

STARFALL

HALF PRICE DEATH

Austin Barth



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Presents

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By Austin Barth

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
What the Investigators Know	3
Background.....	3
Lucky Star Cigarettes	3
Erebus Leaf.....	3
Philip Gainor, Dream Eater	3
Possessed Workers	3
Running the Scenario	4
A Note on Lucky Star Cigarettes	4
Introducing the Investigators	4
St. Mary’s Hospital	4
Victoria’s Office	5
Overlook Hospital.....	5
The Evening Gazette.....	6
The Godwin Estate	6
Carver’s Shoe Shop.....	7
Wendell Carver’s Home	7
Public Library	8
Act Two	8
The Town of Starside.....	9
Starside Library	9
Sorrow Star Lake	9
Starside Inn	9
Kissner’s Diner	9
Lucky Star Cigarette Company	9
The Gainor Estate.....	10
The Dreamlands	12
Conclusion	12
NPC Stats	12
Possessed Townsfolk	12
Philip Gainor, Aging Tobacconist	13
The Dream Eater	13
Starfall Denizens.....	13
NPC Stats	13
Handouts	14

INTRODUCTION

A strange illness has been cropping up in the investigators' city. Five people have been found in a comatose, dreaming state. The investigators are asked to find the cause of this strange illness before it spreads any further.

WHAT THE INVESTIGATORS KNOW

Five people have been found with strange but identical symptoms. All were found in an unending sleep, and no treatment has been able to wake them. The patients were taken to local hospitals and are being kept under observation. Local doctors suggest that the city may be facing an outbreak of a new disease with an unknown vector. The sickness has earned the nickname 'Dreaming Disease' due the patients existing in a constant state of dreaming. Additionally, the patients sleepwalk or talk in their sleep from time to time.

BACKGROUND

There is no 'sickness' affecting the victims of the Dreaming Disease. Philip Gainor, the owner of the Lucky Star Cigarette Company, has trapped the patients' minds in The Dreamlands. Philip uses a strange strain of tobacco known as Erebus Leaf to allow his victims to project themselves into the Dreamlands. Once there, he traps his victims in a state of perpetual sleep, feeding on their energy.

LUCKY STAR CIGARETTES

The Lucky Star Cigarette Company is a cigarette manufacturer and tobacco grower located near the town of Starside. Lucky Star's products are mostly normal, but Philip has been lacing some cigarettes with leaves from a plant known as Erebus Leaf. The company's symbol is a red star, inverted, with "LUCKY STAR CIGARETTE COMPANY" written in a circle around it.

EREBUS LEAF

Erebus Leaf is a strain of Tobacco with black veins running through the leaves. The plant causes those who smoke it, eat it, or touch its oils to have their minds projected into the Dreamlands when they sleep. This manifests as fantastical dreams of far-off places. These amateur dreamers become easy prey for any who would hunt their dream forms. Philip, one such hunter, has been caging the minds of Erebus Leaf smokers within the Dreamlands to feed on their essence.

PHILIP GAINOR, DREAM EATER

Philip Gainor is a wealthy, aging, successful tobacconist. Philip appears much younger than his age of sixty-five, looking around forty-five. He spent his younger years traveling the world in search of new strains of tobacco, new farming methods, and revenue streams. Seven years prior, he stumbled upon Erebus Leaf while traveling in Brazil. Philip now cultivates the leaf strain at his plantation in Starside.

Gainor, using Erebus Leaf, has developed a talent for Dreaming. He has willed into being the dark city of Starfall. Starfall is a shadowy metropolis spanning an area much greater than his home of Starside. Philip's gaunt, pale-faced servants fill the city's towering, shadowed buildings. Erebus Leaf's corrupting nature has twisted Philip's mind. His dream body and the city of Starfall reflect this corruption with their forms. In the Dreamlands, Philip appears as a tall, shadowed figure wrapped in dark robes floating several feet above the ground.

Philip is using his mastery of the Dreamlands to accomplish two primary goals. First, he wants to lengthen his life. Philip discovered a way to drain the energy from trapped minds during his time in the Dreamlands. Using a device he dreamed up called a 'Mindcage', he can force someone to stay in the Dreamlands indefinitely. Once a mind is trapped, they become vulnerable to possession and can be tapped for power. He uses this energy to restore his youth, and to become a more powerful Dreamer. Draining the energy from trapped minds in the Dreamlands is a destructive, lethal process.

Philip's second goal is to bring his wife, Mara, back from the dead. Philip has constructed a Dreamlands clone of his wife. He intends to capture a suitable host in the waking world and use their body as a host for his wife's mind. Philip has been using those he traps in the Dreamlands as test subjects. So long as the victim's mind is trapped, the residents of Starfall can assume control via the link to the Mindcage. The link is imperfect and causes many strange behaviors. Philip has twenty Possessed Workers at present. These are his most successful experiments to date.

POSSESSED WORKERS

Philip's experiments into allowing residents of Starfall to cross the wall of sleep have been mildly successful. The science is imperfect and leads to many side effects in the host bodies up to and including premature death. Attempts to control host bodies can cause sleepwalking, incoherent babbling, and occasional jerking movements. There have many successful possessions, and these possessed individuals have found their way to Starside. Most speak in heavily accented, broken English and could easily be mistaken for foreign workers. The possessed workers have unnerving movements due to the imperfect control of the host by the resident entity.

RUNNING THE SCENARIO

The below sections offer settings and characters the players may interact with. The interactions with the NPCs are by no means an exhaustive list of ways to approach the scenario or scenes. Stealth, subterfuge and strange solutions are always welcomed.

A NOTE ON LUCKY STAR CIGARETTES

The key piece of evidence in this scenario are the Lucky Star Cigarette packs. The crux of the first half of the investigation relies on the investigators not recognizing the connection immediately. For this reason, unless an investigator asks what brand of cigarettes they've found, the Keeper shouldn't note that they're Lucky Star brand. In this case, it is still suggested that the handout for Lucky Star Cigarettes not be given out until multiple packs of Cigarettes have been found. Once a few packs have been found, call for an Idea roll to allow a player to realize that all the packs have been the same brand, and give them the logo handout. Alternatively, they could discover this as appropriate, but in either case giving out the handout too quickly could cut the first section of investigation short. The handout should push them to become curious about Starside, and the cigarette company itself.

