

DEMONGROUND

Reflections of a Darker Future

OCTOBER 2001

VOL 13

LUCKY
THIRTEEN!

COVER ART

Jys'Lyn a'lis

ALL FLESH MUST BE EATEN

Relative Humanism
Courtney Payton

DELTA GREEN

Legends Michael Layne

DARK CONSPIRACY

A Few Good Men Jonathan Turner

Call To Darkness Mike Marchi

Connoly Rory Thompson

GAWAG Lee Williams

Into the Dark Jonathan Turner

Linacre Lee Williams

New Delhi Monkeyman

Lee Williams

Serving Hard Time

Kevin Buchanan

Shop Til You're Dropped

Dave Schuey

Skeletonator

Lee Williams

DARK MATTER

Dead Man's Hand Jerel Hass

Ekimmel Darren Millar

WITCHCRAFT

Big Trouble in Little Italy

Thom Marrison

... Plus A Lot More!!!



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DEMONGROUND ISSUE 13

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WELCOME TO ISSUE 13

Sorry, we're late. We were originally hoping to get this issue out at the end of September, but it just didn't happen for one reason or another. Mainly because of perhaps our most time consuming tasks - graphic design and layout.

This issue more or less marks our third anniversary. Sometimes it's hard to believe that we've been doing this for as long as we have. It's been a long and sometimes rocky road, with all of another or us tempted to throw in the towel at one time or another. But we've managed to hold it together, and the fact we're still going - and still friends - is something I'm actually quite proud of.

Somewhere along the line, I heard that most Internet 'zines don't survive much past their first year of operation. Believe me when I say I probably know why. Putting a magazine together is not as easy as it sounds. Articles have to be collected and edited, artwork found to at least partly match the articles, and then the whole shooting match has to be laid out into the format that you finally get. All up, I'd estimate that probably 50+ hours of time goes into putting an issue together.

That's where the trouble lies - finding those hours. This year alone, all three of the original DG team (Mike, Marcus and myself) have all started new jobs, with Mike and I both having to move interstate in the process. Lee hasn't escaped either, returning to college full-time to study IT. If that wasn't enough, my wife and I are in the final stages of building our first home. Those of you who have had the "fun" of doing this will know just how much of your spare time it chews up. Mike and Becky have had a similar problem getting their new house in order as well, following their move. And as much as we would like it otherwise, finishing an issue of DG is unfortunately one of those things that just gets put on hold until we can get it done.

But the good news is that we've raised our production quality again. We've got a few new desktop publishing tools and are putting them to good use, so I'm hoping that this issue will look far better than any that have gone before it. In three years we've come a hell of a long way in this department. If you don't believe me, go back and have another look at DG 1. When we did that one, we were really happy with how it looked. These days, it almost embarrassing. But you have to start somewhere.



A NEW MEMBER OF THE DG FAMILY

I'm proud to announce that DEMONGROUND is supporting another new system: Hunter the Reckoning. In one of those weird cases of synchronicity, we had a request for the game at the same time as I was reading through the Hunter core rulebook. I felt that it was a relatively close match to the games we are currently supporting, so after talking about it with the rest of the DG team, I contacted Ken Cliffe at White Wolf who graciously gave us permission to support the game.

For the foreseeable future, Hunter is the only World of Darkness game that we will be supporting. It's our aim to support games where the player characters are combating the evil in the world. If that's going to change, then we'll let you know.

ORIGINS AWARDS RECAP

As most of you were probably aware, DEMONGROUND was nominated in 2001 for the Origins Award for the Best Amateur Periodical of 2000. The results were announced at the awards ceremony at the beginning of July at the Origins convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Unfortunately, we didn't get on stage that night. Lee Gold took out the award for her Alarums & Excursions APA, for the second year in a row. Our congratulations go out to Lee on the win.

The news from Origins was not all bad though. Mike & Becky Marchi, who were present at the awards ceremony and who circulated through the con population for the rest of the weekend, ably represented DEMONGROUND. From all reports, their efforts were very successful, as in the two weeks immediately after the convention, we saw a big jump in the number of times

DEMONGROUND 12 was downloaded and in the number of people who signed up for our subscription mailing list. Mike also told me that there was a lot of support from the companies whose games we support.

We're incredibly grateful for the huge number of fans that we already have (DG12 has been downloaded over 1,845 times, surpassing issues 10 & 11, and edging closer to our most frequently downloaded issues (7,8 & 9) which stand at just over 2,000 downloads each) and without you all we wouldn't be where we are today.

So, with the Y2K awards behind us, we're already looking forward to next year's awards. We'd like to go one better and actually win the award next time. But in order to do that, we need more supporters than we already have. We're hoping that's where you - our loyal readers - can help.

We need people to help spread the word to people who still haven't discovered DEMONGROUND. Even though we've been in publication for three years, we're still amazed by the number of people who have never even heard of us. We'd like as many people as possible to help get the word out. I'd love to see reviews of each new issue appear on RPG.net (especially if they're positive ones :). We've also made [a flyer](#) available on our website that you can download and print off to hand out at gaming conventions. Even better, if you have a good relationship with the staff at your local gaming store, you could supply them with a stack of flyers to slip inside the cover of any books sold for the game lines we support.

It doesn't matter how you get the word out, as long as you do :)

STARTING THE DEMONGROUND COMMUNITY

Even though we have well over a thousand readers for each issue of DEMONGROUND, one of the things that we lack is a sense of community. There's currently no real way for readers to get in touch with other readers to share their thoughts about each issue, or to provide conversions of DEMONGROUND's content from one gaming system to another (something I think a lot of people would appreciate).

To help in this regard we've created the DEMONGROUND mailing list at Yahoogroups. It's our hope that we can get a regular conversation going and make things more dynamic than they are at the moment.

To sign up, visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/demonground/>

Anyway, that's enough of my rambling. You have a magazine to read. Take care and enjoy DEMONGROUND 13.

cheers

Geoff Skellams

nightmares of mine

Book Review by Geoff Skellams

Two years ago, Iron Crown Enterprises released a RPG supplement by Kenneth Hite called *Nightmares of Mine*. Its small size is rather deceptive; it's packed with useful information on running a horror game.

In *Nightmares of Mine*, Hite looks the horror genre as a whole. This includes looking at a number of different aspects of horror and its tropes, giving both players and GMs a better idea of what horror is.

The early chapters deal with what horror is and how it can be applied to any game. Hite defines horror in terms of its contents (for example stories with a bad place, black magic, the serial killer, the vampire or zombies), or by intent (dread, terror or gore). Although brief, Hite manages to capture the basic essence of each of these ideas, as well as providing a number of variations. He then gives examples of different types of horror campaigns, from ancient historical ones through to far-future science fiction.

The next chapter is aimed more at players and details developing charac-

ters for horror games. It gives some basic ideas for characters types and suggests skills and background options for each type. This section is the book's most system specific - it only gives details for the ICE Standard System. However, it's not too difficult to port those ideas to other systems. Suggestions are also made for group characters design and how to best work with the GM to create the optimal atmosphere for a horror game.

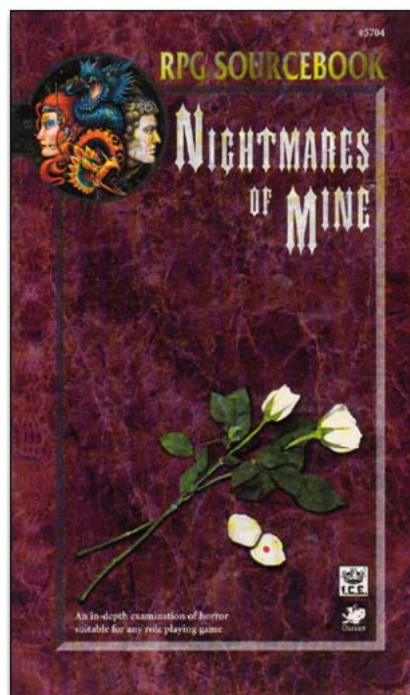
The next two chapters deal with writing a horror scenario. Hints are given on issues such as timing, payoff, NPC motivations. Seasoned writers probably won't find a lot of new information here, but there could be a couple of points to keep in mind.

Chapter Six gives tips on running a horror scenario. It talks about the best ways to get the players to buy into the emotions of the game, so that they get the most out of the adventure. Suggestions are given on using props and music, exploiting character's weaknesses, and players splitting the party.

The next two chapters builds on the previous three chapters to give information about running a horror campaign. These chapters deal more with campaign construction and running, giving a more strategic point of view. Issues such as linking a series of adventures together to build a metaplot and some of the pitfalls of horror campaigns are touched upon.

