

Tickets-of-Leave are small self-contained additions to the **Convicts & Cthulhu** setting for Lovecraftian roleplaying in the early penal colonies of Australia. Each includes a selection of game elements which can either be used collectively as a thumbnail sketch of a mini-scenario, or can be used in isolation to provide pieces that enhance a scenario of your own invention.

Convicts & CTHULHU

TICKET of LEAVE "9"

Orphan School Horror



CREDITS

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The Illoigor were created by Colin Wilson; the Space Eaters by Frank Belknap Long.

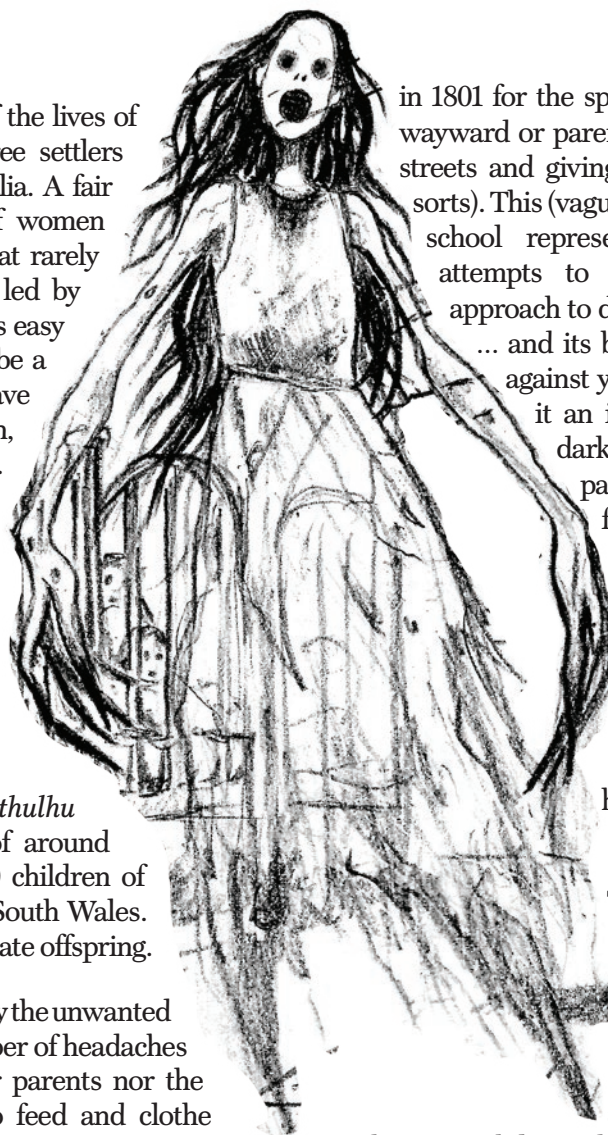
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Introduction

Many accounts have been written of the lives of male convicts, military men and free settlers in the early penal colonies of Australia. A fair number of accounts of the lives of women also survive. However, one topic that rarely attracts much attention is the lives led by children in the prison settlements. It's easy to imagine that a place designed to be a harsh place of punishment would have had few children among its population, but in fact this was not the case. Children came to the colonies as sons and daughters of the wealthy; others came as child convicts. Still others were born during the long voyage out from Britain, or as illegitimate products of the union between convicts and other convicts; or between convicts and gaolers.

By the time of the *Convicts & Cthulhu* setting out of a total population of around 7,000 souls, there were some 1,800 children of European parentage living in New South Wales. Only about 800 of those were legitimate offspring.

The numbers of children – particularly the unwanted progeny of convicts – created a number of headaches for the colonies, since neither their parents nor the government could afford to pay to feed and clothe them. This led to the rather unsightly phenomenon of large numbers of abandoned and homeless waifs living on the streets. For the most part, the Colonial Government of this era turned a callous blind eye to such suffering ... but there was one notable exception to this: the Female Orphan School. This was opened



in 1801 for the specific purpose of getting wayward or parentless young girls off the streets and giving them an education (of sorts). This (vaguely benevolent) boarding school represents the very earliest attempts to create an institutional approach to dealing with the destitute ... and its blend of harsh discipline against youthful 'innocents' make it an interesting backdrop for dark tales of horror. It is a particularly fitting setting for personal tales of terror which, like the eerie 2007 Spanish horror film "El Orfanato" (aka "The Orphanage"; <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0464141/>) centre upon supernatural horrors borne from the suffering of children.

This Ticket of Leave provides an overview of the first Sydney Female Orphan School, as well as a ghostly adventure set in and around the schoolhouse. Because (to modern sensibilities, developed long after the time of the convicts) tales of ghosts and orphanages have a natural association with Christmas, this Ticket of Leave has been timed to be released for Christmas 2017. Realistically, however, the scenario could be set at any time of the year.

The Female Orphan School

“The children are abandoned to misery, prostitution and every vice of their parents and, in short, nothing less than a total change in the system of administration must take place immediately I am left to myself.”

— Letter from Governor King to Under-Secretary King, 3 May 1800, in HRNSW, Vol. IV, pp. 83-84

The Sydney Female Orphan School was the first school of its kind in the penal colony of New South Wales. It was created as a direct result of the disgust voiced by newly-appointed Governor Philip Gidley King upon his arrival in the colony in 1800. When he arrived in Sydney he was appalled by the number of neglected children. They wandered the streets lacking adequate shelter, and in many cases food or proper clothing. Young girls were also sexually exploited thanks in part to the imbalance in numbers between males and female in the European colony. This situation had been noted earlier by the churchmen Reverend Johnson and Reverend Marsden, as well as by the previous Governor (Hunter), but nothing had been done to fix the situation. A major part of the problem stemmed from the fact that by this time in the colony’s history, approximately two-thirds of all children born in the colony were illegitimate, and many left destitute and uncared for by their parents.

In an effort to cure this social ill, Governor King proposed to found a school for orphan girls. This was an incredibly progressive move for the era, since the only form of schooling that existed was delivered by (comparatively expensive) private schools, mostly run out of individual teachers’ houses. There was no equivalent school for male orphans established until well after the era of *Convicts & Cthulhu*, when the colony had evolved to become a much more “civilised” place (where public “benevolence” also extended to an institute for Aboriginal children, run by ex-missionaries).

The establishment of the Female Orphan School in Sydney served several purposes. Firstly it attended to the immediate needs of girls who were obviously living in distress. But, beyond this basic function, the school also served two important ideological imperatives which underscored the colony’s

attitudes to women generally and the notion of “the rising generation idea.” The first stemmed from a pervasive fear that the next generation of children born to convict parents were destined to be degenerate, by virtue of the poor stock from which they were descended. In the minds of the colonists, the only solution to such a dire fate was for the children to be separated as much as possible from the evils of their sires. The second moral need filled by the Female Orphan School came from the powerful fear displayed by the British Colonial Office (as well as early Governors) regarding the particular moral evils of female convicts. This fear also played a major role in the government’s confused and often inconsistent attitude to convict women and their female offspring.

Some basic information about the Female Orphan School is already in the gazetteer section of the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book; the material below supplements that with further historical detail.

Establishing the School

Governor King applied to the Colonial Office in London for funds to establish an institution for destitute young women in Sydney, but this request was refused. Undeterred he decided to raise the money locally instead. Some philanthropic money was raised with the support of Reverends Johnson, Marsden, and Hunter (though the latter personally disliked the newly arrived Governor). With money raised from some of the colony’s wealthy, King was able to buy a large building – a solid, two-storey house on Sydney Cove that had been built and (occasionally) occupied by a prosperous sea captain named William Kent. This impressive structure was given over by King to become the Female Orphan School.

Where was the school located?

The stately home of Captain Kent, which became the Female Orphan School, was situated in a prominent location on Sydney Cove – in the very heart of the township. The schoolhouse was close to the Gaol and to the Tank Stream, the small natural river which flowed out into Sydney Harbour near the Government Docks. The location of the school is marked on the Sydney township map in the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book.

Captain William Kent (1760-1812)

William Kent was a well-connected individual, a nephew to John Hunter, the man who preceded Philip Gidley King as Governor of New South Wales. Kent joined the Navy at aged 10 and in 1795 was given command of the *Supply*, which accompanied Hunter's ship the *Reliant* when Hunter sailed to NSW to take up the post of Governor. For the next few years Kent sailed to the Cape of Good Hope (Southern Africa) and back bringing stores and livestock to Sydney. His ship was, after many trips, eventually considered irreparable in 1797 and for a time Kent elected to stay in Sydney. Thanks to his connections he had no difficulty in receiving a land grant in the heart of Sydney Town, right on the Tank Stream. On this location he built a house, at the time considered one of Sydney's best. (This was the building that only four years later was to become the schoolhouse).

Kent gained a new ship in the *Buffalo* in 1799 and sailed again in it to the Cape and to England, returning to his former trade. This meant he spent only a part of his time resident in his lavish new Sydney house.

Kent was recommended by King to become Lieutenant-Governor of Norfolk Island but was passed over by the Colonial Office. He continued to sail between India, the Pacific and Sydney and Van Diemen's Land. Having been paid well for his Tank Stream house, Kent purchased other property in NSW where he dabbled in raising cattle. He was made a magistrate by Governor King in 1802. He left Sydney in 1805 and despite a failed attempt to lobby to become Bligh's assistant, he was never to return.

Kent died at sea at command of the *Union* in 1812.

Source: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kent-william-2300/text2973>

Running the School

The Sydney Female Orphan School was run in a way which closely followed the model of English charity schools. The institution was overseen by a committee, whose ranks comprised many of the highest tiers of Colonial life. This group was responsible for appointing the staff that ran the school itself, in particular the vitally important positions of Matron (senior-most woman, in charge of ensuring the girls

are well disciplined) and Master (the male head of the school, usually the husband of the Matron). See the box nearby for brief biographical notes on the Matrons and Masters that supervised the school at different points in the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era.

At its inception in 1801 the committee comprised:

- Rev. Johnson and Rev. Marsden, the two Colonial chaplains,
- Surgeons John Harris and William Balmain,
- Mrs Elizabeth King, the Governor's wife,
- Mrs Elizabeth Paterson, friend of Mrs King and wife of Lt-Governor William Paterson of the NSW Corps

David Dickenson Mann, a convict, was the clerk assessor and secretary to the Committee.