INTRODUCING THE INVESTIGATORS

The investigators can become involved in a few different ways. Perhaps one of the victims is a friend. A private investigator could easily be contacted by concerned family that feels that there is something amiss. In any case, once they're in conversation, give the investigators the following information:

- Five people have been found over the last few weeks, apparently asleep but unable to be awoken.
- The patients were moved to hospitals in the area, but doctors are becoming worried there is an outbreak of a new disease with an unknown vector
- The sickness is nicknamed 'Dreaming Disease' since the patients have been known to sleep talk or sleep walk.

Additionally, give the investigators the newspaper articles labeled Handout 1 and Handout 2. These are articles from the Evening Gazette, a local newspaper.

After reading the articles, the investigators should have a few locations to explore.

- St. Mary's Hospital
- The Evening Gazette
- Overlook Hospital

They could also research Dreaming Disease at the Library.

ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL

St. Mary's Hospital is located Downtown in the investigator's city. It is relatively busy due to its clinic which serves many of the poor, underserved members of the community.

In the reception area is a large, half-circle desk with three attending nurses. Signs on the walls point to the various departments. Those with Dreaming Disease have been placed away from other patients on the second floor's North wing. A nurse named "Josephine" is happy to answer the investigators' questions. If the investigators give the name of one of the patients and a reasonable relationship explanation (Fast Talk / Persuade) they're given directions and sent on their way.

In the quarantined area the attending physician, Dr. Malcom Nelson, can be found monitoring and overseeing two patients. He is at wit's end, and happy to believe any story the investigators concoct as he's happy to have another conscious person to bounce ideas off.

Dr. Nelson's patients are as follows:

- Edward Gilman, 52, Drifter
 - Edward has no known relatives. He was brought in by an unknown homeless man.
 - Edward was admitted two weeks ago.
- Victoria Doyle, 29, Private Investigator
 - A client, Darlene Bayley, found her asleep in her chair upon arriving to an appointment.
 - Victoria was admitted five days ago.

The doctor will relate symptoms that he has noticed, including persistent dreaming sleep, sleep walking and sleep talking. He notes that he hasn't been able to understand anything that they've said, almost as if it was in another language, and that the only word he has made out was "Starfall." Dr. Nelson will also advise that he has had to restrain the patients, as a sleepwalking incident ended in Victoria falling off the bed and bruising her cheek.

During conversation, Dr. Nelson may mention that Darlene Bayley is a nurse that works at the hospital, and he offers to get her if they have additional questions. If the investigators accept, he'll ask them to wait with the patients while he finds Darlene, allowing two to three minutes for the investigators to poke around.

Edward's effects are piled on a bedside table, and Victoria's coat hangs near her bed. Edward's effects consist of the following:

- A half-empty flask of cheap whisky
- An old knife
- A small journal
- A mostly empty pack of cigarettes
- Twine
- Quarter box of matches
- Weather-beaten coat

See note regarding Lucky Star Cigarettes (p. 4)

Edward's journal contains mostly mundane activities of a homeless man attempting to scrape by in the city. It does, however, have some excerpts of note detailing his strange, terrifying dreams. (Handout 3)

Victoria's effects consist only of a pocketbook (with a business card containing her office's address) and a set of keys.

While inspecting the room, one of the patients will slip free of their bonds and reach out suddenly to try to grab one of the investigators, babbling in an unknown tongue and gesturing towards the rest of their restraints, their eyes rolled back in their head. This will last for a few seconds before the patient falls limp onto their bed, returning to their deep slumber. Seeing this event and hearing the speaking is jarring and will call for a SAN roll (1/1d4).

Once Dr. Nelson has returned with Nurse Darlene Bayley, the investigators can ask her a few questions before she needs to return to her patients. She is willing to answer most questions and will lead by saying that she found Victoria asleep at her desk when she arrived for an appointment. Nurse Bayley will be reluctant to talk about why she was at Victoria's office, but if Persuaded she will reveal that she believed her husband was cheating on her, and she asked Victoria to find evidence. She can provide Victoria's office address, which is about a ten-minute walk from the hospital.

Once the investigators are ready to depart, Dr. Nelson will (if he trusts the investigators) suggest that they check into the patients at the Overlook Hospital where his colleague Dr. Sadie Broughton is overseeing the care of three other patients with Dreaming Disease. If asked, he will either call ahead or write a letter of introduction so that they will allow the investigators to see the doctor.

VICTORIA'S OFFICE

Victoria's Office is located a few minutes' walk away in a run-down block of office buildings. Her office number can be found on the mailboxes in at the front of the complex. The door is locked, but can be picked using Lockpicking or STR, though the keys from the hospital will also work.

The office has a desk covered in piles of notes from various cases, a shelf with many books, and several plants. A Spot Hidden roll allows the investigators to find a folder containing notes on the movements of a 'Mark Bayley' as well as photographs of him in flagrante delicto with an unknown female. An INT/Idea roll will allow the investigators to realize that the woman in the photos is a young, attractive nurse from the reception desk they passed at St. Mary's. The desk also holds several notebooks, a half-empty pack of cigarettes, and various office supplies. See note regarding Lucky Star Cigarettes (p. 4).

OVERLOOK HOSPITAL

Overlook Hospital is located on the edge of town near the wealthier denizens. This quiet hospital caters to wealthy clientele that can afford to pay for better care. The front desk is staffed by Ruby Verner and Gerald Eliot who, with a successful Spot Hidden roll, can be seen laughing and making jabs at one another. Once they notice the investigators, they'll attempt to look busy, but a Psychology roll shows they're clearly just flirting. Ruby will initially handle conversation, asking what brings the investigators to the hospital. If they are unable to produce decent justification for seeing the patients, Ruby won't allow them to visit the patients, citing patient privacy.

