

Dead Men Do Tell Tales

Forensics Facts to Terrorize and Amuse Your Players

By Matt Staroscik © 1995 ❖ Artwork by Bradley K. McDevitt © 1995

Detective Brenner slowly walked towards the warehouse. In the distance he could faintly hear the pounding Long Beach surf. The moonlight cast strange shadows in the alley, and he again wished he had brought his partner along. That, of course, would have been a mistake; Brenner's informant, whom he only knew as Chavez, demanded they speak alone.

A Beretta 92 held at the ready, he eased the corroded door open and stepped into the darkness. After his eyes adjusted to the dim moonlight streaming through the grimy windows, he made out a human figure across the floor. "Chavez?" he called as he raised the Beretta.

"Of course."

"How about some light?" asked Brenner.

With a faint click a weak bulb came to life, creating a pool of light in the cavernous room. Brenner's attention was immediately directed to the macabre scene in the center of the room. Two corpses were secured spread-eagled to the concrete floor, their chests flayed open. Their clouded, sightless eyes stared upwards out of waxen faces. Gallons of blood were pooled around them, and the remains of candles and burnt paper were scattered about. Bloody footprints traced a ring around the hideous tableau. The faint buzzing of flies could be heard.

Brenner approached the unfortunate pair of victims, careful not to step in any of the blood. The absence of any greenish-red discoloration told him right away that the bodies were less than eighteen hours old - fresh enough that the odor of rotting flesh had yet to rise. "Not again..." swore Brenner as he quickly checked the room's corners once more.

Chavez stepped forward. "I'm afraid so, detective. And this may only be the beginning."

Reality can be disturbing enough to hold its own in a horror-genre game. An accurate description of the state of a corpse can create more impact than simply throwing gallons of blood around the scene. The

buzz of flies, clouded eyes, and rigor mortis all can be described by the GM when characters come across a scene such as that above. The information presented in their article is designed to be useful on two lev-



els. Firstly, in any game the GM will be able to describe the condition of a corpse more realistically after reading this piece. Second, mention is made of how to integrate the information with a skill-based game system so characters with the appropriate skills can make rolls to gather information from a scene. Characters with skill in medicine or crime scene investigation will then be able to put those skills to work more realistically. This information is discussed generally, with no effort made to tailor it to any one system.

Three main subjects are covered: first and most importantly, determination of the time of death. Secondly, the procedure followed during an autopsy is discussed. Lastly, a discussion of the wounds caused by firearms is included. A word of caution: this is a frank discussion of the more gruesome aspects of death. Those who are faint of heart, be warned - you may not want to read this over dinner.

Time of Death

After death, a body undergoes a number of changes that can be used to determine the time death occurred. Despite what might be seen on television this is not an exact science. Still, under most circumstances it is possible to gauge the time of death to within a few hours. To maximize the accuracy of this process, it is important to examine the body *in situ* (where it lies at the crime scene) as soon as possible. After the examination of the crime scene is complete, the body is tagged, bagged, and taken away for a full autopsy.

Time of death is determined mainly by examining two factors. The body's condition - temperature, lividity, decomposition - is one. The other is the presence of insect life on and around the corpse. The determination of time of death can be complicated by extremely hot or cold weather. In freezing weather, a corpse can be so well preserved that the time of death cannot be accurately established. On the other hand, a hostile environment like a hot humid jungle will complicate the determination by accelerating the process of decay.

The well-known milestones used to determine the time of death are summarized below.

T +0 minutes

The skin pales and the muscles relax. The body begins to cool. The rate of cooling is approximately 1.5° F per minute, but changes depending on the ambient temperature. A dismembered corpse will cool more quickly than an intact one, too. The body will remain warm to the touch for approximately three hours. Flies find the corpse within ten minutes of death and lay eggs in the eyes, nose, and mouth.

T +30 minutes

The blood in the corpse, not being circulated anymore, will sink to the lowest portions of the body. This causes obvious purplish patches, called post-mortem lividity. Applying pressure to livor patches will push away the as-yet liquid blood under the skin, resulting in a temporary pale spot. (You can see the same thing when you clench your fist; the blood is temporarily forced away from the knuckles, which become pale.) The upper portions of the body, robbed of all their blood, become more pale or even waxy in appearance.

T +4 hours

At this point, rigor mortis sets in. It can take up to 12 hours for rigor to set in completely in some people. The smallest muscles stiffen up first, starting with the face and neck. Stiffening then proceeds downward to the larger muscle groups. After 30 hours, the muscles have decayed to the point that they don't stay locked up, and rigor mortis disappears. Muscular softening proceeds from the head down. When a body has lost its rigor, it is said that the rigor mortis has been "resolved."

Rigor mortis manifests differently in different people and cannot be used as an accurate time of death indicator by itself. Extremely overweight people sometimes never develop rigor, and thin people may develop it quickly. In addition, vigorous activity, such as a struggle, shortly before death depletes muscular fuel and causes rigor to set in more quickly. Elevated ambient temperature also accelerates the process.

Four hours after death, the body will be cool to the touch.

T +6-8 hours

Post-mortem lividity becomes fixed - that is, pressure will not cause livor marks to blanch. This happens as the blood causing the livor marks clots; pressure can no longer force it from the area. The corpse's corneas may cloud over.

T +12 hours

The eggs laid by flies in the minutes after death hatch after twelve hours. Maggots begin to feed in the mouth, nose, and ears. This is considered a very accurate milestone.

T +24 hours

Eighteen to twenty-four hours after death, depending on ambient temperature, the body will be cold and clammy. The corpse begins to discolor, beginning at the head and neck as with rigor mortis. The greenish-red patches spread downward over the course of the next several days, and eventually cover the entire body. At this point, the odor of rotting flesh is noticeable and facial features become distorted.

Between twenty-four and thirty-six hours after death, beetles begin to feed on the corpse. After forty-eight hours spiders and other insects arrive and begin preying on the insects feeding on the corpse.

T +3 days

Bacterial decay produces large amounts of gas. Some corpses swell; huge blisters, full of gas, may form. Fluids may leak from the nose, mouth, and other orifices.

T +3 weeks

In a warm environment, the body is reduced to a skeleton in three to four weeks. A cold climate can increase that time to two months or even longer. In a more moderate climate, at three weeks after death the body begins to burst open. The hair and nails loosen.

T +2-3 months

A body submerged underwater can undergo a curious transformation after 2-3 months. Fat beneath the skin changes to adipocere, a waxy white substance. This is most prominent in the fingers and nose but nearly the entire body can be converted

under the right conditions. Corpses take much longer to become skeletons when submerged.

Roleplaying Possibilities

A Forensics or Pathology skill could be very useful for any characters that are likely to run across any corpses in their line of work. Determination of the time of death, in the absence of any complications, would be an easy task in Forensics or Pathology. Depending on the situation, the time could be narrowed down to a few hours. The older a corpse is, the harder it is to determine the time of death, and after three days the task difficulty becomes difficult and the time of death will have an uncertainty of approximately eight hours. Older corpses will have uncertainties of many days even with a successful roll. If all that is found is a skeleton, the situation is not necessarily hopeless. A botanist can examine the scene and attempt to determine how long the body has been there by examining the plant life growing around it. This is a very difficult task, with a great deal of uncertainty in the result.

Even if the players aren't interested in having characters with Forensics, the GM can provide grisly details from the guide above at the appropriate times to enhance the mood of any horror game.

The Autopsy

"What's with you today, Brenner?" Dr. Marisa Longo was one of the department's medical examiners. "Cat got your tongue?" she said, holding up an evidence bag with an unidentifiable chunk in it. The crime scene team's lights picked out the scene in vivid detail behind her.

"I'm not up to it today, Marisa. Just tell me what you've got for me."

Taken aback by Brenner's manner - they shared a similar black sense of humor and got along well - Marisa decided to cut to the chase. "The victims - both male - were killed between twelve and eighteen hours ago. The time of death cannot be narrowed down further because the victims were eviscerated, and the basal temperature dropped more rapidly than with an intact corpse. The internal organs

were removed with a serrated blade approximately six inches long and taken from the scene. The eyes were removed as well. It's the same MO as the murders last December, Brenner."

"Yeah... yeah. Look, I've got to go talk to the Captain. Page me if anything else turns up, OK?"

"Sure."

"Thanks, Marisa."

There are two types of autopsy. A simple medical autopsy is used to determine the cause of death when there is no suspicion of foul play. A medical-legal autopsy is a much more in-depth procedure and is required for all homicide cases, or in any other case the coroner decides is suspicious. An autopsy attempts to determine the cause of death (that is, the physical process within the body that led to death), and the manner of death (i.e. suicide, homicide, accident, or natural).

The first step in the medical-legal autopsy is the external examination. Much of this will be done at the crime scene, in order to recover fibers, dirt particles and other evidence clinging to the corpse. The corpse's hands are often protected with plastic bags during transport since they can hold valuable trace evidence, such as blood under the fingernails. Once the body is back in the morgue and the autopsy is underway, a much more thorough examination is performed. The coroner examines the body in detail, both clothed and unclothed. X-rays are taken; they can tell much about the direction blows came from, and could reveal objects lodged in the body that were overlooked. If there are any gunshot wounds, they will be examined carefully to determine the distance the shot was fired from and the angle of entry. (See the section on gunshot wounds for more information) The entire body is photographed in detail before the internal examination is begun.

Next, the body is dissected. A Y-shaped incision is made, starting from the shoulders and groin, and meeting in the center of the chest. Each organ is removed, examined, and weighed. Commonly, a chemical analysis of the stomach contents will be performed, and the blood may be analyzed as well for unusual compounds. The head is examined last. An incision is made from



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ear to ear across the top of the head, and the skin is peeled down towards the face. A cranial saw is then used to remove the top of the skull, granting access to the brain which is removed and examined like the other organs.

If a character with a Pathology (or similar) skill is performing an autopsy, the difficulty of finding clues such as bloodstains on clothes, an odd lesion on an internal organ, or hidden needle marks will vary greatly. The character should receive skill roll modifiers for perception or intelligence stats if the game system allows. The GM should use common sense to arbitrate such a situation.

Gunshot Wounds

It was later that night, and Brenner had just managed to get to sleep when his pager went off. He was tempted to ignore it, but it must have been important as he told the rest of the crew not to bother him unless it was a real emergency. Fumbling on his nightstand he retrieved the sleek black unit and checked the display. The sickly yellow light showed a string of nines - the code Chavez used for an emergency meeting. Swearing, Brenner climbed out of bed and began to dress.

During the drive Brenner wondered what could be so important that Chavez would contact him twice inside of 24 hours. Usually they only met once every few weeks. He had a feeling it wasn't going to be good news.

His Ford Taurus parked in front of an all-night eatery in Century City, Brenner walked to the alley he and Chavez had picked ahead of time as the meeting place for such a situation. Not taking any chances, Brenner had his Beretta tucked in his jacket pocket as he slowly walked down the dark streets. Turning into the alley he almost stepped on a bum sprawled on the pavement, but before he moved on something caught his eye. It wasn't a bum at all, but Chavez. A smashed cellular phone lay by him.

With a sinking feeling, Brenner checked his pulse. None. Upon noticing the ragged hole in Chavez's temple Brenner also decided CPR wouldn't be a good idea. The lack of an exit wound and the small size of the entry wound immediately made Brenner think the murder weapon was a .22 pistol. The skin was loose and torn in a star-shaped pattern around the wound which indicated that someone had come

right up to Chavez and put the gun directly against his head. Unless the killer had Brenner's pager number and knew the code, the murder had to happen in the last 30 minutes since Chavez called. What was the motive? Chavez still had his wallet, and the killer hadn't taken the cell phone.

Brenner went back to his car to call it in, looking over his shoulder the whole time.

Firearms cause wounds with a number of unique characteristics. Depending on the range between the victim and the shooter, different sorts of residues from the discharge may be present on the victim's skin or clothes. Sometimes gunpowder residue can be chemically analyzed to determine the manufacturer, and sometimes even the lot number - and hence date of production - can be determined with the manufacturer's cooperation. If the projectile does not remain within the body, examination of the wound channel can determine the caliber and the approximate power of the weapon.

Determination of Range

As with the determination of the time of death, this is an inexact science with many variables. The different types of residues found and the ranges they occur at are summarized below. If no residue is detected, all one can say is that the attack was conducted from in excess of one to three feet, depending on the type of firearm used. (Rifles leave residues up to three feet, short-barreled pistols usually only up to a foot.)

Gunpowder smudges

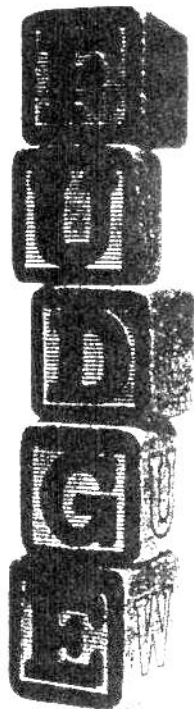
Smudges of gunpowder, which can be easily wiped away, are found with the wound when the gun was fired from closer than 12 inches. This black residue resembles soot. The heavier the deposits, the closer the range.

Gunpowder "speckling" or "tattooing"

Tiny bits of unburned or partially burned gunpowder can be carried to the victim, and will embed themselves in the skin. These small black specks cannot be wiped away as gunpowder smudges can, and are found when the weapon was fired from 10 inches (short-barreled pistol) to 36



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from 10 inches (short-barreled pistol) to 36 inches (rifle).

Speckles and smudges will not be present at the same time. If the weapon was fired at close range, the unburned powder will travel behind the bullet right into the wound, and only a smudge will appear. At longer ranges, the soot causing the smudge has dissipated, but the unburned powder cloud has expanded and will strike the skin, causing speckles.

Torn Skin

If the barrel of the weapon is placed in contact with the victim's skin, the gasses created by the discharge will be forced inside the body. In some cases, this can tear the skin in a distinctive star-shaped pattern. The formation of these tears is enhanced with the target area is backed with bone, such as when a victim is executed with a gun to the temple. Often a bruise or scrape is created by the muzzle of the weapon during recoil. If present, such a mark can be used to determine the orientation of the weapon or possible the dimensions of the muzzle.

If no torn skin or residue is seen, that does not necessarily mean that the attack came from a distance. Skin does not always tear when a contact shot is made, and the residues could be trapped beneath the skin. If this is the case, the autopsy will reveal it. Also, clothing can often totally protect the skin from gunshot residues, so it is important to examine it for traces before jumping to conclusions.

Again, there are many variables and only approximate ranges can be given. If at all possible, the investigators would wish to create test patterns with weapons believed to be similar to the murder weapon to more accurately determine the range of the attack. Under ideal circumstances, but without a weapon, the determination of the approximate range of an attack is a Difficult roll. If the weapon is recovered and test patterns can be fired, the difficulty becomes Easy.

