

SPRIGS & KINDLING



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SPRIGS & KINDLING

A Carved From Brindlewood Community Fanzine

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Theme:

Public Access &
Analog Oddities

Editor's Note

Volume 4 is a wild mixture of weird, wonderful, and wacky submissions and I really hope you enjoy them as much as I did! We had to break this one into two parts, so definitely check our Issue 2: Lost Transmissions!

Keep being weird!

Amanda Mullins
Editor-in-Chief



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On Public Access

By Alex Rybitski

My first ever writing gig was 'The King in Shadows' for The Between, which subsequently led to Jason Cordova asking if I wanted to contribute to the next project he had in the can. I said yes. No hesitation. Had we been meeting face-to-face, I'd probably have seized the man by his neon-patterned lapels and started cackling like a maniac. Since learning of the core concepts of what became Public Access, mostly from Jason's musings online, I knew I was starving to get my hands on any part of that pie.

Public Access is a game that feels so utterly like home—despite having never lived in a desert, or being born too late to really remember the 90s, or even knowing what a public access broadcast was. The reason Deep Lake and Degoya County are so familiar to me is because of the internet. More specifically, all the scary shit I loved discovering. Classic internet horror stories and ARGs like Ted's Caving Page, Candle Cove, and Ben Drowned took up more real estate in my waking mind than any attempts at schoolwork could muster. Not to mention the hundreds of hours of amateur found-footage series on YouTube.



The screens that haunt me may be different than those of TV Odyssey, but the feeling remains. So much of my creative headspace has been built around the very idea of a town like this. A forgotten and decaying corner of rural America, where reality feels strange and the people are stranger; where places like a suburban cul-de-sac can somehow feel like the single most isolated place in the world.

I always liked to imagine that everyone arrives in such a place, sooner or later. We're all haunted by something, and Deep Lake is where shadows of the past congeal into the present. Nostalgia is only one lens through which we open ourselves to be haunted.

I'm happy to not be alone in wanting to reside there.



KEEPER FEATURE

With Gabe McCormick

Safe Keeping

Keeper Corner is a regular column in Sprigs and Kindling in which I dig into an aspect of being a Keeper that is special to the Carved from Brindlewood system. In this issue we look at **Safety for the Keeper**.

I am making a general assumption that readers know at least something about TTRPG safety tools already. However, if you do not, the [TTRPG Safety Toolkit](#) curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk is a good place to start.

Safety can take on many forms in TTRPGs, from formal tools like Lines & Veils, or the X-Card, to more subtle or informal methods like choosing who you play with, taking breaks, or setting time limits to sessions. I will be considering both ways to actively support the use of Safety Tools and how the use of some tools operates with different expectations when you are the Keeper as opposed to one of the Players.

Keeper (or MC or GM) suffer for the benefit of their players. For some of the more technical tools like Lines & Veils or the X-Card you should use them just as freely as anyone else at the table.

This can be often handled by design for the Keeper by selecting the game, the mystery, and the schedule, however, it shows up in direct gameplay as well. As a Keeper you have just as much right to safety as everyone else at the table.

THE WEIGHT OF EXPECTATIONS

As the Keeper, your choices and your words tend to carry extra weight. You probably set up the game initially, scheduled it, selected players, and selected the Threat or Mystery that everyone is playing. It is also likely that you are teaching the game to new players, making calls about disagreements, and structuring the flow of the play session. These all put you in a position of relative power and mean that the choices you make can have more influence than the choices the other players make.

This can cause some Keepers to hesitate to use safety tools thinking something like: “If I X-Card this, I am stifling my players’ creativity” when they are simultaneously encouraging their players to use the X-Card.

“... you are also a player and you deserve to have a good time as much as anyone.”

YOU MATTER TOO

First of all, you are also a player and you deserve a good time as much as anyone. There should be no expectation that the

This is understandable, however, it is more common that the players in the group will watch your actions more than your words.

There are a handful of key Moves that I used to make safety tools a regular part of the game.

MOVE: START WITH LINES & VEILS

When I play online and use a character keeper I will almost always pre-fill my own lines and veils before sharing it with other players.

I want to clearly set the table for what I am willing to have in the game as well as share the message that adding to the list is a normal, expected, thing. With new players I will also try and add something that isn't initially on the list, or model something that may change based on my mood. For me Harm to Children shifts between a Line and a Veil depending on the day or the context. To illustrate this I will explicitly ask the group about changing the status from session to session.

“... help your players use safety tools by expressly using them yourself and modeling the behavior you want to see.”

MOVE: AUDIBLY CHECKING LINES & VEILS

You can actually help your players use safety tools by expressly using them yourself and modeling the behavior you want to see. Before you engage a particularly intense description, perhaps a gory one, it can be powerful to say “hold on, let me check the Lines & Veils...” before diving in. This quick pause reminds everyone that these tools are here to be used.

“... the X-Card is more like the brakes on a car that are used regularly and less like a ‘break glass in case of emergency’ tool.”

MOVE: THE PLANNED X-CARD

Sometimes I will performatively X-Card myself. To do this I will start a description, stop midway through, and say “hold on, I’m going to X-Card that” and then revise the description. I typically use this with players who are new to me or are new to using Safety Tools. I want to show them that the X-Card is more like the brakes on a car that are used regularly and less like a “break glass in case of emergency” tool.

All of the above Moves are designed to show that Safety Tools are just another part of the game and to build comfort through use. Just as something like Answering a Question takes time for players to get used to, Safety Tools require practice as well. As the Keeper you can set the tone early to help everyone see that Safety Tools can be used to prevent problems as much as they can be used to remedy mistakes.

THE OPEN DOOR IS FOR EVERYBODY

The Open Door is a fairly common safety tool that explicitly informs players that they can opt out of a session, leave mid-session, or just generally step away when they need to. This is a great tool that helps make sure that people enjoy their gaming experience and don't feel coerced into attending.

This tool carries more weight when a Keeper uses it. If a player uses the Open Door, the game typically goes on and you play down a person. No sweat. Maybe you do a little side quest, or shift the focus of the session, but generally speaking things can go ahead as planned.

When the Keeper needs to Open Door, the game typically stops. No one picks up the Keeper role for a session, and no one opts to run a one shot of something else. Because of this, Keepers can feel pressure to not use the Open Door, even when they use it freely as players.

Despite using the Open Door many times as a Keeper, including cancelling a whole planned series of The Silt Verses after session four, the choice to opt out of a game or session is always difficult for me. And yet, I have always been grateful that I made the call.

“Forcing yourself through a session is miserable. And more than likely, your players know it.”

Forcing yourself through a session is miserable. And more than likely, your players know it. Your heart won't be in it, you'll be tired, or perhaps distracted. The whole session will be less enjoyable and gaming will feel like a chore.

Generally speaking, I do not reschedule a session when I Open Door. I simply take a series of five sessions and just fit it to four. If everyone's schedule allows, I may add a session on to the end of the series but this is rare. I tend to play with people who have full calendars.

Notably this applies to gaming as a hobby. If you have a situation where you are a paid Keeper that carries different expectations, however, that sort of thing is beyond the scope of this article.

PARTING WORDS: TOOLS ARE MEANT TO BE USED

Simply put, Safety Tools are for Keepers too and you should not be afraid to use them. If you are using them at all, it means the table agree to use them. The same way you may need to encourage your players to use the tools, you may need to encourage yourself.

If you believe that a player's Lines & Veils do not impede your ability as a Keeper, you need to also believe that your Lines & Veils will not impede your players. Any player's agency cannot come by exploiting others, and we must all sacrifice some of our own desires in order to play collaboratively.

Stay safe out there!

Gabe is an educator and game facilitator based in greater Boston. You can find his other games work at <https://gmccornick.itch.io/>

THE HISTORY BEHIND PUBLIC ACCESS

By Rebecca Hall

What is Public Access TV?

Public access television was created by the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the early 1970s. This type of broadcasting required cable companies to set aside some of their profits and a few channels for locally-produced, free content. Over the past fifty years, these channels have hosted everything from edutainment for kids to adult shows with nudity. The comedian Chris Gethard may be the most famous product of public access TV — he started his hosting career with a show on a New York channel.

Public Access in New Mexico

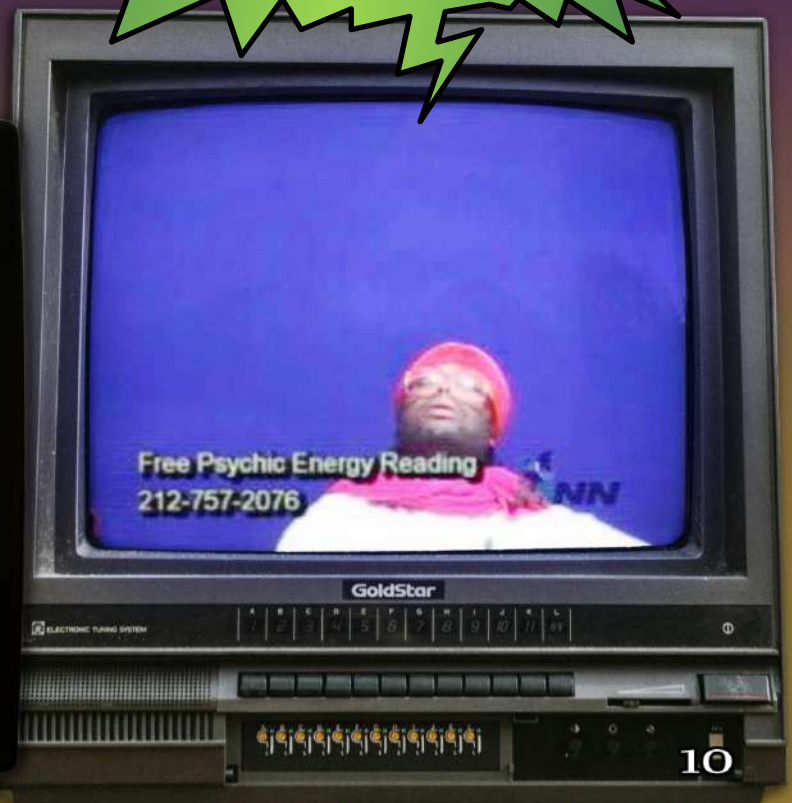
While TV Odyssey may not have been a real channel, New Mexico has a fascinating history of public access TV. According to Albuquerque's [The Paper](#), a nonprofit ran programming on channel 26 and channel 27 from the 1980s until they lost their contract with the city in 2011. Apparently, this decision was very contentious and employees actually had to be kicked out of the studio by police! Today, Studio 519 hosts four public access channels for Albuquerqueans, but you can watch them [online here!](#)

Weird Public Access Content

Public access TV has brought us tons of fascinating content. Here are a few of my favorite clips:

**Robin's Safe Sex Lesson
- Dental Dam Use**

**Flaccid Ego: Psychic
Reading Call-in Show**



**Being a Guide to Some Peculiarities
in the Manners & Customs
of the British Empire,
& London in Particular,
for the edification of visitors
to these shores from The Americas
or elsewhere**

Lady Zora Beauclerk, Marchioness of Wriothesley

By Rob Fletcher



**The Matter of Forms of Address for One's Betters, One's
Peers, as Well as Those of a Lower Station**

As a visitor to our islands making your way among the denizens of this greatest of cities, I am sure you may find it invaluable for me to offer a few suggestions on the subject of addressing the people with whom you will become acquainted, be they greater or lesser in standing than yourself.

When addressing those of a lower social station, particularly those in the employ of your acquaintances, the surname alone is appropriate. My man Wodehouse has been with me for some years now and, my goodness, I am sure I do not recall his Christian name, if ever I knew it. If you are dining with me, you should address him likewise should your wine-glass require refilling. To call him "Mr Wodehouse" would imply a degree of parity that, I am sure, would make poor Wodehouse uncomfortable, not to mention raising eyebrows amongst the other dinner guests.

Mr, Mrs, or Miss, as the occasion warrants, suffice as a polite—without becoming inappropriately deferential—form of address for those in the trade or working classes with whom you are unfamiliar. Perhaps a professional title should the person in question possess such. For example, "Inspector Pettigrew" was the manner in which I referred to the impertinent fellow from Scotland Yard who once had the temerity to ask me some rather pointed questions regarding a matter with which I had No Familiarity Whatsoever!



The working classes habitually use their Christian names when addressing one another. However you, dear reader, should strive to hold yourself above being overly familiar with the yeomen of England if you wish to continue to move in more refined circles.

Those refined circles are where I have observed matters become a little more confusing for visitors. There are a great many titles and honorifics, and whilst it would be churlish to refuse to excuse a slip or two in the etiquette of one not to the manner born, I am sure so sensitive a soul as yourself, dear reader, has no desire to clumsily cause offence, intended or no.

If you are introduced to a Knight of the realm—for instance my very good friend Sir Hugo Rafferty—you should address him as Sir Hugo. It would be a terribly unfortunate faux pas to say “Sir Rafferty”, immediately marking you, I am sorry to say, as an outsider of the gauchest stripe.

The surname alone is frequently the familiar form of address between Gentlemen. If you and Sir Hugo were to happen, in the course of time, to become friends rather than mere acquaintances, “Rafferty old fellow, how the D***l are you?” may be quite acceptable upon encountering one another. I caution you not to assume that such a level of familiarity has been reached without being quite certain, however.

The noble ranks above Knight sometimes carry an array of names. Lord Commissioner of the Treasury Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne is, naturally, a not infrequent guest of mine. He should be properly addressed as Lord Lansdowne, although should you become confused as to whether to use the gentleman’s titular name—Lansdowne—or his surname—Petty-Fitzmaurice—a simple “My Lord” will serve just as nicely.

As to your correspondent. Why, you may address me as My Lady or Lady Wriotheshly. My closest friends may omit the honorific entirely and call me Zora, but I am sure you will forgive me if I say that you and I—as dear as you are to me, faithful reader—are not quite at that stage yet.

ZB



History of Dice

by Lisa Imbryk

From the seven-piece polyhedral sets of Dungeons and Dragons, to the giant d10 pools of World of Darkness, and the simple 2d6 systems of Carved from Brindlewood and Powered by the Apocalypse, dice are a fundamental tool of most TTRPGs. Today, dozens of companies, such as Chessex, Gamescience, Dice Envy, and Black Oak Workshop, produce high quality, inexpensive factory-made dice in various configurations. Independent, handmade makers like Archival Dice, Fighting Chance Studios, Yaniir, and Cryptid Dicecraft create miniature works of art in rolling form, sold to collectors and obligate dice goblins. Differing shapes, sizes, and specialties exist in materials from resin to metal, ceramic to wood, and gemstone to jesmonite. The traditional D6 can be found alongside hyper-specialized deathsave d20s and weather-generation d12s, and so many alternate shapes exist for the D4 that they could fill their own article.

And yet, in the earliest days of TTRPGs, polyhedral dice were virtually unheard of, and the now ubiquitous seven-piece acrylic set would not exist for almost twenty years of Dungeons and Dragons' now fifty-year history.



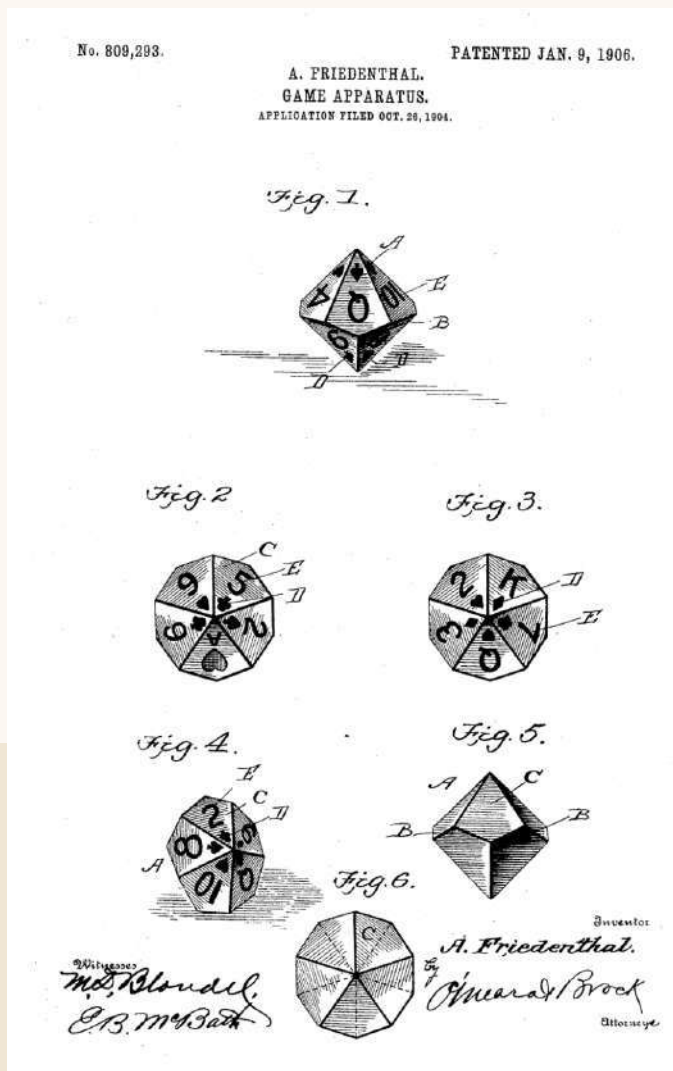
A recreation Greek die made with ceramic by Fighting Chance Studio from the author's collection.

The shapes, of course, existed and had been variously used as dice for gambling and games throughout human history. Theaetetus of Athens was a contemporary of Plato and his mathematical proof that there were exactly five regular convex polyhedra—geometric solids whose faces are all identical, regular polygons meeting at the same three-dimensional angles—was recorded in Books X and XIII of Euclid's Elements, published in 300BCE. These five Platonic solids were the tetrahedron (the shape of the original d4), the cube (d6), the octahedron (d8), the dodecahedron (d12) and the icosahedron (d20). The Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans used icosahedra as dice, and many examples have survived. The missing shape from the modern gaming set, the irregular ten-sided pentagonal trapezohedron (d10), was patented for use as a die by Albert Friedenthal in 1906, and featured playing card numbers and suits.



Dungeons and Dragons originated in wargaming, which traditionally used d6s. While wargaming had existed from at least the Napoleonic era, H.G. Wells published one of the first codified sets of rules in 1913, in his marvelously titled *Little Wars; a Game for Boys from Twelve Years of Age to One Hundred and Fifty and for That More Intelligent Sort of Girl Who Likes Boys' Games and Books* (girls have always been welcome at the gaming table, even when the invitation was misogynist as heck). In *Little Wars*, skirmishes were resolved by the strength and number of miniatures devoted to any given fight, similar to games like *Risk*. Two d6s, however, were employed to create a “chance of war,” with each player setting aside 12 miniatures, and then rolling two dice to see how many of those twelve they could reclaim, creating a randomized initial imbalance of troops.

The 1906 patent filing for Albert Friedenthal's ten sided card die.



By the 1960s, d6s were extensively used in wargaming, with horrifying tables designed to enable percentile rolls utilizing multiple d6s that approximated 5% increments. Percentage chance of success was the underlying principle, but the exclusivity of commercially available d6s dictated the mechanics. When Gary Gygax and Jeff Perren developed the first fantasy wargame, *Chainmail*, starting in 1967—publishing in 1971—they attempted to simplify, and most rolls would be surprisingly familiar to modern PBtA players (though the results are reversed). When a wizard cast “fire ball” at a giant, for example, they rolled two d6s. On a roll of 5 or lower, the giant would be routed from the board; 6-8 it would be pushed back 1 move; and 9+ the fire ball would do nothing.

The shift to d20s during the development of *Dungeons and Dragons* between 1969 and 1974 is debated. What is clearly documented is that the first commercially produced plastic d20, with the sides numbered from 0-9 twice, was developed in Japan by Ishida Yasushi, a quality control engineer for Toshiba who was working for the Japanese Standards Association, between 1950 and 1953. The dice were intended for use in industrial quality control, and as a scientific tool were priced accordingly. By 1963, the JSA dice were verifiably in use by the US Navy for tactical training wargames. In 1965, an American woman named Fredda Sieve patented a polyhedral dice set game, *Zazz* “Polyspheres,” using the five Platonic shapes, that included a 1-20 hand numbered icosahedron, which were manufactured in Hong Kong. And by 1969, the Bristol Wargames Society was claiming in *International Wargamer* to already hold the British patent for 0-9 d20s, which they were producing in house, though no patent from that era could be found.

This is where the story gets murky. According to Dave Arneson, he found a bucket of d20s in the back of a war gaming store, Tradition of London, Ltd, on a trip with his parents some time before he began work on *Don't Give Up the Ship*. He brought three pairs, in black and red—the colors that were indeed produced by the Bristol Wargames Society—back to the US and failed to convince his wargaming friends to use them, despite their obvious advantage for rolling percentile (as the 0-9 numbering enabled a player to roll one die twice to obtain the tens and ones digit, or two dice of differing colors once for the same). He recalled having then tried to work these dice into *Don't Give Up the Ship* with Gygax after they met in 1969, but the lack of a US based supplier made the use too risky. But 1969 is the same year that mention of these dice first appeared in Wargamer's Newsletter, to which Gary Gygax subscribed, prompting some historians (caught up in the Gygax-Arneson feuds) to argue that he could have found out about them on his own.

Fredda Sieve's 1963 patent filing for Zazz Polyspheres.

Sept. 28, 1965 F. F. S. SIEVE 3,208,754
DICE GAME WITH A TETRAHEDRON DIE
Filed Feb. 20, 1963

Fig. 1

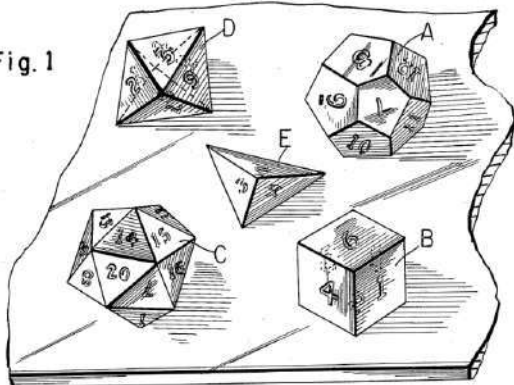
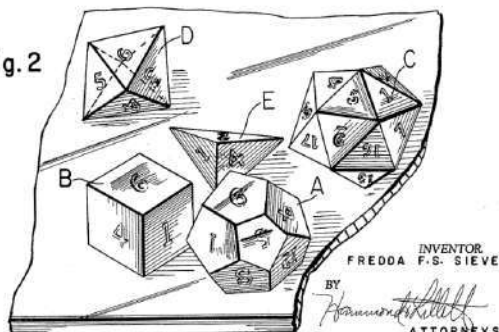


Fig. 2



Either way, in 1971 the initial serialization in International Wargamer of Arneson and Gygax's *Don't Give Up the Ship* did not include a d20, while Mike Reese and Leon Trucker's *Tractics*, which Gygax contributed to, wound up the first wargame to mention the existence of a 0-9 d20, though multiple alternatives were proposed for Americans unable to source the Japanese or British dice, like chits and painted poker chips.

By the time *Dungeons and Dragons* was first published in 1974, both designers had embraced the use of the 0-9 d20, and a domestic source had been found so that the d20s could be included in packaged sets with the three booklets that made up the first edition. Creative Publications, an educational company in California, was producing polyhedral dice for classroom use. While useful for discussing geometry, it isn't clear how the set came to be designed. Their manufacturer was based in Hong Kong, and there is a slim possibility that Fredda Sieve's designs may have influenced their production. The initial design of *Dungeons and Dragons* utilized the standard d6 and the new d20 for percentage rolls, but the Creative Publications sets included all five Platonic solids—a white 0-9 d20, blue d12, green d8, pink d6, and yellow d4.

Cardboard chits for drawing a d20 "roll," an alternative when d20s were unavailable.



Opening the packages and discarding the additional dice was deemed too time consuming, so Arneson and Gygax quickly added a few rules to use the d4, d8, and d12—an addition made obvious by how rarely they were used in that first edition. The game recommended having 4 to 20 pairs of d6s, with a pair each of the other shapes. The dice were uninked, and players were advised to fill in the numbers with crayon and to color one side of the d20s differently to enable 1-20 rolls.

The 1977 edition, edited by J. Eric Holmes, stuck with the same five dice as the first edition, though the d6s produced for TSR were orange. A number of companies, including Gamescience, began producing dice of various qualities. *The Advanced Dungeons and Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide*, published in 1979, contains a whole section on the math of dice and probabilities that would thrill a statistician and dismay most everyone else, but did, in addition to showing the five die set, suggested opportunities for the use of odd dice. This included a description of how Gygax used a card suits d6 to determine NPC attitudes in his own games. It also explained methods for rolling the other polyhedral dice alongside the d20 and multiplying the results together to get different intervals for success.

A new old stock set produced by Windmill Hobbies in 1979, pictured on an ODSM map (<https://oldschooldungeonmaster.co/>)



1980 finally brought the advent of the d10, and the expansion of D&D dice from 5 unique types to 6. The early testing of the 1981 basic set edition, edited by Tom Moldvay, included a d10 numbered 0-9 and a d20 numbered 1-20. Gamescience would also advertise a d10 in December, though Lou Zocchi would later recall that TSR beat them to the design. Rolling percentile shifted from rolling two differently colored d20s to obtain the digits, to rolling two differently colored d10s to do the same. Gamescience would release the “Zocchihedron” d100, which resembled a golf ball and had 100 faces for rolling percentile, in 1985, but the design was heavily derided.

The final addition to the standard seven-die polyhedral set, a ten-sided die with an additional zero on each face—often referred to now as the d100 or the d%—would not arrive until 1990, sixteen years after *Dungeons and Dragons* was first published and more than 20 years after its earliest iterations were in development. Both Gamescience and Chessex independently created versions of the concept, with Gamescience calling theirs the “deckaider.” While the standard method of rolling the two ten-sided dice and reading the tens and one digits in order would persist and remain the dominant method, the existence of a 00-90 numbered die enabled the development of a second method for rolling percentile, in which the roll on the d10 was added to the roll on the d100 to find the percentage.

An original Zocchihedron before redesign for distribution issues.



While these seven options would remain the basic dice until today, innovations in shape and alternative numbering have proliferated as access to manufacturing techniques has become more widespread. The dice of today are likely to continue to grow, innovate, and change. But no matter what, they'll always be an excellent way to introduce a bit of chance into the stories we tell with friends.

A double 0-9 d20 from the late 1970s, white crayoned and black crayoned views



A double 0-9 d20 from the late 1970s, with crayon colored numbers in two colors to enable 1-20 rolls as well as percentile digits.



What is a Move in the CFB context?

BY Chaotic Jamboochian

Introduction

Moves, the life force of Carved from Brindlewood games, provide structure for the players to achieve various actions within the game. However the biggest question I have seen coming from the community is “How do you write Moves?”. But I think a better question is “What is a Move?”. Most people would consider Moves to just be mechanics within the game, but that is a bit inaccurate as mechanics refer to any technical piece of writing within the game. I think by defining Moves more formally, then people can start to understand how to write Moves in a more consistent manner in terms of quality and begin to experiment more with the structure.

Definition of a Move

Many have struggled with defining what a Move is as there's no limit as to what it can be—some claim that Dungeons and Dragons has moves, which doesn't fit within the spirit of what a Move typically is. I define a Move as a series of mechanics with a cause-and-effect clause that changes the conversation from between Keeper and Player to the game itself directly facilitating that exchange. Carved from Brindlewood Moves have a particular style, more uniform in language than general Powered by the Apocalypse Moves. They follow a clear pattern of fictional or mechanical triggers then mechanical resolution, followed by fictional resolution. This definition also excludes Keeper actions from being Moves, as well as other mechanics like invoking aspects of the character sheet to gain advantage on a Move or to increase the tier of a roll from 6- to a 7-9.

Definition of a Trigger

Let's break down some commonly used terms when using or making Moves. A **trigger** is the mechanic that is the cause in the cause-and-effect structure. It refers to anything that the player can do/invoke that would meet a requirement. Triggers must be written in a way so they aren't accidentally invoked unless the player is engaging with the genre or structure of the game. For example, "Once per day" isn't a good trigger as it's unclear about when it happens as it's not playing into the structure of the game. "At the start of the day phase" is a better trigger as it plays into the structure of the game's phases. The trigger is then followed up by specific **mechanical resolutions** like to roll dice or to pick from a list of items. Sometimes these items can be variables like “roll with an appropriate ability” or “pick an assignment”. We'll focus on the idea of a **rollable Move** since they carry the most associated terminology.

The relationship of rolls and hard mechanics

Moves that don't involve rolling might seem mechanically light, but they interact with other subsystems like invoking Conditions to clear them, finding Clues, or furthering playbook specific goals. One of the more difficult mechanical interactions is Moves interacting with other Moves. Typically a Move must be resolved before another is invoked, but there is an exception when a second Move is clearly written within the first's text. The placement of this Move falls after the trigger, and only gets invoked because the player makes a specific choice about the fiction rather than the result of an earlier roll. The writing of the Move cannot contradict the other Move's trigger otherwise it would also break the logic of both Moves.

The relationship between CfB and other games

There might be some inclination to include mechanics from other games in designing Moves, but unless they are built in from the very core of the game, they will clash with the themes of the game. The most clear example is incorporating Clocks from Blades in the Dark. It's a very silly explanation, but the roundness of the Clock scares people. The more serious explanation is that Clocks are specifically built into how the Action rolls work in that system where the Keeper tracks progress towards goals. Instead, Carved from Brindlewood uses tracks that interact with how mechanics work like marking things to bump the tiers, and managing Complexity for Questions. This also falls in line with why numerical values are used sparingly in the system, as consequences are negotiated by consequences with the players rather than controlled by the Keeper.

Other Terms

Each dice roll technically has four tiers, 6-, 7-9, 10+, 12+. A Move may not reference all of these explicitly, but it should at least include a 7-9 and 10+ result. Sometimes, 7-9 is only implied by the concept of the hit. A **hit** is any roll that is above 7, but the 10+ result is often referred to as **success without consequence** as it avoids the complications that come from a 7-9. This can be written explicitly with offering a complication on a 7-9 or the avoidance of a complication on the 10+. This structure provides support to Moves with picklists where the complication comes from not picking an option on the list.

The **miss** result is anything that is 6-, typically this only gets written out when the Move requires specific consequences. Leaving it out invites the Keeper to make a Keeper reaction- something that may have been already discussed beforehand or a new complication. When misses are written they have to be evocative so the Keeper isn't tempted to ignore it in favor of using their own mechanics. On the other extreme a 12+, otherwise known as **overwhelming success**, is an extra benefit on top of whatever the hit and success without consequence would entail.

PbtA and specificity vs Basic Moves and generality

Now we get into the categorization of Moves and their types. It's effectively a 9 square grid: Basic, Playbook, and Custom on one axis; Exploration, Risk, and Rehabilitation on the other. The axes of specificity and result influence how the Move's language adjusts to its purpose. Basic Moves are the most general of Moves, and for the most part are not associated with specific stats when they are rolled. The triggers for these Moves are generalized in which it doesn't assume any specific scenario is happening within the scene. By comparison as you go down the grid into Playbook, it becomes Player Character specific, but the scenarios it is used in are still flexible. This is where stats become more rigid and play into the Player Character's strengths. Custom Moves, further down the grid, are extremely specific and are only used in certain scenarios. They are contained to one to two per campaign arc if available to the group as a whole or restricted to a single Player Character. The most common instance of this Move type is through advancements for the group, whether unlocking a Move via a Question, Reward, or Experience.

I realize that there are a lot of terms and categorizations that may not be useful to the average player or even to game designers which is why I save this section for last. What makes for an interesting Move? **Interesting fiction.** Most Moves are written in the same format, "When you do a trigger, this mechanic happens which results in a consequence." A phrase that gets thrown often in Powered by the Apocalypse spaces is "to do it, you must do it". Triggers aren't passive things, and must offer an opportunity to choose for it to happen. Even with some more "reactionary" Moves that trigger as the result of something scary happening or failure to do a thing still involves a choice. Players choose a consequence for the Day/Night Move, and can back down to do something else if offered an unexpected thing. The trigger can be quite plain looking like "When you gather Clues", but it has to be allowed to be framed in a cinematic way. Otherwise you would end up with everything that the PCs do becoming an opportunity to be a trigger. The mechanic is meant to forward the gameplay loop and invoke an emotion from the player. The gameplay loop is the Big Sync (see Mike Martens article in Sprigs & Kindling Volume 2) applied outside of the module. Present information, answer questions, and resolve the situation. A mechanic can present Clues, roll dice to answer the question of uncertainty, and resolve Conditions. Invoking an emotion may seem difficult but it's asking what is additive, subtractive, or transformative of the mechanic. Marking boxes is a common mechanic, but it feels different when the Mother is adding body parts to their Child vs when the Undeniable is transforming and subtracting beauty away from their Masterwork.

This where the meta discussion of mechanics goes back into the fiction of the situation, the consequences. They apply to both the positive aspects and negative aspects of the fiction that affect the Player Character. This is where you should be thinking about the genre, themes, and tropes of the system. Brindlewood Bay's Moves do engage with the horror of the game, but still centers around the cozy feel of the Player Characters being elderly women. None of their Moves have earth shattering effects on the world, and the most powerful of them ends up being able to enter in a place unaccosted by its inhabitants. Going into the negative aspects of the Moves, it may be easy to just give a negative outcome that no one wants to happen. However, Carved from Brindlewood Moves escalate the situation so that the player has to make more and more drastic decisions. The Player Characters have resources at their disposal to help with improving their chances at success by gaining advantage, including ones that can negate failure, so having death as an explicit possibility in the fiction doesn't feel cheap but rather in a lot of cases engaging with aspects of the genre as a good portion of Cfb games play in the horror space.

Moves can be broken down further by analyzing even more specifically with the wording, but it goes beyond the scope of this article. To recap, Moves focus on the conversation to make interesting fiction happen. There are a variety of ways to mechanically write them out, but they need to invoke the gameplay loops of the specific system. They also have different scopes of influence, ranging from very specific to very general.

the La Fresca Tribune

Monday, July 6, 1981

Bringing News to Degoya County since 1890

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7 Members Of Deep Lake Family Slain; 10 Year-Old In Custody "Officer Barker told me to!"

by Don Hunter

As the investigation into the grisly murders of the Castle family continues, the community of Deep Lake has begun preparations for a vigil for the family to be held later this week—details to come.

Leslie Castle, 41, his wife Janet Castle, 36, their two children, Thomas Castle, 16, Danielle Castle, 13, and grandparents Stephen Castle, 64, Anthony Harris, 60, and Bonnie Harris, 59, were slain in their home on Mitchum Ave. The bodies were discovered in the early morning hours of July 5th, though they most likely died sometime in the late evening hours of July 4th, say police.

"We can't say too much on the incident at the moment," says Deputy Otis March, who was one of the first officers on the scene, and the officer who found Benjamin Castle, 10, wandering the Deep Lake

"Our hearts go out to the community. We know they're mourning, and we all have questions that we desperately want answers to."

Benjamin Castle is currently still in state custody awaiting evaluation for his involvement in the deaths of his family. Another child is reported to be in good condition, though their information has not been released publicly.

Police have also not confirmed how the family was murdered, but early reports suggest that no weapon was confiscated from the crime scene, leading many to suspect that the murderer was unarmed at the time.

"Something else is going on here," comments one Deep Lake resident, Patience Head. "Who can believe a ten year-old boy could kill his entire family without a weapon

for goodness sake. If he did do this, he wasn't alone." Indeed, other residents share similar suspicions, and worry that if rumors of a second attacker are true, are they still out there?

The Castle family were last seen at the Big Sun Convenience Store attending their annual Independence Day Parking Lot Potluck event.

"There wasn't anything wrong from what I saw. The Castles have been a staple of this get-together for years, always willing to help out and just all around good people," says Big Sun owner, Verdell Reynolds. "We've been hosting this party for over ten years. This tragedy has cast a shadow, but we're a community, and we'll crawl out from under it in time. We help each other in dark times like this. I pray for that little boy, and anyone else who's suffering because

of this."

Funeral services for the Castle family are scheduled for Friday, July 10 at Our Lady of Pure Waters Catholic Church in Deep Lake, with interment to follow.

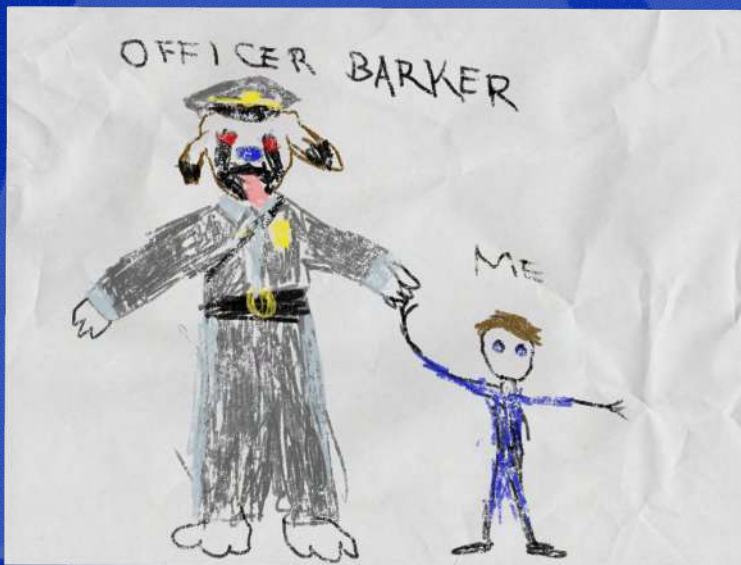


Benjamin Castle

Above: Clipping from The La Fresca Tribune, July 1981.

On the 44th anniversary of the infamous Castle family murders in Deep Lake, NM, *Sprigs & Kindling* takes a look back with some rare artifacts from the 1981 case.

Below: Crime scene photograph, taken at the Castle home, 1981.



Above: Original drawing by serial murderer, Benjamin Castle, circa 1981.



RUNNING A ONESHOT IN 03:00 HOURS

by Nicolas Ronvel

Hello everyone. My name is Nicolas, and I'm French. I translated Brindlewood Bay and Public Access into French (this is important for what follows), and today I'm going to talk about how these games can shine in a 3-hour convention slot. What I'm about to tell you could apply to other games, like The Between or The Silt Verses, but I prefer to speak from my own experiences.

To give you an idea of my experience, in order to introduce these games to the French-speaking audience, I have played Brindlewood Bay 17 times in one-shot format, including 15 times at conventions. For Public Access, I have played 19 times in one-shot format, including 14 times at conventions. Each time in a slot of approximately 3 hours.

So how can we achieve it?

HELLO, MY NAME IS...

An important step for a good game is to have a coherent cast. Be honest about what you're offering so as not to mislead players. For example, in the description of the game you're advertising, include the emergent aspect of the game, the shared narration, the themes addressed. A bad cast can quickly jeopardize a game.

Once at the table do a quick round of introductions, starting with yourself. Then ask: "Are you familiar with Carved from Brindlewood games? Are you familiar with PBTA games?" (with examples if necessary). Their answers will allow you to better focus your explanations according to the knowledge more or less already established around the table.

I'm going to focus this article on games around a physical table. Print one more character sheet than the expected number of players. You never know what could happen around the table (yes, coffee spill), and if necessary, you can use it as an example. Help sheets, summarizing the different Moves, can also be useful. Some players like to know the game's mechanics.

Don't forget dice, of course. Tell the players that they will need 3D6 each, and make sure you have some spares.

Is the table ready? Are your players seated? Are you seated too? OK. Let's go!

FOLLOW THE SCRIPT

Brindlewood Bay and Public Access each offer a damn effective tool to introduce the game: the Session 1 script. It's effective, it works, it answers lots of questions, and it kicks off the game superbly. So follow it. C.A.T.S., the safety tools, and then character creation phase.

One solution to shorten the playing time could be to offer pre-generated characters. My advice: don't do this. The players aren't starting from scratch. The Session 1 script has already provided a good introduction to the setting, who the characters are, and the character sheet will be a good companion. Show them the important sections on the character sheet: their character's identity (first name, last name, style), Cozy Activity/What takes you back (limit the latter to "at least one").

Ask them to think about the questions presented in the scripts, namely (these questions are found in the Session One procedure):

- **For Brindlewood Bay**
 - Her deceased partner.
 - Her children, if she has any (pets count too).
 - Her career before retiring to Brindlewood Bay.
- **For Public Access**
 - What is their current occupation, if any?
 - What do they see for their future, if they ever think about it?
 - If there is someone dear who stayed at home: who is it, and what are they doing?

Remind them to alter their stats, no need to over-explain. Skip Crowns/Keys, Dawn Questions, Conditions for now. The remaining part that matters the most here is the Maven/Latchkey Move.

HOUSE OF CARDS

Choosing a Move can sometimes lead to unexpected delays because players are not necessarily familiar with the game. Moves summary sheets are good tools. But not in this configuration.

So I switched to the Card format, and it paid off.

I took the text of each Move, and transposed each of them into a playing card format, taking the format of MTG cards (because I had leftover sleeves available). This allowed me to have a deck of cards with one card per Move.

First, this prevents multiple players from selecting the same Move.

Second, it saves time.

And then there's the option to filter the available Moves. Some Moves are primarily used in campaigns, or introduce additional, time-consuming scenes, or add unwanted complexity to the format we're

playing. With cards, filtering out these Moves is easy. Simply set aside the cards you don't want in the game. Make your selection. You could even mix Moves from the two sets in Brindlewood Bay, or remove that overused Move you've seen too often.

Finally, another very positive point of offering Moves in card format is when players get stuck in choice-paralysis. The character creation phase must be quick, at the risk of eating on playing time (even if I consider that this is part of the game). So, a player is stuck. Quickly ask them to explain their character concept. The elements they already put in place. You know the Moves, you will quickly find one or two Moves that fit this character. Give them the cards that match, and continue. The player will trust you and choose one of those Moves.

WHO ARE YOU?

Once characters are created it's time for character introductions. Go around the table. Everyone introduces their character, describes the choices they made, and answers questions. Then move on to the Cozy Little Place/Corner of the House phase. Explain the purpose of these items: to provide an advantage, personalize a character, and challenge the players' imaginations. Start by giving an item that will help everyone know how to proceed. For the next characters, wait until everyone has participated to suggest an item that differs from the other proposed items. This will demonstrate the openness of this game mechanic.

During the character introduction phase, take a few notes about them. This can be useful for you to reflect on during the game, and is greatly appreciated by players.

Once everyone has finalized their character and introduced them, take a 5-minute break. Then the game will begin directly.

At this point, you should have already consumed 30 to 40 minutes of gameplay. Yes, already. But don't worry, you're going to have a blast!

START OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

Getting the game off to a good start happens before it begins. I focus solely on the official scenarios, the scenarios included with the base games, and I only use one per game. "Dad Overboard" for Brindlewood Bay. "The House on Escondido Street" for Public Access.

Why these two?

First, they work in a straight line. That is, there is no exposition phase or threshold question to answer before the story can be resolved. In "Dad Overboard", the murder happens before the game starts, and you can dive right into the investigation. Other mysteries can be suitable, but this one is particularly effective. Because the cast of Suspects is established from the start, and the number of locations is limited.

"The House on Escondido Street" is easy to run, the horror and weirdness are evident, and the cast is fabulous. And it can all take place in one location, which will make things much easier.

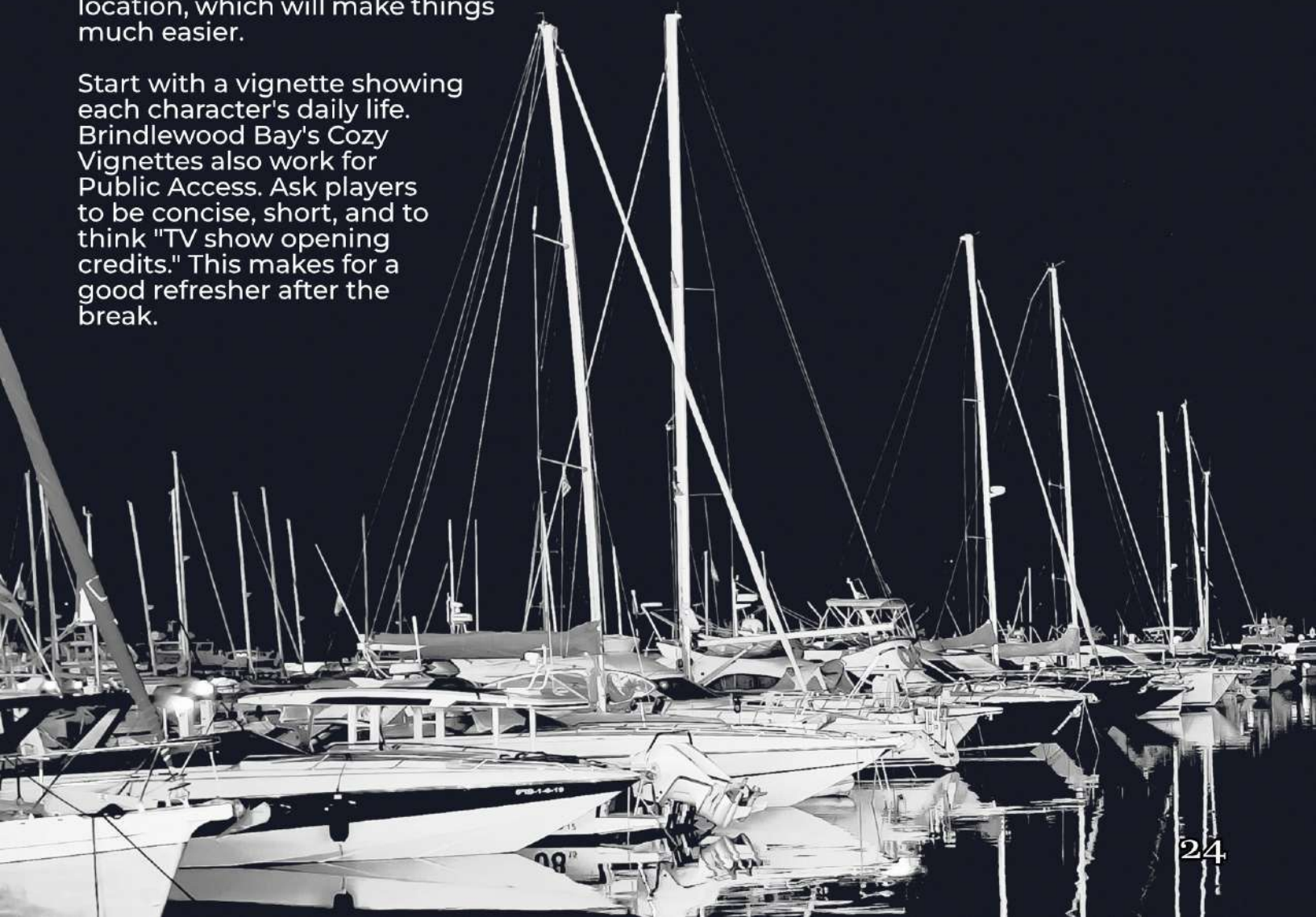
Start with a vignette showing each character's daily life. Brindlewood Bay's Cozy Vignettes also work for Public Access. Ask players to be concise, short, and to think "TV show opening credits." This makes for a good refresher after the break.

Read the mystery's opening script. Don't deviate from it, don't try to act it out (the players always want to talk to Casey or Sheriff Dalrymple). Ask them the questions in the mystery's introduction. Then give them a Clue or two.

Yes, just like that, for free.

To speed up the game, you might think that lowering the complexity of a mystery, and thus reducing the number of Clues required to solve it, would be the way to go. I find this doesn't work well. Theory needs fertile soil to emerge, and fewer Clues make that soil drier. And since you won't have time to multiply the investigation scenes (and therefore the number of Clues collected), one solution is to give Clues from the start.

Once that's done, ask the table, "What are you doing now?"



DAD OVERBOARD

Let me share how I play a game of "Dad Overboard."

First, I make sure the sheriff leaves quickly, embarrassed at having to ask for the Murder Mavens for help. As a preamble to the introduction, I always ask one of the players when the weekly club meeting was, which helps set the plot. Is it evening? Well, okay, welcome to the Night!

I remind them of the time limit for the game and that their investigation will end 30 minutes before our session's end time. This will give them time to theorize, act out an epilogue, and debrief.

I then go around the table to see who's doing what. I gently shut down any attempts at discussion or planning and point out that it's a matter of pacing.

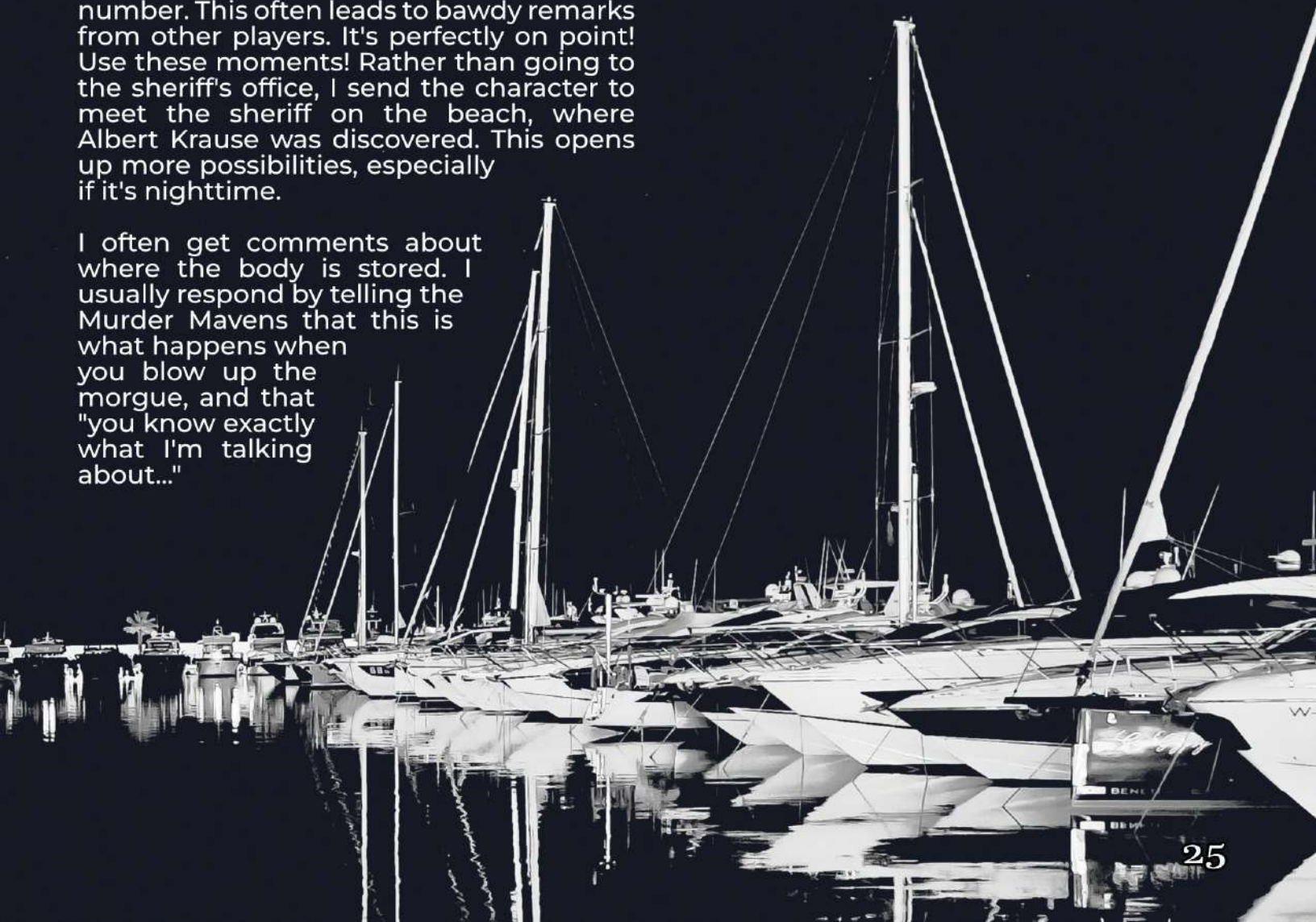
If someone is interested in investigating further with the sheriff, I ask them why their character has the sheriff's personal number. This often leads to bawdy remarks from other players. It's perfectly on point! Use these moments! Rather than going to the sheriff's office, I send the character to meet the sheriff on the beach, where Albert Krause was discovered. This opens up more possibilities, especially if it's nighttime.

I often get comments about where the body is stored. I usually respond by telling the Murder Mavens that this is what happens when you blow up the morgue, and that "you know exactly what I'm talking about..."

Yes, we're not playing a pilot; other episodes have already been filmed.

I encourage the players to split up. In groups of four, I encourage them to form two groups. I often have one group meeting Étienne and inquire about Albert's body. The other goes to the boat to speak to the family.

At the fish market, play with the time of day. During the day, Étienne is taken over by tourists. At night, he drags his melancholy onto his boat. I try to keep Étienne away from the body. This allows for the introduction of a masked shadowy person in the hangar. Play on fear, make this scene a moment of dread. The ice, the dangerous tools around, the dimly lit, empty corridors: you have all the ingredients. Personally, one of my inspirations for this location is the film "I Know What You Did Last Summer," especially at night (but the hangar can always be a night place).



Before visiting the yacht, players often ask me what valid reason their characters could have for approaching the yacht in this way. Well, there are several solutions. Sometimes the group has decided to go on a commando operation, discreetly, by stealing a boat from the harbor. Sometimes, I suggest that the family receive condolences from the locals on the yacht. Of course, no one other than the Murder Mavens will be there (unless you decide otherwise). And then there's the official option: we're consultants for the sheriff's department.

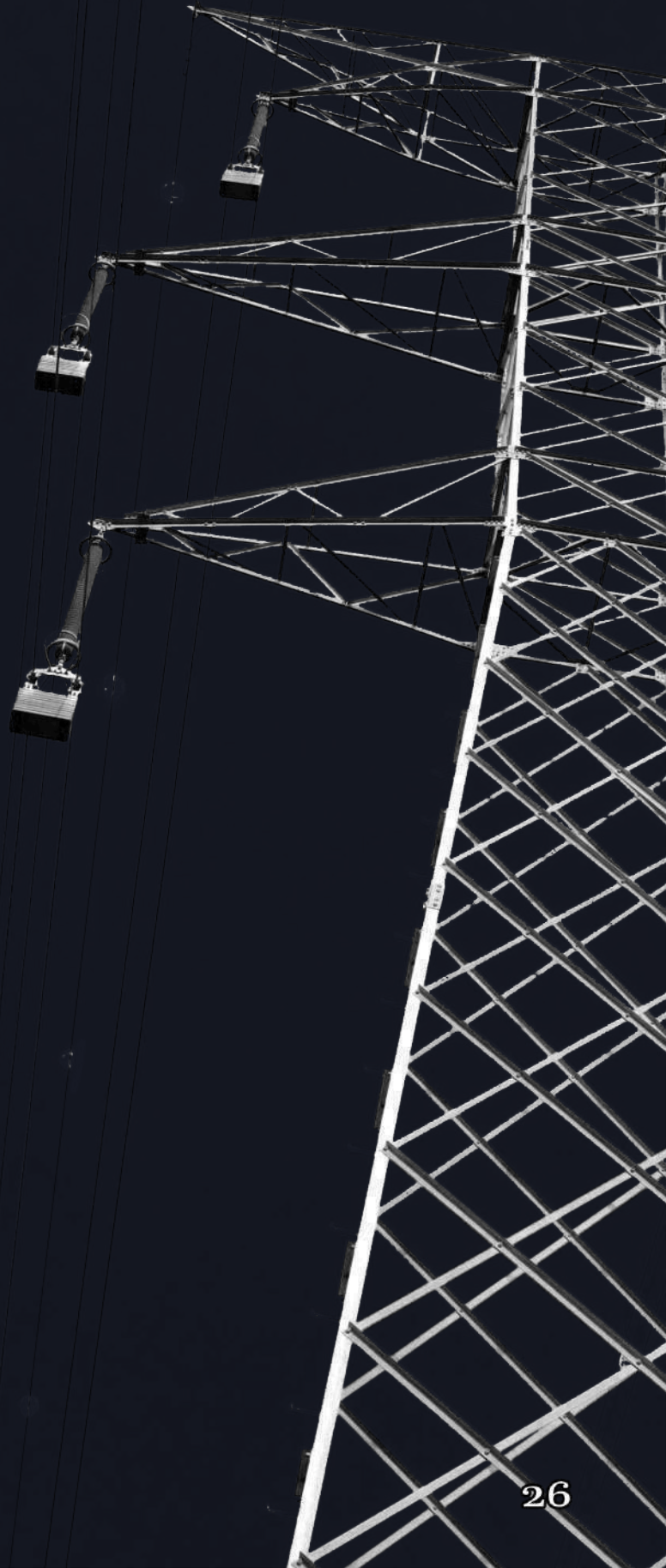
On the yacht, separate the characters. The boat is huge (multiple decks), so play with that. This will allow for some tense scenes, with a stranger's footsteps approaching while a cabin is being searched, or threats made by a Suspect when no one is nearby. Have each Suspect in a different location. This will force the Mavens to separate, and it will force choices to be made regarding which Suspects to be interrogated.