Those suffering from Dreaming Disease are being kept on the third floor under a strict quarantine, with access being restricted to prevent potential exposure. The quarantine room is locked, and could be opened with a Lockpicking roll, but the hall is well-patrolled by guards, orderlies, nurses and other doctors going between cases. The investigators can meet Dr. Sadie Broughton to discuss the case at her office near the quarantine room.

Dr. Broughton is a stickler for procedure and would normally be unwilling to discuss a patient's personal details, but she is at wit's end, and can be Persuaded or given the letter of recommendation from Dr. Nelson to convince her to share details.

Dr. Broughton will note that the patients are in a persistent dreaming sleep and have been restrained due to instances of sleepwalking due to the risk of escape. They have occasionally muttered or yelled out in their sleep, babbling in an incoherent language outside of the word "Starfall."

Under no circumstances will Dr. Broughton allow the Investigators access to the patients directly, citing health risk, but she can be motivated to divulge the following patient details:

- Wendell Carver, 45, Shoe Shop Owner.
 - Wendell was brought in by his wife, Rita, fifteen days ago.
- Jewell Corbin, 24, Journalist
 - Jewell is unmarried and was brought in after being missing from work for several days. A concerned coworker found her in her home.
- Gustav Godwin, 26, Patron and Painter
 - Found by his butler, Walter Caldwell, at his parents' estate.

After answering any reasonable questions, Dr. Broughton will conclude (if the investigators have not yet visited Dr. Nelson) with suggesting that they visit Dr. Nelson at St. Mary's before escorting them to the lobby and wishing them good luck.

Wendell Carver's Shoe Shop and Gustav Godwin's estate can both be found in a phonebook or directory with Library Use.

Upon returning to the lobby, Ruby and Gerald will be nowhere to be seen, having snuck off to a local utility closet.

THE EVENING GAZETTE

The Evening Gazette is in an industrial section of town due to the space required for printing presses. The offices are chaotic, and the atmosphere is busy as news is hastily written, stories accepted and rejected, and journalists scurry from place to place.

Edgar Godfrey, the paper's chief editor, can be found in his office near the back of the newsroom. Quentin Watkins sits at his desk, typing an article. Jewell's desk sits unoccupied, covered in neat stacks of papers and some personal effects.

Edgar Godfrey

Edgar's office is chaos incarnate. Articles lie strewn about the room, and he stands in front of a board near his desk reading snippets of text and potential headlines. Edgar is roughly 45 and takes a brisk but not entirely unfriendly attitude with the investigators. He wants to know what they want and how to get them out of his office.

If the investigators explain that they're looking for information on the Dreaming Disease he will wave it off and tell him to go talk to Quentin, noting that "It's a load of shit, I like sleeping too." If they suggest a paranormal connection, he'll appear interested saying that "It's a decent angle." And asking for a write-up for next week's Spooky Sandra column. He is otherwise unhelpful, aside from telling them to poke around Jewell's desk and directing them to talk to Quentin, saying that "He's had eyes for her forever. Frankly I wish they'd get it out of their systems."

Quentin Watkins

Quentin Watkins sits at his desk, typing an article titled "100th Anniversary Celebration at St. Cyprian's." As the investigators enter the building, he will attempt to notice (Spot Hidden) them, noting that he hasn't seen them around. If approached and questioned, Quentin will be happy to provide any information he can to help Jewell. He suggests they check out her desk if they think it will be helpful. He was the one that found her in her apartment and can provide some basic details.

If asked about Jewell's behavior, Quentin says that she complained recently about strange dreams from some far-off land and said that she was learning to 'lucid dream'. She talked about a shadowy place in the distance that she was pretty sure was called "Starfall," but she had no idea why she knew the name. Around the time of her disappearance, she seemed more tired than usual, and Quentin thought that she was avoiding sleeping.

Jewell's Desk

Jewell's desk is relatively tidy compared to most at the newspaper. The desk contains the following:

- Notes on various story ideas
- Pens
- A third of a pack of cigarettes
- A photo of her and an older woman
- A typewriter

See note regarding Lucky Star Cigarettes (p. 4)

A careful inspection of the photograph, or a Spot Hidden roll reveals a piece of paper that was folded beneath the photograph's frame. Unfolding the paper shows a vivid drawing of a world of dreams unimagined. In the far distance of the drawing, an inky black city can be seen, seeming to call out to the viewer. Feeling the pull of the unearthly landscape is unsettling and calls for a SAN check. (0/1d4).

THE GODWIN ESTATE

Godwin manor sits on the edge of town, and is an oddity compared to most buildings in the city. The manor sits on 2.5 acres of well-manicured grass dotted with trees and strolling paths. The building itself is a three-story brick house with a central courtyard. Archways provide access to the central courtyard which contains a statue of Athena with her spear held aloft and one breast bared. The statue is cracked with age, and when the wind howls the courtyard seems to howl with it due to the wind blowing through the arches.

The grounds of the house are attended by men and women that are strangely uniform in dress and appearance. The grounds and house are buzzing with activity from almost mechanically precise men and women working on the task of upkeeping the aging building and tending to the grounds.

As the investigators approach the manor, but prior to them knocking on the door, the door swings open to reveal a man with dark hair that is graying at the edges. He will introduce himself as Walter, saying “Ah, you must be the investigators here to inquire about Master Gustav. You’re right on time. Follow me, the Lady awaits.”

The interior of the manor is spotless, any speck of dust or misplaced article being swiftly dealt with. Two maids stand ready to receive coats from the investigators, if they have them. The well-polished floors are made of dark, rich wood, and every painting or piece of furniture is laced with precision.

The paintings covering the walls feature a variety of subjects, from landscapes to subject pieces of dark-haired, pale men and women. They are all beautiful in their own regard, though many of the paintings have dark undertones to them.

The house consists of several bedrooms, sitting rooms, a lounge, kitchens, water closets and parlors. The investigators will be taken to a sitting room that has been converted to a studio.

Sitting Room

If the investigators enter the sitting room normally, they will find the lady of the house standing behind an easel. Viola is a tall, thin, beautiful woman with dark hair and full, red lips. She wears a black, high-collared, tight-fitting dress with lace accents throughout. She appears to be in her early thirties, though investigators may assume that she must be older than that.