The last chapter of the book provides a bibliography of the horror genre. Ken Hite provides information about horror books, RPGs, comics, Internet sites and movies. The list is quite extensive, and it would take quite a bit of effort to get through the entire collection.

Overall, *Nightmares of Mine* is a sourcebook that every horror RPG fan should own, particularly those who GM. There's a wealth of good advice in this one that could really make any horror game truly terrifying. ❖





BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE ITALY

by Thom Marrion

Big Trouble in Little Italy is an adventure for Three to Six Players set in Baltimore. Cast Members have been provided at the end of the adventure, though Players may wish to run the Supporting Cast Sentinels or Storm Dragons as characters instead. Write-ups are also included for the Adversaries and some other Supporting Cast who may play a role in the game. The Chronicler may wish to run the adventure in a different city. Any urban area should work, as long as it has an Asian community, a port, and an ethnic neighborhood called Little Something (Where the Sentinels and Storm Dragons can fight each other).

STRAIGHT OUTTA B-MORE

Baltimore, home of Barry Levinson and John Waters. Edgar Allen Poe died here. Homicide and Pecker were filmed here. Harborplace, the National Aquarium and Johns Hopkins University are all here. Baltimore is the place to go if you want to eat good crab cakes, play some lacrosse, or start a small medtech company. You can go to Paul Street to feel artsy, Charles Street to feel multicultural, or Fells Point to feel very intoxicated. With all that going for it, you would think that Baltimore was a pretty interesting city.

It's not.

Founded as a seaport in 1729, it's main purpose today is as a place to get gas between Washington DC and Philadelphia. It's not a place where anyone aspires to live; it's a place they end up. A substantial part of the population consists of people who wish they were living in Washington DC, or Philadelphia, or even New York. Anywhere but Baltimore.

It's no different among the Gifted population. Covenants in that part of the country maintain a much larger presence in Washington DC or Philadelphia. Of course, the Gifted population of New York City is larger than all three cities put together. There are approximately twenty or so people in Baltimore with the Gift at any given time.

It's hard to believe that such an inconsequential town, with such a small metaphysical presence, could be the starting place of a war between two of the most powerful covenants on the planet.

PANIC ZONE

The troubles start in the Korean neighborhood around Charles Street. A small cluster of Korean owned shops are fire-bombed late Friday night, resulting in thousands of dollars worth of property damage, two deaths, and twelve injuries. The words "All Followers of the Dragon Shall Feel the Wrath of God" are spray-painted in six feet tall red letters on the wall of the building across the street.

The Storm Dragons have never really trusted the Sentinels, and now it seems like the Inspired Covenant has declared war on the practitioners of Tao Chi. The Sentinels are ruthless when fighting Supernaturals, and they can be somewhat judgmental when dealing with other Gifted. Still, injuring innocents to make a point doesn't quite seem like their style. The Storm Dragons of the Charles Street School are shocked and confused.

If the Players are running the provided Cast Members, then a Simple Intelligence roll will allow the Characters to see that it looks like the Sentinels have made an attack on the Storm Dragons. Another Simple Intelligence Roll will tell the Characters that fire-bombing a Mundane's store doesn't seem like a typical Sentinel thing to do.

If the Players are running the Sentinels, then they know they didn't do it. Any Character with Divine Sight will be able to determine that nobody else in the Covenant house did it either.

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

Saint Leo the Great's Church in Little Italy is a historic landmark. During Baltimore's Great Fire of 1904, the residents of Little Italy gathered there and prayed to Saint Anthony to save their neighborhood. While much of Baltimore burned, the Great Fire stopped short of Little Italy. This miracle is celebrated by the residents of Little Italy every year. This event is also celebrated by the Sentinels of Baltimore, who can give you the name of the Inspired Person whose faith they believe moved the Creator to stop the Great Fire.

Saint Leo the Great's Church is very dear to the hearts of the Sentinels in Baltimore. It will be a declaration of war when the rented Honda Civic parked on Exeter Street explodes just as the Saturday Night Mass was ending. Five people are killed and eighteen are injured.

Spray painted in red letters along Exeter Street is a stylized oriental dragon and the words, "Your False God Can Not Save You Now." The Sentinels have always thought of the Storm Dragons as misguided Gifted who still tried to fight the good fight. The Dragons have inadvertently gotten in the way of the Sentinels, but there has never been any outright malicious attacks between then two Covenants.

Until now.

If the Players are running the provided Cast Members, then a Simple Intelligence roll will tell the Characters that this really doesn't seem like a typical Storm Dragon thing to do. Something is not right. Either the two Covenants in question have somehow become corrupted, or someone else is setting them up.

If the Players are running the Storm Dragons, then they know they didn't do it. They will be pretty sure that no one else associated with the Charles Street School did it either. Unless it was one of the Acolytes. Or maybe one of the Students.

If the Players are running the Sentinels, they will be part of a meeting that is being held at the Chapel House. Something is very wrong with the Storm Dragons of the Charles Street School if they are parking car bombs in front of historic churches.

APPROACH TO DANGER

The two bombings have captured the attentions of the Mundane Authorities. The Baltimore City Police Department believes that a gang war has started in their city. The Youth Violence Strike Force is combing the streets looking for the gangs responsible, and the FBI is sending in agents due to the serious nature of the incidents. Any Character with a Police Contact will be able to discover this information.

The metaphysical community of Baltimore (such that it is) is starting to worry because they feel it is only a matter of time before the Combine gets involved. To anyone with a clue about the secret Covenants of the Occult World, this clearly looks like the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels are attacking each other without any regard to the innocents that might be



caught in the crossfire. The Combine has a clue about the secret Covenants of the Occult World, and this is exactly the type of activity which will bring them to town.

ALWAYZ INTO SOMETHIN'

By Sunday morning, the two Covenants are unsure about what is happening in their city. The Sentinels know that they didn't blow up any Korean shops, and the Storm Dragons know that they didn't park a car bomb in front of Saint Leo the Great's Church. While the Sentinels are gathered together in the meeting hall of the Baltimore Chapel House, the Storm Dragons have come together at the Charles Street School. Before the leaders of each group can try to figure out what is going on, both Covenants are attacked by Supernatural forces.

The Charles Street School is attacked by a fiery angelic being who descends on the Storm Dragon and cries out, "Now is the Day of Wrath for all who falsely follow the Dragon, who is Satan. The Creator's Warriors shall remove the Evil Ones from this land." That removes all doubt in the minds of the Storm Dragons that the Sentinels did attack them. The attack on Saint Leo the Great's Church was obviously a ploy by the Sentinels to make it look like the Storm Dragons were killing innocents.

At exactly the same moment, the Baltimore Chapel House is attacked by an air spirit who appears as an Asian female. She descends on the Sentinels and says in a quiet voice, "I am the Kami Kaze, the Divine Wind of the East. The days of those Westerners who worship the False God are over. Now dawns the Age of the Followers of the Dragon". That

removes all doubt in the minds of the Sentinels that the Storm Dragons did attack them. The attack on the Korean shops was obviously a ploy by the Storm Dragons to make it look like the Sentinels were killing innocents.

The two Elementals should be easy enough for the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels to defeat. The true battle will take place when the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels face each other in person.

The two Elementals were summoned at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore. This means that, due to the Essence that was expended, any Gifted within a half mile of that hotel will be able to detect the Summoning on a Simple Perception Test. On a successful Test, the Characters will know that about twenty points of Essence was spent and in what general direction it was used. This means that any Gifted around the Inner Harbor, Camden Yards, the Convention Center, Lexington Market Station, or the Pier 6 Concert Pavilion will get a chance to detect the summoning.

Of the Cast Members provided, Collin Knox (and Supporting Cast Member Adrien Knox) will definitely get a chance to make a Simple Perception Roll to detect the Summoning from their Federal Hill townhouse. Any of the other Cast Members would be able to detect the summoning if they in the Downtown area. The Mount Vernon Coven may be going out for breakfast, Joe Kirkwood might be with one of the Ghosts in the USS Constellation at the Inner Harbor, Tatiana might be walking around Lexington Market. If for some reason Victor Trinh is at home instead of at the Charles Street School, he will be able to detect the summoning from the family house in Pigtown.

THE FIRE ELEMENTAL

Appears as a flaming humanoid being with a flaming sword and wings of fire. To the casual observer, it looks like a wrathful angel. This is exactly what it claims to be when it attacks the Storm Dragons.