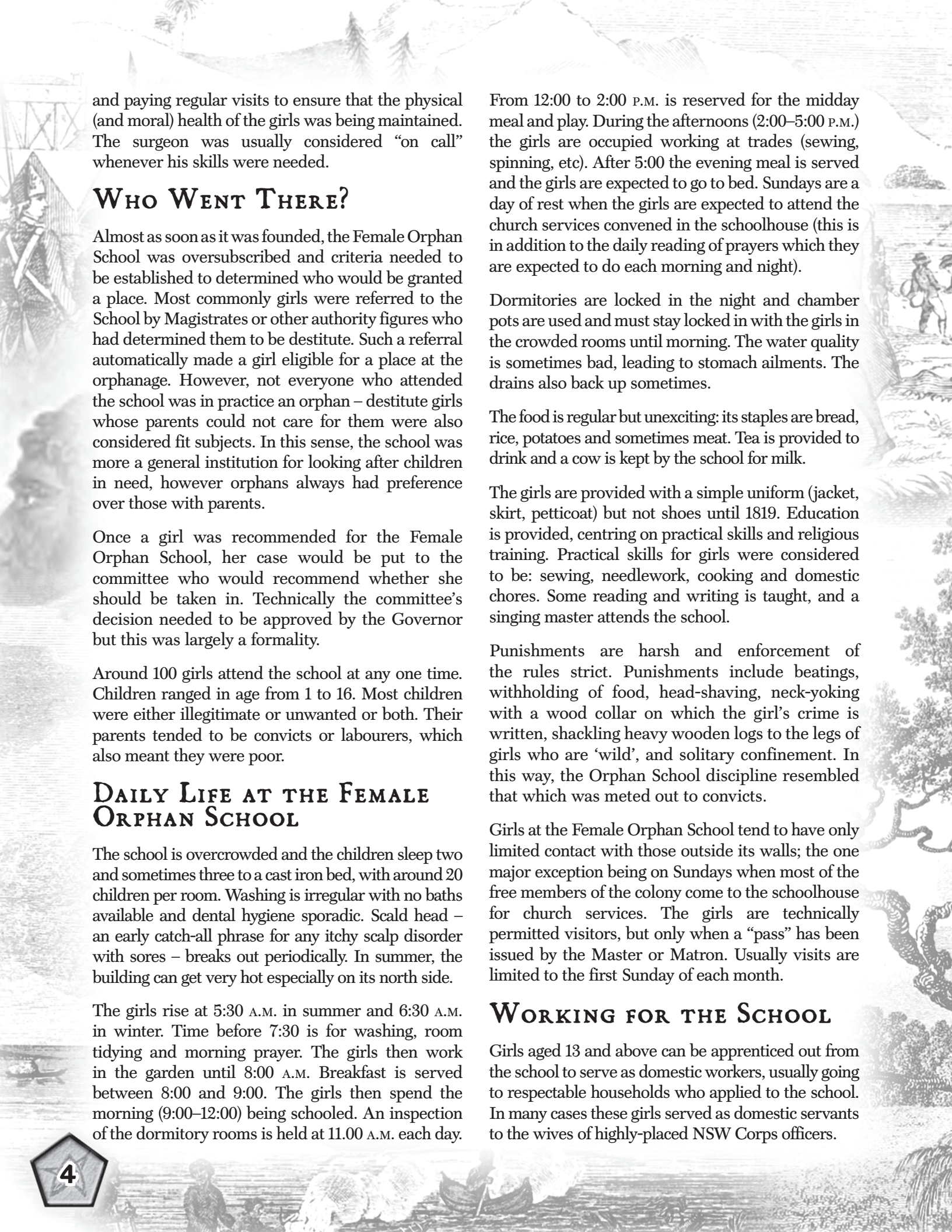
Later, as some of the original committee members departed the colony, their places were filled by other notable and upstanding members of society. Some of the worthy individuals included: William Cox (paymaster of the NSW Corps) and John Palmer (the NSW Colonial Commissary; described further in the *Convicts & Cthulhu* core book).

Paying for the School

Money to operate the Female Orphan School was collected by the Colonial Government via a tax on visiting ships (e.g., by 1811 a typical English merchantman vessel arriving at Sydney was obliged to pay around 15 shillings in tax, proceeds going to the school). In addition to this income the orphanage also owned farmland and livestock of its own (the latter supplied at a considerable loss by Rev. Marsden from his own livestock holding). The products of these were sold to raise further money.

The Female Orphan School could also draw food from the Government stores, if it needed to do so.

In addition to paying for the general upkeep and education of the many orphans who lived at the school, the orphanage's finances also needed to pay for the staff (see the nearby box "Matrons and Masters" for details of staff and student numbers at different times). The school also needed to pay for regular visits by the Colonial Surgeon, who was charged with attending to the girls when necessary



and paying regular visits to ensure that the physical (and moral) health of the girls was being maintained. The surgeon was usually considered “on call” whenever his skills were needed.

WHO WENT THERE?

Almost as soon as it was founded, the Female Orphan School was oversubscribed and criteria needed to be established to determine who would be granted a place. Most commonly girls were referred to the School by Magistrates or other authority figures who had determined them to be destitute. Such a referral automatically made a girl eligible for a place at the orphanage. However, not everyone who attended the school was in practice an orphan – destitute girls whose parents could not care for them were also considered fit subjects. In this sense, the school was more a general institution for looking after children in need, however orphans always had preference over those with parents.

Once a girl was recommended for the Female Orphan School, her case would be put to the committee who would recommend whether she should be taken in. Technically the committee’s decision needed to be approved by the Governor but this was largely a formality.

Around 100 girls attend the school at any one time. Children ranged in age from 1 to 16. Most children were either illegitimate or unwanted or both. Their parents tended to be convicts or labourers, which also meant they were poor.

DAILY LIFE AT THE FEMALE ORPHAN SCHOOL

The school is overcrowded and the children sleep two and sometimes three to a cast iron bed, with around 20 children per room. Washing is irregular with no baths available and dental hygiene sporadic. Scald head – an early catch-all phrase for any itchy scalp disorder with sores – breaks out periodically. In summer, the building can get very hot especially on its north side.

The girls rise at 5:30 A.M. in summer and 6:30 A.M. in winter. Time before 7:30 is for washing, room tidying and morning prayer. The girls then work in the garden until 8:00 A.M. Breakfast is served between 8:00 and 9:00. The girls then spend the morning (9:00–12:00) being schooled. An inspection of the dormitory rooms is held at 11.00 A.M. each day.

From 12:00 to 2:00 P.M. is reserved for the midday meal and play. During the afternoons (2:00–5:00 P.M.) the girls are occupied working at trades (sewing, spinning, etc). After 5:00 the evening meal is served and the girls are expected to go to bed. Sundays are a day of rest when the girls are expected to attend the church services convened in the schoolhouse (this is in addition to the daily reading of prayers which they are expected to do each morning and night).

Dormitories are locked in the night and chamber pots are used and must stay locked in with the girls in the crowded rooms until morning. The water quality is sometimes bad, leading to stomach ailments. The drains also back up sometimes.

The food is regular but unexciting: its staples are bread, rice, potatoes and sometimes meat. Tea is provided to drink and a cow is kept by the school for milk.

The girls are provided with a simple uniform (jacket, skirt, petticoat) but not shoes until 1819. Education is provided, centring on practical skills and religious training. Practical skills for girls were considered to be: sewing, needlework, cooking and domestic chores. Some reading and writing is taught, and a singing master attends the school.

Punishments are harsh and enforcement of the rules strict. Punishments include beatings, withholding of food, head-shaving, neck-yoking with a wood collar on which the girl’s crime is written, shackling heavy wooden logs to the legs of girls who are ‘wild’, and solitary confinement. In this way, the Orphan School discipline resembled that which was meted out to convicts.

Girls at the Female Orphan School tend to have only limited contact with those outside its walls; the one major exception being on Sundays when most of the free members of the colony come to the schoolhouse for church services. The girls are technically permitted visitors, but only when a “pass” has been issued by the Master or Matron. Usually visits are limited to the first Sunday of each month.

WORKING FOR THE SCHOOL

Girls aged 13 and above can be apprenticed out from the school to serve as domestic workers, usually going to respectable households who applied to the school. In many cases these girls served as domestic servants to the wives of highly-placed NSW Corps officers.



Some girls are retained by the school as female servants including kitchen help, and this apprenticeship can commence from age 8. These apprenticeships usually last 5 years.

In addition to these forms of employment, the girls at the Female Orphan School could earn money for the school through the sale of textiles and clothing that they made during their tuition. Such goods are sometimes sold by the school to local merchants ... although girls who attempted to collect personal income by selling the fruits of their labours direct to store owners were severely punished.

LEAVING THE SCHOOL

There are five ways in which girls leave the school:

1. When they turn 16,
2. If they take on an apprenticeship,
3. If they are taken back by a parent who may have been previously destitute or absent but now able to support them,
4. If they are married (only possible with the committee's consent), or
5. If they abscond.

In the last of these cases, fleeing girls are always hunted down by the authorities and (when found) returned to the Female Orphan School for punishment.

Girls who are married direct from the school are given 10 pounds sterling as a kind of dowry ... although in later years this cash stipend is replaced by a grant of

livestock (leading to the common practice of a bride-to-be receiving a “marriage cow” to set her up).

At no time does the school adopt out children.

WHAT ELSE WAS THE SCHOOLHOUSE USED FOR?

As a large publicly-owned building, the Female Orphan School was also considered by the Colonial Government as a venue that could be used for other purposes – particularly those that required a large hall where people could congregate. For most of the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era, Sydney does not have a dedicated church building (due to delays in its funding and construction). In the interim, the main schoolroom of the Female Orphan School serves as the place where Church of England services are held each Sunday. These services are usually attended by most of the upper echelons of Sydney society, filling the modest “hall” to capacity. Attendance by the orphan girls at Sunday services is compulsory.

The schoolroom is also occasionally used by the Colonial Government as a place to hold larger criminal or civil trials, where many people are expected to be involved (as witnesses, or just spectators). The events of the Bligh era in particular, cause the Female Orphan School to be called into such service with alarming frequency – first as a venue for the trial of John Macarthur, and later – after the military uprising of the Rum Rebellion in 1808 – as a “kangaroo courthouse” where those loyal to the displaced Governor were tried and sentenced.

Matrons and Masters

The Female Orphan School was only opened in August of 1801 — if a Keeper wishes to set a story prior to that, he or she will need to bend history a little or invent a similar but different institution with its own roster of staff.

For all other times in the *Convicts & Cthulhu* era, the historical notes below will give sufficient information to populate the Female Orphan School with suitably colourful real-world historical people.