Viola is friendly and will introduce herself and motion for the investigators to sit. There are always exactly as many chairs as investigators. The painting she is working on is a landscape piece, half of which is bright, vibrant colors while the other half, featuring a city, is dark and muted hues.

She will inquire how the investigation is going, and if asked how she knows that they are investigating anything she’ll explain that “We don’t get many visitors here. If anyone is coming here out of the blue, it’s probably on business. If it’s a group of... assorted individuals that I’ve never seen before, well, it stands to reason that you’d be here because you’re investigating whatever wrongness has taken hold of my son.”

Viola will continue working on her painting as she talks, occasionally consulting a journal next to her easel. The journal, she’ll explain if asked, is part of a long-standing tradition between her and her son. He takes notes of his dreams and she paints them. Several weeks ago, his dreams took a different tack than normal, and became wild hallucinations of strange lands. Later, his dreams became filled with weird entities and a shadowy city. She’ll gesture to a crashing star headed towards the shadowed city and mention that “He said it was called ‘Starfall’, and I feel like maybe that’s where he is...”

The investigators are welcome to examine the journal, and it has much of the same information. Viola will answer any questions she can to help the investigation, but unfortunately knows little. If asked about her husband, she’ll explain that he has gone hunting to help him relax. The investigators are welcome to examine Gustav’s room, which has been kept in the same condition that he left it at Viola’s request.

Gustav’s Room

Gustav’s room is tidy, and consists of the following:

- A desk, with notes and writing snippets
- A shelf containing several books on dreams and writing, and a shallow bowl full of glassy black arrowheads.
- A trash can, which contains several sketches, snippets of abandoned stories, and an empty cigarette pack.
- A closet
 - The closet is largely uneventful, containing only clothing and a few pulp magazines in a box.

See note regarding Lucky Star Cigarettes (p. 4)

Once the investigators have asked enough questions and finished their search, Viola will ask that if they need anything from her or if she can in any way help that they contact her. She also says that her family will forever be in their debt if they can help return Gustav to her.

CARVER’S SHOE SHOP

A humble shoe repair and sales store located in a small downtown storefront. The store is open from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M. and Wendell’s assistant Marilyn Bucknam is running the store. Marilyn likes her boss and her job, and will try to assist as much as possible, but she doesn’t know much aside from what she has read in the news. If asked, she can provide Wendell’s address if the investigators appear trustworthy and wish to speak to Rita, his wife. The storefront contains few clues to his lifestyle, but a Spot Hidden roll reveals a number of entries in a sales ledger on his desk for special orders, one of which is for a Gustav Godwin (this contains his address). Additionally, a pack of cigarettes belonging to Wendell can be spotted behind the front counter. See note on Lucky Star Cigarette Packs (p. 5).

WENDELL CARVER’S HOME

Wendell Carver’s home is a typical ranch style with eggshell paint and red shutters. The house is quiet, clean, and very typical for middle-of-the-road America. Rita has been taking some time off to deal with the stress of Wendell’s illness, so she will be home whenever the investigators arrive.

Rita is at first suspicious of a group of strange people showing up unannounced, but she can be Persuaded by investigators that mention why they're there. The house has many photos of long-since-departed children throughout the home, and the shelves are filled with assorted knickknacks and mementos from vacations. Inspecting the living room will reveal a pack of cigarettes that Rita comments on saying that "I can't stand the new brand, it smells even worse than his old ones." As Wendell had switched cigarette brands within the last few months. See note regarding Lucky Star Cigarette packs (p. 4).

If asked about Wendell's behavior, Rita says that he hasn't been sleeping well due to his back acting up and headaches. This was a lie, but she didn't know that, as Wendell was not dealing well with his strange dreams.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The following information can be found at the public library. Each subject requires a different Library Use roll.

- Lucky Star Cigarettes
- Dreaming Disease
- Starside
- Sorrow Star Lake
- The Patients

Lucky Star Cigarettes

The Lucky Star Cigarette Company was founded forty years ago in the town of Starside by a man named Philip Gainor. Philip was twenty-five at the time of the company's founding. Philip started the company after inheriting his family's tobacco farm after the untimely passing of his father.

Dreaming Disease

No references to this mysterious illness appear in any scientific literature, however several articles describe similar symptoms. In some of the case studies, the patients never awoke. In other cases, the patients simply woke up and seemed to go back to their lives with no memory of what happened. In yet other cases, the patients vanished in the night, never to be seen or heard from again.

Starside

Starside is a small town housing around 1500 people located approximately two hours away by car. Many of the town's residents are employed by the Lucky Star Cigarette Company. The town's name refers to Sorrow Star Lake, which is located a half mile from the town's center. It was founded in the early 1800's by settlers that chose to settle near the lake due to its abundant fish, as well as the area's excellent farmland.

Sorrow Star Lake

Sorrow Star Lake is a freshwater lake visited by a variety of tourists and locals alike. The lake's name comes from an old Native American legend regarding the lake's formation.

According to the legend, a star in the sky fell in love with the bright, glowing moon. The star wished to be with the moon but no matter how hard it tried, it could not reach it. The star lamented its separation, and wept, causing the water to pool on the earth. One night, the star believed that it saw the moon in the pool of its tears, so it leapt from the sky to join its love. The star crashed into the lake, having been deceived by the reflection, and it is said that the star remains there to this day, forever gazing up at its love.

Local legends and ghost stories often mention the lake, with strange lights being seen beneath the waves. Some say that they've seen other stars come to the lake to bring back their brethren. Others say that the ghost of a woman that drowned her children in the lake still haunts the shores at night.

The Patients

Addresses of various locations mentioned previously (Carver's Shoe Shop, the general location of Godwin Manor, etc.) can be found here.

STARTING THE SECOND ACT

At this point, the investigators should have discovered that the link between the victims is that they all smoke the same brand of cigarettes, and that the cigarettes are manufactured in a town called Starside. The pacing of this act is largely dependent on the kind of players in the game, and the amount of combat is similarly variable. The players can avoid combat entirely if they are able to use stealth and subterfuge to avoid confrontation.