STR 5 INT 3
DEX 4 PER 3
CON 5 WIL 4

Vital Essence: 40

Energy Essence: 80

Life Points: 120 (When manifested)

Speed: 20

Skills: Spiritus 4, Brawling 4, Dodge 4

Metaphysics: All normal Fire Elemental Powers and Vulnerabilities, Fiery Attack, and Flight

THE AIR ELEMENTAL

Appears as a female spirit in long flowing robes that are constantly blown by an unseen wind. When she manifests, it as an angry swirling wind. She calls herself the Kami Kaze, the Divine Wind, when she attacks the Sentinels.

STR 4 INT 2
DEX 5 PER 4
CON 5 WIL 4

Vital Essence: 35

Energy Essence: 70

Life Points: 105 (When manifested)

Speed: 25

Skills: Spiritus 4, Brawling 5, Dodge 5

Metaphysics: All normal Air Elemental Powers and Vulnerabilities

TUFFEST MAN ALIVE

After the events of Sunday morning, the Charles Street School and the Baltimore Chapel House prepare for war. The Sentinels fortify their dwelling as the Storm Dragons take the offensive. The Gifted members of the School lead the attack, with their Mundane Acolytes backing them up. This is a very unusual thing for the Leader of the Storm Dragons to do. First Level Adepts are not even supposed to go on missions, let alone Acolytes.

The Storm Dragons ride into Little Italy just as the sun is setting. They want the cover of darkness to help them in their attack. The Sentinels, Gifted and Mundane alike, prepare to defend themselves against the attack. The more combat oriented members form a guard at the main door, while the others support them from behind. It will be Divine Inspiration against the powers of Tao Chi.

If this attack actually takes place, it could very well spark and inter-covenant war between the Sentinels and the Storm Dragons. Under no circumstances should this be allowed to happen. It is up to the Cast Members to discover what is really going on and stop the inter-covenant fighting before it begins.

HEROIN CITY, USA

Heroin is an epidemic in Baltimore, with about 7% of the population is addicted to it. The DEA says that Baltimore has one of the highest per capita heroin abuse rates in the country. Anyone who wanted to make money selling heroin would find an ideal market in the City of Baltimore.

The Red Lotus Society wants to do precisely that.

The problem with that idea is that every time Red Lotus starts some urban criminal operation, the local Storm Dragons end up getting involved. Millions of dollars could be made with this operation, which is being overseen by a Red Lotus member named Arishma Murayami. Murayami does not want to be responsible for the Red Lotus Society losing millions of dollars, so he has come up with a plan.

He has decided to set the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels against each other. He is hoping that the Sentinels manage to kill the Storm Dragons, but he will be happy if they are just weakened and occupied. The conflict between the two Covenants also has the advantage of keeping the Police busy trying to find the terrorist gangsters and ignoring the Japanese CEO who is setting up a heroin business in Baltimore.

Murayami himself was the one who caused the explosions at the Korean shops and the Church, while Hideo spray-painted the taunts. Johnny Nisei summoned and bound the two Elementals for the second part of the plan. Now Murayami plans to sit back and watch the two Covenants destroy each other.

Any of the Cast Members who are investigating may hear rumors about a new player in town who wants to start distributing Heroin. A Simple Streetwise and Intelligence Task will let the Characters discover that an Asian Drug Lord (probably Yakuza) wants to start selling China White on the

streets of Baltimore. If the Characters manage to link this with the recent events with the Baltimore Covenants, it begins to look less like the two monster hunter groups have lost their minds and more like the Red Lotus Society is somehow involved. Maybe some information from Officer on the Youth Violence Task Force or the Undercover DEA Agent (Both written up below) will point the Cast in the right direction.

THREE THE HARD WAY

There are three ways the Players can get involved. They are either Sentinels, Storm Dragons or one of the provided Cast Members listed below. If they are members of the Sentinels or the Storm Dragons, then they will be involved from the beginning. The game starts the night of the bombing on Charles Street. They have to figure out that someone else is behind these attacks and then convince their respective Covenants that the two associations have been duped.

If the Players are running the provided Cast Members, then they have the added task of trying to convince the two Covenants that both of them are wrong. This will be even more difficult if the Characters belong to a group which the Covenants don't trust (like being a Necromancer or a Vampyre, or even a Magician as far as the Sentinels are concerned).

Once the true culprit is discovered, perhaps the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels will form a temporary alliance to seek revenge against the Red Lotus Society.

DOPE MAN

Murayami and his Red Lotus minions are staying at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore overlooking the Inner Harbor. The Cast may wish to attack the members of Red Lotus in a huge glass paneled hotel between the Convention Center and Harborplace, endangering countless Mundanes and drawing more attention to Baltimore; or they might just decide to lead the Police and/or the DEA to Murayami. As long as the Players prevent the Storm Dragons and Sentinels from killing each other, and stop the Red Lotus Society from becoming the major heroin providers for Baltimore, the adventure is a success. The Chronicler should then reward the Players accordingly.

If the Storm Dragons and Sentinels start a major war with each other and Baltimore becomes the heroin depository for the Red Lotus Society, then at least the Cast has a good chance of being killed before the Reckoning arrives (When civilization as we know may very well be destroyed anyway).

Always look for the positive in any situation.

B-MORE'S IN DA HOUSE (REMIX)

Even with the Red Lotus thwarted, there are still a few things to do in the City. Baltimore may be a small city, but it gets its fair share of monsters. The East Coast is full of Supernatural Predators who travel up and down Interstate 95, feeding on helpless Mudanes all along the way. Baltimore is



the perfect town to stop in, eat someone, and be back on your way. It's the place to get gas between DC and Philadelphia.

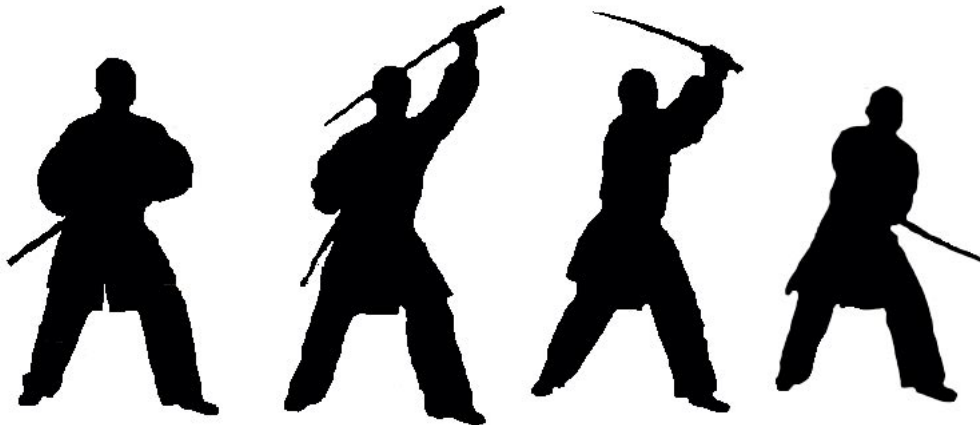
That's why the two largest Covenants in Baltimore are the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels. The Monster Hunters are needed to keep Baltimore safe.

With the information below, a whole campaign could be set in Baltimore (Even without the Red Lotus and their plans for making money with heroin). Between the Cast Members,

the Sentinels, and the Storm Dragons; here is everything a Chronicler needs to know about the Gifted in Baltimore. If the Chronicler needs more information about the streets of Baltimore, then he or she should go to

<http://www.encorebaltimore.org/neighbor/neighome.html>

The map should make things pretty clear why the the Rosicrucians live in Federal Hill and Victor Trinh lives in Pigtown.



THE BALTIMORE CHAPEL HOUSE

The Baltimore Chapel House is located in the Little Italy section of Baltimore. The homes in Little Italy, like much of Baltimore, are mostly rowhouses. The Chapel House is made of five two-story rowhouses which have been joined together by altering the interiors. They now form one large building with a library, a small meeting hall, a private chapel, a gym, a kitchen and dining area, three sitting rooms, four bathrooms, and ten bedrooms.

There are currently five Sentinels who live at the Chapel House. They live as one community, just as other Sentinels gather in Chapel Houses all over the world. There are also two Lay People who work for the Chapel House. Eileen O'Malley is an eighty year old woman whose life was saved by the Covenant when she was a little girl. She now cooks and cleans for the Sentinels. Tony Pazzaglia is a retired police officer who sometimes helps around the Chapel House. His main asset is that he still has ties with the Baltimore City Police Department. Treat this as Contacts (Police) 4, but it is only usable by Tony the Pre-Heroic Supporting Cast Member.