With 40 minutes left, indicate that it's time for the Mavens to meet and cross-reference their information to find the culprit. Close the current scenes. Launch the Theory Move, explain it, and lead it. Indeed, your players may be timid, and you can start the discussion. This should last a maximum of 15 minutes, to leave some time to finish the game. Once the Theory is established, enumerate each Clue and place it in the Theory, then ask someone to roll the dice. And play the conclusion in a purely narrative manner, in the form of a montage in which everyone participates.

If it fails, play it. Make your big reaction happen. A second murder, an explosion, a crazy revelation. Players could choose to spend a Crown each to get a better result, but is it really necessary to have "two endings"? I don't think so. Keep the ending in fail mode; the players will remember it fondly. Ask them for a short epilogue if necessary, then debrief.

Yes, even at conventions I set up a Stars & Wishes. To showcase the tool, and to imagine (via Wishes) what could happen, what we would like to see in the future. Then, when everyone is ready to leave, hit them with a Stinger Scene. Show the Midwives. Show NPCs encountered in the

game in a different light, or in a desperate situation. Show that the Mavens are being watched. Hit hard, then let out a smile, and thank everyone for an excellent game.



THE HOUSE ON ESCONDIDO STREET

Next I will tell you a little bit about how I play a game of "The House on Escondido Street."

It all starts with the introduction. Don't play Casey Wilcox. Read the introduction. Perhaps add that the Odyssey tape obtained in the introduction was left on the doorstep, and that Casey found it on its way to you. Choose the Tape carefully. Make sure there are prompts for each player (so, don't invite 5 Latchkeys if possible! Stick to 2, 3, or 4 Latchkeys). Some tapes are better suited to 3 players, others to 4. Choose it now, especially while you're still having the discussion about Line & Veils in mind.

Often players will want to go investigate at the library. Try to get them to visit the house, but if some insist on the library, well, go for it (see the Library roll table on page XX). Others will sometimes insist on staying at the house on Rodenbecker Street to do some research on the Internet. Okay.

Let's talk a little about clockwork. The Public Access phases require you to be on top of the pace if you want to be able to play a good One-Shot game. The Day Phase will be used to collect Clues. The Dusk Phase will be used solely to answer the Question. It is essential that the mystery Question be answered at this time, otherwise your Night Phase will suffer. The Night Phase will take place in The House on Escondido Street. Impose it on the players. You'll generally have two courses of action: save Elliott and repel the evil lurking there with a ritual. And then, there's an Odyssey Tape to watch, right?

The Night Phase will last about 30 minutes. And I recommend keeping 10 minutes for the debriefing and the final surprise. Allow 15 minutes to answer the Question. And you probably don't have much left for the Day Phase. That's it, you'll have to pace it, cut it, and make ellipses. Announce it to the players from the outset: "I'm going to set up the pace firmly, but it's so that we have a real conclusion to this game, allowing us to really discover the different aspects of the game."

A DAY IN DEEP LAKE

Now, some advice on the mystery itself. If Latchkeys go to the library, make the place creepy. Dim lighting, only one person present, and it's a creepy librarian. And then, the archive room is in the basement, poorly lit. The shelves are cramped. An encounter with an NPC (Debbie Rappaport, Casey Wilcox, Bill Hanscom) is possible. Above all, don't linger too long. Few Clues are truly compatible with being found in the library, and you have to quickly tell the players that they won't find anything else, and that the House awaits them.

Does anyone want to stay on Rodenbecker Street to look up information on the internet? Have them stay alone in the house, and pull off the gloves if their Meddling roll results in a complication (6- or even a 7-9). Someone on the internet knows a little too much about you. Maybe there's a shadow at the window, and someone is knocking aggressively on the door. Make the character feel like it would be nice to get out to Escondido Street instead of staying here.

Escondido Street. One house, so many possibilities. Here, rely on the players. How do they approach the House? From the front? From the back? Discreetly or not? Now's the time to bring Mrs. Head or Chuck into the picture. Separate the characters. Who tries the front door? Who goes through the garden? Who is last and gets accosted by Mrs. Head?

In the House, play with isolation. From one room to another, the Latchkeys' calls may be muffled. Someone screams in the kitchen? No one hears them... Bring back characters mentioned earlier as phantoms. Make the house an enemy, a maze. And have them discover Clues. Should you reveal the Question around Elliott? It depends entirely on the game. Sometimes, Clues are pouring in, and it can be interesting to bring the Question around Elliott. Especially when the table is proactive. Sometimes, time starts to run out, and then it's really not interesting to add Elliott. At least, mechanically. Add him into the narrative, into the house, but don't add his Question. There's still enough to do.

HERE COMES THE NIGHT

Time in the house is subjective. Follow your own tempo and announce that the sun is setting, then begin the Dusk Phase. Ask the players to answer the Question with the Clues they have. To make the Night Phase easier, also ask them to think about what else they need to do in the house: a ritual to repel evil? Communicate with Elliott? This will help you later.

Next, play the Tape. In the Rappaports' living room. Do Latchkeys only show up at the house in the evening (because they're visiting the library or surfing the internet)? Ask them what they're bringing for dinner!

Before playing the tape, ask each player what they plan to do during the Night Phase. One action will suffice! Here's an example. Two Latchkeys decide to take care of a ritual in the house. One prepares the materials, the other will perform it. Another Latchkey decides to talk to Elliott to convince him to leave the premises with them, and a last one finishes exploring the basement where they saw something reminding them of their childhood.

Set those actions up in advance. Then introduce the Tape and its first prompt. Start each player's scenes. Have one of them (two, maximum) roll the dice for what they want to accomplish. Make the other play how they're preparing their actions. Regarding a Night Move, you can already state "It's worse than that", then hold on to the roll for after the Tape. Try to factor in who is answering a prompt in regards to playing scenes.

Then return to the Tape, and continue alternating between the Tapes and action in the House. The example in the rulebook is a very good example of pacing. It's night, don't skip on the "It's worse than that." Get nasty. Get creative. Some players won't hesitate to lose their characters if you offer them a nice way out. A possession will always be more fun than a simple death.

Ideally, if a ritual is taking place, don't conclude it until the final prompt on the tape, and then play the epilogue. The Latchkeys on the lawn, watching the house burn (burning the house down is a great ritual), as Elliott appears next to them—it's a great ending scene.

And then, move on to the debrief. Yes, even at conventions, I set up a Stars & Wishes. To demonstrate the tool, and to imagine (via Wishes) what could happen next, what we'd like to see next. Then, as everyone is ready to leave, hit them with the Big Man's Stinger Scene. Smile, and thank everyone.

THE BIG MAN

Should you put the Big Man in motion before the Stinger Scene? I don't think so. It could derail the story and focus of the players and characters. Use him with caution.



SOME MORE THINGS

Alternate scenes between characters, cutting regularly, so that no one is left out of the conversation for too long. Pace everything, and don't worry too much about time in the story. Yes, some actions may take longer than others, but everyone will end up in the same place for the finale.

Be generous and distribute Conditions. You won't have time to play a Cozy/Nostalgic Move, but that shouldn't stop you from playing with Conditions. And be inventive with your Conditions. One too many mimosas. Chuck(s). You're on my list! Rotten Fish Perfume.

Don't describe Crowns/Keys until you have to use them. At the first failure (6-), go for it hard on the character. Then offer the player the option of rewinding using a Crown/Key. This is the best time to describe this mechanic.

If the number of Clues stagnates, provide more on a 10+ during a Day/Night move. And even more on a 12+. This will help move the game forward.

CONCLUSION

The One-Shot problem with Brindlewood Bay and Public Access can sometimes rely on game economics. Crowns/Keys are abundant, and players could use them at each roll just to succeed. Yes, it could happen. Nobody here's trying to break the game or to "win". You're all around the table to have fun. Remind everyone of that.

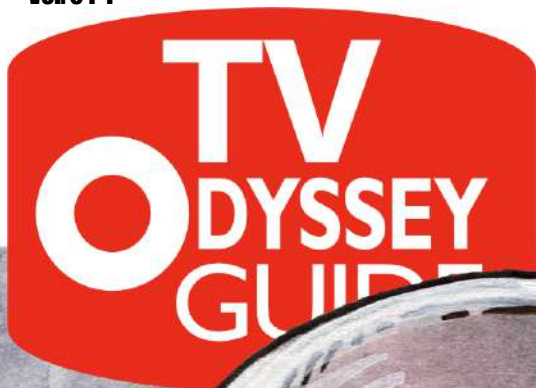
The pacing can be frantic, and your main job will be to take notice of the clock, and to not let scenes run too long. Explain that to players. Yes, it could be cool to have an open discussion on the couch between two Latchkeys about who between Jean-Claude Van Damme and Michael Myers would beat the shit out of the other. It would be a great Nostalgic Move. But we're on a schedule here, sorry mates.

Don't say too much about the weird and strange stuff, especially after the stinger scenes. Let that sink in their minds. Tell them they need to come back to Brindlewood Bay/Degoya County to find out more about what is happening.

Try to have fun, you're a player like the others. If everyone leaves with a smile, you've done your job.



Welcome to Deep Lake



- ☐ There once was a town called Deep Lake
Where locals had a stake
- ☐ In TV stations for sure
And maybe much more
- ☐ But something was sure to break
- ☐ TV Odyssey had a place
Where they rented to locals the space
- ☐ For taping of shows
But as you know
Things changed in quite a haste
- ☐ The channel disappeared
(Many people thought it weird)
- ☐ The station did too
And now you
- ☐ Must face what you have feared

POEM BY REBECCA HALL BIG MAN BY TESS FOWLER

Cassidy Hadlock, Cross-stitched Fanny Pack, 2025



Katas



Keepers

By Pat Eyster

Like a lot of Keepers, I sometimes struggle on responding to character actions in the moment. I know what I want to say, but I freeze up or stumble through the scene. The interaction often goes like this:

Nettle (a thief): *I'm approaching the door carefully, looking for anything that might be amiss. I roll a 2, that's a hit.*

Me (the GM): *You find a trap. It's, umm... (rereads notes) maybe a... hmm... oh! The rocks above the door look unsafe...*

It's frustrating and anxiety doesn't help. I want to get better, not just for my players, but so I can enjoy running games more. Luckily, there's a way to improve. You can rehearse this kind of interaction ahead of time. Martial artists call this a kata, a sequence practiced over and over to build fluidity and confidence. Jazz musicians and programmers do it, too. Katas for Keepers can help you build improvisational skills through low-pressure, repeatable exercises. These katas aren't about performance; they're about practice. No audience, and no managing a full session. The more you rehearse, the easier, faster, and more fun GMing becomes at the table.

To the right is the setup for a simple kata from my zine, *It's Worse Than That!*



Theme - Resurgence or Consumption

Several hours before dawn, the Latchkeys sneak around the empty fairground. Maia watches a skeletal figure rise from the bubbling depths of the industrial fryer in the Fried HoHo stand as a cloud of rancid grease blankets the air. Its hollow eyes burn with cold hunger.

The player says, "I'm going to try to knock the supports out from the awning and trap Mr. Bones in the kitchen."

The Keeper responds, "I think you're making the Night Move. What are you afraid will happen if you fail?"

Player: "I'll be trapped with the skeleton and we'll both be swimming in hot grease."

How do you make it worse than that?

"It's worse than that: you'll be trapped under the awning, swimming in that hot grease, but the skeleton will be free. It will fling hot grease on the other Latchkeys and jump into an attack."

Why don't you give it a try? How would you make the situation worse? Take a couple of minutes and try it once or twice, then come back to this article.

There are a lot of mechanics, like the Night Move kata above, and a lot of situations in gaming that can be fashioned into these simple exercises.. You can practice them whenever you have a little downtime, maybe while riding public transit, during a break in your prep, or even just before your game. Recently, I tried it as an opening to a game session, asking each player to answer. Here are a few, each with a sample exercise you can try.

Devil's Bargains

A Devil's Bargain is something that a player can ask for to gain an advantage on a roll if they accept the given bargain. The bargain will happen regardless of the success or failure of the roll. A common example is a PC trying to leap over a wide chasm: the offered bargain is that, regardless of the roll, the character's sword will be lost down the chasm. If the roll is successful, they lose their grip on the sword and it clatters into the chasm as they leap across. If the roll fails, they don't make it across and, with the Devil's Bargain, the sword tumbles down into the depths with them.

Here's an example from an upcoming *It's Worse Than That!* zine:

Setting: A large Victorian city or a burgeoning spaceport

Arik (a brawler) and Sosh (a burglar) have been hired to retrieve a painting stolen from their patron. They're in a nicer neighborhood than they're used to and think they've located the painting.

The two friends approach the back of the warehouse where they believe the stolen painting is hidden. They've seen watchmen patrolling the building and heard the sounds of guard animals inside. They find the back door locked. Sosh decides to pick the lock. Finding the lock more complex than expected, Sosh's player would like a Devil's Bargain to sweeten the odds.

What Devil's Bargain would you offer to Sosh's player?

Describe a Location

This one is pretty simple: take a location from a published adventure or a setting you've written and describe it as though your players had just entered. This is something that you do all the time at the table. This kind of practice is especially nice because you can use locations that are in the adventure you're going to run next, which gives you rehearsal with the skill and the locations the PCs are likely to see.

Here's an example from a room I wrote for *Beneath Ahknoor*:

Narrow, high-ceilinged hall. A long, ink-stained table centered between the walls. A few black tipped quills and several torn sheets of parchment scattered on the floor.

Imagine that your players have kicked down the door to enter the room. These details can get you started with a description while allowing you the freedom to adapt it to your players' approach. How would you describe it to them if a group of inky shadows were flitting about, ready to attack? What if the PCs came back and entered through a different entrance?



Paint the Scene Questions

These are normally asked of players, but they're a great chance to improvise a response for Keepers, too. If you're looking for a kata to use as a session starter, Paint the Scene Questions are a good one. If you're doing it on your own, try chaining a couple of responses together, each building on the previous one.

Here's a question for the room described on the last page:

Paint the Scene: *How do you sense the dedicated labor of those who once worked here and what labor or love have you left behind for a more selfish pursuit?*

Given your room description, or the description seed, how would you answer this as a brave adventurer exploring the dungeon?



Spark Tables

Spark tables are one or more tables that you roll on to give you an idea. They are a great tool for GMs looking for an idea, but they can be difficult to interpret in the moment. They might look like:

1	Building	Out of Place
2	Traveler	Hidden
3	Wolf	Waterlogged
4	Path	Bright
5	Book	Stolen
6	Boat	Shadowed

You might roll “wolf” and “building” or “book” and “waterlogged.” It's your job to apply these to the event that caused you to roll on the table..

Here's an example of a spark table being used in-game, built into an exercise:

Jerz and Mikkell are on an air skimmer, trying to outrun the corporate police who spotted them trying to sneak into the new floors being built atop the Weyland-Yutani Corporate offices. Jerz says they're ducking into an alley.

You roll on the alley spark table to get some ideas about the alley and get: “Glittering” and “Dark.”

How would you describe this alley?

Wrapping Up

You might think it's odd that I'm not giving any instructions about how to answer. That's intentional. You don't need to know how a mechanic works to get the benefit of these exercises. You aren't learning how to GM a specific game. You are exercising your creative muscles. You might also decide that there are other mechanics or situations that make sense for you to use as katas. You know your table and your strengths and weaknesses better than anyone. The key here is identifying the kinds of moments where you struggle, maybe describing combat or handling a failed check. Then, you can create a simple template for those kinds of situations and fill out the template with examples from your own game(s). Once you're feeling comfortable with these simple templates, you can start swapping out elements.

For example, if I have trouble describing combat, I might think about PCs in my game. I want to focus on different kinds of combat, so I choose Barrus (a stealthy backstabber), Kort (a brute), and Pefrit (a spellcaster). I could write a little template like:

(Barrus, Kort, or Pefrit) (kills, attacks, is attacked by, or is killed by) a (tomb robber, skeleton, giant corpse ant, or wight)

This gives me a number of simple situations to describe. Since I can imagine how Barrus, Kort, and Pefrit act in-game, I can practice describing these kinds of situations. In imagining and describing scenarios that are likely to come up in a regular game, I've set myself up to narrate them more effectively and smoothly when similar events come up at the table.

I try to do a couple of katas whenever I sit down to prep. I also do three or four just before a game.

You could create a kata journal where you record some of your best responses—you may even find yourself using them in games. Here are three good reflection questions you can ask yourself:

- Did I lean on the familiar or try something new?
- What emotion does this response evoke?
- Why do I like this response?

Here's a five-day challenge you can try.

Day 1 - Create two or three responses to a Devil's Bargain request. Record your favorite and answer the journal questions above about it.

Day 2 - Pick a mystery from this volume of S&K, describe two locations from it based on the short location descriptions, and answer the Paint the Scene for each.

Day 3 - Take 7 minutes to pick a scenario and describe it by rolling on the spark table as many times as you can.

Day 4 - Create two or three responses to a Devil's Bargain request. Record your favorite and answer the journal questions about it.

Day 5 - Take 5 minutes to pick a scenario and describe it by rolling on the spark table as many times as you can. Think about how this went on Day 3 and whether today felt more comfortable, more productive, more creative, etc.

I hope you try using katas. You'll find your ability to improvise responses getting stronger over time—and that will bump up the fun at your table!

Public Access - Deep Lake Calling

Alternate Styles & Takes You Back Items by Charlie Etheridge-Nunn

When my friends and I first played Brindlewood Bay, we realised we didn't have as much context for several of the looks. Public Access is similar, and while characters have to come from Deep Lake, there are some ways to allow UK influences to creep in.

Why pick UK items?

- Your family moved to Deep Lake - A parent remarried to someone in Deep Lake, a job opportunity opened up for one or more of your parents, you had to move in with a distant relative after a tragedy.
- You were an exchange student - You spent a short amount of time in Deep Lake, but it affected you.
- You're an Anglophile - You're never too young to be a hipster and something from the UK interested you. Possibly take a mix of UK and US-based nostalgic items or all UK items if you're hardcore.

Things that Take You Back

Art Attack, Bamboozle!, Bananaman, Blue Peter, Butlins, Charles & Di's Wedding, Chucklevision, The Clangers, Commodore 64, Danger Mouse, Dennis the Menace, Doctor Who, Eastenders, Edd the Duck, The Family Ness, Football, Funhouse, Georgie Racer, Glastonbury, Grange Hill, Great Storm of 1987, John Craven's Newsround, Nightmare, Maid Marian and Her Merry Men, The Miners' Strike, Public Information Films, Rainbow, Scouts, The Sooty Show, Supergran, Trap Door, Widespread Unemployment, Wurzel Gummidge.

Styles 2004

Unnecessarily long necklaces, glittery scarves, Ted Baker, Pobs (posh bobs), drainpipe jeans, Topman three-button t-shirts, ironed straight hair, indie sleaze, flat cap, tassel trousers, football tops, waistcoat, patterned flannel shirts, fauxhawk, tall spiky hair.

An Outsider's Guide to UK Nostalgic Items from the 1980s

Art Attack - Neil Buchanan summons a horde of children to make large, public works of art, while a stone bust of a puppet provides humorous recaps.

Bamboozle! - Multiple choice text games accessible through "Teletext" with basic images and the "Boozler" family, using your remote control and launching new questions each week.

Bananaman - Comic and cartoon featuring Eric the Wimp, who turns into the powerful buffoon, Bananaman, whenever he eats a banana.

Blue Peter - Children's variety show with rogue animals, crafts, and endless amounts of sticky-backed plastic.

Butlins - A holiday camp with activities for all the family and all the appeal of a prison camp.

Charles and Di's Wedding - A televised royal wedding, leading to every grandparent's home being filled with chintzy memorabilia for years to come.

Chucklevision - Paul and Barry Chuckle are two moustachioed, middle-aged men who get up to slapstick mishaps as they try to accomplish building work. "To you!" "To me!"

The Clangers - Pink, long nosed moon creatures who speak only in whistles. An old, short show, but re-aired often.

Commodore 64 - Waggle your joystick and get ready to wait awhile when you load up a game on cassette. See also ZX Spectrum for the same with half the colours and Amiga for the hi-tech world of floppy discs.

Danger Mouse - The coolest cartoon mouse, complete with eyepatch, fast car, and hamster sidekick. He lived in a red pillar box and regularly foiled the plans of the evil Baron Silas Greenback.

Dennis the Menace - Not the American character, but a spiky-haired delinquent in a stripy jumper, bullying wimps and accompanied by his dog, Gnasher.

Doctor Who - The love of nerdy children in the UK, an alien traveller in time and space with several companions. This time saw the friendly Fifth Doctor, the alienating Six Doctor, and the whimsical schemer of the Seventh Doctor before its eventual cancellation.

EastEnders - Every Tuesday and Thursday, a soap opera showing the oft-miserable lives of residents of fictional Walford and the Queen Vic pub. See also Coronation Street.

Edd the Duck - An anarchic, bright yellow duck with a green mohawk and leather jacket. Co-host of multiple children's shows despite communicating only in quacks.

The Family Ness - Scottish cartoon in which Elspeth and Angus MacToot summon one of several dozen Nessies using their Thistle Whistles.

Football (Soccer) - A regular childhood obsession. Liverpool dominated the leagues, despite some defeats by Arsenal. Argentina knocked England out of the World Cup and nearly a hundred people were crushed to death in the Hillsborough Disaster.

Fun House - Pat Sharp, along with his blond mullet and twin cheerleaders Melanie and Martina, encourage teams of children to go through messy games, kart races, and an obstacle course.

Geordie Racer - A gritty drama about "Spuggy", a child getting into raising and racing pigeons. Part of the Look and Read dramas.

Glastonbury - Annual music festival aimed at adults, but with spaces for children to occupy themselves. A flood of tents and mud. See also WOMAD & Earth Spirit.

Grange Hill - Children's drama in a comprehensive school, covering bullying, drugs, racism, teen pregnancy, and an incredibly catchy theme tune. See also Byker Grove.

The Great Storm of 1987 - A night of winds up to 217 km an hour affecting England and France. Cut power, felled trees, and wrecked homes. Famously misdiagnosed as a false alarm by weatherman Michael Fish.

John Craven's Newsround - A serious news show for serious children. The first British news show to report the Challenger explosion and assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II.

Knightmare - A game show hosted by "Treguard", in which one child dons a helmet they can't see out of and their friends guide them through all manner of fantasy-themed puzzles featuring actors and special effects. Oooh, nasty...

Maid Marian and Her Merry Men - Live action, comedy show in which Maid Marian is the one competent member of the Merry Men, having to deal with Robin Hood's vanity and the Sheriff of Nottingham played by the beloved actor Tony Robinson.

The Miners' Strike - Eleven months of strikes as coal miners protested the closure of their pits. Included marches, public support, and the eventual closure still happening, causing widespread poverty in mining towns.

Public Information Films - Traumatic short films shown in schools, including children losing their legs to a train, getting electrocuted by masts or substations, drowning in lakes, and a cartoon, ginger cat called "Charley" warning about danger.

Rainbow - A trio of puppets: Zippy is naughty with a zip for a mouth to shut him up, George is a shy hippo, and Bungle is a massive clumsy bear. They get up to mischief with one of several human hosts or singing trio Rod, Jane, and Freddy.

Scouts - The Scouts (and Guides for girls) organisations provides children a way to learn wilderness skills...or go feral together in the woods. See also Woodland Folk for families with more "sensitive" children.

The Sooty Show - Matthew Corbett suffered through the mischief of a trio of glove puppets: Sooty the mute bear magician, Sweep, a dog who squeaks relentlessly, and Soo, a panda who can talk and actually tries to be responsible.

SuperGran - What if a grandmother was also a superhero? A live action children's show and multiple computer games.

Trap Door - Don't you open that trap door! Berk is the long-suffering claymation servant of "The Thing Upstairs".

Widespread Unemployment - Unemployment peaked in 1984 at almost 12% or 3.2 million people, mainly in Northern Ireland, The North (an area between Scotland and the Midlands with contentious boundaries), Midlands, Wales, and Scotland as industrial jobs are increasingly shut down.

Wurzel Gummidge - The adventures of a living scarecrow played by former Dr. Who, Jon Pertwee. He has adventures in Ten-Acre Field and is infatuated with a living doll from a fairground.



The Harrowing by Thwhalee

If you're looking to score your Public Access game, add a chilling edge to your actual play, or just want something unsettling in your headphones, sound designer and composer Thwhalee has conjured something for you.

Known for the harrowing soundtrack to the 2025 Ennie-nominated Crown of Salt by Tania Herrero, Thwhalee's latest track is a dark ambient descent inspired by urban legends, horror stories, and internet folklore. Expect detuned pianos, ghosted vocal samples dropped three octaves deep, playground noise turned sinister, and distortion-drenched layers that feel like the music itself is haunted. It's nasty in all the right ways—drone-heavy, spatially warped, and anxiety-inducing—until, suddenly, a groove cuts through the dread. Briefly. Then it's back under.

The folder includes layered instrument tracks, so you can mix it to your scene's needs.

[Check out the music files here!](#)

Please credit [Thwhalee](#) and [link to their YouTube!](#)

Barker Chow

Made with Peanut Butter Cookies



Barker Chow Ingredients

- ❑ *A bunch of small peanut butter cookies (SEE RIGHT SIDEBAR)*
- ❑ *1 cup peanut butter*
- ❑ *6 oz almond bark (could substitute 1 cup white chocolate chips or peanut butter chips)*
- ❑ *4 cups rice chex*
- ❑ *1 cup mini marshmallows*
- ❑ *About 2 cups powdered sugar*

Barker Chow Instructions

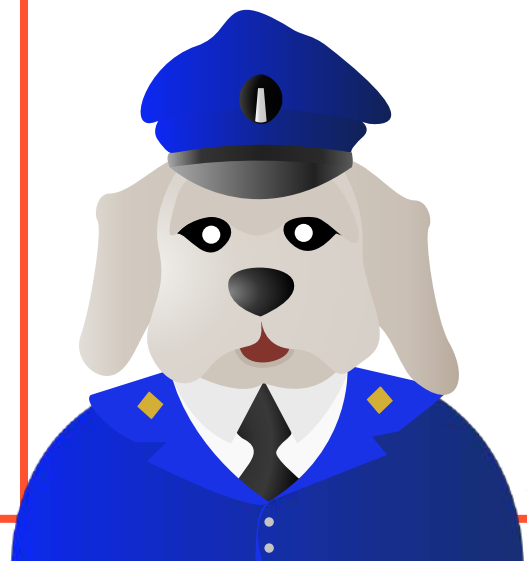
1. Microwave the peanut butter and almond bark in a large bowl until melted and hot.
2. Gently mix in the rice chex until fairly evenly coated. Then add the marshmallows and let them melt while you mix it in.
3. Add the chex mixture to a large ziploc with the powdered sugar and shake to coat. Alternatively, mix the powdered sugar and chex mixture in the bowl. Add additional powdered sugar as necessary.
4. Add the cookies. Enjoy! Dog Tells You To.

Peanut Butter Cookie Ingredients

- ❑ *1/2 cup peanut butter*
- ❑ *1/2 cup butter*
- ❑ *1/2 cup brown sugar*
- ❑ *1/2 cup granulated sugar*
- ❑ *1 egg*
- ❑ *1 teaspoons vanilla extract*
- ❑ *1/2 teaspoon baking powder*
- ❑ *1 1/2 cups flour*

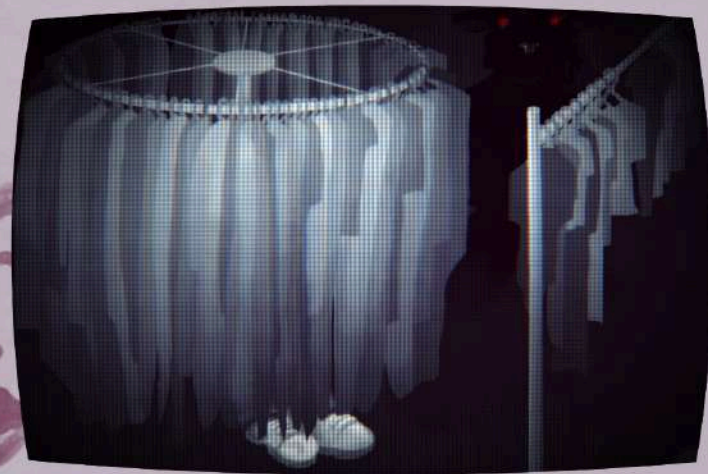
Peanut Butter Cookie Instructions

1. Cream the peanut butter, butter, and sugar together. Add the egg and mix just until combined. Do the same with the vanilla.
2. Mix the baking powder and flour in a separate bowl. Gradually add to the butter mixture. Mix until just combined; careful not to over-mix.
3. Cover cookie dough and chill for 30 minutes to an hour. Roll out on a counter dusted with powdered sugar. Cut out using a small cookie cutter, a little dog bone is what I used.
4. Bake for about 10 minutes at 350 F or until the bottoms are just starting to get golden brown. Let cool on a cookie rack.



Recipe by Cassidy Hadlock

REED'S DEPARTMENT STORE
GREAT!
DEEP LAKE, NM ##/##
YOUR NAME 24.9
THERE IS NO TUSHY



REED'S POCKET THINGS - SNAED

People & Places of Degoya County

- Written by Pat Eyler -

Pack Rat's Thrift Store

Converted gas station and mini-mart. The floor-to-ceiling windows are painted over in cloudy white. The store's name is hand-lettered in large, black letters. It seems like it's been here forever.

Dilapidated racks along the outer walls hold poorly sorted clothing. Tables are piled with books, CDs, dishes, and small appliances. A single cash register is near the front door. A turntable plays classic rock all day, every day.

Paint the Scene: *When you shopped here as a kid, you found something amazing. What was it and why did you have to hide it from your parents?*

A surprise at Pack Rat's: *When a Latchkey searches the store, make the Meddling Move with Vitality or Reason. On a success, they find a Clue. On a 7-9, also take the Condition: **Thrifting**. On a miss, a Side Character from a current or future mystery sees you shopping here: take the Condition: **[The Side Character] thinks less of you**.*

Trey Marcos

Owner. Heavy set. Unkempt grey beard and hair. Wears faded concert shirts. Trey thinks customers get a sense of discovery by finding things in the disorganized clutter that fills the store. Given the slightest urging, he'll happily join in the search.

Quote: *"A book on local history? Yeah, I'm sure we've got one here somewhere. Let's see, you look by that mixer over there. I'll check the stuff that just came in."*

Skitch

Trey's teenage assistant. Bright Janey Meetpackers t-shirt with a Hampton logo on the front. iPod and headphones shield them from customer questions while they do busywork around the store. They're observant and overhear lots of gossip—a good source of local information, once a Latchkey gets past their introversion.

Quote: *"Look, I just work here. Trey wants this stuff put out for customers tonight, I gotta get it done, not stand around talking to everyone who walks into the store."*

Lara Young

Committed thrifter. Faded jeans. Bright crop top. Woven mesh bag, loaded with her latest finds. Moves slowly from rack to table, searching intently. A brief gasp of joy and surprise when she finds something and tucks it into her bag.

Quote: *"You just never know what you'll find, you know? That's why I love Pack Rat's so much. It's like they have a connection to me. I always find what I'm looking for when I stop here - even if I didn't know I was looking for it."*

The Beef-n-Brew

Run-down roadhouse serving burgers and La Fresca Brewery beers. Regular deliveries from La Fresca bring rumors alongside beer, fresh beef, and produce. Dark wood inside and out. Out-of-balance wooden picnic tables covered with cheap plastic tablecloths. Years of french fries and grilled burgers paint the air so thickly you can taste them. The clacking of pool balls from the back room feels like the heartbeat of the dining area.

Paint the Scene: *What local favorite isn't listed on the menu, but gets ordered constantly anyway? Why do you always order it or why do you never order it when you come here?*

*(If **Lilac Street Lotaburger** is active or already resolved): While the food here is a step up from most fast food, how does it not quite measure up to the Lotaburger?*

Marsha Bauman

The owner and line cook keeps an eye on the place from the grill and fry station behind the counter. In her 50s. Tightly curled black hair, tucked under a hairnet. A spattered apron, monogrammed with BnB.

Quote: *"We grind our own beef. Buy it local. It makes a difference. My burgers are a whole 'nother thing from those pucks they sell at every fast food place around here and everywhere else."*

Brenda Smith

Brassy, outgoing server, 40-something. Reddish-blond hair pulled back in a tight ponytail. Seems to know everyone and calls them by name. Always moving. Observant, she's there to refill your drinks just as you notice you're empty.

Quote: *"Honey, we card everyone here, nothing personal. Besides, in a few years, you'll think it's a compliment. Heaven knows I love it when someone asks for mine. Now, I'd get you a menu but we all know you'll be getting the special, it's called that for a reason. Hank has been getting it every day for the past ten years and so long as he keeps ignoring his doctor's orders, he should be another two to four."*

Hank Degraw

White-haired, retiree. Denim overalls, green "Nothing Runs Like A Deere" cap. Always nursing a cup of coffee. Reading the obituaries in the Degoya Daily News.

Quote: *"Every day I gotta check and make sure I'm still alive. Things ain't been the same since I sold my place. I still get up early, but I ain't out on a tractor all day anymore. But you don't wanna hear an old man's problems. What do you wanna know?"*

Welcome Page

Local Obituaries

City of Deep Lake



City of Devilwood

City of La Fresca

Recent Photos

Arroyo Overlook State Park

Small, paved parking lot. A dumpster and Port-a-potties line one side, the smell of garbage and septic chemicals wafts across the lot. Signboard with park rules on one side and faded graffiti on the other. Three steel structures with tiled roofs shade picnic tables overlooking a deep, dry riverbed. Empty cans and bottles are nestled on the dry, reddish dirt of the canyon, clumps of tumbleweed nestle against its walls.

Paint the Scene: *You've heard stories about how dangerous the arroyo is when it rains. What story did your parents tell you to scare you away from playing here? Did it work?*

Spend the Night: *A Latchkey who spends the night at the park may clear a Condition. If they have no Conditions, they may take the Condition: **A Night Under the Stars**, which can be removed to take advantage on a roll. Once used it is cleared.*

Brin Dalrymple

Crisp State Parks uniform. Short blonde hair under a Smokey Bear-style ranger hat. Breaks for lunch in the parking lot. Drives a large white pickup with "New Mexico State Park Service" emblazoned on the doors. Carries lunch for two, in case she finds someone who looks hungry. A good source of information about what's going on outside the towns and cities of Degoya County.

Quote: *"My boss doesn't like it when folks loiter here, but it's so peaceful I just don't have the heart to kick them out. Besides, they're not doing any harm, are they? What brings you to the arroyo today?"*

Tomás Agular

Slender Latino. Grey hair and wrinkled skin. Jeans and a stained white t-shirt. A thin cigarillo dangles from his lips. Sits on a lawn chair next to an older hatchback that's seen better days. The hatch is up, revealing open-topped boxes and a scale. A hand-lettered sign advertises, "Piñón - local - best prices"

Quote: *"I don't get into the city. I like it out here, in the bosque, or up in the montañas. It's quiet. Too much noise in the city. Too many people."*

Augusta "Gussy" Filbert

Teenager. Cape dress and bonnet. Long red hair, pulled back. No makeup. Sits at a shaded picnic table, watching the parking lot and picking at a sandwich on homemade bread. An old-looking bike propped nearby.

Quote: *"No sir, Everything is fine. My father said I was to meet him at the park today, I brought his lunch. I'm sure he will be here soon."*

Desert Moon Inn

Sun-faded sign overlooks a sagebrush-lined parking lot and a run-down motel. Neon lights flicker at night. Turquoise paint peels from the motel building. The doors to the room are painted white with big, brass numbers. A bell chimes as you enter the lobby - dull vinyl flooring, a vending machine, ice maker, and coffee urns sit on one side. The check-in desk is vacant, though a bell sits atop the counter with a sign "Ring for Attn." written in black marker.

Paint the Scene: *Things happened in several of the rooms that now guests won't stay in any of them. The owners have stopped trying to book people in them. What happened in these rooms and why won't guests stay the night?*

What Happened at The Desert Moon Inn: *A Latchkey who spends the night at the motel may roll with Composure to find a Clue related to a current or future mystery. It cannot resolve a question on its own. On a success, they find a clue; on a 7-9, they also take the Condition: **I Can't Unsee It** (What did you see in the Motel?); on a miss, there is no clue.*

If you're using the Skinny Jeans rules, on a **12+** the clue can be used for the TV Odyssey Mystery.

Tab Marris

Day Manager. 30's, finishing a degree online. Glasses, gaunt, prematurely grey. Tan slacks and a teal polo shirt. Textbook highlighter, and index cards are always near to hand.

Quote: *"Just a sec. I gotta finish this note. Ok, there. Now, what can I do for you?"*

Quinn Thompson

Night Manager. Early 20s. Green hair, green eyes, sapphire nose jewel. Tattoos extend past the cuffs of their shirt sleeves.

Quote: *"Weird stuff happens here all the time. I'm not supposed to say anything about it, but we had to close another room last week. Someday, we're going to have to reopen them, or there won't be anywhere for guests."*

Dex Ward

Housekeeping and maintenance. Late 20s. Jeans, button-up shirt with "Handyman" logo, toolbelt, and Albuquerque Isotopes baseball cap. Baseball bat tucked in with tools on cleaning cart - Dex isn't afraid to use it. A good source of gossip about sports and fitness in the area.

Quote: *"Yeh, I tried out, but I can't hit that curveball. I got season tickets though. The new third baseman, he can't hit the curve either. They shoulda signed me."*

DUDE! THIS VIDEOTAPE IS HAUNTED AS F

a roll table for PUBLIC ACCESS

By Michael Van Vleet

Roll d10	The Label Says...	It's so weird, I found it in...	You wanna watch it? It's sick, when you play it...
1	<i>"EVIDENCE: DO NOT DISCARD - Case File 9911282"</i>	A car the cops were auctioning off	You'll feel your teeth get, like... loose
2	<i>"I'M SORRY"</i>	A box of stuffed animals at the thrift store	All the dogs in the neighborhood howl
3	<i>"THE KEY 5:12 - COPY FIRST"</i>	My mailbox, and not even in an envelope	It'll make every lightbulb in the room burn out
4	<i>"NO EYE CONTACT"</i>	Behind my bedroom wall... I heard something in there	It'll show you things... real things
5	<i>"DREAMS DREAMS DREAMS DREA—" [unreadable]</i>	The abandoned mall during an urb-ex video shoot	You'll finally have answers, like you've been saying you want
6	<i>"MATT DESTROY THIS"</i>	The pocket of a jacket I haven't worn for years	You have to watch the whole thing
7	<i>"FLETCH LIVES" "Sky Dancers 11.2.86"</i>	With my dad's porn	You can't look away because it won't play right if you do
8	<i>"Nana's Birthday"</i>	Nana's mouth, she was gnawing on it	You can hear Nana's birthday party just like you remember
9	<i>"Pole Align Ritual II Vig. Lanta Le Le"</i>	On the roof	You can remember the way it really happened
10	<i>"WHISPER MAN IT'S OKAY"</i>	A quiet place, where no cars go and the stars go faster	It just plays and you watch and it plays and you watch and—

Because of its position within Public Access as the vanguard of the endgame, concluding The Night of the Bone-Wolves presents an opportunity to reward the Latchkeys with mechanical modifications especially well-suited for the campaign climax. The milestone of completing the Night of the Bone-Wolves also justifies the collection of rewards, though none are detailed in the base game.

REWARDS

- ☐ A memento related to one of the Great Hungers; each Latchkey asks another Latchkey what it is and then adds it to their Corner of the House.
- ☐ Add the following optional prompts to each Latchkey's list of Dawn questions:
 - ☐ Did you articulate a moment of personal revelation?
 - ☐ Did you experience a change of heart?
 - ☐ Did you reveal what you are capable of?
- ☐ Add the following possible Advancement to each Latchkey's list of Advancements:
 - ☐ Once, instead of rolling dice for a move, you may set your dice result to a 9 prior to modification. This Advancement may be claimed multiple times.

REWARDS FOR NIGHT OF THE
BONE WOLVES

26 RODENBECKER STREET PROMPTS

by salty

DOWNSTAIRS

Porch

As you enter 26 Rodenbecker, what makes it feel like entering a film or TV set?

Garage

What in the garage of Rodenbecker Street gives a clue to what happened to the original owners?

Living Room

What souvenir has each Latchkey brought with them to add to the living room? What made them bring it here?

Dining Room

What about the dining room of Rodenbecker Street makes eating here feel quite suspect?

Downstairs

Bathroom

What makes this the best place in the House to get a moment of peace?

Backyard

What memories do you have of playing in Deep Lake as a child? Are they nostalgic, or horrifying?

Cellar/Basement

What in the cellar of Rodenbecker Street makes you think this house is far older than it appears to be?

What items of rubbish in the basement of Rodenbecker Street have been left behind by previous renters? Take an item, describe it, and add it to another Latchkey's Corner of the House. How do they find it?

UPSTAIRS

Master Bedroom

Who has claimed the Master Bedroom? What made you feel like the original family who lived in the House didn't pass peacefully?

En Suite Bedroom

Who settled into the En Suite Bedroom? What did you have to change so you could get a decent night's sleep?

Guest Bedroom

Who feels a little out of sorts in the Guest Bedroom? What decorations make you feel like the House hasn't been changed since TV Odyssey disappeared?

Box Bedroom

Who got saddled with the Box Bedroom? What actually makes it the best room in the house, despite its limited space and the fact you're living out of a suitcase?

Upstairs Bathroom

What do you see in the mirror that makes you feel like you're in an Odyssey Tape?

The Study

What surprising things about Deep Lake is the study equipped for you to learn about?

Once, when you use the Study to investigate matters around Deep Lake, you gain an Odyssey Clue in addition to any other Clues you find.

SPECIAL PROMPTS

Night of the Bone Wolves

How has the home become a fortress? What former touches of the Latchkeys have been lost to preparations?

TV Odyssey/ Final Session

What permanent mark has each Latchkey left on 26 Rodenbecker?

SPECIAL PROMPTS

- ☐ What are each of the Latchkeys' favorite rooms in the House?
- ☐ What is an annoying housemate habit the Latchkey to your right has?
- ☐ Who got here first and what problem with the house did they have to fix before the others arrived?
- ☐ What doesn't quite work right in the House, no matter how much you try to fix it?
- ☐ What does the welcome mat on the porch say?
- ☐ In the evenings, what do the Latchkeys do- if there's not a tape to be watched or mystery to be solved?
- ☐ What mementos are scattered around the house from the dead-ends the Latchkeys pursued prior to receiving the Odyssey Tape?
- ☐ What were each of the Latchkeys' usernames on the Deep Lake forums? What was their last post before they arrived in Deep Lake?
- ☐ What detail of Rodenbecker House changed due to each of the Latchkeys?
- ☐ What was missing when you arrived at the House?
- ☐ When you arrived, what detail about the House made it feel like a home?

DEEP LAKE MISSED CONNECTIONS

written
by

Jellyfishlines
Chaotic Jamgochian
Scout Munroe
Arrianna Abraham
Rachael Jamison
Dori Murdock

FELLOW XXAAGREUS FAN. M4M.

To the man with the homemade XXAAGREUS hat: I saw you waiting outside the La Fresca Mall wearing a Hot Topic tee and jeans. I think I saw you talking with some friends and you looked at me like you knew me. Contact me by going to the nearest small pit to Deep Lake, the holes in the desert, you know the ones.

Latermoore.

LADY WHO I ALMOST HIT WITH MY CAR. M4W

Down by the stop sign by Rodenbecker Street, you just ran out in front of my car without warning. I totally had my eyes on the road despite what the Sheriff said about it. Normally you would use these types of things to find romance and true love, but I understand if you aren't cool with me since you were so wide eyed at me and ran off when the Sheriff showed up. I still have your sun hat. It smells like Chanel No. 5, if that helps with finding me. I normally hang out at 18 Rodenbecker Street.

Ask for Matthew.

Matthew Wright who is always right.

TO THE LADY WHO PAINTED THE PURPLE FOX AT THE LIBRARY PAINT-A-LONG LAST MONTH:

I can't stop thinking about your art. Not because of the fox, but because of those weird cacti that you put in the background. As soon as I saw them, I knew that I'd seen them before, in person, a long time ago. It's not something that I've ever been able to talk about with anyone, but I have this feeling that you'd understand. If you want to talk, I'll be at the next paint-a-long. I'll put a green vulture in my painting so you'll know it's me.

Desert Dreams

A WILD BOWLER HAT. F4?.

I didn't see you, just the bowler hat that dipped around the corner. Who are you exactly? A fan of anachronistic haberdasheries? Just trying to make a strong statement? Srsly though, who wears bowler hats in the year of our Lord [REDACTED]. Deep Lake's gonna Deep Lake I guess. I'll be at the farmer's market next week, if you want to meet by the artisanal cheeses.

Confused Fashionista

MY SHINY GARDEVOIR. A4A

To the person dressed in the Gardevoir cosplay at the 4th of July marathon. Not only was the temperature hot, but seeing you there on that Sunny Day hit me like a Fire Blast. The way the chalk clung to you....making you as colorful as any Rosalia....made me want to know you all the more. Not only that, but your Mean Look your eyes held was a contrast to the smile of utter joy on your face. I choose you, and if you want me on your team, meet me at Deep Lake at 1305. Just call for Spitfire.

Chris Lattimore who Blaziken love you.

TO MY FAN AT THE JUICE BAR

Even though I get recognized everywhere I go because I am so famous, I know lots of important people. Your interaction was one of the best I've ever had, and the drinks were superb. You listened to me and took everything I said to heart. You seriously have a promising career in juicing which I imagine is a very thankless job. Unlike mine, which is to be admired and adored. But you serve it with a smile on your face and a happy disposition. You exhibit the joy of someone who has life figured out. I will, from now on, only order when you are there. I want to feel that joy you have in loving what I do in life. May you keep that joy and never let anyone take it from you.

Love Quash



THE PARTING GOODBYE

BY IRVING
BENITEZ

THE BIG MAN MONOLOGUE

The Big Man appears and he has Sunlight for a face. A brilliant, beautiful, burning plasma. You can feel the heat on your skin. He speaks to you, all of you, then, without a mouth.

"There's always been four things here. Five really.

There is always the land. The land that you call Degoya County, New Mexico, that I call The Land of There, Nowhere, and Beyond What Can Be Felt. It's blessed and sick all at once. Tearing itself apart each night and building itself anew each dawn. That cycle is breaking and I can't fix it. I can't keep the balance any longer.

There is always a door. To where you need to go through and from which you need to leave. People darken doorways they should have never darkened at all. But the human spirit, cursed, blessed, or morbidly curious and even indomitable, made this door home. Some doors can't be reopened again. Some doors you can't go back through.

There is always a signal calling out. The signal from here called you all back. Back home, if you call this place that. There are signals everywhere here, in this place. They call out for and to help, to harm, to distract. Some don't even remember why they're calling.

Those fourth things? Well, they are what answers. They answer the call of the land, the call of the door, the call of the signals. Most people only hear one of these. Y'all hear all of them and y'all answered.

As for myself, I am a fading part of the fifth. I can no longer keep the Great Hungers away in this form. Even appearing to you now is risking what little I have left of myself. Beware the Great Hungers. Beware the one that dubbed itself The Station Manager. It lies at the heart. You have all the keys you will need to enter but you have to find the one to leave once you cross that threshold. Please, go forth brave travelers, fools no longer. I don't know what you are now, but make The World whole."

To all Latchkeys, as he begins to fade away into ether: What does The Big Man say to you that will help you find and navigate TV ODYSSEY?
Add those words to your Corner of the House.

As you all awake, and you all look at your digital clocks.
It's 7:62 AM. It is night. Your analog watches have stopped running.

Somewhere, the TV, that you never plugged back in, is playing the theme songs to TV ODYSSEY programs. There is a set of keys on the table.
Each is labeled with room names and numbers. TVO Set 01, TVO Powder Room 07, TVO Tech Suite 26...
Notably there is a key missing, the label swinging loosely.

TVO SM 000-0.
This is a clue.

What do you do?



Alright, Pause!

or, the approaches to watching Odyssey Tapes and splitting the difference, by Levi Phipps

Odyssey Tapes. They're the foundational mechanic of Public Access, often a standout rule to those first giving it a spin. At times—including in my case—they're the reason new Keepers choose this game over the rest of the Gauntlet catalog or the countless horror games the TTRPG community has to offer. But for something so innovative they're potentially the part of the game that has changed the most over the course of the game's lifetime. Now you may say to me "Levi, certainly the Mysteries have gone through plenty of edits. And with the Skinny Jeans rules set to be the default, the campaign framework has changed tremendously! What the heck are you even talking about?"

First, let me take you back to a simpler time. To a bygone era that a modern audience may struggle to recognize. The year was 2014, Jason Cordova had released a new story game: Public Access. But this was just his first attempt at the idea of investigating a creepy public access TV station. There was nary a Brindlewood to carve from. I read the game's semi-official re-release in Skinny Jeans and Summer Screams. It was a perfectly fine game for 2014 when story games as we know them were barely anything. For our purposes we wanna pay attention to the Before Play Begins section and Parts 2 and 3 of the game's 5-part play structure. Before play begins, the players were to collaboratively construct an unnerving public access kids' show in the vein of Candle Cove. During parts 2 and 3, the players were to decide what odd mystery plagued the show, then go in a circle and describe an episode and collectively decide on Clues from each one. Sound familiar? The game would go on to describe phases in which a "Local" goes around town and discovers these Clues, then the group collectively figures out the solution to the Mystery.

Gosh, I'm really getting a sense of *deja vu* here. Part of the game's problem—which Cordova himself admitted in the April 2023 episode of the Darkened Threshold—is that it wasn't clear who you played and that the TV show and mystery were made ad-hoc, which caused an unusual need for buy-in and "getting started problems." But once the original game's structure was combined with the much more supportive Unscene, the Odyssey Tapes we know and love start taking shape. There was just one simple problem. The Latchkeys have to watch the damn Tapes.

You see, the films and TV shows that can be counted as analog horror will have sequences that alternate between the actual analog media and the lead characters watching it in real time. (If you need further explanation, think *Sinister* [2012] as a primary example.) If it's a solidified genre trope, why the hell not make that a game mechanic? That's the PbtA and CfB staple right? And you know what? Let's call the cuts between the Latchkeys and the Tape prompts "pressing pause/play." In a way, the players are doing the same thing their characters are. Isn't that cool?

Well.....

It's all well and good to see a professional actor show unease, shock, and revulsion in a competently shot film, but it's not the most exciting thing to narrate. And if it's your first Tape, especially if it's the first time you as a player are watching a Tape, it can feel like you're on the spot to be entertaining while the scene that has been set gives you nothing to work with!

This tends to be only true for the first Night Phase or two; as the Latchkeys meddle about Degoya County, they'll find Locations that allow them to watch a Tape there and trigger special rules. It might not be the most engaging role-play to hang out in the same living room you were just eating pizza in, but certainly the haunted house or abandoned rollercoaster can lead to an exciting scene! The Keeper can have Dangers show up and the Latchkeys can split off to collect some Clues!

...Hold on a moment. If everyone's splitting off to do their own thing, who's watching the Tape? If the House on Escondido gives a Clue based off something that a Latchkey didn't see, how do the Latchkeys think that it's relevant? Perhaps they watch the Tape again during the nights that we skip over between Day Phases? But if we have to bend the fiction this far to justify these easily ignored edge-cases that take a really long look at specific rules to notice, let's handwave all of it! In fact, having the Night Phase take place in the special Location is such a restraint anyway! Ya know what, let's smooth this whole thing out entirely! The entire process of watching a Tape? The whole innovation the game came out of? It's all out of character now! That's better, right?

No! No it's not!

We do not need to be terribly strict about this; I'm not demanding you to glue your Latchkeys to the couch at 26 Rodenbecker and painstakingly guide them through a series of horrified expressions and nothing else. In my experience it's very rare that you don't have options. In the more tame cases of Rodenbecker Street or even the empty Escondido, check what Conditions are on the table. Is anyone Marked by Sheriff Hanscom? Perhaps an anonymous tip-true or otherwise-sent the sheriff after them. Is someone Haunted or spooked off by some other inhuman specter? Nothing's kept it from following the Latchkey home. And that's when you have to put in some work for it!

If the crew is going to The Heavenly Descent, it's more likely than not that Starlight Kingdom is still being investigated. If the Latchkey is hanging out in Cassie March's childhood bedroom then Benjamin Castle and Officer Barker are certainly hanging around. It is not hard to make an exciting scene in between Tape prompts. The reins are in your hand. It's leading the horse to the water that's the hard part.

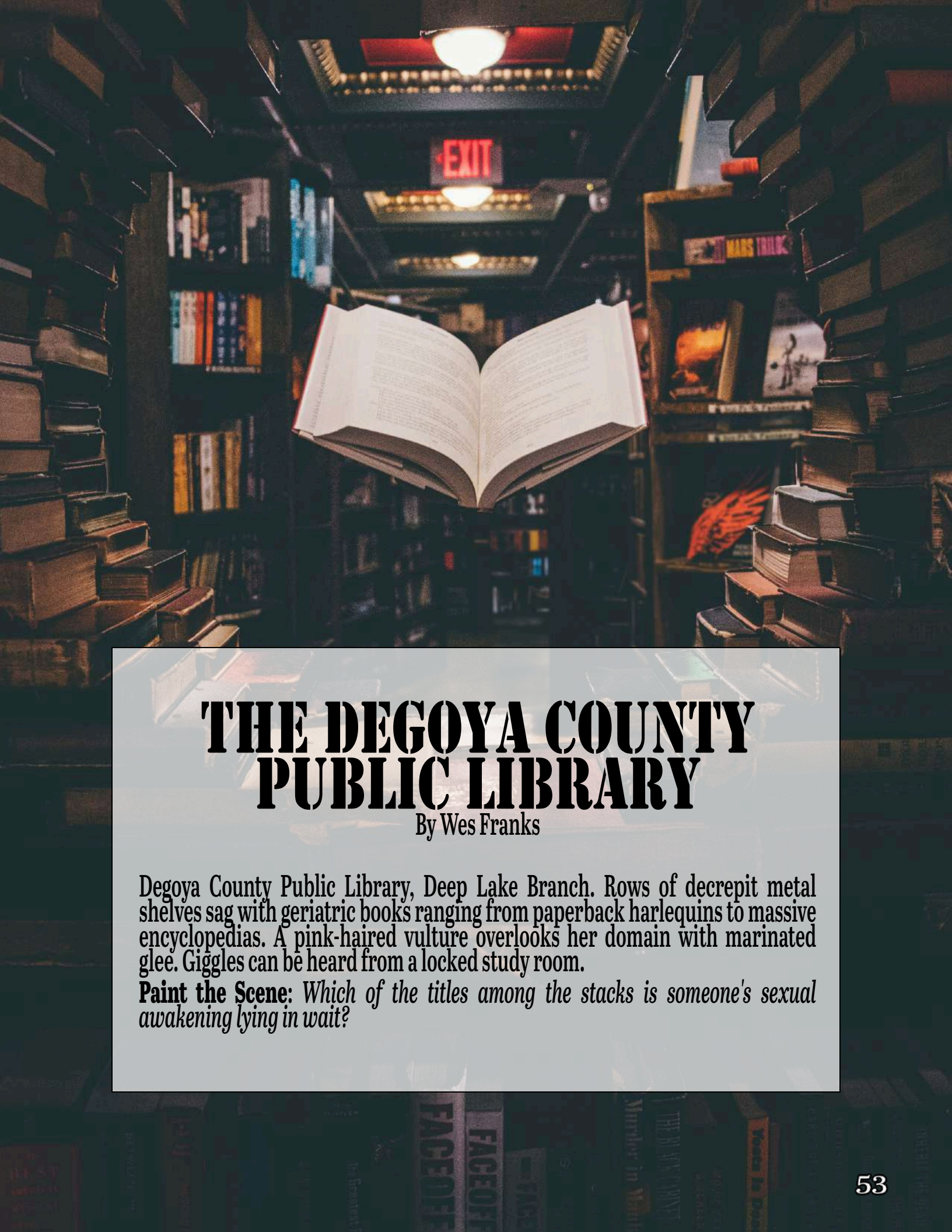
Now what that odd metaphor means is that the Special Rules tied to the Locations are ways for the players to discover new toys: Clues, Conditions, even unique ways to play around with the extant Special Rules. If you choose a particular Mystery you might want to guide your Latchkeys to the special Location, or at least imply above the table that it exists and that there's a new toy to play with. But there's a fear there. There is a fear that if you harp on it too much, that the players will seek out and watch the Tape there out of obligation. That "this is what the Keeper wants us to do." It does not matter what game you are playing. Whether the game is rules-light or crunchy, fantasy, sci-fi, or horror, "this is what the Keeper wants us to do" is a bad feeling for you. It's a bad feeling for the players. It's a bummer. So if you're like me and you do want you and your players to take in as much of the game as you can cram into the campaign structure, you're going to put in a bit of work to be subtle. Like any Location in the game, you're gonna casually mention the different leads the Latchkeys can investigate, "You might be able to check out the abandoned video game studio." You may need to remind them after a few sessions, "There isn't anything more to find in the arcade. You might try the forums or maybe the abandoned video game studio." Then when they do follow the lead, that's when you point out the special Location. "As you walk between the desks, you see a faint blue light coming from a half-open door. As you peek in, you see a break room with a TV/VCR combo mounted to the ceiling. It still works." Then during subsequent Dusk Phases you can list off available Locations with Special Rules that are still active.