The main thing to keep in mind when running this portion of the adventure is that out-of-towners looking into the factory and exploring town are a common occurrence, and Philip is certain that no one has any idea that he is guilty of any wrongdoing. Indeed, he treats everyone he meets with kindness and open arms, happy to have more customers and potential victims.

THE TOWN OF STARSIDE

Starside is a small town located around two hours away from the investigators. The trip to Starside is through largely rural areas, comprising of many vast fields of various crops. The road to Starside passes by Sorrow Star Lake. Occasional small watercraft can be seen on the lake, and families occasionally picnic on the shores. Starside has its own police and fire stations, though they are consolidated into a single large building. The mayor's office, administrative functions, and courts are similarly consolidated. The town also has a couple restaurants, two small motels, a church, law office, and other small shops.

THE LOCALS

The residents of Starside are not enumerated here, but some general guidance for how residents would react to out-of-towners follows. Starside's citizens are used to travelers coming here on business, to visit the lake, or to visit the cigarette company.

Possessed workers pass through town on a regular basis going between the workman's bunks at the Gainor Estate and the fields at Lucky Star. Possessed workers speak semi-broken English, though they can understand it perfectly. The accents sound eerily like the unknown language the investigators may have heard during their investigation into Dreaming Disease.

The regular residents don't distrust the workers, though they will admit that they find them a little strange. Most regard the Possessed as "Kinda odd foreigners." but ultimately say that "Mr. Gainor is very kind to help these folks get settled in America." The residents of Starside aren't concerned by the influx of cheap labor as over time the 'foreigners' have replaced the farm hands and some factory workers, but those who were displaced were promoted to easier, higher paying positions rather than let go. Approximately twenty possessed workers live at the Gainor estate in the workman's bunks.

STARSIDE LIBRARY

The Starside Library is small and contains the same information as the previous public library, in addition to information on the Gainor Family.

The Gainor Family

The Gainor Family has long been present in Starside. They were one of the first families to settle the land in this area, building a house near the lakeside. Philip's parents passed when he was only twenty-three, some 42 years ago. He inherited the family farm and grew determined to turn it into a thriving business. Using savings from selling his crop, he went from merely growing tobacco to producing and selling cigarettes and cigars, naming the factory for the nearby town.

Philip married and has two children that have now left the home. He is a widower and lost his wife ten years ago due to illness according to an obituary.

SORROW STAR LAKE

Sorrow Star Lake is a freshwater lake populated with large quantities of fish. The pebble-filled beaches are well-maintained by the locals who value the lake for its tourism draw and beauty. The Gainor estate sits on a portion of the lake away from the primary beaches, about half a mile from the center of town.

Sorrow Star Lake is presented as an opportunity for expanded storytelling and serves as a source of misdirection given the stories surrounding it, but how much truth there is to the stories is left to the Keeper. Play up the mystery and the ominous nature of the lake, and perhaps throw in a favorite ghost story or two.

STARSIDE INN

The Starside Inn is a ten-bedroom single-story motel between the lake and town. The rooms are clean, and the owner / desk worker (Patty Sinclair) is happy to answer any questions that the investigators have about town.

KISSNER'S DINER

Kissner's Diner is located downtown near the Police / Fire stations. It serves typical diner food and the owner, Carl Kissner, is used to serving travelers and locals alike. The investigators may encounter two possessed workers here eating a meal, which is an opportunity to notice their strange movements and odd accents.

LUCKY STAR CIGARETTE COMPANY

The Lucky Star Cigarette Company has a substantial footprint. The main factory complex contains the following areas: Drying rooms, tobacco preparation rooms, cigarette assembly, storage, gift shop, and corporate offices.

Gift Shop

The Gift Shop contains all manner of Lucky Star items, as well as limited-run cigar and cigarette packs. Additionally, tours of the factory and grounds are available here for a small fee. The tour guide, Sally, is bubbly and excited to relate the history of the factory and town. Guided tours start in the corporate offices, move to the fields, then to the drying rooms, preparation rooms, and cigarette assembly.

If the investigators go on a tour, they are joined by an elderly couple (Mabel and George Thompson) that can be used for either comedic relief or a leash to rein in a trigger-happy party.

Corporate Offices

Philip and a variety of accountants, advertising managers, secretaries and the like can be found here. Philip greets most tours and will be happy to chat with the characters for a bit. He talks about his business growing (literally) and will try to present a charming portrait of an aging man. He doesn't suspect the investigators are looking for him unless they make it obvious they're not just tourists. He'll answer any questions but will eventually want to get back to work.

Philip can be found at the corporate offices from 9-4 and in his home otherwise, unless he would be going to town for one reason or another.

Drying Rooms

The drying rooms have vast, hanging tobacco leaves drying in preparation for conversion into cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco and cigarettes. The leaves are drying and changing color, but among them some leaves with black veins can be seen.

Product Assembly

Production workers here assemble cigarettes, pack tins, and roll cigars. The assembly area has mostly happy looking residents of Starside. They are happy to speak to visitors and praise the working conditions. They regard Philip as a "Great boss" that "Isn't letting a tough life get in the way of his business and living well." They'll also remark that "They hope to look as good as him when THEY hit 65."

Fields

The fields of tobacco are vast and dotted with several greenhouses as indicated on the map. The fields themselves will have approximately six workers in total roaming the fields, looking for issues and otherwise tending plants. If tours are being given, they will avoid the greenhouses. If asked about them, the growers will say that the buildings are for "Researching new growing techniques, and germinating tobacco seedlings, as planting them and waiting for them to germinate can be a difficult process." A Natural World roll will confirm that this is often the case when planting Tobacco.

Each of the buildings has only one entrance and appears to be attended by a worker at each door. A Psychology roll will show that they are only pretending to be on break. They never go back inside, they just sit persistently smoking and watching the crowd.

At night, a guard with a flashlight makes rounds every hour starting at the Gift Shop and proceeding in a circle around the fields before arriving back at the gift shop.