August 1801: the first Matron, Mrs Elizabeth More Hume is appointed. She is the daughter of a Kentish clergyman (and incidentally the mother of Hamilton Hume, who in later decades would become a significant explorer of the Australian hinterland). Mrs Hume is a free settler who has been in the colony since 1797. Her husband Andrew Hamilton Hume is considered something of a dubious character, having been tried twice for rape and malversation, twice acquitted, yet twice dismissed from public office. See the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book for some additional biographical notes on Mr & Mrs Hume.

During this time the school employs two servants and looks after 35 girls.

Late 1801 to 1803: After only a few months of operation, a replacement Matron was appointed — Mrs Mary Robson, a convict who had been transported to New South Wales for seven years but who also had some prior experience in England as a teacher. She had an Assistant Matron (her sister) and the school employed three teachers — Mary Peat, Mary Cosgrove and Elizabeth Edwards — all of whom were older orphan girls themselves.

The school employed three servants: Anne Sandilon, Cook; Mary Gaunterry, housemaid; Thomas McDermott, porter. It looked after 35 girls.

1803 to 1807: In 1803 two new superintendents (a Master and Matron) were appointed to the school. This was Sgt H. Stroud and his wife (name unknown). The school during this period looked after 65–100 girls and employed a staff of three servants (same as above). Ten convict women served as teachers and helpers.

1807: After another change in administration the school was placed under the supervision of Rev. T. P. Newsham, a convict transported for seven years, and his wife (who had accompanied him as a free settler). Mrs Newsham was generally considered a genteel woman but the same cannot be said for her husband, who proved to be a most unfit candidate for the job. In a letter penned by committee-member Dr John Harris to the Governor, the man's unseemly proclivities were described: "he preached in the afternoon on Sundays and took unwarranted liberties with the girls on Mondays." As punishment for his abuse of the position, Rev Newsham received 200 lashes, was pilloried three times, and sent to hard labour in Coal River. The reputation of the Female Orphan School plummeted in the wake of this scandal, and it took a decade or more before the place was considered by most a fit and proper place to protect young girls.

Later in 1807: In the wake of the preceding events, a new Master and Matron was appointed: Mr and Mrs Marchant. The Marchants came out from England to work at the school. Unfortunately, by the time that Mr Marchant was suddenly thrust into the job of school Master, he was also very unwell and not capable of much. Not long after his arrival in the colony he was murdered.

1808: A new Master and Matron were appointed: Henry and Susannah Perfect. Perfect was a convict transported for 7 years. Mr and Mrs Perfect had previously run a private school in Sydney, but their credentials did not impress senior committee member Rev. Samuel Marsden who sacked them from the jobs after less than a year.

1809 and beyond: The sudden departure of the Perfects came when Marsden recruited John and Ann Hoskings to replace them. The Hoskings were a pious Methodist couple with some formal training as teachers. Their stewardship provided the first stability the school had known. During this time, the number of girls at the orphanage was consistently around 100.

Scenario Seed: The Orphan School Horror

This adventure seed concerns weird happenings in and around the Female Orphan School and its neighbourhood of Sydney Cove. The scenario as written can take place in any of the time periods of *Convicts & Cthulhu* after the Orphanage's establishment in 1801, although Keepers who wish to run the scenario in earlier times could readily do so by inventing a suitable fictional location for the haunting.

Keepers may wish to re-read the Sydney Gazetteer section of the core *Convicts & Cthulhu* book, since familiarity with the buildings and personages around Sydney Cove will certainly provide opportunities to enrich the scenario with immersive details.

There are three Mythos options provided to explain the mysterious and eerie phenomenon witnessed by students and staff at the Orphanage — one of these is particularly keyed towards running a slightly traditional-themed Christmas ghost tale. This is largely an atmospheric conceit, and can be easily ignored if the Keeper wants to run the scenario featuring that option at some other time of the year. If, on the other hand, the Keeper does wish to make use of the Christmas tie-in, he or she should consult the nearby box “Christmas in the Colony” for some notes about the manner of festive celebration in the early penal settlements.

The Orphanage Ghosts

Strange things have been witnessed recently at the Sydney Female Orphan School — at least if the word of the somewhat excitable orphan girls can be believed. Gossip concerning curious sounds, half-glimpsed figures, and even more outlandish things has begun to circulate among those who live and work at the school. A couple of the girls have even “fallen into a swoon”, becoming catatonic after supposedly having witnessed something terrible.

Such “superstitious nonsense” does not well please the Master and Matron of the school, nor does the school committee see it as appropriate to the moral and spiritual well-being of the girls. Accordingly, both are determined to put an end to these wild tales, once and for all.

Christmas in the Colony

Just as in Britain, Christmas Day is a religious festival celebrated by Christians — the predominance of Europeans in the colonies (at least notionally) — on December 25th, to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. Australian Christmas takes place in the height of summer, but despite the heat the festivities mirror English customs, including chicken and turkey meals, formal dress and heavy desserts such as pudding. The serving of such heavy, hot meals on days where the daily temperature might be 100 Fahrenheit is wildly impractical but universally followed anyway for the sake of tradition.

In the penal colonies, Christmas Day begins with an official morning church service which is held at around 11.00 A.M. in Sydney, with the Governor attending. Convict attendance is compulsory, otherwise no concession regarding relaxation or gifts is made by the authorities. Christmas dinner is held in the evening, and in more respectable quarters is an occasion of some formality, though compared to the Christmases of the later Victorian era it is a relatively simple affair. Gifts (but not cards) are exchanged on Christmas Day which is largely considered a day of rest (except for convicts and domestic workers).

Christmas in the Female Orphan School is austere, but the girls are given one treat — a plum pudding supper in the evening.


The celebration of Christmas in the early years of the colonies is extremely British in character. It is not until the 1850s that Australians begin to incorporate some of their own iconography and flavour into Christmas customs.

Sources: Frank Cusack, *The Australian Christmas*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1966.

Origins of the Aussie Christmas: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-12-24/the-origins-of-the-aussie-christmas/1190624>

Keeper's Introduction

Despite the dismissive attitudes adopted by (most) adults, there is some substance to the outlandish claims of the girls at the Female Orphan School. The place is, in fact, being preyed upon by a malevolent supernatural entity. One month ago, this baleful thing attached itself to the school, and since then it has been feeding on the youth and fears of its denizens.



While the supernatural force gains sustenance by terrorising children, it has a far worse plan in store for adult members of the school community (and surrounding parts of Sydney Cove). Those it wants to entirely subsume. Weirdly, whenever the dark, shadowy entity absorbs an adult human it does not kill them, but transforms them into a kind of orphan ghost. In this way, the twisted thing aims to slowly build an army of ghostly thralls; but to do so it requires energy it can only obtain through the fears of children.

Over the past three weeks the children at the Female Orphan School have begun reporting seeing ghostly apparitions that frighten them so badly they struggle to even speak of them. In the same time two adults (people working near the schoolhouse) have gone missing — one two weeks ago; the other, last week. All attempts by local officials to track down these missing people have failed.

In recent days, two of the girls have been struck with a kind of catatonia — a side-effect of encountering the thing. This has left them incapable of speech or independent movement; the visiting colonial surgeon can only describe these cases as a kind of “stupor” although he is at odds to explain its source.

Some of the adult staff have also begun to catch half-glimpses of the entity themselves, as unpleasant shadows or figures only seen out the corner of their eye. The teachers and servants have had enough and have complained to the school’s Matron. She in turn has contacted the school committee to ask for their help in putting an end to the increasingly hysterical atmosphere that is engulfing the school.

The exact nature of the malevolence that has caused this subtle but palpable terror — as well as the particular weakness by which it may be destroyed — will vary according to which of the three Mythos options the Keeper wishes to use (see Mythos Options on page 15).

Involving the Investigators

The default assumption is that the investigators become involved in the mystery surrounding the Female Orphan School because they are (directly or indirectly) approached to look into the outlandish claims of the girls with an eye to debunking them once-and-for-all. For this to work, one or more of the investigators must be known in some reliable capacity, probably associated with the investigation of strangeness, to one or more members of the Female Orphan School Committee. Through

such connections, they are thus invited by the Committee — in the person of Mrs Elizabeth Paterson — to investigate the odd stories and if possible, stop whatever is behind them, or at the very least report back to the Committee in full on the situation. (Note that if the game is set during the administration of Governor King, 1800 to 1806, this mission has even greater weight since the Governor’s wife is the patron of the school committee).

If the Keeper wants to run an entirely different style of scenario, he or she might alternatively consider a set-up where the players take the roles of plucky orphan girls who want to get to the bottom of the mystery themselves (see nearby box for some notes on running such a game).

Finally, if this scenario forms part of an ongoing *Convicts & Cthulhu* campaign in which most of the investigators are convicts, the Keeper may need to invent some reason that one or more of the investigators has a close personal tie to the staff of the orphanage. Some female convict investigators could feasibly even be grown-up orphans who once attended the school themselves.

Note that if either of the last two options is adopted, the Keeper will need to make some slight changes to the scenario as written (in particular finding a new way to convey the information learnt at the outset about the current state of the school). The Keeper may also decide that there is a rival “official”

Child Investigators

Keepers interested in running an unusual one-shot *Convicts & Cthulhu* game might consider running this scenario with players taking on the roles of some of the older girls who live at the Female Orphan School. While not physically powerful, many of these young women are exceedingly intelligent and may (ironically) fare better against the nebulous horror of the spectral entity than a group that tries to solve the problem by brute force.

In creating younger investigator characters, the Keeper should follow the normal process for character creation with a few small modifications: rolls for statistics that measure physical size should receive one fewer die than normal, as should rolls for Education characteristics. Teenage characters should get a small bonus to their Speed. Investigators should be created using the convict profession template for “Domestic Servant” (called “Former Domestic Servant” in *C&C Ticket of Leave #5*) but with the skill in driving oxen & cart replaced by skill in sleight of hand.

investigation into the school's haunting running parallel to their own (see "Red Herrings and Other Complications" on page 15 for more).

The True Nature of the Threat

The true supernatural threat behind the strange phenomena reported by students and staff depends on which of the options the Keeper has chosen (see Mythos Options on page 15).

- **Option A — The Crack in Reality:** In this version, the school's haunting is caused by a fragment of a vast and terrible lloigor trapped in a watery prison elsewhere but connected to this place by a mystical gateway buried below the school. Due to shifting in the foundations of the schoolhouse, the gateway has been exposed to human thought for the first time in millennia.
- **Option B — The Nexus of Need:** In this version, the horror that haunts the school is a supernatural living manifestation of the suffering of mistreated children; it feeds on such misery to grow more powerful with the goal of achieving corporeal form, so as to perpetuate cruelty of its own on the young. This is the "Christmas haunting" option.
- **Option C — The Guest of Captain Kent:** In this version, the school's haunting is caused by a horrific supernatural creature (a nascent form of the interstellar race sometimes known as Space Eaters). This monstrosity was summoned to earth some years ago by a degenerate Naval officer who was staying in the home of Captain William Kent — the building now occupied by the school.