THE CHARLES STREET SCHOOL

The Storm Dragon School is actually called the Charles Street Dojang of Korean Martial Arts. They teach the Korean styles of Hapkido, Kuk Sool Won, and Tae Kwon Do. The more advanced students are taught the true martial art of the Storm Fist. Kuk Sool Won is a Korean weapon fighting technique. The two weapons which the Charles Street School focuses on are the Gum (A Korean sword similar to the Katana) and the Dan Bong (Short staffs that are used in pairs. Cast Members must know the Hand Weapon [Club] Skill to use them).

The Charles Street Dojang of Korean Martial Arts is a two story building located in the Korean neighborhood around Charles Street. The first floor contains a front desk, locker rooms, and the large studio where normal classes are held. This is where students learn Hapkido, Kuk Sool Won, and Tae Kwon Do. There are currently twenty-one such students. The second floor holds the office of Michael Jeung, a library of Storm Dragon texts, a meditation room, and a studio where the Storm Fist style and Tao Chi techniques are taught. There are currently two Second Level Adepts (They teach most of the regular classes), one First Level Adept, and three Acolytes at the Charles Street. They make up the entire Storm Dragon Covenant in Baltimore.

BIG
TROUBLE
IN
LITTLE
ITALY

THE SENTINELS

DAVID BERGAMO

Deacon of the Baltimore Chapel House

Gifted Sentinel Fanatic

David Bergamo is an Italian man in his early forties. He has thin black hair streaked with gray, an olive complexion, and dark eyes. He almost always dresses in a suit and tie. This makes some people think he is a Mafioso, or even worse a Yuppie. He is actually the leader of the Sentinels in Baltimore.

Bergamo grew up in Little Italy. He was an altar boy as a kid, but he never really thought of himself as especially religious. Then one night the Virgin Mary appeared to him in a dream. He had been chosen to help fight the forces of Evil. He could perform Miracles. He also became aware of the secret world of the Supernatural.

David Bergamo was an effective monster hunter. He single-handedly stopped a Cult of Nath-Shagraa from summoning a Mad God in Dundalk. He was asked to lead the Chapel House when the old Deacon, Liam Kavanagh, was killed by a Demon in Elkton back in 1991. Bergamo has been Deacon ever since. He also remains a devout Catholic and is still very active at Saint Leo the Great's.

STR 2	PER 3
INT 2	CON 2
DEX 2	WIL 4

Life Points:	26
Endurance Points:	29
Speed:	8
Essence:	40

Qualities: The Gift, Divine Inspiration, Charisma +2, Resources 2,

Drawbacks: Honorable 2, Humorous, Zealot (Sentinels)

Skills: Brawling 3, Dodge 3, Driving (Car) 2, Guns (Shotgun) 2, Hand weapon (Club) 2, Humanities (Theology) 4, Occult Knowledge (Supernaturals) 3, Streetwise 3

Metaphysics: Increased Essence Pool +25, The Binding, Exorcism, Divine Sight, Holy Fire, Strength of Ten

Possessions: A few nice suits, a 12-gauge Shotgun (He generally uses slugs for Supernaturals and shot for people), a Police Baton, a private altar to the Blessed Virgin Mary in his room at the Chapel House, a new Jeep and an old Van (which actually belong to all the members of the Chapel House. The titles are just in his name), and all the resources of the Baltimore Chapel House.



MAGDALENA BIALOSZYNSKI

Visionary of the Baltimore Chapel House

Lesser Gifted Sentinel Scholar

Magdalena (Lenny to her friends) is an attractive woman in her late twenties with blue eyes, and long straight blond hair. She usually dresses in jeans and a University of Maryland-College Park tee shirt (That's where she majored in Classical Languages). She is easy going around the Chapel House, but she can be shy around Mundanes. She was called a freak as a kid and doesn't want to relive the experience.

Lenny grew up in the working class neighborhood of Canton, the youngest of six children in a Polish Catholic family. The Gift manifested in her at an early age. She has always received Visions and seen things that others can not. This brought ridicule from her friends and family. It was only the intervention of a Sentinel, the old Deacon Liam Kavanagh, which allowed her to learn about her abilities and her place in the world.

The Sentinels provided a home for her, paid for her to go to school, taught her knowledge that she could not have learned otherwise, and gave her a sense of purpose. Lenny does scholarly research for her Covenant, often going to the Chapel Houses in DC or New York to go over their extensive libraries. She believes (Like a few others) that the Sentinels originated among the Cult of Mithras during the Roman Empire, and she is constantly looking for evidence to support this theory. She is fiercely loyal to her Covenant and can not see why anyone would want to attack them

STR 1	INT 4
DEX 2	PER 3
CON 2	WIL 6

Life Points:	22
Endurance Points:	32
Speed:	8
Essence:	18

Qualities: The Gift, Divine Inspiration, Attractive +2, Charisma +1, Nerves of Steel, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Honorable 2, Emotional Problem (Fear of Rejection)

Skills: Brawling 1, Dodge 1, Driving (Cars) 2, Humanities (History) 4, Humanities (Theology) 4, Language (Aramaic) 2, Language (Greek) 2, Language (Hebrew) 2, Language (Latin) 2, Occult Knowledge (Divine Inspiration) 3, Streetwise 1, Writing (Academic) 3

Metaphysics: The Touch of Healing, Divine Sight, Visions

Possessions: An extensive private library of books (Dealing with theology, History, and Classical Languages), a stack of academic papers on these same subjects, copies of more knowledgeable papers by other Scholars with the Sentinels, notebooks crammed with notes on her own theories, a casual wardrobe typical of someone just out of college, and a big teddy bear named Mr. Fuzzy.



THE SENTINELS

EDUARDO SCALI

Monster Hunter

Lesser Gifted Sentinel Warrior

Eduardo "Big Eddie" Scali is a huge Italian man in his late twenties with short black hair, a goatee, and a scar on his right check. He dresses in jeans and a leather jacket, often wearing a pair of dark sunglasses and carrying a baseball bat. Most Mundanes think of him as a hardcase steroid casualty. Most Supernaturals think of him as Bad News.

Big Eddie grew up in Little Italy, started boxing locally, and worked as Muscle For Hire for some of the seedier businesses in Baltimore. He probably would have ended up in jail if one of those seedier businesses hadn't gotten in the way of a Vampyre named Gerhard Sterk. After being run out of Amsterdam, the two hundred year old Vampyre was planning on starting an operation in Baltimore. Sterk went on a killing spree. The only reason that Big Eddie survived is that the Sentinels got to the Vampyre before the Vampyre could get to him.

The whole experience changed him. His encounter with the Supernatural gave him a new found faith in the Metaphysical. After a long period of prayer and meditation, Big Eddie became gifted with the ability to perform Miracles. Scali now knows why he was put on this Earth. He is here to kick ass for the Lord.

STR	4	INT	2
DEX	3	PER	4
CON	4	WIL	3
Life Points:	54		
Endurance Points:	38		
Speed:	14		
Essence:	20		

Qualities: The Gift, Divine Inspiration, Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill +3, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Cruel -1, Reckless

Skills: Driving (Car) 2, Dodge 5, Humanities (Theology) 2, Martial Arts (Boxing) 5, Occult Knowledge (Supernaturals) 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3

Combat Moves: Counterpunch 5, Jab 5, Punch 5, Roundhouse 5, Suckerpunch 5

Metaphysics: The Binding, Holy Fire, Strength of Ten

Possessions: Casual clothes, a leather jacket, dark shades, boxing gloves, a punching bag, some old posters from his boxing days, a scar on his right check from an encounter with a Jaguar Feral, and a stack of hip hop CDs (Big Eddie likes rap music).



ANJA BEGEISTER

Bad Girl for God

Mundane Sentinel Warrior

Anja is a tall athletic woman in her early twenties with short light-blond hair and blue eyes. She usually dresses in leather pants, boots, and a jacket (and not much else). A lot more sexuality than you would expect from a Holy Warrior, but the Sentinels are a lot more tolerant of certain things than people generally give them credit for. They have a whole different set of priorities.

She didn't join the Sentinels because of a Vision from God or an encounter with the Supernatural. Anja joined the Sentinels because it was a family tradition. Her family could trace their lineage all the way back to Baden-Württemberg in the Fourteenth Century. From the very first German Knight who fought for the Sentinels in those days, each generation of her family has had at least one member who fought Evil in the name of the Creator. She is the last descendent of the Begeister family and now it is her turn.