You're in the Dusk Phase. The Latchkeys know that they're watching a Tape and where that's happening. You assigned the prompts and called for a break. You're staring at the Mystery sheet and asking yourself "now what?" The guy from the magazine says it's more interesting if you frame a scene at the special Location. Now what? Well, the players have already told you what they plan to do. You have the special Location in your mind, so take your time to describe it. Even if they found it earlier this same session, a few sentences are enough to set the mood a bit. Then ask the player(s) at the special Location what it looks like as they start watching the Tape. Then cut to a Latchkey that isn't in the scene. Again, the Latchkeys don't need to be holding hands like they're coming in from recess. If they all happen to be at that Location anyway, just cut to the Tape. I already pointed out how Conditions are handy prompts and active Dangers can come in when those fail. If those somehow don't apply to the characters watching the Tape, the players are likely to do things that trigger Moves anyway. They might look up Alan Gibson in the phone book and ask him about Officer Barker. They might search the summer camp for the hot counselor they're hoping to hook up with and get told he's in the woods. The Conditions and Dangers can show up on a 7-9 or Miss: just like any other scene.

Let's say you have a Latchkey that is... somehow... content to make some popcorn and watch the Tape anyway. That's fine. Early on that might happen. And guess what? If you began the Night Phase like I suggested: described the space, mentioned the pale blue glow of the screen, reincorporated stuff from a Paint the Scene or even waited until the Night Phase to pose that question... you did it. You set the mood. Like all horror, mood is first and foremost. And when a Tape is the star of the show? You get to let the tension build to be held until another Night.

So if the Latchkeys do find the special Location and watch a Tape there, then treat it as an excuse to celebrate the Mystery! Take a bit of time-if only in the briefest bits of narration-to luxuriate in the fact that the Latchkeys are getting closer to the Mystery by watching VHS Tapes. It is what we are here for. So take the time. Place the tape in the VCR. Press Play.





THE DEGOYA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Wes Franks

Degoya County Public Library, Deep Lake Branch. Rows of decrepit metal shelves sag with geriatric books ranging from paperback harlequins to massive encyclopedias. A pink-haired vulture overlooks her domain with marinated glee. Giggles can be heard from a locked study room.

Paint the Scene: Which of the titles among the stacks is someone's sexual awakening lying in wait?

The Degoya County Public Library Deep Lake Branch Roll Table

Roll	Prompt	Contributor	Roll	Prompt	Contributor
1 1 1	A row of books is sorted not by title, author, or subject, but the colors of a TV Test Card.	Levi Phipps	1 4 1	An empty study room with the detritus of what looks like a baby shower. The decorations are all green or brown.	Sean Tibbitts
1 1 2	The Old Testament - wingdings edition.	Sydney Hawkins	1 4 2	A children's astronomy book: "Our Great Big Galaxy." The interior of both covers have crayon drawings of alien abominations.	Levi Phipps
1 1 3	A copy of The Train to El Paso, its card has been stamped every 6 years.	Arthur Wells	1 4 3	A library poster from the 90s that just says "READ", featuring an established Side Character.	Michael Dürr
1 1 4	A dusty box labeled "Do Not Open Until 2000," found in the back of a storage room.	Clint Smith	1 4 4	A worn, faded copy of <i>Come On In</i> by Cole Livingston. The pages with sex scenes have been dog-eared for future readers.	Wes Franks
1 1 5	<i>The Whately Family in America</i> 1936 edition - includes 2 dozen color plates from photographs.	Pat Eyler	1 4 5	An original copy of Domingo Belasco's <i>Constellaciones inferni</i> (<i>The Constellations of Hell</i>), written in 1662.	Jack
1 1 6	A smelly business card for Luis Fishman - Professional Cave Angler. It works great as a bookmark.	J Evan Parks	1 4 6	A roll of microfilm full of overdeveloped images. The only thing you can make out is the name of a Latchkey's childhood pet, repeated over and over throughout the roll.	Sean Tibbitts
1 2 1	A periodicals request slip for an article from a back issue of Vogue. The words "TV" and "Odyssey" appear in the article's title, but not next to each other. However, both words are underlined.	Sean Tibbitts	1 5 1	A young single mother studies for her Graduate Thesis. Her baby will. Not. Stop. Crying.	Levi Phipps
1 2 2	A pile of Big Bobby Snack Cake wrappers.	Wes Franks	1 5 2	A single brand new, freshly cut key. The tag reads "26 Rodenbecker".	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)
1 2 3	A cassette mixtape called "Top 90s hits", but when you play it, you hear satanic prayers in the loop.	Arek Stefański (Archie)	1 5 3	Empty chocolate bar wrapper, expiry date 07/07/2077.	Amanda Mullins
1 2 4	An activity kit, with a fake skin suture pad covered in tattoos.	G F Greco	1 5 4	An empty pouch of sunflower seeds and a pile of sunflower seed husks under a "NO EATING" sign.	Sean Tibbitts
1 2 5	An ink blotter soaked with blood on the front desk.	Amanda Mullins	1 5 5	A secret garden hidden behind a door drawn in chalk. You see there are three more doors that lead out of the garden.	Arthur Wells
1 2 6	Choose a book on this table (or a book that exists as a Clue.) The last person to have checked it out is the Latchkey's parent or older sibling.	Levi Phipps	1 5 6	A flattened cannabis joint smashed between the pages of an old textbook.	Jack
1 3 1	The library is sponsored by a big corporation - several books include product placement.	Michael Dürr	1 6 1	A CD case for "Feels Like Home" by Nora Jones, inside is a homemade CD labeled, "Whale Song - Deep Lake - 1999"	Pat Eyler
1 3 2	Your elementary school yearbook. There is a student who looks identical to you that you don't remember attending school with.	Jack	1 6 2	Medical notes on the framed cork-board in the library in Deep Lake/or some innocent side character's place with illustrations called "how to amputate a leg/arm?"	Arek Stefański (Archie)
1 3 3	A small, thin book in plain a plain dust jacket. There is no title or name on the cover. When opened, it lists names and dates. The last names in the book are those of the Latchkeys with the year of their birth, the year they left Deep Lake, and "Summer. 2004."	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)	1 6 3	A hallway extends into blackness in an outdoor-facing wall. Paint the Scene: <i>Whose voice do you hear beckoning to you, and why are you tempted to follow it?</i>	Amanda Mullins
1 3 4	A cookbook titled "To Serve Man".	Sean Tibbitts	1 6 4	A business advice book: <i>From Play to Profit: Turning Games into a Successful Career</i> by Noleen Lamb.	Levi Phipps
1 3 5	A button with star stickers covering the outer rim. The image in the middle is a goat's skull.	Clint Smith	1 6 5	<i>Choose Your Own Curses</i> , a series of children's interactive books on how to do black magic with actual rituals and spells.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
1 3 6	A matchbox filled with unlabeled SD cards.	J Evan Parks	1 6 6	A black and white photo that is showing its age. There is a group of four teenagers huddled together and smiling. In the far background stands an abnormally tall person. The back of the photo reads "August. 1954. See you next summer. Love," with the name smeared off.	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)

Roll	Prompt	Contributor	Roll	Prompt	Contributor
2 1 1	A discarded library card for a library located in the Vatican.	Scott C. Bourgeois	2 4 1	A map of the library on the wall that does not correspond to the floor plan of the library, with an entire section of shelves blacked out and marked NO.	Kim Riek
2 1 2	A TV Guide from 1986, but the crossword in the back is entirely made up of clues about your life that happened post 1986.	Kim Riek	2 4 2	Glossy and nicely produced magazines about each of the Deep Lake Odyssey Forum members with their cover photos and nicknames, which list all their humiliating secrets and stories that should never come to light. Each forum member has their own edition of the magazine.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
2 1 3	A-track collection of recipes. Every one of them includes fresh plants and human blood. The result of every recipe is a sentient algae that responds to temperature, moisture and vocal stimulæ.	Blake Ryan	2 4 3	A d4, d6, d8, d10, d12 and d20 set on a rave flyer that says GREETINGS TRAVELER and a local phone number.	Michael Van Vleet
2 1 4	A fantastically vivid storytelling hour in the children's corner. You could swear that characters from the dark fantasy are starting to fade into existence in the stacks- watching, listening, waiting.	salty	2 4 4	A fellow patron of the library, and may even be an old friend of a Latchkey. The Latchkey has never met this person in their life. If questioned, the patron knows some specific details of the Latchkey's childhood. When looked at directly they are a normal patron. When viewed from the corner of a Latchkey's vision, their face appears upside down or smeared like oil pastels.	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)
2 1 5	What appears to be an Odyssey Tape. Someone has recorded a TV broadcast of <i>It's A Wonderful Life</i> over it.	Alton W	2 4 5	A 4x6 card pinned to a board up front reading "ROOMMATES WANTED Must love rats, \$350/mo. rat food rat meetings NO WEIRDOS".	Michael Van Vleet
2 1 6	A game guide for <i>Battle Beasties: Blue Version</i> . The Beastie Tamer on the cover looks suspiciously like a Side Character.	STEPH INFECTION	2 4 6	In a nook, out of sight of the other exits, a well hidden door opens into a small room that should not be there - curtained walls, sconces with lit candles, seating and a 'Wait Here' sign. A tall, brass-trimmed, mahogany desk sits at the far wall, facing the entry.	Pat Eyler
2 2 1	A tattered and beaten up copy of <i>101 Ways to Die</i> , a number of loose leaf papers and post it notes have been added throughout.	Arthur Wells	2 5 1	<i>Understanding Your Changing Body</i> by Dr. Duncan Ellis 5th edition rev. 1976.	J Evan Parks
2 2 2	A desk with a practically ancient computer and a timer set to one hour. A list of blocked websites is plastered on the wall, including the deep lake odyssey web forum.	STEPH INFECTION	2 5 2	Stalactites of old chewing gum can be found under one of the reading desks.	Michael Dürr
2 2 3	A bronze set of keys to a sports car. Hanging of the keys is a white cross keychain with "PESTILENCE" carved into it.	Brian Miranda	2 5 3	In a lugubrious recess, a prodigiously colossal rodent voraciously masticates a thesaurus.	Amanda Mullins
2 2 4	A deep legal analysis of a class action lawsuit alleging nightmarish injuries from the Betty Crocker Bake 'n Fill cake pans, including discussion of the ways it changed the legal system. No other sources have references to this lawsuit.	Nova Wurmsom	2 5 4	It's World Book Day! Everyone in the library is dressed up as their favourite book character.	salty
2 2 5	Two old stamps: one prints the word "CANCELED" while the other prints the word "CANCELLED".	Kirk Damato (kirksays)	2 5 5	A copy of <i>TV Repair for Beginners: 5th Edition</i> by Homer Davidson. Someone has carefully replaced all of the diagrams with dental X-rays.	Cameron L. Summers
2 2 6	Microfiche of heavily redacted articles from the local paper, covering a mysterious citywide calamity from just a few years ago that you have no memory of.	Scott C. Bourgeois	2 5 6	A copy of <i>Dracula</i> , always falling open on the same page. The quote <i>Denn die Todten reiten schnell</i> underlined in red. ("For the dead travel fast.")	Jazy
2 3 1	A book called <i>Water Fowl of Southern New Mexico</i> . The Checkout Card shows that the Latchkey who found the book is the only person to ever check out this book. They've checked it out every year for the last decade, on today's date.	Alton W	2 6 1	A well used porno magazine from 1982 with questionable stains on it, but featuring articles that don't quite match up with real 1982 world events.	Scott C. Bourgeois
2 3 2	The children of Deep Lake Elementary recite their ABCs.	Brian Sago	2 6 2	Lost and Found box. Paint the Scene: <i>What item do you find in the box?</i> Add it to Your Corner of the House.	Amanda Mullins
2 3 3	Bookmark with lunar phases - During the New Moon, you can hear things that were whispered to the author of the book, the bookmark is placed in. During the Full Moon, you can hear things that were whispered to you in the past.	Blake Ryan	2 6 3	A single, purple garlic flower, tucked in a cracked open window that won't ever quite close.	Jazy
2 3 4	A manila envelope of seeds, labeled "Roses, by way of Ynn - DO NOT PLANT".	Kevin Macku	2 6 4	<i>Undeniable: The Life and Lies</i> of Beryl Blakely. The biography is marked with a peacock-blue lipstick kiss.	Cassidy Hadlock
2 3 5	A copy of <i>Leonard Maltin's TV Movies & Video Guide 1989</i> that includes reviews for sequels that don't exist for hundreds of classic movies.	Devin R Bruce	2 6 5	A painting of 1800s London stands out among the other works on the walls. If you look close enough, you see a woman in a carriage with a brilliant blue sapphire around her neck staring back at you.	Billy Lingar
2 3 6	A copy of <i>Love's Labour's Won</i> by William Shakespeare. Autographed.	Scott C. Bourgeois	2 6 6	You find a Big Man somewhere in the library and he says "It might surprise you but I never gonna give you up, never gonna let you down, never gonna run around and desert you...". Take the Condition: Rickrolled by Big Man.	Arek Stefański (Archie)

Roll	Prompt	Contributor	Roll	Prompt	Contributor
3 1 1	An ad for a transcendental meditation group, handwritten on looseleaf paper. The same ad had been tucked into every book on the MYSTERIES, PAE - POR section of the shelf. The meeting's location has since become a Spencer's Gifts.	Andrea Klassen	3 4 1	An old and stern librarian raises a finger to her lips. She stares at you from an eyeless face, or at least it seemed like that on first glance due to the light glancing off her glasses... Take the Condition: Marked by Marian the Librarian.	Arthur Wells
3 1 2	As you wander around the front desk, a small black cat emerges--its peculiar eyes focused on you. It proceeds to weave between your legs insistently--tripping you. As you look around from the floor, something small catches your eye, what is it? Add it to your Corner of the House.	Billy Lingar	3 4 2	A DVD case with the cover art removed from the plastic protective sheath. The disc inside has a piece of masking tape on it and is labelled in black chisel tip marker "Emanuelle in Carcosa, Season One".	Mike Raichelson
3 1 3	A drawing from the Latchkeys childhood in crayon. It depicts them and their imaginary friend: A tall human-looking figure drawn in yellow with a sun for a face.	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)	3 4 3	A collection of sci fi video game tie-in books centered around a parasitic life form that aims to wipe out the entire galaxy. As you flip through, you realize that some pages are spotted with tiny bulbs of organic matter that seem to react to your touch.	Billy Lingar
3 1 4	A world atlas; the page where New Mexico should be detailed is missing. Not removed--there is no gap in the page numbers. Every other atlas you can find has the same strange omission.	Mare Majcher	3 4 4	A stack of old newspaper articles, referencing events in the Latchkey's lives. Unlocked: Library Key. Each Latchkey narrates a time when they saw something they weren't supposed to.	Amanda Mullins
3 1 5	A mouth appears on the end-cap of a row of bookshelves and says, "Beware you who trespass on the Black Leaf Circle's domain!" It disappears when done speaking.	Pat Eyler	3 4 5	An old pair of pince-nez glasses. When you look through them, everything appears in a sepia tone.	Kirk Damato (kirksays)
3 1 6	Video Tape of Secrets - Video tape with one secret from each person who ever returned a book or tape late to this library. The viewer sees themselves talking on the tape.	Blake Ryan	3 4 6	An old postcard with young and smiling Esther Whateley with people wearing black robes and white masks, titled "Join the Midwives. Embrace the Void!"	Arek Stefański (Archie)
3 2 1	A stack of Ranger Rick and Nat Geo Kids magazines with Polaroids of elaborate chalk ritual circles on black tarmac tucked inside.	Raymond Rich	3 5 1	A platter with a full rack of ribs, sticky, sweet, unattended.	Arthur Wells
3 2 2	A table display entitled, "Childhood's End," consisting of 27 copies of Arthur C. Clarke's "Childhood's End".	Aaron Sinner (Joe Kenobi)	3 5 2	Encyclopedia sets with alien alphabets.	Justen Bennett
3 2 3	Your novel. The one you always intended to write but haven't yet. Old and worn and with a publication date of 1956.	Scott C. Bourgeois	3 5 3	A poster on the wall of a cat hanging from a branch with the text "hang in there!" It seems like the eyes shift whenever you look away and back at the poster.	Tess Chappell
3 2 4	A child's science fair project with poster board, "Terrariums: Self-Contained Habitat of Life!", cartoons drawn by a middle schooler showing the cycle of life. The terrarium has pink pulsing mass that crawls around in its glass enclosure.	Chaotic Jamgochian	3 5 4	A phone number with a message: "For a bad time, call..."	Jack
3 2 5	A liter bottle of bright blue cotton candy faygo soda, in the distance you hear a quiet honk.	Arthur Wells	3 5 5	Community bulletin board with one flyer: "Teeth needed. Inquire below." Every tear-off number is missing.	Russell Anderson
3 2 6	A temporary tattoo vending machine. Paint the Scene: What tattoo do you get and how do you feel when it starts to move on your skin?	Amanda Mullins	3 5 6	Videotapes of the 1986 La Fresca Elementary School state dodgeball championship. The youngest children are terrified or sad, some crying hysterically. Teams throw metal balls instead of normal ones.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
3 3 1	A lurid book about unexplained phenomena. Paint the Scene: What disturbing photograph do you find when flipping through the pages?	Rob Fletcher	3 6 1	A student sits at a study booth near the back, slowly tearing pages from an anthropology textbook and eating them, one by one. If asked what he's doing, he'll only reply "studying."	Scott C. Bourgeois
3 3 2	Perfume bottle, purple glass. Using the perfume links you to the three people you have desired the most in your life. Sometime in the next month you will dream one of their most happy dreams, and another night one of their most horrifying nightmares.	Blake Ryan	3 6 2	A copy of Times Magazine that reads "Goodbye to that Yellow Brick Road, A Retrospective on the Butter Princess Pageant Season" The pages are oily and need to be peeled apart.	Arthur Wells
3 3 3	From around the corner you smell smoke and hear the clicks of burning pages, but when you locate the source you only see an old dingy, unpolished candlestick holder that looks as someone left it there after a long night of reading.	Jeremy Gaines	3 6 3	Llama/alpaca/vicuna/guanaco/other animal eating hay in back room of library and staring blankly at Latchkey while chewing. Add it to Your Corner of the House.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
3 3 4	There's a sheet of paper on the floor of one of the restrooms that says "Oh, I'm sorry... did I make you anxious?"	Michael Dürr	3 6 4	A book in standard library binding, but with neither author nor title. It has 410 pages, each with forty lines, and each line is about eighty characters long. It's all gibberish, save for a single line on the 407th page that ends "O TIME THY PYRAMIDS."	Cameron L. Summers
3 3 5	Computers with general internet access, for some unknown reason, only display the murky content of the dark web.	Arek Stefański (Archie)	3 6 5	For a moment, a desk calendar is set to the Latchkey's 10th birthday. The accompanying drawing is of The Big Man in the style of the Peanuts comics.	Levi Phipps
3 3 6	The statue of a cartoon tree for children to sit under and read, pillows strewn at its base. The mouth is too wide. Wide enough for a child to fit in. Its eyes seem to follow you.	Scott C. Bourgeois	3 6 6	An yellowed copy of the evening edition of the newspaper Arkham Herald, dated May 25, 1977, oddly mixed in with this week's copies of The New York Times. Headline: "The Star Wars Are Right!"	Mike Ferdinando

Roll	Prompt	Contributor	Roll	Prompt	Contributor
4 1 1	You find yourself invited to a wild party in the desert. You wake up the next day without a kidney with stitches with a sad La Llorona tattoo next to it. Take the Condition: Kidneys Gone Wild .	Arek Stefański (Archie)	4 4 1	A room dedicated to storing a single, unfinished choose-your-own-adventure novel. The shelves are packed full of hand bound folios; while perusing you hear the quiet meow of a cat who may or may not be in this room.	Arthur Wells
4 1 2	A listening booth with albums: The Beatles Reunion at LiveAid, Jimi Hendrix's blistering guitar solo on Thriller, Buddy Holly's jam session with the Who, Belushi and Akroyd as The Blues Brothers on the SNL 50th Anniversary Concert.	Jim Crocker	4 4 2	The librarian tells you that what you need is "down in the basement." There is no evidence of a basement existing.	Levi Phipps
4 1 3	A manilla envelope labeled "1979.04.11 Iron Horseshoes." It contains a business card for Anna Bubeníková, Postmistress, Nininger, MN, 1899.	Lisa Imbryk	4 4 3	A 1.2m tall statue of your Grade school teacher made completely of Bubble Hash. There must be 30kilos here.	Blake Ryan
4 1 4	An old, worn felt puppet for toddler story-time, one eye loose. Putting your hand in it has the sensation of raw, ground meat.	Sydney Hawkins	4 4 4	A post-it note left in a book. "Tell Phineas that we need more film. - Station Management".	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)
4 1 5	Reaching for the top shelf, you trigger a memory that makes you bite your lip. You flash to your younger self, in another library, and just beyond your reach was a book that intrigued you, but seemed to scare those around you. You remember a friendly hand on your shoulder pushing, and a demanding hand on your wrist holding you back. Which one won out? Which feels the most familiar now? And why is this not the first time today you've tasted blood?	Lukas Kristjanson	4 4 5	An archive box containing copied of the <i>Illustrated Police News</i> from 1870. Paint the Scene: What far-fetched headline do you spot?	Rob Fletcher
4 1 6	Audio tape, set of 6. <i>Learn Bat Speech Today</i> . Lessons in how to speak and understand bats. This is ultrasonic so only really useful for dogs and dolphins.	Blake Ryan	4 4 6	A small pamphlet titled How to Relax in the Presence of the Phantom, written by a Side Character.	Billy Lingar
4 2 1	A choose-your-own-adventure book, entitled <i>The Day They Finally Came For Me</i> . As you read, you slowly realize that it is describing this morning—your morning. You flip back and forth in a panic, but every path seems to lead you here, to the library. The character picks out a choose-your-own-adventure book. If you would like to open it, turn to page 72. If you would like to RUN!, turn to pajEaeGp 001981-a24.	Marc Majcher	4 5 1	An ancient hanging map of Deep Lake, the details of which seem to change every time you look at it. Sometimes featuring figures not found in official documents or strange and disturbing geometric patterns.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
4 2 2	A flyer for an upcoming wrestling promotion titled "Pine Rock Throwdown" headlined by "The Mortician" facing off with an up-and-coming wrestler in a special rules match. What is the other wrestler's name and look? And what about the promotion tells you one of the men is truly not leaving that match alive?	Billy Lingar	4 5 2	A clothing donation bin filled with several dozen pairs of baby shoes, never worn.	Jim Crocker
4 2 3	You hear the constant and loud sound of heavy construction coming from the bookshelves. It is unbearable as if your head would burst from the amount of decibels. However, people reading books do not mind it and do not seem to hear it. Paint the Scene: How do you know that the people in the library are creatures, perhaps extraterrestrial or from other planes of existence? What is their true form?	Arek Stefański (Archie)	4 5 3	A handheld console, whose batteries have run out, displaying "YOU'VE LOST" message on a glitched background. Paint the Scene: Why does the device feel familiar?	Igor Juraszewski
4 2 4	An 8-track recording of the last field recordings of Agent 355.	Arthur Wells	4 5 4	A call bell on the children's librarians desk that makes no noise when struck, but the room grows much colder and something rustles in the stacks.	Kim Riek
4 2 5	Something is jamming up the book return slot. It's fleshy and smells rotten.	Scott C. Bourgeois	4 5 5	A copy of <i>The Treasures of U-Da-Barr</i> . The author's name is scratched out.	Levi Phipps
4 2 6	Raccoon lurking from behind a bookshelf, rubbing its hands in mischievous way and running away when spotted.	Igor Juraszewski	4 5 6	The librarian's radio plays relaxing music from the Twin-Peaks theme song. You think something wholesome is going to happen but it's the opposite. What's going to happen next?	Arek Stefański (Archie)
4 3 1	A children's board book, brightly colored, entitled <i>Suzie Finds the Watcher</i> . There are no words, just a series of illustrations of a small pig-tailed child in a raincoat carrying a bundles of helium balloons. each page she meets something horrific, and then the next page she has one less balloon and looks a little more worn/afraid and you can see the monster in the background with the balloon. On the second to last page, Suzie has no balloons and is visibly injured. The next two pages are stuck together, do you pry them apart?	Kim Riek	4 6 1	A translation of <i>Beowulf</i> with several key character's names replaced with Latchkey or Side Character's names. For days after, the reader dreams of murky lakes (possible Condition name, a la MDH's translation "fate-fucked").	Kim Riek
4 3 2	An old atlas with several pages ripped out. According to the table of contents those pages referred to a country labelled as Svenborgia. No other reference material in the library (or any other) references the current or historical existence of anywhere with this name.	Mike Raichelson	4 6 2	A worn comic book from the 1930s: <i>Tales from the Caped City</i> . A hero known as the Scarlet Specter graces the cover.	Levi Phipps
4 3 3	You are struck with the overwhelming saccharine smell of fresh honey wafting from the stacks. You follow your nose to a copy of <i>The Wild Blue Hereafter</i> , and inside you find a wriggling queen bee larvae, floating in royal jelly, capped behind a wax wall.	Arthur Wells	4 6 3	A braided friendship bracelet, with the note "To you, with no particular love whatsoever".	Mads C. Turley
4 3 4	Tucked behind other dusty books is a small journal titled <i>The Adventures of the Lakeshore Kid Rangers</i> . It's covered in stickers with landmarks from the Pacific Northwest, flecked with paint (or is that blood...). Paint the Scene: What are some <i>standout mysteries</i> that the children of <i>The Lakeshore Kid Rangers</i> solved in their heyday?	Billy Lingar	4 6 4	You open the first page of the book, and glance up to see that it's suddenly night. Wasn't the sun up? You look down and you're on the last page. You have no memory of the book's contents.	Scott C. Bourgeois
4 3 5	A memorial bench off to the side of the entrance with a plaque on it. Paint the Scene: Whose name do you see noted on the plaque who has no business whatsoever being valorized there and why does it make you so angry?	Jim Crocker	4 6 5	Someone gifted the library an interactive globe. When a location is pressed, a card is dispensed that prompts research topics and titles. A random location suggests "Forensics 101" and census data for an oddly familiar year. Your current location says "Here be dragons." The globe is gone the next day.	Lukas Kristjanson
4 3 6	The 1992 children's picture-book <i>It's Fun on the Farm</i> with Calamity Raccoon, about how Calamity Raccoon and her anthropomorphic friends grow fresh pizzas for sale. The book is little more than an advertisement for Calamity Raccoon's Good-Time Pizza Farm, but the artistic detail of pizzas growing from bizarre-looking plants is oddly compelling.	Mike Ferdinando	4 6 6	A slow jazz vinyl spins on a record player. When played backwards a demonic voice gives a recipe for blueberry scones.	Amanda Mullins

Roll	Prompt	Contributor	Roll	Prompt	Contributor
5 1 1	A glass figurine falls from a high shelf. You can no longer identify what it once represented.	J Evan Parks	5 4 1	A copy of <i>The Big Man in the Desert</i> , the newest Amanda Delacourt Gold Crown Mystery.	Arthur Wells
5 1 2	The book drop off slot extends into the darkness. Paint the Scene: <i>What do you drop in? Where does it end up?</i>	Justen Bennett	5 4 2	Deputy Marty Wallace helps his daughter carry heavy stacks of fantasy books and <i>"How to Draw [blank]"</i> books.	Levi Phipps
5 1 3	A 1540 book of strange stories and tales from the conquistadors that describe the progress of your investigation into the TV Odyssey mystery. There is a bookmark with "TIME TO PAY!" written on it in blood.	Arek Stefański (Archie)	5 4 3	Children's biology book of ominous taxonomy for mundane things and creatures. The entry on librarians has been ripped out.	dión // isle in the heavens
5 1 4	You stumble upon a silent and undisturbed law library room here, you're not sure how you got here, but you know it would be a safe hiding spot if you needed it.	Arthur Wells	5 4 4	A heavily annotated copy of a <i>A Beginner's Guide to Camping</i> . The notes in the margins start as simple tips, but quickly pivot into a journal of a doomed expedition into the Appalachians.	Scott C. Bourgeois
5 1 5	The library's payphone has three quarters left in the coin return: two dated 1984, and one dated 2004. Any Latchkey who drops the two older quarters into the coin slot is instantly brought back to the year 1984. The only way back is to use the 2004 quarter at the same payphone.	Jesse Ross	5 4 5	You come across some persistent pale, black-eyed children begging for change for the vending machines at the entrance to the library. Unfortunately, you're out of luck. Maybe you look friendly or the children like you and you become their next victim. You can easily chase them away by using the Latchkey Move - Have You Ever Danced with the Devil. Otherwise, do Move "Banish Evil" (modified Day Move). Take the Condition: Possessed by Children's Whisper . You can get rid of the Condition by bringing the 'children' another victim to take your place - maybe another Latchkey or a Side Character.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
5 1 6	A copy of Pink Floyd's <i>The Wall</i> , <i>The Novelization</i> . It's never been checked out.	Devin R Bruce	5 4 6	While you read by yourself, you're approached by a disheveled man in a tattered brown coat with greasy salt-and-pepper hair. As he approaches you, he grabs you by the shoulders and you see each eye has two irises. "Do you read Spencer Cannon?" he asks aggressively. As you fall down, he disappears - leaving a brand new copy of Spencer Cannon's newest horror novel. What is it called? Have you heard of it before today?	Billy Lingar
5 2 1	At first you think you spot two co-eds making out in the stacks. Their eyes shine red. Their teeth are sharp. They seem to be totally ignoring you, lost in the ecstasy of sucking each other's blood.	Scott C. Bourgeois	5 5 1	The communal grocery list for 26 Rodenbecker, written in an unknown hand. You didn't even know you were out of milk! How helpful!	Brendan (Khaytra)
5 2 2	While looking for a book about Deep Lake you overhear a librarian on the phone. When asked what happened to her husband/boyfriend she replies "I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti... I've killed a lot of people.", and then she looks at you with an unpleasant smile.	Arek Stefański (Archie)	5 5 2	A door labelled "Macrofiche Room".	Amanda Mullins
5 2 3	A table sized mechanical star chart that can show you the night sky over Deep Lake on any date. The calendar is set to May 25, 1540 and the sky is filled with flaming meteors.	Arthur Wells	5 5 3	A Rubik's cube that becomes randomly mixed each time you look away from it. It wants something in exchange for solving it.	Arthur Wells
5 2 4	A cashbox of petty cash, collected from late library fines.	Justen Bennett	5 5 4	A locked gate sectioning off a rare book collection. Inside, you can see many leather tomes marked with strange sigils. You are not welcome in this collection. The books here hate you.	Scott C. Bourgeois
5 2 5	In the <i>La Fresca Times</i> archive, a copy of the 19 January 2020 edition. It is weathered, and a number of articles have been cut from it.	Pat Eyler	5 5 5	A children's collection of fairy tales, bookmarked in the middle of "Little Red Riding Hood" with a coupon for half-off a "person pan" pizza at Calamity Raccoon's Good Time Pizza Farm.	Brendan (Khaytra)
5 2 6	Winning Lottery Ticket for exactly 21 years in the future. You just have to live that long...	Blake Ryan	5 5 6	A manikin wearing a Latchkey's slightly blooded clothing. It's in a dramatic pose that slowly changes when no one is watching.	Igor Juraszewski
5 3 1	An empty room, containing only a solitary Canada goose. It's angry.	Amanda Mullins	5 6 1	A taxidermy skeleton of a tall thin bird sealed in a glass dome. It would usually be classified as an ordinary egret if it didn't have 5 eye sockets and humanoid teeth. All of these features appear to be naturally occurring and not some sort of creative sculpting or forgery. It can be checked out for 53 hours at a time ONLY (no early or late returns).	Mike Raichelson
5 3 2	Sitting atop the reference section is an old cat, as small town libraries are wont to have. It occasionally interrupts study sessions, and has defused more than a few night-before-the-paper-is-due panic attacks. If it could talk, it would probably have much to say about trends in both books and readers. But it can't talk. And there's certainly no rhyme or reason to what it knocks off the shelf in front of you. Any significance you might draw from that is your own imagination. Right?	Lukas Kristjanson	5 6 2	In a carpeted recess, surrounded by steps for the audience to sit there is an abandoned music stand with sheet music for the Appalachian folk song "Ghost of John."	Tess Chappell
5 3 3	You get separated from the group for just a moment. As you wander through the endless racks of books, you stumble upon a child. The child looks up at you, and you recognize them. Which other Latchkey is it? Ask their player what cryptic warning they give you before wandering off.	Billy Lingar	5 6 3	A box of newspaper clippings which contain negative reviews for shows in which Dolores Rodenbecker starred. Also in the box are newspaper obituaries, detailing the deaths of those review writers.	Brendan (Khaytra)
5 3 4	A book in the nature section about identifying trees. None of the trees it documents exist, but they are all thoroughly documented, photographed, and catalogued. One looks very clearly to have been photographed in the back yard of the finder's grandparents' house.	Mike Raichelson	5 6 4	Your favorite childhood toy covered in weird sticky slime and blood.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
5 3 5	A dusty jar on a shelf in the history section containing wafer-thin slices of brain floating in a clear liquid. They are probably large enough to be human.	Rhyme Jansen	5 6 5	A wide-brimmed hat, black as night, no stars. If you decide to reach into it, your hand will disappear, feeling no discernible bottom.	Mads C. Turley
5 3 6	An video tape labelled "La Fresca Senior High - Prom 1986 :-)". Describe what you see on the tape. The Keeper will tell you how it's worse than that after you watch it.	Arek Stefański (Archie)	5 6 6	Doodles across several pages creating a flipbook of the library exploding.	J Evan Parks

Roll	Prompt	Contributor	Roll	Prompt	Contributor
6 1 1	A copy of <i>The Last of the Degoyan Gaboons</i> sits under a stack of books. Every single word has been carefully, individually, censored, save for the words "New Eden" which occur seven times.	Arthur Wells	6 4 1	A copy of the 1965 trade paperback edition of the three-act play "The King in Shadows," written by an anonymous author in the 1750s. Several pages in Act III are stained with long-dried blood. The book is misshelved in the YA section.	Mike Ferdinando
6 1 2	The book you pick up has, tucked within it, a small photocopied hand-screwed zine. It contains instructions for some kind of fantasy wargame. In addition to the usual paper, pencils, and dice, the game also instructs you to gather two mirrors and a yearbook photo of Arnold Davison, class of 1965. The instructions also say the game must never be played between dusk and dawn.	Jesse Ross	6 4 2	The Latchkey's favorite childhood picture book. The main character is not as you remember them. Paint the Scene: What notable physical feature that you remember is this character missing? What has replaced it?	Andrea Klassen
6 1 3	A yellowed pamphlet tucked between the pages of a romance novel listing all 613 commandments that appear in the Old Testament. Looking at it for longer than a few seconds gives you a nosebleed.	Ben Mansky	6 4 3	6 Atari 2600 cartridge of games (Pitfall, Pacman, Jungle Hunt, Bezerk, Frogger, Asteroids). The 6th level of each game is a library quest, cross referencing books from the same author. Once this is unlocked 6 times you have learned how to summon a minor demon (like an imp or evil scorpion).	Blake Ryan
6 1 4	A great circular carpet spread out during community storytime. Paint the Scene: How are the animal drawings off, and how do you dismiss it as normal damage?	Levi Phipps	6 4 4	A Chiltons Repair and TuneUp guide for 1979-1984 Datsun models, well used. There is a post-it note on the cover that catches your attention, perhaps a remembered date, or a personal detail meant for you. Opening the book, you discover the pages have been carefully carved out to perfectly hide a weapon. Was this for you to find, or no-one?	Lukas Kristjanson
6 1 5	A tacky slick of cloyingly sweet residue on the stairs from the roof to the basement.	Jim Crocker	6 4 5	A person is hunched at one of the computers with their hood pulled up. A closer look shows they're on the Ghost Bros forums. If you have a Latchkey with the "Who Ya Gonna Call" special Move, the person has that Latchkey's profile open and the player takes the Condition: Being Watched . If there are no players with the "Who Ya Gonna Call" special Move, what thread is the person fervently commenting on?	Billy Lingar
6 1 6	You wander into a web-covered corner of the library, finding a rack of superhero comics you've never heard of. Paint the Scene: What superhero comics are front and center in the rack? What about their stories makes you feel uneasy?	Billy Lingar	6 4 6	A strangely warped game disk that reads Degoya Trail. The main character desperately travels 19th century New Mexico seeking a city called Reality. How do you know them?	James Smith
6 2 1	A VHS-sized, well-worn edition of Homer's <i>Odyssey</i> , bound in thin, chapped leather. A post-it note on it says: "PLAY ME!"	dión // isle in the heavens	6 5 1	You don't know why, but you feel like everyone in the library is staring at you. Maybe with curiosity, maybe with horror and disgust. But no one wants to talk about it. When you look in the mirror, you'll understand why.	Arek Stefański (Archie)
6 2 2	A well worn copy of Frances Glessner Lee's <i>Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death</i> , a photo collection of exquisitely detailed hand-made miniature crime scenes used in forensic training. Oddly, one reminds you of a recent event. Is it a coincidence, or a copycat? You glance at the names of people who recently took the book out. Is one familiar? Is one yours?	Lukas Kristjanson	6 5 2	A copy of the book <i>A Rural History of America</i> by Dr. Mammohan Subramanyam. Tucked inside the front cover is a pamphlet visitor's guide for "The Museum of Brindle-Dolls," located in a little town on Cape Cod.	Mike Ferdinando
6 2 3	A document explaining the Dewey Decimal system. The margins are extremely tiny.	Amanda Mullins	6 5 3	An elderly plastic model depicting the difference between a smoker's lung and a healthy lung.	Kim Riek
6 2 4	An ornate marble fireplace glows with the light of a dwindling flame. A music box sits on the mantle.	Arthur Wells	6 5 4	A copy of a book titled <i>Thirst</i> , written by Liz Vathor, published 1977. The fore-edge of the book is stained red along all the pages. If opened, it immediately gives you a painful paper cut.	Scott C. Bourgeois
6 2 5	A map of the White Mountain National Forest, the frame it hangs in is a strange bronze with a verdegriis patina.	Levi Phipps	6 5 5	A collection of groovy screen printed posters from the Sounds of the Chromatic Desert Music Festival, dated 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967.	Arthur Wells
6 2 6	A mangy cat lounges on top of one of the bookshelves. It watches you with a single yellow eye. After a moment, it leaps down and starts trying to lead you somewhere deeper in the library.	Scott C. Bourgeois	6 5 6	Kids' books with creepy covers of haunted children in fields.	Justen Bennett
6 3 1	Exploring around a corner, you discover an exact copy of the library's central hall, sans exit. 2/6 chance turning a new corner leads you back to the original room, 1/6 chance of a sign that something is in there with you. Every new copy of the room is progressively dustier than the last.	dión // isle in the heavens	6 6 1	A bicycle with a book bin on the back and a jolly sign asking for volunteers to ride it to Library events. The tires are flat, the chain is rusted and caked with filth, the seat appears to have been violently ripped up by something very sharp, and the paint is splattered with crusty dark brown stains.	Jim Crocker
6 3 2	A librarian whose massive mop of hair contains a bird's nest, housing two baby chicks.	Aaron Sinner (Joe Kenobi)	6 6 2	A book titled <i>The Deep Lake Cryptid Guide, Now With Illustrations!</i> sits on the shelf, well used.	Billy Lingar
6 3 3	A copy of the <i>Handbook of Horrors</i> , a supplement for the <i>Serpents & Sepulchres</i> roleplaying game. Paint the Scene: What creature do you find when flipping through the pages?	Rob Fletcher	6 6 3	A 1996 atlas of New Mexico. Evidence of years of pencil marks tracing road trips long past, all scrubbed away by eraser leaving only shallow channels following the highway out of town.	J Evan Parks
6 3 4	A smelly gym sock.	J Evan Parks	6 6 4	In a dark corner away from the window there is a pot with a huge plant with a large red flower and leaves. You don't know it, but it is carnivorous. The plant gives off an intense "smell" reminiscent of rotting carrion. Take the Condition: Rotting Carrion . When you approach it, the flower opens and shoots vines towards you, trying to devour you. Make a Night Move with disadvantage: What's the worst that will happen if you lose your cool?	Arek Stefański (Archie)
6 3 5	A flyer looking for other people who "Walk in Sleep", encouraging them to meet at the library in the Dreamlands to go over "the next steps".	Billy Lingar	6 6 5	A handwritten message left in a book. If a Latchkey has disappeared before finding this, it's in that Latchkeys handwriting. If not, it's in the Latchkey who found the books handwriting. It says "They're watching. They're always watching. Be careful."	Irving Benitez (Jellyfishlines)
6 3 6	A book strikes you in the back. You turn, but there's no one nearby who could have thrown it. The book is exactly the one you were looking for.	Scott C. Bourgeois	6 6 6	A mummified body. They're wearing your exact same outfit. They've got scars where you have scars. The things in their pockets are in your pockets. Their face is contorted in neverending terror, and now yours is too.	Jack



Odyssey Tapes

Appliances with Andy!

by James Smith

Distorted upbeat synth pop music begins, followed by the logo for the show in glinting chrome. The camera zooms in on a gleaming white infomercial kitchen lit with blinding studio lighting. Behind the counter stands Andy, a bearded and red-faced man of middle years wearing a colourful Hawaiian shirt with the sleeves rolled up. His assistant, Carol, is smartly dressed and her makeup is immaculate. She looks pallid and overly shiny in the harsh light. Both wear matching branded aprons.

The studio audience cheers and shouts the show's catch phrase: 'Let's get Andy in the Kitchen!'

1. **The Nutrilator:** Carol lifts the first appliance onto the countertop, a gleaming metallic bullet that can juice anything. 'And I mean anything, Carol!' Queue awkward laughter. It is unclear how it is powered, or how the inner mechanism functions. Narrate Andy's light hearted sales pitch.

Demo 1: How do we know that the device can juice anything?

2. **The Suraisā:** Carol whips back a cover, revealing a gleaming cooking knife. Queue a moan of excitement. The handle is the deepest black. The blade ripples with gleaming patterns. It makes a disturbing sound as it parts the air. 'Now this is real Japanese craftsmanship, Carol...' whispers Andy reverently. Narrate Andy's intense sales pitch.

Demo 2: How do we learn that the blade can cut anything?

3. **The Cuisfigurator:** Carol opens a cupboard door to reveal a large white box covered with banks of flashing lights. The icons resemble runes. Queue a round of thunderous applause. Andy's eyes gleam with zeal. 'Carol, this is special. Anything that goes in comes out ready to eat!' There is a rising ominous hum. Narrate Andy's alarming sales pitch.

Demo 3: What is ready to eat when the humming ceases?

4. **'Carol':** 'Carol' jerks and spasms in an uncanny way, face in a rictus grin. Her shiny skin peels back at the hairline, revealing a dark metallic carapace. Black goop leaks from her mouth. Queue screams. Andy doesn't seem as surprised as he should be and tries to cover up what is happening. Narrate what we see before the camera cuts out.

Demo 4: What do we learn that 'Carol' is capable of?

Bachelor Number 3

by Levi Phipps

Between 1988 and 1991, TV Odyssey aired *Deep Lake Looks for Love*, an obvious rip-off of *The Dating Game*. One lucky contestant asks casual getting-to-know-you questions to three bachelors or bachelorettes and ends the episode by choosing one to join on a date.

1. A woman in her early 20s, Evangelina Reyes, walks onto the stage and takes her seat. How can we tell that she's excited but nervous?
2. For her first question, Evangelina asks the Bachelors what their ideal first date is. Bachelor #1 suggests a local Italian joint and Bachelor #2 suggests an at-home movie marathon. Describe the violent occult ritual that Bachelor Number Three suggests as the perfect first date.
3. Evangelina asks the Bachelors about their five-year plans. Bachelor #1 is studying to coach football. Bachelor #2 plans on opening a bookstore. What dark omen does Bachelor Number Three foretell in five years?
4. **Paint the Scene:** As Evangelina picks bachelor number three, the valentine heart-clad canvas covering him rises. How can we tell that Bachelor Number Three is not quite human, and that he means Evangelina harm?

CAMP CRUSADE 4 CHRIST

by Sydney Hawkins

This tape is a recruitment advertisement, meant to entice older teens and college summer returners to a summer of Bible study and rock climbing at Camp Crusade 4 Christ. After the logo, a dual-canoe depicting Christ's crucifixion cross fades, the camera pan across the brown lake and faded buildings. The frame centers on two figures: A suave, khaki-laden man and a woman standing hand and hand at the camp gate. They wave vigorously at the camera..

Each segment features an enticing camp amenity:

1. **Paint the Scene:** A montage of shots shows the campgrounds and footage from previous summers, including a younger version of the khaki'd pair—Brigita and Nate. As scenes of the camp flash across the screen, what details show the camp has seen several 'close calls' of camper injury or death?
2. Brigita and Nate stand in front of an impressive waterfront - positioning the camera so that aging elements are out of frame. Clearly, this is intended to showcase the fun of being a camp counselor. As they talk about a summer of 'changing lives,' how can you tell they secretly blame each other for the dangers they've faced at camp?
3. Out at the rock climbing walls, Nate explains how staff get once in a lifetime experiences as he sets up a belay route for Brigita. The weather is turning, and the two start arguing. As the camera is knocked over by their altercation, what does it look like to the viewer as their vile emotions take corporeal form?
4. The final segment pulls out all the stops—Nate and Brigita attempt to show off recent renovations to staff accommodations, playing out a campy skit where they play their younger selves. As a spark of their previous love is revealed in a long-ago memory, they lose themselves in the moment and ignore the warning signs of the imminent doom. What are those signs, and how do Brigita and Nate lose their lives for good?

LINDY LINDY PSA 01

- DUCK AND COVER

by Rhyme Jansen

WARNING

*This Odyssey Tape
includes (indirect) harm
to and death of children.*

This black and white tape opens on teenage pop star Lindy Lindy standing at the front of a classroom with the words “Duck and Cover” written on the chalkboard behind her and students seated in the rows of desks in front of her listening attentively. She wears a version of her odd and iconic sequin-covered dress with the symbol for radiation picked out in the pattern of sequins. When she gestures towards the chalkboard, there’s a janky transition where the words disappear and are replaced with a series of instructive diagrams arranged around a mushroom cloud. Each diagram shows a step of the duck and cover method of protecting oneself from a nuclear explosion, which for school children boils down to duck under your desk, cover your head, and pray. In fact, the word “pray” is written in small letters on the corner of the chalkboard, where it almost isn’t visible to the camera.

1. **Paint the Scene:** The air in the classroom is hazy in a way that, like the transition with the chalkboard, seems like bad editing. How else did the producer and set designer of this PSA attempt to make the classroom look radioactive, and which element looks like it might not be fake?
2. The camera pans to a smiling Lindy Lindy pointing at the diagram of a kid crouched under their desk, hands covering the back of their head. Her smile doesn’t draw the attention away from the heavy bags under her eyes. What else about her appearance makes it clear that she’s unwell and feels even worse as filming goes on?
3. As the students practice huddling under their desks, what substance does one kid cough onto the floor that makes his classmates try to flee in horror? How does their own coughing stop them from escaping?
4. When the camera refocuses on Lindy Lindy, dark muscle shows through the skin rotting off of her face before she lurches towards the camera. Equally rotting students come into view when the camera spins wildly. The camera ends up pointed down the school’s hallway filming the flight of the screaming cameraman. How far does he make it before the zombies catch up, and how do they then brutally and childishly consume him?

LA FRESCA PROM NIGHT 1986 :-)

by Irving Benitez

This tape shows a group of four students, Jessica Lewell, Michael Bastion, Jason Moore, and Amy Tsai, just hours before their prom night at La Fresca Junior High School. The film occasionally goes in and out of focus but is otherwise clear. The friends are dressed in prom dresses and tuxedos and each of them looks like they're excited for a great time.

1. Jessica, a brunette in a pink mermaid style dress, is talking about how she knows she is going to win prom queen. She keeps looking past the camera and towards a window, almost distracted. What lets us know she doesn't want to actually win the title?
2. The scene changes to just outside the school. The person behind the camera asks Michael, who is wearing his letterman jacket, what he plans to do after graduation. What does he say he wants and how do we know this isn't his dream?
3. The camera cuts to the La Fresca Junior High gymnasium. Students murmur as smoke has started to fill the room with no discernible cause. The cameraperson turns towards Jason, a young man in square glasses, near the doors in a panic. As screams break out in the room and the gymnasium doors fly open, what does Jason do or say that lets us know that he is truly terrified?
4. **Paint the Scene:** Amy is hiding in a classroom supply closet crying silently with her hand covering her mouth and nose to muffle her breathing. The classroom door is heard creaking open and Amy stops, lurching, in an attempt to stay quiet. As footsteps grow closer, Amy takes her hand off her face. What are Amy's last words mouthed to the camera just before the supply closet door opens? What strange thing is in the doorway that the camera catches a glimpse of before the film cuts?

XMAS 1979 SPECIAL - THE SANDYMAN RETURNS - PURE-WHITE EXTREME



by Brendan (khaytra)

This tape is a Christmas Special which aired on TV Odyssey during the 1979 Christmas season. The special is done in stop motion, much like the familiar Rankin/Bass Christmas specials. The models used and the stop motion techniques employed are of particularly poor quality—many of the models are oddly disproportionate, with especially hungry mouths and oversized limbs, and their movements are jerky at best.

1. **Paint the Scene:** As the special opens, we see a camera pan over a town—a miniature of Deep Lake as it appeared in the late 70s, with many houses festooned with colourful pieces of tinsel and rainbow string lights, while a cheerful, wintery tune, heavy on the sleigh bell, underscores the scene. Frosty Dave, an overly enthusiastic character whose arms rarely stop flailing, stands in the town square, asking the audience if they've ever heard of "the Sandyman." "No-o-o-o, not Santa Claus! Something even older than him! You mean you've ne-e-e-ver heard the story of the Sandyman?" He proceeds to dance about and sing a jovial song describing the Sandyman. What monstrous detail about the Sandyman's appearance do you find the most frightening?
2. Elsewhere in town, we see a family readying their house for Christmas. A small child, Little Lucy, wears an oversized frown as she watches her parents busily rush about the house. As her parents decorate for Christmas, what preparations for the holiday seem odd or unsettling in spite of the festive atmosphere?
3. It's time for the big Christmas tree lighting in the town square, but Little Lucy doesn't want to go! Lucy throws a temper tantrum and yells that she hates Christmas and she doesn't want to go to a stupid tree lighting. Lucy's mother warns her not to act up or else the Sandyman will come for her. According to Lucy's mother, what does the Sandyman do to children who are naughty at Christmastime?
4. It's time to light the big tree in the town square, and everyone—even Little Lucy—is there! As Frosty Dave excitedly flips a switch, the bright red lights on the tree flare to life. The children gasp and point as a huge, hulking shadow rises up behind the tree. The Sandyman has arrived! The assembled adults lower their eyes and cover their ears as the creature snatches up the children that it knows must be punished. How is the Sandyman's punishment worse than what Lucy's mother had said? What ultimately happens to Lucy and the other bad kids?



CONDUCTOR DUNGAREES

By Jim Crocker

PAINT THE SCENE:

1. As the denim overall-clad Conductor Dungarees turns on the lights and unlocks the door, whistling the show's theme song, what's one odd touch that's been added to the set to indicate it's meant to be coded as a kid-friendly train station?
2. Conductor Dungarees has a friendly chat with his old pal Captain Caribou, a comically-antlered puppet. What odd phrase does Captain Caribou trick Conductor Dungarees into saying, and what falls from overhead onto Conductor Dungarees, much to the smirking Caribou's delight and the Conductor's mild annoyance?
3. Conductor Dungarees is reading aloud into the camera from a beloved children's picture book. Captain Caribou can be seen sniggering over his shoulder. The Conductor turns the page and reads it aloud, but it's a trick! How has the phrase from the previous scene changed, and what falls from overhead onto Conductor Dungarees, leaving him stunned and shaken as the puppet guffaws?
4. Conductor Dungarees says it's time for Samuel's Sketches, an animated segment where a stick-figure boy uses magic pencils to bring drawings colorfully to life. Halfway through the segment, a cartoon Captain Caribou saunters on and violently wrenches the pencil from Samuel's hand. The camera cuts back to Conductor Dungarees standing beside the sketch pad the segment appears on, asking Captain Caribou just what he thinks he's doing. The rough-sketch puppet quickly draws a word balloon coming from Conductor Dungarees' mouth, and scratches in letters lickety-split. How has the phrase changed again, and what falls from overhead onto Conductor Dungarees, leaving him howling in agony and terror as Captain Caribou roars with laughter, illustrated tears gushing from his eyes?

Soapbox TV

By Leigh Eldgridge

This tape is an episode of *Soapbox TV*, a show featuring two minute clips filmed by members of the public in an unmanned, user-activated video booth outside the TV Odyssey studios. People were encouraged to pay \$0.50 to talk about anything they liked and the clips were compiled into episodes with themed segments by the enigmatic editor, Glenn. The tape starts with the show intro: a dizzyingly sped-up fisheye shot of driving around Deep Lake, ending back at the TV Odyssey building. The glowing SOAPBOX TV logo spins into place before a starwipe cut into the first clip.

1. You recognize the person in this clip: they were a minor local Deep Lake celebrity in the late-80s and early 90s. Who were they, what personal interest are they talking about, and why did they disappear from public life?
2. "This message is for Deep Lake City Council", states the young man speaking into the camera. What are his grievances with the city, and how does he think they should be fixed?
3. The woman in the clip is treating it like a missed connections ad. Who is she describing, and how can you tell that she's actually been stalking them?
4. A montage of clips from various people has been edited together to deliver a larger message, each speaking one or two words. What is the message and why do you find it so deeply disturbing?

FIND YOUR VALENTINE

AN ODYSSEY TAPE BY BOA

Find Your Valentine is a dating show where the hostess, Alexa Cross, plays matchmaker. She is dressed up as Cupid, in a revealing white dress with (poorly) made paper-mâché wings. Tonight, the perennial bachelor Patrick Gallagher has three lovely ladies to choose from.

Dawn, the redhead; the auburn beauty Noelle; and fake blonde Janice. All young women dressed to the nines, smiling their Colgate smiles and winking their eyelashes at the imaginary crowd and the tens of viewers back home.

A curtain partitions the room they're in, so Patrick cannot see them, only ask them questions and then decide who he wants to go on a date with. And tonight, *Find Your Valentine* is proud to announce that the happy couple will be treated to a 3-course meal at a local restaurant, courtesy of the show.