The Interview with Mrs Paterson


Assuming the investigators are engaged through an official approach by the Female Orphan School Committee, the introduction to the mystery will be via an interview with Mrs Paterson, a no-nonsense soldier's wife who is an active member of the committee. She is well known in the colony for her



dedication, hard work and determination. If the Keeper is adapting the scenario, he or she will need to ensure that the information below is delivered by alternate methods.

Mrs Paterson knows the following details:

- For the past three weeks, there have been sightings of "strange apparitions" by the children of the Female Orphan School. Some girls claim to have seen a "ghost child", others a ghostly housekeeper. Around ten children of various ages, from around 4 to 14, have reported these. The Master and Matron of the School were inclined to dismiss this as overactive imagination or perhaps some kind of illness ... that is, until two recent developments.
- The first recent development has been the unexplained (and unprecedented) "swoon" that has affected two students. The two girls have been struck with a mental stupor, incapable of speech and movement. [Keeper's note: Mrs Paterson is describing catatonia, but such a medical concept does not yet exist].
 - * One of the two girls so afflicted was Mary Asker, aged 9, who still remains in an unresponsive state after several days.
 - * The other girl suffering the "swoon" was Bethany Small, aged 13, who was similarly affected but emerged from her stupor after nine days. School teachers (and even the Matron) have questioned Bethany, but she remembers little of what happened except that it somehow involved a ghostly figure and something that still inspires her to become over-excited and afraid. Attempts to gather more from the child have been hampered, as she has become prone to unpredictable periods of fear.



* The colonial surgeon has been to attend to both girls, but his ministrations have not shed much light on the situation. He has applied leeches to bleed off excess humours that he believes are the source of Bethany's over-excitement, but otherwise he can find nothing wrong with the girl. Similarly, his inspection of the still-unresponsive Mary has not been able to rouse her from her state.

● The second development that has caught the attention of the Master and Matron is that two of the school's staff have gone missing in the last four days. Both are convict women who have been working with the school staff to help the girls. One is Mrs. Margaret Boyne, aged 32, who is married to a gardener on the Orphan Farm; the other is Harriet Torrence, aged 22, a young woman who recently left assignment as a domestic servant to a farmer at Parramatta.

* The Sydney authorities have been notified of the disappearance of the women, but they believe that the women have probably simply absconded. Mrs Paterson thinks this is unlikely, since both women are of good moral character and would have nothing to gain.

After providing this information, Mrs Paterson charges the investigators with looking into the matter on behalf of the Committee and learning what is terrifying the girls and where the missing women may be found. She is a very practical woman and believes stories of ghosts and haunts are all made up tales, but clearly something is afoot.

If the investigators ask for her opinion (and perhaps even if they do not), she will tell them that she suspects some unsavoury male of hanging about and making a nuisance of himself with the girls, but admits no such person seems to have been reported by the staff.

At the conclusion of the interview Mrs Paterson gives them a letter of authority from the Committee and agrees that the Committee will foot all expenses upon remittance.

Flow of the Adventure

This scenario is designed to play out like a classic "ghost tale." These are usually big on slow, atmospheric build-up and relatively light on direct conflict (at least until late in the story when the protagonists have an inkling of the horror they face).

Accordingly, the flow of the scenario is likely to be:

1. Initial meeting with Mrs Paterson
2. Early inquiries about the Female Orphan School, and some initial interviews with the staff
3. Time spent searching the schoolhouse for traces of weirdness; this is when the first small supernatural phenomena will be encountered
4. More detailed investigations, either in the school or in the areas surrounding it, leading ultimately to an understanding of the nature of the Horror
5. A final confrontation as the investigators attempt to banish the thing.

Early Inquiries

Investigators who ask around Sydney about the reputation of the Female Orphan School, or otherwise seek out gossip about the institution, will hear two conflicting accounts. Friends of the Governor consider it a model of rectitude and a valuable institution, while political enemies claim it little better than a whorehouse. Some seedy characters have been known to hang about the school and become a nuisance, however the prevailing attitude of (male) colonists is that such events are likely the fault of the "wayward girls" at the orphanage. General opinion is that they are morally degraded, and as such will naturally attract attention from men of low morals.

Gathering some basic factual information about the Female Orphan School from colonial records is easy.



By such means investigators can learn:

- The Female Orphan School operates in a building that was the former house of Captain William Kent, Governor Hunter's nephew. The building has been called 'the best house in all Sydney'.
- The School sits on a block bordered by George and Philip Streets, with the Tank Stream at its east.

Visiting the school, investigators can very easily observe the general layout of the building (described further in the map on page 13):

- It is a reddish two-storey building, with two wings, one more recent than the other, thus doubling the initial size of the building. There are a number of dormitories, living quarters and a kitchen. The old wing includes an office on the ground floor, and a slightly canted basement.
- There are outbuildings on each side of the main building and ten plots of garden in front.
- A substantial wall borders the Orphanage, eighteen inches thick and eight feet high. A playground sits just inside the wall.
- If the (optional) Christmas setting is being used, some meagre Christmas decorations adorn the buildings.

The investigators are likely to want to speak with the staff of the Orphan School to hear their accounts; as described earlier the staff usually consists of the Matron and Master who run the day-to-day activities of the school and a handful of teachers (usually older convict girls or female convicts). There are also currently three domestic servants — two women (a cook and a housekeeper), and one man (the porter). Teachers and servants will be only too eager to talk to investigators — since they find the recent events baffling — however too much talk will bring down the wrath of the Matron, who despises both gossiping and idleness. Information that can be discovered during interviews is summarised below.

Investigators may wish to speak directly with the orphan girls, but the Matron will initially prohibit any such questioning — particularly if the group of investigators is primarily men. As events progress, however, she will soften her stance (see "Questioning the Girls" on page 14 for information that can be learned from student inquiries).

ABOUT THE MISSING SERVANT WOMEN

- Both missing convict women are remembered as hard workers and good staff. Everyone is aghast that the women have vanished.
- Suggestions that perhaps the missing women may have been the victim of foul play horrifies the Orphan School staff — however if asked for an opinion about who might have perpetrated such a crime, some staff will mention the rough men who work at the nearby warehouse (run by Mr. Underwood). They seem a dubious lot.
- One of the staff recalls Harriet being in the old wing in the basement the last time she was seen.

ABOUT THE "SWOONING" AND UNRESPONSIVE GIRLS

- There is great sympathy among the staff for the girls who are catatonic.
- Most staff and older girls believe they were frightened into this state, probably by a strange man.

ABOUT THE GHOSTLY SIGHTINGS

- Although they have heard the stories told by the orphans, none of the staff members has personally seen the "ghostly child" figures.
- A few members of the household staff have, however, seen glimpses of ghostly adult figures. The two women who have seen such this apparition (Elizabeth Bean and Caroline Merchant) describe it as the spectral figure of a woman. Each only caught a glimpse of the figure, but describe it as a stately woman, ghostly and slightly greenish, gliding by and beckoning as if they were to follow. Both felt a compulsion to do so, but resisted.
- If investigators ask where the two servant women experienced their encounters, Elizabeth says she saw the ghost woman outside the top dormitory of the new wing. Caroline saw the ghostly figure outside the Master's office in the old wing.

OTHER WEIRDNESS

Asking about other recent weirdness at the Female Orphan School, the investigators may be able to coax another story out of the (somewhat embarrassed) porter. According to him he has recently seen a strange “otherworldly” figure lurking outside the orphanage’s yard gate at night. He thinks the figure is child-sized. He only saw it once – one minute it wasn’t there and then it suddenly appeared. Thinking it might be one of the orphan children he called out to it, but the figure turned and ran. As it turned, he got a better look at it and saw its proportions were not quite human. Something about it gave him a terrible turn. He is happy to call the thing a “ghost” since it had a shimmering greenish hue, but he noted when it ran it ducked around things, not go through them. He allotted himself an extra tot of rum that night.

Eerie Encounters in the Night

All good ghost stories incorporate opportunities for spooky and unexplained minor supernatural phenomena as the protagonists explore. In this scenario, the best opportunities to introduce such classic hauntings is while the investigators are looking around the Female Orphanage School building and grounds.

In general, getting permission from the Master and Matron to search the school top-to-bottom will be difficult, however persuasive investigators may be able to talk their way around such objections particularly if they can provide guarantees that the girls themselves will not be disturbed.

The map nearby shows the layout of the orphanage and its grounds. For most rooms, the Keeper will need to synthesize his or her own description of the furnishings and accoutrements. Generally, most areas are not lavishly decorated – the main exceptions to this rule are the Master’s office (which has some expensive-looking furniture left behind by Captain Kent) and the personal quarters of the Matron and Master.

As the investigators make their way through the Female Orphan School, the Keeper should look for opportunities to introduce small supernatural effects. Initially these should be almost insignificant but odd phenomena, with the scale and severity of haunting effects steadily increasing the longer the investigators

spend poking their noses into corners of the building the Orphan School Horror would prefer them not to.