Gunshot Residues on the Shooter

When one fires a weapon, residue is left behind on the hands. The police can test for these residues to determine if one has been handling a weapon recently. The

most reliable tests (that is, the ones that give the fewest false positives) look for tiny particles of residue on the hands. Competing procedures look for elemental traces such as lead, antimony, copper, and barium, but these methods are unreliable. Most gunshot residue traces can be removed by thorough washing, or will wear off naturally in about six hours of normal activity. Some residues, such as tiny amounts of nitroglycerin used in some gunpowder, soak into the shooter's hands and can be detected for, possibly, days unless removed by washing with solvents such as acetone.

Conclusion

Hopefully, you'll now be able to make your players squirm as you describe in dripping detail their latest discovery. The use of skills such as Forensics and Pathology can get the players more involved in the game; instead of waiting for the autopsy report, they could be doing the work themselves. If you want to learn more about crime scene investigation, just head to the nearest college library, where you will find more than you'll ever be able to use even in the most ambitious game.

Brenner rolled home through the midnight fog, wondering who might have killed Chavez and why. It might have been the same people whose work was left in the warehouse last night, in which case Chavez was lucky that he got a quick death. It was obvious that Chavez had known more than he was saying, but with him gone, the situation had gone from bad to horrible.

The next months would be interesting.

References

Cause of Death, a writer's guide to death, murder, and forensic medicine Keith D. Wilson, M.D.; *Writer's Digest Books*, Cincinnati, OH 1992

The Investigation of Death Donald Karl Merkeley, M.D. Med. Sc. D; Charles C. Thomas, Publisher Springfield, IL 1957

Forensic Science Geoffrey Davies, Editor; *American Chemical Society*, Washington, DC 1986



The Bousacc Problem

A Generic Adventure Setting for Modern-Day Horror

GAME
MASTER'S
WORKSHOP

By Jolly R. Blackburn © 1995

Additional material by John Zinser, John Wick and Rob Vaux
Illustrated by Matthew Wilson and Brad McDevitt © 1995

PLOT-
WERKS

"I knew an old man from Bousacc,
He walked with a cane and a limp.
But when the full moon came waning,
the old man would start sangin'
I swear he had wolf in his blood."

Old Shrimper's Song
From Bayou Country

Introduction:

The Bousacc Problem is our first Plotwerks™ scenario. Plotwerks is the most recent sword under the GM Workshop banner, a semi-regular series which will lay out a setting - populated with NPCs, a history, and a geography - which GMs can use as a background for their own stories.

The setting is a small town in the bayou country of Louisiana which harbors a terrible secret. Gamemasters can easily tailor the setting to wide variety of systems such as *Call of Cthulhu*, *Chill* or *GURPS Horror*. Likewise, GMs running *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* could also use the setting to run a group of Garou into the intrigues of the Country Club.

Remember, there is no set adventure presented here. There should be enough background material and characters presented here to suggest a wide variety of adventure seeds.

The Setting:

Bousacc
Population: 1200

Laramy's 'Travel Guide to the Sleepy South' describes Bousacc as a "a quiet village on the edge of the Nezipique Bayou that has apparently been forgotten by the rest of the world. There is a turn-of-the-century charm about the community, making it worth a few hours diversion from one's journey." It's the only reference to Bousacc in Laramy's guide and ironically, he excluded the town from the enclosed maps.

Bousacc was founded deep in Louisiana bayou country in 1764 by a group of French refugees fleeing justice. (A future issue of SHADIS will feature a fictional piece, *Le Main*, detailing the exploits of this group). The small village grew over the years, attracting all manner of brigands, pirates and undesirables drawn to its remoteness.

Since any sign of trouble from the authorities was likely to come by way of the Nezipique river up from the Gulf of Mexico, Bousacc's inhabitants had ample warning to withdraw into the swamps until the danger was over.

The town existed largely unmolested by the outside world until the Louisiana Purchase turned the entire area over to the hands of the United States.

With American ownership came the militia and soon after, some semblance of law and order. Pirates and highwaymen were sought out and vanquished. Bousacc fell under military occupation for a time in the 1830's and the town served as a local staging point for military forays into the swamps, hunting down the lawless.

As soldiers tend to do, they soon sent for their wives and children to join them. Some of them married the few local women available. The face of Bousacc was transformed forever from a small disorganized pirate haven into a bonafide community.

The first church opened its doors in the fall of 1832. The first mayor was elected in 1846, and with him, the first real attempts at town planning were instituted. The original settlement of Bousacc had hugged the banks of the Nezipique and was frequently ravaged by seasonal floods. A new area was cleared a short distance west of the river and marked off with streets and city blocks. The town has occupied this site up to the present day.

In 1864 a railroad linking Alexandria with Baton Rouge and New Orleans was put through the town (after some celebrated lobbying by the town council), causing a short-lived population and prosperity boom.

Meanwhile, the Civil War stretched on with little impact on the town. A dozen or so local boys packed up and journeyed to Baton Rouge to enlist in the Confederacy, but most of the townsfolk preferred to let the outside world fight its own wars. In fact, several deserters ended up in Bousacc to lie low until the war and all its conflicts were resolved. After the Civil War, an old soldiers' home was placed on the outskirts of town. It quickly filled with the maimed and tormented, bringing the first real sign of the horrors of war to the sleepy town.

By the time the great world wars rolled around, shrimping had become the area's primary resource. Nearly everyone in Bousacc made their money either directly by shrimping or off those who did.

Big-city corporations in the 1940's and '50s established docks and shrimperies all along the river. Daily catches were packed on ice and transported by trains to far-away places. This was the peak of Bousacc's prosperity. When a state highway was diverted to run through the town, it brought more contact with outsiders.

By this time, many townsfolk were beginning to fear their community was losing something vital in the transition. Although the town always had its share of petty crimes, the first murder in recent memory soon occurred, and others quickly followed. Every few months or so, a body was found somewhere in the swamp, along the railroad tracks or on a deserted road. Most of the victims were nameless outsiders; drifters, wayward travellers, etc.

To the citizens of Bousacc, the problem was systematic of the outside world's problems and not their own. A general feeling of mistrust of newcomers began to pervade the town. While some townsfolk were content with just being a little less friendly and a bit evasive of outsiders, others became openly hostile in their manner of speech and service.

The seemingly endless supply of shrimp was exhausted by the mid '60s. The shrimperies, no longer profitable, quickly closed, leaving the shrimpers and netters unemployed. A few stubborn shrimpers who were lucky enough to own their own boats still remain in Bousacc. A dozen or so shrimp boats operate from the docks on the Nezipique. Most are in a state of bad repair and showing their age.

Since that time, Bousacc has simply survived from day to day. The population has dwindled to just over a thousand and most travellers on Highway 41 are content to pass on through. The younger generation seems split between those eager to leave for the big cities and those who find comfort in the traditions and closeness of small town life.

Ask the average citizen what the biggest problem facing Bousacc is and they are likely to agree on at least two things.

Firstly, Bousacc has no movie theatres. Friday nights are usually witness to an exodus of sorts as families pile into their cars and head to the nearest drive-in theatre twelve miles up the road.

The other problem is more serious. Over the past few years, a swelling number of transients and the homeless have shown up in Bousacc. Most are simply drifters en route between the big cities, pausing just long enough to find a meal or a place to rest up from hard travel.

The Cypress Estates Country Club

Featured in a 1987 article in *Golf Magazine* on "Best Kept Secrets of the South," Cypress Estates was originally planned as an exclusive golfing community. Unfortunately for the developers, the swamps that the course winds through are much too expensive to build on, and the golf course itself is all that was ever built. The course was purchased by a corporation headed by Honoré Demure, and is run by the members of the Le Main. It is financed by investor/members who visit the club once a year for an annual week-long tournament to raise funds for the many charities which the club supports. The truth, however is that these members don't only come for the golf...

The Le Main uses the golf course for their annual Hunt, wherein they let their "animal natures" run free. Typically, Le Main members (and the guest werewolves they may have invited) set loose a group of transients onto the course, promising them money and freedom if they can make it back to the clubhouse. None have made it yet, but a few have survived the attacks and two have gone on to wreak no small amount of havoc (see "Rogue Werewolves" above.) Occasionally, a member of the club will make arrangements for corrupt businessmen from the big city to take a trip to the country club. These men are misled into believing they are going a vacation and brought to Cypress Lakes, where they are wined, dined, treated to a few great rounds of golf, and hunted down and killed. The Le Main takes care to select only those they feel are too corrupt to live, but many of them are powerful and well-known. The werewolves have learned to cover their tracks very well, however, and

thus far, none of these killings have been traced back to the club.

If you're not one of the werewolves annual victims, Cypress Lakes can be an excellent golf course. The food is good and there is entertainment for members and guests every weekend. Memberships are \$25,000 + \$2000 per month; Needless to say, the club is very exclusive.

History of the Le Main

It all began with Napoleon's scheme to invade Russia. He had chased the Russians too far into the Motherland, leaving months of marching behind him with the bitter Russian winter creeping up.

When he called for the retreat, he needed bridges to cross the terrain, and had burned the bridges after him. Desperate to get home, he left some of his troops to act as a rear guard and provide valuable time to enact his own escape. The troops he left behind were captured and forced to work in labor camps, re-building the ruins Napoleon left behind him.

Five of the men who were left behind were Jules Faidherbe, Albert and Honre' Daumier, Francois Fourier and Casimir Guizot-Proudhon. These five men effected a daring escape out into the Russian wilderness. They had no equipment or supplies, only their fierce desire to return to their homeland.

Days after their escape, they were halted - not by Russian troops, but by wolves as tall at the shoulders as a man and glaring red eyes. It was pure chance that they were able to escape certain doom, but when they stumbled across a small wooden hovel, the old crone before the fire told them what had happened: they had been attacked by werewolves. They had proved themselves to be strong men, and had earned the wolves' respect - and their gift of immortality. They were given supplies and food, shown the quickest route to their destination, and allowed to leave.

When they returned to France, they found themselves to be labeled as "deserters," with their names and reputations in disgrace. They quickly departed for the New World, fleeing from "justice."

Once in the colonies, they began to experiment with their new nature. It was

Casimir who kept extensive notes and observations regarding their condition. Casimir discovered that as long as they allowed themselves to change, they would remain immortal, but they would have to change at least once a year on the anniversary of their struggle.

They founded the small township of Bousacc, decided to "settle down," and with Casimir's help, they were able to restrain their transformations to once a year.

And once a year, the Le Main (tr. "the hand") lure transients, criminals, crooked businessmen and politicians to the Cypress Lake Country Club, feed them 'till they're fat, get them drunk, lead them out to the golf course and transform before their very eyes. They always make a deal with their victims, a deal that scores *deja vu* from so many years ago in the staffs of Russia: *If you can get back to the Country Club, we'll let you go free.* So far, only twelve have survived the ritual, and they have become part of "the hand," joining in on the ritual the next year. However, there were two survivors that have not joined the Le Main.

The Rogue Garou

Just recently, Francois brought two derelicts to the club to "play with". The others were not aware of his actions... until the two derelicts escaped into the town. Now there have been multiple mutilations in Bousacc, and the Le Main and Reeves have had trouble covering them up.

There are two rogue *garou* on the loose; one is at #8 (Daumier Park), the other is hiding out at #7 (Bousacc Paradise Inn).

The Loup Garou

Although the rules for werewolves change from game to game, the werewolves presented in this setting are *loup garou*. They are shapeshifters in a very traditional sense, so they are *not affected adversely by silver*. They have complete control over their transformations (once they've learned how to control it, that is) and are not forced to transform by the phases of the moon. The moon does affect their behavior in wolf-form, however. Other than the facts presented above, *loup garou* are like any other kind of werewolf.

Map Directory

1. Shrimpy's Bait & Tackle

Shrimpy's sells fishing tackle and live bait as well as a variety of hardware items. Eddie 'Shrimpy' Cardone inherited the shop from his father and can usually be found behind the counter.

2. Bousacc Gas 'n' Go

The Gas 'n' Go is the town's only gas station. It also has the only soda and snack vending machines in Bousacc, making it a popular after hours hang-out for local teenagers who sit on the hood of their cars and watch traffic pass by on Highway 47.

3. Landsbury Five & Dime

This general store is the oldest business in Bousacc, established in 1847. Ed and Emma Landsbury run the store and serve as the town's postmaster and notary public.

The store is still heated with a wood burning stove and there is usually a small group of elderly men gathered around it, smoking pipes and cigars and spinning yarns.

The store is well stocked with a wide variety of goods. Special order items are jotted down on a legal pad and picked up in Baton Rouge during Ed's weekly trip to the big city.

4. Sheriff's Office/Jail

This two story building serves as the town's jail and Sheriff's station. There are three cells which are normally unoccupied except for the occasional hunter or fisherman who has had one drink too many.

The upper level is the Sheriff's living quarters. It can be reached by a staircase from the lower level or by a separate entrance on the outside of the building.

5. Parson Apartments

This run-down apartment building usually has a few vacant rooms that can be rented by the week or month.

6. Mary George Cordone's Residence

Mary lives on the top floor of this tenement building. She turns her tricks from her apartment. Occasionally a client can be seen slipping up or down the fire escape in back.

7. Bousacc Paradise Inn

This motel was closed for years and just recently reopened. Of the thirty original rooms, only ten were remodeled and currently in use. The remaining rooms remain boarded up. (GM note: One of the boarded up rooms is being used by the rogue werewolves when in hiding.)

8. Daumier Park

This municipal ballpark is in desperate need of maintenance. There is a dilapidated playground, a few picnic tables and a scrubby, weed-choked baseball diamond. A large cypress tree cloaked in Spanish moss has become a traditional site for wedding pictures to be taken.

A vagrant named Tyress has been living in the ballfield's dugout. He can often be found scrounging aluminum cans from the various trash receptacles in the park. (GMs Note: Tyress is one of the Rogue *garous*.)

9. Albert Daumier's Residence

This plantation-style house is a registered historical landmark. The Daumier family owned it since it was built in 1812. Albert Daumier frequently entertains guests in the large gardens outback.

Entrance to the grounds is guarded by a remote-controlled gate, and a pair of trained Doberman pinschers have free run of the yards.

10. Francois Fourier's Residence

This large mansion is largely obscured from view of the street by a dozen or so ancient weeping willows. A cobbled driveway leads through a large brick archway. Usually, Francois' 1934 Mercedes is parked here. A weathered placard on the archway reads, "Shrek's Shed," referring to the original pub that was located on the site over a hundred years ago.

11. Burgman's Funeral Parlor

Gris Burgman has been the sole mortician at this parlor for nearly fifty years. The Parolor handles all of Bousacc's funerals.

Years ago, Gris secretly began keeping a notebook detailing certain bodies he had tended to. His notes concern corpses with bitemarks and peculiar scratches on them, which tend to contradict the accompanying death certificates.

12. Train Depot

The depot has lain quiet since 1963, when the last train stopped in Bousacc. The building has been leased over the years to various companies as warehouse space. In 1976, the depot was the site of a gruesome murder. Three dismembered bodies were discovered, leading to a famous manhunt that ended in the arrest and subsequent execution of two vagrants. (GMs note: The vagrants were framed by Le Main members who were covering up a rogue werewolf's rampage.)

13. Guizot-Proudhon Mausoleum

This large structure presents an eerie image. Circled by moss-enshrouded trees, the ancient family mausoleum was constructed in 1840. It is a favorite target of local vandals.