Greenhouses

The Greenhouses are large wooden structures with frosted glass windows, though the windows at the top of them are normal glass. Inside of each greenhouse there are rows of seedling tobacco plants, ready to be transplanted from their hydroponic containers to the fields for growing. There are also many rows of black-veined tobacco leaves (Erebus Leaf) at various stages of development. These plants spend their entire life cycle inside the green houses and aren't taken to the field for planting. They require specific care and upkeep, and Gainor doesn't want them confused for sick plants by observers.

Each greenhouse's front door is locked at night and guarded by a single possessed worker during the day. They will direct the investigators away with a note that the greenhouse has proprietary growing technology, so they can't let outsiders in. During the day, three to four workers can be seen through the frosted glass tending plants.

One of the greenhouses has a trapdoor built into the floor, leading to a secret area beneath via a set of well-built stairs. The trapdoor is covered by a rug, but this should be out of place to anyone that notices it with Spot Hidden.

Secret Lab

Beneath one of the greenhouses there is a secret laboratory approximately thirty feet by thirty feet. Inside, barrels are attached to hoses running up through the ground, with a pumping machine attached to them used for watering the fields with a strange red liquid. A leather-bound journal can be found (Spot Hidden) detailing a series of notes regarding experiments. On a nearby table, the investigators see a large pile of notes and drawings detailing the machine.

The journal contains a surprisingly well-designed study of plant growth between crops treated with the liquid and crops not treated with the liquid. The growth-rate and yield of the treated group was significantly higher, and the practice has been expanded to all plants at the Lucky Star farms.

The journal refers to the red liquid as "byproduct from discarded husks."

THE GAINOR ESTATE

The Gainor estate sits just outside of town, near the lake's edge. The grounds are relatively well-kept, and the overall view of the house is picturesque. There are three major buildings to the property.

Worker Dormitories

This large building holds several bedrooms with bunk beds. Each room sleeps four people, and there are six total rooms. All but six beds are spoken for by the field workers. The building also contains three restrooms / showers, a kitchen, and common living areas.

An investigation into the worker's quarters reveals a distinct lack of personal effects. There are no mementos, trinkets, or journals. No one seems to be concerned with possessions, having only a few simple sets of clothing per person.

Workers, if encountered, will be friendly but ultimately feign a lack of understanding of the language to avoid conversation.

Servant House

The Servant House contains three bedrooms, occupied by a butler and maid.

The butler, Thomas Martin, has served Mr. Gainor for many years. He is loyal, though knows little of Gainor's comings and goings. If questioned, he will merely say that his master's affairs are his master's business and that he wasn't at liberty to discuss them. Martin will say that he believes Gainor to be a good man but will admit that as he has aged he has become more... spirited. Thomas knows that the maid has become stranger in her recent years but doesn't admit this to others if asked without good reason.

The maid (introducing herself only as Margaret), is one of the possessed townfolk, though with a greater mastery of English and her body, being one of the first converted. She is distrustful of the investigators and will attempt to get others to send them away. If confronted, she will say that she "Doesn't like out-of-towners meddling in the master's affairs," and attempts to get them to leave. She will try to keep an eye on any investigators that seem to be snooping around.

Gainor Manor

The Manor is two stories tall with a small attic upstairs. The large wooden structure sits near the lake, and the path leading to it is covered in various beautiful flowers. Inside, the first floor contains a guest room, study, kitchen, living room, personal library, restroom, and dining room. The second floor contains a master bedroom, two bedrooms, restroom, and office. Occasionally, a mechanical hum can be heard from somewhere distant. If asked, the servants or Gainor will just say that "Oh that's a pump, helps keep the house dry. Someone apparently thought it was a good idea to build a basement in a lakeside house."

The estate is well-kept, though not nearly so well-kept as the Godwin manor. Gainor's servants live in the nearby servants' quarters during resting hours. Pictures adorn the walls of the manor, mostly featuring Philip in various countries and at various ages. Many have his wife and children, also at various ages. Philip had one daughter and one son.

Kitchen

Herbs sit growing in water-filled, square, glass containers along the windows, apparently used for cooking. The pantry is walk-in, and well-stocked with various fresh vegetables. In the corner of the pantry, a trapdoor is seen. This trapdoor leads down to the basement and is locked with a heavy iron lock.

Basement

A rickety ladder leads down to a small, damp basement. The space is well-lit and contains strange machines that can be seen pumping liquids from one machine to the next, refining a strange red liquid. Following the tubes to their source will reveal a Gore Pit, a pile of naked, twisted human corpses being slowly turned into a red slush by a combination of nearby chemicals, lake water being pumped in, and a slowly churning mechanism. These are the discarded husks of former attempts to control bodies by the residents of Starfall in the dreamlands, and Gainor is refining the nutrients contained in the corpses into a fertilizer used to grow his Erebus Leaf plants, as well as the tobacco in his fields.

Seeing the twisted pile of human corpses will call for a Sanity check (1/1d6+1) due to the disgusting implications.

A journal sits on a nearby table. See Handout 5. The journal details experimentation with a new fertilizer on the fields, as well as mentioning different growing techniques that Gainor has tried to increase yield.

A pile of notes sits near a cage on a nearby shelf. The cage itself is not large enough to hold anything larger than perhaps a dog. The cage is inscribed with many runes in an unknown language. This is a physical representation of the Mindcage in the Dreamlands. The notes detail the progression of his time in the Dreamlands.

"I have found mastery of this new, dreaming paradise. I've remade the city into something greater than it ever could have been. The fools that wander there remain there, and with every new resident from this world I grow stronger in both. My skin tightens, youth returns, and I am slowly becoming more than anything I had ever imagined possible." (Handout 6)

Study

A book on aquaculture (or Hydroponics, depending on era) sits on a table. A small writing desk details various press releases for the cigarette company, and the walls are covered in photos with important dignitaries, visitors, and the like.

Bedrooms Upstairs

Two bedrooms appear to be maintained how their residents last left them, showing a man who has a son and daughter, both of whom have apparently moved away after going to college to pursue careers and lives of their own.

Master Bedroom

A large bed dominates one wall, and a bedside photograph of Philip's late wife sits facing the bedroom. A safe is set into one wall, containing valuables, important documents, and mementos, as well as more explicit research notes regarding the plants, bodies, and dreaming world. One of the notes in the book details that Philip wishes to one day bring back his wife via his research.