She has taken to her calling well, and God seems to be smiling down on her. She has been incredible lucky in the last five years that she has served as a Sentinel. When her luck has run out, she has been saved by the power of Prayer. Anja takes this as a sign of the Creator's approval despite her tendency to go bar-hopping in Fells Point and have sex with the occasional stranger she meets there. If God isn't worried about it, neither is she.

STR	3	INT	3
DEX	6	PER	4
CON	4	WIL	3
Life Points:	38		
Endurance Points:	35		
Speed:	20		
Essence:	25		

Qualities: Attractive +1, Fast Reaction Time, Situational Awareness, Good Luck (Five Levels)

Drawbacks: Addiction (Habitual Drinking) -1, Covetous (Lecherousness) -1, Reckless, Showoff

Skills: Dodge 3, Driving (Motorcycle) 3, Guns (Handgun) 2, Humanities (Theology) 4, Martial Arts (Karate) 5, Seduction 3, Smooth Talking 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 4

Combat Moves: Back Kick 5, Crescent Kick 5, Jump Kick 5, Kick 5, Punch 5, Spin Kick 5

Possessions: Black leather jacket, black leather pants, black leather boots, some clothing that isn't black leather, kickboxing training gear, a job teaching Kick Boxing at a women's Fitness Center, a restored 1948 Indian Chief 348, a 9mm Handgun with Hollow-Point Bullets (because Monsters usually aren't well armored, they are just tough.)

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE ITALY

THE SENTINELS

GWENDOLEN HOWELL

Friend of the Angels

Gifted Sentinel Weird One

Gwendolen is a thin nineteen year old girl with fair skin and white blond hair. She dresses in pastel summer dresses and work boots, often with a bit of paint splattered on them. Typical art girl. For those who are able to see the Supernatural, she is often accompanied by an Angel.

Gwendolen has always had visions, even as a child growing up in nearby Laurel. She had trouble making friends. She was into Art and Mysticism when everyone else was into Malls and Monster Trucks. She would not have had anyone to talk to if it had not been for the angel Beatrizarca. She appeared to Gwendolen on Christmas Eve when she was fourteen and the two have been companions ever since.

When Gwendolen graduated from High School, she decided to move to the city to try to make it as a painter. Laurel is in between Washington DC and Baltimore, but Baltimore is a much cheaper place to live. She got a small apartment in the Mount Vernon section of downtown Baltimore and made it two months before she could no longer afford to pay rent. Fortunately, she had come to the attention of the Baltimore Chapel House by that time and has lived with the Sentinels ever since.

STR	1	INT	3
DEX	2	PER	3
CON	1	WIL	4
Life Points:	18		
Endurance Points:	23		
Speed:	6		
Essence:	47		

Qualities: Gifted, Divine Inspiration, Artistic Talent (Painting), Attractive +2

Drawbacks: Covetous (Conspicuous)-1, Cowardly -1, Honorable -2, Weird Delusion (Everyone has a Guardian Angel, most people just never talk to theirs) -1

Skills: Dancing (Ballet) 2, Dodge 3, Fine Art (Painting) 8*, Humanities (Theology) 5, Occult Knowledge (Angels) 3, Singing 3, Street-wise 1

Metaphysics: Free Familiar (Angelic Ethereal) 6, Increased Essence Pool + 20, Divine Sight, Exorcism, The Touch of Healing, Visions

*Includes the +3 from Artistic Talent

Possessions: Dresses, boots, art supplies, stacks of CDs, lots of canvas and frames, a studio in the Baltimore Chapel House, a Guardian Angel, and a simple childlike faith.

BEATRIARCA

Gwendolen's Guardian Angel

Angelic Ethereal Free Familiar

Beatrizarca appears as a thin young woman with golden eyes and brilliant white hair. She is clothed in a robe that seems to be made of light and has pure white wings. Some people think that the Ethereal bears a certain resemblance to Gwendolen, as if she was an idealized version of the Sentinel artist. Magdalena Bialoszyznski has determined that the Angel's name is derived from the phrase "Blessed Bow" in Latin. This is what Gwen Dolen means in Welsh. Magdalena doesn't really know what to make of that.

The Angelic Ethereal appears to be devoted to Gwendolen, like a lovesick puppy. The Spirit takes great delight in Gwendolen's company and is also very protective of her. The minor angel usually remains in spiritual form when she is with Gwendolen, but will physically manifest if the young woman is threatened.

STR	5	INT	5
DEX	5	PER	5
CON	5	WIL	5
Essence:	50		
Essence:	70		
Life Points:	120		
Speed:	25		
Spiritus:	5		





THE STORM DRAGONS



MICHAEL JEUNG

Master of the Charles Street School

Gifted Storm Dragon

Michael Jeung is an unattractive Korean man in his late thirties with short black hair and a thin mustache. As the main instructor of the Charles Street School for the Martial Arts, he often dresses in exercise clothing. He trained at the Storm Dragon Temple in New York, and is now responsible for the Covenant in Baltimore.

Mr. Jeung was promoted to Fourth Level Adept so that he could run the Storm Dragon School in Baltimore, though technically he should only be Third Level since he does not know any Greater Tao-Chi. A combination of necessity and the relative unimportance of Baltimore made the Teachers at the New York Temple appoint him over the Storm Dragons in Baltimore anyway. The Storm Dragons who run schools in Washington DC and Philadelphia sometimes refer to Jeung as being a "3 3/4 Level Adept". They never say that to his face though, because that would be undignified and unworthy of a truly high level Adept.

Jeung has been running the Charles Street School for the past seven years. He had a run-in with some local gang members when he first started, but now has pretty much kept them out of the Korean neighborhood. He feels that this is all a test by the Teachers to gauge his worth. Maybe he's right. For now he just runs the Charles Street School as best he can, teaching Korean Martial Arts to the Mundanes and introducing the Gifted to the Ways of the Storm Dragon.

STR	3	INT	2
DEX	4	PER	2
CON	3	WIL	3
Life Points:	34		
Endurance Points:	32		
Speed:	14		
Essence:	23		

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Increased Essence Pool +5

Drawbacks: Adversary (Street Gangs) -2, Attractive -1, Honorable -2, Humorless, Minority (Asian), Zealot (Storm Dragon)

Skills: Hand Weapon (Club) 1, Hand Weapon (Sword) 1, Humanities (Storm Dragon Philosophy) 5, Instruction 2, Martial Arts (Storm Fist) 5, Occult Knowledge (Tao Chi) 5, Trance 3

Combat Moves: Armlock 5, Back Kick 5, Jump Kick 5, Kick 5, Punch 5, Spin Kick 5

Metaphysics: Chi Mastery 3, Chi Healing 2, Chi Strike 2, Dragon Strike 2, Inner Strength 3, Spirit Strike 3

Possessions: A Charles Street School Uniform (A black Gi with the logo of the school on the back of the jacket), some other work out clothes, one suit, a Gum (The sword used in the Korean Martial Art of Kuk Sool Won. Treat as a Katana), a pair of Dan Bong sticks (The short staffs used in pairs in the Korean Martial Art of Kuk Sool Won. Treat as a Small Club), a one bedroom apartment a few blocks north of the School, a 1977 Honda Civic Station Wagon that has seen better days (Even without the occasional encounter with the Supernatural), and a Storm Dragon School that deep down inside he feels he might not be worthy to run.

VICTOR TRINH

Street Fighter

Lesser Gifted Storm Dragon Warrior

Victor is an athletic Vietnamese man in his late twenties with long black hair and dark eyes. He usually dresses in jeans, nikes, and a plain tee shirt that shows off his muscular physique. He often wears a Gi jacket from the Charles Street School as well. This shows off the fact that he is the main instructor under Sah Bum Nim Jeung (Sah Bum Nim being the Korean version of Sensai).

Trinh came to the United States at the age of four when his family was fleeing Vietnam. His Grandfather, his parents, and his two little sisters ended up in the Baltimore neighborhood of Pigtown. They were one of the first families in what would become a thriving Vietnamese community on the other side of Martin Luther King Boulevard from Downtown Baltimore. Victor grew up as an American, but his family still kept the old ways of Vietnam. This was certainly true of his grandfather, who taught him the ways of the Celestial Dragon who still sleeps in a secret cave in Vietnam.

Young Victor was a natural at Martial Arts and soon developed the Gift and Chi Mastery. When his grandfather died at the age of eighty-four, Trinh continued his training at the Storm Dragon School on Charles Street. He is now a Second Level Adept and the main instructor at the School.