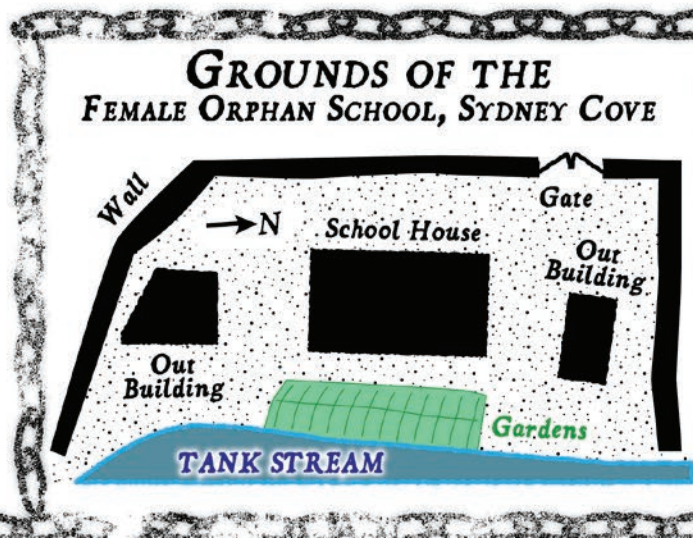
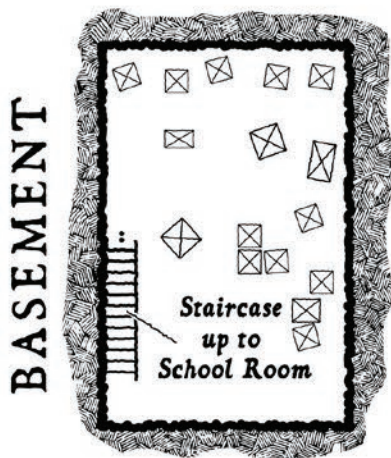
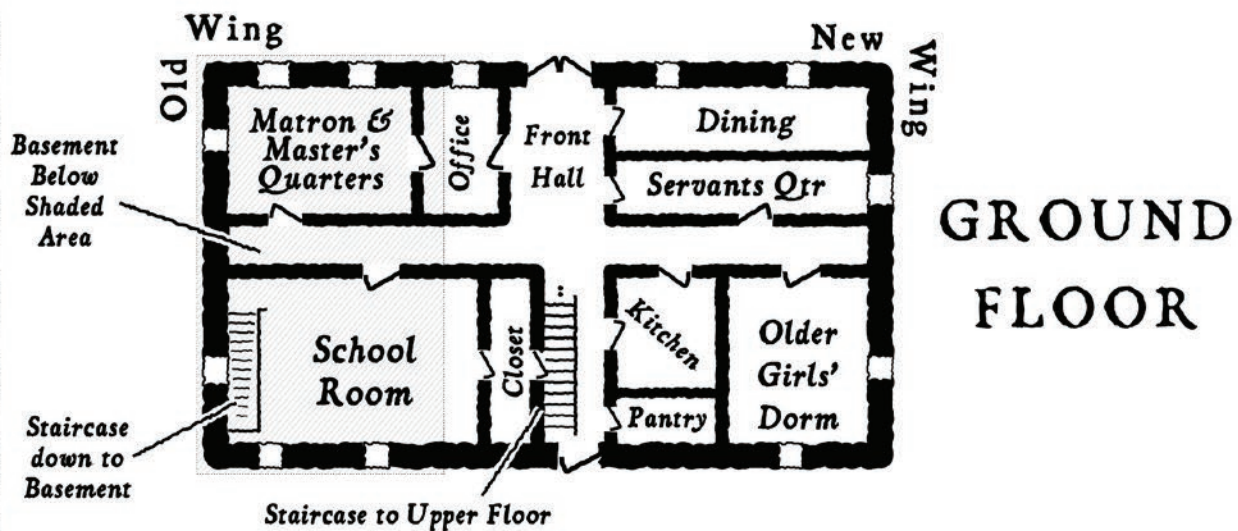
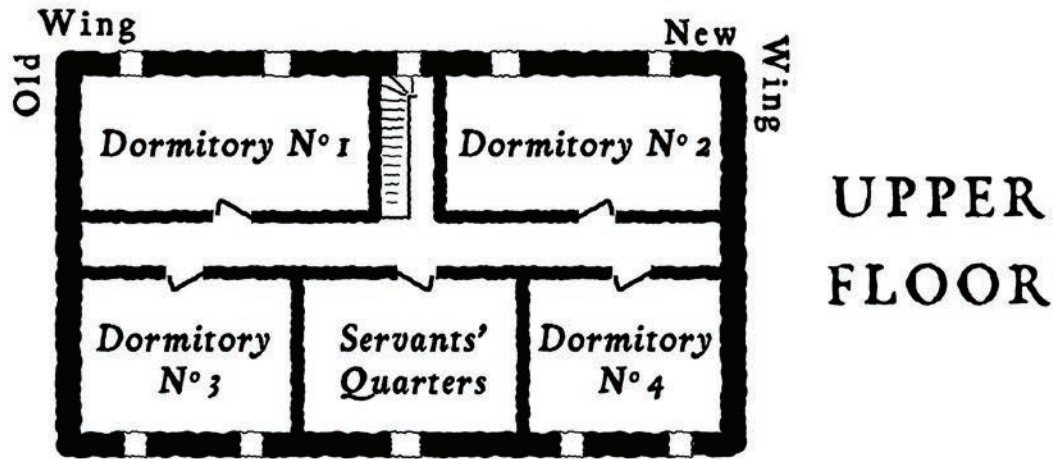
In general, supernatural effects during the day will be far milder than those witnessed at night. The fact that almost all the ghostly sightings to date have occurred at night may make investigators wish to “camp out” in a lonely part of the school (perhaps in the school room) after dark. This will provide a great opportunity for the Horror to unleash some more remarkable supernatural effects in an effort to scare them away.

Depending on the Mythos Option the Keeper has chosen, there are some specific haunting effects that are available to the Orphan School Horror. However, in addition to these special powers the insubstantial creature can always:

- Cause small objects to inexplicably move around inside a room,
- Conjure up the faint and distant sounds of children playing,
- Whisper the names of the missing convicts, the catatonic girls, or anyone from the investigators’ past that it believes they may be terrified by,
- Create a sudden wind capable of blowing out an unprotected candle or causing the flame in a lantern to dance around wildly,
- Warp a person’s shadow into a truly grotesque form,
- Briefly mimic a face or voice from a person’s past in a reflected surface,
- Dramatically alter the room temperature around itself.

As the investigators begin to form theories about what is truly going on at the school, the Horror will abandon these subtle tactics and aim to lure them into quiet places to attack them directly. Once they have attracted its ire, there is a 70% chance each day that one of the investigators catch a glimpse of the horror in its grown woman form, somewhere within the school. Depending on how the investigators respond to such an encounter, this may push the adventure towards its logical conclusion (see “An Encounter with the Lonely Dead” on page 15).

SYDNEY FEMALE ORPHAN SCHOOL (Main Building)



Layout of the Sydney Orphan School. (NB: no historical map source is available; this floorplan based on layout of later Parramatta Orphan School)

Questioning the Girls

Eventually, the situation at the school is likely to escalate – particularly if other adults (or even investigators) go missing as the result of successful attacks by the Horror. This will lead to the Matron relaxing her stance in opposition of the investigators questioning girls directly. Even in this situation, however, the Matron will insist that any interviews with the orphans occur with a member of school staff present – however, with some connivance it may be possible for students to be approached and quizzed alone. Such subterfuge will be far easier if the investigator is female.

The general story told by the orphan girls is remarkably consistent – they say that the school is haunted by a mother and child ghost. If the investigators manage to speak alone with one or more of the orphans, the girls will be a little more forthcoming: relating some rumours and personal opinions about the ghosts. Some of the orphans believe that the mother ghost haunts the school because she grieves for the fact that she was unable to get her child (the other ghost) a place in the orphanage, a tragedy that caused the mother to kill herself out of remorse.

Specific areas of inquiry that the orphans can shed light onto are described below.

THE MISSING SERVANT WOMEN

The girls believe these women have been killed by the ghosts, taken off and drowned in Sydney Harbour. There is no basis for this belief nor sensible rationale of how the ghosts might have accomplished this, or why.

- A few girls say they saw both women in the old wing, heading towards the basement, shortly before they vanished
- Both women were well-liked by the girls. They both seemed a little troubled at times, but otherwise very kind.

THE UNRESPONSIVE GIRLS

Both girls struck down by the “swoon” to date have been generally well-liked by their peers.

- None of the girls believe they are faking their symptoms, and nobody has seen any evidence to support such a theory.

THE CHILD GHOSTS

Unlike the staff, many girls have seen the ghost child, but only fleetingly.

- One girl, Lettie Crookes aged 7, saw the ghostly child turn into a big spidery thing. The girls teased her about this, so she is reluctant to offer up her account. The girls will note that Lettie has her own strange theory and laugh, which may bring her to the attention of investigators.
- The girls believe if you get a good look at the ghost child you end up like Bethany and Mary (this is true).

THE ADULT FIGURE GHOSTS

None of the children have personally seen any grown-up ghosts (which seems at odds with the general story about a “mother and daughter”).

WEIRD FIGURES AT THE ORPHANAGE GATE

Some of the older children have been in the yard working late and have seen some odd-looking children lurking on the outside of the school gate. One of the girls thought that she recognised the features of one of the strange figures – and that it looked just like Margaret Boyne (one of the missing convict women), only as a child.

THE GENTLEMAN LURKER

If questioned about other strange people seen around the school, one of the older girls (Jenny Cowley, aged 13) says on several occasions she has seen a young man hanging around outside the wall. Some nights he can be seen throwing small stones up to the window. She recalls he was there the last night she saw Mrs Boyne. Jenny recalls he looked well-dressed.

Wider Investigations around Sydney Cove

While investigating the Orphan School mystery, the investigators may wish to survey the neighbourhood around the school. Adjacent to the school building is a Government Granary and Storehouse; beyond that is a private warehouse belonging to one James Underwood. These are the only major structures close to the orphanage.

Speaking with clerks at the Government Storehouse, investigators can learn only that they have seen number of young men hanging around the Orphanage. Whenever they spot such degenerates, they tend to send them packing.

The workers at Underwood's warehouse are generally of low character, but pleasant enough to visitors. One of them, John Biggell, claims that he has seen the Orphan ghosts. He found them terrifying, but anyone he tells the story assumes that he was merely drunk, and threatens him with a flogging. For this reason, he is (understandably) reluctant to share what he saw. But with some reassurance from investigators he will relate how he heard one of the spectral things making a weird humming noise that sounded to him like "Margaret Born." He has no idea what this means.

An Encounter with the Lonely Dead

The scenario should come to a climax whenever the investigators have developed a theory that approximates what is really going on at the school. As soon as this happens, the Orphan School Horror will realise that they are a material threat, and it will shift all its efforts to eradicating them.

If the investigators are struggling to form a definitive theory, the Keeper can help them along with information supplied by the second "swooning" orphan when she awakes. This girl, nine-year-old Mary Asker, rouses from her catatonia some three days after the scenario begins. Unlike Bethany, Mary recalls most of the events leading up to her encounter with the Horror. She can describe it in detail or, at the Keeper's discretion, recall specific clues that will help the investigators solve the mystery (such as key locations where information can be found).

Eventually the scenario will shift gears into a head-to-head battle between the Orphan School Horror (and its small army of Ghosts) and the investigators. Exactly how this plays out will depend on which Mythos Option has been selected: see the relevant option descriptions for details.