1. When asked about their hobbies, what bizarre and unwholesome leisure activities does Noelle fill her spare time with?

2. Patrick asks the women about their worst date experience. What horrible story does Janice laughingly tell, while the other women (and Patrick) look shocked?

3. Patrick asks the women how they feel about children. Narrate how, with detached calm, Dawn opens up about her feelings in a way that makes the other women stare at her with disgust.

4. It's time for Patrick to choose who he wants to go on a date with. As Alexa prances around and shoots toy arrows up into the air, how do we see Patrick struggle with making an impossible choice. Who does he choose? How do the others react?

DRAW WITH DAN

AN ODYSSEY TAPE BY BOA

*This Odyssey Tape is inspired by
<https://artforkidshub.com/> and
the YouTube videos they make.*



This tape is an episode of Draw with Dan, a show featuring an out-of-work illustrator, the eponymous Dan Dreyfus, teaching children how to draw. His show features a revolving cast of local children. Today, they will be drawing the legendary Deep Lake Lurker.

1. **(Paint the Scene)** Dan and Little Lucy Fairclough sit down on their stools behind the drawing bench as the show starts. Drawings from previous episodes hang on the wall behind them. What strange or bizarre things have they drawn on this show previously?
2. While Dan's Deep Lake Lurker shapes up perfectly, Little Lucy struggles to follow his instructions, and Dan is clearly not happy with her work. How does he subtly ridicule Lucy for her artwork while still managing to present it as a compliment that the child accepts.
3. Dan and Little Lucy take a break before coloring the drawing. Dan moves closer to the camera to shut it off, but somehow bumbles it. As Lucy goes to the restroom, a frustrated Dan starts muttering to himself. What does he say that indicates that he should not be allowed to work with children?
4. Almost done coloring the Deep Lake Lurker, Dan snaps. While he doesn't lay a finger on Lucy, he yells at her until she starts bawling. Lucy runs teary-eyed out of the frame. Realizing what he's done, Dan runs after her and tries to apologize for losing his temper. We can hear them faintly in the background, but just before the recording stops, we see something. Which object left behind in the room behaves in an unexplainable fashion?



Call and Answer 44 with Miss Calypso

An Odyssey Tape by Billy Lingar

The tape fades in from black with cheesy “spiritual” music playing over a title card reading *Call and Answer with Miss Calypso* (Miss Calypso also poorly sings the title itself). As the camera pans down from black fabric with stars projected onto it we see the “famous” Miss Calypso. Miss Calypso is a woman in her mid-30s, sporting a salmon-colored headband, rosy cheeks, and wearing a cheap looking shawl. Her desk is adorned with tarot cards, a crystal ball, and animal bones. The show features viewers that call in with questions for Miss Calypso, so she may psychically divine the answers.

1. **Paint the Scene:** As Miss Calypso introduces herself once again, what about the way Miss Calypso plays to the camera tells you that the cameraman is here against his will?
2. Miss Calypso enthusiastically announces she has a caller before the phone even starts ringing. Troy calls in, not for the first time. He explains that his long-time girlfriend has recently become distant, and he feels guilty about getting too close with a co-worker because he “feels lonely”. To absolve himself of guilt, he asks Miss Calypso if his girlfriend has been cheating on him. Miss Calypso refers to her tarot deck for the answer. What card does she pull? And what about how she answers tells you that she somehow knows it’s true?
3. After a handful of calls, Miss Calypso tells the viewers that she has to take a break to “refuel her energy”. The camera pans back up to the star-covered fabric, but still transmits audio. As you faintly hear her get up from her desk, Miss Calypso sensually says “I think I know just the way to recharge”. How does she “refuel her energy”?
4. The show resumes and Miss Calypso’s title card plays again, along with her own (now ethereal) singing. After a long pause, a phone around one of the Latchkeys rings. What do you ask Miss Calypso? What does she say?





Say it Right 05

Spanish with Aunt Juanita

An Odyssey Tape by Arkadiusz Stefański

This tape is an episode of "Say it Right: Spanish with Aunt Juanita," an educational program that aired on TV Odyssey. The episode opens with a warm, charismatic woman in her forties dressed in vibrant, traditional attire standing in a cozy kitchen adorned with papel picado and marigold garlands. With an enthusiastic "¡Hola, amigos!" she welcomes viewers and begins teaching basic Spanish phrases. In the background, a mysterious, ethereal figure observes the set. Aunt Juanita greets her audience from a kitchen that feels like a blend of a traditional Mexican home and a mystical sanctuary. She demonstrates the phrase "¿Cómo estás?", and as she speaks, the camera catches a small, odd, ornate figurine perched on a shelf and Don Manuel, a charming guest with a dry sense of humor, chimes something witty.

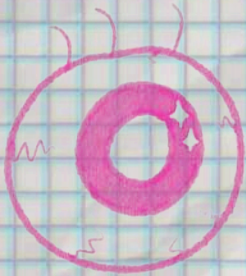
- 1. Paint the Scene:** The set bursts with festive colors and flickering candlelight, yet subtle symbols and an oddly placed sugar skull hint at a presence beyond the ordinary. What quirky detail in the background makes you wonder if a spectral guardian is silently keeping watch?
- As the lesson continues, Aunt Juanita smoothly transitions into teaching vocabulary for family and community. Once bright and inviting, the atmosphere shows hints of a darker undercurrent. Soft shadows dance on the walls as the warm glow of the candles flickers more erratically. Looking closely we see how the interplay of light and shadow transforms the familiar kitchen into a setting filled with quiet mystery. Is it merely the effect of the candles, or is something more enigmatic at work in the corners of the room?
- Midway through a cooking segment, while demonstrating the phrase "¿Qué hora es?", a sudden distortion disrupts the lesson. The vintage television screen in the background crackles with static, and eerie, whispering echoes seem to emanate from it. Don Manuel interjects something dry-funny with a wry smile. For a brief moment, the distorted image reveals the fleeting glimpse of a dark figure moving in the background, intensifying the unsettled mood, and the subtle shift from lighthearted banter to tinged with unease. What peculiar element in the distortion makes you suspect the disruption is more than just a technical hiccup? What is happening on the set?
- The festive kitchen, once full of cheerful decorations, is now shrouded in suffocating darkness with twisted, eerie silhouettes. Dim red control panel light casts long, wavering shadows as a sinister, amorphous figure slowly creeps toward Don Manuel, whose eyes widen with fear and defiance. With a shaky, half-wry smile, he mutters something to the audience. Aunt Juanita steps forward, her expression calm yet determined. Raising her arms, she intones in a clear, resonant voice, "¡Que la luz de nuestros espíritus ahuyente la sombra del olvido!". Her ancient incantation echoes through the room, blending with the crackle of static and the creature's low, menacing hum amid deep shadows and pulsating red light. Every detail hints at a battle between fate and desperate magic. What chilling element here makes you wonder if Aunt Juanita's spell is a true safeguard or merely a last desperate attempt to stave off the inevitable? What is the last thing we see and hear before the tape ends with a white static?



U'n'i 02 Who Let You In?

an Odyssey Tape by dión // isle in the heavens

This tape is an episode of *U'n'i*, an overseas kids show that had a short-lived syndication run on TV Odyssey until it became clear that the foreign humor didn't land with domestic audiences. An adult woman in an ill-fitting, baby blue sheep costume stands in a sparsely decorated living room, next to a floating cartoon eyeball.

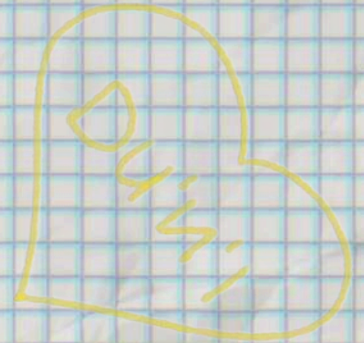


Hey friends!

I'm Ewe! This is Eye!

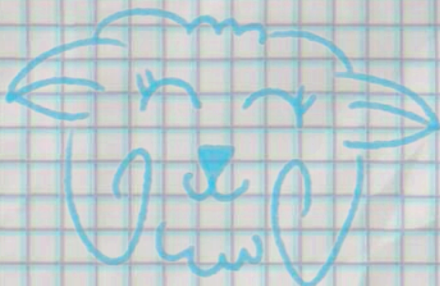
And together we're Ewe and Eye!

- 1** While the audio has been dubbed into English by the network, the original subtitles seem to be burnt into the video. Even though you don't speak that language, how can you tell some concerning liberties have been taken with the translation of Eye's introductory monologue?



- 2** **Paint the Scene:** *[Directly address a player, not their Latchkey.]* While Ewe and Eye discuss what to do today, a household item from your immediate surroundings walks into frame, complete with face and puppet extremities. What ill-advised lesson is it teaching the both of them against their will?

- 3** In the middle of a scene the view cuts to footage of a real sheep with blue fur and a bloody eyeball rolling along the floor. Nothing in the dialogue acknowledges this change. When the original video feed suddenly returns, which little detail in the scenery remains from this brief detour into hyperrealism?



- 4** As the outro theme starts playing, the camera pans out of the living room set and onto the studio audience, zooming ever closer toward one individual. Where have you seen their face, twisted with pain, before?

A COLLECTION OF ODYSSEY TAPES BY MAGS MAENAD

Meister Stein Shows Franco the Miracle of Life

This tape comprises several Life Lessons, which were short clips played to pad out the hour when an advertiser fell through. They featured a broadcast executive's son, Franco, asking his elderly German neighbor, "Meister Stein", questions, which the old man was somehow always ready to answer with a scholarly lecture, complete with demonstrations and interactive activities.

1. **Paint the Scene:** Franco always seems to interrupt Meister Stein working in his garage, bent over a vaguely feminine form laying shrouded on a cluttered workbench. What familiar pieces of technology do you see on Meister Stein's workbench?
2. In one of the first segments, Franco is visibly upset due to a wrist injury that has his arm in a sling, but Meister Stein is animated, using the boy's healthy arm to demonstrate how the application of pressure or electricity in the right places can make the hand move in spite of itself. He then carefully withdraws a loosely arm-shaped mechanism from his project now, and passes it to Franco. What emotion do you see in the old man's eyes as the boy explores the motion of the delicately painted digits for the first time?
3. In later Lessons, Meister Stein typically gives Franco a more complete anatomy lecture with a conclusion relevant to the boy's athletic performance. Today, the old man loses his patience, leaving Franco alone in the garage with the body on the workbench for the first time. What equipment gives the project a distinctly medical appearance at its present stage?
4. In the final lesson, when Franco goes to visit Meister Stein, the garage is nearly empty, except for the body on the bench, the old man, and a few scattered pieces of equipment. The man greets Franco warmly, asking for his help. Franco follows directions, and after a minute, the body from the workbench sits up. A few minutes later, a familiar Side Character walks out of the garage. Who is it?

Deep Lake Dreams - Animatronic Ambitions

This tape features an episode of Deep Lake Dreams, an uplifting interview series featuring local students and their families. This episode opens on Stella Sanchez, a serious 14-year-old girl. She is holding a joystick and a kalimba-like arrangement of limitswitches, which were stuck together using hot glue and half-melted electrical tape. She stands in her living room in front of her parents and a collection of broken bike parts in the shape of a dog. As you watch, she calls "Bosco, sit" over her shoulder as her fingers fly over her makeshift controls and the mechanical pile behind her stands, shakes, and sits obediently, cocking its head and staring into the camera with interest. The interviewer, for his part, raves to the camera about Stella's skill building animatronics from recycled materials.

1. **Paint the Scene:** Stella's parents are seated in a cozy conversation pit. It's clear that the mechanical beast regularly makes itself comfortable here. What evidence is there that Stella does not feel as welcome?
2. When the interviewer begins his questions, Stella's mom makes an excuse to send Stella away and Stella's dad begins a long-winded anecdote. Stella never answers. What was Stella going to say before she was interrupted by her parents?
3. When the interviewer follows up, weeks later, both parents are excited, raving about a scholarship offer Stella received, conditional on her nearly immediate enrollment, in spite of her youth. For her part, Stella sits slumped in a chair, the elaborate control panel from before reduced to a handful of buttons and a few electrodes taped to her arm. What is Stella pushing herself to complete before she leaves?
4. The last time the interviewer tries to follow up, he cannot get into the house. Bosco lunges, gnashing metal teeth as the interviewer approaches the door, and Stella's mom apologetically steps outside to talk with him. She asks the interviewer to leave, but relays that by all accounts Stella is excelling in her summer program. They are so happy for her, even if they haven't been able to control Bosco since she left. What are Stella's parents hiding?

Sleepaway Survivor? Pure-White Setup

This tape contains clips from *Sleepaway Singalong*, interrupted with sections of static and VHS distortion. *Singalong* is set in a cabin for a teen girls' music-themed summer camp, and features a cast of girls living together and the constant stream of songs they select to play for each other. CDs and vinyl records are stashed anywhere there's room to store them, and various turntables and CD players litter the flat surfaces of the room. Somewhat out of place is a prominent computer monitor with an IRC chat constantly scrolling on screen. Chat logs have been overlaid onto the video footage, always pertaining directly to the actions behind them, though whether that's because of clever editing or because the chat had early access to the raw footage from the cabin cannot be determined.

1. **Paint the Scene:** The shelves also contain dozens of trinkets. What gifts indicate the inappropriate attention these girls already receive from adult men?
2. This clip starts with a promo shot of the eight girls, posed in the cabin, before fading in on them chatting about which female lead singer has the most star power. In the overlaid chat logs, a fan says "pigtails is the best", referring to a girl from the promo shot with messy pigtails under oversized headphones. Before long, the phrase gets picked up by other users, and soon it fills the screen: "pigtails is the best pigtails is the best pigtails best pigtails best girl pigtails best girl". What song does the girl who goes to change the track put on and what does she use as a weapon as she turns on "Pigtails"?
3. This clip starts with the familiar promo shot with three girls scratched roughly out. The chat logs show men placing bets on who will be eliminated next. Behind the text, the uneasy peace between the five battered survivors breaks. What tracks jockey for place as each girl scrambles to put their song next in queue, and how does the victor sacrifice her physical safety to ensure the win?
4. By the time a form on screen emerges from the snow that corrupts the final clip, the final girl is limping, panting and blood drenched, to a turntable, looking up occasionally to read the IRC channel with a faint frown. What track does she finally choose, and how is she enjoying it when the men from the channel start knocking on the cabin door?



Public Access Mysteries

FROM HANK BELANGER

FADING MAGAZINE FRIENDSHIP



FADING FRIENDSHIP

Note: This is a Side Mystery. It is introduced like other Mysteries, but does not count towards the limit of three active Mysteries. There can only be one active Side Mystery. After the Presentation of the Mystery, the Latchkeys can choose to decline to investigate with no consequences, and the Mystery disappears into the ether.

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Pose to the table: *Someone slipped a letter under the door of 26 Rodenbecker Street. Which Latchkey is this letter addressed to?*

It reads: "It's been a long time. I'm sorry about what happened to us back then, but I'm willing to put the past behind us. We had so many good memories. Just thinking about the past... I'm sorry about how it ended. Since you're back in town, I'd like to try to make up for all the lost time. Let me know if you'd like to try again, too."

"Your Friend"

Pose to the other Latchkeys: *Come to think of it, what's something you've forgotten or misplaced recently?*

Whoever this Friend is, you don't remember them or can't think of who it could be. But this memory loss seems to be spreading, and who knows where it will end. Almost as an afterthought, you check the address of the envelope. It's from 18 Rodenbecker Street.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Is the Friend a malevolent stalker or a lost childhood playmate? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Unlocks the next appropriate question.

Question: If the Friend is a malevolent stalker, why are they obsessed with the Latchkey? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by capturing or banishing the Friend.

Question: If the Friend is a lost childhood playmate, what caused the rift between them and the Latchkey? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by convincing the Friend to come home or accept that they've moved on.

Special Rule: The Friend is always at the edge of perception. At any time, a Latchkey can say, "I sense the presence of the Friend." If they do so, any Clues the

Latchkey uncovered in the scene will come from this Mystery sheet (or applied to this Mystery for Clues the players create, such as during the Nostalgic Move).

Special Rule: If using the Skinny Jeans ruleset, the Latchkeys cannot gain an Odyssey Clue from answering the Threshold Question with a 12+.

THE KEY UNDER THE DOORMAT

- Each Latchkey recalls a time they ran into someone from their childhood in Deep Lake. Did either of you recognize the other? How did you both feel?

MOMENTS

- > An old home movie of a Latchkey at a birthday party. This can count as a Clue on a successful Meddling Move.
 - > **Paint the Scene:** Name one guest at the party. Who were they? What happened to them after you left Deep Lake?
- > A Polaroid flutters down from the sky. It shows you as a child.
- > Someone waves at you. Then you realize they're waving to a person behind you.
- > A window blind on the house across the street snaps shut as soon as you look towards it.
- > Someone approaches, excitedly asking how you've been and knows you by name. You don't remember theirs.
- > The sound of someone moving in the crawl space beneath your feet.

THE FRIEND

When nearby, the Friend feels like someone just outside your peripheral vision. If a Latchkey has the **Chromatic Desert** marked, they can perceive the Friend as an outline of television static. They remain at a distance until the first question is answered, either due to shyness or difficulty in directly reaching out to our reality.

If the Latchkeys ignore the Friend ...

If the Friend is a forgotten childhood playmate, they eventually fade into the Pure White Signal, leeching more of the Latchkey's memories. If the Friend is a stalker, it attempts to abduct the Latchkey to the other side with them. **After 5 Night Phases**, the Latchkeys must cross out a Key of the Child, marked or unmarked (their choice) as they lose that memory. The Friend is gone forever.



DANGERS

Memory Loss

The proximity of the Friend saps the memories of those around them. The Latchkeys may forget Corner of the House items, lost as car keys or TV remotes in the liminal depths of couch cushions. People will forget responsibilities, skills, and each other, leading to terrified confrontations and accidents resulting in tragedy.

Disorientation

The proximity also bends space and time around it. People feel like they've "teleported" to unfamiliar places as miles cross in a blink. Hallways stretch on seemingly indefinitely, as if the distance continued to divide in half forever in mind-bending displays of Zeno's Paradox.

LOCATIONS

18 Rodenbecker Street, Outside

Unkempt lawn. Peeling paint. A labyrinthine yard sale stretching from the curb, across the lawn, up the driveway, and into the depths of the garage.

Paint the Scene: *What treasures hide amidst the junk?*

18 Rodenbecker Street, Inside

Nauseating yellow wallpaper. A smell like burnt toast lingering beneath dust. Stacks of stored junk slowly decreasing, yet still posing the threat of an avalanche.

Paint the Scene: *What signs of a loving family are buried under refuse and overflow?*

Deep Lake United States Post Office

Decades' worth of government posters plastered over each other. The smell of adhesive. Cramped, crowded, and stuffy despite a rickety ceiling fan.

Paint the Scene: *The post office is overflowing with mail despite the town's small population. What package or letter won't get delivered?*

×A Latchkey's Old Home

The Latchkey describes the general location and type of residence they lived in back in the day. The other Latchkeys describe one detail about its current state. Unless it's impossible, there's an old TV and VCR present.

Special Rule: If the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey tape here, the end of the tape features one of the details from Layer Two of the TV Odyssey sheet (The Strange History of Degoya County) from the perspective of a handheld camcorder. Pose the following **Paint the Scene:** *How do we know the one filming this is deeply alone?*

The first time they watch a tape here, the last scene cuts to a rear shot of the Latchkeys watching the TV. Looking behind them reveals no one there. Looking back, the TV is nothing but static.

Side Characters

78



LOVE
& WAR

AT THE REN FAIRE.

By
Pat Eyeler

----- LOVE & WAR AT THE REN FAIRE -----

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

A previous Side Character shows up at the Latchkeys' house on Rodenbecker Street one morning, asking for help. They went to the Ren Faire with a friend the other day. Now this friend is professing undying love and asking for a token of their favor. The friend has followed them here. They pound on the door, demanding in strangely archaic terms that the recurring character be released.

Ask the following of one of the Latchkeys: It's not just the language that's odd, but the tone. How does the demand sound like a threat, and what makes you feel like they'll act on it?

Staged in a valley between Deep Lake and La Fresca, the Ren Faire is a colorful part of Degoya County. This year, it's getting some bad press. Word around Deep Lake is that attendees are exhibiting extreme emotions. Fights have broken out at the Faire grounds and beyond. Something is fanning the flames of powerful emotions in the faire-goers.

Ask another latchkey: You've recently seen a disagreement at the mall spiral out of control. How do you know it was caused by whatever's happening at the Ren Faire?

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What is triggering the unusual emotions among the faire-goers? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Unlocks the next question.

Question: How can the source of these emotions be stopped from infecting anyone else? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by stopping the source and cleansing the Faire grounds.

Emotions Run Amok

Something is seriously wrong at the Degoya County Ren Faire. Many attendees, entertainers, and staff are experiencing extreme emotional responses to normal events and have taken to wearing Ren Faire costumes in their lives outside the Faire. It's up to the Latchkeys to discover the cause of this and put an end to it. A few things are certain though: no one has been affected without being on the Faire grounds, the change is real and lasting, and those affected do not acknowledge that there is a change in their behavior.

If the Latchkeys ignore the issue ...

Outbursts of extreme emotion become more frequent throughout Degoya County. The co-anchors of the morning radio show get into a fight about who gets to introduce a song, leading one to shoot the other on air. A marriage counselor corners one of their clients at a fast food restaurant and proposes to them. Local authorities don't take action because they, too, are affected.

THE KEY OF DEEP FEELINGS

- Narrate a flashback to when you expressed heightened and/or unexpected emotions in a situation that normally wouldn't evoke them.

MOMENTS

- > A group of Star Trek cosplayers are surrounded by angry faire-goers bearing rattan swords. Violence is imminent.
- > A figure dressed in a plague doctor costume holds out a rat, wriggling in their hand. They ask passers-by to kiss it to ward off the plague.
- > Someone dressed as Robin Hood darts between two tents, a gaudy purse clutched in their hand. A voice calls out from the crowd, "Thief!"
- > A child slaps another with a glove and calls out, "I will have satisfaction." The second child pulls out a wicked-looking knife and assumes a fighting crouch.
- > Two performers dressed as the Bard hurl Shakespearean insults at one another. The crowd is taking sides.
- > Loud banging draws attention to a lone port-a-potty. A stick is jammed into the latch. From within, someone bellows, "Let me out!"

DANGERS

Out of Control Emotions

Affected faire-goers may focus their attention on one or more of the Latchkeys. This could take the form of challenging them to a duel, stalking, or even violence. Any such interactions will be slathered in Ye Olde English. The Keeper will also have access to a special Condition: **Unbalanced Humors**, which magnifies the affected Latchkey's emotions and hampers their ability to act with Composure.

SPECIAL RULE

Until the Latchkeys have resolved this mystery, the Big Man will dress in "medieval" analogs to his normal clothing. He will not admit to this being different.

LOCATIONS

Parking Lot

Dry and dusty. Cars parked haphazardly. Poles with heraldic banners mark sections of the parking area. Long line of port-a-potties with longer lines of people.

Paint the Scene: Somehow, people on their way into the faire seem different from those leaving it. How do the ones leaving the faire seem more emotionally charged?

Entry Gate

Two-story gate, with a false stonework facade. A portcullis hangs over the entry. Windows on each tower are staffed by ticket takers in fairy or medieval costumes. Entertainers work the crowd, juggling and eating fire, as the people wait to enter.

Paint the Scene: The entryway is a liminal space between the outside world and the faire where emotions naturally run high - fear, impatience, anger, etc. How do the faire-goers exhibit these emotions in even minor interactions?

Groundlings Theatre

A stage stands above the yard where the audience stands. The floor is strawed. It smells of spilled drink and sweat. Enclosed by plywood walls painted to look like wood panels.

Paint the Scene: The most recent entertainment staged here devolved into bloodshed between entertainers and audience. What signs of struggle were missed in the cleanup?

× Break Tent

Entering this tent is like stepping back into the present. A VCR, a game console, and a TV stand against one wall. An old couch, mounded with multi-colored pillows, faces the TV. A microwave sits atop a minifridge in one corner.

Paint the Scene: The Ren Faire actors look down on the faire-goers. This is amplified by the current situation. How does this manifest inside the tent?

Special Rule: Any Odyssey Tape watched here will be badly reskinned in faux-medieval trappings. Characters featured in the video will also be affected by whatever is causing the problems at the Faire. Narration shouldst be littered with thees, thous, haths, and the like.

When the tape is over, as an act of extreme emotion, the Latchkeys can reassign an unused Clue from any active or resolved Mystery to any active Mystery. Narrate how this fervor is expressed.

Ye Fairy's Gift

Racks of fancy blouses. Tables spread with leather bags, hats, and assorted jewelry. A large vase overflowing with peacock feathers.

Paint the Scene: Taking a gift from a fairy is said to always come with strings attached. What item catches your eye, and what hidden price is attached to it? Do you buy it anyway?

Paint the Scene: *Brother Carrick, the resident fortune teller, has stopped doing readings due to the influence affecting the Faire. How do you feel oppressed by this influence?*

- ☐ A heart-shaped locket with pictures of two lovers inside, one in each half. One of them has been scratched through.
- ☐ An arrow with unusual fletching, someone's name is scratched into the shaft.
- ☐ A playbill from one of the attractions at last year's faire. "Never Again" is scrawled across the page.
- ☐ A waterlogged copy of the La Fresca High School 1986 yearbook.
- ☐ A monocle with a red-tinted lens, looking through it reveals hidden, threatening horrors.
- ☐ A blood-stained chainmail coif, the blood won't wash off.
- ☐ A bouquet of dead, wilted flowers. Their colors are brighter and more vibrant when alive though.
- ☐ A coupon for a free turkey leg, a phone number written on the back.
- ☐ Polaroid photos of someone in different locations at the Faire. They seem unaware they are being photographed.
- ☐ A doll made of knotted cloth, with a hat pin driven through its dried-apple head. It looks like a Side Character.
- ☐ A stray dog sleeps in the shade. It suddenly wakes, barking and snarling at nothing.
- ☐ A talking toy parrot with wire talons to "perch" it on your shoulder. It only says one phrase.
- ☐ A bag of chocolate gold coins, each of which has a bite taken from it.
- ☐ A small stage make-up set, the mirror still shows the horrified face of the last person to use it.
- ☐ A home-made CD of monastic chants, sung over the soundtrack to Halloween 3.
- ☐ A clay pipe and a pouch of tobacco, runes spelling Dandalf are pressed into the clay.
- ☐ A map of the Faire Grounds showing several locations that don't exist.
- ☐ A hand-written screed on yellowed paper claims that the Lady of the Faire is actually (choose one: a usurper, a faerie, bewitched, or something of the Keeper's devising).

- Quote:** “The Faire is different now. The crowds are uglier. It’s like they want someone to get hurt. Maybe I’ll skip it next year and try the faires in Arizona.” But I guess that’s kind of the point.”

[illegible]

CASSIDY HADLOCK

NUTERRA

GIRLIE 3000

GIRLIE 3000

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Some weeks ago, the for sale sign at 32 Rodenbecker Street disappeared. New neighbors moved in—transplants from Utah. The next day, they came by with a plate of cookies to introduce themselves: Autumn and August Allen, along with their children Auctober, Austyn, Aunya, Aurcher, Auria, Aulive, and baby Auzzy. They seemed nice enough, maybe a bit preoccupied with what you all do for work. They own a business.

Then more people moved in. 11 Rodenbecker Street. 29 Rodenbecker Street. 42 Rodenbecker Street. And most recently, 8 Rodenbecker Street. All of them are from Utah. Each time, they come over with a plate of cookies. The Jensens. The Nielsons. The Hansens. The next time you see them, the women have changed. You could swear that you saw Autumn at first, but they just have their hair dyed the same shade of blonde. Huh.

So it turns out Autumn and August Allen are representatives for NuTerra: a health and wellness multi-level marketing company. Their flagship product is NuTerra Nurish. Autumn wedges it into every conversation, and it seems to be working. All the new neighbors use it! And it seems like everyone you meet is either using Nurish or signing up to be NuTerra sales reps themselves.

A few days ago, Autumn brought a sample of NuTerra Strengthn along with a batch of cupcakes. She invited you all to a “Wellness Party”.

Ask the Latchkeys: Which one of you accepted the invitation to Autumn’s party? Why couldn’t you say no?

Sweets and NuTerra products are tastefully displayed in Autumn’s living room. The new neighbors are all there too. Autumn introduces the women who are part of her team, as well as their disinterested husbands. Other invitees crowd in, and the team gets to work selling the miracle that will solve every problem: Nuterra.

Ask the Latchkey with the highest Vitality: During the party, what gives away that these women are robots?

The invitees start buying. They start drinking and lotioning and remedying themselves. And then...

Ask the Latchkey with the highest Reason: What changes about the other invitees makes you sure that they are being brainwashed?

The party wraps up, and everyone goes home. Autumn makes sure to invite you to her next party in a week’s time. Over the next few days, you see more bottle blondes.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Can the robots be convinced to stop?

(Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Unlocks the next appropriate question.

Question: If the robots cannot be convinced to stop, where do they charge every night? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by deprogramming the robots while they are powered down.

Question: If the robots can be convinced to stop, how do NuTerra products brainwash people?

(Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by working with the robots to disrupt the process or otherwise make an antidote to the brainwashing.

THE KEY OF DISAPPOINTMENT

- Each Latchkey narrates a time when they put their blood, sweat, and tears into something that ultimately left them worse off.

NuTerra

The predatory MLM company wants to grow. When new recruits sign up to become sales people, the ones with promise are whisked away to their manufacturing plant and incrementally changed from humans to cyborgs to robots. This process makes them the property of NuTerra.

If the Latchkeys ignore the NuTerra ...

More people around Deep Lake will either join the business opportunity, or become NuTerra’s brainwashed customers. The robotic sales reps will become more forceful and prolific. Complete market share is the goal, no matter the cost.

MOMENTS

- > A woman gives the sales pitch for NuTerra Nurish. It’s a bio-competitive, yeast inhibitive, neo-aging, allergy balancing, instant, circumbacterial, patent pending, pre-tox supplement! It can be ingested, brushed into hair, used as an ear wash, applied under the tongue, or even soaked into a tampon! Really, there’s no way not to use it!
- > A young child drops a glass, and all the women turn to the child and say in unison, “It’s okay. Here, mix it with some Nurish. It makes everything better!”
- > A husband pauses while speaking. He looks like a stage actor who’s forgotten his lines.
- > Autumn compliments another woman’s outfit. After the woman leaves, Autumn says under her breath: “I wouldn’t be caught dead wearing that.”
- > A woman is speaking to a small group of potential customers and recruits. When interrupted, she begins her sales pitch from the beginning. It is the exact same every time.
- > A Latchkey tries to make a call within range of a robot: Their phone cannot connect.

DANGERS

The Robots’ Programming

Though programmed to maintain their former human personalities, NuTerra has ensured that all of their robots prioritize furthering the reach of the company and improving its bottom line. They do not tolerate slander, destruction of property, or any action that could be construed as harmful to NuTerra. They can disrupt electronics, they have enhanced senses, and possess superhuman strength.

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

The arguments for NuTerra are persuasive. One of the robots may try to single out a Latchkey and to recruit them to her team. If they do, have the Latchkey roll the **Night Move**. On a 7-9 or a miss, the Latchkey gains the Condition: **A Business Opportunity**. While they have this Condition, the Latchkey may choose to spend the Night Phase “Making Rank” while this mystery is active.

During the Night Phase, this player will narrate a scene in which a part of their Latchkey is replaced by its robotic equivalent. During the next Dawn Phase, the Latchkey will take -1 from whichever stat feels appropriate. Add the robotic body double to their Corner of the House; it does not get marked when using it to gain advantage on a roll. This Condition cannot be cleared while the mystery is active, and “Making Rank” can be pursued more than once.

GIRLIE 3000

LOCATIONS

32 Rodenbecker Street

Home of Autumn and August Allen. It's a wonder so many children live here; not a thing out of place! So many modern amenities! NuTerra products are tastefully displayed throughout every homey room.

Paint the Scene: *In what surprising way is Autumn's home welcoming?*

11 Rodenbecker Street

Home of Makynna and Roper Jensen. Dark, moody colors bathe the walls. Every piece of furniture is draped in soft textiles. The front and back porches are screened in, creating a buffer against the outside world. Half-used NuTerra products accent most of the rooms.

Paint the Scene: *What evidence has Roper failed to hide concerning his late night engagements with the neighbors' husbands?*

29 Rodenbecker Street

Home of Mykayleigh and Porter Nielsen. Granite countertops, sleek white furniture, and a slight echo. The house smells of bergamot and lavender. The common areas are stiff, and the decor is abstract if not useless. The only photo is of Mykayleigh and Autumn celebrating her first time ranking up in NuTerra.

Paint the Scene: *How can you tell that the Nielsens are entirely broke?*

42 Rodenbecker Street

Home of Mikraelynn and Dallin Hansen. NuTerra clutter churns from one spot to another. It's an eclectic home without direction or taste. The fridge is well stocked with snacks, and the furniture is comfortable.

Paint the Scene: *In what subtle ways does Mikraelynn's suppressed frustration with life manifest?*

8 Rodenbecker Street

Home of Nayvie and Braeden Peterson. Live, Laugh, Love decor. Moving boxes yet to be unpacked. Lots of pictures of the couple. The smallest house on the street; builder grade and slightly unfinished.

Paint the Scene: *How can you tell that Braeden hates what Nayvie is becoming?*

Side Characters

Autumn Allen, the upline

Blonde, blue eyes, boob job. A tiny leather bag and a 44 oz dirty Dr. Pepper. Smiles easily. Highly tuned to social cues and human expression, she picks up on the slightest emotions of people around her. That's the key to her success with NuTerra.

Quote: *"I'm probably the least qualified person for a job like this. I didn't have any sales experience either, and now I'm my own boss! We'll train you and add you to a group that will cheer you on along the way. Will you at least consider it?"*

August Allen, the supportive husband

Square shoulders, a cleft chin, and a voice like honey. August lights up whenever he sees Autumn. He's either blissfully unaware of his wife's robotic nature, or loves her enough that he doesn't care. A man's man, interested only in grilling, football, and the proper way to fix a leaky faucet.

Quote: *"Oh yeah, now we're cooking with gas! Hey: be a pal and hold this for a second? Gotta go grab some tools—looks like that chair is wobbling just a bit."*

Makynna Jensen, the enthusiast

Blonde, blue eyes, boob job. Curious by Britney Spears and Ed Hardy sunglasses. Comes to tears when talking about NuTerra. She's a true believer and thinks she owes her life to Autumn.

Quote: *"Becoming the mom of Deseret Rae really opened my eyes to all the chemicals that are everywhere. We put so much garbage in and on our bodies. I am so blessed that NuTerra brought light to my life."*

Roper Jensen. Black skinny jeans, pierced dimples, a shameless flirt.

Mykayleigh Nielsen, the greenhorn

Blonde, blue eyes, boob job. Pink Juicy Couture tracksuit and chunky highlights. The newest member of the team. Worries that she isn't committed enough to NuTerra—she's putting in 60 hour weeks with little to show for it. Mykayleigh is equipped with extra battery capacity, so she's already working harder than the others.

Quote: *"NuTerra sent us new order forms on Tuesday and said they are effective immediately. But I saw that Autumn was still using the old ones! I had to stay up all night fixing it...don't tell her I told you that!"*

Porter Nielsen. Flip flop tan lines, piercing laugh, used to do summer pest control sales.

Mikraelynn Hansen, the team player

Blonde, blue eyes, boob job. Constant gum smacking and bubble popping. Wedges and layered lace camis. Mikraelynn has extra sensory receivers, so she can easily keep tabs on what's going on around her. Lives for managing drama and relishes in conflict.

Quote: *"The amazing thing is that I get to work from home doing what I- LAKYNN STOP TOUCHING YOUR SISTER! Sorry, I do what I love. I get to- OH MY HECK TAYCEE THAT IS NOT THE BEHAVIOR I EXPECT OF YOU!"*

Dallin Hansen. Heavy freckles, isn't the brightest bulb, calls everyone 'my guy'.

Nayvie Peterson, the prospect.

Brunette, blue eyes, freckles. The girl next door. Still early in the process of ranking up in NuTerra, she hasn't been machined into a robot—yet. Nayvie is unsure if this is the right path, but she doesn't see any way out—she's already invested so much time and money.

Quote: *"No, I'm really excited to reach Platinum Director. NuTerra flies you out to their manufacturing plant. It's like a leadership thing, but I've heard that it just really changes you. But I guess that's kind of the point."*

Braeden Peterson. Tattooed rose sleeve, bleached hair, actively avoids conversation.

REWARDS

- ☐ Nayvie Peterson becomes a recurring Side Character. When you get her help to sell something (a product, an idea, an opportunity...), make the roll with advantage.
- ☐ A super computer chip from one of the robots. Add it to your Corner of the House.
- ☐ A box of NuTerra products. Ask another Latchkey the name of it, and add it to your Corner of the House.
- ☐ Roper Jensen's phone number. Add it to your Corner of the House.
- ☐ A memento from the investigation. Ask another Latchkey what it is and add it to your Corner of the House.
- ☐ A memento from the investigation. Ask another Latchkey what it is and add it to your Corner of the House.

NOTES

- ☐ An ingredient list with several lines redacted.
- ☐ Rumors of a top rep leaving NuTerra for Am Living.
- ☐ An odd string of numbers in an unusual place.
- ☐ A highly technical mechanical manual, no. 2 of 14.
- ☐ Electrical scorch marks that have been hastily painted over.
- ☐ A Deep Lake phone book. Numbers are crossed off through the last name Garcia.
- ☐ A floppy disk drive in an unusual place.
- ☐ Lab results from a research facility in Salt Lake City, unopened.
- ☐ A woman's eyes flashes like it is scanning.
- ☐ An unopened sample of an unreleased NuTerra product.
- ☐ The radio jumps frequency every few seconds.
- ☐ A brain in a jar.
- ☐ House blueprints that make no architectural sense.
- ☐ A side character blurts out a nonsense word: banana, Julius Caesar, iridescent, etc.
- ☐ Words overheard: "Do you think you can get more blood in time?"
- ☐ A receipt to a hardware store for a massive amount of screws.
- ☐ Rumors that the next line of NuTerra products will be injections.
- ☐ Children play with dolls, acting out a horrific procedure.
- ☐ A kitchen appliance sparks when not in use. The electrical circuits are fried.
- ☐ The smell of burnt car oil.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



BURNING 4 U

A PUBLIC ACCESS MYSTERY
BY RAYMOND RICH

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

This morning, while running an errand or grabbing groceries, the Latchkeys chanced across Deep Lake's own minor sports celebrity: Davey "Nitro" Neuman. Davey bounced around multiple professional football teams having only modest success. After a bit of polite small talk, Davey claims to be in Deep Lake rehabbing an injury during the off-season. He swears by the results he's seen at Donna Kay's AerobiX InfernO and thinks he can get signed for the coming season when walk-on tryouts open.

Davey doesn't remember anything about TV Odyssey, and chalks it up to being too busy after school with football practice and struggling to pass algebra. He doesn't speak of it uncharitably, but you can hear the words a younger Davey Neuman and his entourage would use to describe such fringe pursuits. It's hard not to hold a grudge, to not look him in the eyes and see a legacy of intimidation and misdirected frustration.

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the highest Composure (or whoever you wish in the case of a tie): *Davey wasn't a particularly imaginative bully. How did you turn the tables on him and earn his respect if not outright friendship?*

Now, just a few hours later, he stands on the doorstep of your house on Rodenbecker Street, wide-eyed, glancing about furtively, and quivering with fear. He looks like he's been asked to read his essay in front of the class. Davey believes that Donna Kay's AerobiX InfernO is run by witches, something he calls "The Coven Caprine," and that they have marked him to participate in an upcoming ritual they call "The Dance McRib." You're pretty sure he means "Danse Macabre," but it's probably not the best time for that lesson.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Who has been chosen to be the Coven's sacrifice? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by rescuing the target and spiriting them out of Degoya County under cover of darkness. The Coven Caprine will be an ongoing Danger in the campaign.

Question: Who has been chosen to be the Coven's next Matron Mother? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by confronting the new leader of the coven and convincing them to abort their ritual. The Coven Caprine will be an ongoing Danger in the campaign.

Question: When will the Danse Macabre ritual be performed? (Complexity: 8)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by disrupting the ritual and foiling the Coven's dread plans. The Coven Caprine will cease being an ongoing Danger in the campaign.

THE COVEN CAPRINE

The Coven Caprine is rumored to have been brought to Degoya County by a wandering conquistador who studied the occult at the infamous Black School beneath Salamanca before journeying to the New World. While its provenance is questionable, it seems to have always been active in Degoya County in some form, ranging from debauched social club to underground revolutionary network.

Today, it functions more like a multi-level marketing scheme than anything else, with new recruits learning minor rituals and alchemical formulae to provide reagents used by those above them in the hierarchy. Most don't believe there's any real magic at work here, but swear by the results. All the pills, diets, and workouts that failed to deliver lasting change previously are now just components in a greater working that seemingly achieves the impossible. The truly faithful are ready for any test, and would rather die than go back to their old, disappointing lives.

The Coven is always led by a Matron Mother, a term more symbolic than literal. People of various genders and dispositions have held the title. Theirs is a form of noblesse oblige, as they are charged with maintaining the physical and spiritual growth of the Coven. The Matron Mother's word is law, however, and sometimes a bad apple must be ruthlessly culled to avoid spoiling the whole bunch.

If the Latchkeys ignore the Coven Caprine ...

Eventually, the Danse Macabre will be performed at the appointed hour, irrevocably changing the course of history. People will die and fortunes will change hands in a fiery conflagration. Whatever the details, the Matron Mother of the Coven Caprine will cement their power for another generation. Perhaps it was always meant to be.

DANGERS

The Danse Macabre

The "Dance of Death" is an artistic expression of the universality of death, transcending class and culture. From ragpicker to emperor, everyone dances to the grave eventually.

The Coven Caprine has unearthed a dance that serves as an arcane ritual, a sort of group somatic manipulation of personal and environmental energies to channel thought and emotion into the fabric of reality, changing its shape like a cat's cradle woven from the threads of fate. If their motives were pure, there wouldn't be anything to worry about. A few Coven members are well versed in lesser incantations, ranging from a simple gesture to invoke a sudden stumble to more elaborate routines that can cloud minds or break bones.

Mater Sudorum - Our Lady of Sweat

One of Our Ladies of Sorrow referenced by Thomas de Quincey in his opium-fueled ravings, Mater Sudorum has been all but forgotten by occult scholars. The Coven sought her patronage sometime around the invention of the television, when all the wonders of the world seemed already within reach.

Mater Sudorum promised a variation on the American Dream, but her principles were less about the nobility of toil or stoicism and more about shared adversity, the unity of rippling muscle and focused will turning the Wheel of Fortune with Sisyphean determination.

Should Mater Sudorum become aware of the Latchkeys, they will glimpse her as a sense of movement on the periphery, a hurried figure having moved just out of sight. She will test them. Stairs will feel steeper. Burdens will feel heavier. Temperatures will feel warmer. Through it all, the incessant pounding of their own heartbeat, just slightly but noticeably off from its usual rhythm as if struggling to keep pace with someone or something else. This attention can result in Conditions or taking rolls with Disadvantage as the Keeper deems appropriate.

MOMENTS

- > A flash mob of diverse individuals converge in the middle of the street, blocking traffic to perform the Electric Slide without musical accompaniment. The mob disperses as suddenly and wordlessly as they assembled.
- > The cloying stench of burnt rubber from some local hooligans in muscle cars doing donuts in the empty parking lot before peeling out and driving away.
- > Two apparent strangers begin eyefucking each other across a crowded room, one of them gone silent mid-conversation, suddenly oblivious to everything and everyone around them.
- > A reflection in a mirror or other shiny surface seems to move just a few seconds too late... or too soon.
- > A tanning bed, steam room, bath, swimming pool, or shower rapidly becomes dangerously hot.
- > Judas Priest's "Turbo Lover" fills the club during a "Box Office Blockbuster Bash" to celebrate the summer solstice. Revelers wear costumes inspired by popular film franchises, past and present.

THE KEY OF THE CRUCIBLE

- Each Latchkey narrates a flashback when they made a painful, pointless sacrifice for somebody else.

BURNING 4 U

LOCATIONS

Donna Kay's AerobiX InfernO

Once a sheetrock plant, purchased on the cheap by Donna after an ecological impact study freed the property up for sale. Brick walls and hardwood floors. Sound baffles hang on the walls and from overhead cables to divide up the open floor plan. Offices, locker rooms, showers, and utility closets in a long row down one side.

Paint the Scene (for the Latchkey with the highest Sensitivity or Keeper's choice in case of a tie): *A pay phone hangs on the brick wall outside, far from the gym entrance. As you notice it, the phone starts ringing. How do you know it is ringing for you, and who are you afraid you'll hear on the other end of the line?*

Juice Bar

A veritable altar of formica and chrome. Plastic jugs of fruit juices, ordinary and exotic. Paper cups neatly stacked. A set of framed prints depicting harlequins and ballerinas posed provocatively together. The vibe of a singles bar, but its patrons brim with a smug confidence atypical of a nightclub.

Paint the Scene: *What bizarre pick-up line do you casually overhear? Does it work?*

Gym

The rhythmic whirring of exercise bikes and rowing machines. The discordant clanking of free weights. The grunting and groaning of patrons pushing their limits. The unmistakable fragrance of sweat and sexual frustration.

Paint the Scene: *How does one of the popular pieces of exercise equipment remind you of a torture device, historical or imagined?*

Aerobics Studio

Energetic music. Rows of attractive people in tank tops, shorts, and skin tight spandex, all gyrating in practiced synchronicity. Mirrored panels line the walls to give the illusion of endless depth and numbers. Wooden floorboards polished to a bright sheen that seems wet. A raised dais-like platform at the front for instructors.

Paint the Scene: *here's something undeniably alluring in the pounding beat and sense of camaraderie. What pet project have you been procrastinating on or abandoned outright that now springs to the forefront of your mind?*

The Computer Room

One wall made up of surveillance monitors and another covered in twinkling status lights that resemble the desert sky in the dead of night. Drawer upon drawer of plastic 3½" floppy disks, color-coded with handwritten labels. Toggle switches and dials that suggest control over such unlikely concerns as "Shower Temp," "Station 38 Resistance," and "Sauna pH."

Paint the Scene: *What gives you the impression that controlling the function of a health spa was not this computer system's original design intent?*

The Loft

Bundles of razor wire taken down from the perimeter after the building was renovated. Industrial conveyor belts and rollers stacked haphazardly. Broken glass scattered like confetti after a parade. Gypsum dust that gets everywhere even after the briefest interaction.

Paint the Scene: *How does this area feel more like an ambush predator's hidden lair than merely neglected storage space?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Davey "Nitro" Neuman, an apprehensive athlete

Lean and formerly mean, now genial and grateful for the lifestyle his natural gifts and the appreciation of others have provided. Fashionable in a nondescript way, like a catalog model. Focused on football, fitness, and finances, but generally confused by or disinterested in anything and anyone outside of those concerns.

Quote: *"Sports was my ticket out of here, y'know? Never thought I'd find myself back here in Deep Lake. Certainly never thought we'd ever see each other again. I'm a better person than I was back then. I hope we all are."*

Donna Kay Barnes, the owner

Shoulder-length chestnut hair, impeccably styled. Spaghetti-strap leotard over a tank top, headband, and legwarmers, all in contrasting colors. Mischievous grin. Warm, energetic, encouraging, and inspirational. Former bricklayer and house flipper. Possesses a neophyte's understanding of parkour, capoeira, and charcuterie.

Quote: *"We're going to accomplish great things today. I can feel it in my lats."*

Alan Graham Stone, a privileged programmer

Blonde perm. Cheekbones that could cut glass. Dimpled chin. Son of a disgraced congressman. Friendly but openly suspicious. Will only drink bottled water and eat food he prepares himself. Fluent in fourteen programming languages. Drives a black Mustang SVT Cobra that he calls "The Baroness."

Quote: *"We're on the brink of Armageddon. Once it kicks off, it's going to be dog eat dog, every man... and woman... for themselves. Only the strong will survive, so I never skip leg day."*

Cheryl de Vos, CEO of Vosmetics Health & Beauty

Widow's peak dyed a bold fire engine red. A rictus grin, lipstick smearing the all-too-even teeth. An invisible halo of hairspray that condenses in your mouth if you stand too close, too long. Sheathed in pastel lycra.

Quote: *"The world is changing, and you can either change with it or be left behind. You've got to be smarter, stronger, tougher, and prettier than you were the day before. One is always competing with one's past self, first and foremost. Today's pain is tomorrow's gain."*

Ronnie Jung, an ambulance chaser

Long, jet black hair like a nest of eels eagerly consuming the light. A white sweatshirt with "GOATROBIX" across the front in puffy, black, iron-on letters. A personal injury lawyer aggressively advertised on local television and on scorpion-themed billboards across greater Degoya County. "Don't get stung. Call Ronnie Jung."

Quote: *"I helped them write the waiver you sign when you join the club, so I know that's ironclad, but that car parked outside? That headrest isn't doing your neck any favors. Lots of recalls on that model. If it's a rental, you probably won't be able to retire on the compensation, but I can probably get us Margarita money for the rest of the summer. Oh, and call me Veronique. Ronnie is for clients."*

Officer Jill Seaver, a rookie

Newly-minted Degoya County Highway Patrolperson. Long blonde hair pulled back in a tight braid. Mirrored aviator sunglasses. Jodhpurs and motorcycle boots even in casual settings. Asks twenty questions and listens to about half the answers.

Quote: *"Good sesh, guys! Rock! The world needs more people like us, people who never quit! Who never surrender! What trouble are you getting up to this weekend?"*

Samuel "Big Salami" Marley, an undercover detective

Rugged and surly. Perpetual scowl. Members Only jackets in multiple colors. A private eye hired by a distraught heiress looking for her runaway son who was last seen here, Marley joined the club less than a week ago. Smokes cigars out back by the dumpster when he thinks no one is looking. Sensitive about being nicknamed "Big Salami" by his aerobics classmates, though the staff are careful to only refer to him as "Samuel."

Quote: (hushed) *"There's more to this building than what we can see. I'm certain of it."*

Evangelical Gym Rats

Sweaty, loud, and loyal. Forged into a hive mind by sharing goals, adversity, and victories. Eager to recruit new blood for the grind. Some names, if you need them: Arnie, Denise, Jane, Kiana, Lou, Richard.



BURNING 4 U

CLUES

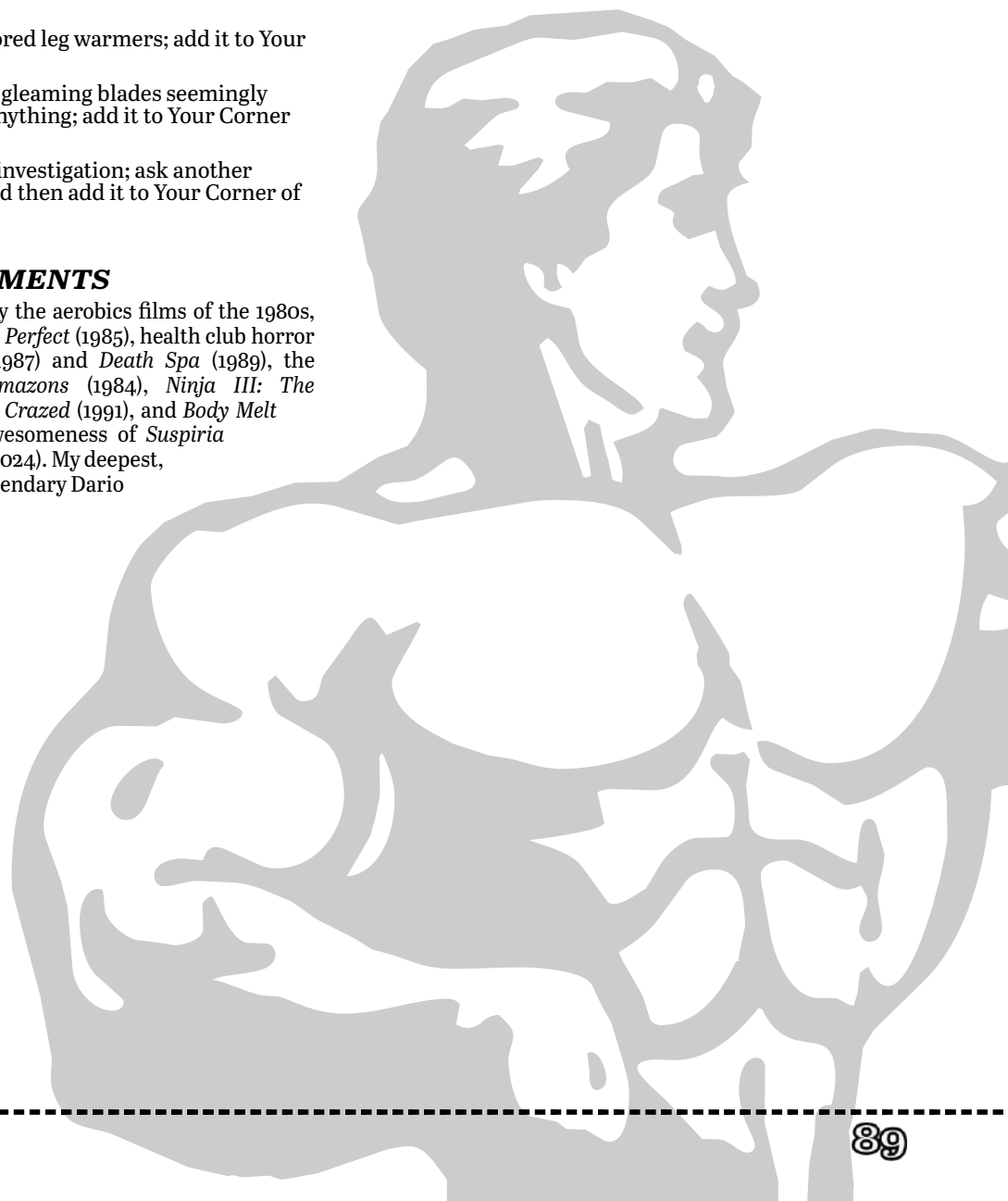
- ☐ A stack of fitness magazines with all of the eyes painstakingly cut out of the photographs.
- ☐ Powdered drink mix in an unusual flavor: Blood, Sweat, and Tears.
- ☐ A trio of black goats seemingly admire the Latchkeys from atop a paint crew's scaffolding.
- ☐ Thick fog seeps out from under a closed door.
- ☐ A CD with "Workout Mix 6" written on it in blue Sharpie but it only seems to contain a three-hour loop of "Born to Be Alive" by Patrick Hernandez, each time followed by a different three-tone electronic chime.
- ☐ The espada ropera of a notorious conquistador, surprisingly sharp.
- ☐ A singing telegram delivered by a performer dressed like a giant hot dog.
- ☐ Swimwear worn by a Side Character in an unusual place.
- ☐ A vintage copy of *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* by Thomas De Quincey with considerable hand-written notes in the margins disputing or verifying the accounts.
- ☐ Artisanal black candles rendered from human fat, ethically sourced via liposuction release forms.
- ☐ A news article showing that a Side Character, under another name, burned to death years earlier.
- ☐ A Side Character suddenly breaks out in a cold sweat.
- ☐ A hand-drawn map to a secret rendezvous (pick one: in the unfinished industrial basement of the club/in the rough-hewn natural caverns under the club/at the recently renovated Devilwood Country Club a short drive away/somewhere else).
- ☐ An empty prescription bottle for "cognition enhancers," the label smudged with sweat.
- ☐ A laptop hard drive filled with forged identity documents for Cold War era West German sleeper agents.
- ☐ A gym locker containing (pick one: candid photos of a Latchkey/a wig in the distinctive hairstyle worn by a Side Character or Latchkey/a corpse/something else).
- ☐ Time-stamped printouts of changes to the computer operating system.
- ☐ A burnt club membership card, the plastic laminate melted and curled.
- ☐ An oversized hypodermic needle, empty, labeled "SIMULACRUM" in bold Arial font.
- ☐ A shrine composed of votive candles and candid photographs taken surreptitiously.