STR	3	INT	3
DEX	5	PER	3
CON	4	WIL	4
Life Points:	38		
Endurance Points:	38		
Speed:	18		
Essence:	22		

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Attractiveness +2, Fast Reaction Time, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Reckless, Showoff, Minority (Asian)

Skills: Driving (Motorcycle) 1, Hand Weapon (Sword) 2, Hand Weapon (Club) 1, Humanities (Storm Dragon Philosophy) 3, Instructor 2, Language (Vietnamese) 1, Martial Arts (Storm Fist) 4, Occult Knowledge (Tao Chi) 3, Trance 3

Combat Moves: Armlock 4, Back Kick 4, Jump Kick 4, Kick 4, Punch 4, Spin Kick 4

Metaphysics: Chi Mastery 3, Chi Strike 2, Dragon Strike 2, Spirit Strike 3

Possessions: A two story rowhouse in Pigtown which he shares with his parents (Mau and Marie Trinh) and two younger sisters (18 year old Isabelle and 12 year old Colette), a Gum sword, a pair of Dan Bong sticks, casual clothing, martial arts clothing, a pile of rap CDs (Everything from Wu Tang to NWA to Puff Daddy to Missy Elliott), a five year old Kawasaki Ninja ZX-9R motorcycle (Painted jet black), and a job teaching Korean Martial Arts to the citizens of Baltimore.



KIL-JA "KELLY" PAK

Martial Arts Instructor

Lesser Gifted Storm Dragon Seeker of Knowledge

Kelly is an attractive Korean woman in her early twenties with shoulder length black hair and light brown eyes. She has her hair dyed blue in front and dresses like she is going to a rave. Bare mid-ribs to show off her belly button ring, assorted bits of jewelry and fishnet, a little black backpack, and sunglasses with brightly colored lenses. She usually shows up at the Dojang in a tee shirt that says "Porn Star".

Kelly is the first student under Sah Bum Nim Jeung's tutelage to achieve Adept status. She is now a Second Level Adept and helps Victor Trinh instruct the students at the Dojang (She teaches Beginning Hapkido and Tae Kwon Do; He teaches Kuk Sool Won, Advanced Hapkido, and Advanced Tae Kwon Do).

One of the things that helped her advance in the ranks of the Storm Dragons was the fact that she is an Old Soul. She can remember having lived as a Hwarang Knight in Seventh Century Korea, a peasant wife in Yuan Dynasty China (During Mongol rule), a Kabuki actor in Late Tokugawa Era Japan, and a female revolutionary student during the Boxer Rebellion. With all that combined life experience and mystical experience you would expect her to be much more serious than she actually is.

STR	3	INT	3
DEX	5	PER	4
CON	3	WIL	5
Life Points:	34		
Endurance Points:	38		
Speed:	16		
Essence:	35		

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Old Soul (1 Level), Attractive +2

Drawbacks: Covetous (Lecherousness) -1, Clown, Honorable 1, Minority (Asian), Reckless,

Skills: Acrobatics 2, Driving (Motorcycle) 3, Humanities (Storm Dragon Philosophy) 3, Instructor 2, Language (Korean) 2, Martial Arts (Storm Fist) 4, Occult Knowledge (Tao Chi) 3, Seduction 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Trance 3

Combat Moves: Armlock 4, Back Kick 4, Jump Kick 4, Kick 4, Punch 4, Spin Kick 4

Metaphysics: Increased Essence Pool +5, Chi Mastery 2, Chi Healing 1, Chi Strike 1, Dragon Strike 1, Spirit Strike 2

Possessions: Assorted stylish clothing, assorted martial arts gear, a red Yamaha YZF-R1 Sport Bike that should definitely run better than it actually does, a small apartment in the Mount Vernon area (Closer to the art galleries and the underground shops than it is to the Korean neighborhood), lots of CDs, lots of books, lots of videos, lots of art prints on the walls, and lots of dirty dishes and clothes that never seem to get washed.

THE STORM DRAGONS



CHARLES HALL JOHNSON

Aspiring Martial Artist

Lesser Gifted Storm Dragon Student

Charles is an athletic black man in his early twenties with a shaved head and light brown eyes. He dresses in casual clothing, typical street wear. He has only just recently risen to the rank of First Level Adept. Technically, as a First Level Adept, he should never leave the Dojang to engage in combat with any Supernatural menaces. But since the Charles Street School is on the small side (At least the Storm Dragon part of it), Charles is sent on missions when the need arises.

Technically speaking, Jeung isn't ready to run a School (He doesn't know any Greater Tao Chi). He certainly isn't going to quibble about Charles not having attained the proper Level to go on missions for the Covenant. Besides, Charles Hall Johnson can hold his own.

He has always been interested in the Martial Arts, he just ended up at the Charles Street School through blind fate (That kind of thing tends to happen to him). He quickly rose from Student to Acolyte and then to First Level Adept, all in the space of a year. The world of the Metaphysical is still new to him, but he has adapted to it quickly. It is only a matter of time before he advances past his instructors, maybe teaching in a Storm Dragon School of his own one day.

STR	4	INT	3
DEX	3	PER	3
CON	4	WIL	5
Life Points:	42		
Endurance Points:	44		
Speed:	14		
Essence:	22		

Qualities: The Gift, Attractiveness +1, Charisma +2, Fast Reaction Time, Nerves of Steel, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Cruel -1, Emotional Problem (Fear of Commitment), Honorable 1, Minority (African American)

Skills: Dodge 3, Driving (Car) 2, Humanities (Storm Dragon Philosophy) 3, Martial Arts (Storm Fist) 3, Occult Knowledge (Tao Chi) 3, Smooth Talking 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Trance 3

Combat Moves: Armlock 3, Back Kick 3, Jump Kick 3, Kick 3, Punch 3, Spin Kick 3

Metaphysics: Essence Channeling 2, Good Luck (One Level), Chi Mastery 2, Chi Strike 1, Spirit Strike 1

Possessions: Casual clothing, one good suit, martial arts gear, a large eighty year old house in Druid Heights which looks every bit its age, a 1968 red Ford Mustang Convertible which despite all reason still runs pretty well, and the admiration of the children in his neighborhood whenever he demonstrates the latest thing he learned at the Dojang.



BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE ITALY

THE STORM DRAGONS



THE ACOLYTES

New Dragons Without the Gift

Potential Hero Storm Dragon Students

These are the Students of the Charles Street School who have just been initiated in the Covenant of the Storm Dragon. They are not Gifted, they have no Chi Mastery, they have are just learning the rudiments of the Storm Dragon Way. If Michael Jeung sends the Acolytes on a mission, then things have gotten very desperate for the Storm Dragons of Baltimore.



Ramiro Tucker is a young man from the African-American neighborhood of Druid Heights. In fact, he lives down the street from Charles Hall Johnson. The two grew up together and Johnson was the one who got Tucker to start taking Martial Arts. Ramiro is a tall muscular man with short dreads and a thin goatee.



Cindy Kwong is a young Korean woman with short black hair and a dragon tattoo on her left shoulder. She has been taking classes at the Charles Street School since Jeung started it seven years ago. Cindy now works as a secretary for the school when she isn't taking classes.



Kevin Zheng is a short muscular Chinese man with a crewcut, a soulpatch, and the Chinese ideograms for "Storm" and "Dragon" tattooed on his right bicep. He dresses like a chollo and lives in Pigtown near Victor Trinh. The two of them sometimes climb to the roof top of the rowhouses where they live to listen to the Orioles Games at nearby Camden Yards.

Treat the stats for all Acolytes as follows:

STR	3	INT	2
DEX	3	PER	3
CON	3	WIL	3
Life Points:	34		
Endurance Points:	32		
Speed:	12		
Essence:	17		

Qualities: Fast Reaction Time, Nerves of Steel

Drawbacks: Minority, Resources -2

Skills: Dodge 3, Hand Weapon (Club) 2, Hand Weapon (Sword) 2, Humanities (Storm Dragon Philosophy) 3, Martial Arts (Storm Fist) 3, Occult Knowledge (Tao Chi) 2, Streetwise 3, Trance 3 and 5 more points of skills

Combat Moves: Armlock 3, Back Kick 3, Jump Kick 3, Kick 3, Punch 3, Spin Kick 3

BIG
TROUBLE
IN
LITTLE
ITALY

THE RED LOTUS



ARISHMA MURAYAMI

CEO of Yama Exports

Greater Gifted Red Lotus Scoundrel

Arishma Murayami is a short bald Japanese man in his late fifties. He dresses in conservative suits appropriate for the CEO of a small trading company. His clothing hides the intricate tattoo on his back. It is a very detailed lotus flower surround by Japanese writing which says, "I am the Petal which defeats the Storm."