"I have a growing recollection of her. Every day she gets more and more like my Mara. Soon, if I can find her a suitable host, she can cross over and start our new life together." (Handout 7)

THE DREAMLANDS

If the investigators are foolish enough to go to the Dreamlands via the Erebus leaf, only certain doom awaits them. The effects of Erebus Leaf take some time to manifest, with repeated smoking and sleeping sessions being required to access The Dreamlands knowingly. Travelling to the Dreamlands via Erebus Leaf is an inherently tainted experience, and the shock of entering the new world requires a **SAN** roll (2/1d8). Once the investigators are in the dreamlands they will, over the course of a few nights of rest, find themselves in the city of Starfall. The shadowed metropolis is filled with strange, pale-faced men and women stalking the streets. Cages no larger than a dog's cage line the streets. Inside of the cages, various people sit bemoaning their captivity and crying out for help. **Spot Hidden** reveals that one of the faces in the crowd matches someone they've seen in Starside, calling for a **SAN** roll (1/1d6).

The longer the investigators spend in Starfall, the more likely they are to encounter the Dream Eater, Philip's dream form. He manifests as a ten-foot tall creature made of billowing cloaks and strips of blackened cloth. Fighting the Dream Eater is likely to result in imprisonment inside one of the many cages in Starfall, their minds imprisoned beyond the wall of sleep.

CONCLUSION

The scenario can end in several ways. The investigators could expose Philip to the police. The police, though they're not immediately trusting of outsiders, aren't evil and will properly investigate the crime, though it may be somewhat difficult to not implicate themselves given that they'd only know about some of the details by breaking and entering.

Philip may become suspicious of them if they're spotted snooping around his estate or the fields after dark. In these cases, he would likely assign a couple possessed workers to tail the investigators and alert him if they start poking around where they're not wanted. His first recourse would be to get the law involved and failing that, take direct action by calling his many possessed workers to his aid and attacking them directly.

To stop Philip's work, the investigators will have to either kill him, destroy all the Erebus Leaf plants, or enter the dreamlands to kill Philip's dream body, the Dream Eater.

Killing Philip will release all possessed workers and return their minds to them, the supernatural influence of his constructed city being undone. This may spark an investigation, but a careful examination of the house by the police will quickly cause a scandal to spiral out of control, given that it would reveal that the tobacco fields were being watered with extracts from human bodies. The fields will be burned, and the Erebus Leaf plants disposed of. Those with their minds being returned to them will be indefinitely insane, having endured in some cases years of torture within the dreamlands, watching their bodies piloted by strange pale-faced creatures.

If the police investigate and find Philip guilty, all the above will occur except for returning those trapped within the Dreamlands to their bodies. This will only occur on Philip's death, and he can continue to elongate his life by consuming the essence of those already trapped in Starfall, as well as directing his minions to continue carrying out his will via communing with them in the realms of sleep.

Battling Philip in the Dreamlands leaves the least physical evidence but will be a very hard-won victory. Destroying the Dream Eater there will prevent him from accessing the Dreamlands entirely, and his ability to control it will fade as well, returning the minds of those trapped in Starfall to their bodies. Given that there will be upwards of twenty insane individuals waking up just outside of the house of the man who has been torturing them for, in some cases, years it is easy to see how mob justice would be swift and deadly. The scandal would be seen as a worker's revolt, and the town would be none the wiser to the investigators' involvement, though the formerly possessed workers and indefinitely sleeping people would know exactly who helped them.

In any of the above cases, Philip's son Liam will return with his sister Sarah to oversee the sale of the farm and the family assets, not wanting to uproot their lives and live in their former hometown.

Defeating Philip and removing him permanently from the dreamlands, regardless of method, awards 1d6 SAN. Managing to do so without killing him is an additional 1d4 SAN. Destroying the Erebus Leaf crops so that they cannot be used to access the dreamlands awards another 1d6 SAN.

NPC STATS

POSSESSED TOWNSFOLK

STR 80 CON 75 SIZ 65 DEX 40 POW 80
HP 14 DB: 1d4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 1

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting 30% (15/6), damage 1D3 +db

Armor: 1 (the entity controlling the body isn't aware of pain in the same way a normal human would be)

Sanity Loss: 0/1d4+1 if an investigator sees the strange, jerking movements or otherwise recognizes that the townsfolk is unusual.

PHILIP GAINOR, AGING TOBACCANIST

STR 41 CON 47 SIZ 46 DEX 40 INT 76
APP 32 POW 90 EDU 78 SAN - HP 9
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 5 MP: 18 Luck: 65

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3

.30 Lever-Action Carbine 60% (30/12), damage 2d6

Armor: none.

Skills: Credit Rating: 80%(40/16), Dodge 40%(20/8), Persuade 50%(25/10), Charm 60%(30/12), Cthulhu Mythos 25%(12/5), Occult 75%(37/15)

THE DREAM EATER

INT 76 POW 90

Attacks: 1

Philip's dreamlands form is immune to physical damage, and his wraith-like form consists only of INT and POW. To attack The Dream Eater, investigators must make an opposed POW check, which The Dream Eater receives a bonus die on. This represents an attempt to wrest control of reality in the Dreamlands from one another. Philip can similarly attack the investigators by initiating the check. If the investigator loses the POW check, they lose 3d10 POW. If the Dream Eater loses, he loses 1d10 POW.

The Dream Eater can also summon 1d4 Starfall Denizens to assist him as an action.

STARFALL DENIZENS

STR 80 CON 75 SIZ 65 DEX 60 POW 80
HP 10 DB: 1d6 Build: 1 Move: 7 MP: 1

Attacks per round: 2

Fighting (Claws) 60% (30/), damage 1d6 + db

Armor: 2

Sanity Loss: 1/1d6 for seeing the strange, pale-faced servants of the Dream Eater.

HANDOUTS

HANDOUT #1

Missing Reporter Found!