14. Guizot Hill Cemetery

Graves in this cemetery date back as far as 1770. Bo Farley is paid by the town to cut away weeds and tend the grounds. Bo frequently discovers strange ritualistic items on some of the grave sites. The items have spooked him and he's been threatening to quit his job.

15. Burgess Gravel Pits

The state created these pits when gravel was extracted to help build Highway 41. Jeff Burgess owned the property and tried to establish a commercial gravel company on the site. He's been out of business for years, but the flooded pits have become popular swimming holes, as well as a makeshift lovers' lane. This site is marked 'no trespassing' but no one seems to pay attention.

Last year two bodies were found in the pits. (Victims of rogue lycanthropes).

16. Illegal Dump Site

This gravel pit has become an illegal dump site. The whole area is littered with discarded sofas, refrigerators and other items tossed from the back of pickup trucks. (GMs Note: Brian Jaffrey's Volkswagen Bug is lying just below the water's surface at this site. His body is wrapped in the remains of a lawn table umbrella. The umbrella is from the Country Club and could provide a link between the murder and the club.)

17. Taffrey Shrimpery

The old shrimpery has been closed for years. The warehouses and processing sheds have been boarded up and a forest of weeds have obscured the grounds.

The docks are still used by independent shrimpers. The Taffrey brothers have stopped using the docks, but haven't told the other shrimpers why.

18. Casimir Guizot-Proudhon's Residence

Casimir's beautiful plantation-style home sits right on the banks of the Nezpique river. Casimir has walled in his entire estate, giving the place an unwelcome feeling. The most unique feature of the grounds is a small graveyard in the northeast corner. Ten beautifully built mausoleums with spires that stand above the height of the wall. Most hold the remains of the Casimirs - relatives who died of the plague a few years after building the home.

19. Albert Baumier's Residence

The house here is currently under construction: Albert is building his dream home. This is the only piece of property large enough to build an estate right on the golf course, and Albert has waited many years for the old man who owned it to pass on. Even though the house is only half finished, Albert has already moved in. He proudly drives his golf cart off his property onto the 13th tee each day.

20. Bo Farley's Shack

Bo Farley is an assistant greenskeeper at Cypress Lakes. He lives in a run-down shack that sits off of the 8th Green. Bo is unaware of the goings-on at the country

club, but has begun to suspect something. With his findings at the graveyard and the odd occurrences at the Country Club that crop up from time to time, he will be more than paranoid about strangers poking around and asking questions.

21. Cypress Estates Country Club

See page 32 for exposition of the Club.

22. Boathouse

The few yachts owned by the members of Cypress Lakes are stored here. Jules Faidherbe owns the largest and most impressive boat, and he often takes it out and for up to a month. The boathouse is always locked up and under the watchful eye of the club's security.

23. Site Where Woman's Body was Found

Not all of the Cypress Club's victims were killed by the werewolves. A few escaped into the nearby swamp, but not before they were infected with the disease of lycanthropy. Most of them went on to join the Le Main, but two of them set their own agenda and have gone rogue. They haven't learned to control their bestial sides as the Le Main have, however, and occasionally, they leave messes.

One such mess was discovered at this site: the body of a young teenage runaway torn apart by her fellow transients. This was the first such kill the rogues made. No one arrived to claim the body, and the Le Main had the incident hushed up, but the site remains, and the rogue werewolves occasionally come back to the spot while on the hunt. The players may encounter them here, sniffing the earth and howling eerily at the moon.

24. Dead Body site

The body of one of the Le Main's victims is here, washed ashore after being dumped in the swamp. The man was a transient who happened into the area a few months ago. The body has been lying in the swamp for quite awhile, so any distinguishing features have long since rotted away, but his clothes match those worn by the country club's groundskeeping crew.

No one has found the body yet. If the sheriff gets wind of it before anybody else, he will have it hushed up quickly, but if

the players somehow discover it first, they will have a strong connection between the murders and the club.

25. Rogue's Landing

Rogue's Landing is the sight of the famous Gaffrin Mutiny, where the pirate Roger Gaffrin was hung by his crew. The ship was wrecked trying to leave the port by a rival Spanish ship, and the remains can still be found here, almost swallowed by the swamp. Stories of Gaffrin's ghost are always told to young children by older children, but the only truth to the stories comes from the one child who stumbled across a sleeping rogue *garou* hiding out in the derelict and lived to tell about it.

Hook, Line & Sinkers

"The Accidental Gumshoe"

Hook: The PC's are werewolves, invited to the annual "Gathering" at the Country Club.

Line: Once there, they are offered an opportunity to enjoy the Hunt, but as the Hunt progresses, they hear gunshots firing in the swamp.

Sinker: Gordon Bozell (see above) was wandering around the swamp looking for more evidence to hook the club in with the Jaffrey disappearance. One of the guest werewolves stumbled onto Bozell, and in his bloodlust, thought he was one of the Hunted. The werewolf has been seriously injured by the gunshots, and Bozell has just gotten a full-eye view of a *loup garou*...

"Welcome To The Party, Pal!"

Hook: The PC's are wealthy businessmen who also happen to be vampires. They've been invited to play golf at a very prestigious country club.

Line: Of course, when they get there, the *loup garou* take them out to the ninth hole, transform in front of them and tell them if they can make it back to the Clubhouse, they'll be fine.

Sinker: During the Hunt, the PC's are approached by Francois. He's willing to assist the PC's back to the Clubhouse if they help *him* destroy the other werewolves. After all, he does not agree with any of their ethics. They are all animals, and he wants to help them in any way he can...



Tom "Lanky" Reeves

"Now don't give me reason to draw ma gun! I tend to win all arguments in this town - if you know what I mean."

Occupation: Town Sheriff

Skills: Small Arms, Detecting, Streetwise

Motivation: Keeping the peace

Weaknesses: Torn between duty and loyalty

Lanky has served as the Sheriff of Bousacc for twenty-seven years, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. He is a large bear of a man with a noticeable spare tire. He inevitably has a cigar stub wedged in one corner of his mouth and a three day beard on his cheeks. He spends most of his time in his squad car, cruising what little there is of Bousacc and the surrounding country roads.

Occasionally, Lanky's squad car can be spotted parked behind Mary George's apartment at odd hours of the evening. Despite his habit of tipping the bottle and visting the local whore, Lanky is well respected by the townsfolk of Bousacc.

He is well aware of what's going on out at Cypress Estates and is torn between upholding the law and loyalty to members of the clan who he considers friends.

Adding to his dilemma is the fact that his father and grandfather tolerated the butchery at the country club. When a few bodies were recently found (horribly mauled), he suspected the clan, but swallowed his instincts and covered them up. He has traveled to Baton Rouge twice in recent weeks to research *Loup Garous* and how to deal with them. □



Ed & Emma Landsbury

"Cordone girl is pregnant again - least that's what we heard. Heading nowhere fast just like all of them Cordones. Bad blood ya know?"

Occupation: General Store proprietors

Skills: Hard Sell, Clerical, Gossip

Motivation: Keeping up on gossip

Weaknesses: Dependent on each other

Ed and Emma run the Landsbury Five and Dime. The elderly couple have owned the store for the past fifty years.

They are both infamous gossip-mongers. In the old days, they operated the town's only switchboard and used to listen in on everyone's phone conversations. Now, they gather their information from the mail they sort (the store serves as the local post office).

Although they pride themselves with their knowledge of other people's business, they have no clue as to the true nature of the Cypress Lakes Country Club.

They've heard the strange rumors surrounding the club but dismiss them as the "insane goings-on that the rich and spoiled seem ta love."

Ed has one peculiar habit. He often talks to his son, Jimmy (who died in the Vietnam War) as if he were alive and doing chores around the store.

Emma humors him and is quick to chastise anyone attempting to correct Ed or bring the conversation around to the subject of their son. □



Gordon "Gus" Bozell

"Anything I can't stand is a liar. Got no use for 'em. Lord, the world's full of 'em."

Occupation: Private Dectective

Skills: Detecting, Tracking, Investigative

Motivation: Completing the job at hand

Weaknesses: Addicted to pain killers

Gus is from Chicago. He was hired by the parents of Brian Jaffrey, who want him to find their runaway son. Brian mailed a postcard from Bousacc over a year ago - it was the last anyone heard from him.

Gus is staying at the Paradise Inn on Baton Rouge Road. He's told everyone in town that he's a bio-chemist from a university studying the effects of pollution on local shrimp populations. Unfortunately, Ed and Emma intercepted a telegram shortly after he arrived and learned of his real reason for being in Bousacc. They spread the word within hours and now everyone knows the cat's out of the bag but poor Gus.

Gus viewed the two bodies recently found in the swamps and has ruled out that Brian was one of them. He has evidence that Brian was hired at the Country Club as a caddy, but the trail ends there.

He's now convinced that Brian ran into trouble at the Club, especially since the club members are being so tight-lipped.

Recently while driving back from the docks, a beat-up pickup truck barreled down on him and ran him off the road. The incident shook his nerves for awhile but also strengthened his determination to solve the case. □



Eddie "Shrimpy" Fulton

"Bass is smart animals. I reckon they're the smartest critters in the swamp! That's why they're so hard to catch."

Occupation: Proprietor - Shrimpy's Bait & Tackle

Skills: Menial Labor, Stealth, Move Silently

Motivation: To marry Mary George Cardone

Weaknesses: Mildly retarded

Shrimpy runs the Bait & Tackle shop his father left him. As a child, Shrimpy fell from a boat in the bayou and drowned. He was revived, but suffered permanent brain damage which left him mildly retarded and with a severe speech impediment.

When his parents died in a terrible fire five years ago, family friends tried to have Shrimpy committed to the State Mental Hospital. Sheriff Lanky and Mary George Cardone came to his defense, however, and managed to have the case dismissed.

Shrimpy surprised the town by keeping his father's shop going and even starting a chartered fishing business. (Mary George comes in once a month to help balance his books and restock his inventory.)

Shrimpy has a tremendous crush on Mary George. He recently proposed to her but she gently turned him down. Undaunted, he has launched a campaign to win her heart. He delivers a bouquet of fresh cut flowers to her apartment each morning.

Shrimpy is usually found at his shop, unless he's on a chartered fishing trip. The Cypress Club employs him frequently to run errands and bring supplies out to the estate. □



Charles & Frank Taffrey

"Shrimp are like those there horoscopes they's got in the Sunday paper. If the shrimp aren't running, there's trouble afoot. You can bank on that."

Occupation: Shrimpers

Skills: Pilot Watercraft, Fishing

Motivation: Making the "BIG" catch

Weaknesses: Socially awkward

Charles and Frank are brothers who own three shrimping boats. They've been struggling to survive for the past five years, but continue on with dogged determination. They usually manage to catch just enough to pay for fuel, rent and a few groceries.

Like all fishermen, they feel they're just on a run of bad luck and that someday they'll make the 'Big Catch'.

Lately the brothers have made a little extra cash by taking Gus into the backwaters of the bayou where they've dragged for bodies. Finally, one of the brothers let it slip that the gators would have long since disposed of any remains dumped in the bayou. Gus promptly asked to be taken back to town and hasn't hired them since.

The brothers have been harboring a secret for several months. One night, while returning to the docks, they witnessed a group of horrible creatures - werewolves - feeding on what appeared to be a human body along the shoreline. □



Mary George Cardone

"There aren't any real men in this town. If'n there was they wouldn't let their wives and youngin's grow up in such a stinkhole. A real man - that's what I'm waiting for. I reckon one will show up soon enough."

Occupation: Prostitute

Skills: Soap Opera Lore, Driving

Motivation: Marrying a rich out-of-towner

Weaknesses: Gullible

Mary George is Bousacc's only 'lady of the night.' At the tender age of 16, she married a local shrimper. Her husband died a few years after their marriage leaving her with a mountain of bills and a four month old child. She struggled for several years trying to provide for herself and the baby, but the load finally overwhelmed her.

She moved to Baton Rouge where she became a victim of the streets. After being arrested several times for drugs and prostitution she lost custody of her child to the state. Broken hearted, she returned to Bousacc. When she didn't find any support or sympathy from the townsfolk, she withdrew to a run-down apartment and fell back into prostitution. One of her clients was Brian Jaffey, who confided to her about 'strange and evil' doings at the Country Club. A few days later, he disappeared, a fact which worries her to no end.

Mary George despises her neighbors, with the exception of Shrimpy, who she sees as an innocent. She spends her idle time watching soap operas and dreaming of a better life. She holds onto the belief that the man of her dreams will wander into town and take her away from her misery. □



Jules Faidherbe

"If you can find a man who will give a full day's work for an honest day's pay - hold on to him. He's worth five shirkers and God knows I have enough shirkers on the payroll."

Occupation: Owner of Shrimping Fleet

Skills: Golf, Investment, History

Motivation: Expanding the Faidherbe Estate

Weaknesses: Remorseful of his lycanthropy

Jules is a original member of the Le Main. For a while he served as leader of the clan, but fell into disfavor after the Great Killing got out of hand during his stint of power. He was deposed in favor of Albert Daumier, a move which came as a secret relief to him.

Jules chose not to infect the dozen or so wives he's had over the years with the disease. Although he is a businessman he is also an active philanthropist and travels very often. His shrimping company is the only local business still purchasing the catches of the independent shrimpers, which keeps the town from dwindling any further.

Jules is afraid that Louis Blanc is beginning to exert too much power in the Lemain, and hopes that Honoré and Albert do not get too taken with the charisma of the young wolf. He has not spoken to Francois since he broke the first rule of the Le Main - not to bring anyone new into the pack. Louis's acceptance into the pack is still a problem for him, and he's not sure what he's going to do about it. Should Louis stumble, however, he will be there to make his move. □



Louis Blanc

"The railroads and highways - that's what ruined this town. They remind a person that there's an outside world. It's the proverbial carrot on a stick tempting our younger generation to pull up stakes and move to the big city. The youngsters are the life's blood of this town."

Occupation: Independently Wealthy

Skills: Golf, Speech, Streetwise

Motivation: Clean up Bousacc

Weaknesses: Women, Pride

Louis is the youngest lycanthrope in the group and the only member not from the original Lemain Clan. He was born and raised in Bousacc, but went away to college at Stanford. Soon after his return, his parents died and left him a fortune. Francois, who had been like a father to Louis much of his life, confided the secret of the clan to him, knowing that if Louis had a problem with it he would have to be killed. Much to his surprise Louis embraced the possibility of becoming immortal. Francois secretly infected Louis, and after the rogue wolves became a problem, he used the young man as the solution.

Louis has dreams of rebuilding the city from within. He has currently invests heavily into town renovation and is a prime candidate for nomination as the next mayor. Lately, Louis has taken to travelling with Honoré and has spent less and less time at home with Francois. He finds Honoré a fascinating mentor, but is also very wary of the man's own private ambitions. □



Honoré Daumier

"The Japanese - they've got the whole notion of business figured out. War! That's what business is. No room for mercy or compassion. It's a fight for survival between you and the other guy. You show me a successful business man, and I'll show you a warrior of merit."