Murayami has spent the last three decades in the Red Lotus, mastering Sokodzikara (the Red Lotus term for Tao Chi), and building a criminal empire behind the front of Yama Exports. The Company has offices in Hong Kong and Tokyo. It appears to deal in the export of simple Asian crafts to Australia, Canada, and the United States. Yama Exports actually makes its money through drugs. Murayami controls a little part of the Golden Triangle, with a facility in Burma which produces the Heroin known as China White for export. The profits from these international drug sales have made considerable amount of money for both Arishma Murayami and the Red Lotus Society.

Arishma hopes that these accomplishments will not go unnoticed by the inner circle of the Red Lotus Society. His ultimate goal is to one day join their ranks. For now, he will just have to content himself with being a powerful drug lord.

Arishma Murayami has huge estates in both Hong Kong and Japan. with armed guards and beautiful women (sometimes the same person can fulfill both functions). While in Baltimore he is traveling light. He has a limousine (driven by Tsuruko), a laptop, a .357 Magnum, a Katana, and the services of the others listed below,

STR	4	INT	3
DEX	5	PER	4
CON	4	WIL	5
Life Points:	42		
Endurance Points:	44		
Speed:	18		
Essence:	25		

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Influence 1, Nerves of Steel, Status 2 (Free from Resources), Resources 5

Drawbacks: Covetous (Ambitious) 3, Cruel 2, Humorless, Weird Delusion (Prejudice against non-Asians) 3

Skills: Bureaucracy 4, Demolitions 3, Electronic Surveillance 2, Escapism 3, Hand Weapon (Sword) 5, Humanities (Philosophy) 6, Intimidate 4, Language (Japanese, Native) 5, Language (Cantonese) 4, Language (English) 3, Martial Arts (Lotus Petal*) 6

Combat Moves: Armlock 6, Counterpunch 5, Disarm 4, Headbutt 4, Jumpkick 5, Kick 6, Punch 6

Metaphysics: Chi Mastery 6, Chi Healing 3, Chi Strike 6, Dragon Strike 5, Inner Strength 4, Spirit Strike 3

HIDEO ONUMA

"Ninja" Assassin

Gifted Red Lotus Warrior

Hideo is a Japanese man in his late twenties with long flowing black hair and dark eyes. He dresses in black clothing, usually favoring a black long coat over a black turtleneck and slacks. He has an intricate tattoo on his back of a Tiger attacking an Oriental Dragon. In a combat situation he will be armed with a Katana (Which is hidden by the black long coat).

Hideo Onuma displayed the Gift at the age of twelve on the streets of Tokyo. If he was anywhere else, he might have become a Storm Dragon. Unfortunately, the Storm Dragons do not have a very strong presence on Japan and young Hideo was trained by the Red Lotus Society instead.

He has become an accomplished Assassin in the last fifteen years. He has done favors for the Cult of Pain and has even done work for the Combine (At least he thinks it was the Combine. You can never be sure about that kind of thing). Though he has spent his life working for Dark Covenants, he feels that the Red Lotus Society and their allies are the honorable ones in hidden world of the occult. The end justifies the means. He has killed many people, and the man he works for is a Drug Lord, but in the long run they are actually making the world a better place.

Why else would the inner circle want these things done?

STR	4	INT	2
DEX	4	PER	3
CON	3	WIL	3
Life Points:	42		
Endurance Points:	35		
Speed:	14		
Essence:	19		

Qualities: The Gift, Fast Reaction Time, Nerves of Steel

Drawbacks: Honorable 1, Reckless, Zealot (Red Lotus)

Skills: Acrobatics 3, Hand Weapon (Sword) 5, Language (Japanese, Native) 5, Language (English) 3, Martial Arts (Lotus Petal) 5, Stealth 4

Combat Moves: Armlock 5, Breakfall 3, Disarm 5, Flip 3, Kick 5, Punch 5, Spin Kick 4

Metaphysics: Essence Channeling 3, Chi Mastery 3, Chi Strike 3, Inner Strength 3,

Spirit Strike 3



THE RED LOTUS



JOHNNY NISEI

Spirit Master

Lesser Gifted Solitaire Survivor

Johnny Nisei is a Japanese-American street kid from Los Angeles whose parents left him at an early age. Johnny Nisei isn't even his real name, it's just what the people in the neighborhood started calling him (Nisei means second generation, and Johnny's parents were both from Japan). He probably would have ended up being killed by some random gang activity if he hadn't been discovered by a Gifted Solitaire named Wei Jin, or Uncle Gin as he was called on the streets.

Uncle Gin recognized Johnny's potential and began teaching the young man Invocations. He was particularly skilled at summoning and controlling Elementals. Unfortunately, he was not very skilled at dealing with Supernaturals. A Vampire named Mecario Delgado was trying to control the street activities in Los Angeles, and he thought that Uncle Gin was in his way. The Vampire tortured Uncle Gin, feeding off of his Essence until the old man died. The Vampire made Johnny watch the whole thing. The young apprentice would have been next if it hadn't been for the timely intervention of the Red Lotus Society (They were trying to control the street activities in Los Angeles, and thought that Delgado was in their way).

Johnny felt indebted to the Red Lotus, and the Red Lotus took advantage of that. Nisei has been working for them ever since. He is now in his mid-twenties, a Japanese-American with shoulder length hair that is streaked with burgundy. He dresses in torn jeans and a silk robe, with a strange amulet worn on a chain around his neck. The amulet isn't magical or anything, it is just a trinket that Uncle Gin would wear. Nisei now keeps it in memory of his mentor.

STR	2	INT	3
DEX	3	PER	4
CON	3	WIL	5
Life Points:	30		
Endurance Points:	35		
Speed:	12		
Essence:	35		

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 3, Increased Essence +15, Attractive +1

Drawbacks: Addiction (Heavy Drinking) 2, Clown, Cruel -2, Recurring Nightmares

Skills: Acting 3, Brawling 2, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 3, Driving (Motorcycle) 1, Guns (Handgun) 1, Hagglng 3, Languages (Japanese) 3, Lock Picking (Mechanical) 2, Pick Pocket 3, Smooth Talking 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 4, Surveillance 2, Unconventional Medicine (Acupuncture) 1

Metaphysics: Insight 2, Soulfire 2, Spirit Mastery (Elementals) 3, Warding 1

ASSORTED RED LOTUS GOONS

Criminal Cannon Fodder

Lesser Gifted Red Lotus Scoundrels

These are the low level thugs who are acting as body guards, drivers, and hired muscle for Arishma Murayami and the Red Lotus in Baltimore. They are all huge Japanese men with Yakuza tattoos all over their heavily muscled bodies. They all dress in identical suits, long coats and mirrorshades. The standard uniform of the stylish Asian criminal.

There are five goons on this operation. Sogo is the bald one, Koji is the one with the long hair tied in a ponytail, Daizu is the one with the crewcut and the gold tooth, Junki is the one with the loose long hair and the mustache, Motomu is the one with the short hair and the scar across his right eye, Tsuruko is the one with the short hair dyed blond.

All five are armed with 10mm Handguns. Sogo also carries a 12guage Shotgun. Koji and Daizu both have a Tanto each (Treat as a Large Knife), Junki has Nunchaku (Treat as a Staff and replace his Club Skill with the Staff Skill), Motomu has a Tonfa (Treat as a Police Baton), and Tsuruko has six Shuriken (Treat as Small Thrown Knives and replace his Club Skill with the Throwing [Knives] Skill).

STR	5	INT	2
DEX	5	PER	3
CON	5	WIL	2
Life Points:	50		
Endurance Points:	41		
Speed:	20		
Essence:	22		

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Situational Awareness, Resistance (Pain) 4

Drawbacks: Cruel 2, Humorless, Obligation (Major)

Skills: Driving (Car) 3, Guns (Hand Gun) 3, Hand Weapon (Club) 3, Hand Weapon (Knife) 3, Intimidation 5, Language (Japanese, Native) 5, Language (English) 2, Martial Arts (Lotus Petal) 4, Streetwise 3

Combat Moves: Arm Lock 3, Disarm 3, Headbutt 3, Kick 3, Punch 3, Roundhouse 3

Metaphysics: Chi Mastery 3, Chi Strike 3, Dragon Strike 2, Inner Strength 2

BIG
TROUBLE
IN
LITTLE
ITALY

CAST MEMBERS

BELINDA HAYES

High Priestess of the Mount Washington Coven

Lesser Gifted Wicce Weird One

Belinda is a beautiful woman in her late twenties with long red hair and bright green eyes. She usually dresses in a long black dress, black boots, silver bangle bracelets, dark sunglasses, a crescent moon pendant on a silver chain, and a leather jacket. She is the High Priestess of the Mount Washington Coven (Which consists of two other individuals).