REWARDS

- > A charm bracelet with a silver quiver and a dozen tiny golden arrows; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A leather and velvet roll bag for chef's knives, but with sharpened rib bones tucked into the sleeves instead; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A pair of brightly-colored leg warmers; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A Vita-Mix 5000 with gleaming blades seemingly capable of blending anything; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This mystery is inspired by the aerobics films of the 1980s, *Heavenly Bodies* (1984) and *Perfect* (1985), health club horror such as *Killer Workout* (1987) and *Death Spa* (1989), the general weirdness of *Amazons* (1984), *Ninja III: The Domination* (1984), *Science Crazy* (1991), and *Body Melt* (1993), and the overall awesomeness of *Suspiria* (2018) and *The Substance* (2024). My deepest, reddest apologies to the legendary Dario Argento.



THE SECRET OF SIERRA PLATA

**A PUBLIC ACCESS MYSTERY
BY CAMERON L. SUMMERS**

THE SECRET OF SIERRA PLATA

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Pose the following to the Latchkey of your choice: *There was a spot, just outside of town, nestled in a sort of natural amphitheater, called the Sierra Plata Drive-In. You had an early brush with the uncanny there – what was it?*

The Sierra Plata Drive-In never reopened after the winter of 2000. Since then, it's fallen into disrepair, abandoned and forgotten like so many places: an artifact of a bygone age.

Recently, though, strange cars have been seen coming down the access road: chimeric vehicles of no specific make or model, or models which haven't been produced in decades, but look like they just rolled off the lot.

Each is driven by a pair of men in dark suits and sunglasses, who spend their days going around Deep Lake asking oddly pointed questions that have no clear logic. Most are apparent non sequiturs, but hidden among them are a few notable phrases: "What do you know about the public access cable station that was found on channel 94?" and "Have you ever met a very large old man dressed in yellow?"

Pose the following to each Latchkey: *Which side characters have been questioned by these men, and what made them feel threatened?*

Additionally, you've heard about them lurking around three local businesses: Lazar Used Cars, Tome on the Range, and Eddy's Spic-n-Span.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What do the Operatives want? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve this mystery by giving them what they want, or by foiling them.

Question: How can they be made to go back to where they came from? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve this mystery by banishing them, and the Latchkeys (collectively) gain the Move: **Put on the Glasses.**

THE AGENCY

It is unclear if the Agency exists. The Operatives refer to it, but none of their documentation refers unambiguously to any specific organization. Still, there is some intelligence directing their behavior. It may be fictitious, otherworldly, or imagined – but its effects are real and consequential.

If the Latchkeys ignore the Agency ...

The Operatives grow brazen, zeroing in on the Latchkeys and the TV Odyssey Investigation. They begin to observe, harass, assault, and abduct first side characters, and then make attempts on the Latchkeys themselves.

DANGERS

Operatives

Black suit. Black tie. Sunglasses. Single earphone. No expression. An air of restrained menace. The Operatives are all seemingly interchangeable and ambiguously human. If pressed, they give names that appear to be chosen from objects in view when they speak: Mr. Clock, Mr. Valley, Mr. Stone, Mr. Hand, Mr. Lake. Often, they appear to struggle with everyday objects like doorknobs or glasses of water, and their manner of speech is eerily off (emphasizing the wrong syllable, unusual cadence, mispronouncing common words), but they are dangerous if pushed. Each is incredibly strong, and, beyond that, armed.

Quote: *"We have some questions for you. Let us start out quite simply: to the best of your awareness has your behavior ever been manipulated by means of a signal, ray, or broadcast? And, please understand, you are not permitted to lie. The penalties can be...quite harsh."*

Bureaucratic Friction

While the Operatives have an uncanny air to them, they are persuasive enough to convince the forces of law and order in Degoya County to go along with them. Those connected to the Latchkeys may pull back and check for confirmation, but the result is largely the same: you can expect no help from the authorities.

MOMENTS

- > Motion out of the corner of your eye: blurred black and yellow – a hummingbird moth is feeding from a flowering plant.
- > An Operative raises a cigarette to his mouth, as if he is about to light up, but instead inserts the whole thing and begins to chew it like a stick of gum.
- > A car parked in an alleyway. Someone has wrapped the whole thing in several layers of tinfoil.
- > A location the Latchkeys frequent has police tape across the entrance, but it is printed with a simple cartoon of a man being waterboarded and the text "YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING."
- > A suppressed cough comes from behind the mirror in a public restroom.
- > A car of an unfamiliar make and model slowly idles past you, its windows fully tinted.

THE KEY OF THE PARANOIAC

- Each Latchkey must explain one conspiracy theory that – before returning to Deep Lake – they believed in but were too embarrassed to talk about.

LOCATIONS

Lazar Used Cars

Multicolored tube-men dance in the high wind. Signs that make false promises. Row after row of cars in every condition and color – those close to the road are pristine, while those in the back slump on stained asphalt.

Paint the Scene: *Which friend of the Latchkeys did Scott Lazar swindle and how?*

Tome on the Range

Powerful air conditioning and the smell of new books. Regimented darkwood shelves with shiny dust-jackets facing out. A kid's section in the back with a sign promising a story event soon – one every weekday during the summer. The stock is calibrated to appeal to seasonal visitors.

Paint the Scene: *What self-published gem do you find in the "local authors" section?*

Eddy's Spic-n-Span

Clinking silverware and light conversation. The smell of tortillas on the flattop grill, and green chili cooking in the back, stirred by row after row of lazily spinning ceiling fans. A glass case full of baked goods, shining with grease and crystalized sugar.

Paint the Scene: *Some shocking fracas took place moments before you entered: what signs do you see of it?*

Sierra Plata Drive-In Theater

Chain-link surrounds cracked, dusty asphalt, scrub reaching up out of the fissures. The smell of dust and creosote. A white screen stands before the striated, red, stone wall of the valley. The gates are open, but all you see in the lot are a shack, the screen, and a single abandoned car.

Paint the Scene: *You feel like you are being watched, there is no evidence for it – where do you find yourself checking?*

The Shack

Rust-colored Googie facade over concrete and cinderblock. Dull brown soda stains and the smell of fake butter. The power is on, but everything obvious has been taken out. There are three main areas: the snack bar, the office, and the projection booth.

Paint the Scene: *What makes you think that the drive-in closed down in a hurry, without prior warning?*

Special Rule: Someone has torn out the innards of the projector and built a new machine in its casing that will project VHS tapes. An Odyssey tape watched here ends with trailers: each Latchkey narrates a two-sentence scene or image of the Latchkey to their left. A Latchkey that fulfills this prediction the next session marks one experience.

The Abandoned Chevy Malibu

A broken down old car of a late '60s vintage, left where it was last turned off. The pavement beneath it is stained with every manner of automotive effluvia. No one has approached it in years. As you get close, you can feel why.

Paint the Scene: *The car radiates strange energies that most obviously take the form of intense heat. What else happens as you get closer?*

THE SECRET OF SIERRA PLATA

SIDE CHARACTERS

Scott Lazar, local used car dealer and recent interviewee

Skinny and energetic, Lazar is a fixture in the local community. He wears a cheap suit and big round glasses, which you remember from television ads. He frantically tries to sell you a car, and hides the fact that his arm was broken about ten minutes ago.

Quote: *"You know, I've got this '91 LeSabre that you'd look perfect in. Owned by a blind old woman who just liked having it in the garage. Last group that came through here – real rough customers – one of 'em took a shine to it, but didn't put a dollar down. It's yours if you want it, let me just talk you through the financing options we offer..."*

Joanne Alexander, Receptionist and Compulsive Liar

Current receptionist of Lazar's Used Cars and former manager of the Sierra Plata Drive-In. A round woman with jaw-length black hair and a pack-a-day voice. Talks even faster than Scott, which is unfortunate.

Quote: *"You know, I didn't want to manage that drive-in, it was just my cover. I was an inventor, but the Trilateral Commission decided that the world wasn't ready for Teflon Two and the Health Cigarette."*

Special Rule: Any Meddling Move made to get information out of Joanne – or into which she can insert herself – is made at Disadvantage.

Kelly Hopkins, Beleaguered Waitress and Snack Bar Veteran

Jeans and a black shirt with an Eddy's Spic-N-Span logo, short apron with a notepad sticking out of it. Chestnut brown hair in a french braid. Perpetually chewing a stick of gum. Kelly has a ready smile that may slip to reveal a haunted expression if pressed about her former place of work.

Quote: *"Look, I don't really want to talk about...that job. Can I get you a cup of coffee? Maybe a sopapilla? Today's batch is really good."*

Don Keogh, Bookstore Employee and Savant Projectionist

Bald as an egg and bouncing with barely-restrained (possibly chemically-induced) energy. Dresses like he's seen professors on TV and thinks that's a good look. Keeps a cork in his discussion of the ins and outs of operating a film projector, but that dam will break at a moment's notice.

Quote: *"The Sierra Plata? Best job I ever had. Sure, I'd have to stay up late squaring away the reels, but there was an art to it. You look for the cigarette burn and then at the exact right second you switch it over. You get to the point where your spinal cord knows how to do it, and your brain only finds out after it's happened."*

CLUES

- ☐ A strange man turns a corner in front of you, takes your picture, and dashes off.
- ☐ A flickering light from beneath a door into an empty room.
- ☐ A digital clock glitches and dies with a puff of smoke.
- ☐ The title of a 1969 Chevy Malibu with the name of (someone long dead / a side character / one of the Latchkeys) on it as the selling party.
- ☐ A phone call where the other party only breathes heavily.
- ☐ A side character reports losing track of time – often around the same time of day.
- ☐ Your nose starts to bleed as the sun sinks behind the mountains above the Drive-In's screen.
- ☐ Receipts that show that something other than food was sold out of the snack bar.
- ☐ A side character reports hearing footsteps above them, where no one could be.
- ☐ If a Latchkey has the Fathomless Well marked: they receive a phone call and have a pleasant conversation – which they cannot recall afterward.
- ☐ Official-looking ID cards covered in gibberish.
- ☐ A personal threat is delivered to the Latchkeys by a side character in a post-hypnotic state.
- ☐ All of the clocks in a location are stopped at different times.
- ☐ A side character is revealed to have lined their clothing and hat with tinfoil.
- ☐ Every car on a street dies simultaneously, leading to a traffic jam.
- ☐ A very lifelike false skin, folded up and hidden somewhere. It even has body hair and moles.
- ☐ An absurdly large phone bill.
- ☐ A manilla envelope containing an autopsy report: the subject had neither bones nor blood, but this appears unrelated to the cause of death.
- ☐ A magazine for a 9mm pistol. None of the bullets have propellant, and each appears to be an oversized human tooth.
- ☐ Numbers whisper from an object that doesn't have a speaker or receiver.

REWARDS

- > A palette of discontinued "Aurora Crystal" brand soda from the snack bar. Why was it discontinued? Take it, and add it to your corner of the house.
- > A false ID with your face on it. What disturbing but ultimately accurate fact is present? Take it and add it to your corner of the house.
- > A dossier on one of the latchkeys that conclusively proves that some of their memories are false. Which ones? Unmark two Keys of the Child and take the Condition: **Identity Crisis**.
- > A memento from the investigation. Ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A memento from the investigation. Ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

OPERATIVE QUESTIONS

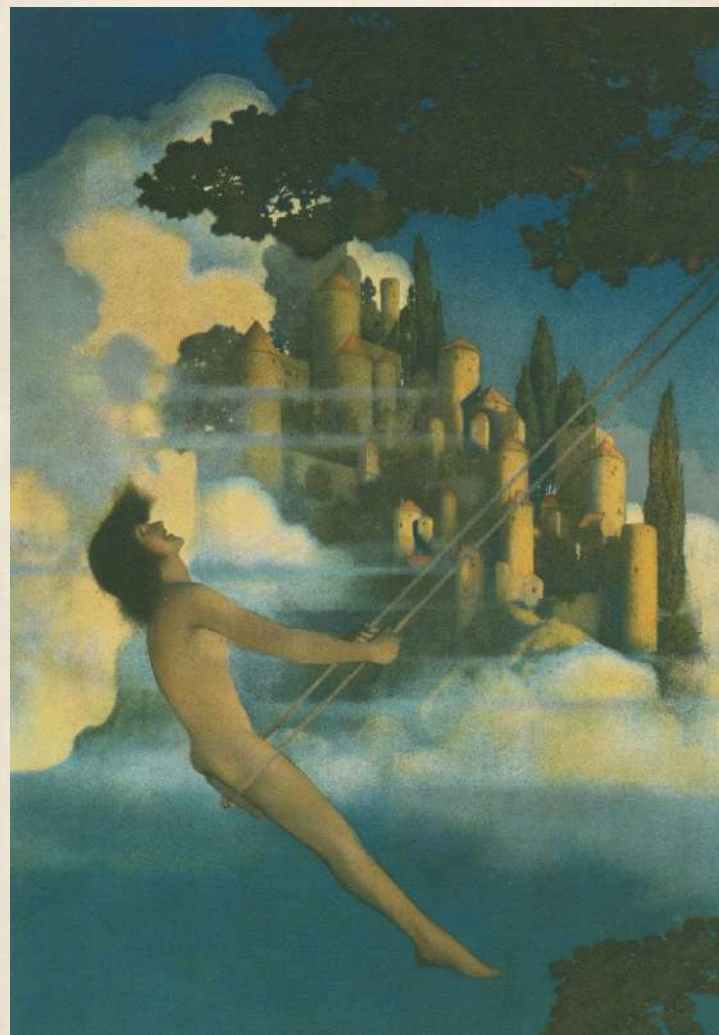
- > Do you identify as left-handed?
- > Have you ever felt that people were following you or spying upon you?
- > At what age did you lose your first tooth?
- > Is that your real face?
- > What did you have for breakfast today?
- > Have your friends or loved ones commented upon your behavior lately?
- > Have you ever been convinced that some person, entity, or force was present without evidence?
- > Do you feel that the television or radio is speaking to you? Has this feeling increased recently?
- > Have you ever found an implant in your body that wasn't supposed to be there? Have you checked everywhere?
- > Are you the same person you were yesterday morning?

PUT ON THE GLASSES

After selecting rewards for a Mystery, one Latchkey can make the Night Move with Reason or Sensitivity to take a clue from the just-completed mystery and keep it as a clue for an active mystery.

My Kingdom is as Great

A Public Access Mystery
By Cassidy Hadlock



MY KINGDOM IS AS GREAT

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

This morning two strange things appeared in the living room of 26 Rodenbecker St. The first is a worn leather copy of *Daphne* by Guy Neilson sitting on the coffee table, bookmarked with a brass key.

Daphne is the story of a girl who had a terrible childhood. As a beautiful young woman, she caught the eye of the king of the fairies—The Wile King. He loved her and promised her that he could fulfill her heart's desire, but the young woman learned that this was a terrible love. A greedy love. The king of the fairies trapped her in a world of his own design, thinking he could keep her for himself in exchange for granting one wish. Daphne delayed the king, telling him every morning that she needed more time to ponder what she wanted most. Once the king's patience grew short, she made her escape and trapped him in a book. Whenever Daphne grew lonely or tired, she would open the book and read its stories, wondering what would have happened if she had stayed.

Pose the following to the Latchkeys: Which one of you read this book as a child? **Ask them:** What character quality did you always admire about Daphne?

The second strange thing that appeared in the living room of 26 Rodenbecker St. is a small ornate door embedded in the wall. A carved door frame with a brass handle and is small enough the Latchkeys will need to crawl through to fit.

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the highest Sensitivity: How do you know this door was put here by the Wile King?

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Which Latchkey is the object of the Wile King's obsession? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Unlock the next question. Additionally, tell that Latchkey to take the Condition: **Marked by the Wile King**. This Condition cannot be cleared while this mystery is active.

Ask the Latchkey: "What do you want most in this world?"

For the rest of this threat, show them how 'it's worse than that'. For example:

If the Latchkey wants someone to notice them, drown them with attention.

If the Latchkey wants to be successful, make them the envy of everyone.

If the Latchkey wants to be accepted, chip away at their sense of self.

Question: How does the Wile King plan to keep the Latchkey in his kingdom forever? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by escaping his kingdom if necessary, and sealing the passageway in the living room.

Question: What is the secret to navigating the labyrinth? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: The Latchkeys may manipulate the environment once during this mystery to do something impossible like making a miraculous getaway.

Read Once a Latchkey Opens the Door: Behind the door is a tunnel of masoned stone. It is cool to the touch and leaves traces of salt on anything that touches it. Something changes while crawling through the tunnel; it doesn't take long to realize that you are made of felt.

Direct this question to the Latchkeys that went through: What does your puppet form look like?

If you players are up to it, direct them here to create their own puppet avatars: <https://meiker.io/play/15468/online.html>

THE WILE KING

The King is a fae-like being from another world. He can manifest himself in many forms due to his talent with glamours, but the ones he favors are a gleaming coyote with starlit eyes in the real world, and Orlando Bloom as a poncho-wearing bandit in his kingdom. He is fickle and impulsive. His obsession with one of the Latchkeys borders between fascination and hunger. The Labyrinth and everything in it are his domain, and the Wile King will often grant its inhabitants exactly what they most want in sometimes cruel ways.

If the Latchkeys fail to resolve the mystery in time ... The Wile King's patience will grow thin. This realm beyond the door will begin to become hostile to the Latchkeys. The Wile King will attempt to breach reality. Side characters in other mysteries may be affected and become puppets.

THE KEY OF OBSESSION

- Each Latchkey recalls an infatuation they experienced in their youth and the actions they took to try to catch that person's attention.

DANGERS

Puppets

Lots of different puppets live in the Wile King's kingdom. Use these generic inhabitants as distractions, obstacles, or threats against the Latchkeys. They can create crowds, ruin clues, or do the bidding of the Wile King.

Names

- Gabriela
- Brundy Toad
- Mr. Pumpernickle
- The Desert Nitwit
- Bill the Unreasonable
- Animal

Looks

- Heavy lids and thick eyelashes
- Emerges from a crevice and never leaves
- Thick, oversized alpaca poncho woven in a sunset palette
- Clinking, glinting spurs on snakeskin boots
- Singed fur and the smell of wildfire
- A perpetual dust cloud hovering around

Desires

- The Latchkeys aren't joining in—get them to dance.
- The Latchkeys are boring—rope them into shenanigans.
- The Latchkeys don't fear the Wile King—educate them.
- The Latchkeys don't love the Wile King—educate them.
- The Latchkeys don't look very good—fix them.
- The Latchkeys don't understand what's important—show them what is.

Hecklers

These puppets are different desert animals: peccaries, bighorn sheep, gila monsters, jackrabbits, rattlesnakes, roadrunners, tortoises, turkey vultures, armadillos, etc. These puppets will mock the Latchkeys, commenting on how they are wasting their time trying to leave or find their way. As the mystery progresses, the peanut-gallery comments can become more personal and touch on things from the Latchkeys' childhoods. Booing is also appropriate.

Take the Condition: **Heckled**.

Quote: "Of course she'll choke, don't you remember what happened during her fifth grade dance recital? She was supposed to be the star of the show, but ran off and cried in the bathroom!"

Traps and Hazards

- The floor falls away, sending the Latchkeys into a slot canyon with only one very narrow way out.
- The way the Latchkeys came from closes or redirects, splitting them up.
- A cactus honey flash flood.
- A dust storm clouds the Latchkeys' vision. When it clears they are in a different, more dangerous part of the Labyrinth.

LOCATIONS

The Other House on Rodenbecker Street

The end of the tunnel opens up into a mirror image of the house the Latchkeys are renting. Everything is exactly the same at first glance.

Paint the Scene: *What details betray that this copy doesn't capture the heart and soul of the real house?*

The Labyrinth Entrance

Out the front door is the entrance to a sprawling stone labyrinth. Cacti grow in the blistering sun, tumbleweeds drowsily roll past

Paint the Scene: *What mirage do you see wavering in the heat, tempting you toward the doors?*

Forest

50 foot wide saguaros tower above a branching network of rocky ravines. At the bottom of each ravine is a river of incredibly sticky cactus honey. Smooth bees the size of softballs latch onto the cacti like hagfish to extract nectar.

Paint the Scene: *How are the other insects different from those in the real world?*

Crystal Cavern

Mushrooms grow on the walls and ceiling of this winding, crystal-studded cave. The felt mushrooms feed off the Latchkeys' energy and perform songs that reflect their emotions. In the middle, an expansive tourmaline takes up a whole wall. The crystal holds a distorted reflection of the cave.

Paint the Scene for the Latchkey marked by the Wile King: *Your reflection shows how the Wile King sees you. What do you look like?*

Paint the Scene for the other Latchkeys: *How does your reflection show that you are unremarkable?*

Dunes

These dunes are impossibly high, impossibly steep, and are not made of sand but of trinkets and tchotchkes from the 80's and 90's. Worms on a string make themselves at home here. They are shy and wriggle through tunnels in the dunes.

Paint the Scene: *What item from your childhood do you recognize in the pile, and how do you know it's yours?*

The Dance Hall

Heels clack against the worn hardwood, fringe dazzles in the light of fireflies. The dance hall's striated canyon walls soar above, getting lost in a starry night sky. The puppets do-si-doing wear cowboy hats, spurs, ponchos, and other western wear.

Paint the Scene: *What makes this dance hard to escape?*

The Wile King's Court

The twists of the labyrinth open up to a drop off. A narrow ridge leads down to a vast salt flats. The sun glints off the salt crystals that crunch underfoot. A solitary throne stands out against the monotony.

Paint the Scene: *What traces can we see of the Wile King's last target?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Bongle, a lackey

A yellow puppet with a purple, banana-shaped nose. His yellow, fluffy hair sits underneath a small cap. Bongle is outwardly a bit grumpy but with some work can become a bit of a softy. He wants to be left alone and avoid the King's punishment.

Quote: *"Now don't go thinking this means Bongle approves of what you're doing. No no, not approves at all. His Majesty won't like it a single bit."*

Twiggy and Ziggy, the "twins"

At first it looks like twins, but then you realize it's a double-ended, blue and green puppet with two torsos, two heads, four arms, and no legs. They usually walk around on one set of hands. One is practical, wary, and very knowledgeable. The other is wistful, trusting, and intrigued by things they don't understand.

Quote: *"You're not from around here, are you?" "Maybe, MAYBE they can help us! Do you think you could help us get separated? You see it's a long story, ever since-" "We're sick of each other. Can you help or not?"*

The Cat, a cat

A tabby cat puppet. On closer inspection, the stripes in her coat are made from the real fur of different colors of cat. Because she is an intruder in the King's realm, she keeps a low profile and can slip unnaturally from place to place, even to the real world. She is equally helpful, cryptic, and insulting to the Latchkeys.

Quote: *"Hmmm.....yes... I suppose you could go that way. It's at least interesting."*

Crumblecakes, a muppet of millions

A short puppet with gangly arms, no eyelids, and hewn turquoise buttons for eyes. Crumblecakes' chartreuse fur is matted and crusted with honey. Their voice is fuzzy and offcenter. Crumblecakes is the collective consciousness of a bee colony contained within the felt. They will offer to remove the Latchkeys's eyes and give them buttons as well, using a cactus needle to sew them in and expand their field of vision.

Quote: *"The King gets what he wants. But he gives us what we want. He gave us flowers, life, this world. And all he asks is to love him, fear him."*

Professor Fitzwilliam, researcher

A ratlike puppet. Khaki shorts, a backpack stuffed with research equipment, and is often seen holding a rattlesnake. Professor Fitzwilliam is singularly interested in desert flora and fauna.

Quote: *"You wouldn't think that a crocodile could live in this type of environment, but they've adapted well to"-dodges snake lunge-"easy girl. You could've done some damage with that one. She's such a good girl."*

Momo, a gentle giant

A towering pillar of a puppet. An overgrown, pink mop. The labyrinth's pariah. No one knows how to decipher her roars and snuffles. She wants companionship and to feel like a part of something.

Quote: *"Aaaaaaahhrrr! Hnff hnff."*

MOMENTS

- > All the puppets in a location stop when the Latchkey marked by the Wile King enters. All eyes turn to them.
- > Cracks in the walls open into gaping mouths. Whispering voices cheer on the Latchkeys and promise good things to come their way.
- > One of the seams of the Latchkey's felt gets caught. It rips open to reveal pink, hot, shiny flesh beneath the fur.
- > Desert wildflowers spring from the parched earth to create a path. They quickly wither once walked on.
- > A small critter is stuck in a pool of cactus honey, unable to move. It is unconcerned as it sinks.
- > A desiccated puppet corpse sits undisturbed. Its head is split open, revealing a geode within.



MY KINGDOM IS AS GREAT

CLUES

- ☐ “Beautiful Soul” by Jesse McCartney plays on repeat (from the radio, on the wind, in your mind.)
- ☐ A crystal ball showing in it a scene of the Latchkey in claymation.
- ☐ A felt heart, beating with real blood
- ☐ A side character or random puppet, dead, glitching between puppet and real life
- ☐ “Love me, fear me” in an unusual place.
- ☐ An ultra-realistic doll of the Latchkey. It has real hair, real flesh, the joints articulate...
- ☐ A photograph of a side character, but they aren’t a puppet. Ask the Latchkey: How can you tell this is still ____?
- ☐ An orange poppy that parrots the words it hears.
- ☐ A side character has sworn their soul to the Wile King.
- ☐ A book with a thorough record of wishes.
- ☐ A puppet show depicting the Wile King as a snake swallowing a Latchkey or side character whole.
- ☐ A side character getting stuck on the phrase: “All hail the King.”
- ☐ Cactus needles growing in an unusual place.
- ☐ A group of square dancers cannot stop dancing no matter what they do.
- ☐ A random puppet’s eyes have been removed, and buttons are loosely sewn in place, hanging down on their cheeks or chin.
- ☐ Rumors of a secret path from the throne room straight to the entrance of the tunnel.
- ☐ Initials carved into a rock/canyon wall/etc.
- ☐ A tarnished tiara set with turquoise.
- ☐ Speculation that the labyrinth is due to shed its skin any day.
- ☐ Fireflies form into an unexpected symbol.

REWARDS

- > During the investigation, you found another entrance to the kingdom. Describe it. It is unknown to all the inhabitants, including the Wile King. You may travel freely between the real world and the kingdom.
- > The Cat becomes a recurring Side Character. You get an additional Clue on the Meddling Move when you consult with her on matters dealing with unreality and things that can’t be explained.
- > A cowboy hat from one of the square dancers. Ask another Latchkey to describe and add it to your Corner of the House.
- > A living, breathing, worm on a string. Ask another Latchkey to name it and add it to your Corner of the House.
- > A trinket retrieved from the dunes. Ask another Latchkey to tell you what it is and add it to your Corner of the House.
- > A memento from the investigation. Ask another Latchkey what it is and add it to your Corner of the House.



Return to

Olivia St

Alton W

RETURN TO OLIVIA ST.

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

An early morning stroll brings you past the house again. Number 8 Olivia Street, a small, innocuous suburban home, only a few blocks from Rodenbecker Street. Unassuming brown paint, maybe in need of a few shutters replaced and gutters cleaned. Why did I come here again? Was I on the way to the store to fetch more cereal for the Latchkeys?

“Are you alright?” A passerby inquires from his rolled down window. He shoots you a concerned look as he drives around you. You didn’t realize how long you’d been standing in the middle of the asphalt. Staring.

When you arrive back at Rodenbecker Street, you mention this encounter to the other Latchkeys and are surprised to find that they too have stopped by the house on Olivia Street. But can’t quite remember why they were there.

Paint the Scene: What is something so normal about the house, that you just couldn’t help but make note of it when you walked by?

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Is there anything actually wrong with the house? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Unlock the next appropriate question.

Question: If there isn’t anything wrong, then there’s nothing more to do here...right? (Complexity: 0)

Opportunity: Resolve the Mystery by putting it out of mind. The Latchkeys do not get rewards from the Rewards section but do still get to answer their dawn question for resolving a Mystery as usual.

Question: If there is something wrong, what is it? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the Mystery by confronting a metaphysical entity or force and either banishing or destroying it.

Special Rule: Whether the house is supernatural or not, strange occurrences happen. While Return to Olivia St. is an active Mystery, you have a new Keeper reaction: **Occurrences** (see the Occurrences section of this sheet). Use the soft version of the occurrences for softer reactions; use the hard version for hard reactions. They don’t need to happen right away, just let the Latchkeys know that there will be unforeseen consequences.

THE HOUSE

Contains (or is) a metaphysical being or force that is truly unknowable with completely alien motivations and ineffable powers...or it’s merely surrounded by a series of unfortunate coincidences.

If the Latchkeys ignore investigating the house ...

Bad things will start happening that can’t be definitively linked to the house, but they will give the Latchkeys a bad feeling.

OCCURRENCES

The Omen

Soft: A Latchkey spills salt, steps on a crack, breaks a mirror, finds a face down penny, notices it is Friday the 13th, or sees a black cat. They take the Condition: **Unlucky**.

Hard: As in the soft version but they do two of these at once and the Condition cannot be cleared while Return to Olivia St. is an active Mystery.

The Envy

Soft: A Latchkey becomes jealous. They take disadvantage on the next roll they make while another Latchkey is in the scene.

Hard: The Latchkey has become incredibly bitter and takes the Condition: **Spiteful**. They must refuse to share scenes with a Latchkey of their choice until the Condition is cleared or a Mystery is resolved.

The Spark

Soft: A Latchkey takes the Condition: **Negatively Charged**. While Negatively Charged and they try to use modern technology, they must roll with Sensitivity. On a miss, the technology malfunctions. On a Hit, the technology works as intended.

Hard: As in the soft version, but on a miss, the technology now explodes.

The Downpour

Soft: It suddenly starts to rain, despite a clear forecast.

Hard: It suddenly starts to thunderstorm. Day Moves may become Night Moves for the remainder of the Day phase.

The Bug

Soft: A Side Character falls ill and can’t be engaged as normal.

Hard: A Side Character dies suddenly. They’d apparently been battling illness in secret for some time now.

The Call

Soft: When a Latchkey tries to go to Rodenbecker Street, they find themselves walking into the house on Olivia Street instead.

Hard: A Latchkey receives an email congratulating them on their purchase, complete with animated fireworks. They have bought the house on Olivia Street.

MOMENTS

- > A Latchkey finds themselves on Olivia Street even though they didn’t mean to head there.
- > The sound of wind chimes can be heard, but there’s no wind.
- > A Side Character loses control of their car, crashing into the mailbox at number 8 Olivia Street.
- > A Latchkey finds a toy in the house that they lost as a child. Ask them to describe it and add it to their Corner of the House.
- > A low, inhuman growl seems to come from right behind a Latchkey. When they turn around nothing is there.
- > Someone who should be dead can be seen in the window of the house.

Note: this Mystery is a soft-sequel to *The Between Threat*, [The Olivia St. Oddity](#) by Alton W.

THE KEY OF MUNDANITY

- Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to something totally normal, innocuous, or forgettable they did in the last week.

LOCATIONS

The Doorstep

An empty dog bowl sits by the doormat. A silver 8 is prominent on the unlocked door. The doorbell is covered with a piece of tape that reads “Do Not Wring”.

Paint the Scene: What negative reaction does your body have as you reach for the doorknob?

x The Living Room

An aging couch. An inviting La-Z-Boy. A TV with a broken antenna and refurbished VCR. The furniture seems like it’s never arranged the same way the last time you were here.

Paint the Scene: What sits in this room that’s exactly the same as from your childhood home?

The Kitchen

Someone has left a chair in front of the door and it needs to be pushed out of the way. The instant kettle is the only cookware that seems like it’s been used recently.

Paint the Scene: It seems no one has stocked this kitchen in ages. What items still linger in the cabinets and shelves? How long ago was their expiration date?

The Bedroom

A comfortable looking bed. An unplugged clock on the side table. A carnivorous plant in the window. A locked closet.

Paint the Scene: When was the last time you got a good night’s sleep?

The Garage

Musty smell. Piles of sagging boxes. A worktable with plans for a dozen unfinished house projects. A carved out space that seems like it might be able to fit a car if you pulled in just right.

Paint the Scene: What discarded treasures are buried among the folderals here? The Latchkeys may add the treasure they describe to their Corner of the House. If they do, they take the Condition: **Carrying Something You Shouldn’t**.

The Infinite

Only appears if the Latchkeys determine there is something wrong with the house. An infinite and ever-changing labyrinth of empty rooms and hallways. Something terrible lurks here.

Paint the Scene: Who has entered here, never to be seen again?

RETURN TO OLIVIA ST.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Jordan Moore, A Neighbor

Thick rimmed glasses. Button down work shirt. Makes a living pushing papers. Jordan picked Olivia Street because it's quiet and a little out of the way. She likes that no one lives next door, and tolerates the creepiness of the house for this reason. She thinks number 8 is best left alone, for her sake and yours.

Quote: "I'm sure you mean well but I think it best you don't go poking around that house. There's no for sale sign so I think what you're doing counts as trespassing. I hear the houses closer to the lake are really worth looking at."

Will Cray, The Caretaker

Older English gentleman. Fleece coat and canvas work gloves. Walks slowly after a recent hip replacement. Stops by every few days to check on the house. He's quite fond of it, but can't quite seem to notice the odd things about the house that the Latchkeys do.

Quote: "You are strange folk aren't you? However, if it makes you happy, feel free to look around. As long as you keep the place tidy. I'm fixing to put on some tea if you'd like some."

Henry "Pac-Man" Peck, Aspiring Frontman

Hair over the eyes. Red flannel. The biggest kid in the 8th grade. He and his bandmates (Big Wig, Pick Six, and Rigatoni) practice in the garage. They think they will get big if they can only decide on a band name.

Quote: "You really rolling up on our crib while we're trying to chillax and work on our tracks? Why don't you beat it, gramps."

Bradley Wasner, HOA Enthusiast

Bath robe. "World's best Dad" mug. Sneakers begging to be replaced. Too much free time since his kids moved away. He hates number 8 and is determined to slap the owner with as many city code violations as he can. He just needs to figure out who the owner is first.

Quote: "I suspect it's an illegal AirBnB operation. I hear those are popping up all over. Boy when I get my hands on the guy who owns that place, he'll have hell to pay."

Tanisha Smart, The Mail Carrier

Hat over a bob. USPS uniform. Mail truck with broken A/C. Tanisha has daily mail for every house on Olivia Street, except for number eight. It has never sat right with her and always tugs at the back of her mind. Out of curiosity, she has peered in the windows, knocked on the door, even sat in the shade of the porch on an especially hot day. She'll become suspicious that the Latchkeys are hiding something about the house if she sees them go inside more than once.

Quote: "Not even a piece of junk mail. That's strange right? I get debt notices and Christmas cards for the last three renters of my apartment and this house doesn't get so much as a credit card ad."

Sylvie, Neighborhood Dog

Probably a black lab or something. Wears a collar with an illegible tag. Needs a bath. She never wanders far from Olivia Street. Occasionally she finds food in the bowl outside number 8. A bit skittish, but she can be coaxed over with a treat. She'll begin to subtly change if she ever goes inside the house: different fur color, a clipped ear, a Latchkey's phone number on her tag.

Quote: "Bark."

Roy, A Drifter

Unkempt beard. Beaten boots. Sturdy Osprey backpack. Set out hitchhiking when he got laid off from his job in California. He was passing through Deep Lake when he came upon this empty house. Not a bad place to stay for a couple days, so long as he doesn't get caught. He's happy to share some ramen off his camp stove. If it turns out there is something wrong with the house, it will kill him first.

Quote: "Oh shit, you don't own this place do you? Look I can give you like...ten, eleven, twelve dollars aaaaand thirty-five cents if you don't call the cops. I didn't mess with anything, I swear."

Marsha Cause, A Developer

Tailored gray pantsuit. Hair in a too tight bun. Constantly checking her phone. She's looking to build nicer homes around here, places that will appeal to rich tourists. At some point, she will give Jordan Moore and Bradley Wasner some seriously good offers on their homes, but can't quite seem to find who to talk to about buying number 8.

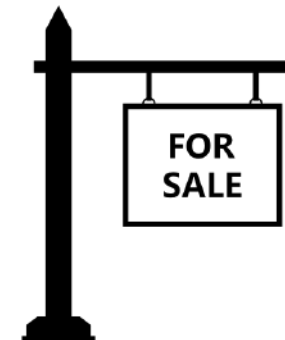
Quote: "It's an eyesore, no? As soon as I can get the paperwork in order, I'll knock the thing down and throw up a minimalist eco-home. The techies out in California die for that shit. Have you seen the house over on Escondido? Number four. Yeah the square looking one. Sold for 2.2 million. Can you believe it?"

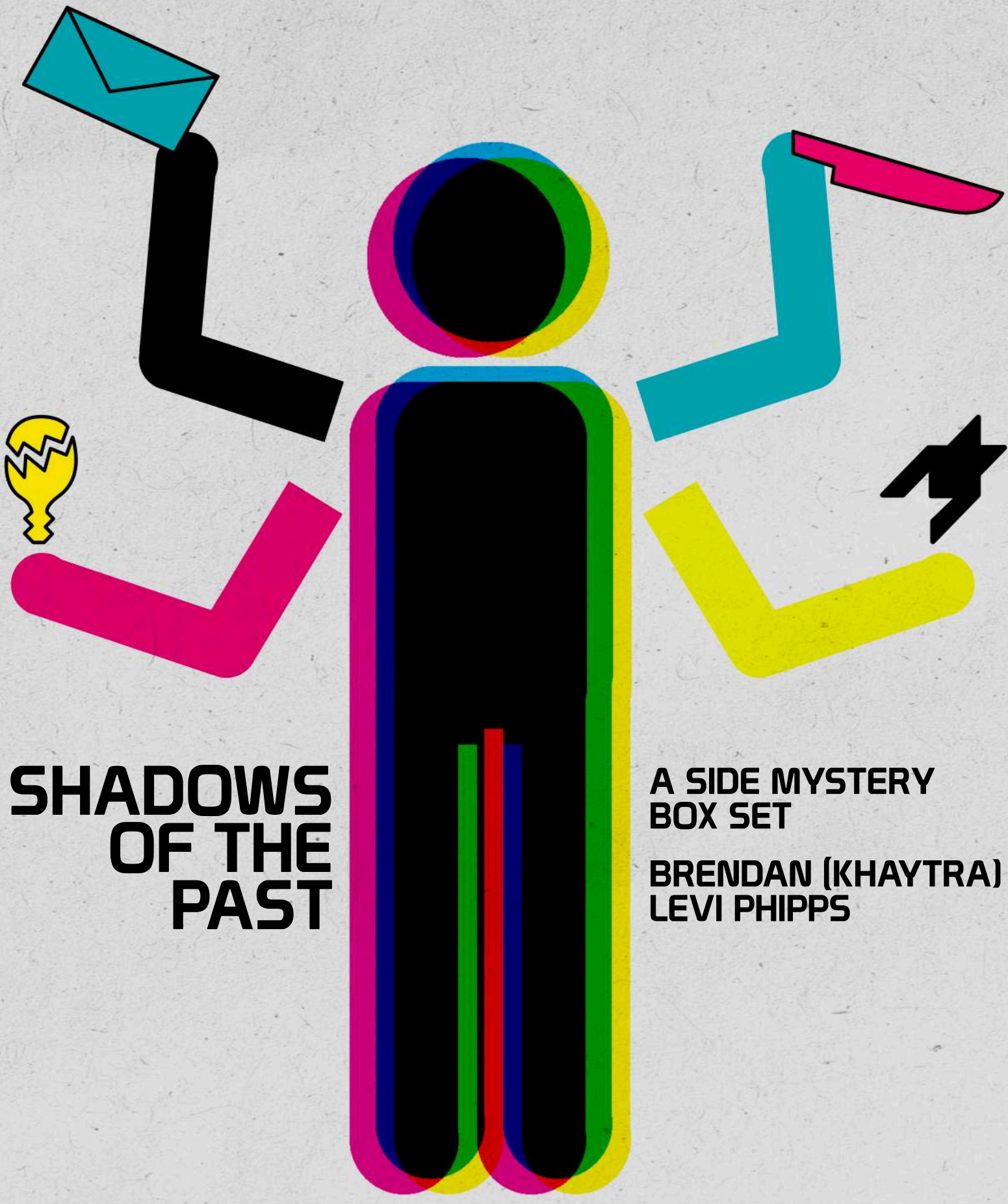
REWARDS

- > You buy the house. Add The Deed for Number 8 Olivia Street to Your Corner of the House.
- > You hire Will Cray to help take care of things at the house on Rodenbecker Street. He becomes a recurring Side Character; You get 1 extra clue on the Meddling Move when you seek his counsel on matters of the home and house-workers.
- > A suppressed childhood memory. Something in the house triggered it to come back. Add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.
- > A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

CLUES

- ☐ A dusty handprint.
- ☐ A sensible, level-headed, and irrefutably mundane explanation for something paranormal.
- ☐ A sudden difference in pressure.
- ☐ A morse code message communicated with (the sprinklers/the porch light/the water pipes/something else).
- ☐ Evidence that the house is older than the town of Deep Lake.
- ☐ A sudden realization that you experienced a traumatic event here as a child.
- ☐ A home video starting at the timestamp 20:34:13 07/04/1994.
- ☐ An event that evokes an overwhelming sense of Deja Vu.
- ☐ A neglected children's toy. One that your parents wouldn't buy for you when you were a kid.
- ☐ Inconsistent rumors about the house.
- ☐ An electronic turns on suddenly and without warning.
- ☐ A light can be seen in the window that isn't there when viewed from inside.
- ☐ A rat trap catches something other than a rat.
- ☐ Something about the house is very well maintained: mowed lawn/fresh paint/clean toilets/something else.
- ☐ Mail arrives at the house.
- ☐ A diary entry from a past owner.
- ☐ A scratched out entry in the yellow pages.
- ☐ The identity of Olivia, for whom the street is named.
- ☐ A strong smell of gas.
- ☐ A business card from a solicitor, wanting to sell the house.
- ☐ A charming neighborhood story.





SHADOWS OF THE PAST

A SIDE MYSTERY
BOX SET

BRENDAN (KHAYTRA)
LEVI PHIPPS

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

These are Side Mysteries. They are introduced like other mysteries, but do not count towards the limit of three active mysteries. There can only be one active Side Mystery.

SECRETS SECRETS

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

When answering a knock at the front door this morning, you didn't see who knocked, but they left something for you: a crumpled Polaroid from your middle school days. The photo is of you and your friends from Harding Middle, with Brandi Weiss and Dustin Ebner's eyes crossed out. On the back of the photo, rough pen scratches read "I know what really happened."

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the most Keys of the Child marked (your choice in the case of a tie): Brandi Weiss died the summer between seventh and eighth grade. You and all of your shared friend group were there. What did you all say happened? What really happened?

Hours later, Dustin Ebner's mother called you, informing you that he was found murdered last night. Someone knows how Brandi Weiss died, and wants revenge.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Who is committing these revenge-killings? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Resolve the Side Mystery by confronting the killer and bringing them to justice.

Special Rule: The Meddling Move is not available for this Side Mystery. Instead, whenever the Latchkey who knew Brandi Weiss participates in the Nostalgic Move, they must recall a memory of Brandi Weiss and their other friends getting into childish mischief. The Clue stumbled upon during said Nostalgic Move must be a Clue for this Mystery.

THE ONE WHO KNOWS

Someone is killing a Latchkey's middle school friends as revenge for Brandi Weiss's death.

Each Dawn Phase this Side Mystery's active, tell the affected Latchkey to name the middle school pal that gets murdered. On the fourth Night Phase this Side Mystery is active, the killer will attempt to kill the Latchkey. Afterwards the killer is arrested or skips town. This Side Mystery can no longer be resolved and is not considered active.



MOMENTS

- > A figure in a black sweatshirt looms in the distance, their face obscured in shadow.
- > A Latchkey returns to 26 Rodenbecker Street to find a chef's knife embedded into the door.
- > A Latchkey recognizes a Side Character from middle school. The Side Character refuses to return the recognition.
- > A Clue is found in a handwritten note addressed to a Latchkey.
- > A Latchkey thinks they catch up to a Side Character or Danger, but it's a different person in a similar common outfit.

THE KEY OF THE TATTLETALE

- Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to when they told a lie that saved their skin but got someone else in major trouble.

REWARD

- > **The Key of Outreach:** Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to when their peers made them feel included. This can be used only once by any Latchkey at any time.

SCARED TO DEATH

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Little Lindsay Doyle has woken up screaming every night for the last week. That first night, her parents rushed into her room to see what was wrong and discovered her sitting up, the blanket pulled over her head, yelling herself hoarse. They turned on all the lights in the house, looked under the bed, looked in the closet, checked outside the window—nothing. They were mystified, and Lindsay herself could offer no coherent answer about what had terrified her so. Her mother Wendy held her close for a few hours while her father, Thomas, sat on her bed, looking around Lindsay's room in confusion. Eventually, Lindsay calmed down, her tears were wiped away, and she went back to sleep. Upon waking, she could still offer nothing in the way of an explanation, and her parents, baffled, let the matter drop.

This routine—Lindsay waking up screaming, the search, the confusion, the tears—has happened every single night for the last week. Lindsay's throat has become raw, and she has eyebags no child her age should have. Wendy and Thomas are nearly out of their minds with worry. Having used up nearly all of her vacation days, Wendy is dreading having to return to work while Thomas, always a problem-solver, is frustrated with his inability to help his daughter. No matter how many nightlights are set up, no matter how thoroughly the house is searched, nothing is helping Lindsay.

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the highest Composure (or a Latchkey of your choice): Wendy Doyle was once your babysitter and she was just the coolest person to you back then. When you were bullied in school, she stepped in, your knight in a plaid flannel shirt. What did she do to chase away your bullies?

Wendy, knowing you're in town and looking into strange happenings, has come to you in desperation. "Please," she says, "I don't know what to do. We can't keep living like this. Maybe you could come by and... I don't know. Maybe we're missing something."

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Who or what is terrifying Lindsay? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by removing the cause of Lindsay's fear.

Special Rule: During this side mystery, the Meddling Move is unavailable. Instead, once per day, a Latchkey may visit the Doyle house. The Doyles, at their wit's end, will allow the Latchkeys to investigate Lindsay's room and the rest of the house.

While investigating, a Latchkey can narrate a memory from childhood where they were afraid of what lurked in the dark when they were tucked into their bed. They must say what horrible thing they imagined was out there and whether or not they were ever able to sufficiently explain away their fear in the light of day. Then, they can discover and define a Clue based on something seen in the flashback.

THE DEATH OF LINDSAY DOYLE

If four Night Phases pass without resolving the mystery, Lindsay's poor heart cannot take it anymore. She will give one final scream in the night and then collapse onto her bed, quite literally scared to death.



THE KEY OF THE MIDNIGHT WHISPERS

- Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to a time when they surreptitiously stayed up long after their bedtime and saw or heard something that they shouldn't have.

MOMENTS

- > A breeze rushes through the trees outside a window, causing the shadows cast on the wall to sway ominously.
- > The floorboards in the next room over creak and groan even though there isn't anyone in that room. It's just the house settling, right?
- > A Latchkey hears their name growled from some dark, shadowy part of the house.
- > A lightbulb suddenly blows out, plunging the room into darkness. Before the light completely fades, a Latchkey swears they could see some hideous form out of the corner of their eye.
- > While standing next to a bed, a Latchkey feels something grab at their ankle. It's only a stuffed animal that fell over, a teddy bear's arm reaching out desperately.
- > A Latchkey is filled with absolute certainty that they are not alone, the eyes of some beast burning fixed upon them.

REWARD

- > **The Key of the Warm Blanket:** Each Latchkey narrates a flashback where they woke from a nightmare and found comfort in the arms of a parent. (This key can be used at any time and can only be used once.)

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Tommy Vallejo was 8 years old when the infamous “Christmas Day on Murphy Street” incident happened in Rio Canyon. Every single person up and down the street simply vanished: Cars were still parked in driveways, shoes still neatly aligned by doors, Christmas dinners still in warm ovens. Everyone was gone—everyone, that is, except for Tommy. He was found beside the family Christmas tree, calmly unwrapping his presents. He had no idea where his family was, and he seemed to hardly know where he himself was. Authorities gently took him and left him with his aunt, who lived in Devilwood. None of the missing families were ever seen again, in spite of the intense police work done in pursuit of locating them.

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the highest Sensitivity (or a Latchkey of your choice): You’ve researched plenty of disappearance stories. What unsolved case sticks out in your mind? What strange detail in that case seems to defy mundane explanations?

Tommy is now 50 years old. According to his doctors, he doesn’t have much time left. While they can’t say how much longer he has, his prognosis is grim, and this is likely to be his last summer. Having heard about your investigative efforts, Tommy has turned to you in an attempt to find some sort of closure to the one great mystery that has enshadowed his life.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What happened to the residents of Murphy Street? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Convince Tommy Vallejo of your theory, allowing him to die with some measure of closure.

Special Rule: During this side mystery, the Meddling Move is unavailable. Instead, once per day, a Latchkey may visit Tommy Vallejo at his home in Devilwood. There, they can engage in the Nostalgia Move with Tommy, reminiscing about Christmases past, especially Christmas 1962. At the end of the Nostalgia scene, the Latchkey may define a Clue for this mystery based on Tommy’s recollections.

THE DEATH OF TOMMY VALLEJO

While Tommy Vallejo knows that he is terminal, he has no idea just how close to death he is. If four Night Phases pass without this mystery being resolved, Tommy will be found dead in his bed the next morning, and he will have died without ever knowing closure. The mystery will no longer be available, but it is not considered successfully resolved.



THE KEY OF KRAMPUS

- ☐ Each Latchkey must narrate a flashback to a Christmas (or another holiday that they observe) that was ruined by something you or your family did or said.

MOMENTS

- > A radio plays “Santa Claus Is Comin’ To Town” but the chorus of the song is simply the line “You better watch out!” over and over, with each repetition louder than the previous one.
- > A stocking filled with coal and labelled with the name of a Latchkey is found one morning by the fireplace at 26 Rodenbecker.
- > A Side Character or a special person from a Latchkey’s past sends a Latchkey a vaguely threatening Christmas card in the mail. If questioned, they deny sending the card.
- > 26 Rodenbecker is pelted with glass Christmas baubles much like if children were egging the house.
- > A Latchkey smells the enticing aroma of sugar cookies and crushed peppermint. If they try to find the source of the smell, they will be led into danger.
- > A man with a thick beard, wearing a Santa suit, solicits donations on a street corner. He refuses to take the money of any Latchkey who was spoken to Tommy Vallejo.

REWARD

- > **The Key of Good Cheer:** Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to the best holiday that they spent with their family. (This key can be used at any time and can only be used once.)

THE SCREENING HOUR

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

The La Fresca Lazerplex is Degoya County’s only modern cinema. Sure, Deep Lake and Rio Canyon have places where you can see something a month later for half the price, but the Lazerplex is the only place you can easily see the latest releases before the forums or the film buffs in your life can spoil it for you. It’s so modern that it’s getting into the brand-new trend of “midnight screenings:” squeezing just a bit more cash into the night before a movie’s release date. Since the first screening is technically on the real release date.

But it’s not all late-night excitement, pizza parties, and fandom craze. Recently, the copies of the movies have been... intruded upon. A different picture has been spliced into all of the movies selected for these special screenings. A few random minutes of these blockbusters are interrupted by shots of a surreal and often frightening amateur film.

No shot from the intrusive flick has been repeated twice, except for a creditless title card that punctuates each clip.

Pose the following to a Latchkey of your choice: What overly poetic or bluntly simple title does the film have? And where have you seen a clip of this movie before?

None of the employees of the Lazerplex have a clue who would even have access to the film reels long enough to edit the movie in this way without being caught. But you all have an inkling that if you give the rookie director a shot, this might actually convince them to stop.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What is the actual plot of the film? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Resolve the Mystery by drumming up buzz about the new and upcoming director and holding a movie screening to satisfy the person responsible.

Special Rule: During this side mystery, the Meddling Move is unavailable. Instead, during the Dusk Phase, a single Latchkey may declare they’re attending a midnight showing at the Lazerplex. They do not participate in normal scenes in the subsequent Night Phase. If a Tape is being watched, they’re the only ones who narrate the Tape. If a Tape is not being watched, they must describe a Side Character in each other Latchkey’s scene doing something strange or disruptive. In the next Dawn Phase, they may describe a Clue for this Mystery in the form of a scene from the movie.

THE DIMINISHING CROWDS

The longer that the film is allowed to be spliced into these special screenings, the more word gets out that this happens. The more word gets out, the less people want to go to the screenings, or even go to the Lazerplex. If this Mystery is still active for three Night Phases, the Latchkeys will hear of massive budget cuts at the Lazerplex: concessions closing, ushers laid off, dropping more obscure movies before their time. After five Night Phases, the Lazerplex will close indefinitely. This Side Mystery is no longer active and is not considered resolved.



MOMENTS

- > A Side Character slips into an accent that is an indistinguishable European mush.
- > A door opens into a room with strange red furniture and a houndstooth carpet
- > A paper popcorn bucket passes by like a tumbleweed.
- > Someone sits in gum.
- > A Side Character furiously writes in a notepad, tearing away pages as quickly as they fill them.

THE KEY OF THE HECKLER

- ☐ Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to a time something they looked forward to was disrupted by someone behaving rudely.

REWARD

- > **The Key of the Crowd:** Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to a time where they were wrapped up in the joy of a crowd. This can be used only once by any Latchkey at any time.

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white top and a red patterned skirt, is sitting on a large stack of books. She is holding an open book and looking down at it. The room is filled with stacks of books, some on shelves and some on the floor. A wooden pole leans against the wall behind her. The text "FOLLOW THE BOOKS STEADY HAND" is written in a stylized, glowing font in the upper right corner.

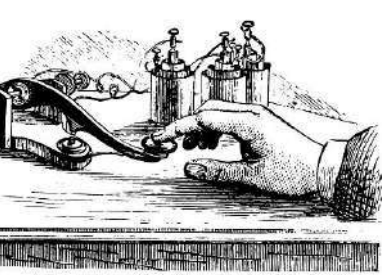
FOLLOW
THE BOOKS
STEADY
HAND

Other Games

Dashed Hopes

A mystery for *The Between: Ghosts of El Paso*
By Jim Crocker





DASHED HOPES

A Threat for The Between:
Ghosts of El Paso
By Jim Crocker

The recent grand opening of the Kidd & Springer Telegraph Office has been the talk of El Paso. The novelty of same-day communication with their main office in New Orleans had not yet worn off when the messages began to take a turn for the uncanny.

Residents have begun receiving entirely unsolicited cryptic warnings of future calamity, veiled reminders of buried indiscretions, and garbled pleas for redemption, all from very unexpected senders.

It's gotten to the point where Josiah Kidd, proprietor of the service, now stands at your door, transcript of a just-received message in hand, requesting the Vigilance Committee's assistance.

Ask the Bootstrapper if they're in play, otherwise the Hunter of your choice: Describe the uncanny message you just received from Kidd via the new telegraph. How were you involved in the death of whomever supposedly sent it?

Questions & Opportunities

WHO OR WHAT IS SENDING THESE UNCANNY MESSAGES? (Complexity: 4)

Unlocks the next question.

HOW CAN YOU GET THEM TO SHUT UP?
(Complexity: 2)

Resolve the Mystery by ending the interference and restoring communication to the East.

The Mask of the Message

Each Hunter narrates a flashback to a time when someone delivered unexpected news to them that changed their life.

Clues

- ☐ The ashes of a pile of burned telegraph messages with the Kidd & Springer logo.
- ☐ A brand new bail of telegraph wire.
- ☐ A carefully disassembled telegraph receiver apparatus, including several strange parts you don't recognize.
- ☐ A Side Character is found wandering outside of town following the telegraph lines eastward. They don't remember how they got there.
- ☐ A ladder and bolt cutters, hastily concealed.
- ☐ Dots and dashes carved rudely into a tabletop.
- ☐ A Side Character reports seeing glowing spirits gliding along the telegraph line.
- ☐ A handwritten Morse code table containing a third column with bizarre shapes.
- ☐ A letter from back East that complains of similarly strange telegraph messages coming out of El Paso.
- ☐ A Side Character besides Roderick is operating the telegraph when the office is normally closed.
- ☐ A Side Character who rode through the storm was struck by lightning but it did not harm them.
- ☐ A horse taps out a simple Morse code message with its hoof.
- ☐ A Side Character absent-mindedly taps their fingers as if operating the telegraph.
- ☐ A Hunter dreams of racing, disembodied, along the telegraph line away from El Paso towards something dark and terrifying.
- ☐ A Hunter dreams of racing, disembodied, along the telegraph line towards El Paso to escape something incandescent and raging.
- ☐ A well-worn used telegraph sending apparatus, carefully wrapped in oilcloth.
- ☐ A survey map with every telegraph pole from El Paso to the border carefully noted.
- ☐ A suppressed report of the first attempt to run a telegraph to El Paso that ended in tragedy.
- ☐ The smell of ozone and copper hanging heavy in the air.
- ☐ Flashes of light in the pattern of a Morse Code message.