Occupation: Commodities dealer

Skills: Business, Firearms, Charisma

Motivation: Building a business empire

Weaknesses: Lack of empathy.

Honoré has ambition. That's why empathizes so well with Louis. It's also the only reason he empathizes with Louis. Honoré has truly become a business machine. He has spent too many years being a salesman, feigning emotions to make the sale. Too many years of this have made all emotion just a farce. He recognized that fire of ambition in Louis, and the two have struck a firm friendship. For the first time in many decades, Honoré feels a kinship with a member of the group.

But a man who has been ruthless for so long is difficult to change, even if the change is voluntary. Already he is manipulating the local politics to get Louis the position he wants, even at Louis' own objections.

If Louis knew Daumier was positioning his campaign behind his back, there would be insurmountable damage between the two. Louis is a "proud young lad" (as Honoré often calls him), and he wants nothing to do with an achievement he cannot gain on his own merit. □



Albert Daumier

"I think that the game of golf is perfection. All of my friends and associates were made during the game. If a man doesn't like golf - I immediately distrust him."

Occupation: Cypress Lake Chairman

Skills: Business, Charm, Etiquette, Golf

Motivation: Hedonist

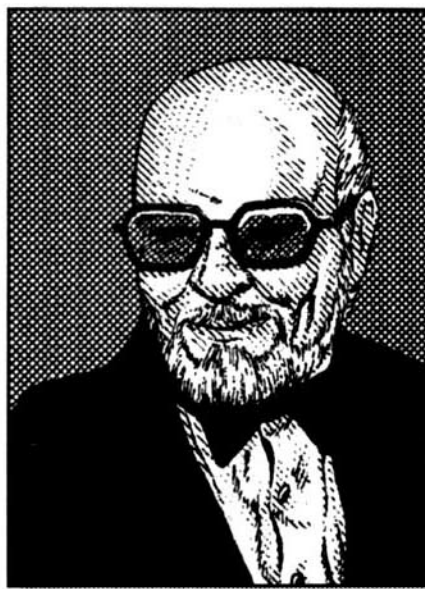
Weaknesses: Sacrifice anything for the Club

The first thing anyone notices about Albert Daumier is his eyes. They flash with charm and depth, making his smile and booming laughter more contagious than they should be.

Albert loves life. He loves being immortal and he loves being a wolf. He has grasped on to life with his hands and teeth and will not be torn away by anyone. He is a hedonist in the true sense of the word: he is addicted to pleasure. He drinks, but never to excess. He eats, but always leaves food on his table. He loves the company of beautiful women, but like food and drink, he only indulges in "the best."

As the Chairman of Cypress Lake, he is very concerned about security. Whenever something goes wrong, Albert is the first one there asking questions. He has worked very hard to get what he has, and he's not about to let carelessness take it away.

He's also very concerned with the trouble brewing between Francois and Louis. He knows there's a bit of bad blood between the two since their fall-out, and he's fully prepared to sacrifice one of them for the security of Cypress Lake. □



Casimir Guizot-Proudhon

"The thing I like most about my job is the solitude. No one wants to share in your work when you are an accountant. They say that silence is golden and I tend to agree."

Occupation: Treasurer/Accountant

Skills: Science, Alchemy, Accounting

Motivation: Discovering a cure for condition

Weaknesses: Dark secret, hyper-senses

Casimir began his existence as a *loup garou* with curiosity. He had always been fascinated by the darker side of science, and when offered a first hand opportunity to discover the truths of lycanthropy, he leapt at the chance. He has been regretting his mistake ever since.

For some, lycanthropy provides a freedom. It has enslaved Casimir. For the last fifty years, Casimir's senses have become ten times more sensitive, making even a spring rain storm a torturous experience. He wears dark glasses to keep his eyes free from harsh light (even candles are beginning to cause his eyes to itch). He has spent the last fifty years working for a cure to his condition, but all attempts have failed. If someone were to discover the truth about him, they may begin to suspect the tragic death of his lovely wife about forty years ago. Casimir's senses overwhelmed him on his wedding night, and the next morning he awoke to discover his blushing bride to be no more than a ruined corpse. He covered the incident up quite cleanly, and not even his compatriots suspect the truth. □



Francois Fourier

"We all have a dark side. Even the child-innocent has the hint of a cold shadow in his heart. 'Course some people have darker souls than others."

Occupation: Manager Pro-Shop

Skills: Golf, Manipulation, Intrigue

Motivation: Become the leader of Le Main

Weaknesses: Lost all humanity

When Francois brought Louis Blanc into the Le Main, his ambition to control the group through Louis' charisma seemed perfect. But Honoré Daumier stuck his nose where it didn't belong, and now things have turned out all wrong.

Francois is very different from his compatriots. He relishes the Hunt, and secretly hunts in New Orleans whenever he gets a chance. He's even been daring enough to seduce young girls when he's on tour and chase them across the wilderness. He's become almost bestial in his hunger, but he has retained every last bit of his human cunning. *That* makes him a danger to the Le Main.

He has spent the last few years planning the downfall of the Daumier, but the man has sidestepped all tragedy.

The rest of the group has begun to detect something unclean about Francois, and although he may suspect it, they are much more on to his "dark desires" than he thinks. But history is filled with tragic stories of villains who have been underestimated, and the story of Cypress Lake may have such an ending if its members are not careful. □



Bousace and Surrounding Area

Map by Jolly R. Blackburn © 1995

Modern Madness

Revised Insanity Rules for Call of Cthulhu™

By Maria Alexander Douglas © 1995 ❖ Art by Stacey Drum © 1995



George Witherspoon walked down the large hallway to his study in the West Wing and flung open the great doors. As the smell of oiled leather and treated wood slipped around him like an old smoking jacket, he sat down at the broad oak desk and stared sleepily at the papers covering the surface.

It was then he heard it...tick, tock, tick, tock. There was certainly nothing unusual about the sound of the old grandfather clock, but the ticking somehow mesmerized him: he was drawn into the rhythm, a sweet dance in the ballroom of Time, stepping this way and that, back and forth. He was entranced by the swaying of the pendulum and the shadows that played in the corners of the clock's empty belly...

Days passed. The clock's ticking burrowed into his mind like maggots. And with each tick, he lost something precious: some small splinter of his sanity broke away with each step of that dance. Each morning he awoke a little earlier and went to the study, compulsively sifting through the papers on his desk and the pens in his drawers, unsure of what he hoped to find. Further and further into the night he sat at his desk, watching the swaying pendulum. It was in this way he tried to stave off the night's dreams, which clung ever more vividly to his tenuous thoughts, pulling him deeper into the mire of his growing madness.

He could never discern the nether language of those half-shaped dream spirits, nor fathom their motives for trespassing on his rational thoughts, but George Witherspoon knew for certain that if he continued to shuffle through the papers, he could keep his mind from being swallowed into the belly of the clock...

Poor George. He seems to be losing his marbles, doesn't he? He spends hours in his study anxiously pouring through papers for God-knows-what, rattling his pens, and staring at the clock, listening to its tick, tock, tick, tock. Some would say that

George Witherspoon is having one helluva nervous breakdown — or worse. But is he really crazy? Are these symptoms of authentic mental illness, or are they merely actions concocted by a writer, perhaps with little or no knowledge of abnormal psychology and the human mind?

More often than not, writers fabricate the details of insanity in their fiction — especially in *Call of Cthulhu*™ (CoC) — rather than use genuine symptoms and illness. Writers do this for several reasons. For one, many writers have no desire or time to delve into the seemingly dry subject of abnormal psychology. Others avoid exploring “textbook” insanity because they believe they can create something more interesting and colorful. Even more writers avoid exploring real mental illness because they are frightened of it — deeply so. Mental illness, for some, naturally triggers fear of the unknown.

For many role-players, CoC is their first exposure to abnormal psychology, and an exciting one at that. Forgetting the terrifying or “stale” aspects of the subject, players scream with ghastly delight when they miss a Sanity roll, anxiously checking their character sheets to determine if the insanity is only temporary or — heaven forbid! — indefinite. Some characters proudly bear those mental aberrations as a psychic scar from battling Mythos minions, often adding a delectable dimension to their character’s personality and history.

But how much of the CoC experience is based on modern psychology? Unfortunately, very little. Many role-playing games go to great lengths to simulate realistic combat and healing systems in their mechanics, especially for games set in modern or post-modern eras. Since CoC emphasizes sanity loss, how about a realistic — and playable — sanity loss system for CoC? This article describes how to modify the existing CoC system to incorporate “true” modern psychology.

Temporary Insanity

The fifth edition CoC rules are fairly relaxed concerning temporary insanity, suggesting only a few consequences of short-term madness. Table 1 lists some possible “temporary insanities,” including a few of those from the CoC rules. The options in Table 1 are not really insanities, per se. They are simply realistic reactions to shocking situations. Anyone who has

experienced a traumatic situation or observed victims of violence has probably seen a number of these reactions. Keepers might want to choose certain reactions over others, since, for example, a character is less likely to enter “fight or flight” from reading a Mythos tome than she is from being attacked by a Mi-Go.

Note that Table 1 does not include phobias, as does the CoC rules. By definition, phobias are long-term psychological disorders that plague the afflicted person until he or she is treated by a psychiatric professional. Therefore, they are better defined as indefinite insanities rather than temporary.

1-2:	Stupefaction
3-5:	Fight or Flight
6:	Fainting
7-8:	Disbelief
9-10:	Hysteria

Stupefaction — The character stands quietly observing the event, doing nothing to protect herself from any danger that the event may pose. Although the character is unable to react physically, mentally, or emotionally, she can be led around by other characters until the period of temporary insanity ends.

Fight or Flight — The player must make a Know roll. If the roll is successful, his character realizes that the situation is undefeatable and that he can do nothing more than run away, screaming into the night. If the roll is unsuccessful, he flings himself into the event to physically encounter the shocking force.

Fainting — The character faints and remains unconscious until aroused. If the character is unconscious for more than a day, then the Keeper may opt that he has entered coma and will not regain consciousness until his conscious mind absorbs the shock (i.e., for the duration of the temporary insanity).

Disbelief — The character literally does not believe what he sees. The event is so overwhelming that his mind cannot cope with it. If he is attacked, he will not defend himself, but instead “rationalize” what’s happening (“What are you all upset about? It’s just a bear!”). However, when the disbelief wears off, the character will either faint, become hysterical, or enter “fight or flight” for 1D6 combat rounds. Disbelief is, for gaming purposes, the same as being in mental and emotional “shock,” but not physical shock, because the character may or may not be injured.

Hysteria — Overcome with panic and terror, the character screams and cries for hours, unable to accept any form of comfort. If hysteria lasts more than 1D6+6 hours, the character will lose her voice for the next 24 hours due to hoarseness; if hysteria lasts more than 12 hours, she will not be able to sleep without some form of tranquilizer.

Failing the Idea Roll — A New Definition

Many people “failed their Idea roll” during the 6.6 magnitude earthquake in Los Angeles, California, on January 17, 1994. They did not suffer a “trick of the mind,” as explained in the CoC rules, nor did they forget what happened. Somewhat disoriented and confused, they simply did not realize the full implications of what had taken place. After the “shock” of the quake, they reacted normally, and even heroically, to save themselves and others from danger. This does not mean they were not badly shaken, nauseated, or trembling: Their minds merely absorbed the shock.

In gaming terms, this means a character who blows his Idea roll is oblivious to the true extent of what happened to him or her. The character is frightened, but now also vulnerable to poor judgment because he does not fully realize what has happened. Therefore, if his character is in a dangerous situation (as opposed to sanity lost while reading a Mythos tome), the player may need to make a Luck roll to escape further danger. If the character loses the sanity while reading a Mythos tome and then fails his Idea roll, he is terrified but unable to intellectually connect what he has read to the tome’s cosmic implications.

Indefinite Insanity:

Clearing Up the Misconceptions

The 5th edition CoC rules concerning Indefinite Insanity introduce several interesting "maladies," many of which are not necessarily related to real psychology. This section will define the terms used in the 5th edition and explain which ones are useful for a realistic sanity loss system and which are not. (Of course, if you as a Keeper find these conditions useful or entertaining as described in the 5th edition rules, then by all means keep using them.) The section following this one will offer alternative psychological afflictions with which to torment your players.

Catonia/Stupefaction: Catonia is a rare form of schizophrenia related to motor disturbances. The movie "Awakenings" is an accurate portrayal of one catatonic type ("withdrawn"). See Table 2, entitled "Alternative Indefinite Insanities," for a full description in the following section.

Stupefaction is not a psychological term, but rather a state of overwhelming amazement and does not necessarily imply a psychological malady.

Amnesia: The CoC rules describes only one of several forms of amnesia. See the next section for more information.

Panzaism/Quixotism: Neither of these terms are official psychological maladies. Neither of these terms appear in the DSM-III-R or even the New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary, Encyclopedic Edition, although their derivation is clearly from the two main characters of Cervantes Don Quixote. The two words translate into little more than denial and delusion (see Paranoia), respectively.

Paranoia: This is a bona fide form of schizophrenia, where the character suffers from delusions of persecution — everyone is "out to get him." (A delusion is a false belief held by a character, even in the face of evidence to the contrary.) For more details, see the next section under Psychosis.

Phobia or Fetish: As mentioned earlier, phobias are long-term conditions that plague a character until he or she is treated by mental health professionals. Phobias can indeed be "elements of rigid control."

People suffering from phobias, especially those centered around common objects such as urine or running water, rearrange their lives around their fears, imprisoned by terror. Of course, the rarer the object of that character's fear, the less control that phobia has over her life.

The CoC rules use the colloquial definition of fetishism, which implies that the character merely likes a particular type of object very much and continually keeps these objects around him or her. According to psychologists, a fetish is an inanimate object — typically undergarments or shoes of the opposite sex — that the character requires in order to become sexually aroused and achieve orgasm. Keepers should try to have the character explain that to his next sexual partner! ("Gee, honey, I really like your bra. I mean, I really like your bra. Can I borrow it?") This does not mean that the character is a transvestite, commonly known as a cross-dresser. He may just like holding or smelling the garment during sex. Fetishism is part of a large, complicated class of disorders called paraphilias, which this article will not discuss.

Obsession, Addiction, and Tremors: The CoC description of obsession more accurately fits the condition called obsessive-compulsiveness. Someone who suffers from obsession has repetitive thoughts and ruminates over various ideas and activities. A character suffering from obsessive-compulsiveness, however, repeats certain activities, such as hand-washing and door-opening/shutting, to relieve anxiety much the way a superstitious person will perform a ritual to ward off bad luck. The longer a character is prevented from performing her "ritual," the more hysterical she will grow. The symptoms of insomnia, manic-depression, and secrecy listed by the CoC rules are not necessarily related to the obsessive-compulsive condition.

The CoC definition of addiction is adequate. However, "tremors" is not a genuine insanity. The description of tremors sounds something like Tourette's Syndrome, a condition where the afflicted suffers from uncontrollable verbal and facial tics, among other symptoms. Unfortunately, Tourette's Syndrome is a far more complicated, possibly genetic, disorder.