Red Herrings and Other Complications

Some Keepers and players enjoy having stray clues and irrelevant plot-lines introduced into their mystery-based scenarios, to complicate the process of deduction. Other groups eschew such "red herrings" altogether, preferring simpler and more direct mysteries. As Keeper, you know your group better than anyone and can best decide whether to sprinkle some additional complications into the mix to challenge your players (or not).

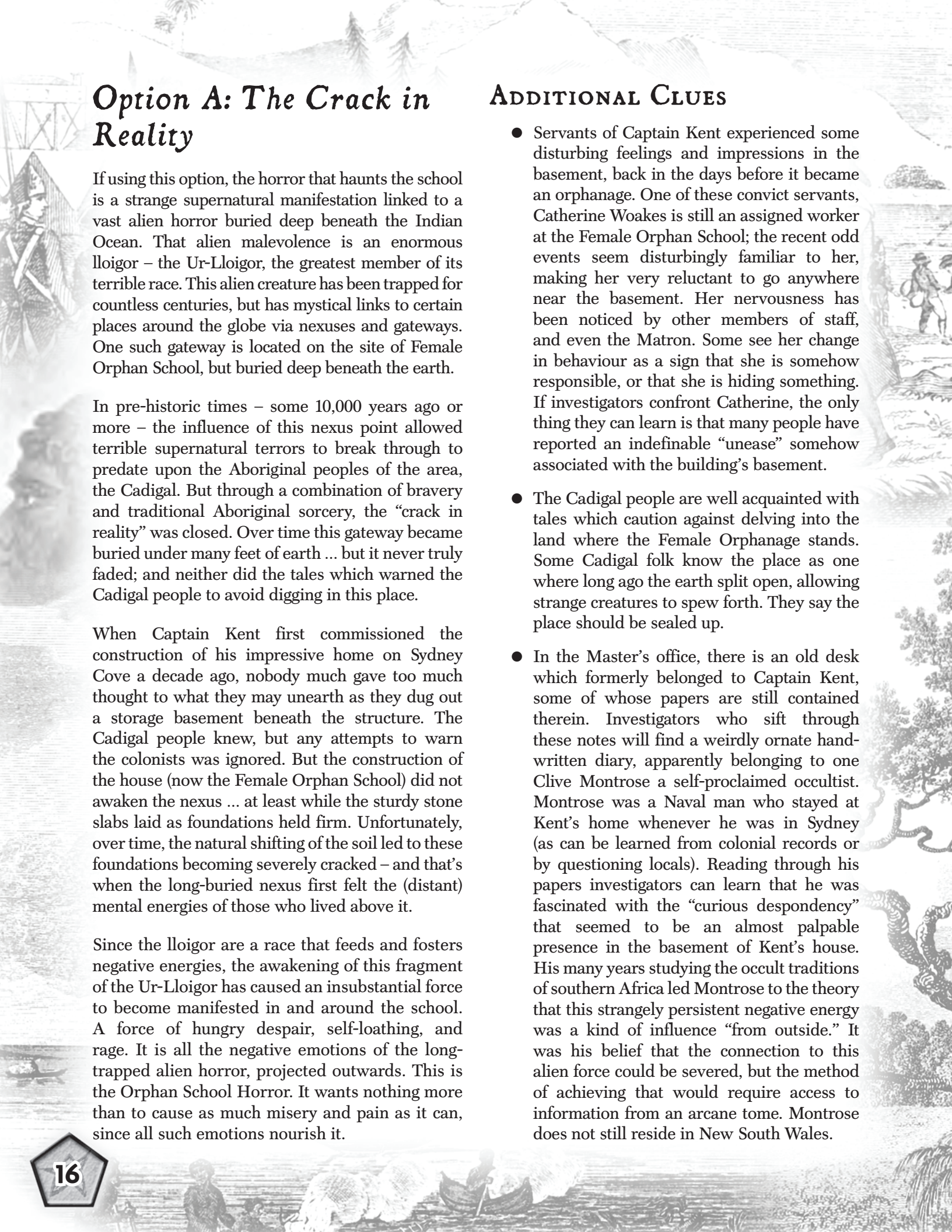
As written in the main text, most of the clues relate directly to the main plot. Here are some ideas for introducing additional elements which are only marginally relevant:

- **The Young Loiterer:** the well-dressed young man hanging around the house can play a number of roles as a red herring — he may be a youth smitten with an older orphan girl, a predatory creep, or perhaps even a cultist zeroing in on the strangeness afflicting the Orphanage.
- **A Rival Investigation:** if the Female Orphan School Committee has reason to doubt the progress made by the investigators (or if they are looking into the mystery without the endorsement of the committee), the committee may decide to bring in a separate group to quell the rising hysteria. This might be a group of free settlers, government types, or (worst of all) a group of NSW Corps soldiers.
- **The Warehouse:** A rumour of two mentions the warehouse nearby. There may actually be some nefarious goings on here: smuggling, an illegal still, some escaped convicts being hidden until they can be taken off by an obliging sea captain.

Mythos Options

Three alternative Mythos-related mysteries are offered. Keepers can decide which they will employ. Each will have some effect on the way the early parts of the adventure — as well as its grand finale — play out.

For each of the options, there is a different weakness by which the Orphan School Horror can be readily dispatched by clever investigators. These are called its "Bane."



Option A: The Crack in Reality

If using this option, the horror that haunts the school is a strange supernatural manifestation linked to a vast alien horror buried deep beneath the Indian Ocean. That alien malevolence is an enormous lloigor – the Ur-Lloigor, the greatest member of its terrible race. This alien creature has been trapped for countless centuries, but has mystical links to certain places around the globe via nexuses and gateways. One such gateway is located on the site of Female Orphan School, but buried deep beneath the earth.

In pre-historic times – some 10,000 years ago or more – the influence of this nexus point allowed terrible supernatural terrors to break through to predate upon the Aboriginal peoples of the area, the Cadigal. But through a combination of bravery and traditional Aboriginal sorcery, the “crack in reality” was closed. Over time this gateway became buried under many feet of earth ... but it never truly faded; and neither did the tales which warned the Cadigal people to avoid digging in this place.

When Captain Kent first commissioned the construction of his impressive home on Sydney Cove a decade ago, nobody much gave too much thought to what they may unearth as they dug out a storage basement beneath the structure. The Cadigal people knew, but any attempts to warn the colonists was ignored. But the construction of the house (now the Female Orphan School) did not awaken the nexus ... at least while the sturdy stone slabs laid as foundations held firm. Unfortunately, over time, the natural shifting of the soil led to these foundations becoming severely cracked – and that’s when the long-buried nexus first felt the (distant) mental energies of those who lived above it.

Since the lloigor are a race that feeds and fosters negative energies, the awakening of this fragment of the Ur-Lloigor has caused an insubstantial force to become manifested in and around the school. A force of hungry despair, self-loathing, and rage. It is all the negative emotions of the long-trapped alien horror, projected outwards. This is the Orphan School Horror. It wants nothing more than to cause as much misery and pain as it can, since all such emotions nourish it.

ADDITIONAL CLUES

- Servants of Captain Kent experienced some disturbing feelings and impressions in the basement, back in the days before it became an orphanage. One of these convict servants, Catherine Woakes is still an assigned worker at the Female Orphan School; the recent odd events seem disturbingly familiar to her, making her very reluctant to go anywhere near the basement. Her nervousness has been noticed by other members of staff, and even the Matron. Some see her change in behaviour as a sign that she is somehow responsible, or that she is hiding something. If investigators confront Catherine, the only thing they can learn is that many people have reported an indefinable “unease” somehow associated with the building’s basement.
- The Cadigal people are well acquainted with tales which caution against delving into the land where the Female Orphanage stands. Some Cadigal folk know the place as one where long ago the earth split open, allowing strange creatures to spew forth. They say the place should be sealed up.
- In the Master’s office, there is an old desk which formerly belonged to Captain Kent, some of whose papers are still contained therein. Investigators who sift through these notes will find a weirdly ornate handwritten diary, apparently belonging to one Clive Montrose a self-proclaimed occultist. Montrose was a Naval man who stayed at Kent’s home whenever he was in Sydney (as can be learned from colonial records or by questioning locals). Reading through his papers investigators can learn that he was fascinated with the “curious despondency” that seemed to be an almost palpable presence in the basement of Kent’s house. His many years studying the occult traditions of southern Africa led Montrose to the theory that this strangely persistent negative energy was a kind of influence “from outside.” It was his belief that the connection to this alien force could be severed, but the method of achieving that would require access to information from an arcane tome. Montrose does not still reside in New South Wales.



- If the investigators wish to pursue this lead, the Keeper can make it as easy or hard to obtain the nominated tome as befits the desired pace of the game. Ultimately its cryptic text will tell them that the best method of neutralising the nexus point is by ensuring it is well sealed with earth, preferably limestone.

Eerie Phenomena: In addition to the normal haunting phenomena, the spectral force can create inexplicable and sudden impressions of negative emotions. Investigators (and orphans) can be subjected to sudden and unexplained bursts of sorrow, or despair. They can also be confronted with flashbacks to horrible events from their past, in particular ones where their own personal flaws were the cause of some misfortune. The Haunt can also create unexplained cold spots.