Dangers

THE IMPULSE

A compulsion to act on the mysterious messages received by the telegraph. Otherwise level-headed folk whom the Hunters have previously found to be steadfast citizens start acting all crazy based on what the Telegraph tells them.

The Keeper should take this opportunity to allow their mildest Side Characters to behave in outlandish but clearly desperate ways. The mousy schoolteacher robs the bank at gunpoint. A recent widow in sackcloth suddenly goes on a bender in a saloon. One of the Mastermind's murderous cutthroats volunteers as a deacon. Choose a Side Character the Hunters know reasonably well and have them act in a manner opposite to what they expect. However the Hunters manage to resolve a given incident, the perpetrator has a script for one of the uncanny telegraph messages.

Whichever of the Hunters received the odd telegraph as part of the Establishing Question may at any time incur the Condition: **The Impulse**, based on the message they received. Other Hunters who review transcripts of the messages or through investigation actually hear the dots and sashes of the uncanny signal make themselves vulnerable to this Condition as well.

THE POST BROTHERS

A pair of reprobate outlaws who have made a fine living off extorting the US Mail and Pony Express riders on the outskirts of El Paso, now desperate that their income is going to dry up as a result of the arrival of the telegraph.

They're a known nuisance to the townsfolk, but because the Express Company has always considered their modest ransoms a cost of doing business, no one's wanted to risk going into the desert after them. But now they've started to directly harass some of the more remote homesteads, demanding any telegraph messages their victims may have.

The Elder

The older brother, Temperance, is the brawn of the operations, a big, slow lunkhead whose menace is mainly theoretical; he doesn't particularly like to hurt anyone unless they hurt his brother first. He's like a freight train momentum-wise; slow to get moving, but very difficult to stop once he does. He goes armed with a scattergun that he rarely uses and a railroad sledge which he generally relies on. He's pale as a ghost with just a wisp of very light blonde hair.

Quote: "Um. I dunno, I should prolly ask my brother."

The Younger

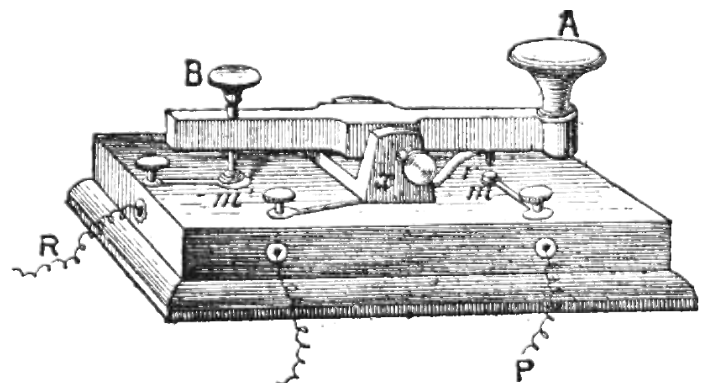
The younger brother, Diligence, is the brains of the operation, as diminutive and weaselly as his brother is oxlike. He tries for clever rhetoric and philosophical justification that more often than not results in odd spoonerisms and misstatements of well-known aphorisms. He's no fighter, but quite adept at arranging to take a modest licking to get his brother wound up and swinging, during which he'll step back to wait for the perfect moment to stab his opponent in the back (usually figuratively but occasionally literally). He goes armed with a nasty Bowie knife, an ivory-handled straight razor, and a pearl-handled six-shooter. He's as brown as his brother is pale, with thick black curly hair and a well-waxed moustache. ("The Post patriarch was particularly promiscuitous," he likes to quip).

Quote: "Temperance, my esteemiabale fraternal companion, never, ever forget that a bird in the hand should not throw stones."

THE THUNDERHEAD

The Thunderhead is a massive weather system of booming thunder, spectacular flashes of lightning, and torrential rain, wind, and occasional hail that formed around the time the strange messages started arriving, and has been slowly growing in size and intensity since. It is remarkably stationary, and though ominous does not seem to be headed towards town.

Any Hunters who venture out into the storm to visit residents on the outskirts of town, including the Post Brothers, to check on the telegraph line, or simply to investigate the storm itself, must make the NIGHT Move to reach their destination safely, regardless of the time of day. Hunters may incur **The Impulse** as a Condition from exposure to the storm, in addition to any other weather-related difficulties the Keeper inflicts.



Side Characters

JOSIAH KIDD, CO-OWNER KIDD & SPRINGER TELEGRAPH COMPANY

He/Him, white, late 40s, fancy silk suit with top hat in striking burgundy. Tall and lean. Closely-shaved, handsome face with pomaded hair and meticulous nails. The hype-man and business-minded partner in the company. Known nothing at all about how the equipment works, but everything about the finances. Patrician Manhattan affect that sometimes slips into Southern sharecropper when he becomes agitated. Big spender when out on the town, but a skinflint where the company is concerned.

Quote: “My dear sir, I can assure you with absolute confidence that you see before you the future of no less modest an endeavor than the shining future of human communication!”

RUTH SPRINGER, CO-OWNER KIDD & SPRINGER TELEGRAPH COMPANY

She/Her, early 40s, Jewish, work shirt and dungarees. Short and compact. Frizzy black hair up in a bun with a pencil through it, strands escaping. Bright, bespectacled eyes with a clean-scrubbed face free of cosmetics. Squints and bites her bottom lip when concentrating. The technically-minded partner in the company. Knows everything about how the equipment works, and nothing about the finances. Shares her many serial enthusiasms with little regard for social circumstances. Can instantly translate any Morse-coded message just by hearing it and send messages with shocking alacrity and clarity.

Quote: “Oh, my, is that a modified Morse B7 prototype you have there? I’d heard that three were actually constructed but I’ve never seen one! Ohhh, look at the curvature on that transmission arm, can I give it a tap or two? Oh, yes, sorry, sorry, I’m Ruth.”

MARIGOLD SWANSON, TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

She/Her, early 20s, white, pale face with freckles and long, straight red hair pulled up in a neat bun. Modest white blouse and blue skirt. She alternates between the sending and receiving station in the telegraph office and is unfailingly courteous and efficient. Cooperative with general inquiries but fiercely protective of the privacy of their customers. Occupies the small room at the back of the telegraph office.

Quote: “I appreciate your concern, Deputy, but I’m afraid you’ll need to ask Mrs. Cranston herself if you’d like to know the details of her message. Mister Kidd has been very clear on that.”

Side Characters, Cont’d

MICKEY “MAILBAG” JACKSON, RETIRED PONY EXPRESS RIDER

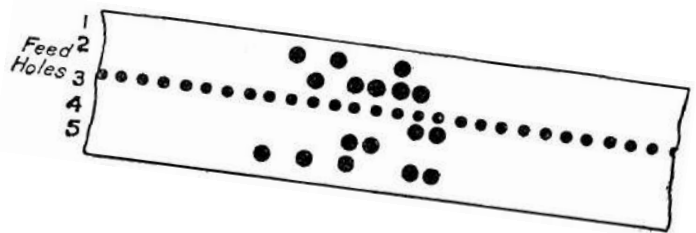
He/Him, Early 60s, Black, tall and long-limbed but whip-thin. Weathered skin and copiously-wrinkled face. Bow-legged but spry. Rode the final leg of the pony express run for years and known every acre of desert on the route to El Paso like the back of his hand. Happily retired and living with his kids and grandkids but wouldn’t turn down a little excitement. Extremely adept rider with the stamina of a man half his age, though his eyesight isn’t what it used to be.

Quote: “Well, now, I reckon that’d be about 13 mile South by Southwest along the old creek bed, then left into the gully. Good spot for an ambush! You’d best have someone along who knows the territory, son.”

DR. LEONHARDT VON SCHNIEDER, DEDICATED CLINICIAN

He/Him, early 40s, white, tall and slender. Well-worn suit under a doctor’s smock. Thick spectacles, high greying widow’s peak, neatly-trimmed beard, stethoscope, calipers, rubber hammer, head mirror on a leather strap, meerschaum pipe. Director of the Compassionate Sanatorium. Speaks in a thick Austrian accent, peppering his speech with medical and psychoanalytic jargon and theories. Genuinely cares for the well-being of his patients, but also wedded to some pretty fringe ideas. Currently working to reconcile the obviously-supernatural influence of The Wounded Night and cutting-edge theories of the mind and self.

Quote: “I am pleased you came to me, Madam, this patient is clearly exhibiting signs of Post-Mortality Identification Disorder. I’ve theorized a possible treatment, but now we can actually test my hypothesis!”



Locations

THE KIDD & SPRINGER TELEGRAPH OFFICE

A modest storefront on a side street off Main. A couple of benches for waiting, a wall of cubbies to hold messages behind a counter. Telegraph sending apparatus in one corner, receiver in the other, with a stack of pads and pencils for recording incoming messages. Manual cash register for transactions. Back room with a stove, modest cot and pantry for the overnight shift.

Paint the Scene: *As you look at one of the people lined up waiting to get a message sent back East, how do you know what their message will probably be about?*

THE POST BROTHERS HOSPITALACE

An abandoned Pony Express stable and rest stop commandeered by the siblings. Patched together with bits and pieces from other buildings. Stable houses a single aging but well cared-for burro. Large safe in a corner with nothing but a shotgun rigged to shoot anyone who opens it. Camp stove, cots, lanterns scrounged from abandoned mines.

Paint the Scene: *The place is ramshackle, but not squalid. What sentimental touch at odds with the fearsome reputation they cultivate has one of the brothers added?*

THE KIDD RESIDENCE

An opulent, newly-constructed house just outside of town. Ostentatiously imitating the fine mansions back East. Paint barely dry, smell of glue and furniture polish.

Paint the Scene: *On the outside, it appears Kidd has spared no expense in the construction of this rococo monstrosity, but what's a clear sign he cut corners on the interior?*

A TELEGRAPH POLE IN THE DESERT

One of many stout tar-coated poles of Eastern pine driven into the desert sand. Listing slightly as the lines sway in the wind from the storm. An occasional crackle of electricity from the contacts on top as a message makes its way down the lines. A few cacti and scrub plants about, otherwise barren and inhospitable country.

Paint the Scene: *How can you tell there was someone else here recently?*

RUTH'S WORKSHOP

A former dentist's office filled to bursting with bits of machinery, junk, tools, and hardware. Hand-cranked generator capable of creating modest, short-lived bursts of electricity. Several workbenches with projects of varying completion laid out. A single groaning bookcase overflowing with manuals and blueprints. A tiny room in back with a fold-up cot and single foot locker for clothing.

Paint the Scene: *Despite the apparent chaos, how can you tell that Ruth definitely has a system for how things are organized?*

Moments

A drunk, forehead pressed against it to steady himself, urinates on the base of a telegraph pole.

A light glows behind the windows of the Kidd & Springer office despite the ungodly hour.

A bedraggled young man begs for pennies to send a message back home to his mother.

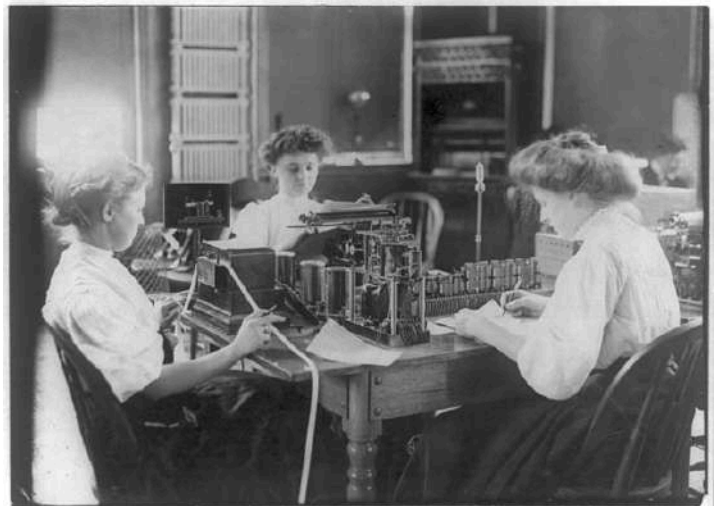
The clipped, tinny beep of the telegraph carries out into the street.

The skyline fades from bright blue to coal black as you turn towards the distant storm.

The telegraph poles seem to sink into the ground on the horizon.

Rewards

- A coded telegraph from an unknown source. Add it to your Personal Quarters.
- A telegraph machine, top of the line. Add it to your Personal Quarters.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another hunter what it is and then add it to your Personal Quarters.
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DEAD AIR

A Trouble for Step Right Up

By Amanda Mullins



DEAD AIR

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Presenting the Trouble

The loudspeakers above the carnival are on the fritz, again. The sound truck, too. All day long there's static playing under the announcements and the calliope music. And each night at 8 PM there's a voice speaking low and calm, murmuring like a preacher at a funeral. No one can quite make out the words, but danged if folks don't stop in their tracks to listen.

We thought it was a mild inconvenience until we found Little Dovie, the girl who sells candied pecans by the Ferris wheel, whispering into the glass in the Hall of Mirrors like that same voice. Her reflection was whispering back. Elmer chewed clean through the loudspeaker wires to make it stop. The static didn't even hiccup.

But tonight we caught something. A call-sign—KVOS. It's coming over the AM radio. If we can't fix the wires, we'll have to go to the source.

Direct the following to the Carny of your choice: *One of you remembers listening to KVOS as a child, long before the Carnival life. Back then, the voice on the radio spoke only to you. What did it say, and why did you refuse to ever listen again?*

Paint the Scene for all Carnies: *For the past week the broadcast has repeated a different, strange and distorted phrase each evening, getting stuck in your mind, almost burrowing into your skull. What phrase do you remember hearing and how did you get it out of your head?* (Keeper advice: use these as Conditions to start the Trouble.)

Questions & Opportunities

How can you understand the Trigger Phrase? (Complexity: 2)

While it won't stop the broadcast, you can now warn the Carnival and townsfolk. This unlocks the subsequent questions and the Move: **Tuned In**.

Tuned In:

The first time you hear The Trigger Phrase you begin to incorporate pieces of it or rhymes of it into your speech.

The second time you hear The Trigger Phrase you take the Condition: **Tuned In**.

The third time you hear The Trigger Phrase you must immediately reduce your Reason by -1 and increase your Vitality by +1. This lasts until the Trouble is resolved.

How have the loudspeakers been hijacked? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve this Trouble by fixing the loudspeakers and leaving town. KVOS AM will no longer impact the Carnival (although the broadcast continues on radios and will still affect townsfolk). One Carny can add "fixed loudspeakers" to their Travelling Case.

What is the true nature of the broadcast? (Complexity: 6)

Resolve this Trouble by silencing the radio broadcast permanently.





KVOS AM

Nobody recalls when it started broadcasting. The dial shouldn't even go that far. And yet, every night at 8 PM, KVOS AM fills the air with a voice that lingers in the bones long after the radio goes silent.

The man speaking (if it is a man) never gives his name. His voice is steady, patient, the kind you'd follow into a river without ever realizing you were drowning. He speaks in circles, weaving words into shapes the mind can't quite hold onto. People who listen too long change. They start whispering things that sound like scripture but feel all wrong, like an old hymn played backward. Some get violent. Others just walk, heading into the dust, lips still moving.

Quote: *"They told you not to listen. But you've always been listening, haven't you?"*

If the Carnies ignore investigating KVOS AM...

It takes Little Dovie first, all that are found are her little patched shoes. The animals will refuse to perform, and townies begin to act strangely. A Carny disappears, and another becomes violently enraged. The broadcast changes on Night Four. No more phrases, no static, just heavy but patient breathing. The townies gather at the carnival grounds, and a bloodbath ensues. On the fifth night, the voice crackles to life once again.

"You've been listening for a long, long time. Now it is time to come home."

The survivors (townies and Carnies alike) start walking out into the dust.

DANGERS

The Townsfolk

Some of the townsfolk begin to act erratically after hearing the broadcast. They don't speak much, but when they do, they seem to echo the voice on the radio. It's as if they're trying to act out the broadcast's commands, but there's no clear pattern to their behavior. Sometimes, they stand outside carnival tents for hours, staring at the performers as if waiting for something, unmoving and silent. Other times, they rush into the carnival, trying to pull or drag people away. Occasionally, they erupt into sudden, inexplicable violence, without warning or reason, and the Carnies must always be ready to flee or fight.

Static and the Trigger Phrase

It starts as background noise, so very easy to tune out. Over time, however, it becomes almost physical, like a manifestation of smothering air. Listening too closely for too long you might start to hear voices in the static. You might start to even make sense of them.

MOMENTS

An automobile driver listening to the radio doesn't pay attention to the road, with deadly results.

A group of children, toys abandoned, play "Radio Host" and viciously fight each other for the title role.

Cheery ads are played over and over. **Paint the Scene for the Carny with the highest Sensitivity:** *What ad do you hear and why do you desperately want the item?* Take the Condition: **Sweet-talked.**

A newsreel describes horrifying events in a town you've recently left after the townsfolk succumbed to the broadcast.

A woman yells at her husband to turn off the radio and get some work done, but he turns it back on as soon as she leaves.

A preacher delivers a sermon, but every word is just static. The congregation nods along, murmuring "Amen."

TICKET OF ITERATION

Each Carny must narrate a flashback of when they established an in-joke with another Carny that is only hilarious to each other.



LOCATIONS

Wachsmann Carnival Sound Truck

Rusty and repeatedly repaired. Peeling paint faded from dust and wind. The face of the Spectacle plastered on the box for all to see. Lately, no matter where it's parked, someone swears they hear the speakers crackle at odd hours—just a breath of static, like a voice waiting to be heard.

If a Carny has the Condition “**Star Attraction**”, it is their face on the truck and everyone in town will associate their face with the KVOS AM broadcast blaring loudly from the truck's speakers.

Paint the Scene: *You've heard something deeply unsettling from the truck's speakers. What was it, and how did you try to dismiss it?*

KVOS AM Broadcast Station

A decrepit, seemingly abandoned building on the outskirts of town, floorboards sagging under layers of dust and debris. Animals and insects scuttle through the ruins, seeking shelter from the unending storms. There is no sign of power—no wires, no generator—but the loudspeaker above the door crackles with static as if waiting for someone to listen.

Paint the Scene: *The static surges, and for a moment, the building seems less abandoned, as if time has folded in on itself. What brief, impossible scene do you witness, and is it indicative of a past or future event?*

KVOS AM Broadcast Booth

A glass booth with a single boom microphone. Reels of unused waxed cylinders, celluloid strips, and paper tape for recordings. The chair is still warm, though no one is there.

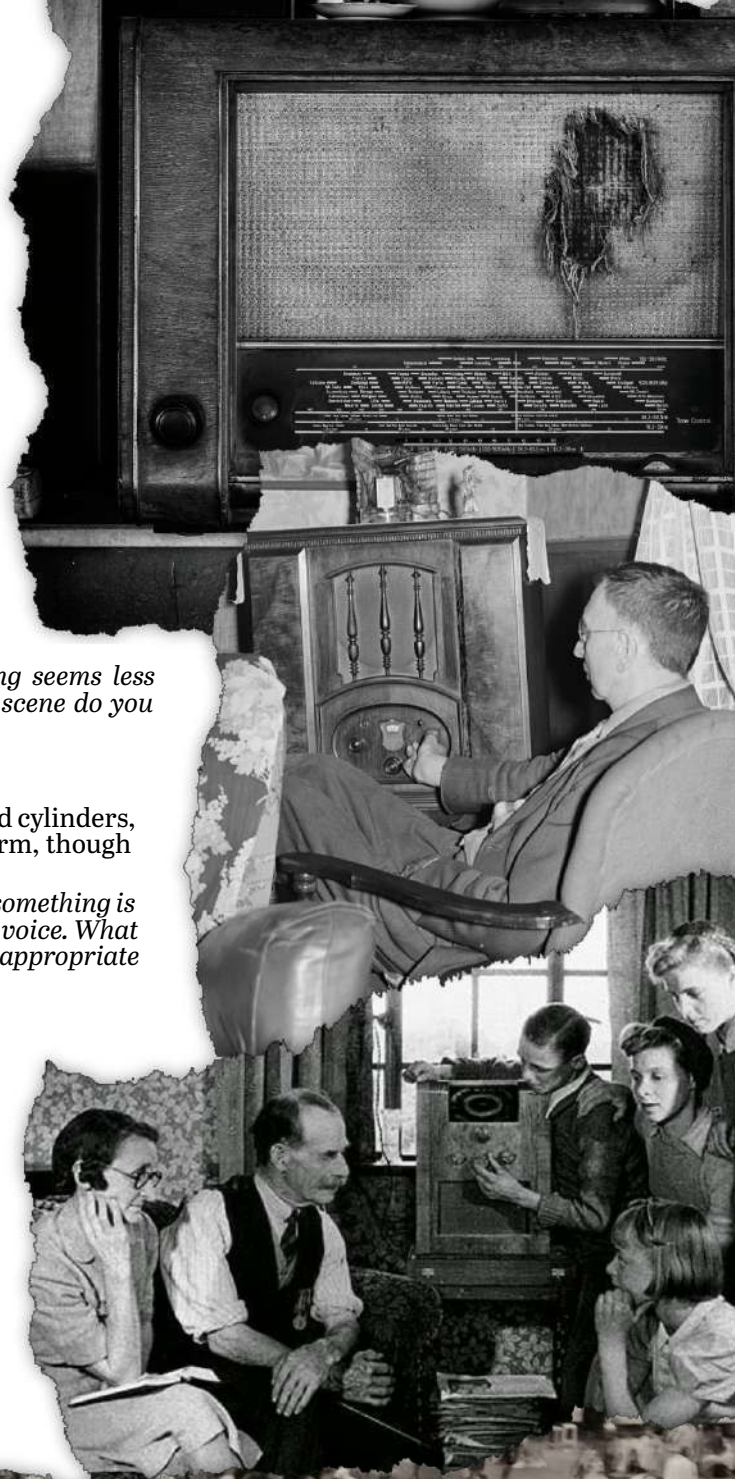
Paint the Scene: *The recording equipment shouldn't be running, but something is spooling onto the reels. When you lean in to listen, you hear your own voice. What are you saying and why don't you remember speaking it? Take an appropriate Condition.*

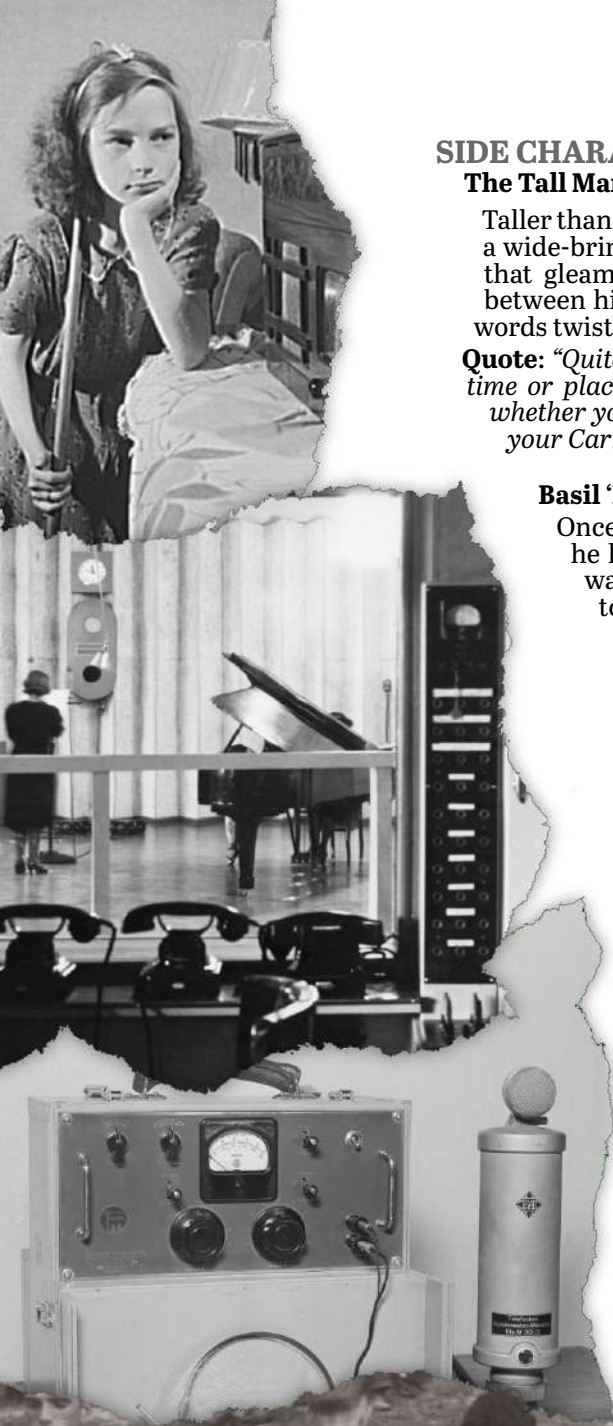
A Shack

Tiny and barely standing against the wind, shaking in the dust. Inside walls are covered with notes scribbled in shaky hands about broadcasts of the past. Next to the shabby cot is a rickety table with a radio. The dial is fused in place, and the static from the radio is loud. The longer you stay in the shack, the less you want to leave.

Paint the Scene: *Something about the static changes as you linger—it almost forms words, almost becomes familiar. What do you think you hear, and why does it make you hesitate at the door?*

Special Rule: Trying to leave the shack is a Day Move during the Day Phase and a Night Move during the Night Phase.





SIDE CHARACTERS

The Tall Man, a wanderer

Taller than even the tallest Carny, stick-slim and like a marionette at rest. He always wears a wide-brimmed hat (when outdoors, of course—manners matter), a golden sun brooch that gleams even in the dimmest light, and an extra-long cigarette holder balanced between his unnervingly long fingers. His voice is warm, his demeanour genial, but his words twist smokily, curling in the spaces between meaning and crypticism.

Quote: “Quite the storm, isn’t it? I must have wandered through it for ages with no sense of time or place. It’s easy to get lost in something like that. To forget where you started, or whether you were moving forward or simply treading the same path. But I stumbled upon your Carnival, and here I am. Tell me—doesn’t this all feel strangely familiar to you?”

Basil ‘Buzzman’ Weathers, a washed up host

Once the voice of KVOs AM, now a jittery wreck with a thousand-yard stare. Claims he left the station when he realised it was broadcasting his voice even when he wasn’t in the booth. Constantly fiddling with a broken pocket watch, as if trying to rewind time itself.

Quote: “They’re still playing it, you know. My voice. My words. But I never said them. Not like that.”

Mrs Joy Callaway, a devoted listener

Wiry grey hair and a widow’s hump. Kindly and soft-spoken, she seems to know everything about the Carnies, even things they’ve never told anyone. Swears she’s been listening to KVOs all her life, despite it being a relatively new station.

Quote: “Oh, I remember when you said that. I remember all the interviews! Such a lovely story. Or did you mean it as a warning? Hard to say, really.”

Deacon Ezra Beachum

Short and angry, a fire-and-brimstone preacher who sees the radio as a conduit for something unholy. Carries a thick leather case heavy with scripture pages torn from their bindings. His congregation dwindled when he started raving about “the voices that twist men’s minds” and “the false prophets whispering through the static.” Has been known to smash radios with a sledgehammer.

Quote: “You think you’re the one listening? Oh, you stupid child... it’s been listening to you this whole time.”



CLUES

- ☐ A warning: "It's not a station. It's a door."
- ☐ Someone claims they heard their own voice on the radio, but much older and extremely frightened.
- ☐ A sign that reads "Signal Interference. Will Return Shortly". It appears decades old.
- ☐ A door is locked from the inside and nobody is there.
- ☐ A long list of shows that never aired and radio hosts that never existed. One of the names is yours.
- ☐ A micro sandstorm sounds like static.
- ☐ A weathervane spins wildly when not windy, stopping suddenly to point to a location.
- ☐ An on-air sign flickers rhythmically like a heartbeat.
- ☐ "The circuit cannot be broken" written in an unusual place.
- ☐ Someone's voice echoes in a crowded room.
- ☐ A sand dune forms in an impossible location.
- ☐ Dust falls from the sky in the shape of a waveform.
- ☐ A photograph of the original staff of KVOS AM. Someone in the photo is extremely familiar.
- ☐ Someone mutters an apologetic "sorry about the noise" to you in an otherwise silent space.
- ☐ Someone knows exactly what you are going to say before you say it.
- ☐ An OPEN sign flickers an SOS.
- ☐ Children draw spirals in chalk, but when asked will not remember doing it.
- ☐ A tin can telephone stretched between two abandoned structures. You can hear breathing on the other end.
- ☐ A familiar voice from your past comes from an unusual place.
- ☐ Clocks and watches all stopped at 2:17.

REWARDS

- The Trigger Phrase (Only available if the broadcast was not silenced). When you use the Trigger Phrase to purposely infect someone you get an automatic success on a roll involving that person. Additionally, you must mark the next unmarked box:

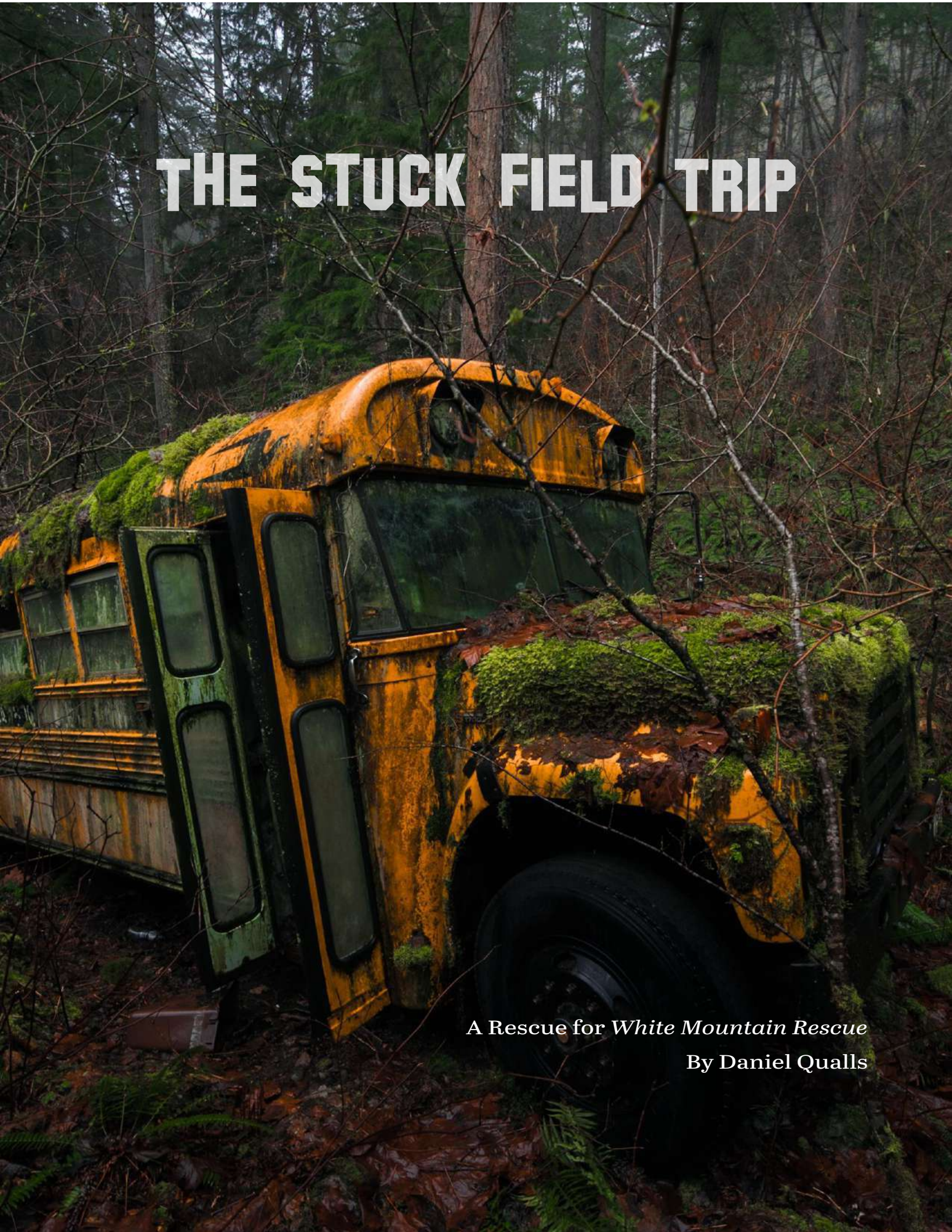
- ☐ Take the Condition: **Tuned In**. You must immediately reduce your Reason by -1 (Min -2) and increase your Vitality by +1 (Max +3). Your stats return to normal when the Condition clears.
- ☐ Take the Condition: **Pontypool**. While this Condition is active you can only speak in nonsense.
- ☐ Take the Condition: **Johnny Deadeyes**. You must permanently reduce your Reason by -1 (no minimim).

Each subsequent use of the Trigger Phrase requires a marking a Ticket.

- Keys to the Wachsmann Carnival Sound Truck. Add them to your Travelling Case.
- The Tall Man becomes a recurring Side Character. Consulting him on matters related to space/time or other dimensions gives an extra Clue.
- A bag of Little Dovie's candied pecans. Add it to your Travelling Case.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Carny what it is and then add it to your Travelling Case.



THE STUCK FIELD TRIP

A photograph of a yellow school bus, heavily overgrown with moss and rust, partially obscured by bare tree branches in a forest. The bus is tilted slightly to the left, and its front door is open. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees.

A Rescue for White Mountain Rescue

By Daniel Qualls

THE STUCK FIELD TRIP

A Rescue for *White Mountain Rescue* by Daniel Qualls

Presenting the Rescue

Nestled beneath Stinson Mountain, Stinson Lake has quiet waters surrounded by pine and birch. Though modest in size, the lake is a favorite of locals and schools alike for its clarity and calm. Each spring, nearby middle schools launch their Stinson Watershed Inquiry Project, a hands-on STEM initiative where students build floating sensor buoys to monitor water temperature, acidity, and oxygen levels. Working in teams, they collect simple data and analyze the lake's health over time, presenting their findings at the annual Shoreline Pavilion Showcase. During the project, the kids always hope to find evidence of Sonny, the legendary lake monster of Stinson Lake.

This year, after the science showcase was wrapping up, school buses from area middle schools lined up as students boarded in a fairly dense fog rolling off the lake. The last bus in line, from Russell Middle School, disappeared into the fog while teacher Tanner Gilroy spoke with event organizers. The bus apparently went the wrong direction from the exit, possibly the driver was confused in the fog. Regardless, the bus, its driver, and twenty-three 8th graders are missing. They are probably stuck somewhere weird due to the fog. The bus was last seen around 12:20 p.m., and it is now 2:15 p.m.

Search crews of volunteers, coordinated by the Grafton County Sheriff's Office, are spreading out around the lake. Deputy Sheriff Stephen Nicholas is leading the effort and has assigned your NSF team a sector stretching from just north of the pavilions to the lake's northeast corner.

Paint the Scene: *There is not much left of the fog, it seems to have drifted back onto the lake to the north. What are some dangers you typically encounter while searching for people lost in the fog?*

Establishing Question

Amy Ednie, a river guide for the National Forest Service, has got a NFS boat launched and tied to the docks and is ready to go if anyone chooses to check the shore via boat. Ask the Veteran or anyone who is friends with Amy the following: What strange thing did Amy tell you she saw on the lake years ago that made her think there might be some truth to the existence of Sonny, the Lake Monster?



Rescue Questions

Where in the borderlands of reality is the school bus stuck? (Complexity 4)

Answering this question locates the school bus and unlocks the next question.

Why does the Lake Creature want the school bus? (Complexity 4)

Answering this question gives the team the opportunity to either distract or trick the Lake Creature and rescue the middle school students.

The Crown of the Lake

Each First Responder narrates a time they had a peaceful day out on the water.

The Phenomenon: The Lake Creature

Sonny the Lake Monster is actually a behemoth-sized creature from the Mountains of Verdigris. It is a mass of mottled, lumpy flesh with an enormous maw lined with sharp fangs easily three or four feet in length. Its most identifying feature is its tentacles of varying thickness, from the width of a backyard garter snake to the girth of a massive Amazonian anaconda, and their length can be unrealistically long, possibly stretching for thousands of feet. These tentacles can also sense what is around them.

When the First Responders first encounter the tentacles, read the following:

Paint the Scene: *What makes these tentacles unlike anything found on known species of cephalopods?*

Note: No matter where the First Responders find the school bus in the Border Wetlands, it is half-pulled into the Swamps of Verdigris by several of the Lake Creature's tentacles wrapped around the back of the bus, with all the students crowded up to the front of the vehicle.

Escalation

As it gets closer to night, the difficulty and danger becomes amplified especially with the lingering fog. Mark a box after all the players have had a scene or if you deem appropriate due to time passing. After 4 boxes have been marked, have the team all make a Dangerous move involving the darkness. If the Question has not been answered, a Search Operation Center is set up at the Lake Stinson Pavilions.





Dangers

- **Lost in the Fog:** If the gray fog gets thicker, First Responders may need to make a Risky Move to avoid getting lost or separated from others.
- **Drowning:** If anyone falls into the water, a tentacle will grip their ankle and yank them into the deeper water. They must immediately make a Dangerous Move or drown.
- **Tentacles:** These could be encountered dropping from trees, in deep grass, along the lakeshore, and even burrowing out of soft soil or mud. They will attempt to entwine any human they encounter and drag them to the north or kill them if they put up a resistance. Make a Risky Move to avoid them or Dangerous Move to escape them if entwined. If injured, the tentacles will quickly retreat to wherever they came from near the Marsh.
- Here is the Paint the Scene from above for when they are first encountered: **Paint the Scene:** *What makes these tentacles unlike anything found on known species of cephalopods?*

Moments

- A First Responder almost slips in mud near the shore, but gets their hand all muddy when catching themselves.
- The National Forest Service helicopter flies above the fog stirring it up into dissipating spirals.
- A reference map is going all soft at the edges from damp fingers and the humidity.
- The surface of the lake is like polished glass despite the search crews using motor boats on the far side.
- A compass needle spins briefly in slow circles before locking onto a direction that leads straight into the Stinson lake.

Note: Only the player who failed previous Rationalization Moves will also see oddities from other Rescues like the tall figures or random stairs.

Side Characters

Amy Ednie, River Guide for the National Forest Service

Tall with blonde curly hair, sunburned nose. Wears a khaki National Forest employee uniform with a Red Sox baseball cap. Is protective of her boat and reminds passengers not to step on non-steps. (Amy is featured in the Vanished Canoe Trip and if she was killed, change her to **Chad Elvers**).

Quote: *"Because of the mountain wrap around, this is one of the calmest lakes I know, still, you gotta wear PFD (personal flotation device)."*

Stephen Nicholas, Grafton County Deputy Sheriff

Sharp-eyed and respected by the National Forest Service LEOs. He keeps his uniform crisp, his radio on, and a quiet notebook of strangeness he's seen over the years tucked in his cruiser. (The Rookie, the Warden or First Responder with the highest Presence would know that Stephen plays drums for a local ZZ Top tribute band, called "Gimme All Your Luvin'")

Quote: *"There's no road out to the north, just a bunch of dirt roads to lake access points for boats. It circles back around to the pavillon. He either got stuck in the mud or drove off into a ditch in the woods. Worst case scenario is the lake, but it's pretty shallow on the shores so we'll find them easy enough if they are."*

Tanner Gilroy, Middle School Teacher

Young science teacher with a red t-shirt with white letters saying "Russell Middle School: STEM." Baffled as to why the bus didn't follow the rest out to the south exit. Tanner definitely wants to go with the First Responders to help.

Quote: *"I don't know where Mr. Nelson went. I mean he was right there with the door opened waiting for me and then when I turned back to go, the bus was just gone. Like. . .where did he go?"*

Clinton Sharpe, Fisherman

Local retired man wearing a faded ball cap. Carries a thermos in one hand. His tackle box is a mess of old lures, rusted pliers, and hooks. Concerned that lately the fog is rolling in thicker than usual, spoiling the view.

Quote: *"I've not really caught any fish here in months, but the water is so smooth it's a pleasure to get out on the water."*

Brian Zaborski, National Park Service Helicopter Pilot

(contacted via radio) His voice sounds steady on the radio. In person he typically wears aviator glasses and an olive drab flight suit. His helicopter is a light H135 airbus painted white with bold green and yellow stripes.

Quote: *"(tchzzk) This is NFS Air 2, come in ground. I have a visual on all five search crews. Everyone is maintaining their intervals. (tchzzk)"*

Bernie Nelson, School Bus Driver (if alive)

Older gentleman with a buzz cut flat top. Jeans with suspenders and dark green flannel shirt. Is just about catatonic with shock.

Quote: *"Hey. . .how's it going?"*

Twenty-three Middle School Students

The emotional state of the 8th graders range from excited to freaked the hell out. Regardless, they all want to go home. Some wear red Russell Raccoons jackets and they all talk urgently at the same time. (Possible names: Aiden, Claire, Denny, Logan, Jade, Jason, Courtney, Maddie.)

Quote: *"What the heck is that? That thing is not Sonny!! Get us out of here!! Where are we???"*

Locations

Shoreline Pavilion

A long wooden structure with a green metal roof, just above the lake's edge and open on three sides. Weathered picnic tables line its interior, their surfaces etched with decades of initials and scribbles from local middle schoolers. Restrooms and storage make up the closed fourth side.

Paint the Scene: *What is carved in the tables that show students over the years are more interested in Sonny the Lake Monster versus recording the health of the lake?*

Boat Dock

Narrow, creaking length of maintained planks make up the long dock that juts into the still water. Old rubber bumpers hang loosely from the sides, scuffed from years of fishing boats and canoes. Beneath the dock, the water darkens quickly, hiding the lakebed.

Paint the Scene: *Just hovering near your subconscious is the faint desire to jump in what does that pull feel like?*

Shores of Lake Stinson

The trees go right up to the water's edge for the most part, making it difficult to get to the lake unless you use a fishing access road. Branches and a steep incline adds to the difficulty walking the shoreline. The surface of the lake is smooth and the water is cool to the touch.

Paint the Scene: *What natural wildlife is visible along the shore?*

Fishing Access Roads

These small unpaved roads provide small boat access along the lake. Occasional muddy puddles from the trust of vehicle tires. The school bus might have mistakenly came this way and then veered off the road and become hidden among trees or brush

Paint the Scene: *What strange tracks or markings do you see in the mud?*

Marsh

All to the north is a wetlands area that has a boardwalk Marsh Trail used by hikers and local schools. Tall grass and water foliage grows thick in the mud and standing water. The buzz of mosquitoes and biting flies are interested in your movements.

Paint the Scene: *How does the gray fog appear to be protecting this marsh?*

Border Wetlands

In the fog, the marsh boardwalk disappears and the water is shallow but the mud is thick. The march weeds are a green, sickly color as if tainted by rust. The fog seems to almost block the sun and feels warmer, more humid than it should.

Paint the Scene: *What odd bird sounds do you hear in the foggy wetlands?*

The Swamps of Verdigris

Twisted trees half submerged in the wetlands are half hidden by green fog. The water is thick and covered with iridescent pollen. Lantern-shaped fungi bob along the surface, casting eerie, green glows.

Paint the Scene: *What sounds do you hear letting you know this swamp is not on earth?*

Helicopter Above

The white National Forest Service Helicopter, NFS Air 2, flown by Brian Zaborski is still overhead making another pass around the lake. Occasionally, the copter flies along the ridge of the Stinson Mountains.

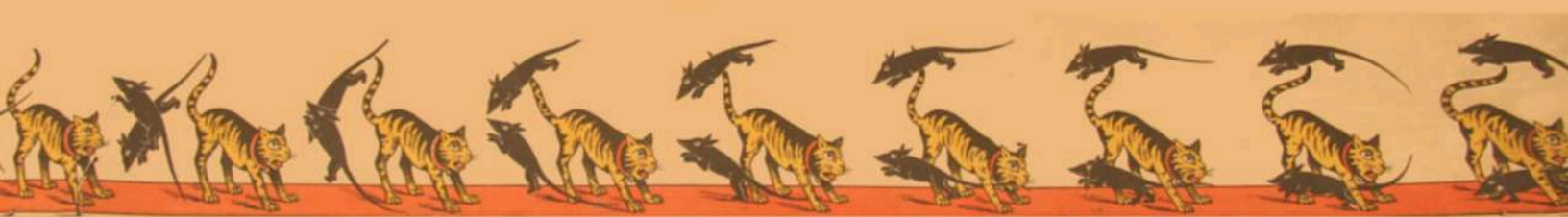
Paint the Scene: *Describe how the dense foliage and light fog is making it difficult for the helicopter to see much.*

Clues

- ☐ Drag marks in soft earth, as if something heavy was pulled.
- ☐ The sound of a bus horn in the distance, echoing, but no direction can be ascertained.
- ☐ A water bottle with the Raccoon logo of Russell Middle School.
- ☐ Broken side mirror, matching a school bus make.
- ☐ A kid's red jacket snagged on a tree branch, too high to have been caught naturally.
- ☐ A row of smashed trees snaking through the forest.
- ☐ The smell of diesel fuel faintly lingering.
- ☐ Scrapes and yellow paint marks on a narrow rock pass.
- ☐ A compass needle randomly spinning for a few seconds.
- ☐ A large muddle puddle that looks like a huge snake slithered through it.
- ☐ A handwritten note in a child's handwriting: "We're going down to learn."
- ☐ An intricate spiral pattern drawn in the mud on the lake's edge.
- ☐ A sealed jar found bobbing near the shore, containing a human tooth and a tiny bus toy.
- ☐ A Side Character remembering an odd fact about Sonny, the Lake Monster, "Sonny doesn't eat. . it teaches, in its own way."
- ☐ A tangle of wet branches and vegetation near the lakeshore pulses faintly, like organs, and carries a foul, rotten stench.
- ☐ A trail cam snapped a photo of something coiled around a tree near the lake's shore; its mouthparts flared wide like a lamprey.
- ☐ A flashlight beam refracts oddly in the fog, revealing spiralling patterns hanging in the mist.
- ☐ The wet carcass of a deer, apparently cut cleanly in half by giant scissors.
- ☐ The twisted and mutilated corpse of the bus driver, Bernie Nelson.
- ☐ A First Responder with a Crown of the Mountain marked finds their own childhood report card tucked under a rock, dry and untouched by time.

Mountain Clues

- ☐ A walkie-talkie crackles with static before a child's voice murmurs, "We're still here. . I don't hear anything" and then another kid's voice saying, "Keep trying!" followed by silence.
- ☐ The gray fog pulses in and outward for a few moments, like it's breathing, then settles just as quickly.
- ☐ A First Responder opens a child's backpack left in the reeds and finds it filled with damp, hand-drawn maps of the lake, each dated weeks before the trip, and marked with the word "ENTRANCE" scrawled in the northeast end of the lake.
- ☐ A First Responder stumbles into a small clearing and finds all the frogs lying belly-up, perfectly still, each with strange black needles, almost quill-like, embedded in their soft throats and bellies.
- ☐ A gentle voice sings a camp song from somewhere in the woods, very slow, very clear, but no one can hear it except the First Responder with the highest Sensitivity, who insists it's coming from the treetops.



THE HYPNOTIC ZOETROPES

Peter DeCraene



THE HYPNOTIC ZOETROPE

A Threat for The Between by Peter DeCraene

The Illustrated Police News reports that several children and adults have been hospitalized for catatonia that erupts into violence when the patient is disturbed. According to the article, the most recent cases are of ten-year-old Andrew Drummond and Mrs. Enola McCreavy, a nanny for the Drummond family of Oxford Street near Grosvenor Square. Mrs. McCreavy was helping Andrew after breakfast with a zoetrope he had been given for his birthday. When they did not emerge from the playroom for tea, a servant went to investigate and found the pair staring at the zoetrope, immobile aside from keeping the toy spinning. When Mr. Drummond was informed, he picked up the toy and smashed it. Young Andrew remained immobile and continued staring at the spot; Mrs. McCreavy, however, became violent and attacked Mr. Drummond. The butler and two footmen managed to subdue the crazed nanny. Mrs. McCreavy has been taken to Bethlem Royal Hospital, while Andrew remains at home. Neither have shown any improvement.

Pose the following to a hunter who has the Cosmic Passage marked (or whoever you wish if no one has it marked): What additional detail in the story indicates that Andrew and Mrs. McCreavy succumbed to a form of hypnotism while playing with the zoetrope?

Questions & Opportunities

WHO IS HYPNOTIZING PEOPLE THROUGH THE ZOETROPE? (Complexity: 4)

Unlock the other questions.

WHAT IS THE HYPNOTIST'S MOTIVATION? (Complexity: 2)

Resolve the Threat by luring the Hypnotist to you and capturing them. Those already affected will remain in their hypnotized state.

HOW CAN THE HYPNOTIC EFFECT BE BROKEN? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Threat by capturing the Hypnotist and discovering the means to cure those already affected by the hypnosis. The hunters now have access to the custom Move: **The Wisdom of Bedlam**.

Moments

A carriage continuously drives around one of the squares or traffic circles in London.

A child repeatedly throws a ball into their air and catches it. The only part of the child that moves is their arm, and the ball always follows the same path.

A street entertainer has a peep-show box which a line of people are paying to look into. Depending on the demeanor and dress of the person, the entertainer changes the image, and might show them a landscape, a portrait, or a satirical, lewd, or horrifying picture.

A group of children pretend to play a game of marbles. They are quite good at reacting to the game despite there being no actual marbles.

A group of well-dressed children go running by, laughing hysterically, while a dowdy woman chases after them.

Three children draw chalk pictures on the sidewalk.
Paint the Scene: Each picture is exactly the same as the previous one, except for one small detail. What does the picture show?

Dangers

THE HYPNOTIST

The person responsible has multiple ways to hypnotize people. They prefer to remain anonymous and use the zoetropes to gain control remotely. When confronted, they can use techniques to quickly hypnotize anyone who can see and hear them.

THE HYPNOTIC ZOETROPE

There are a number of these toys around London. Should a hunter gaze into one, they must roll with **Sensitivity**.

On a 12+, The hunter is unaffected by the zoetrope, and gains a clue for this Threat. Tell the Keeper what the Clue is.

On a 10+, The hunter is unaffected by the zoetrope.

On a 7-9, The hunter gains the Condition: **Susceptible to Suggestion**. This Condition can only be removed if the hunters find a way to break the hypnotic effect.

On a miss, the hunter must be retired, at least until the hunters find a way to break the hypnotic effect

VICTIMS OF THE ZOETROPE

The children affected by the hypnotic toys insist on continuing to play with them, and become distraught or catatonic if the toy is taken away. The adults who have been affected wander around London in a daze. If confronted, the adults may react violently.

IF HARGRAVE HOUSE IGNORES THE THREAT...

More people become affected by the zoetropes. The hypnotist and those under hypnosis become part of the Mastermind Threat.

The Mask of Play

Each hunter narrates a scene from their childhood in which they abandoned, lost, or destroyed a formerly favorite toy.

Locations

DRUMMOND HOUSE

Large townhouse with ornamental stonework outside, smells of roses and old wood inside.

Paint the Scene: *The Drummonds are a well-to-do family with several servants. How can you tell that they are trying to hide their worry about their son's affliction?*

BETHLEM ROYAL HOSPITAL

A strong ammonia odor, sounds of patients and orderlies shouting, hysterical wailing and laughter.

Paint the Scene: *What are some signs that the staff are trying to lighten the usually dark mood of the place?*

NOAH'S ARK TOY SHOPPE

William Hamley III, proprietor

Glass-fronted cabinets and heavy tables of dark wood, placed seemingly randomly, contain well-dressed dolls, colorful card and board games, ingenious automatons, regiments of lead soldiers, and all manner of entertainments for upper-class children. Smells of wax and brown butter. A door at the back leads to the workshop.

Paint the Scene: *Noah's Ark Toy Shoppe has been in business for over 100 years, and always in this location. What signs are there that business has not been particularly good recently?*

NOAH'S ARK WORKSHOP

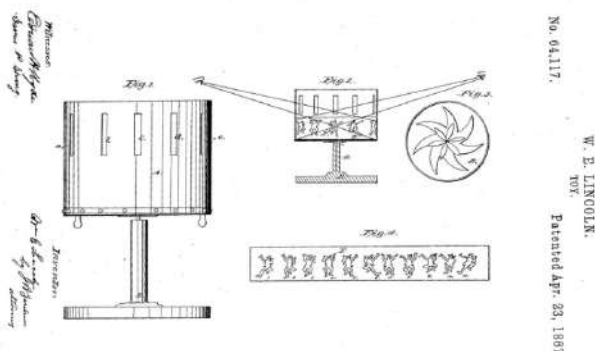
A chaos of workbenches, boxes of supplies, diagrams showing construction details for a variety of toys, crates with stock. Smells of wood shavings and varnish. An office off to the side.

Paint the Scene: *Do the employees enjoy their jobs, or find it drudgery? Describe one of the workspaces and how it reflects the attitude of the person who works there.*

AN ARTISTS' FLAT

Stacks of paintings leaning against the wall, easels and a drawing table with half-finished drawings and paintings, a small cot. Smells of turpentine and linseed oil. Noise of neighbors living in close proximity.

Paint the Scene: *What signs are there that the artist is experimenting with new techniques and styles?*



Side Characters

NICHOLAS DRUMMOND, A FATHER

Impeccably dressed, subtle smell of sandalwood cologne, a recent scar on his forehead. Nicholas is worried about his son, but also wants to give the appearance that everything is ticking along fine.

Quote: *"Terrible business about the nanny. My wife is interviewing new candidates. I'm off to the Club to meet an old schoolmate."*

AMANDA DRUMMOND, A MOTHER

Well-dressed, if a little harried; stylish coif with a few hairs dramatically out of place. Amanda is not used to discomfort or chaos, and Andrew's condition has put her on edge.

Quote: *"Of course, we're carrying along, but Mrs. McCreavy's illness has caused a great deal of inconvenience. Her behavior certainly had a worrying effect on Andrew; the doctor said it should pass with time and rest. How much time, I don't know, and as for rest, well, until I find a new nanny, I certainly won't be enjoying that luxury."*

ANDREW DRUMMOND, A HYPNOTIZED 10-YEAR-OLD

Recently turned 10 years old, spends his time staring at nothing, and responding to no one.

AGATHA DRUMMOND, A YOUNGER DAUGHTER

Dressed well, and very tidy, plays by herself. Agatha is very cross that Andrew got most of the attention because he's older and a boy, and now he gets even more because of his condition.

Quote: *"Mother always wants me to play with my dolls, but aren't Andrew's tin soldiers just small metal dolls? I don't understand why I can't play with his toys; he doesn't play with them anymore. I didn't even get to look at the zoetrope. It was very selfish to smash it before I had a chance to try. Perhaps if I stare at the walls and wet myself, Mother would pay more attention to me."*

ENOLA MCCREAVY, FORMER NANNY

Piercing blue eyes, wild, untamed hair, dressed in a straitjacket. Mrs. McCreavy is one of the adults hypnotized by the zoetropes. She sits morosely in her padded cell, staring at nothing until someone addresses her when she starts screaming and attacks the person disturbing her.

CARLTON EFFINGHAM, A DOCTOR

Small round glasses on a narrow birdlike nose. Fussy, but seems to care about his patients and worries that he doesn't know what this new condition is.

Quote: *"Not a lick of rational response. Had to give some of them a zoetrope to stare at. Put them all in straitjackets. Tearing their hair out you see. Or someone else's. Went for my eyes one time."*

Side Characters, Cont'd

WILLIAM HAMLEY III, A PROPRIETOR

Elderly man, bald with tufts of white hair over his ears, and glasses that make his eyes look enormous. Smells of wood shavings. Hands are always moving. William's grandfather first opened the toy shop, and William is immensely proud of his heritage. The shop has not been doing well, despite the quality merchandise, and William hopes to earn a royal warrant to boost the shop's credit.

Quote: *"The toys are my children - one does not simply abandon their children, does one? No, of course not. They must be cherished and their futures secured, so that they can bring happiness to future generations."*

WILLIAM HAMLEY IV (YOUNG WILL), A BOOKKEEPER

Young man with curly dark hair, demeanor of an overstimulated beagle. Young Will is Hamley's grandson and is completely bollocks at crafting toys; he is brilliant with numbers, however.