Schizophrenia: The description of this disorder in the CoC rules is distressingly vague and can be hard to role-play. For a systematized breakdown of the different forms of schizophrenia, see Table 2 in the next section.

Megalomania: This condition is a form of schizophrenia, where the character has delusions of grandeur and believes that he is a famous or powerful person. Again, see Table 2 for the different forms of schizophrenia.

Criminal Psychosis: "Criminal Psychosis" is a misnomer of a real condition called antisocial personality disorder (also known as psychopathy), where the character has no regard for societal values and morals. For people with this disorder, relationships are shallow and fleeting, jobs are hard to keep, and alcohol abuse is frequent. Unfortunately, characters cannot develop this mental illness by ways described in the game, even though cultists and other non-player characters with 0 SAN seem to fall under this category. Some psychologists believe this disorder might be the result of biological problems and/or family upbringing, such as parental separation at an early age. In any case, a



more realistic use of this disorder is for deviant non-player characters (NPCs).

Actually, the word "psychosis" merely refers to one's loss of contact with or distortion of reality through hallucination and delusion. Note that just because someone is psychotic, it does not mean that he cannot tell "right" from "wrong." All it means is that the sufferer does not perceive reality the same way the majority of people do. Modern psychologists have known for some time that psychotics do in fact understand societal values and morals. Conversely, not all criminals are psychopaths. Some individuals adopt a criminal lifestyle because of their family's values or other reasons.

Multiple Personalities: Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) begins only in childhood through severe, repeated sexual and physical abuse. It takes many years to develop, and only then a person will develop it if he or she has a certain affinity for "personality fragmentation" or "dissociation." Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that a glimpse or two of Cthulhu would cause a character's personality to fragment and form the complex inner world that real MPDs develop over a lifetime. However, if that character had been raised in a severely abusive home, where his parents used him numerous times in sadomasochistic sexual rites honoring Y'golonac, then that character may have earned this condition. The movie "Raising Cain" with John Lithgow accurately portrays MPD development and behavior.

MPDs have many symptoms that would make the disorder difficult to role-play. For example, each personality separately retains certain memories to keep the core from being overwhelmed and destroyed by the whole of some terrible truth. A player trying to characterize this condition would have to chart which of the character's personalities have what memories. Then, as the character assumes each individual personality, he or she can only act with the knowledge that the one personality happens to own. When individual personalities take control of the body, the core personality suffers a "blackout" and loss of memory for the duration. As a result, MPDs usually have little or no sense of passing time. Not that watches would help — many MPDs discharge an abnormally high amount of electrostatic discharge

(ESD for you electronics junkies), enough to disable a normal quartz watch, and sometimes other electronic equipment like video cameras.

For Keepers, this condition could be highly useful for NPCs. If players are interviewing an NPC with this affliction, it could pose many interesting role-playing possibilities as they try to deal with the NPC's many different personalities.

Split Personality: Although this term does not appear in the CoC rules, the myth must now die in the minds of Keepers and players alike — the condition of "split personality" does not exist. Period. It does not appear in the DSM-III-R or in any other reputable psychological treatise. People who think they know something about psychology love to talk about this purported disorder. Well, now you can laugh in their Cliff Claven faces. This term comes from the word schizophrenia (discussed later in more detail) whose Greek roots translate into torn (*shizein*) mind (*phren*). Schizophrenia was one of several terms which first appeared in the late 1800s that eventually replaced the older, more broadly defined term dementia praecox ("insanity at an early age"). When schizophrenia was first used, some physicians thought schizophrenics had two different personalities dwelling within their minds because of their dramatic mood swings.

Around the same time, Robert Louis Stevenson published *The Mysterious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886. "Split personality" was then coined colloquially to describe the malady where two different, fully developed personalities reside in the same body. (This is different from MPD in that the personalities are rounded out and not just splinters of a whole personality.) Although the condition was purely fictional, society (particularly writers) popularized the concept and the term. Even Robert Bloch uses Stevenson's malady somewhat obliquely in "The Suicide in the Study."

Alternative Indefinite Insanity List

So what is genuine insanity? And what kinds of insanities are possible from the mind-blasting events that characters face when investigating the Mythos? The underlying idea of this revised system is that, of all the different kinds of insanities a person can contract, some are contracted

over a long period of time while others are the result of mental and emotional crises. CoC characters typically suffer from the latter type of insanities. It's usually through crises — that is, seeing a Mythos creature or reading a Mythos volume — that a character loses his mind.

Table 2 provides a list of insanities that can be brought on through crisis. The probability of contracting each one is weighted according to their relative frequency of occurrence, although Keepers are, of course, free to choose particular illnesses when appropriate.

Panic Disorder — The character experiences "panic attacks" without any exter-

Table 2

Indefinite Insanities (Roll 1D100)

1-14:	Panic Disorder
15-30:	Phobias
31-39:	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
40-50:	Generalized Anxiety Disorder
51-63:	Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
64-68:	Psychogenic Amnesia
69-72:	Psychogenic Fugue
73-80:	Depersonalization Disorder
81-95:	Addiction
96-00:	Psychosis (Schizophrenia)

nal provocation. She feels apprehension, terror, and impending doom that lasts anywhere from 1D6 minutes to 1D6 hours. Attacks occur at least twice per week (1D6+1) at the Keeper's discretion. The character's heart rate increases and she shakes uncontrollably, unable to think or react in any logical fashion until the attack ceases. Agoraphobia may develop in lieu of panic disorder (player should make Luck roll to avoid developing agoraphobia). Others witnessing a panic attack will not be able to identify any rational explanation for the character's behavior.

Phobias — Millions of people suffer from phobias, which can only be cured through long-term therapy. Until the char-

acter can quickly and safely put great distance between him and the object of his fear, he runs away, shrieking hysterically, until exhausted or physically restrained. To check for exhaustion, use the CoC rules for Suffocation; when the player finally fails the roll, his character collapses and is unable to move any farther. If he cannot get away from the object, the character will suffer a temporary insanity effect such as hysteria or fainting until the object disappears.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder — Commonly experienced by war veterans and holocaust survivors, this disorder causes flashbacks, nightmares, and emotional outbursts. Each day, the player must make a Luck roll to prevent the occurrence of 1D3 symptoms chosen by the Keeper. During a flashback, the character will act out the incident, oblivious to the rest of the world. During emotional outbursts, the character may become violent. The afflicted character will repeatedly relive the traumatic event until he obtains mental health assistance. Even then, the character will never forget the event, and he may be extremely reluctant to talk about it. The psychiatrists at Lorraine Bobbitt's trial claimed that she suffered from this disorder.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder — The character experiences "free floating" anxiety: Danger is everywhere! Be careful! He worries day and night about everything. Because the character experiences "hypervigilance," add 1D10+5 to their Listen, Spot Hidden, and Dodge skills until they

are treated. Characters with this disorder are edgy, jumpy, nervous and irritable (not to mention annoying); therefore, subtract 1D3+1 POW until the character recovers. Under therapy, the character will regain 1 POW point every three consecutive months of successful therapy.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder — This disorder involves the use of frequently repeated rituals (performed 1D100+10 times per day) to relieve continuous anxiety. These rituals can include almost any conceivable action: handwashing, window and door checking, glass touching, etc. In some ways, this disorder is like superstition carried to the *n*th degree. It also includes eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, and is often characterized by loneliness, social isolation, and emotional withdrawal. Characters afflicted with this disorder perform these rituals in order to relieve pent-up anxiety; if they cannot perform them, they are driven into ever deeper madness. For every hour that a character is prevented from performing her ritual (which is chosen by the Keeper), there is a 10% chance that she will become hysterical and violent. For example, if a character is prevented from performing her ritual for 3 hours, then she has a 30% chance of becoming uncontrollably violent and hysterical. A character that needs to perform a ritual more than 50 times a day is dysfunctional and needs to be hospitalized.

Psychogenic Amnesia — This condition usually occurs after a traumatic event and then appears in one of several forms. A character with localized amnesia cannot

remember the events of the incident, but remembers everything else about their person ("Well, I don't remember where I was exactly. I must have been at the shop or somewhere else when it happened"). Selective amnesia causes the character to only remember certain details of an incident ("I must have blacked out for a moment..." or "You're crazy! That part never happened!"). In generalized amnesia, the character cannot remember anything about themselves, including living skills. The least common form is continuous amnesia, where the character cannot remember anything from a specific point in time up to the present. In effect, she has no short-term memory and forgets each successive event in their life, although she retains her living skills.

Psychogenic Fugue — Every once in a while the character will flee his current home and take up a new identity and residence, perhaps as far away as another country, for 1D10+2 weeks or months. The character's identity may change completely or partially (at the player's discretion), and he will not remember anything about his old life, even if confronted by friends and family. He will continue to change identities until treated by mental health professionals. Retain the character's stats and skills, but disallow use of any previously learned spells.

Depersonalization Disorder — The character starts to feel that things around her are "unreal." She may feel the horror that she is "losing her mind," and living out a dream. The environment, including other people, becomes distorted and misshapen, taking on the landscape of nightmare. Also, she may feel like she is not "attached" to their body and that she is floating above the ground. While characters with this disorder can function normally, the anxiety generated by this illness is tremendous, making them edgy and nervous (subtract 1D3 POW, which can be regained as described in Generalized Anxiety Disorder).

Psychosis — Also known as schizophrenia, the symptoms are very similar to mental aberrations caused by lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). Characters suffering from schizophrenia experience a wide range of perceptual problems, including delusions (mistaken beliefs) and hallucinations (sees or hears things that are not



there). To them, their world “makes sense” even though to us it is completely irrational. In addition to hallucinations and delusions, schizophrenics suffer from social withdrawal, neglecting normal everyday duties such as bathing and cleaning, as they become more absorbed in their internal world of false perceptions. They also experience dramatic mood swings and shortened attention spans. Some even find a certain fascination with their fecal matter. Schizophrenics are known to develop

Table 2a

Schizophrenia (Roll 1d4)

- 1: Paranoid
- 2: Catatonic
- 3: Disorganized
- 4: Undifferentiated

latent artistic talents (Mr. Pickman, I presume?). The drawings and paintings of “disorganized” or “undifferentiated” schizophrenics may give other investigators important clues to the mind-shattering events that precipitated the illness. Psychotics are not particular as to the medium of their art, either. Some use crayons or watercolors, while others may use their own feces.

For gaming purposes, schizophrenia gradually develops over weeks: the first week, the afflicted character may stay home at night because she “doesn’t feel social”; the second week, the character might neglect work and other duties around the house; the third week, the character stops bathing and answering the phone; and so forth until the disease is firmly rooted in her mind.

As mentioned earlier, psychotics do not lack conscience or morals, nor are they even dangerous. Thanks to the ignorant news media, many people use the term “psychotic killer,” which is practically a contradiction in terms because schizophrenics are very rarely unsafe.

There are at least four different types of schizophrenia:

Paranoid: Paranoid schizophrenia appears in two forms. The persecuted schizophrenic will develop elaborate “conspiracy theories” or carry on several delusions centering on some central theme (e.g., the CIA or UFOs). Constantly suspicious, he will often interpret the simplest of events as life- or ego-threatening situations (“Remember that woman who was laughing on the bus? She was laughing at me, I tell you!” or “My ex-husband is poisoning me through radiation emitted by the television!”). Although these delusions are fairly consistent, the afflicted character is not necessarily obsessed with them. This means that someone can carry on a conversation with the persecuted schizophrenic without touching on the delusion/s. When confronted by friends and family for their behavior, they may refuse to talk, claiming that “the walls have ears.” The schizophrenic with grandiosity has delusions of grandeur, and may believe he is a famous person, like Jesus Christ or Napoleon; grandiose schizophrenics usually require hospitalization because they might try to perform acts such as walking on water when, in fact, they can’t swim!

Catatonic: There are five types of this least-common form of schizophrenia. *Excited* catatonics talk ceaselessly, wave their arms about, and quickly pace about the room with no purpose; they can sometimes be excited to the point of violence, endangering themselves and those around them. While *posturing* catatonics do not respond to their environments and may adopt extremely awkward positions, they maintain a certain waxy flexibility. Those with *rigidity*, however, cannot be moved at all, maintaining a rigid standing or sitting posture. Another form of catatonia is called *stupor* or *mutism*, where the sufferer completely lacks response to his environment (“He’s been sitting in that chair with his eyes closed for days, doctor...”). And, finally, those with *negativism* may look perfectly awake, but they resist all instructions or attempts at being moved. Catatonics typically require hospitalization.

Disorganized (hebephrenic): These schizophrenics appear to be drooling, gibbering idiots. No one can understand their endless, nonsensical rantings. They hallucinate, hearing voices in the washing machine and watching purple letters float above their heads. Worse yet, they show absolutely no emotion, although they may giggle if you tell them your sister just died. This type of schizophrenic may also suffer from cognitive slippage, where his thoughts constantly wander from topic to topic during conversation without any logical connection between topics or even within sentences (“Don’t let your inks slip!”). In addition, he might make up new words — called “neologisms” — that have no meaning, such as “blamp” (a combination of “bed” and “lamp”).

Undifferentiated: This type of schizophrenia comprises any number of random symptoms, including delusions, and auditory and visual hallucinations. Some common delusions are that someone is either broadcasting or draining the schizophrenic’s thoughts, and perhaps even inserting foreign thoughts into their brains.

Despite the formidable-sounding symptoms, many schizophrenics can function within society. They can hold down jobs, raise families, and even maintain hobbies because their intellectual skills are not impaired. Except for catatonics, numerous schizophrenics can take medication to control their symptoms, although many prefer to live in their own, more “colorful” worlds. For others, their symptoms are too severe and they do not respond to medication. All schizophrenics require hospitalization for at least the first six months after the onset of the illness; after that, severely afflicted characters require continued hospitalization. To determine if the character needs continued hospitalization, the Keeper should check the character’s number of Sanity points at the onset of the illness: If it is less than half of the character’s starting (or highest recorded) Sanity, then she must be hospitalized for longer than six months (an additional 1D6+6 months); if over half, then she may become functional afterwards with the aid of medication and day programs. The Keeper can also determine the severity of the condition by limit-

Table 2b

Addictions (Roll 1D10)

- 1: Pyromania: Likes to start and watch fires.
- 2: Kleptomania: Steals anything.
- 3: Trichtillomania: Pulls out his hair until he is hairless (all over!); lose 1 APP per week for a total of 1D6+2 APP loss.
- 4: Compulsive Gambling: Gambles and borrows money to keep on gambling, even if he is losing everything.
- 5: Compulsive Spending: Automatically spends any money he has and doesn't care what he buys.
- 6: Alcoholism
- 7: Drugs: May eventually incur hospitalization, depending on the drug. LSD imitates schizophrenia, while PCP can cause violent behavior. Keeper's choice as to which drug.
- 8: Drugs and Alcohol
- 9: Satyriasis/Nymphomania: Addicted to sex. Attempt a POWx2 roll every time the character meets an attractive member of the opposite sex (APP 13+) to avoid putting "the moves" on them. If the character fails the roll (or even if the character just wants to indulge), and the other character is "willing," he must make a Luck roll to avoid contracting a venereal disease (VD). If the roll fails, he contracts VD and loses a point of CON (Tough luck — you lost control before you or your partner could slip on your "rain coat"). Since VD is a virus, it is untreatable and the CON loss is permanent.
- 10: Referee chooses an addiction, and, if feeling evil, makes the player roll up a second one!

ing the occurrence of hallucinations and delusions.