By QUENTIN WATKINS

Our own Jewell Corbin has been found in her apartment after an extensive search. Previously, Jewell was believed to be missing after not showing to the office for several days. Jewell was found, apparently still asleep, at her apartment late last night. Attempts to rouse Jewell were unsuccessful, and she has been taken to Overlook Hospital for observation. We at the Evening Gazette thank the community for their continued support during these troubling times, and ask that you send your thoughts and prayers to Jewell for a speedy recovery.

HANDOUT #2

Dreaming Disease Outbreak Continues!

By QUENTIN WATKINS

A local man was found apparently afflicted with what local doctors are calling Dreaming Disease. The man, whose name has been withheld, was taken to St. Mary's Hospital and placed under observation. This marks the fourth individual diagnosed with this strange new disease. The Health department warns that we don't know how the disease spreads, and notes that the lack of connection between the victims in any discernible way indicates that it doesn't seem to be infectious. Our hearts go out to the families of those that have fallen asleep, apparently never to wake.

HANDOUT 3

Excerpts from Edward's Journal

"... I've begun to dream strange new dreams of fantastical worlds. Bizarre, beautiful, terrible creatures parade about in a beautiful and strange landscape. I've never been a painter, but I now want to be. If I could draw what I'm seeing I'd be a wealthy, wealthy man."

"I draw closer and closer to the dark city with each passing night. I don't want to go there. I can't escape its pull...."

"I've passed the gates of Starfall.. I fear that next time I'll see what lies within."

HANDOUT 4

Lucky Star Cigarettes Pack



HANDOUT 5

“... Subject H-076 displayed promise for a time, but repeatedly rejected resident. Remanded to pit for reprocessing.”

“Apparently the host’s essence must be maintained indefinitely in Starfall’s cages lest the body fall inanimate. Subject H-026 had long been used as a host but essence was consumed during regular feedings, after which the resident was ejected back to Starfall....”

“Plants fed with Husk byproduct grow at an accelerated rate. Need to expand research to primary fields.”

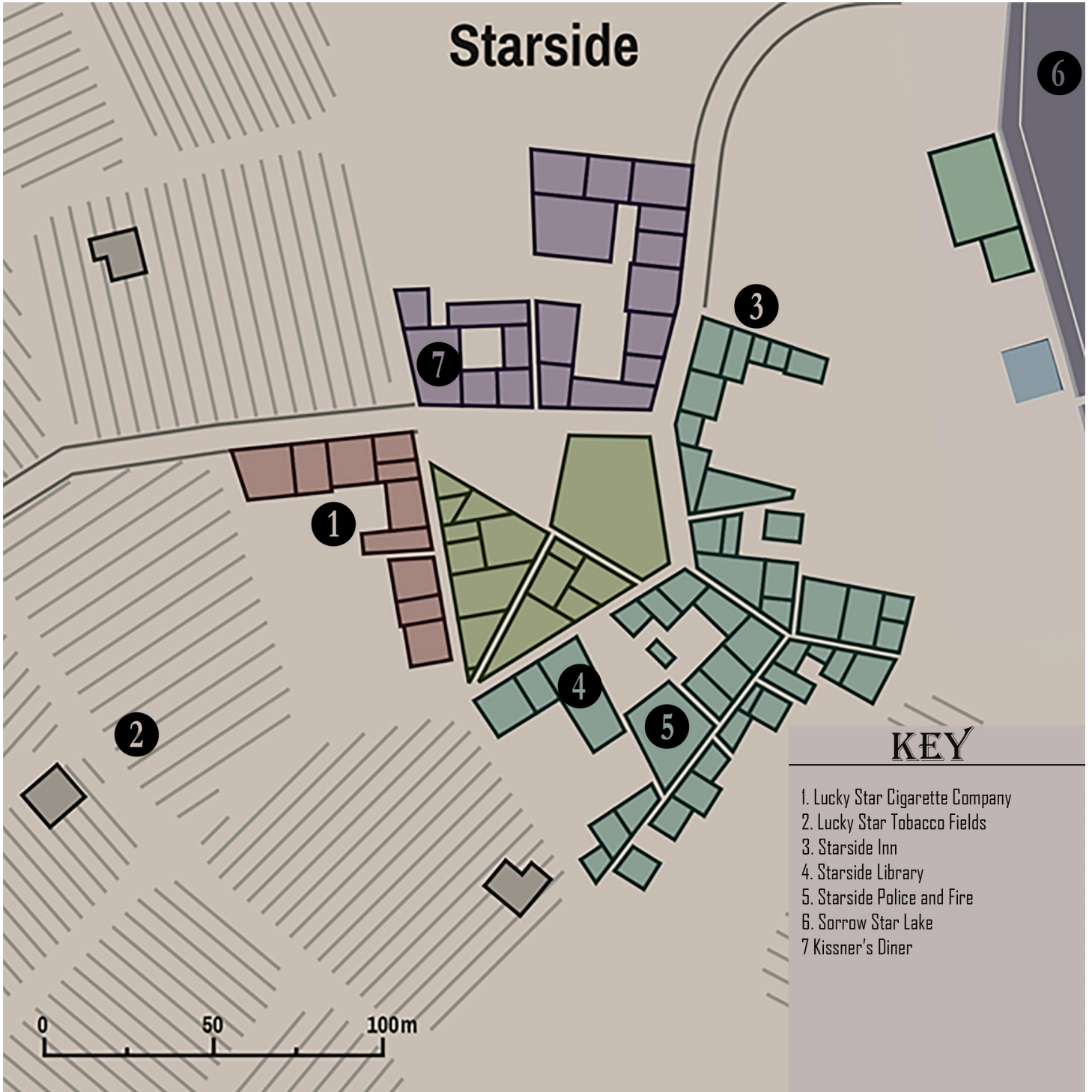
HANDOUT 6

“I have found mastery of this new, dreaming paradise. I’ve remade the city into something greater than it ever could have been. The fools that wander there remain there, and with every new resident from this world I grow stronger in both. My skin tightens, youth returns, and I am slowly becoming more than anything I had ever imagined possible.”

HANDOUT 7

“I have a growing recollection of her. Every day she gets more and more like my Mara. Soon, if I can find her a suitable host, we can have her cross over and start our new life together.”

STARSIDE PLAYER MAP



STARSLIDE GM MAP