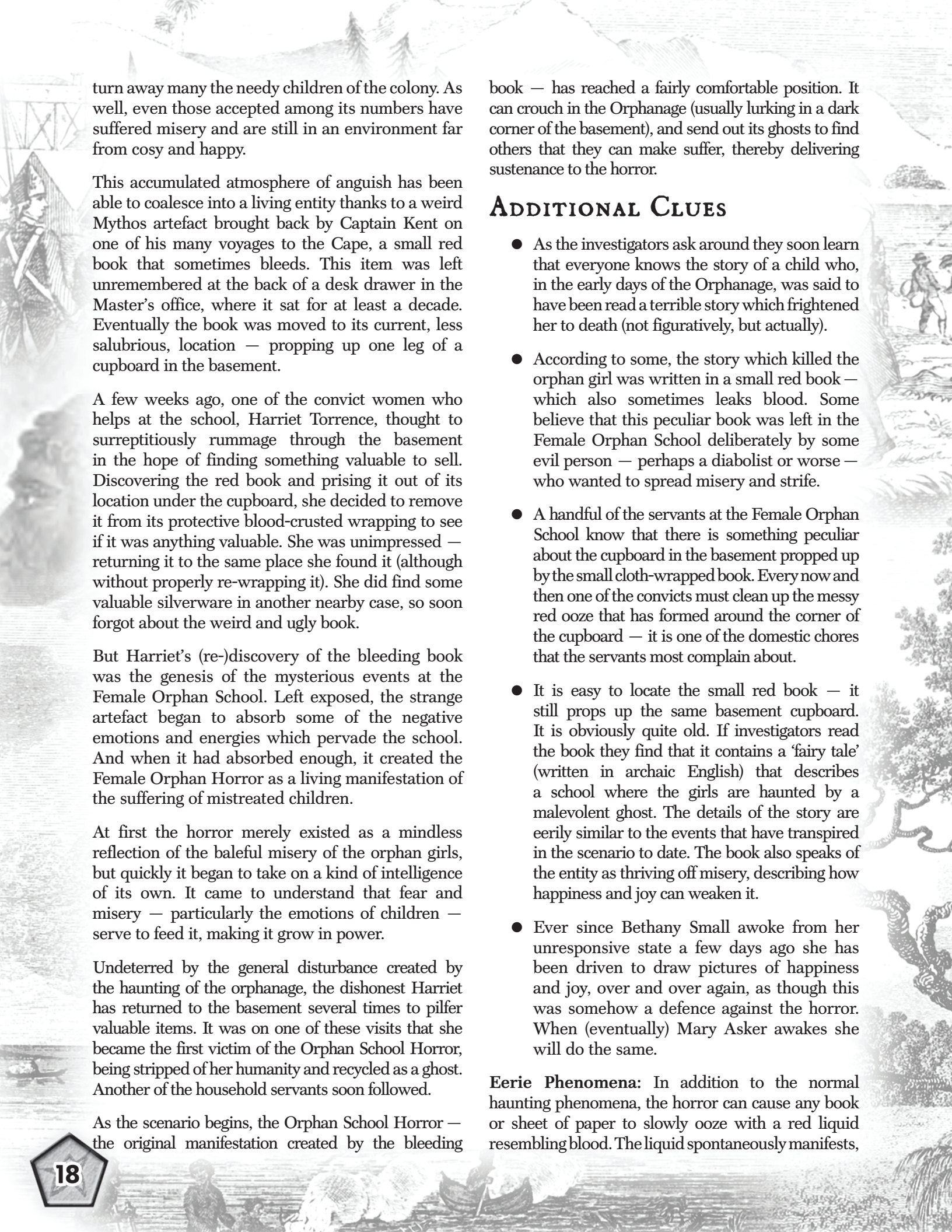
Bane & Denouement: The bane of the horror is having the nexus sealed tightly beneath rock and soil, such that the gateway is removed from all contact with human consciousness. Use the guidelines in the statistics block for the Orphan School Horror to resolve any actions which exercise this bane. Coating the walls of the basement with a layer of

limestone is a minor exercise of this bane. A more serious construction effort like packing all the walls of the basement (and the floor) with a thick layer of plaster or cement is achievable with a day's convict labour, and is worth a major roll against the thing's bane. The most radical solutions, such as arranging for the entire basement to be permanently filled in with limestone, will probably only take a few days of construction work, although convincing the school committee (and the Colonial Government, which notionally owns the building) may take much longer. Such a solution is worthy of a significant roll against the horror's bane.

The Orphan School Horror will not sit idly by while the connection to its only food source is sealed up. Rather it will run amok during the process even appearing in one of the dormitories where the girls are locked in, forcing any rescuers to scramble for keys.

Option B: The Nexus of Need

If using this option, the spectral force that haunts the Female Orphan School is a strange manifestation of the misery and suffering of those who attend the school – and even those denied attendance. The school is perpetually oversubscribed, and forced to



turn away many the needy children of the colony. As well, even those accepted among its numbers have suffered misery and are still in an environment far from cosy and happy.

This accumulated atmosphere of anguish has been able to coalesce into a living entity thanks to a weird Mythos artefact brought back by Captain Kent on one of his many voyages to the Cape, a small red book that sometimes bleeds. This item was left unremembered at the back of a desk drawer in the Master's office, where it sat for at least a decade. Eventually the book was moved to its current, less salubrious, location — propping up one leg of a cupboard in the basement.

A few weeks ago, one of the convict women who helps at the school, Harriet Torrence, thought to surreptitiously rummage through the basement in the hope of finding something valuable to sell. Discovering the red book and prising it out of its location under the cupboard, she decided to remove it from its protective blood-crusting wrapping to see if it was anything valuable. She was unimpressed — returning it to the same place she found it (although without properly re-wrapping it). She did find some valuable silverware in another nearby case, so soon forgot about the weird and ugly book.

But Harriet's (re-)discovery of the bleeding book was the genesis of the mysterious events at the Female Orphan School. Left exposed, the strange artefact began to absorb some of the negative emotions and energies which pervade the school. And when it had absorbed enough, it created the Female Orphan Horror as a living manifestation of the suffering of mistreated children.

At first the horror merely existed as a mindless reflection of the baleful misery of the orphan girls, but quickly it began to take on a kind of intelligence of its own. It came to understand that fear and misery — particularly the emotions of children — serve to feed it, making it grow in power.

Undeterred by the general disturbance created by the haunting of the orphanage, the dishonest Harriet has returned to the basement several times to pilfer valuable items. It was on one of these visits that she became the first victim of the Orphan School Horror, being stripped of her humanity and recycled as a ghost. Another of the household servants soon followed.

As the scenario begins, the Orphan School Horror — the original manifestation created by the bleeding

book — has reached a fairly comfortable position. It can crouch in the Orphanage (usually lurking in a dark corner of the basement), and send out its ghosts to find others that they can make suffer, thereby delivering sustenance to the horror.

ADDITIONAL CLUES

- As the investigators ask around they soon learn that everyone knows the story of a child who, in the early days of the Orphanage, was said to have been read a terrible story which frightened her to death (not figuratively, but actually).
- According to some, the story which killed the orphan girl was written in a small red book — which also sometimes leaks blood. Some believe that this peculiar book was left in the Female Orphan School deliberately by some evil person — perhaps a diabolist or worse — who wanted to spread misery and strife.
- A handful of the servants at the Female Orphan School know that there is something peculiar about the cupboard in the basement propped up by the small cloth-wrapped book. Every now and then one of the convicts must clean up the messy red ooze that has formed around the corner of the cupboard — it is one of the domestic chores that the servants most complain about.
- It is easy to locate the small red book — it still props up the same basement cupboard. It is obviously quite old. If investigators read the book they find that it contains a 'fairy tale' (written in archaic English) that describes a school where the girls are haunted by a malevolent ghost. The details of the story are eerily similar to the events that have transpired in the scenario to date. The book also speaks of the entity as thriving off misery, describing how happiness and joy can weaken it.
- Ever since Bethany Small awoke from her unresponsive state a few days ago she has been driven to draw pictures of happiness and joy, over and over again, as though this was somehow a defence against the horror. When (eventually) Mary Asker awakes she will do the same.

Eerie Phenomena: In addition to the normal haunting phenomena, the horror can cause any book or sheet of paper to slowly ooze with a red liquid resembling blood. The liquid spontaneously manifests,

usually at the edge of the page. This is usually a temporary effect, however should the original small red book be threatened with destruction, the Orphan School Horror can turn any book found in the schoolhouse into a new perpetually bleeding book. (This is important since the entity requires one such book to exist as a focus for its power).

Bane & Denouement: The bane of this thing is happiness and laughter. If the investigators can bring some respite to the Orphanage, they weaken the power of the creature — perhaps even kill it altogether. Use the guidelines in the statistics block for the Orphan School Horror to resolve any such attempts. Attempts to ease the suffering of a few of the girls is a minor exercise of the bane; arranging for all of them to receive some new bedding or clothing is worth a major roll. A particularly magnanimous action like arranging a lavish Christmas feast for the whole school would be worth a significant roll.

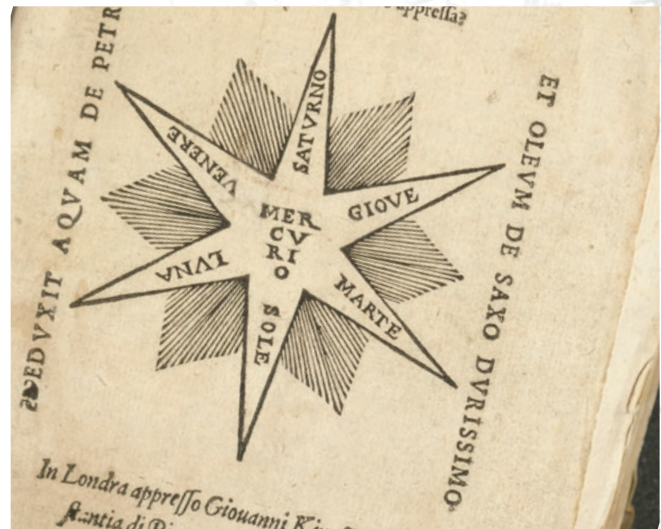
If the haunt is defeated utterly, it and its attendant ghosts are dispelled forever — probably after a flashy last-minute show of rampant malevolence, witnessed by as many people as possible.

Option C: The Guest of Captain Kent

If using this option, horror that haunts the school is an extra-terrestrial creature that was summoned to Earth in a dormant state a decade (or more) ago by a temporary resident of the building. The recent mysterious events are a direct consequence of the alien thing finally “hatching” from the egg-like protection within which it has slowly — invisibly — been maturing since then.

The Female Orphan School building was formerly the home of Captain William Kent, a busy sea captain with many varied acquaintances. One of these was a somewhat degenerate Naval officer named Clive Montrose, who would occasionally stay with Kent while he was in Sydney. Montrose was a dabbler in the occult, with a sketchy but dangerous grasp of some of the secrets of the Cthulhu Mythos. During one of his stays with Kent in 1799 the occultist determined that the time was auspicious for him to attempt one of his elaborate summoning rituals.

After a week of preparations, Montrose was ready to perform his summoning ritual in the basement



of Kent’s stately house. Many hours had been spent drawing intricate symbols on the bare stone floor; many more were spent intoning almost unpronounceable chants. Montrose’s goal was to gain contact with a hidden race of higher beings that live outside of Earth’s sphere — these creature he knew by the name “Eaters Out Of Space.”

Exactly what happened at the climax of this length ritual remains unknown — but whatever took place left Clive Montrose quite mad. He was removed to the makeshift hospital at Sydney by Kent, who had not participated in the “occult nonsense” but was alerted that something was amiss when a bright pillar of light shot through the floor of his study and out the roof at the same instant his friend cried out in abject terror.

The only thing other left behind after the removal of Montrose was a strange mass of leathery organic matter, the size of a cabbage. The thing was dry to the touch and apparently inert. Assuming it was some strange paraphernalia owned by the (now-incapacitated) occultist, Kent threw this object into a sea chest and promptly forgot it. The item was not, in fact, of this world at all but rather the embryonic form of a Space Eater, brought forth by the ritual.