Addiction — The Referee may either roll on Table 2b or choose an addiction unique to the character. Each day, the character must make a POWx1 roll or give in to his cravings. Increase the multiplier

for every month of psychotherapeutic treatment. Keepers can determine appropriate stat losses and skill penalties for characters addicted to alcohol and/or drugs.

Alternative Keeper's Lore to Insanity

The human psyche can normally buffer a certain amount of cumulative mental abuse, but it can only take so much: The mind will find the proverbial last straw and finally break down in some insidious way. Therefore, if a character's Sanity points ever reach 50% of their highest (usually the starting) SAN value, then the Keeper should have the player roll below his character's POWx5 to avoid automatically contracting one of the stress-related insanities on Table 3.

When the character's Sanity points reach 40% of their highest value, then the player should roll under his character's POWx4, and so forth. If the player fails the roll, the indefinite insanity does not occur immediately, but at the Keeper's discretion, such as when the player must make his or her next sanity roll. Regardless of the outcome of that next roll, the character will go indefinitely insane because he has finally "snapped" and can no longer buffer the cumulative damage. (When the player initially creates her character, it might be helpful to have her record somewhere on her character sheet the values of 50%, 40%, 30%, and 20% of their SAN stat for easy reference.)

Most of the disorders listed in Table 3 are related to increased and sustained anxiety, which prolonged exposure to the Mythos would provide. Further, because drugs and alcohol are a common means of

relieving anxiety, addiction is also prevalent. The new disorder on this list is brief reactive psychosis, probably the most common disorder experienced by people who undergo a gradual psychological breakdown. The character with this illness typically contracts symptoms similar to disorganized or undifferentiated schizophrenia, but they recover on their own in 1D4+3 weeks. However, when the character returns to normal, he permanently loses two points of POW. This loss represents the after-effects of the illness, which leaves its sufferers somewhat shaken and reserved. People with brief reactive psychosis are usually hospitalized for the duration of their illness to see whether they will recover from the episode or if they have developed a full-blown case of schizophrenia.

Redefining 0 SAN

So if a character with 0 SAN points is insane, and insane (e.g., psychotic) people typically know right from wrong, how do we account for all those psychopathic cultists with 0 SAN who serve the minions of Cthulhu through death and mayhem? We can, for gaming purposes, surmise that their minds have come under the permanent and total influence of the Mythos; that is, they no longer respond to our society's morals and values or acknowledge that human life has any meaning beyond serving the unnamable gods that command the universe. Because the wall of sanity — that stone fortress of earthly convictions and beliefs — is the only thing that stands between investigators and the Mythos, each glimpse into this awful truth chips away at that wall. Once the wall has completely tumbled, and the investigator's Sanity reaches 0, nothing is left to protect his or her mind and soul from being completely ravaged by the "alternate" reality of the Mythos world. Therefore, the character's replete madness is not so much associated with psychopathology as it is with becoming acutely attuned to the reality of the Mythos.

Treating Insanity Then and Now (Mostly Now)

Mental illness itself has not changed from the 1920s to the 1990s, only the way mental health professionals define it. Therefore, while not all of these terms were commonly used in the 1920s, the symptoms were still the same. For example, in a 1920s scenario, the psychoanalyst

Table 3

Stress-related insanities (Roll 1D6)

- 1: Panic Disorder
- 2: Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- 3: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- 4: Depersonalization Disorder
- 5: Drug/Alcohol Addiction
- 6: Brief Reactive Psychosis

treating a character with depersonalization disorder may not have a term for the problem, but he can clearly discern from conversations with the patient that she is feeling detached from reality and drifting away from the solid world. The same goes for scenarios set in the 1890s, although the character is more apt to be shunted into an asylum for discussing or expressing his illness.

A New Skill

For **Cthulhu Now™** scenarios, Psychiatry should replace the Psychoanalysis skill. To obtain the Psychiatry skill, the character must have a minimum EDU of 18 and 40% Psychology skill. This new skill allows characters to properly diagnose and treat mental illness, as well as prescribe the correct medication. When a character with this skill first encounters a form of mental illness, the player must make a successful roll on this skill to correctly diagnose the problem. If the roll is unsuccessful, the player should then make an Idea roll to see if his character realizes that he needs additional information or time with the patient to determine what is actually wrong with

him. If the player fails his character's Idea roll, then the character misdiagnoses the illness and immediately proceeds with an ineffective course of therapy. The Keeper may allow the player an additional chance to re-roll his Psychiatry skill each game month to correct his diagnosis.

A psychiatrist is essentially a psychologist who has studied medicine. Therefore, in scenarios that call for a Medicine roll, Keepers can let characters make the same roll at half their Psychiatry skill.

Recovery Then and Now

For each game month of therapy, the patient will regain 1D2 Sanity points provided that the character treating the patient makes a successful Psychiatry (or Psychoanalysis) roll each month. Note that the rate of recovery is somewhat slower than that described in the CoC rules. In this manner, indefinite insanities can be cured either:

1. If characters who become indefinitely insane from losing 20% or more of their Sanity points in one game hour regain all lost points through therapy, *or*
2. If characters who lose 50% of their starting (or highest) Sanity regain 50% of the total lost points. For example, if a character starts with 70 SAN and loses 35, that character must recover 18 Sanity points (50% of 35, rounded up).

The fumble rules (96-00) still apply. If the Psychiatrist or Psychoanalyst fumbles, subtract 1D6 Sanity points from that character.

Modern Costs of Recovery

Mental health facilities in the 1990s are neither full nor limited to the "criminally insane." Treatment is, however, expensive. Hospitalization in California, for example, usually costs approximately \$1000 per day. Fortunately, Medicare — federal medical funding for the poor — covers these costs, so severely impaired characters will not be burdened with hospital bills.

But characters who do not require hospitalization must either visit the hospital 1D3 times a week for counseling or enter a "day program" at a mental health facility. Counseling sessions each cost \$80+4D10 and medication costs 2D6x\$50 per month (the Keeper makes one roll and charges the

character that amount every month). Characters with health insurance pay only 20% of these totals for sessions. Day programs cost approximately \$450 per day. To determine if the character has health insurance, the player should make a Know roll and then a Luck roll successively. Otherwise, he will probably go bankrupt trying to pay all of the hospital and doctor bills.

Panic disorder, phobias, addiction, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and psychosis are all treatable through medication and day programs (anti-psychotic medication for schizophrenia eliminates hallucinations and delusions, although the player must roll his POWx5 once per game month to resist the temptation of not taking his medication). For gaming purposes, all other disorders are treated through therapy only.

Conclusion

So, what about poor George Wither-spoon? Is he really crazy? No, not really. Plagued by nightmares because he won't deal with his problems, he escapes into his study every day. There he has developed a mild obsession with the clock whose ticking only reminds him more and more that time is slipping away. He only thinks he's losing his mind, when he really isn't. Later, he confides in a psychologist friend and realizes that his problems are not insurmountable, but in fact quite common.

That is, until he discovers the Mythos... □

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GAME
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Up Against the Wall, Suckers!

Five GM techniques to drop-kick player complacency in horror gaming

By John Tynes © 1995 ♦ Art by Pete Garcia © 1995



It's Saturday night, and tonight's the fifth session of your mondo-cool horror campaign.

You: "The door opens, and it's nasty. Nick is lying in a bloody heap, a metal spike protruding from his head. He's been dead about."

Player: "Hey! It's Nick on a Stick!"

(The group breaks up laughing.)

You: "Ho, ho. So anyway, the room is dark but there's a strange pulsing radiance coming from Nick's eyes. It's like—"

Player: "Get some sunglasses, dude!"

(The group breaks up again.)

You: (Small mewling cries.)

What's going on here? It's obvious. The players just aren't into the mood of the game, and when the game is horror, mood is everything. Most genres of gaming don't really demand the level of involvement that horror RPGs do. They really demand that at key points in the game, the players should be really into it. They should be uneasy, suspicious, jumpy, or just plain scared. Every so often, they should all look at each other, put on shaky grins and whisper "This is so cool!" before turning their full attention back to you and the situation at hand.

That's not easy. Running horror games is tough on the GM, and it also asks a lot of the players. No matter how much you as the GM are into it and ready to go, without motivated players the game will probably suck. So how do you motivate the players to be engaged, uncertain, and scared?

Horror RPGs have been wrestling with this since the beginning (much as horror fiction has sought the same reactions from readers). The *Call of Cthulhu* rules urge GMs to downplay combat and to focus on the everpresent loss of sanity. The first edition of *Chill* had much to say on setting and mood, and used many examples from

other media to illustrate its points. But this is all pretty much baseline stuff; yeah, you and your players know the way it's supposed to be played. So what if they aren't making the effort, or are out of practice? How do you get them unbalanced and scared again?

It's not that hard, but it's going to require that you push the envelope a bit. You need to confound the players' expectations and scare the crap out of them. Not the game, not the NPCs...you. To scare the players, you must be scary yourself. H.P. Lovecraft wrote that the oldest and strongest form of fear is fear of the unknown. Your players know you, so how can they be scared of you? Easy. Don't be yourself. Try some of the following techniques out and see how they work. You don't need to use all of them, and you might think some of them are just a little bit out there. But I've used all of these things, and they really do work.

#1: Be A Jerk

The Theory: Don't make small talk. Don't laugh at their jokes. Don't smile. Glare at them when they break the mood. Don't ask for die rolls or other requests: demand them. When damage is dealt to the players, spit the total at them and demand to know how close they are to death. When damage is dealt to the players' foes, shrug it off as if it's inconsequential. Speak in short, clipped sentences. Furrow your brows. If they goof off, do not play along. If they go to the bathroom, keep playing while they're gone and wound their character if possible. If anyone protests about anything, you should rule for or against them fairly; but do it quickly, cleanly, and with as few words as possible.

The Practice: You can't do this all the time or the players won't come play anymore. Think of this almost as a persona that you adopt at certain times. In particular, I'd urge you to switch into this mode only during one or more of the following situations: during the climax of a session; when they've stupidly botched something and are suffering the consequences; in an unexpected combat or other surprise situation. Soon your players will know that when you're being The Jerk, it means something, and they'll get serious, too. God bless Pavlov.

#2: Make Them Stand

The Theory: When players sit at a table, they get comfortable. They lean back, they put their feet on the table, they slouch, they put their head down, they play with dice. This annoying little tic of the human animal can be dealt with by taking the chairs away and forcing the players to stand. They may lean, they may shuffle, they may pace: but they will never really be comfortable. They will be, quite literally, on their toes.

The Practice: This is really feasible only in a few situations: if your session will only be an hour or so; if it's for a portion of a session and occurs after or between some sort of break or intermission; if used in tandem with some other disorientation tactic employed to accentuate a climax or other dramatic phase. For example, let's say that the climax of the session is a night-time chase through a swamp. So, turn off the lights, hand out a flashlight or two, and take away the chairs. The players will be confused, restless, and quite unrelaxed. Once the chase ends, bring the chairs out again. Another good reason for this tactic is that it encourages more physical role-playing. If the players are moving around anyway, they're more likely to swing their arms, lean over someone menacingly, and in other ways use their whole body to role-play.

#3: Split the Herd

The Theory: Like junior high students on a field trip, the herd mentality gives the players strength and solidarity. People don't get scared in groups; they get scared inside their heads. So, split them up: not just the characters, but the players. Manipulate play so that you can put each player in a different room—or at least one or two of them—because their characters have been split up. Keep the lights off or dim, and move quickly from one player to the next. Allow no communication between them. If at all possible then play loud, disorienting music or sound effects so they don't spend their time waiting in silence. Confuse them, misdirect them, and if they end up shooting each other by mistake then so much the better.

The Practice: Like most of these techniques, this is really helped by darkness. Get each player alone and in the dark,

with some horrible racket going on so they can't think straight, and they'll get spooked pretty easily. It won't be for very long, but it doesn't need to be. It's even better if, once the group re-assembles, not all of them make it back. This technique works very well with "**#1: Be A Jerk**," by the way: you can move from player to player with a sort of ruthless efficiency that's bound to bother them. It also works well with the next technique.

#4: Get Physical

The Theory: Most GMs, even when animated and excited, are still friendly and respectful. Not you. Whenever you're portraying a hostile NPC then get in their face, wave your arms around, talk loud, swear at them, and engage in hostile speech and hostile body language. Plan some sort of physical action for key encounters, like a sudden attack or NPC temper tantrum or something. Then, when playing, do it for real: throw a punch (as long as you know you'll miss), grab them by the collar, hurl a dish against the wall. Do something they would never expect you to do. If someone gets hurt just a little then break character and apologize, but only for a moment. Then get physical again. Shock them.

The Practice: Works well in tandem with your players signing liability waivers! In all seriousness, it really isn't hard to pump up the physicality of your NPC performances—only in key encounters, not in every one—and really jar your players. Pulled punches, broken dishes, slammed doors, and other gross physical acts are outside the range of most players' experiences and they'll usually be too shocked to do anything but gape. This is excellent if it's just you and the player alone (see #3 above) since when you rejoin the group the player will be shaken and twitchy and the other players will wonder why. But you can't be stupid about this. Suddenly throwing a punch when you're standing several feet away and not getting anywhere near the player can be as effective as throwing it right past their head, and it's a much safer idea. The goal here is surprise value, not to make them think you're really going to hit them. This isn't stage combat; the player should be the audience for this kind of technique, not a participant.

#5: Get Help

The Theory: Splitting up the players is all well and good, but then while off giving some poor schmo the treatment you know the rest of the group is doing Monty Python routines and crunching chips. That won't do. Get a second GM to help you instead, and the two of you can tag-team your games. One GM works for a bit while the other slips around the table to resolve individual queries and secret goings-on, then switch roles. When the group splits up, the other GM keeps the rest of the group going. No one should ever be waiting for a GM.

The Practice: Having two GMs formalizes play to an extent, making the players less likely to screw around. It also evens the odds: there's now two of you. You can play good cop-bad cop if you like, or have one GM do certain NPCs while you do certain others. Of all these techniques, this one may sound like the most foreign and the least likely to work, but in practice I've found that two-GM games can be truly exceptional. Not all scenarios are right for

this, but most can be made to work and will be improved as a result. Splitting the NPCs is an especially good idea. If each of you only plays one or two major NPCs, you'll get a much greater range of performances and you'll also be able to play off each other when your NPCs are in the same scene. In addition, in major scenes between the players and your NPC, the other GM can handle all the questions, dice, etc., while you just play the NPC.

Conclusion

Your goal is to scare the players. None of the above techniques are scary in and of themselves (well, not usually) but all of them should be unexpected and out of the ordinary. If the players start wondering what you're up to and what you might do next, they'll be less sure of themselves and more likely to react in fright when scary things happen.