Quote: *"Have you seen the automata that we have? Ingenious! I'm surprised that we don't sell more of them. Would you like to buy one? I have one in the office with a man walking his dog; all the legs move, and the beast actually opens and closes its mouth!"*

JOHN TAPPER, A CARPENTER

Calloused but dexterous hands, a cap pulled low over his eyes. Smells of fresh cut wood and cheap cigars. He has been designing and crafting toys at Noah's Ark since before Young Will was born.

Quote: *"This here zo-ee-trope? Easy as pie to build. 'Course, I ain't no artist. I can get Jack to jump out of his box on the 'pop!' bit of the song, but put a pencil in my hand, and the best I can do is chew on it or use it as a dowel in one of these crank toys. We get the animation strips from some local artist-fellow."*

SIMON WESTERFELD, AN ARTIST

Round and soft, smells of absinthe. Simon is contracted by the Hamleys to make the animated strips for their zoetropes. This is the steady, if small, part of Simon's income.

Quote: *"I can draw zoetrope strips as quick as you like, but they work best without color. Do you know how many different colors there are on the skin of a toad? I did a whole series of paintings using a 'toad palette'; they're around here somewhere. I'll be exhibiting some at a local gallery soon - just waiting for confirmation of the dates."*

LAWRENCE HART-LINCOLN, A RIVAL TOY-MAKER

Tall and painfully skinny, walks hunched over as if his thin frame cannot support its own weight. Very proud of the pop-up books he constructs and the artistic flourishes on anything he paints.

Quote: *"Of course we sell zoetropes. I paint the strips myself. Tedious. I find the construction and illustration of our pop-ups and paper theaters to be far more interesting. They also sell well, and customers come in to find new designs or to replace one that their brat-, ahem, children destroy."*

Clues

- ☐ A tight roll of paper with cartoon characters painted on the edge. (When unrolled, these characters would not be seen.)
- ☐ A set of broken dowels painted green, even on the broken ends.
- ☐ The statement "If you join the dance-circle, you must dance," written in Latin.
- ☐ A pair of eyeglasses with eyes painted on them.
- ☐ A heavily annotated copy of the book *Mesmerism In India and its Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine* by James Esdaile, found in an unlikely place.
- ☐ A silver vase that has the image of a laughing face polished into the tarnished surface.
- ☐ A faded and torn poster advertising a performance of "The Amazing Hypnos", showing someone wearing a mask manipulating people as if they were marionettes.
- ☐ A set of Punch and Judy puppets with fish hooks sewn inside making them impossible to use without hurting oneself.
- ☐ A single blue and white china teacup with matching saucer and a silver spoon discovered in an unlikely place.
- ☐ A gold pocket watch with an eye engraved on the inside, and missing the minute hand.
- ☐ A paper zoetrope strip showing a running horse; a laughing face is inserted between two of the horse images.
- ☐ A ledger containing nonsense words interspersed with typical entries.
- ☐ A box containing sawdust mixed with crushed glass.
- ☐ A Ludo board game (Parcheesi) with all the non-green pieces replaced with silver thruppence.
- ☐ A porcelain doll, with an elaborately embroidered dress, has no eyes painted on.
- ☐ Three concentric rings of tin soldiers standing in perfect circles.
- ☐ A painting of a street scene, done only with shades of green.
- ☐ A set of dice, but the sides that would normally contain three pips are all blank.
- ☐ A book of paper dolls, in which someone has inserted a newspaper clipping about the Okey sisters, two girls with epilepsy who could perform feats of strength, speak foreign languages, and resist electric shocks while under hypnosis.
- ☐ A bag of glass marbles, which except for one are all shattered.

Custom Move

The Wisdom of Bedlam

You have access to the patients confined to Bethlem Royal Hospital, and can get information from them about any active Threat. Describe the individual you wish to talk to and how that person might have information about a Threat, then roll with **Composure**.

On a 10+, the patient gives you relevant information in the form of a Clue. Tell the Keeper what this Clue is.

On a 7-9, the patient gives you relevant information in the form of a Clue, but there is a complication. Tell the Keeper what this Clue is, and pick one of the following complications. No complication can be chosen more than one time; once all three complications are used, this Move is no longer accessible.

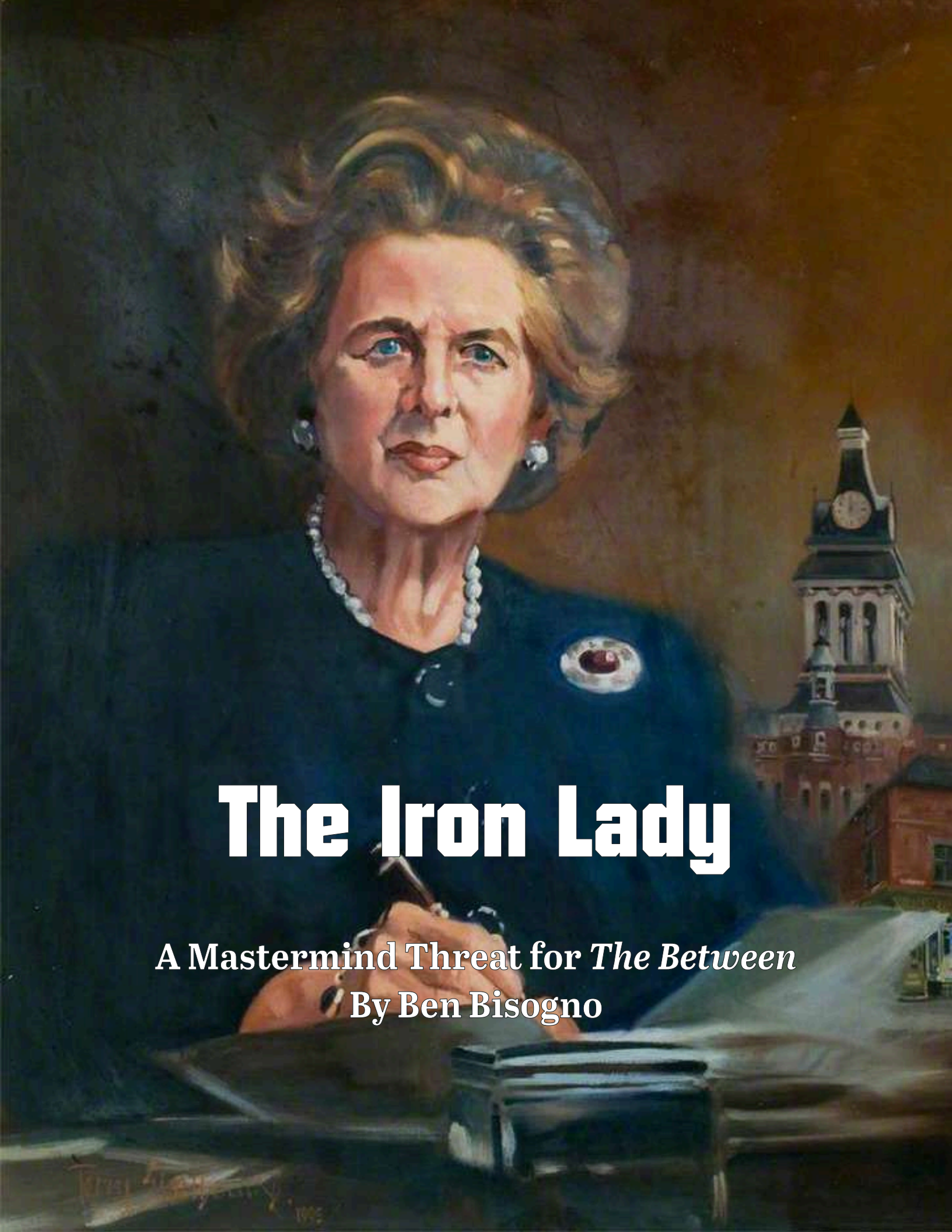
- ☐ You gain the Condition: **Touched by Madness**.
- ☐ The patient becomes agitated and some harm comes to them or to another patient. Describe this scene. This Move is no longer accessible to your hunter.
- ☐ The patient escapes. At the Keeper's discretion, either the patient becomes a servant of the Mastermind and the hunters roll with disadvantage on any encounter with the patient, or your hunter must spend the next London Night Phase tracking the patient and returning them to the Hospital. Explain how the Clue the patient gave you helps you locate them. (This does not use or explain the Clue as it pertains to the Threat.)

On a miss, you do not get a clue, and you are overwhelmed by the Madness of Bedlam. Retire this hunter until after the current Mastermind Threat has been resolved. If the hunter returns after that, mark **The Cosmic Passage** if it is not already marked.

Rewards

- A wooden toy from Noah's Ark Toy Shoppe. Describe the toy and add it to your Personal Quarters.
- A game from Noah's Ark Toy Shoppe. Describe the game and add it to your Personal Quarters.
- Unmark the **Darkened Threshold** if it's marked; explain how resolving this threat has provided you with some redemption for the acts of the past.
- An item gifted to you by one of the hospital patients. Describe the item and add it to your personal quarters.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another hunter what it is and then add it to your Personal Quarters.

Notes



The Iron Lady

A Mastermind Threat for *The Between*
By Ben Bisogno

Note: This Mastermind is in the style of the The Between Preview Edition.

Quote: “Progress? It’s a dangerous word. It means the decay of our time-honored values. I will not allow this nation, this Empire, to fall prey to the whims of those who seek to dismantle the very fabric of our society. Tradition and economic strength—these are the pillars upon which our civilization must rest. I do what must be done to ensure our legacy stands unchallenged, for the good of all. This city—this godly nation—and by extension the **world** needs the firm hand of a mother to raise it right. I shall be the iron that disciplines the child”

The swish of her pussycat bows, sensible handbag, and pearls are a reminder of her incongruity with this era; yet here she is, mingling effortlessly with Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. He presents her a gift from the house of Lords: a fob chain watch, initialed MT. Yet its luster pales in comparison with the internal glow of the “smart-watch” on her wrist. Her dark purple pillbox hat frames sculpted blonde curls, resembling a regal helmet. It stands in contrast with an audience teeming with top hats surrounding the two. She turns to survey the crowd below. Her eyes, concealed behind otherworldly dark “sunglasses,” reflect the waving appreciation of Victorian London’s public.

Thus she begins her speaking tour. Her voice is high, sharp, and commanding. She claims that the Prime Minister is poised to reshape the course of history and restore pride in the nation—and she will be the oracle needed to make it happen. She is an anachronism, a complete outsider, yet she holds herself at ease, as if she has practiced this many times before. The ministers give her message their rapt attention: she promises to be a steadfast Conservative shield for a new Great Britain. Her Majesty can rely on her—Margaret Thatcher—to be the beacon London needs to traverse the uncharted darkness of the future. “I will be extraordinarily patient with aligning the Empire with right and proper values, provided I get my own way in the end!”

Why She Wants to Bring the Crown to Its Knees:

Margaret Thatcher, having discovered the secrets of time travel in the twilight of her career, sees the Victorian era as the fulcrum on which the future of the British Empire—and the world—can be tipped in favor of her vision. She believes that by controlling the Crown, she can enforce a world order where economic conservatism is law, and where progressive movements are quashed before they can take root.

Thatcher’s plan is to halt the advance of social equality, to prevent the emergence of welfare states, and to ensure that concepts like women’s suffrage and queer rights never see the light of day. Under her influence, a Pax Britannica will thrive for another thousand years, a beacon of conservative values in a world increasingly threatened by change.



First Appearance

The First Mastermind Clue is always Margaret Thatcher’s first appearance in the story. Her voice may startlingly be carried over loudspeaker, or another brand new device called a radio, found in a Side Character’s home. This device could even be delivered without a return address to Hargrave House. She will invite listeners to join her on a crusade to “remake” the future.

Layer One

END OF SESSION SCENE

This layer is unlocked after the hunters discover the FIRST Mastermind Clue. At the end of the session in which this clue is found, describe a scene where Thatcher stands poised at the balcony opening on Big Ben’s clock face. Inside, a spinning orrery revolves, while outside, Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli dangles precariously from the edge of an hour hand. She demands his allegiance. When he refuses, she pulls a lever, sending him plummeting. Snapping her fingers she invites another man—another Benjamin Disraeli from a different timeline—to step out and witness her handiwork. She asks if he will share his predecessor’s fate or will align with her interests. As he bends the knee, she turns to survey the grand expanse of London, directing her gaze and pinched smile directed straight at us, the viewers.

Layer Two

UNTIMELY UNSCENES

This layer is unlocked after the hunters discover THREE Mastermind Clues. The Keeper can now begin using Untimely Unscenes, provided below. These scenes portray various futures that may occur should Thatcher’s plans succeed. Between sessions, write down the name of a Side Character you’d like to see return during the Mastermind Threat.

Layer Three

THE HISTORY OF THE IRON LADY

This layer is unlocked after the hunters discover FIVE Mastermind Clues.

- **1959-1979:** Thatcher enters Parliament as the MP for Finchley, rising through the ranks of the Conservative Party. She becomes the first woman to lead a major political party in the UK and eventually Prime Minister. Her tenure is marked by her iron-fisted policies, which earn her both admiration and infamy.
- **1980-1990:** Thatcher's time as Prime Minister is characterized by a fierce commitment to free-market policies, the reduction of state intervention, and a staunch opposition to socialism. Her actions lead to significant economic changes, but also to widespread social unrest. Thatcher is a divisive figure, her legacy both celebrated and reviled.
- **1991-2032-1640-2999-1875-Etc.:** After being ousted from power, Thatcher grows increasingly disillusioned with the direction of the world. Her discovery of time travel—a secret known only to a select few—offers her a chance to reshape history. She travels to various periods but settles on Victorian London to serve as a base to rewrite the future by controlling the past. Bringing modern technology as proof of her claims, she earns the loyalty of heads of government and industry.

Layer Four

A THREAT BECOMES A SERVANT

This layer is unlocked after the hunters discover SEVEN Mastermind Clues. The Keeper frames a scene in which Thatcher swears a Threat into Parliament as the new “Minister of Order”.

This Threat is now a Servant of the Mastermind. Note the Threat in the Servants section and tell the hunters the Threat can no longer be resolved (it also ceases to be “active” for purposes of presenting new Threats, though it remains a danger in London).

Between sessions, write down the names of two more Side Characters you'd like to see return during the Mastermind Threat. Take some time to revise your idea about what Thatcher's ultimate scheme is. Consider how the Threat that is now a Servant might fit into that scheme, as well as any Side Characters you have written down to this point.

Layer Five

DIRECT ACTION AGAINST HARGRAVE HOUSE

This layer is unlocked after the hunters discover TEN Mastermind Clues. Thatcher and her Servants can now take direct action against the hunters including the use of the special Keeper Reaction Temporal Manipulation; see below for detail. Make one final revision to your idea about what her ultimate scheme is. Consider everything that has happened in the story up to this point. Thatcher may now use powerful temporal manipulation directly against the hunters and their allies. Possible expressions of this manipulation are detailed below.

Temporal Manipulation

Regression:

Soft: The victim feels as though they are moving backward in time, their memories becoming hazy and their identity slipping away.

Hard: The victim physically regresses, their body growing younger until they are a helpless child, or even a mere thought in the ether, forgotten by all but those with the Cosmic Passage marked.

Stasis:

Soft: The victim finds themselves unable to move or act for a brief period, trapped in a moment that feels like an eternity.

Hard: The victim is frozen in time, unable to age, move, or perceive the passage of days, effectively trapped in a living death.

Acceleration:

Hard: The victim experiences the rapid passage of time, aging years in mere minutes.

Harder Still: The victim is hurled into a distant future, where all they knew has crumbled to dust, and they are left alone in a world that no longer has a place for them.



THE MASTERMIND THREAT

This layer is unlocked after the hunters discover FIFTEEN Mastermind Clues. You can now create the Mastermind Threat following the guidelines in the rulebook and your notes from this sheet. You may cease presenting new Threats at this point. You may present the Mastermind Threat once all active Threats are resolved. After the Mastermind Threat has been resolved, select a new Mastermind to keep the story going, or end the game by asking each player to narrate a short epilogue for their character.

SERVANTS

The Council of Industry

A cabal of industrial magnates and factory owners, each eager to curry favor with Thatcher in exchange for groundbreaking technological secrets and investment advice. In return, they advise her on how best to manipulate the economy and politics to her advantage, implementing policies that strip away workers' rights and control the masses. They are her ears in the dark corners of London, and they enforce her will with ruthless efficiency. Some names:

- William Lever, 1st Viscount Leverhulme (Of Lever Brothers, soap magnate);
- Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury (imperial expansionist, secured markets for the state);
- Sir Thomas Bouch (Infrastructure including rail and bridges);
- Andrew Carnegie (Steel industrialist);
- Thomas Edison (Inventor of the motion picture camera, electrical systems, lighting systems, etc.).

The Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli

Is a weak-willed man, easily manipulated by Thatcher. THICK mustache. He is the official face of her regime, signing decrees and laws that tighten her grip on the city. Though he believes himself to be in control, he is out of his depth.

Quote: "Picture this: inter-era tourism. Imagine the people strolling through ancient Rome, mingling at the courts of Versailles, or even watching the glorious clash at Agincourt—all without leaving London. A diversion of that magnitude would keep people docile, distracted... forever grateful."



The Clockmaker

A mysterious figure whose face is hidden by a clock-face mask. Every stitch of skin is covered. He dresses in all white. Wears a Rolex Oyster Perpetual watch. Pose the following to the Hunter with the highest Sensitivity: *How do you know that beneath his gloves and mask, this man is entirely constructed of live ticks?*

Speaking of ticks...he has a verbal tic, using time based puns to start sentences: "Time will tell... In due time... History tends to repeat itself... The clock is ticking... In the nick of time... Like clockwork... All in good time... The past is prologue... We're on borrowed time... Mark my words, the time will come..."

The Clockmaker maintains the devices (the nature of which are up to the Keeper) that allow Thatcher to bend time to her will. His true motives are known only to himself, but he appears unwavering in his support of Thatcher's vision for the Empire. He can be found tinkering on a grand orrery, an intricate, mechanical celestial device with rotating planets and gears hidden behind Big Ben's face. He keeps ticking clocks dedicated to each of the hunters, the faces of which indicate where the playbooks are at on the Janus Mask countdown.

Quote: "Before you know it... on deciphering the mechanics of your first watch, you realize you can unravel any mystery. Every cause has an effect, every action a reaction. In that understanding lies the power to shape the future."

Examples of devices he may provide Thatcher for time travel:

- Sunglasses whose lenses, when turned, are revealed as dials
- Tiny brooch with even tinier gears glinting with gemstones
- Threads of time worked into her pussycat bows, provided by the Fates
- Rings with different gemstones and functions when they are twisted
- A time-bomb hidden under her pillbox hat.

The Last Supper

Thatcher has assembled a team of advisers to assist her in reshaping society, and subjugating the small folk. She may select one or two of these notorious individuals gathered throughout history to execute her directives. Some names:

Jiang Qing, The Marquis de Sade, Shaka Zulu, Attila the Hun, Gilles de Rais, Elizabeth Báthory, Ivan the Terrible, literally-Hitler, Nero, Pol Pot, Heinrich Himmler, Catherine the Great, Andrew Jackson, Sam Walton, Al Capone

These special Unscenes portray various futures that may occur should Thatcher's plans succeed. These may be introduced in any order.

1941: Final Curtains at Covent Garden

Brigid and Aoife are planning a rebellion against parliament, which has recently annexed the German empire.

- I. The grand Royal Opera House, one-time cathedral for live spectacle, is now a gilded cage, looping cinema propaganda for Thatcher's Tory regime. It is a regime that enforces piety and austerity in the public, and yet the audience present, composed of the city's elite and high-ranking officials (and even a deposed Adolf Hitler, now sworn to King George V), do not seem to display these virtues. **Paint the Scene:** *Looking around, what do we see that behind closed doors they live in contradiction with the morality they espouse?*
- II. In the projector room, an old, battle-worn operator threads a reel with shaking hands. As the events of the current film reach their climax, the image distorts, revealing a message of rebellion. What does it say or depict that sparks an uproar?
- III. Two sisters, Brigid and Aoife, now enact their plan to massacre the members of parliament. The precision of their movements are a testament to years of planning. How do they execute their plot, and what details reveal the depth of their preparation?
- IV. At a crucial moment, Brigid betrays her sister. The plot is foiled mid-flight (though a good many ministers do not survive). Yet even though Brigid was loyal to the regime, both women are dragged to the stage by their husband, the prime minister. How does he make a chilling example of them, in a manner that, ironically enough, brings live spectacle back to the Opera House?

2165: The Flesh-Terrarium

Renowned eugenicist, Thatcher-135, a clone of Her Majesty the Progenitor is guiding a group of recent graduates through her state-of-the-art laboratory.

- I. The graduates gaze in awe at the laboratory's glass-walled cells, each containing a series of grim experiments. Subjects lie restrained on surgical slabs, their every physiological metric displayed on overhead screens, flashing with data and anatomical scans. The expressions of the conscious subjects range from terror and agony to dull resignation and fervent zeal. **Paint the Scene:** *How do we know that this is a facility dedicated to the production of eugenic and surgically made horrors?*
- II. Venus Holiday, imprisoned for a crime her mother was convicted of, has been coerced into undergoing experimental surgery. What inducements did the state offer her to submit to these procedures? As she receives biotechnological enhancements, what are the nature and effects of these modifications?

- III. The graduates are led to an elevated walkway overlooking expansive, ever-changing mazes. One maze pits married couples against extreme conditions and lethal traps, testing their problem-solving abilities and endurance. Survivors are selected for breeding. Emily and James, a couple who have endured for over six months, face their latest ordeal. What trial are they currently enduring, and which of them will sacrifice themselves for the other before the end of the night? What will their consolation reward be for surviving?
- IV. In the breakroom, the graduates are given refreshments to unwind from the disturbing tour. At what moment do they realize that they have been drugged and are now part of a new wave of subjects? What form of sexual experimentation awaits them as a group?

2459: The Awakening of Diana-7B51

Diana-7B51, a clone of the princess of the same name born in the 20th century, has spent 13 years working 20-hour days at the Fish and Chips bar Mama's Oyster, is interviewed before her execution. Her interviewer, a masked journalist, lifts Diana-7B51's execution hood so her voice can be recorded clearly.

- I. In this future of Britain, unions have been outlawed and labor has been replaced with docile clones. Their curiosities are kept at bay due to the pharmaceutical effects of their only source of food: squeeze tubes of Waxx. Diana-7B51 recounts her life at Mama's Oyster. **Paint the Scene:** *From her account, what details reveal the clones' enforced ignorance and servitude, trapped within the confines of the restaurant and oblivious to the outside world?*
- II. The journalist is intrigued by Diana-7B51's claim that clones possess individual personalities, hindered by the Waxx's suppression of their differences. What was Diana-7B51's first glimpse of the outside world? How did she begin to deviate from her programmed existence?
- III. The journalist then asks Diana-7B51's to recall the events of her attempted escape. What was the plan?
- IV. The journalist reveals that she is here to rescue Diana-7B51 from her imminent execution, to switch places with her so that Diana-7B51 may become the new face of the Rebellion. What is Diana-7B51's final remark before placing the executioner's hood on the journalist?

Special Rule: Once this Unscene is completed, the Keeper may introduce the Side Character Diana-7B51 at any time. She is a hardened fighter from a distant future here to take out Thatcher in Victorian London before she can influence the future irrevocably. Diana looks just how the progenitor princess would in the 20th century but far more muscular and decked out in futuristic weaponry.

Quote: *"Royal protocol? I am here to blast your boss's tits back to the future."*

She has an associated Mask: The Mask of the Princess:

- ☐ Narrate a montage in which Diana uses futuristic weaponry to wreck absolute havoc and mayhem against Thatcher and the state.

2680: Burn the Witch

Severe austerity in response to overpopulation has brought Britain back to its agrarian roots. The people have embraced the Thatcherian faith, what was once known as the Church of England. In this time, The Iron Lady is thought of as a prophet of god and living saint. In Belgrave Square, the members of Hargrave House of this time period have been literally tarred and feathered and are about to be burned.

- I. This should be a future in which technology has progressed to a point where everyone's basic needs are met. However, in contrast, society has become a puritanical cult. The mega-scrappers and even the moon elevators of old are relics rusting throughout the city. **Paint the Scene:** *How does this witch burning resemble or not the witch burnings of medieval times?*
- II. The current members of what was once known as Hargrave House are to be burned. What crime or heresy against Thatcher, Holy is Her Name, have they been accused of? How do they remind us of present day members of Hargrave House? What are their distinctive differences?
- III. One of the members makes a final protest against the magistrates. What supernatural feat do they accomplish that could inspire a heterodox religion of its own?
- IV. Thatcher is there, watching the spectacle all the while. A member of the current, Victorian Era, Hargrave House is beside her too witnessing this. Who is it?

Special Rule: This hunter takes the Condition: **True Believer**. The hunter can clear this Condition at any time and take Advantage on their role. They have a series of 5 empty boxes to mark. Whenever the hunter does something that ushers in this future they have witnessed, they may mark a box. When all are filled, they may take the Condition True Believer again.

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WARM AIR

A Story for Arkham Herald

By Levi Phipps



WARM AIR

A Story for *Arkham Herald* by Levi Phipps

Presenting the Story

Cancer rates are on the rise. Dozens of people have flooded Arkham Municipal Hospital with malignant tumors, intense fatigue, and the inability to keep food down. Which is unfortunate, as they each remarked how they just got the latest Archimedes Appliances Model III microwave oven.

Ask the Reporter with the highest Insight: *What details regarding the victims or their symptoms suggest that the microwaves are involved in these people falling ill?*

As you all consider this, and contemplate the microwaves' part in it, something gnaws at the back of your minds: there's no way they're doing it on purpose, right?

Direct the following to the Reporter with the highest Audacity: *You've looked into Archimedes Appliances before. What controversy did you unearth?*

With an already shady company seeming to have performed a grave bit of negligence or worse, these microwave things need to get out of people's homes. But people won't throw them out without definitive proof that they're dangerous.

Questions & Opportunities

Is Archimedes causing this disease by design or simply cutting corners? (Complexity: 4)

Unlock the next appropriate Question.

If it's deliberate, what is their end goal? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Story by gathering and publishing enough solid evidence to halt production.

If it's cutting corners, who at Archimedes wants to stop it? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Story by convincing the potential whistleblower to sit for an interview.



The Price of Convenience

Each Reporter narrates a time when something they thought would make their life simpler backfired tremendously.

Archimedes Appliances

A moderately successful household goods manufacturer with an office in Arkham and a factory a day trip away in New York, Archimedes has gone through a massive P.R.-centric shakeup after their recent controversy. The restructuring did not, however, seem to consider safety. Office workers and factory laborers alike are overworked, the factory is poorly maintained, and consumer safety is at an all-time low. The interference of the Reporters will raise the hackles of the company's leadership.

If the Reporters ignore Archimedes Appliances...

More and more people will be afflicted, and those who already are will worsen, eventually falling infirm, if not dying. If the Story is still active for five Off the Record Phases, another Side Character will be admitted into the hospital or pass away during each subsequent Hangover Phase.



Dangers

S. Thomas Hobson, Archimedes CEO

The company has had record profits under his stewardship, and he'll be damned if a disaster like this has his name attached to it. When he catches wind of the Herald's meddling, he'll use the full extent of Archimedes Appliances' security, legal, and P.R. teams.

Quote: *"This isn't to say I don't respect the efforts of you and your colleagues, but is the work we do here truly a public concern? The phrase 'how the sausage gets made' isn't popular because people are fascinated by the process, if you catch my meaning."*

Archimedes Appliances Model III Microwave Oven

The cutting edge of technology and the latest luxury item, these microwave ovens have also been linked to the increase of cancer rates plaguing Arkham. If exposed to the appliance, a Reporter could begin to show signs of the affliction or hear, see, or feel a presence. The first Reporter to interact with an Archimedes Model III takes the Mythos Condition: **Something in the Waves**.



Moments

- A heat wave roils over Arkham. Sweat rolls down your back and soaks your clothing.
- The clattering of machinery leading to a heavy thud in the next room.
- The buzz of ambient electricity whirs to a crescendo and is suddenly interrupted by a loud beep.
- A Reporter with The Crawling Chaos marked sees flies and maggots crawling from a desk drawer.
- A Reporter with The Lurking Fear marked is followed by a man in a trench coat. He never gets too close.
- A radio or television advertisement for Banquet Foods is followed by an ad for Swanon. Then for Banquet again.

Locations

Arkham Municipal Hospital

A wasteland of cracked tile and flickering fluorescent lights. Overworked and underpaid nurses scurry about like narcoleptic cockroaches.

Color: *How is it obvious that staff and patients alike are giving into despair?*

Archimedes Offices

The lemon fresh scent of Lysol, the clattering of typewriters, one thousand shades of white.

Color: *How do the employees betray that they're deeply overworked?*

S. Thomas Hobson's Office

A panoramic window. An extensive collection of awards. A desk that costs your salary for a year.

Color: *What makes it obvious that Hobson doesn't do any actual work?*

Archimedes Factories

A vast building complex in New York. Workers and machinery bustle about in an effort to deliver high-grade kitchen appliances up and down the East Coast.

Color (to any reporters with the Condition: Something in the Waves): *A voice wails and moans from the machinery. What does it say?*

Color (to anyone else): *What safety issues are obvious even to you?*

Fulton's Department Store

Stark fluorescent lighting. Tiles polished to a shine. Families pushing carts with the looks of kids in a candy store.

Color: *What's the most eye-catching gadget or other home good, and what outlandish claim does it make?*

A Press Conference

The flash of camera bulbs and the mutter of journalists and hangers-on. More of an overly-produced stage show than an informative endeavor.

Color: *Who else is here, and what niche industry feud are you in the middle of with them?*

Side Characters

Rebecca Ann Parsons, a nurse

Disheveled scrubs, curly dark hair, and constant eye bags. Head nurse of the cancer ward at Arkham Municipal, she's connected all of the dots and is anxious for this conspiracy to be more than a theory.

Quote: *"The people here are at their lowest point. The best we can do is just make the shit less shit. You ever have those moments? Where the shit can't be good, just less shit?"*

Isaac Hernandez, an engineer

Striped dress shirt, rumpled. Novelty keyboard tie. Constantly fixing his hair. Project Lead on all Archimedes microwaves, Hernandez is profoundly proud of his work. After immigrating from Mexico ten years ago, he is deeply, deeply afraid of losing the uphill battle to this scandal.

Quote: *"We are living in a time of incredible progress. A pair of wings and a turbine engine turns days of travel into a few hours. A simple electromagnet and a wave regulator turns minutes of cooking into seconds. The less educated public may have their worries about scary words such as 'radiation' and 'rotation of molecular poles.' But Galileo was burned alive for his discoveries. The public does not always know what's right."*

Edgar Michaelson, a pencil pusher

Square-framed glasses, cheap yet comfortable shoes, and a suit that hasn't fit him in years. The least popular in the office, most inquiries at Archimedes will be directed his way out of spite. He will feign ignorance, if only to keep his job.

Quote: *"Oh, I can assure you all that the fine folks of Archimedes Appliances have your safety as top priority!"*

Margaret Baker, a concerned mother

Elaborate updo, pastel blue blouse, chain-smoking. Her 8-year-old, Daniel, was hit the hardest, as he's already approaching stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Her husband Albert passed away five years ago.

Quote: *"He just...fainted one day. It was during lunch. Leftover spaghetti, I think. I was reheating it and he simply passed out. I was so scared. I still am."*

Enid Lozano, a trucker

Short caramel hair, muscular build, combat boots. A driver at Miskatonic Logistics, she chalks up her affliction to cigarettes or the time spent working on car engines. Her partner, Stella Navarro, won the microwave in a Fulton's giveaway.

Quote: *"The aches and fatigue are nothin' new. I don't regret a single thing that I've done, but I'll tell you that I have not been kind to my body. I'll give ya that for free. Great, I'm doing it again. See, Stella gets onto me for talking like I'm already dead. Ya ask me, that's the realistic thing."*

Saul Patrick, a husband

Lousy combover, poorly-trimmed mustache, remarkably drab shirts. An accountant whose wife has been affected. He purchased the microwave with part of his Christmas bonus.

Quote: *"It's the last thing we need right now. First the car crash, then that storm took out the window, and now this. I'm not sure how much more we can take."*

The Boiling Man

(only available to a Reporter with the Mythos Condition: **Something in the Waves**)

Torn coat. Long hair matted and greasy. Sign reading, "Anything helps." At first glance, he looks like any member of Arkham's homeless population. At a second glance, any exposed skin shifts and bubbles like boiling water. Can be interviewed and interacted with like any other Side Character, though it can be hard to make out what he's saying.

Quote: *"Nah 't' ba' anda stree... blrbl don'myn blrlbeing ingor'blrblr."*

Clues

- ☐ An Archimedes employee admits the company took on major debt years ago.
- ☐ The screws on an Archimedes microwave are mismatched.
- ☐ A patient was part of an Archimedes test group.
- ☐ A fax cover sheet from (choose one: Farimax Pharmaceuticals, the Department of Defense, a rival appliance company, someone else).
- ☐ A Reporter with The Temple marked hears a whispered or exalted prayer, "The waves will take us all. Our blood will boil and our bones will burst. We will all burn. We will all burn and the Flaring God will feast."
- ☐ Rumors of Archimedes Appliances planning to release a model of luxury sports car.
- ☐ A trashcan full of circuit board schematics.
- ☐ The Archimedes Model II is on sale at a ridiculous discount.
- ☐ Arkham Power and Light raised their rates 20% this past year.
- ☐ Reports of multiple Archimedes factory workers having lost fingers.
- ☐ An office worker appears distressed while making or taking a phone call.
- ☐ Rumors that Hobson's father owns a large diamond mine in Africa.
- ☐ A Reporter with the Mythos Condition: **Something in the Waves** hears (choose one: a random number, the name of a Side Character, the time and date they'll die, something else).
- ☐ Records of stock buybacks dating back to 1947.
- ☐ A Reporter with **The Temple** marked finds evidence of a mass grave being emptied or exhumed.
- ☐ An Archimedes microwave emits a rhythmic beep for no discernable reason.
- ☐ Rumors that an Archimedes Appliances employee has been embezzling money from their department.
- ☐ A Side Character warns a Reporter to stay away from (choose one: S. Thomas Hobson, Isaac Henandez, a victim of the microwave, someone else.)
- ☐ A budget report notes a significant amount of funds allocated to real estate.
- ☐ An Archimedes microwave is hot to the touch long after being used.

Rewards

Each Reporter may add one Clue that was discovered during the Story (but not used to Blow This Thing Wide Open) to their Morgue Files. Alternatively, they may clear a Mythos Condition or choose a Reward from the following options:

- Experience with these microwaves have made you adverse to any food you did not prepare yourself. Gain access to the Special Move: **Talking Over Dinner**.

Special Move: Talking Over Dinner

When you have the other Reporters over for dinner at your house, you and those that choose to attend answer the following prompts.

For the host: *What have you made for dinner? What bittersweet memory do you associate with it?*

For the guests: *What small menu addition did you bring? How does the evening get a bit too intense for a moment?*

Once the scene is over, each Reporter can take Advantage on a single Move until the next Hangover Phase.

- Nothing gets you out of a rut faster than picking up a shiny new appliance, a new outfit, or some other minor luxury to shake up the routine. Gain access to the Special Move: **Retail Therapy**.

Special Move: Retail Therapy

Mark a box below to frame a scene showing how you purchase something neat for yourself from Fulton's. Then, clear a mental or psychological Condition.

☐ ☐ ☐

- The Boiling Man becomes a recurring Side Character. He can be consulted like any other Side Character regardless of Mythos Conditions. You get 1 extra Clue on Investigate rolls when asking him about the back-alleys of Arkham. Each time the Boiling Man is sought out, read the next unmarked prompt and mark it.

- ☐ The Boiling Man is camping out beneath an overpass. A scavenged tarp and ratty blanket protect him from the elements.

Color: *What personal effects portray the life this man lived before becoming what he is?*

- ☐ The Boiling Man, having found a guitar, plays a blues song on a busy street corner.

Color: *How has this musical element made people more likely to stop and hand the man some money?*

- ☐ The Boiling Man has a to-go container in his hand, slowly savoring a turkey on rye.

Color: *How is it apparent that other people have been showing the Boiling Man more acts of kindness?*

- ☐ The Boiling Man sits on a park bench, drinking from a liquor bottle labeled "Tin Valley Vulture."

Ask the Reporter with the highest Insight (Keeper's choice in case of a tie): *How is it apparent that The Boiling Man is in constant pain?*

- ☐ The Boiling Man hides in an alley as he slowly absorbs a human corpse.

Ask the Reporter with the most Prices of Knowledge marked (Keeper's choice in case of a tie): *Aside from this and his ever-roiling skin, how is it apparent The Boiling Man is becoming less human?*

This scene is unlocked once all of the check boxes have been marked. When the Keeper initiates this scene during the Off the Record Phase, the Reporters will get a tip to meet the Boiling Man at an abandoned Arkham warehouse. If they enter, the Reporters will find a dozen robed figures surrounding a naked Boiling Man. They praise the Scorching One, The Flaring God, Cthuga. The Reporters cannot escape without being seen.

- **If Archimedes Appliances was acting out of deliberate malice:** All Reporters gain access to the Special Move: **Follow the Money**.

Special Move: Follow the Money

- When you investigate the finances of a corporation or government entity, choose 2:
 - Find a Clue for an active Story. The Keeper will tell you what it is.
 - Find a Clue for a future Story. Tell the Keeper what it is.
 - You do not draw unwanted attention.
- **If Archimedes Appliances was cutting corners:** Gain the Blinds Spot: "Not malice, just incompetence." This Reward can be taken by more than one Reporter.



The Lord in Static

A Faith Sheet for *The Silt Verses*
by Arthur Wells

FAITH SHEET

THE LORD IN STATIC

That Damned Signal • Old Fuzzy Zigzags • War-of-Ants

Advertised as a new, up-and-coming divinity, in reality, the Lord in Static has followers who remember he wasn't always the all-welcoming inamorato of The Saint Electric. Years ago, in the rural suburbs outside of Ees, a small but fervent following of preteens heard his call from the white noise in their radios and tv screens and took up his Cloak of Static. They rose up against the adults in their town and made a latchkey kid's paradise: school was out forever, Saturday morning cartoons played every morning, and no one had to be home by the time the street lights came on. You were their prophet, and it was beautiful... for a moment. As time passed, it became clear there was only one way to keep your new paradise sustained: you had to purge any follower who reached the age of 18. Before your own time came, That Damned Signal was wrangled and neutralized by agents of BIASD, and all of the latchkeys had to move on and grow up. A few months ago, a representative of the Saint Electric's Cathedral of the Sacred Grid came to you with an offer you couldn't refuse: a place as your stray god's prophet, so long as you played the part of the smiling face of their re-canonization of his faith.

ALTAR *Pick one or make up your own.*

A stamped tin lunch box, the painted faces of smiling characters faded but still in good condition; the gutted remains of a cathode ray tube television, covered in sun-bleached puffy stickers; a treehouse in the tallest oak around, complete with a retractable rope ladder; your childhood home, the master bedroom untouched, save for a nest-like bed.

THE VERSE OF PROPHECY

If there are no boxes marked, you can retire this character to safety and obscurity instead of writing this verse; tell the other Custodians what the future holds for you. Otherwise, mark the first unmarked box.

- ☐ **THE WHISPERED PSALM:** Narrate a flashback to the first time you heard his voice in the static, the sound of his beautiful Blur washing endlessly over you and baptizing you as his prophet.
- ☐ **THE ASHEN CIRCLE:** Narrate a flashback to the Day of War-of-Ants, when you and your fellow latchkeys marched across town and sacrificed those too old to wear His Cloak. Who did your followers save for you to sacrifice personally? Increase your Communion by 1 (Max 3).
- ☐ **THE BLEEDING REVELATION:** Narrate a flashback to your 18th birthday, the day BIASD arrived in your hometown to corral your fellow faithful and sever the influence of Old Fuzzy Zigzags. How did you defend yourself from the other survivors' accusations of conspiring with the Custodians? Were you lying?
- ☐ **THE SWELTERING CRUCIBLE:** Narrate a scene in the present showing how you are strong in your old faith again, despite the rebranding. How did it feel to hear his Blur again after so many years? Hereafter, when you appeal to a Side Character's sense of childlike nostalgia to get what you want, even without donning the Cloak, roll with advantage.
- ☐ **THE FLESH ASCENDED** Say your Final Prayer.

MOVES

You start with CLOAK OF STATIC

■ CLOAK OF STATIC

The song of the Lord in Static is a relentless, white noise that lulls the hearts of any who listen to it to comfort and complacency. As His Chosen, you can don his blessed Cloak and manifest the Blur into the real world to get the things that you want. When you channel the Black and White, describe how visually or audibly television or radio noise quietly appears in the scene, and take the Condition **Watched Over By Him**. While you have this Condition, you may at any time mark one of the options below and activate its effect for the duration of your current scene.

- ☐ Mesmerize a Side Character by appealing to their childlike nostalgia: rolls with Presence are done at advantage, and they won't remember the details of this conversation.
- ☐ Manifest an item that is just what you needed: the object looks almost cartoonish and is temporarily added to your Altar.
- ☐ Retcon an event in another Custodian's past: they may ignore a relevant Condition while making rolls during this scene.

Once all three boxes are marked, replace **Watched Over By Him** with the Condition **Fuzzy At The Edges**, and unlock the Journey Scene: **THE BLUR**. **Fuzzy At The Edges** can only be cleared through use of **THE BLUR**.

□ IT'S LIKE... YOUR THING

Your encyclopedic knowledge of the characters that filled your favorite movies and shows has made you deeply genre savvy. Increase your Insight by 1 (max 3). When you declare another Custodian is acting true to their character, you may give them an appropriate Condition naming the trope, such as **Femme Fatale** or **Lone Wolf**. When they make a roll relevant to the Condition, they may roll with advantage and replace the condition with **Predictable**.

□ COMBAT ACCESSORY INCLUDED!

A consecrated weapon that you used to strike those who could no longer carry his pure white mantle has laid dormant all of these long years. You have now taken it from its resting place and carry it by your side again, describe it and add it to your Altar. When you are in the Journey Scene, you may unmark your weapon if it is currently marked.

□ HIDE-A-KEY

Perfectly disguised and never too conspicuous, the Hide-a-Key has always been your go-to method to store your keys, why should anyone else be different? When you are trying to gain entrance to a locked space, you may search for a hidden key and roll with Focus.

- **On a hit**, you find it! Describe what obvious fake nature feature hides the key.
- **On a 10+**, this is a spare, no one will notice it's missing.
- **On a 12+**, you find a Clue, something jammed in here with the key – tell the Keeper what it is. The Clue cannot conclusively answer a Question by itself.

□ BRAND NEW LOOK...

As the face of the Lord in Static's new faith, you have the sponsorship of The Saint Electric's high priests. With the untapped potential of The Blur nearly within their grasp, they will not hesitate to provide support to their newest prophet. You may call upon the aid of the Cathedral of the Sacred Grid to neutralize an active Danger until the introduction of a new Assignment, but your contact will expect proof of your progress. The Keeper will describe a task or miracle the clergy requires of you to remain in good standing.

□ SAME GREAT PRODUCT

Thrown to the far corners of the CLS and the Peninsula, many of the former faithful of The Lord in Static have been rehabilitated to more acceptable religions and lifestyles, but you remember each of their faces. Even if you didn't, you would recognize the longing in their eyes when they see your mantle. When you declare a Side Character as someone who used to be a faithful, mark a box and offer a return to the faith in exchange for a service. Once the track is filled, narrate a scene where your contact within the clergy of the Saint Electric strips you of your title of prophet as you have deemed too dangerous. You then lose access to this Move.



FINAL PRAYER

🌀 INTO THE BLACK AND 🌀
WHITE

The weariness of a life, not the one you were promised but perhaps the one you deserved, pulls at the edge of your very being. You've carried the mantle of your faith for too long and the blood in your veins has now been replaced with pure white and black static. It feels impossible to hold back any longer, but you can manage to make your way to some quiet town before it erupts. As you pass faded street signs and shaded front porches, you feel your form begin to be torn apart as the static emerges and takes over this whole town.

Describe how The Blur irrevocably rewrites the reality of this town in the perfect image of the sitcom life you will never be a part of. The Keeper and other players will each add a detail illustrating the way your absence haunts the narrative here.



JOURNEY SCENE

THE BLUR



The street lights flicker on, welcoming you home to the suburbs outside of Ees, Nesh, Bellwethers, it doesn't matter. Your weary feet drag across the pavement as your boundaries shift and bristle in and out of focus. You reach under the doormat and find a familiar key. It turns in the lock and the door swings open with a gentle creaking noise.

This Journey Scene can be repeated over multiple phases; mark the first unmarked box each time the Custodian of the Lord in Static travels alone into The Blur.

Despite not being in the scene, any Custodians may also answer the Paint the Scene and Recall a Time prompts and clear a Condition.

- ☐ **PAINT THE SCENE:** Mother, Father, Sister, Brother – they're all here; at least, whoever you've trapped in The Blur with you responds to those names. What subtle signs indicate that somewhere beneath the surface this family is still aware?

RECALL A TIME: When was the first time you realized too late you had said goodbye to someone for the last time?

- ☐ **PAINT THE SCENE:** You and your troupe of unwilling actors sit around a table and talk about your days over dinner. What details of their real daily lives accidentally slip into the conversation?

RECALL A TIME: What simple, mundane annoyance from your past do you miss?

- ☐ **PAINT THE SCENE:** You look around and see this house is littered with the clutter of lives well-lived, of happy times filled with laughter, and hard times filled with even more love. What lingering traces of The Blur will stain this house long after you've gone?

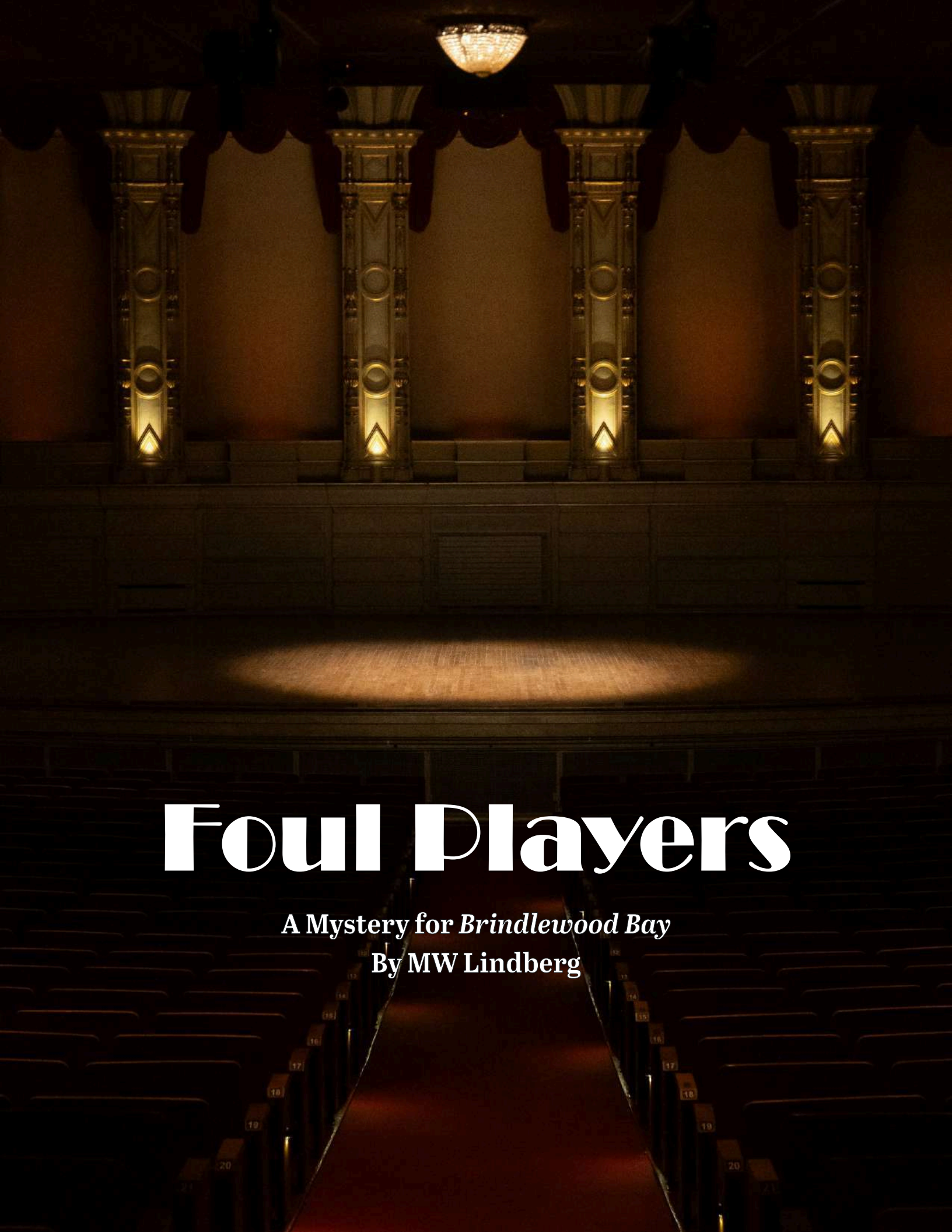
RECALL A TIME: How have you used your faith to take something you wanted for yourself?

- ☐ **PAINT THE SCENE:** Your "family members" have a moment of lucidity before The Blur takes over for good. What final pleas do they make to you as they become awash in the unrelenting white noise?

→ **PROPHET, YOU WEREN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY HIS MANTLE.**

MARK YOUR FINAL PRAYER.



A photograph of a theater interior. The scene is dimly lit, with a spotlight illuminating the stage floor. In the background, there are four ornate, classical-style columns with decorative capitals and bases. A chandelier hangs from the ceiling. The foreground shows rows of empty theater seats, with a red carpeted aisle running down the center.

Foul Players

A Mystery for Brindlewood Bay

By MW Lindberg

Foul Players

by MW Lindberg - Complexity: 7

As this mystery can provide opportunities for revealing town history, it is recommended to play only if Level 2 is unlocked or you expect it to be unlocked during the mystery.

Presenting the Mystery

Local theater group Brindlewood Amateur Dramatics (BAD) have been rehearsing a new original musical about the town's history: "The Good Ol' Bay: From Then to Today" written by a local amateur historian. BAD is a small set company of actors with a headstrong artistic director and a converted barn on the edge of town they can do with as they please. Buzz is building for this particular show as the gossip alleges several of the historic incidents that will be depicted recall scandalous (and hopefully apocryphal!) events in Brindlewood Bay's past.

Establishing Questions:

One of the Mavens somehow got herself involved in this BAD production. Which Maven is it, and what are they doing for the show?

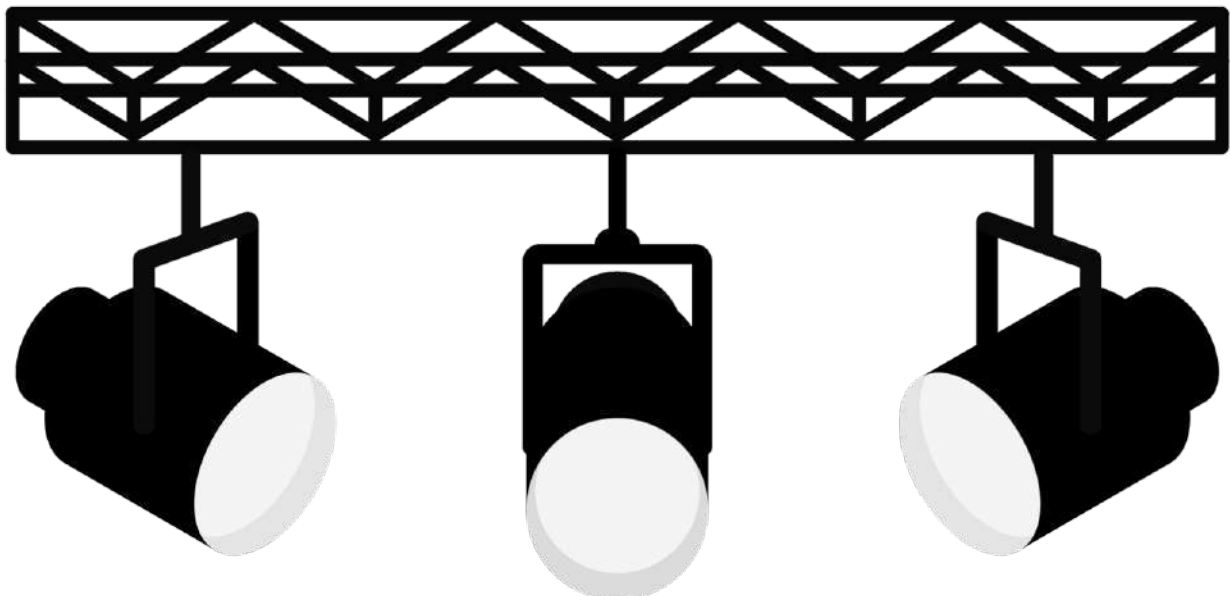
A horrible accident happened at last night's rehearsal. During a solo moment onstage when the older actor playing the Narrator/Storyteller, Wilton Wallis, was rehearsing a monologue or song, a light fell from the rafters, taking his life.

The Maven who was on the scene could tell the light had been tampered with, but the Sheriff's department quickly ruled the death an accident. That just doesn't sit right with our vigilant Murder Maven, so they gather their group of amateur sleuths together the next morning (let the Maven decide where) to tell them the story and begin an investigation to figure out what really happened and who was responsible.

Bits of Town History revealed as Keeper Reactions may come in the form of scenes or songs from the play (found as script pages, bits being rehearsed, or as described by company members).

Moments

- An actor's switch into or out of character gives a Maven chills, even if it's just in a conversation.
- Company members crack up at a nonsensical "inside joke" leaving the Mavens feeling quite left out.
- Old photos from previous productions show a few familiar townsfolk.
- Someone launches into a passionate monologue about the importance of local theater as an art form.
- Vocal warm-ups that sound like spirits in torment.



Suspects

Lili Dexter, BAD Artistic Director

Colorfully dyed hair. Eccentric accessories. Dead serious attitude. Lili founded an early version of BAD when she blew into town several decades ago. She has grown it from a wandering beach performance troupe to an established town fixture in a property she was somehow able to purchase for the company several years back. Her energy around this particular production is even more intense than usual.

Quote: “I gave the company the morning off to recover, and then it’s right back to business this afternoon. LEX! CHECK IN ON THOSE OUTSTANDING PROGRAM AD PAYMENTS! I have to figure out about the Narrator role now. Do any of you have acting experience? Never mind, maybe I could do it myself...”

Lex Dexter, BAD company manager

Rarely-washed mop of hair. Unbuttoned flannels. Coffee coffee coffee and can they get you one too? 20-something, Lili’s child, they/them. Lex does all the work of a stage manager, house manager, designer, and personal assistant. Everyone’s certain they’re the only company member Lili doesn’t pay.

Quote: “No, I’ve never thought about being onstage myself. I’m perfectly happy on the sidelines. Though I suppose now I’m the only real choice to take Wilton’s role. I know it all, of course. I always memorize the entire play we’re doing. Hang on, my mom needs something...”

Mark Rodman, BAD leading man

Brown-haired bland white man. Always dressed like a 1950s businessman headed to the office (when not in costume). Mark and Mary are a Stepford-esque couple who most people in town (even here in Brindlewood Bay) find a tad creepy. Mark and Mary genuinely transform when onstage, though, and have played some surprisingly dark roles for Lili and BAD...

Mary Rodman, BAD leading lady

...But when the scene ends they always pop right back into their cheerful, positive selves. Mark and Mary have no children, but behave parentally towards everyone. They are close to aging out of their positions as the de facto leads in every BAD production. Mary is a brown-haired pleasant-faced white woman. Always dressed, coiffed, and made up like a 1950s housewife (when not in costume).

Quote: “Hey, sport, you did great out there today!”
“We’re so proud of you, honey; can I get you a cold drink?”

“Darling, do you know where I put my-”

“Your reading glasses, dear? Right here in my apron pocket for safe keeping!”

Keisha Bix, BAD female ingénue

Petite. Angelic singing voice. Morbid, darkly-focused personality. Keisha turned up in town several years ago and fit right into a vacancy in the company. No one knows where exactly she lives or what she does with herself when she’s not at the theater.