Time passed and Captain Kent sold his home, and a great many items along with it — including the sea chest which contained the Space Eater embryo. Its alien physiology does not mature according to any biological processes known to mankind, but somehow the thing eventually reached maturity and “hatched.” The thing that emerged was the Orphan School Horror (actually a juvenile phase of the Space Eater lifecycle). It lives to absorb energy, with the ultimate goal of growing into an adult Space Eater.

ADDITIONAL CLUES

- If the investigators ask around about any peculiarities in the history of the schoolhouse building, there is a fair chance they will find someone who can tell them about the strange mad occultist who was sometimes Captain Kent's notorious guest. Some may even be able to recall his name: Clive Montrose.
- During a search of the basement, investigators are likely to stumble upon a sheaf of documents left behind by Montrose. Although rambling and incoherent, these personal papers mention his obsession with summoning an "Eater Out of Space". They also reveal the results of his researches into methods to control and banish such a creature, should it prove necessary. The notes make it clear that Montrose had prepared a "banishment seal" to use against the creature. No matter how much they search the school, the investigators will not find anything matching the description of the seal.
- A scan of government records will reveal that Clive Montrose died some years ago, apparently after a long convalescence in the Sydney hospital.
- A visit to the hospital will bring the investigators into contact with surgeons who still remember Montrose; they all describe the man as thoroughly insane, often needing to be tied to his cot to prevent him from injuring himself and others. He died eventually of an unspecified infection.
- If the investigators ask, the hospital still has some of Montrose's papers including a letter he wrote to his brother in England (but never sent). In it he states that it is vitally important that he recover the old sea chest that he formerly carried with him aboard his ship — inside that chest is something that is crucial to preventing a "catastrophe of unimaginable ferocity." Melrose says that he has only just realised the full gravity of the situation far too late, and pleads for forgiveness for all that he has done.
- Investigators can easily use the records in Government House to locate the ship which

Melrose most recently travelled aboard — it is the *Peregrine*, a small ship that now runs short trips between Sydney and Van Diemen's Land. With a little bit of patience, the investigators can board the ship (it is either already in harbour, or soon will be). The personal sea chest of Clive Montrose is still aboard the *Peregrine*, a fact that can be readily confirmed by the ship's quartermaster. Looking inside the chest, investigators can find a stone bearing an odd sigil, a little like an Elder Sign.

Eerie Phenomena: In addition to the standard haunting phenomena, the horror can manifest some of the characteristics of a Space Eater (in miniature). Thus it can create colourful columns of prismatic, shimmering light which are at once beautiful and terrible to behold. It has some abilities to create cold spots and summon spontaneous mist in a room.

Bane & Denouement: The sigil in the sea chest is the creature's bane. It can be used to either repel the thing or to weaken it. Use the guidelines in the statistics block for the Orphan School Horror to resolve any such attempts. Confronting the creature with the sign is a minor exercise of its bane; pressing it against its non-corporeal form is a major exercise. Tracking down the leathery "shell" from which the creature hatched and burying the sigil inside it is worth a significant roll.

If the creature is defeated it bursts into a thousand points of spectral light accompanied by a gut-wrenching scream as the dots of light are scattered to the four winds.

Rewards & Penalties

If the investigators are successful in destroying or banishing the Orphan School Horror they should be rewarded with +1D10 Sanity Points. In addition to this, success brings a boost in Credit Rating and associated social standing: a boost of +10 percentiles is warranted, since the Female Orphan School Committee is very well-connected. The influential members of the colony's society will not forget the service the investigators have rendered.

Statistics

Game statistics for *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition* are shown below.

The Orphan School Horror

Out of some foul dimension this creature has manifested, feeding on the fear, regret and terror its powers intensify. It is a shadowy amorphous horror, faintly shining with a sickly green effulgence.

The Orphan School Horror can take a number of forms, its favourites being a ghostly orphan child (which it uses to appear to children), a ghostly servant or matron (which it uses to appear to adults), and a headless, multi-tentacled thing with a churning darkness in its distended middle. In all forms, it emits a sighing and gibbering noise punctuated by the occasional unearthly scream of pain and terror. Now and again it can usher forth a whispered and sibilant 'come forward' or 'my sweet child' but that is the extent of its vocalising. Despite its limited capacity to communicate, it is intelligent — and malevolent.

STR — CON — SIZ 100 DEX 90 INT 75
POW 100 Hit Points: N/A
Damage Bonus: N/A Build: - Move: 10 Magic Points: 20

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

The horror has no physical attacks; it can only use its special powers (see below) to attack.

Armour: None. However, the Horror cannot be harmed except by its Bane (see Mythos Options).

Skills: Stealth Know Fears 100%, Know Childhood Trauma 100%, Stealth 60%.

Sanity Loss: 1D4/1D10 to see the Orphan School Horror.

SPECIAL POWERS

Harvest the Child: This power works only against children in the orphanage (for game purposes anyone 16 or under). The Horror terrorises child victims by showing them their worst fears. It projects these into as a flickering image on a nearby surface. Any victim failing an Opposed POW roll while watching these images will become immersed in them, no longer able to judge fantasy from reality. Conversely, if the targeted



child wins, the Horror retreats. Once immersed, victims must attempt another POW roll. Failing this sends the victim into catatonia for 1D10 days and causes them to lose 2D10 points of permanent POW, life energy which is instantly added to the POW of the Thing. When children emerge from catatonia, they will remember little except vague terrifying sensations.

Bring Forth the Child: This is the only attack which is effective against adults. By concentrating its energies, the Horror can channel and amplify the target's childhood fears and traumas. Even a happy childhood will have some moments of unhappiness, and these the creature seizes on to make a thousand times worse. Victims of genuine childhood trauma relive these terrible memories. Those targeted by this power must make an Opposed roll comparing their POW to the POW of the Horror. If the targeted adult wins, the horror retreats. If the target fails, they are overwhelmed with emotion and rendered helpless for 1D10 minutes. If left undisturbed, the Horror will use that time to absorb its stunned victim into its spectral extended body, effectively turning them into an insubstantial form that it can carry away to wherever it currently dwells. One day later it excretes them as an Orphan Ghost (see below for details).

Vulnerability to the Bane: The Orphan School Horror has a special weakness (the exact nature of which will depend on the option the Keeper has chosen). Whenever this "bane" is exercised by the investigators they may weaken it, or even kill it outright. Mechanically, attempts to exercise the bane are treated as opposed rolls comparing the POW of the Orphan School Horror against the highest POW score of the individuals trying to cause it harm. If the investigators obtain a superior class of result to the Horror, the latter takes damage to its POW characteristic. If this brings its POW below zero, the Horror has been permanently banished and any attendant Orphan School Ghosts similarly dissolve into the ether.

The specifics of the opposed roll and the amount of damage resulting from investigator success will depend on the magnitude of the action which they have performed to exercise the bane. Actions are rated by the Keeper as being minor, major, or significant depending on the scale of impact they will have on the particular weakness. For example, if the bane of the thing is children being joyous and happy (Option B), then a minor action might involve improving the lives of a few of the children; a major action might involve a short-term improvement to the lives of every child; a significant action might involve a grand gesture like raising money for a lavish Christmas feast. The table below shows the different types of rolls and effects arising from each different magnitude of action.

Magnitude of Action	Opposed Roll	Damage
Minor	Normal opposed roll of POW vs POW	-1D10 POW
Major	Opposed roll of POW vs POW where investigators get one bonus die	-1D20 POW
Significant	Opposed roll of POW vs POW where investigators get one bonus die	-1D100 POW

There is a potential down-side to attempting to damage the Horror by exercising its bane — in the event that the investigators roll is fumbled (i.e., a natural 96–00) then the attempt has backfired due to some botched element. The Horror will gain POW equal to the damage it would have suffered due to investigator success (i.e., it gains +1D10 POW from a botched minor attempt; +1D20 from a botched major action; and +1D100 POW from a botched significant action).

Orphan School Ghosts

Orphan School Ghosts are the product of a successful attack on an adult by the Orphan School Horror (see above). The ghosts are unnaturally thin ghostly children with long arms and fingers, their features in a permanent howl of madness and pain. They are effectively mindless thralls of the Horror, with no obvious memory of their former life, except a compulsion to say their former name in a soft humming monotone.

The Orphan School Ghosts exist to sustain their foul progenitor (and themselves) through the harvesting of energy from adult souls. This is similar to the way the principal Horror destroys, but on a much more modest scale. The ghosts have no power at all over children except to terrify them into a Sanity loss by their appearance.

STR — CON — SIZ 30 DEX 90 INT 15
 POW 50 Hit Points: N/A
 Damage Bonus: N/A Build: - Move: 10 Magic Points: 10

ATTACKS

Attacks per round: 1

The ghosts have no physical attacks; they can only use their special power (see below) to attack.

Armour: None. However the Ghost is instantly destroyed if the Orphan School Horror (above) is banished or killed.

Skills: Know Childhood Fears 100%, Stealth 50%.

Sanity Loss: 2/1D6 to see an Orphan School Ghost.

SPECIAL POWERS

Harvest Adults: The Orphan Ghosts have the power to terrorise adult victims by showing them their worst childhood fears. It projects these into as a flickering image on a nearby surface. Any target failing an Opposed POW roll while watching these images becomes immersed in them, no longer able to judge fantasy from reality. If the target wins, the Ghost retreats. Once immersed, victims must make a second POW roll. Failing this robs the victims of 1D10 POW, half of which is instantly added to the POW of the Ghost, the other half being added to the POW of the Orphan School Horror. Unlike the Horror, above, the Ghost's stolen points of POW dissipate within 24 hours and it just terrifies victims, rather than renders them catatonic. Victims recall the encounter vaguely, but require a successful INT roll to summon forth details.

Further Source Material

There are several other places where Keeper can find further historical information about the plight of female children in the colonies.

Beryl M Bubacz, *The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales, 1801-1850*, PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2007 <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/2474>

Barry Bridges, *Sydney Orphan Schools 1800-1830*, Masters Thesis, University of Sydney, 1973 <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/7358>

John F Cleverly, *The First Generation: School and Society in Early Australia*, Sydney University Press, 1971.

Kay Daniel, *Convict Women*, Allen & Unwin, 1998.

Cathy Dunn, 'Sydney Female Orphan School 1801 - 1818', Australian History Research, <http://www.australianhistoryresearch.info/sydney-female-orphan-school-1801-1818/>



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