I didn't mention things like dim lighting, music, sound effects, props, costumes, and other stuff like that as particular techniques. They're good too, if used sparingly

and with precision. A session that begins with the characters at a library doing research shouldn't begin in darkness with candles and spooky music. Look at movies: when scary things are happening, you get the funky lighting and music. When things are mundane, it's all very normal.

The key to scaring your players is knowing when to be scary, and when not to be. You can't keep players afraid for four hours straight, so you've got to go for brief moments of fright where appropriate. It's in those moments that the techniques described above really shine. None of these things are meant to encourage you to be adversarial or unfair in your GMing; you should still be a fair GM. But they should make your players think that anything is possible, and if they really think that then you've got them right where you want them: credulous, bleating sheep shuffling fearfully towards the slaughter...


Good hunting! □

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Portrait of an Urban Landscape at Night

Atmosphere Tips for Modern Horror Games

By Rich Lewis © 1995 ♦ Art by Bob Hobbs © 1995

The sound of a car door shutting somewhere down the alley caused Gerald Wingate to turn his head over his left shoulder and quicken his pace. He stepped into a puddle from last night's rain, soaking his foot through his thin, cheap sneakers as he began to lope down the alleyway toward the halogen-bled light of the next intersection just ahead.

He could hear the raspy wheeze of the Cousin as it lumbered after him. A stray alley cat hissed at the fat man as he loped by it in pursuit of the young mage. Its threat to the second intruder died quickly as the man shot

out an unexpectedly quick hand at the animal slapping it off the dumpster it perched on.

Gerald never heard the wet thud of the cat hitting the ground. Ahead, he saw the silhouette of a dark sedan, its lights out, turn into the alley. The automobile blocking his exit, Gerald stopped in his tracks and began the lesser banishing ritual.

As he felt the energy begin to flow and the ancient chant build in rhythm the headlights of the car flashed on, bright and blinding. Gerald clamped his eyes shut and turned his head quickly, verbally stumbling in his incantation.

Somewhere in the distance a group of four black-clad teenagers danced out of a rave being held in an old abandoned warehouse. Flushed with the energy they still felt and half-deaf from the music inside, they were unaware of what was happening a few blocks away. They didn't know about the moldering tome that had slipped from the young mage's jacket pocket as he had made a last desperate leap for a fire escape ladder that seemed so impossibly high

They didn't know, but at some point in the night they would.

Atmosphere in a modern horror genre really is a trick of light and shadows, a bit



of smoke and mirrors. Getting the right feel for the genre is as simple as taking a walk through your home town in broad daylight; you just have to be willing to turn the hands of your own wristwatch and see how the sweep of an hour hand can twist what you see like a spoon through a cup of coffee.

The city around you is a conglomeration of thousands (if not millions) of people working together, interacting, affecting each other's lives in minute ways with even the slightest gesture. There are people walking purposefully down the streets to get to work or a lunch date, there are families picnicking or playing in the park, pigeons sit on windowsills or a statue or

two. Buses roar by, people give handouts to the homeless or buy something from a street vendor. A band may be playing for the noon crowd at a downtown plaza, people jockey for places to hail cabs from. Some people smile, some don't, but most everyone is active, alive, interacting with their environment.

At night, it's a different story. From the dawn of time, the night has been an environment that people have looked on as interacting with them. It's a time when safety should be sought, a time when if you're not at home, you are mostly with groups of other people, eating in restaurants, sitting in movie theaters, drinking or dancing at the local night spot, anywhere

that safety can be found in numbers so the slower pace can be enjoyed.

Anyone who has found themselves walking down an unfamiliar city street at night knows the feelings that creep in at one's consciousness, the unease, that strange feeling that you keep telling yourself isn't really fear.

But it is fear and those streetlights seem to be farther and farther apart the later it gets, the shadows get deeper. It's an old instinct we have inside of ourselves that tells us there are predators out there in the night that we can't do anything about - except join the herd so that we won't stand out as potential prey.

The trick to getting this feeling out in a group of players who are sitting safely around a gaming table is to place them mentally on that unfamiliar street and then keep moving those streetlights just a bit farther each time they took up.

Buildings

Most American cities are caught between tomorrow and yesterday and this is reflected more than anything else in the city's architecture. With urban revitalization projects at work in about any community, it's not strange to see buildings from almost every decade so far this century within just a scant few blocks of each other.

Skyscrapers, towers of glass and steel, cast long shadows and somewhere in there, smaller brick buildings seem to push up through cracks in last year's sidewalks like mushrooms and dark, scraggly crab grass.

Skyscrapers help to create the environment in any urban gothic tale. Beyond the artificial shade, block upon block of towering structures like them create something like soft-cell wind tunnels, channeling breezes down into the streets, rustling discarded newspapers, keeping the dust moving. Think of them as the crooked, wide-spaced teeth in the maw of a living city, menacing in the moonlight but capping a picture perfect smile in the daylight.

Most buildings in cities aren't over three stories tall, though. They make up the blocks of mercantile stores or the garages and washing machine repair shops



that usually sit somewhat along behind their chain-link fences.

These buildings are the ones most often left dark and alone in the middle of the night; they're almost purely nine to five operations. While cleaning crews and night shift workers at least partially populate high rises at night, small business owners struggling to make it usually leave their workplace behind at the end of the day. The buildings are often much older, with either utilitarian architecture of the classic box-with-a-door shape, or have useless flutings and abutments that cast deep shadows in awkward places.

If you take one of these buildings and look at them in the daytime, you can easily see where there are chinks in the brickwork and masonry. There might be a broken window on the third floor or a set of old wooden stairs leading from a back stoop or porch. At night, these chinks can be the places where bats or rats living in the attic exit the structure in search of food, or maybe it's a colony of roaches that make their nest there, nestled in the cool shadows behind the building's facade.

If you place an old, faded curtain in that broken window, a breeze might toy with it, moving it slightly back and forth in the light of a nearby street lamp. It also gives you the opportunity to tell one of the players that they notice the breeze is blowing away from the building, that it couldn't possibly be moving that one, lonely curtain remnant. Then sit back and let them think of who or what is behind that curtain, moving it just enough to get a glance at who is standing out there on the street looking back at their building.

Want to make it even worse? Remember that old, set of wooden steps around the back of the building? Tell the players that they heard a single creak coming from back there and that the curtain is now hanging listlessly. Tell one of them that they notice that the board covering the building's crawl space entrance is just lying on the ground beside a black hole in the wall. Maybe the weeds that grow all over the building's lot are a bit crumpled down right around that area as if someone had been lying there, or had been dragged through there.

Maybe they'll notice how the building across the street has a place on its roof

where the street metal has been pulled back just far enough for a man-sized creature to crawl through. There's probably an old house down the street, too. It's one of those that has been there for fifty years or more, resisting the stunted growth of the neighborhood around it. Maybe there's a light or two on in the house; or maybe someone is sitting on the porch in an old ladder-back chair, watching the players through the gate of the chain-link fence that runs around the yard.

An old sign with the name of a luncheonette that went out of business years ago down the street might creak in that breeze. The radio in an old junk car down the street might seem to come on, faintly, very faintly, spewing out an old song that sounds tinny in the night air.

Alleys and Streets

City blocks also breed alleys, the causeways where people set their trash out for sanitation workers during the day, out of sight of the every day person on the street. They're also the place a kid might take a shortcut through to get from the arcade to home, or a mugger with daytime working hours might hang out.

There are always back doors and fire escapes in the alleys, places where people can leave and not be in sight of the common public and as night falls they may or may not see unusually active use. Back doors lead to unknown store rooms and a fire escape can give a look into different rooms in an apartment building.

Fire escapes are also dual in their use. Some people ignore them, trying not to think about the time they may have to use them to escape a life-threatening fire, trying the creaky escape for the first time, usually in the dark.

Other people look at them as a poor man's terrace, leaving potted plants and lawn chairs on them, things that could mysteriously fall off in the middle of the night.

Cats may use them as an access to their owner's apartment, or the alley or roof. Pigeons may roost on them when they think no one is watching.

If you are going to allow the possibility of a fire escape within your adventure, keep

in mind a few things. Fire escapes usually allow access to the ground in one of three ways: a ladder attached securely to a wall will lead up through a hole in the first landing, a set of stairs may hang from the first landing requiring the weight of a human body to slowly creak down to the ground at an angle, or it may be a ladder held vertically on the first landing on a slide/counterweight system so that it retracts when no one is holding onto it. The first method means 100 percent access from the ground; the other two may require the characters to make some acrobatic jumps to grab it; then they have that moment when they are dangling in the air as the stairs or ladder comes to the ground. A person stepping or thrown onto one of those from the landing may also find themselves taking an unexpected trip down to the waiting alley.

Streets are for plain sight traffic, from buses and cars to people on foot or bicycles. Rarely are they untraveled in some form or another. While someone's biggest fear walking down a busy street might be getting hit by a passing vehicle, if they are on an empty street at night, the feeling might be quite different. Try to get your players to begin asking among themselves where the traffic is, why there are no cabs around, why no one is walking down the streets or sitting on the stoops of buildings? Surely there must be a reason.

Maybe a championship ball game is on television, or a blockbuster movie just opened in the neighborhood, or everyone just decided to turn in early. Maybe the people in the neighborhood are just afraid to come out at night for some reason. Even the street toughs, cabbies and policemen avoid this street at night for some reason, whatever it is, maybe the players will latch on to the fact that they're not supposed to be there, even if you've led them to the location.

But that's the feeling someone's supposed to get in an urban gothic setting—that they're not supposed to be here. □



The Good,

Artwork by Michael S. Harmon © 1995
Written by Brandon Blackmoor © 1995



Adrian Drake

Type: Young Vampire

Strengths: Historian, Teacher

Motivation: Peace and Quiet

Weaknesses: A Reasonable Man

Adrian Drake appears to a mortal human male in his late 30's. He teaches History, he wears tweed, and he doesn't watch TV. He has also been dead for about two weeks. He's trying to adjust to his new lifestyle, but three days ago his bloodlust got the better of him and he killed one of his students when she stayed after class to ask him a few questions. Not knowing what else to do, he made her a vampire.

Now he's being hunted by the police, a retired judge, other vampires and lord knows who else. So far, he's managed to stay one step ahead of the police, but Chelsea (his recent victim) is swiftly getting to be more than he can handle, and it's only a matter of time before things come to a head. □



Special Agent Holroyd

Type: Mortal FBI Agent

Strengths: Firearms, Occult Lore

Motivation: Protect Humanity

Weaknesses: Only Human

Special Agent Stephen Holroyd is part of an elite FBI task force that quietly investigates reports of supernatural activity. He has battled zombies, demons, evil magicians, and werewolves. He has been in the city for the last eight months tracking down suspected vampire activity. He knows enough about vampires to realize that they aren't uniformly evil, and he also knows that if he declares wholesale war on them, his nights will be numbered. He is hoping to find allies among them to help him hunt down the really bad bloodsuckers.

He has received an anonymous tip that the recent disappearance of the daughter of Judge Stallings may be vampire-related, and he is looking for Adrian Drake, with whom the girl was last seen. □



Chain

Type: Ancient Vampire

Strengths: Combat Monster, Musician

Motivation: Entertainment

Weaknesses: Bored

Chain was made a vampire in third-century Naples, Italy when she was seventeen years old. She is the oldest vampire she has ever met by more than a thousand years, although she pretends she is much younger than she is. She has been living in the city for the past twenty years using the name "Chain," and she's the leader of a band called "Nocturnal Zoo." The other members of the band know she's a vampire and are willingly in her thrall. She takes turns feeding from them, and Adrian is the first human she has killed in years.

Chain made Adrian into a nosferatu because his wit and intelligence impressed her, and she wanted to make sure he'd be around a few centuries. She really enjoys having someone to talk with again. □



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The Bad,

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Maria

Type: Modern Vampire

Strengths: Intimidation, Firearms

Motivation: Power

Weaknesses: Short-sighted

Maria was made a vampire in the 1920's, and she thinks she's the oldest in the city (she's wrong: there are several much older than she). She has been trying to subjugate the other vampires in the city (it's infested), but nosferatu are an independent lot and don't take well to being ordered around.

Maria realizes that many of the other vampires look up to Chain, and Maria wants to kill Adrian as a tool to demonstrate her power in the city. She knows Adrian made Chelsea a vampire, and Maria made Chelsea's aged father, Judge Stallings, a vampire because she figured she could use his mortal contacts against Adrian (and thus Chain). She doesn't realize yet that Stallings has no intention of being anyone's pawn, and has his own plans for the city. □



Earl

Type: New Vampire

Strengths: H-H Combat

Motivation: Revenge

Weaknesses: Weak-willed

Earl is the kind of guy who fantasizes about girls but never asks them out. He has had a crush on Chelsea since the day she sat three rows in front of him in Dr. Drake's history class, but he never got up the nerve to talk to her. Maria recently made him a vampire, and she has turned his unrequited passion for Chelsea into a full-fledged hatred for the man who killed her. It doesn't seem to matter to Earl that Chelsea is no more dead than he is, and that she doesn't even know who he is.

Earl is pretty bright, but he's weak-willed and easily influenced, particularly by Maria. She made Earl a vampire because he led her to believe he knew Chelsea well; she found out too late that he was deluding himself. □



Tony Green

Type: Immortal

Strengths: Organization, Presence

Motivation: Independence

Weaknesses: Tired of Conflict

Tony "Mean Green" Green isn't a nosferatu: he is a true immortal. He has been alive for over 250 years, and as far as he knows he cannot be killed (although getting shot still hurts like hell). In the early 1900's he and Maria preyed upon the KKK and other racist groups in the city, and worked to avenge victims of racist violence, but as he grew tired of the violence she grew more fond of it. He is still friends with Maria, but it saddens him that she no longer cares about civil rights.

For the past few years he has been using guile and money to gain control of the black street gangs in the city. He hopes to unite the gangs and focus their energies in a positive direction: ending the violence and creating a healthy black community in the city. □



GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

And The Ugly

Artwork by Michael S. Harmon © 1995
Written by Brandon Blackmoor © 1995



Judge Stallings

Type: New Vampire

Strengths: Contacts

Motivation: Control

Weaknesses: Overconfident

Stallings is a mover and a shaker, but he prefers to operate behind the scenes, where it's safer. He has dirt on most of the elected officials in the city, and he's not averse to throwing his weight around to get what he wants.

Judge Robert Stallings never particularly cared for his daughter Chelsea: he wanted a boy to follow in his footsteps and take the reins of the city. He's pulled strings to get Chelsea out of trouble on more than one occasion, but that was more to protect his own reputation than out of any feeling for Chelsea.

Stallings is used to getting his way, and he doesn't yet realize that he's in the big leagues now. Vampires don't care who your friends are. □



Chelsea

Type: New Vampire

Strengths: Fearless

Motivation: Self-Destruction

Weaknesses: Insane

Chelsea is the spoiled daughter of a very rich old man. She has never had to work for anything or face the consequences of any of her actions. The only reason she was going to school is so her father wouldn't make her get a job. If she vanished from the face of the earth, no one would shed a tear.