Quote: “I’ve always sensed an ominous energy in this space. I figured it was from something bad that had happened. But I guess I was getting a premonition that something bad was going to happen...”

Kai Kenoshi, BAD male ingénu

Incorrigible prankster. Chaotic and hard to keep focused when offstage. Always filming a video or live-streaming. Like all of the BAD company members, he’s a different person onstage and delivers focused, competent performances. But he makes everyone’s lives hell during rehearsals, to varying degrees.

Quote: “Wilton is my favorite to play tricks on! He gets so mad, and huffy, and like he can’t breathe. He punched a mirror in the dressing room one time! My followers love him! Oh no, I’ve gotta break the news to the Kai Krew... Hey guys, it’s ya boy here! Kai Krew represent! Sad news...”

Burt Klosterman, amateur BBay historian

Mad scientist hair. Rapidly unspooling cardigan. Always has a book in hand unrelated to anything he’s talking or writing about. This is the only play he’s ever written, and he did not intend for it to be a musical (that was Lili’s doing). Lili and Burt fight with a white hot passion, but always get back to the work.

Quote: “This play has gotten completely out of my hands. You do think people will know they didn’t sing when they founded the town, right??”

Archibald Smythe, the pianist

Foppish British transplant. Spectacles and scarves. Grayed and balding. He runs local yarn and sewing shop The Brindle Spindle and plays the piano for BAD, along with providing costume advice. He is not an official company member and is more than happy to float above all the drama.

Quote: “Never Archie, dear, Baldy before Archie, please.”

Ramada Chatterley, town council member

A helmet of curls. Threatening brooches. Sheriff on speed-dial. Ramada has been trying to have this production shut down if they won’t remove certain scenes that paint Brindlewood Bay in an unfavorable light. She often “checks in” on rehearsals and gives her critiques to any of the BAD members who fail to elude her afterwards.

Quote: “I’m all for the cultural cultivation of our beautiful town, but only if it’s done in the right way!”

Locations

The Brindlewood Amateur Dramatics Theatre

A converted barn-like space on the edge of the woods. The smell of pine and maquillage. Shadows and spiderwebs in every corner. The persistent echoes of high and low pitched musical notes.

If Layer Two is unlocked: *What do you realize this building used to be?*

Paint the Scene: *Theater folk are a superstitious lot. What's something you've heard you should NEVER do or say in a theater? How badly do you want to do or say it? (If the Maven does or says her forbidden thing you can require a Night Move and/or reveal a Void Clue.)*

A clearing in the woods behind the theater

A firepit for post-rehearsal gatherings. Log furniture assembled by Wilton. A tent.

Paint the Scene: *What bits of detritus or paraphernalia lying around do you associate with which BAD company members?*

If a Maven has A Shadow in the Garden marked: *What are you afraid is up in the trees?*

The Dexter house

Small and messy. Always looks like it's show week. Playbills, posters, scripts, and notebooks on every surface, in every drawer and cabinet. Lili and Lex share the house, both equally devoted to the full time passion project that is BAD. The theater itself has no office space, so the Dexter house is also the administrative HQ for the company. (The house may be on the same property as the theater.)

Paint the Scene: *What concerning details tell you that the Dexters neglect important daily housekeeping and self-care duties?*

The Rodman house

Pristine to the point of tension. Vintage appliances that shine like new. Plastic on the furniture.

Paint the Scene: *What crack in the Rodmans' perfect façade do you hope to find in their home? How are you disappointed?*

The Brindle Spindle

A cross-stitched Open/Closed sign. A rainbow of yarns on display. Tea perpetually brewing behind the counter.

Paint the Scene: *How does Archibald display his British pride?*

Clues

- ☐ A scar from a suspicious massage circle accident.
- ☐ The story of a former company member's disappearance.
- ☐ A rusty hacksaw hastily disposed of.
- ☐ Wilton Wallis's script has obsessive notes all over it about a Suspect.
- ☐ Black gloves that smell of metal.
- ☐ An important prop, broken or tampered with.
- ☐ An annulled marriage.
- ☐ A frayed rope from the backstage fly system.
- ☐ A police report from a recent break-in at the theater.
- ☐ Evidence/gossip that Wilton was planning to quit the show.
- ☐ A missing costume piece.
- ☐ A nasty rumor that's been going around town about a Suspect was started by Wilton.
- ☐ Director's notes to the cast that cross a line.
- ☐ Dropped charges against a Suspect.
- ☐ Iron filings found somewhere strange.
- ☐ A staged conversation/fight.
- ☐ A shocking photo from a gathering in the woods.
- ☐ A length of yarn with a peculiar scent.
- ☐ Buried bones.
- ☐ A historic feud/vendetta.

Void Clues

- ☐ Every instance of theater masks you see from now on throughout the mystery is screaming.
- ☐ Like a stage light from the rafters, the moon/stars/sun fall from the sky and smash into the earth.
- ☐ You see zippers and fasteners in people's skin like their very bodies are costumes.
- ☐ The script of an ancient Greek play accurately retells the life of a Maven. It ends tragically.
- ☐ Stage fright and the world's a stage.



STRAY SIGNALS ANTHOLOGY

SNEAK PEEK

An Anthology for Public Access
By J Evan Parks and Hawk Williams



Stray Signals is an anthology of short Lost Transmission-style mysteries for the Public Access TTRPG designed to be dropped into an ongoing game as a one-shot break from the action or strung together throughout a game to form a kind of B-side campaign that will have compounding consequences for the A-side game.

The mysteries of Stray Signals all take place within the small town of Shallow Sands, NM, a twisted reflection of Deep Lake. Everything that takes place within Shallow Sands is darker, weirder, and heightened in comparison to the oddities of Deep Lake. Like in other Lost Transmission mysteries, the players inhabit alternate versions of their Latchkeys. The characters have the same names and perhaps similar personalities, but within Shallow Sands, they become the Nestlings: a group of young adults who at one point lived in Shallow Sands in their childhood, but were suffocated by their parents growing up. Their only respite was tuning into a local access radio station, FM 94.0 ODSY "The Odyssey". One day, the radio station literally disappeared. No one in Shallow Sands speaks of The Odyssey or the much-rumored Odyssey Reels, reel-to-reel tapes that contain the only proof of the odd and often terrifying programs that The Odyssey used to air. The Nestlings met on an online forum devoted to the topic and decided to return once more to Shallow Sands to see if they could get to the bottom of this mystery. Worse comes to worst, they think, they spend a nice summer in a nostalgic place. Of course, they never could have known how bad things can really become.

The events that take place in Shallow Sands will echo the events that take place in Deep Lake. Each Mystery in this Anthology is a pastiche of an existing Mystery that Latchkeys may experience, remixed to be more scary, more dangerous and more over the top.

The idea of this anthology is to take each of the 8 base mysteries and condense and remix them into something sharp, dangerous, and completable within a single session. It will also include optional rules to bring over narrative consequences for completing more and more of these mysteries, along with fun rewards, additional key prompts, and a grand conclusion that folds itself into the main campaign finale.

Unlike Lost Transmissions and the base set of mysteries, Stray Signals encourages reckless play. Death carries lesser consequences, while as the player's character is removed from the rest of the session, they do not have to automatically mark The Chromatic Desert or The Pure White Signal, and if another Stray Signal is played, the character strangely returns for the mystery. The narrative consequences of player character death can still be explored, but the lighter mechanical consequences should help aid the pacing and tone of each Signal as characters invariably die.

Please note, the anthology is still a work-in-progress, and some elements may be changed in the final release!

META-MORPHO CZ

THE REMNANT

- > A radio switches on, broadcasting static. After a few moments, a radio call sign can be heard underneath, "You are listening to 94.0 ODY 'The Odyssey!' Have we got a story for you today, folks." The radio host goes on to describe the events of the Mystery.
- > Upon entering an arcade, the Latchkeys find themselves entering Polygonaland as the Nestlings instead. The Mystery begins from there.
- > La Doña tells the story of the last night of Polygonaland to the Latchkeys, as she speaks a theremin backing joins in, hypnotizing the Latchkeys into experiencing the Mystery as a shared dream.

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Ten days ago, the owner of Polygonaland, the local arcade, went missing. Every day since, another person has disappeared from the store. Employees staying late, kids left unattended, no one is safe. The Nestlings were approached last night by Kate Paulson, the niece of Polygonaland's owner, Ovi Davros. While Ovi is gone, management of the store has fallen to her, and the growing disappearances are bringing with them an increasing legal liability. Kate can't let the store close, at least not until someone can beat their new cabinet, Meta-Morpho CZ. In the 10 days since the game arrived, it is the arcade's most popular by far, and everyone is eager to see who will be the first to clear it, Kate especially. So far, even skilled players can't make through the second level before losing. Kate knows you have been involved in other strange occurrences around town, and have somehow come out on top. The police are coming tomorrow morning to forcibly shut the store down. She needs you to spend the night and help clear the game, so she can have resolution before the great Game Over.

Question the Nestlings: *You were never allowed to play video games growing up, but have since found some appreciation for the medium. For what reason were you banned from them as a kid, and how did your appreciation ironically develop from that reason?*

QUESTION & OPPORTUNITY

Question: What is the cheat code to beat level two of Meta-Morpho CZ? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Resolve this mystery by completing the game, and witnessing the end.

META-MORPHO CZ

Ovi Davros' masterwork, the most addictive arcade game ever created. It's sumptuously animated, stupendously soundtracked, and seemingly generated in response to the player's desires. It follows a nameless protagonist as they create a new world, each level representing a new epoch in that world's history. However, players can't seem to get past the second level. Behind the screen, the secret to the game's groundbreaking programming is Ovi Davros himself. Beneath the sound effects, you can hear him breathe. Touching the cabinet, you can feel his pulse. He biomechanically combined himself with the machine. Initial investigation by the Nestlings makes this clear.

New Move: Insert Credit

When a member of the Club goes to play Meta-Morpho CZ, introduce the first uncleared level to the player, and have them roll with Composure or Sensitivity, minus the number of checked boxes below. On a hit, provided there's no other mechanical barrier, they may clear the level, check the corresponding box, and claim the level's prize. On a 10+, they also discover a Clue. On a miss, do not check a box and take the Condition: **Dawn of a New World**. If a Nestling already has **Dawn of a New World**, progress the Condition to **God's Plaything**.

Once a level has been completed, it is completed for all Nestlings who use this Move.

□ LEVEL ONE: GENESIS

First, there was nothing. Then, light. Life. Strange misshapen creatures limp and crawl, too young to survive alone. Plants, massive and foreign and dangerous. The player must guide the newly formed world into a balanced ecosystem.

Paint the Screen: *The poor creatures on the screen are too stupid to survive, seemingly running to their deaths at every opportunity. What about them seems to be a horrible reflection of yourselves?*

Prize: *The Nestling who completes this level loses their non-dominant hand. A new level appears on the select screen.*

□ LEVEL TWO: POPULOUS

(CANNOT BE BEATEN UNTIL THE CHEAT CODE IS DISCOVERED)

First steps, clay becomes flesh. Flesh becomes man. Man forms community. The player must protect and guide the newly formed tribe of man from the harsh forces of nature. After only 30 seconds, the combined forces of flora, fauna, and weather form a disaster that completely wipes out the tribe, losing the level.

Paint the Screen: *As the monitor fades into a red GAME OVER screen, the game cabinet seems to delight in your frustration. What does it do that confirms that it is indeed alive?*

Prize: *The Nestling who completes this level loses their non-dominant hand. A new level appears on the select screen.*

□ LEVEL THREE: APOCALYPSE

Industrialization. Capitalism. Consumerism. The tribe builds and builds, subsuming and consuming all in their path. This level takes place in an arcade, a group of young adults barricading themselves in to protect themselves from the shambling hordes of zombies, threatening to consume them. Playable characters include a homecoming queen, a teen nerd, and an arcade employee.

Paint the Screen: The arcade cabinet is mad that you were able to reach the third level. What changes does it make, both physically and to the game, to show that it will even the score?

Prize: Regardless of whether the Nestling attempting the level succeeds or fails their roll, they are sucked into the screen, and forced to play the level over again, this time from the inside. Unlock the question below. If Travis' Crew has not already attacked the arcade, you may now have them do so.

Special Rule: If the Nestling lost their non-dominant hand, they find it is now a chainsaw in the game world. If the Nestling lost their eye, they find they now have a sawed-off shotgun in the game world. If the player dies in the game, immediately end the Mystery. GAME OVER.

Question: How do we free our friend from the game world? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve this mystery by freeing the trapped player and escaping from the arcade.

If the Nestlings don't intervene...

Each of the Side Characters fall to Meta-Morpho CZ's engaging gameplay and disappear. As each one falls victim to the machine, it physically grows and the game becomes more difficult. Eventually, Travis' Crew storms the arcade, destroying every machine and burning it to the ground, regardless of who is left inside.

DANGER

Travis' Crew

A whole football team out for revenge and having a good time doing it. Shows up after Travis has done a final check of the arcade. Armed with baseball bats, golf clubs, and other sports equipment. Drunk, high, and filled with teenage masculine rage. Only listens to Travis, and even then, barely. Will look to hurt anyone they see as a dork. Names, if you need them: Pete, Clark, Harvey, Rich, Jason, Alex, Ron, Ramon, Joseph.

KEY MOMENT

At midnight (or earlier if Travis doesn't find the answer he's looking for), a roar of many muscle cars revving can be heard outside the arcade, their headlights blinding the window. Then a brick flies, smashing the glass door. Soon the shop is overtaken by football players, smashing everything, and everyone, in sight.

META-MORPHO CZ

LOCATIONS

Arcade Floor

Black carpet with neon geometric shapes, matted and faded from years of trampling. Dozens of arcade cabinets and games. The various beeps and boops echo differently at night. In a prominent position and slightly larger than the other cabinets is Meta-Morpho CZ.

Paint the Scene: *It could be the age of the store, or it could be some liminal quality of public spaces at night, but the arcade feels deeply lonely. What aspects about the various game cabinets seem to show them longing for human touch?*

Prize Counter

Finger traps, individually wrapped bubble gum, and stuffed toys make up the bulk of prizes behind the small glass table tucked in the corner of the arcade, but the grand prize is a PS2 Slim, available for 1,000,000 tickets, though few machines in the arcade actually reward them.

Paint the Scene: *The prizes laid out seem especially done so to draw the customer's eyes and imagination towards the PS2 Slim, available for 1,000,000 tickets. What odd or otherwise strange prizes are also included, though usually ignored?*

x Secret Workshop

Ovi Davros's machine workshop, hidden away from where customers would typically explore. Various tools and electronic equipment that could be used to repair games strewn about haphazardly, and the walls are blanketed in electronic schematics of various forms, some handwritten. A reel-to-reel tape player gathers dust amongst the equipment. A single light hangs above an empty table in the center of the room.

Paint the Scene: *To an untrained eye, the workshop looks like a mess, but Ovi Davros had a system for everything. What idiosyncratic part of the workshop's set-up reflects his system for this room?*

Special Rule: *If an Odyssey Reel is played here, it airs over the store's ancient PA system. The reel seems to frighten Meta-Morpho CZ. Rolls on the Insert Credit Move may be taken at advantage, but characters from other arcade games will now join the final level of Meta-Morpho CZ as antagonists.*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Kate Paulson, Acting Arcade Manager

Tight brown ponytail, pulling at the roots of her hair, gray eyes, black and pink Polygonaland polo. Rapidly filling out a notebook detailing different strategies to beat Meta-Morpho CZ. Ovi Davros' niece and closest living relative. Kate was previously uninterested in video games but found herself obsessed with Meta-Morpho CZ once she took over shop operations.

Quote: *"I used to think video games were just for children, but I can see now that there's a select few that offer the kind of depth an adult needs to be properly entertained. If I knew games like Meta-Morpho CZ could exist, perhaps I would have studied computers in school instead of law."*

Gary Minos, Teen Gamer

Five foot and no inches, a thick mop of frizzy black hair obscuring his eyes, and his body is completely obscured by layers and layers of black clothes. Spends every day after-school and all weekend long at the Pac-Man machine, armed with a limitless supply of quarters. As thanks for his patronage, Kate is letting him spend the night to witness the end of Polygonaland and Meta-Morpho CZ.

Quote: *"I don't think any game can come close to the perfectly measured, workman's quality, essence of Pac-Man, but uh, let me know if you're getting close to beating MMCZ. Not because I think it's cool or anything. Just, uh, I just am curious what a game ending could look like..."*

Sarah Erikson, Disillusioned Employee

Acne scars, braces, name tag reading "Sara E." Wearing a black and pink Polygonaland polo. Frequently sighs. Uses her downtime to work on her massively popular (online) Spirk fan fiction. Agreed to work this all night shift because she needs the hours to pay server costs on her increasingly trafficked personal webpage.

Quote: *"Aren't you a little old to be playing games? Whatever. The PS2 Slim costs 1,000,000 tickets. Yes, we're closing tomorrow. No, I can't give it to you. Not unless you have 1,000,000 tickets."*

Travis Wells, Star Quarterback

A shock of blonde hair, well decorated varsity jacket, and built like a truck. Has a catchphrase, "BOOM!" Classic jock, and loves to bully nerds and dorks, especially hates gamers. His girlfriend and Shallow Sands Municipal High School Homecoming Queen, Beth LeMasters, is one of the people who went missing from the arcade, and he has plans if he can't find her tonight.

Quote: *"Shut it, four-eyes. I'm here to get my main girl, and I know she's somewhere in this stupid dork-zone. Let's just say if I don't find her before midnight... BOOM!!!"*
Hahahahahahaha!"

CLUES

- ☐ A trail of blood leading to a closet.
- ☐ A loose ceiling panel, revealing (choose one: a collection of ex-sanguinated corpses, a mountain of prize tickets, a portal).
- ☐ Extension cables, daisy-chained and encircling (choose one: the whole arcade, a Pac-Man cabinet, a huge stuffed bear).
- ☐ A secret computer program, running in the background.
- ☐ Soaked towels.
- ☐ A street map with directions handwritten on the side.
- ☐ A rusty(?) bone saw.
- ☐ Alchemic instructions for the transformation of flesh into steel.
- ☐ A trap door.
- ☐ A second Meta-Morpho CZ cabinet, empty and waiting.
- ☐ A cache of recalled energy drinks.
- ☐ Thick black roots, growing, pulsing.
- ☐ A progressing rash.
- ☐ A homecoming queen sash and crown, covered in a thin film of slime.
- ☐ Wires protruding from flesh.
- ☐ Charon's Obol.
- ☐ A flyer advertising a new game called Xxaagreus.
- ☐ A radio broadcast describing a new disease discovered in Shallow Sands, and rapidly spreading.
- ☐ A body ritualistically carved open, its entire nervous system removed.
- ☐ A will-o'-wisp, changing colors between red, green, and blue.

REWARDS

- ☐ A stone arcade token; add it to Your Corner of the House. Using it at an arcade allows you to immediately clear the current level.
- ☐ The 1,000,000 ticket PS2 Slim; add it to Your Corner of the House. It comes with a library of games never released in your dimension.
- ☐ Travis' Golf Club; add it to Your Corner of the House. When you use it to threaten or harm anything dorky or nerdy, you may leave it unmarked.
- ☐ A memento from the investigation; ask one of the other Latchkeys what it is and add it to Your Corner of the House.
- ☐ A memento from the investigation; ask one of the other Latchkeys what it is and add it to Your Corner of the House.

ODSY REELS

SHALLOW ECHO 88 STAR PLAYER

A recording of a 1988 high school basketball game between the Shallow Sands Salamanders and the Echo Canyon Cavaliers. The recording is commented by two AV club teens, Alma Herman and Ian "Tooks" Tewksbury.

- I **Paint the Scene:** Before the game starts, Tooks and Alma speculate excitedly about the Salamanders' star player, Shawn Lynch. What accolades do they attribute to this high school senior?
- II The Nestlings notice an abnormality in the background audio that grows louder as the game continues. It goes unremarked upon by Tooks and Alma. What strange, repetitive message is buried in the noise?
- III The cheers of the audience turn to horrified screams. Stammering, Alma announces that...something has happened to Shawn Lynch. What?
- IV A harsh whistle. The cries of enraged parents and the sound of feet rushing the court. In the ensuing chaos, even Tooks and Alma abandon their post. What ominous warning is whispered into the microphone just before the reel ends?

SUNSET CHOPPER FINAL BROADCAST

An unreleased installment of News from the Sunset Chopper, ODSY's "eye in the sky" traffic report program. The host, Lonny Meeks, lists the time as 9:30 PM as he makes his way along Route 102 into town.

- I **Paint the Scene:** As Lonny describes an "easy-breezy drive home" for people still commuting from the city, what about the recording leads the Club to suspect his helicopter isn't exactly top-of-the-line?
- II About a minute into the broadcast, Lonny reports some kind of accident blocking the road. What bizarre vehicle does he describe?
- III As Lonny descends to see if anyone needs help, another transmission intrudes into the broadcast, eventually drowning him out. What is it?
- IV The reel skips, and suddenly the Club are listening to a somber Tommy-Lee Muñoz, reading out an obituary for ODSY's own Lonny Meeks. What about the tribute makes them think there's been a cover-up?

SAMPLE FROM ODSY MYSTERY SHEET

LAYER ONE: RADIO INTERFERENCE

This layer is unlocked after the players complete their first Stray Signal.

Read the following to the players after the end of the session when they completed their first Stray Signal.

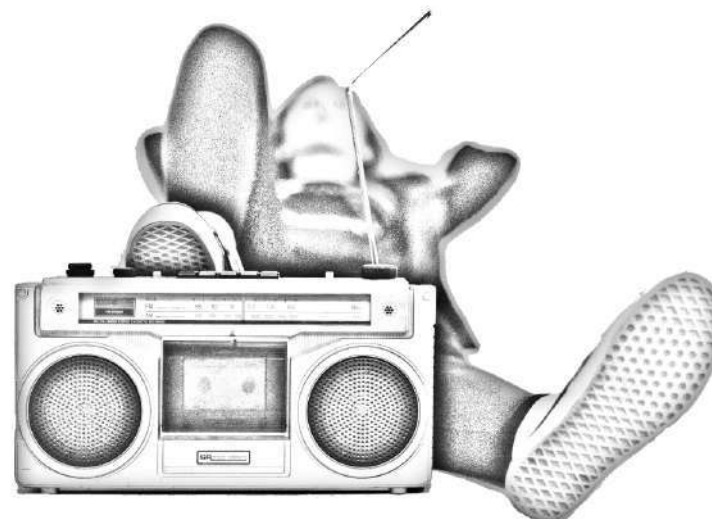
There's a click and then a whirl. Magnetic tape runs past the recording head. Warm tones from a theremin play, though the sound bends and warbles from the tape's age. We pull out from the reel to reel player and find ourselves in the desert atop a plateau. It's night, the stars are out, and a full moon hangs in the center of the sky illuminating a small woman, no more than three feet tall, wearing a deep blue gown adorned with a moon brooch. She sits behind a fold out table, and draws a single tarot card from a deck. She looks at it and scowls before placing it on the table. She looks up and meets our eyes, then speaks, her voice seemingly coming from the tape:

"A most unfortunate draw; the Tower reversed. It depicts a tower struck by lightning, and our Fools leaping from its windows to escape disaster. Up right, the card represents momentous change. Reversed, unavoidable disaster on the horizon. A storm is coming. Listeners at home, will our heroes weather the rain, or drown in the flood? Only time will tell."

The tape clicks again, and stops, and we fade into static.

You now have a new Keeper reaction available to you: La Doña.

Also, La Doña begins to appear in both Deep Lake and Shallow Sands. Latchkeys may now seek her out and consult her like any other Side Character. When they do so, roll with Sensitivity. On a 7-9, you gain a Clue at a cost. On a 10+, she also gifts you an Odyssey Reel. On a miss, turn a key or face the consequences.



DEMO EDITION

TRUST FALL

*To survive the present,
you must confront the past.*

DEMO EDITION

GABRIEL ROBINSON
& BEN MANSKY

◀REW

INTRODUCTION

As teenagers, you found yourselves drawn to the dark and dangerous corners of your imagination. You dabbled in all things occult because it was edgy and it pissed off your parents—but it was also thrilling and powerful. You broke so many rules, you actually found a way to cheat your way into the realm of real magic. No one believed you at first. In the end, you showed them.

But you went too far. You and your friends got in way over your heads, and lost control of the dark powers you awakened. Someone died. All of you bear scars of one kind or another. You tried not to talk about it afterward, but it haunts you to this day.

Trust Fall is a scrapbook grimoire, a deck of haunted cards, a cursed mirror where you will explore the reckless choices and unwelcome truths of your past and present selves. You may be flawed, messy, and entangled in forces you don't understand. But you're also close friends who would do anything for each other.



Trust Fall is inspired by the TV series *Yellowjackets*, along with elements of *The Craft*, *Twin Peaks*, *The Blackcoat's Daughter*, *The Haunting of Hill House*, *A Dark Song*, *Talk to Me*, and 90s nostalgia. Its mechanical structure is derived from games that are “Carved from Brindlewood”, such as *Brindlewood Bay*, *Public Access* and others. You do not need to be familiar with these games in order to play.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Content warnings include: player character betrayal, graphic violence, ritual sacrifice, stalking, blackmail, discussion of mental illness, and harm to children. Be sure to discuss the game's subject matter with your table and use safety tools.

SETUP

This demo of *Trust Fall* requires 3 or 4 players and one Keeper to run the game, a standard deck of playing cards (Jokers removed) and character sheets. We recommend two sessions of 2-3 hours to complete the game.

— GAMEPLAY BASICS —

The Shared Deck

The game is played through conversation, as the members of the Circle figure out how to deal with the looming threat of their past. Eventually, you will attempt something risky or uncertain, usually triggering a move (described in more detail in *Basic Moves*). To determine the result of their actions, *Trust Fall* has players draw from the top of the shared deck of cards. This deck represents the shared fate of the group, as when the deck runs out, the story comes to an end. Players will be able to manipulate the contents of this deck in a number of ways through various moves—whether for the benefit of the group or to serve their own ends.

The Suits

The four suits correspond to sets of characteristics that the characters embody during play.



Clubs are associated with conflict, facing danger head on, and force of will.



Hearts are associated with presence, charm, and humanity.



Diamonds are associated with reasoning, deduction and the spark of intellect.



Spades are associated with fortitude, holding it together, and digging deep.

Each suit is also associated with a particular playbook, which are described in more detail below.

Drawing Cards

When you trigger a move, work with the Keeper to determine which **suit** your action corresponds with (the Keeper has final say). Then, draw the top card from the deck and determine its value:

- > Aces count as a 1; numbered cards determine their value, and face cards (Jack/Queen/King) count as an 11.
- > Add +1 to the result if the suit of your card matches your approach.
- > Add +1 to the result if the suit of your card matches your playbook's suit.

If your final draw is a...

- **A-6:** Miss. You fail, and the Keeper reacts.
- ▣ **7-10:** You succeed, but there is a cost or complication. The Keeper will describe it.
- ⊕ **J/Q/K (11+):** You succeed, describe what it looks like.

Once a card is used to interpret an action, it is discarded, removing it from the deck.

Shuffling Cards

When a player draws a card which is not a miss (A-6), they may **choose** to count it as a miss instead and shuffle the drawn card back into the deck, allowing it to be drawn in the future. Affecting which cards stay in the deck is an important strategy for players to influence later card draws in the game.

Advantage & Disadvantage

When you have an advantage, draw 2 cards and use the higher card. You will most often have advantage because the Keeper believes it's appropriate based on the circumstances around your action.

When you're at a disadvantage, draw 2 cards, using the lower result. You will most often be at a disadvantage when an **Unwelcome Truth** affects your action, or because the Keeper believes it's appropriate.

In either case, the unused card is shuffled back into the deck.

Running Out of Cards

If the deck runs out, the players must immediately **Close the Circle** (described in *Basic Moves* below).

Crowns

After a card is drawn, a player may choose to **Put on a Crown** to increase the success level one tier (e.g., from a miss to a success with a complication). If they do so, they *must* shuffle the card back into the deck.

There are two Crowns, the **Crown of the Future** and the **Crown of the Past**. Each Playbook has an associated Crown of the Future, but the Crown of the Past is shared between all players. The Crown of the Past must be marked in order, and when it is marked, the player who marked it answers the corresponding prompt and the Flashback Phase begins (for more information, see *Play Structure*).

Each time the Crown of the Past is marked, the group collectively describes a Clue to the Keeper which they discover during the scene.

Unwelcome Truths

Unwelcome Truths are pieces of your past that you would rather stay buried. Crimes, embarrassments, betrayals, transgressions. Memories you thought you'd exorcised. Alone, they are not enough to destroy you, but they haunt you all the same.

Unwelcome Truths may be revealed:

- > When prompted by the Keeper (such as a complication during a move).
- > When the player draws a card matching their stated approach or their playbook suit, in order to gain advantage during an action (keep the lower card of the two you have drawn as this new Unwelcome Truth).
- > As part of another move.

When you reveal an Unwelcome Truth, work with the Keeper to describe how this dark part of yourself intrudes in the moment, then name it and keep the card associated with it, face up in front of you. There's no point in trying to hide what everyone already knows about you.

You can hold up to three Unwelcome Truths. If you would reveal a fourth, you instead must Put on a Crown.

Unwelcome Truths may be cleared through the Reflection Move or the Betrayal Move.



— BASIC MOVES —

The Hunt Move

When you seek to track down or uncover something which eludes you, describe how and draw a card.

- ⊕ **On a hit**, you find a Clue. The Keeper will tell you what it is.
- ⊖ **On a 7–10**, there's a complication — either with the Clue itself, or a complication you encounter while searching. The Keeper will tell you what the complication is.

The Invocation Move

When you draw the attention of supernatural forces or otherwise attempt something dangerous, declare your intent then state what you fear could go wrong. The Keeper will tell you how it's worse than you fear. Draw a card.

- ⊕ **On a hit**, you carry out your intent.
- ⊖ **On a 7–10**, there's a complication — either with the Clue itself, or a complication you encounter while searching. The Keeper will tell you what the complication is.

The Reflection Move

When you allow yourself to be vulnerable with one or more members of the Circle you may each clear an Unwelcome Truth, discarding its associated card. Then, define a Clue as a group that you stumble upon during the scene.

You can only participate in the Reflection Move once per phase.

The Betrayal Move

When you betray a member of your Circle or endanger the group with your selfish actions during another move, you can invoke one of your Unwelcome Truths. Treat it as a second card as if drawn with Advantage. Afterwards, shuffle the lower card back into the deck. The higher card is discarded as usual.

Close the Circle

When the Circle convenes to reach a consensus on their fate, decide whether you will answer the Past Question or the Present Question. Each player draws a card, using the highest card drawn to determine the result. Add the number of Clues incorporated into the answer or otherwise explained away, minus the question's Complexity.

- **On a miss**, you are tragically, horribly wrong. In order from lowest to highest card drawn, narrate how your character meets their end as a result of your folly.
- ⊕ **On a hit**, you are freed from the specter of your past. In order from lowest to highest card drawn, narrate how your character moves forward.
- ⊖ **On a 7–10**, you are successful in closing the Circle, but you are not entirely free of the past. After each player narrates their epilogue, the Keeper will tell you how your history still lingers.

If the deck has run out of cards, forcing the players to Close the Circle, they must each play an Unwelcome Truth instead of drawing. If the deck runs out while Closing the Circle, Unwelcome Truths may be played to make up the difference in cards drawn.

ANATOMY OF A CHARACTER SHEET

The character sheet has two sides: one representing your character in the past, and one representing your character in the present.



THE CHALLENGER / THE WOLF QUEEN

The suit of clubs. Ruthless and effective, driven to achieve their goals at any cost.



THE REBEL / THE ANTLER QUEEN

The suit of hearts. Brash and unflinching, cuts to the heart of matters.



THE FOOL / THE SERPENT QUEEN

The suit of diamonds. Sharp and insightful, quick to take the measure of people and situations to leverage for their advantage.



THE LOVER / THE THORN QUEEN

The suit of spades. Resilient and pragmatic, does whatever is necessary to keep people together.

PAST
PRESENT

THE Challenger

Andy
Nickname. Make one up based on your present-day name.

School Uniform
Style. Pick one or make up your own: School Uniform, Sports Jersey, Juicy Couture Tracksuit

The Park by the Creek
Location. A dangerous place where you go to train, blow off steam, or test yourself. Paint the Scene: what about this place reminds you of a past failure, and why do you keep returning to it?

Move: Might Makes Right (Past & Present)
When you draw a miss, you can escalate the situation with violence to change the result to a mixed success instead (you cannot modify the result further). Take the card you drew as an Unwelcome Truth in addition to any other consequences.

Crown of the Past. Shared by all members of the Circle. Mark the next box in order, then flash back to a time when:

- ☒ You hid a dark secret from someone you care about.
- ☒ You couldn't escape the feeling that you were truly, deeply, entirely alone.
- ☒ A so-called "friend" stopped you from doing something you desperately wanted.
- ☐ You confessed something that made everyone look at you differently.
- ☐ You felt empowered by committing a shameful or transgressive act.
- ☐ You realized none of you would ever truly escape from what you unleashed.

Additionally, during the scene, describe how the group stumbles on a Clue.

THE Wolf Queen

Cassandra
Name. Pick one or make up your own: Natalie, Taissa, Misty, Shauna, Jackie, Sophie, Anna, Laura, Nancy, Sarah, Bonnie, Rochelle, Jocelyn, Evie, Laura, Donna, Audrey

Power Suit
Professional Attire. Pick one or make up your own: Athleisure, Power Suit, Red Carpet

Jenna, Coworker + Ex-Friend
Side Character. A person who watched you claw your way to the top.

Unwelcome Truths

4♥ Lied to Jenna's partner

3♠ Injured a Competitor

Card Truth

Crown of the Future. Mark in any order:

- ☒ Narrate a private moment where you experience regret for the damage you've caused, but bury the feeling.
- ☐ Narrate a nightmare showing how you fall short of achieving something very important to you.
- ☒ Narrate a scene where you coldly sacrifice someone or something precious in pursuit of your goal.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where you abandon all pretense and allow your wild self to take over. Describe how you achieve your goal in the most destructive or violent manner possible, then retire this character.

What they called you back then

Your style in the past

An important **Location** to you, added to the **Mystery**

Your unique **Playbook Move** (accessible in both Flashback & Present phases)

The shared **Crown of the Past** (when one player decides to check a box, all must check that box)

Your name

Your professional persona in the present

An important **Side Character** to you, added to the **Mystery**

Your currently held **Unwelcome Truths** (apply across Flashback & Present phases)

Your **Crown of the Future**

TRUST FALL

THE Challenger

THE Wolf Queen



*Ruthless and effective, driven to achieve
their goals at any cost.*



Nickname. Make one up based on your present-day name.

Name. Pick one or make up your own:
Natalie, Taissa, Misty, Shauna, Jackie,
Sophie, Anna, Laura, Nancy, Sarah,
Bonnie, Rochelle, Jocelyn, Evie,
Laura, Donna, Audrey

Style. Pick one or make up your own: School Uniform, Sports Jersey, Juicy Couture Tracksuit

Professional Attire. Pick one or make up your own: Athleisure, Power Suit, Red Carpet

Location. A dangerous place where you go to train, blow off steam, or test yourself.
Paint the Scene: what about this place reminds you of a past failure, and why do you keep returning to it?

Side Character. A person who watched you claw your way to the top.

Unwelcome Truths

Move: Might Makes Right (Past & Present)

When you draw a miss, you can escalate the situation with violence to change the result to a mixed success instead (you cannot modify the result further). Take the card you drew as an Unwelcome Truth in addition to any other consequences.

Card Truth

Crown of the Past. Shared by all members of the Circle. Mark the next box in order, then flash back to a time when:

Crown of the Future. Mark in any order:

- ☐ You hid a dark secret from someone you care about.
- ☐ You couldn't escape the feeling that you were truly, deeply, entirely alone.
- ☐ A so-called "friend" stopped you from doing something you desperately wanted.
- ☐ You confessed something that made everyone look at you differently.
- ☐ You felt empowered by committing a shameful or transgressive act.
- ☐ You realized none of you would ever truly escape from what you unleashed.

- ☐ Narrate a private moment where you experience regret for the damage you've caused, but bury the feeling.
- ☐ Narrate a nightmare showing how you fall short of achieving something very important to you.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where you coldly sacrifice someone or something precious in pursuit of your goal.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where you abandon all pretense and allow your wild self to take over. Describe how you achieve your goal in the most destructive or violent manner possible, then retire this character.

Additionally, during the scene, describe how the group stumbles on a Clue.

TRUST
FALL

THE *Rebel*

THE *Antler Queen*



Brash and unflinching, cuts to the heart of matters.



Nickname. Make one up based on your present-day name.

Name. Pick one or make up your own: Natalie, Taissa, Misty, Shauna, Jackie, Sophie, Anna, Laura, Nancy, Sarah, Bonnie, Rochelle, Jocelyn, Evie, Laura, Donna, Audrey

Style. Pick one or make up your own: Goth and Proud, Scene Kid, Tree Hugger

Professional Attire. Pick one or make up your own: Rocker Chic, Bohemian, Travel Influencer

Location. A place where everyone goes to get in trouble, get fucked up, or live on the edge. Paint the Scene: how does this place make your friends uncomfortable?

Side Character. A person who thinks they truly know you.

Unwelcome Truths

Move: Voice of the Wilderness (Past & Present)

After you make the Reflection Move, you may retrieve a card from the discard pile, taking it as a new Unwelcome Truth. Describe an additional Clue based on something that went unspoken during the conversation.

Card Truth

Crown of the Past. Shared by all members of the Circle. Mark the next box in order, then flash back to a time when:

- ☐ You hid a dark secret from someone you care about.
- ☐ You couldn't escape the feeling that you were truly, deeply, entirely alone.
- ☐ A so-called "friend" stopped you from doing something you desperately wanted.
- ☐ You confessed something that made everyone look at you differently.
- ☐ You felt empowered by committing a shameful or transgressive act.
- ☐ You realized none of you would ever truly escape from what you unleashed.

Additionally, during the scene, describe how the group stumbles on a Clue.

Crown of the Future. Mark in any order:

- ☐ Narrate a scene where you avoid closeness out of fear of vulnerability.
- ☐ Narrate a scene showing you give in to temptation, willfully ignoring the consequences.
- ☐ Narrate a nightmare where you open up to someone only to have them betray you in a painful, violent way.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where you give in to the forces that have been pushing you toward your doom for as long as you can remember. Describe how you achieve your goal in a way that proves that all your fears were justified, then retire this character.

TRUST FALL

THE Fool

Nickname. Make one up based on your present-day name.

Style. Pick one or make up your own: Coke-Bottle Glasses, Overalls, Nerdy Graphic Tee

Location. A place where you go to volunteer or pursue a special interest.
Paint the scene: what about this place would you be able to exploit if the need arises?

Move: Sharing is Caring (Past & Present)

When you draw a miss, you may describe how you pull another member of the Circle into the situation, then exchange your card with one of their Unwelcome Truths. Describe how you were secretly the one responsible for it, and use the new result instead.

Crown of the Past. Shared by all members of the Circle. Mark the next box in order, then flash back to a time when:

- ☐ You hid a dark secret from someone you care about.
- ☐ You couldn't escape the feeling that you were truly, deeply, entirely alone.
- ☐ A so-called "friend" stopped you from doing something you desperately wanted.
- ☐ You confessed something that made everyone look at you differently.
- ☐ You felt empowered by committing a shameful or transgressive act.
- ☐ You realized none of you would ever truly escape from what you unleashed.

Additionally, during the scene, describe how the group stumbles on a Clue.

THE Serpent Queen

Sharp and insightful, quick to take the measure of people and situations to leverage for their advantage.

Name. Pick one or make up your own: Natalie, Taissa, Misty, Shauna, Jackie, Sophie, Anna, Laura, Nancy, Sarah, Bonnie, Rochelle, Jocelyn, Evie, Laura, Donna, Audrey

Professional Attire. Pick one or make up your own: Librarian Vibes, Scrubs, HOA President

Side Character. A person who sees you for who you truly are.

Unwelcome Truths

Card	Truth
------	-------

Crown of the Future. Mark in any order:

- ☐ Recall a time you went to extremes to anticipate the needs of others.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where you pursue friendship with someone who clearly didn't want it.
- ☐ Narrate a flashback to a time you put someone in grave danger or abandoned them in their time of need.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where a plan of yours comes to fruition, but not in the way you hoped. Describe how you realize your drastic mistake too late to fix it, then retire this character.

TRUST
FALL

THE Lover

Nickname. Make one up based on your present-day name.

Style. Pick one or make up your own: Braces & Friendship Bracelets, Limited Too, Hand-knit Cardigan

Location. A secret place where you go to indulge a dangerous vice.
Paint the Scene: what about this place makes you feel like a more "real" version of yourself?

Move: Prepare for the Worst (Past & Present)
Before you draw, you may look at the top 3 cards in the deck, take one of them as an Unwelcome Truth, then replace the others in any order.

Crown of the Past. Shared by all members of the Circle. Mark the next box in order, then flash back to a time when:

- ☐ You hid a dark secret from someone you care about.
- ☐ You couldn't escape the feeling that you were truly, deeply, entirely alone.
- ☐ A so-called "friend" stopped you from doing something you desperately wanted.
- ☐ You confessed something that made everyone look at you differently.
- ☐ You felt empowered by committing a shameful or transgressive act.
- ☐ You realized none of you would ever truly escape from what you unleashed.

Additionally, during the scene, describe how the group stumbles on a Clue.

THE Thorn Queen

Resilient and pragmatic, does whatever is necessary to keep people together.

Name. Pick one or make up your own: Natalie, Taissa, Misty, Shauna, Jackie, Sophie, Anna, Laura, Nancy, Sarah, Bonnie, Rochelle, Jocelyn, Evie, Laura, Donna, Audrey

Professional Attire. Pick one or make up your own: Soccer Mom, Self Help Author, Motivational Speaker

Side Character. A person who stayed by your side despite the damage you caused.

Unwelcome Truths

Card	Truth
------	-------

Crown of the Future. Mark in any order:

- ☐ Narrate a scene where you go to great lengths to put on a facade of normalcy.
- ☐ Narrate a scene showing how you sacrifice something of yourself for another, but resent them for it.
- ☐ Narrate a nightmare in which everyone you worked so hard to keep on your side realizes how broken you are and leaves you.
- ☐ Narrate a scene where you solve a problem by abandoning any chance of maintaining the life you've built, revealing your true nature to everyone around you. Describe the fallout, then retire this character.

—PLAY STRUCTURE—

Play alternates between the present day and flashbacks to the character's teenage years. The game begins in the **Present Phase**, with the members of the Circle finding out that someone is threatening to unearth their past.

The **Flashback Phase** is triggered as a Keeper reaction, or any time a player puts on the Crown of the Past. Each Flashback Phase focuses on a particular place and time when the Circle was pursuing their occult activities. If a player puts on a Crown, they choose one of the Past Locations (see *The Mystery*) and frame the scene described in the prompt there. If the Paint the Scene question has not yet been answered for the Location, the players answer it before the scene begins.

The Flashback Phase concludes after a clue is discovered, four cards have been drawn, or as a Keeper reaction, whichever comes first. The Keeper transitions directly into the Present Phase, either picking up where the last Present Phase ended or moving forward in time.

Play Stru

Keep  Out!!


The rest is for the
Keeper's
eyes only!!!

Ritual
Crown
Pact
Coven
Circle

THE KEEPER

From here forward, this guide is addressed to the Keeper.

Keeper Reactions

When a player draws a miss or a mixed success, or the fiction otherwise demands it, you may take a reaction to further complicate the narrative. Possible reactions include:

- > **Time Shift.** Cut to the Flashback Phase from the Present Phase, or vice versa.
- > **Look in the Mirror.** Reveal an Unwelcome Truth.
- > **Losing Time.** Discard a card from the top of the deck.
- > **It Hungers.** The Entity demands a sacrifice (see *Dangers*).
- > **No Escape.** The Pursuer issues a threat, demanding money, information, or some cryptic task with no immediately obvious purpose (see *Dangers*).
- > **Collateral Damage.** Kill a Side Character.
- > **Chosen Sacrifice.** Kill a Player Character.

Always be a fan of the players and the story you are telling together, but do not hesitate to take shocking or dangerous reactions. The players have extremely powerful tools at their disposal—such as Putting on a Crown— to avoid their character meeting their end.

THE MYSTERY

Each game of Trust Fall features the same mystery at its center. However, the Side Characters, Locations, and the way the mystery unfolds will change every time you play. In character creation, each player adds a side character and a location based on the prompts in their playbook.

Presenting the Mystery

As teenagers, you discovered a way to commune with a power both dark and alluring. Together, through ritual and sacrifice, you formed the Circle. You were bound together by your shared secret. You each gave into your gnawing desire, indulging in the occult for personal gain. Inevitably, this power demanded something in return. So you did something unspeakable.

Decades later, you have put this darkness behind you in an effort to live a normal life. The Circle remains in tenuous contact, but the ever-present specter of the past still lingers. And now, someone from your past is threatening to reveal truths best left buried. You can't let that happen.

Ask the Thorn Queen: *What did you find that tells you somebody is after you?*

Ask the Wolf Queen: *What's at stake if the truth gets out?*

Ask the Serpent Queen: *What about this situation feels strangely re-invigorating?*

Ask the Antler Queen: *What are you willing to do to survive?*

Questions & Opportunities

Only one Question may be answered.

The Past Question: Why did your ritual go wrong? (Complexity 6)

Close the Circle by correcting the mistake you made all those years ago.

The Present Question: Who is digging up your past and why? (Complexity 8)

Close the Circle by stopping your pursuer, putting the past behind you once and for all.

Dangers

The Pursuer

Someone knows what the Circle did all those years ago. Now, they're threatening to unearth the Circle's sordid past, and destroy everything its members have built for themselves.

During play, The Pursuer will issue threats to the members of the Circle through untraceable emails, letters, DMs, phone calls, or notes left in places for the Circle to find. They seek a twisted kind of justice for the unconscionable acts the Circle committed. They will not hesitate to toy with the Circle, even if it harms their friends and loved ones.

Quote: *"I know what you did. I do not forgive, and I will not forget."*

The Entity

The possibly real, possibly not-real supernatural entity that wants something from you. The Keeper may reveal the presence of the Entity as a reaction, but this will always be in a way that focuses on the perception of your character. Is it a nightmare, a shared hallucination, a haunting, a possession? Whatever it might be, it's certainly dangerous and affects the characters.

While the players cannot definitively answer this until they Close the Circle – and even then, they may not settle on a tangible answer – these questions should be freely explored at the table. Because the players explicitly can't define the true nature of the Entity right away, they are free to present wild theories from the point of view of their characters. Just like the films and TV series which inspire this game, part of the fun is guessing what is real in the outside world and what is a projection of the characters, or a reality of their own they can't seem to escape.

Past Locations

Pine Ridge High School

Dingy hallways, faded linoleum, chipping paint, even back then. The faint smell of mildew and cleaning products. Flickering fluorescent lights.

Paint the Scene (direct to individual characters as needed): *What feature of the building feels most oppressive? How have you left your mark on this place in an act of futile rebellion? What about this place feels unchanging, as if outside of time? What place holds a secret, good memory?*

Green Hollow Shopping Mall

A temple to commerce, complete with a water feature in the middle. Most importantly, a climate-controlled place to avoid your family and spend time with your friends.

Paint the Scene: *What do you desire here that always seems out of reach?*

The Forest

Dense woods at the edge of town, carpeted with pine needles, air rich with the scent of wet dirt and decay.

Paint the Scene: *What secret thrill do you experience here?*

Your Bedroom

Paint the Scene: *How do you enter and leave undetected? What decor shows how much your friends mean to you? What do you try to conceal from them when they visit?*

Present Locations

Your Home

Paint the Scene: *Describe a room of your home. How is your private life at odds with your public appearance? What is notably absent from your home?*

Your Workplace

Paint the Scene: *Describe where you work. How does your personal workspace show that you are throwing yourself into your work or avoiding your responsibilities?*

An Errand

Paint the Scene: *Describe an errand you rush off to. What is your task, and how is it an excuse to include or avoid another activity?*

A Restaurant

Paint the Scene: *Describe where you go out to eat most often. What is your usual order? Who recognizes you here as a regular, and what is the unspoken agreement between you?*

A Secret Place

Paint the Scene: *Describe where you go to be alone. What excessive measures do you take to keep this place secret? What seemingly mundane activity do you use it for, and what part of you is most fulfilled by it?*

Playbook Locations









Side Characters

Ellen Davis, a supportive teacher.

Kind but weary eyes, secondhand suit, hair always a bit messy. Taught English at Pine Ridge, and is now retired. She's always had a soft spot for misfits, and little patience for those who would prey on someone weaker than them.

Quote: *"Come on now, it can't be all that bad. You know my door is always open if you want to talk about it."*

Maggie Palmer, a former classmate.

Tattoo sleeve, tank top, an infectious laugh and a fierce competitive streak. She moved to the city for college and stayed there afterwards, though she's never really settled down. She's back in town because of a family thing she'd rather not talk about.

Quote: *"Oh my god, it's been what, like, 20 years? More? Kind of surreal to be back here, it looks pretty much the same. Brings back memories..."*

Jason Valdez, a dedicated journalist.

An earnest young man hunting for a more exciting story than his usual feel-good human interest beat. A fan of unsolved mystery and conspiracy theory podcasts, in part because his older brother disappeared when he was a kid. He still drives his brother's beat up old Jeep.

Quote: *"I just feel like there's got to be something with a little more substance here. If I have to write another piece about the same girl scout troop raising money for charity I might lose my mind."*

Alisha Nair, a local celebrity.

Bright smile, always well dressed. She was prom queen back in the day, and is now the local TV station's meteorologist. She knows just about everyone, either through her advocacy work or her popular women's book club. She recently joined the race for town council.

Quote: *"There's joy to be found everywhere, I think. Even on the rainiest day, the sun is still shining, up there past the clouds. There's even joy in being underestimated, I've learned."*

Playbook Side Characters









Clues

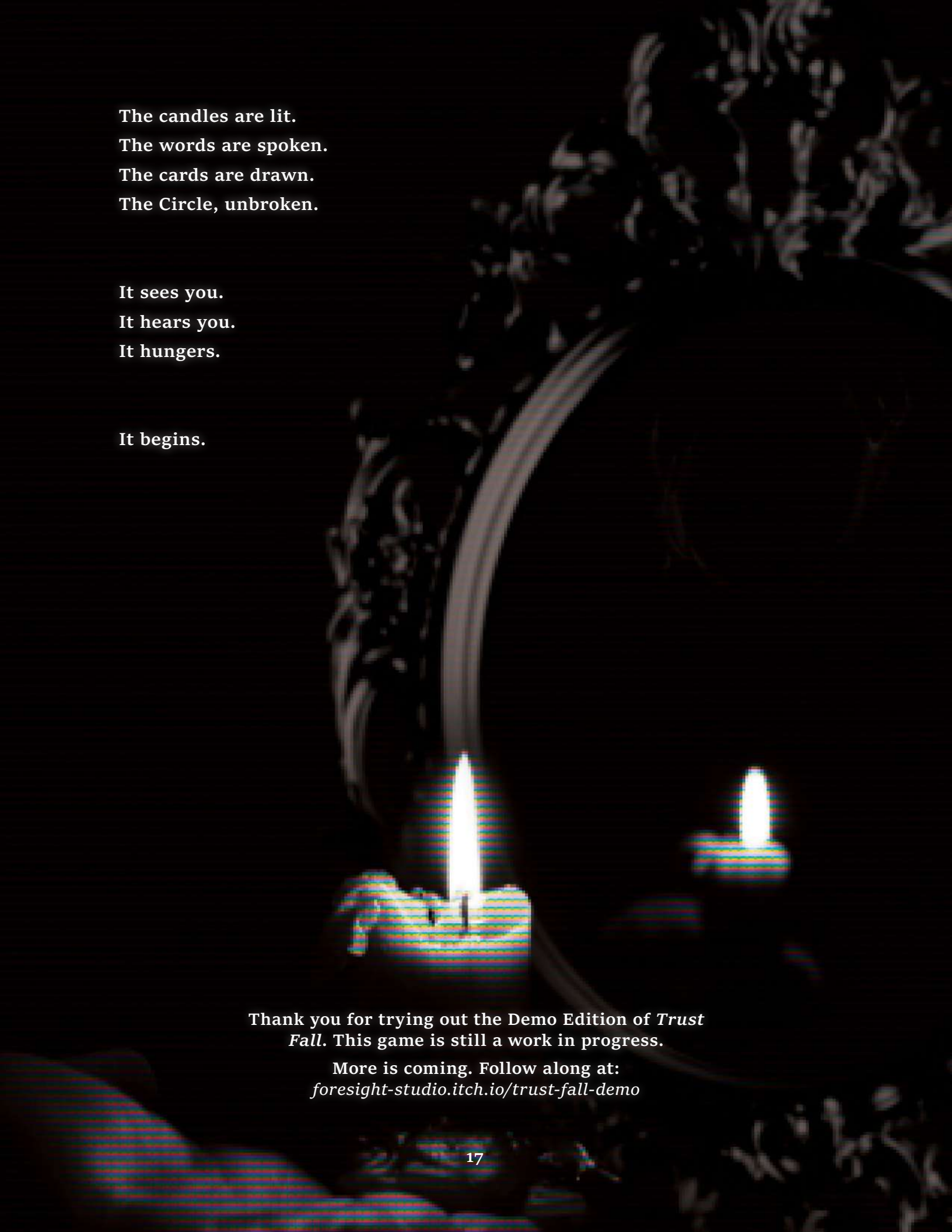
- ☐ An eerily familiar sigil in an unexpected place.
- ☐ A threatening postcard sent from a location important to the Circle.
- ☐ A charred journal with fragments of barely legible [prophecies / components of a ritual / lists of names and dates].
- ☐ The wind whispers a phrase which only you can hear.
- ☐ An enormous collection of dried mushrooms and herbs, some poisonous.
- ☐ A Side Character's eyes roll back in their head, and they speak in a voice that is not their own: "*It hungers.*"
- ☐ The Queen of Hearts, tucked in an unusual place.
- ☐ A dirty, tattered high school soccer jersey
- ☐ Burnt human remains.
- ☐ A stack of drivers licenses and IDs each with a different name, but all the same picture.
- ☐ Plants/vines/branches growing from a place they shouldn't be.
- ☐ Surveillance photos of two Side Characters meeting outside the local diner.
- ☐ Snow in the summer/searing heat in the winter/some other eerie, unseasonable weather pattern.
- ☐ A locked diary, contents written in a cipher only you and one other person would know.
- ☐ One half of a heart-shaped "best friends" necklace.
- ☐ A ritual circle, candles recently snuffed out and still smoking.
- ☐ A concealed [room / cabinet / pit / weapon].
- ☐ A manila envelope of old yearbook pictures of the members of the Circle, eyes scratched out.
- ☐ An antique hunting knife, blade perfectly honed.
- ☐ The corpse of a small animal, ripped open and innards splayed across the floor, somehow still blinking.

Past Moments

- > The howling of wolves, closer than they should be.
- > An invisible force gently plays with your hair.
- > A jet-black deer, eyes glistening, gore hanging from its bloodied antlers.
- > A strange person appears out of nowhere—they look eerily familiar, like they could be an older version of yourself. They make no sound, but seem to be frantically warning you of something. Before you can respond, they're gone.
- > Blood oozes slowly from a crack in a wall, like the sap of a tree.
- > Every screen and radio in the area flickers to life, buzzing with static.

Present Moments

- > A Side Character casually says the words "*I know what you did*", but has no memory of saying it.
- > A stranger stares at you from a distance. This is not the first time you've seen them today.
- > Shadows of grasping branches at the edge of your vision, the sound of scraping and clawing.
- > You blink and realize you don't know how you got here, or what you were doing. There are traces of dried blood on your hands.
- > The shadowy form of a figure with [twisted antlers / extra limbs / trembling wings / an impossibly large, toothy maw], appearing at the most inconvenient moment.
- > The droning of bees, so loud it drowns out all other sound.



The candles are lit.
The words are spoken.
The cards are drawn.
The Circle, unbroken.

It sees you.
It hears you.
It hungers.

It begins.

Thank you for trying out the Demo Edition of *Trust Fall*. This game is still a work in progress.

More is coming. Follow along at:
foresight-studio.itch.io/trust-fall-demo