Chelsea is reveling in her newfound powers as one of the walking dead, but it is slowly driving her mad. She was not raised with any sense of right and wrong: her father taught her it's only wrong if you get caught. Now, she can get away with anything, and she keeps pushing it to the limits. It's only a matter of time before she goes too far and gets herself (or someone else) killed. □



Marguerite Lewis

Type: Human Wizard

Strengths: Discreet, Intelligent

Motivation: Status Quo

Weaknesses: Secret Identity

Margeurite runs a small book shop in the neighborhood where Tony Green lives. She is part of a secret society of scholars and magicians that keeps an eye on the equally secret societies of nosferatu and immortals. She knows that a blood war among the vampires is coming, and she wants to find a way to keep it from involving mundane humankind.

She is on friendly terms with Tony Green. She knows he's an immortal but he doesn't know she's a magician. She knows that Chain is essentially a benign vampire, and would like to help her against a creature like Marla, but Margeurite has been sworn not to reveal her identity as a magician to those she is watching. □



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Is This Heaven?

Near-Death Experiences For Call of Cthulhu™

By Ben Leeb © 1995 ♦ Art by Stacy Fitz © 1995



Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu game contains a lot of very sophisticated systems for playing out various disturbing aspects of the occult. It seems to me, however, that one very significant and potentially entertaining aspect has been largely ignored... that of Near Death Experiences. I have devised some simple rules to account for this eventuality, the Funeral Factor system. Although this variant was designed for use with CoC, it should be easily adaptable to any campaign, horror or not, in which the players have a serious taste for the bizarre.

Whenever an investigator would normally die during the course of an adventure, whether from a gun shot or being digested by a Dhole, have the player make a POW roll with a multiplier equal to a computed Funeral Factor (FF). To find the FF, simply start with a base of x1 and add one for each of the following categories that apply:

1. **Undeserved:** The death came about through an unlucky die roll rather than some event which was precipitated by the character's own carelessness or incompetence. Characters who die because of a single failed Luck roll are covered here.

2. **Role-playing:** The death came about because the player was tenaciously clinging to some insanity or personality trait belonging to his character. The Foolhardy Mercenary who takes on a Shoggoth single-handed would fit in here.

3. **Prologue/Climax:** The death comes at the very beginning or very end of the adventure.

4. **Heroism:** The death is due to some act of self-sacrifice. This is where all the "You go on ahead; I'll hold them off here!"-types go.

Once you have a multiplier (x1 to x5), have the player roll. If the roll succeeds, then that character's HP are immediately

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reduced to zero and he is rendered unconscious. In addition, he has an Experience. The character loses 1d6 SAN (no SAN roll allowed) and must roll 1d10 on (or the Keeper may choose from) the following table. All alterations to characteristics are permanent.

1. Character suffers hysterical paralysis of (choose one): vocal cords (mute), optic nerves (blind), tendons (lose use of one arm or leg). May be healed as indefinite insanity.

2. Character suffers a mutilation of the appropriate area, losing one point from a relevant attribute. For example, a character slashed across the face would lose 1 APP, while one hit in the arm would lose 1 DEX or STR.

3. Character is "marked" as a psychic delicacy. Every time the player makes a Luck roll to avoid being the one to be attacked by a creature, the roll required must be halved.

4. Character is Changed. He might lose his shadow, gain a taste for human blood, or begin to "see things" (-1 POW).

5. Character has his hair turn white, develops a case of the shakes, or gains a nervous tic (-1 APP).

6. Character seems to enter a tunnel of white light, where he meets a deceased friend or relative who gives him a cryptic clue to the current adventure.

7. Character gains Insight. Add one point to Cthulhu Mythos for each SAN point lost from the Experience.

8. Character is filled with the Spirit (+1 POW).

9. Character toughens up from the Experience (+1d6 HP).

10. Character has a new lease on life. Add 2d6 to SAN and annoy the other characters with your optimism.

If the POW roll is failed, the character is still dead, but the FF is translated into characteristic points which can be added to the next character that player creates. All the points must be spent on one newly generated character and a player cannot save the FF from several dead characters to create one super-character. Characteristics must remain within the usual diced maxi-

mums (that is, 21 for EDU and 18 for the others).

Example: Constance Sternwozzle (POW 12) is snooping around a cemetery alone one night when she is attacked by a ghoul, taking a horrible wound (enough to kill her). The Keeper calls for a Near Death roll, applying the Undeserved bonus (since she was killed by a single attack from an incidental threat) and the Prologue/Climax bonus (since this was the very beginning of the adventure), giving a total multiplier of x3, or a POW roll of 36 or less.

If she succeeds. Constance loses all her HP and goes into a coma. The Keeper rolls for SAN loss, and gets 5! The duration is rolled as three days. In addition, he gives her Necrophobia (having never seen a ghoul, she thought it was a zombie!). Rolling on the Near Death table, the Keeper scores a 6, a Visitation. So, Constance winds up in a hospital bed, tossing and turning for three days in a wild, hallucinatory fever when she is visited by her dead grandmother, who prattles on as usual — "Oh, Constance, dear, the 'other side' is so lovely! In fact, just the other day I was having tea with this lovely woman, a Ms. Danbit — pity all the trouble she's been having with those accursed vandals — lovely woman. Anyway..." (the entrance to the ghouls' warren is under Ms. Danbit's grave). When Constance heals up some, she might go downtown to buy a shovel...

If she fails. Constance's player calls for a moment of silence, then starts creating his replacement character, Sir George Crum-pet. With an FF of 3, George has three extra points to play with. He adds two to POW (adding 10 to SAN) and adds the last one to EDU (giving him 20 more professional skill points), Thanks, Constance!

One sticky problem with these rules is ... what if the character became Cthulhu-munchies, and there's not enough left to resurrect? Easy — just ignore logic! Have the character wake up naked, burned by digestive juices, lying on the beach of some Pacific island, surrounded by sinister natives. The Mythos isn't bound by natural laws — and neither is the Keeper. So don't look at death as the end of an adventure, but as the beginning of a new one! □

The Villain Who Wouldn't Die

Frightening Ways to Keep Your Favorite Bad Guy Coming Back For More

By Rob Vaux © 1995 ♦ Artwork by Matt Wilson © 1995

At some time or another (usually in our early adolescence), all of us have probably experienced a Z grade slasher flick. Unwilling to indulge in more sophisticated fare, we've put our brains on hold to wallow in the various and sundry gore-fests clogging the video shelves: *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and their countless spin-offs, rip-offs, and sequels. The story never wavers — each film reveals a new bunch of sex-starved teenagers venturing off into the middle of nowhere, only to be disemboweled one at a time by some maladjusted hockey goalie with a Black and Decker fetish — and, like it or not, the trappings of slasher films have become staples of the horror genre.

As a given series goes on, it becomes apparent that the hockey goalie in question is tougher than he looks; no matter what happens to him, he just pops back up in the next film, ready for more. Each installment of *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, etc., ends with the last heroic teens finally taking down the house villain and walking off into the sunset. Then the film makes enough money to justify another sequel, and the writers have to figure out how to bring him back to life again. And sure enough, some incredibly contrived series of events occurs to resurrect the psychopath and send him careening off against a new gang of hapless victims. Well, why should all that hard work go to waste on the video shelf? Now you too can terrorize your players with a seemingly unstoppable baddie who just won't lay down and croak like a decent human being. What better way to infuse fear and terror into your villain than having him pop back up again and again just when the characters thought he was street grease?

Bad guys are vital to successful stories, and a villain that players love to hate can be one of the most fruitful elements of a campaign. By keeping him around—despite the characters' best efforts to off



him — you can heighten the mystery and danger surrounding him and make his schemes the perfect foil to keep a group of characters going. If done correctly, your own, home-grown Villain Who Wouldn't Die can become just as memorable as Jason, Freddy, and all those other folks. Below is a series of suggestions for working such a villain into your campaign, either as an existing character or the foundation for a new one.

1. Plausibility, or "Hey, isn't that the guy we decapitated last week?"

The cardinal rule for bringing a villain back from the grave is to make sure the players buy it. This involves one of two different strategies. First, the villain could die in some way that prevents the characters from confirming his death. In other words — *no body can be found*. It plunged off a cliff or was buried in rubble or just got burned beyond recognition. This is a favorite tactic of comic book writers, who need ways to bring their favorite evil geniuses back from the dead on the spur of the moment. The problem is that it can get old very quickly and stretch credibility to the point of ridicule. If it takes some staggeringly implausible set of circumstances to remove the corpus delicti each and every time, the players aren't going to buy it and your carefully-crafted bad guy will be reduced to a joke.

A second and more workable method is to facilitate the villain's return by some factor that negates what seems to be certain doom. Whether it be resurrection, mistaken identity, a clone or whatever, some paranormal circumstances have allowed him to throw back the icy claw of death and return to the land of the living. As a general rule, it should be something unwholesome and vaguely disturbing, something which adds to the villain's general aura of menace. TSR's King Ivid V, the mad ruler brought back as a member of the undead, or DC Comics Ra's Al Ghul, who periodically resurrects himself with a psychosis-causing pit of primordial slime, are good examples.

Cloaking the method in an air of mystery helps this process as well: the less the players know about how their nemesis has returned, the more unsettling and creepy his reappearance is likely to be. Which brings us to suggestion 2...

2. Pacing It, or "Him again!?"

Nothing angers players more than something they can't kill, and a villain who shows up every session is going to make things very boring very quickly. Arrange for some down-time between encounters. Let the players relax and move on to other challenges. When you decide to bring him back, do it slowly. Let little events begin to filter into the game. A body turns up with tell-tale slash marks on it. A lackey or device appears that suggests their old nemesis. Characters feel as if they're being watched and studied, or stalked by someone they feel they know. Keep them guessing as to who it could be; make things tantalizingly familiar, but not so obvious that the player know immediately that their nemesis has returned. Then, just when they're confused and unnerved enough, let 'em have it.

Again, this tactic needs to be approached very carefully, or else the element of surprise is lost. Dramatic returns should only happen very occasionally in order to avoid becoming commonplace. When you do plan to bring the baddie back, make sure the players are focusing on other things. Freddy Krueger should be at the very backs of their minds. That way, when he finally turns up, the shock and horror of his appearance will have its full dramatic impact, and your players will be appropriately unnerved. "But you can't be back! You're dead! We killed you!" Panic and mayhem should reign, and when they finally do put him down again, there should still be that lingering doubt in their minds as to whether he is truly gone...

3. Playing Possum, or "Look out behind you!"

Everybody knows the slasher film cliché where the heroes think the killer's dead and relax, only to have him pop up again seconds later. The first time you saw it, it was probably a shock. By the tenth or eleventh, the novelty had worn off, and now you probably giggle uncontrollably whenever the filmmakers resort to it. It's usually a last-ditch way of eliciting cheap shocks, or the mark of a desperate screenplay. The lesson its hackneyed status presents should not be lost on Gamemasters.

Playing possum should generally be limited to the villain's lackeys or servants. A head honcho resorting to such tomfoolery will lose the player's fear and respect in a

New York minute. It suggests desperation on his part, and allows the players to believe that he's on his last legs: "Lord Grimmore's been reduced to playing dead! Now we've got him!" Furthermore, getting up and lumbering after the group that just kicked your butt isn't too bright, and stupidity never inspires the respect a good baddie needs. The best way for a head villain to play possum ties into the "vanishing body" scenario discussed above. Rather than having him get up and lurch after the characters for one more round of pointless combat, let them think he's dead and move on. Then, when they come back to finish looting the body, they find it has mysteriously vanished...and can spend the next few wide-eyed nights wondering what might have happened to it. But as mentioned before, overdoing this can quickly get old. Use it sparingly.

On the other hand, playing possum can work quite well if used by the villain's cannon fodder. Imagine the players wading through a horde of undead minions, slaying them all at great cost. Then, as they relax and move on to the next challenge, they hear the fiendish laughter of their adversary and turn to see the slobbering zombies they just destroyed rise again and shamble towards them...

The key to this scenario is detachment on the part of the villain. If the players see his hand involved in the resurrection of his followers, but no direct involvement, then the scene comes off as scary and threatening without wallowing in predictability. The villain can strike at them from a distance, and even his lowliest followers are tougher to kill than may be readily apparent.

4. Proper Attitude, or "Jason's...cool, heh-heh."

Slasher villains from the movies have the habit of becoming anti-heroes of a sort, adored and worshipped by the prepubescent fans who shell out hard-earned allowances to indulge in their escapades. One of the key reasons for bringing a favorite villain back lies in this appeal. His return should constitute a legitimate challenge for the players, one that they relish and dread simultaneously. They should be drooling to see what insidious scheme he has up his sleeve, they should shiver with nervous glee when they hear he might not be dead after all. In short, they've got to love being scared by him.

How exactly can you make that work? Beyond the actual mechanics involved in orchestrating his return, the nature of the villain must have something compelling about it. The players have to really be scared of him, he has to represent a legitimate threat to their lives, liberties and pursuits of happiness. But at the same time, he has to have something enticing about him, some little quirk that makes him appealing. No matter how shallow and silly, all slasher film give their killers some gimmick that separates them from the rest of the genre. Usually, it's a weapon of some sort, or an article of clothing like Jason Voorhee's famous hockey mask, but it needn't be that overt. It could be a mark that he leaves wherever he's been. It could be the flair with which he commits his nefarious deeds. It could even be some tag line he delivers, whispered on the wind as the players step out of their lodgings. Whatever it is, it should suggest the villain's presence without actually bringing him into the picture. Any good horror director will tell you it's not what you show, it's what you don't show, and a villain's prominent absence is ten times scarier than his

appearance in person. Come up with a few tell-tale signatures to drop among the landscape, and your players will be counting the moments until they can cross swords with him.

Further Research (sic)

Obviously, the horror rack at your local video store has tons of slasher titles available. Sequels tend to have the most Thing That Wouldn't Die ideas by virtue of necessity, but most of the best examples are originals. John Carpenter's *Halloween* is required viewing for anyone planning to bring slasher conventions in their campaign, as is *Psycho*, the immortal fount from which the genre has sprung. For a lighter touch, Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* films have some extremely clever takes on the idea of unkillable villains. Other films embracing the Thing That Wouldn't Die include *The Crow* (with the hero returning from the dead instead of the villain), *Interview With the Vampire*, and either version of *Cape Fear*, just to name a few.

Television shows are equally rich sources of ideas. A particular favorite of

mine is the syndicated *Forever Knight*, which brought its ubervillain, La Croix, back from the dead in a brutally unnerving manner. Soap operas are also great places to look; favored villains have a nasty way of popping back up just when the ratings are beginning to slide. Finally, most comic books have resurrected characters who were once thought dead. Pick a title, and sooner or later, somebody important will make a dramatic return from oblivion.

With a little adjustment, these examples can be made to fit almost any character, turning another run-of-the-mill thug into a villain that will have players looking over their shoulder at every turn. Why settle for a one-shot bad guy, when you can keep him coming back time and time again? When worked properly, The Villain Who Wouldn't Die can make a good campaign great and keep your players engaged for hours on end. Just remind them to duck when the chainsaws come out. □

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