Belinda inherited the title from her grandmother Agnes Hayes (Who also left her a nice Victorian house and estate in the Baltimore suburb of Mount Washington). Belinda was taught the Rituals and Invocations of the Wicce Covenant at an early age as part of her home schooling. This led to a very sheltered childhood, it was years before Belinda realized that most families were Mundane and did not practice the Old Religion.

In fact, the three members of the Mount Vernon Coven are the only official members of the Wicce Covenant in the Baltimore area. Since Baltimore is usually not the center of any unnatural disturbances, three Wicce are all you need to keep the forces balanced in Baltimore. The sudden war between the Sentinels and the Storm Dragons is throwing things way out of balance, and Belinda feels that it is up to the Coven to restore the natural order.

STR 2	INT 3
DEX 3	PER 4
CON 3	WIL 5

Life Points: 30

Endurance Points: 35

Speed: 12

Essence: 25

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Attractive +3, Nerves of Steel

Drawbacks: Emotional Problems (Fear of Commitment), Honorable -2*

Skills: Brawling 2, Craft (Seamstress) 3, Craft (Leatherwork) 3, Dancing (Folk) 2, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 1, Humanities (Wicce Theology) 3, Humanities (Women's Studies) 4, Instruction 3, Rituals (Wicce) 4, Singing 2, Storytelling 2, Swimming 2

Metaphysics: Increased Essence Pool +5, Blessing 2, Insight 2, Soulfire 1, Soul Projection 1, Warding 1

**This is actually the Wicce Code of Honor "Gets involved when she believes she can help others."*

Possessions: Dark clothing, silver jewelry, a decent sized Victorian house in Mount Washington, a yellow 1998 VW Beetle, a Women's Studies degree from the University of Maryland, every episode of Xena on videotape, some renaissance faire costumes, a Xena costume, and a coven (consisting of herself, a High Bast named Benu-mau, and a Beginning Gifted named Charlotte Yamazaki)

BENUMAU

Black Cat Boy

High Bast Wicce Daredevil

In feline form, Benu-mau appears as a large black cat with green eyes. In human form, he appears as a young African male with short spiky black hair and emerald green eyes. When he walks on two legs, he goes by the name of Ben.

Ben is on his third life, and he keeps getting reborn near the Mount Washington Coven House. He served Belinda's grandmother and now he is serving her. He just figures it is his destiny and doesn't worry about it. He doesn't really care what the Storm Dragons and the Sentinels do to each other, but if Belinda says the Coven needs to do something about it then so be it. Benu-mau has been letting humans run the Coven for the past seventy years just so he wouldn't be responsible for important decisions.

That's just the way he likes it.

STR 1/4*	INT 2
DEX 5/4	PER 4
CON 2	WIL 2

Life Points: 22/34

Endurance Pts: 20/29

Speed: 14/12

Essence: 26

Qualities: The Gift, High Bast, Attractive +2, Acute Vision (One Level)

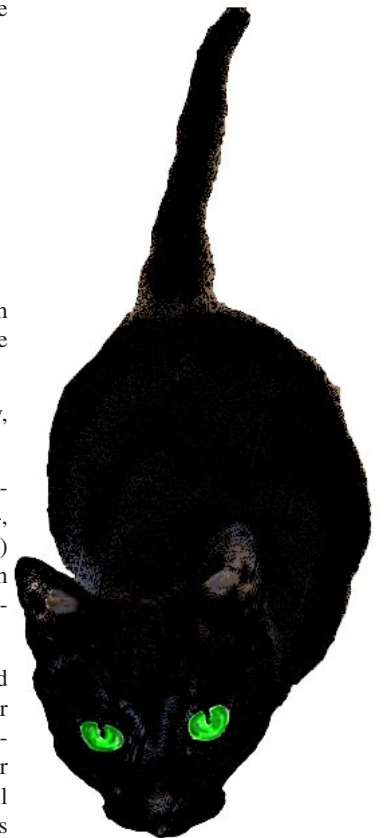
Drawbacks: Cruel -1, Lazy, Reckless, Showoff

Skills: Acrobatics 3, Brawling 4, Climbing 4, Dodging 4, Humanities (Wicce Theology) 1, Rituals (Wicce) 1, Smooth Talking 2, Stealth 4, Street-wise 2, Tracking 2

Metaphysics: Increased Essence Pool +10, Alter Psyche 2, Blessing 2, Communion 2, Insight 2, Lesser Illusion 2, Soulfire 2, Soul Projection 2, Warding 2, plus all common Bast powers

**The second number is the Attribute when the Bast is in human form.*

Possessions: He's a cat, he doesn't need any. He just stays at Belinda's house where there is a large bed and a set of clothes just for him.





CAST MEMBERS

COLLIN KNOX

Leader of the Baltimore Cohort
Gifted Rosicrucian Reluctant Hero

Collin Knox is a blond tan young man in his late twenties with the look of self-confidence that only a ridiculous amount of money can bring to a person. His grandfather made a small fortune in business just as the United States was getting out of the depression, his father turned that small fortune into a large one, and Collin has been given the task of not doing anything with the family company. Collin doesn't have the business sense of his father or grandfather, so the family would prefer that he just enjoy his trust fund and stay out of everyone's way.

Knox would have continued with his simple trust fund sponsored existence if a fraternity party at Georgetown hadn't turned into an encounter with the Supernatural. A Vampyre was feeding off of frat boys in the DC area, and Knox would have been next if one of the Cohorts in that city hadn't intervened. The Rosicrucians who saved him were impressed by how Knox handled himself. Collin Knox had all the qualities that make a good Rosicrucian; he was rich, he was white, and he didn't panic in the face of the Supernatural.

So now he has something of a sense of purpose, even if that purpose is leading a Cohort of two. The Duke of the New York Shrine has entrusted him with looking after the welfare of Baltimore. Knox is not going to be happy when the Gifted start blowing up streets in his town.

STR 2 INT 3
DEX 2 PER 3
CON 2 WIL 3
Life Points: 26
Endurance Points: 26
Speed: 8
Essence: 15

Qualities: The Gift, Increased Essence Pool + 10, Resources (Wealthy) +3

Drawbacks: Addiction (Habitual Smoking) -1, Clown, Delusion (Prejudice-The Poor) -1, Reckless

Skills: Acting 3, Bureaucracy 1, Driving (Car) 2, Humanities (Economics) 1, Language (Latin) 1, Occult Knowledge (Magic and Essence) 2, Pilot (Sail Boat) 3, Riding (Horse) 2, Ritual (Rosicrucian) 2, Sport (Tennis) 3, Smooth Talking 3

Metaphysics: Essence Channeling 4, Affect the Psyche 2, Shield 2, Soulfire 2, Spirit Mastery (Ethereals) 2, Symbol of Protection 2, Warding 2

Possessions: A very nice townhouse in Federal Hill with a great view of the Inner Harbor, all the material possessions you would expect to find in such a house, a trust fund, a silver 1998 Mercedes-Benz SLK 230 (That he almost always drives with the top down), and the services of the only other Rosicrucian in town (A Beginning Gifted named Adrien Lenoir).

JOSEPH LEE KIRKWOOD

Private Investigator
Lesser Gifted Twilight Order Survivor

Joe Kirkwood is an average looking thirty year old guy with brown hair and gray eyes. He dresses in khakis, sneakers, and plain shirts. Nothing about his appearance would make him stand out in a crowd. This is good, because he works as a private investigator. Most of his cases are the typical mix of adultery and insurance fraud, but sometimes he has to look into something more unusual. Sometimes he has to investigate the Dead.

Ever since he survived the traffic accident which killed his wife and child, Joe has had the ability to communicate with the dead. He doesn't see this as either a curse or a blessing, it's just the way things are. He hopes that his family is in a better place, but he can't be sure. The Ghosts he have spoken with so far don't seem that happy. He is now the one member of the Twilight Order in town. Despite the presence of some famous Ghosts like Edgar Allen Poe and various crew members of the USS Constellation, the Twilight Order feels that its members are needed more in DC or Philly. Joe should be enough to handle things in Baltimore.

Once the incidents of this adventure start, Kirkwood will feel compelled to investigate. He knows that something is going on in the small occult community of Baltimore. He also has a chance of hearing about the new Heroin Dealer that is trying to stake a claim in town. He might even be able to connect the two.

STR 3 INT 3
DEX 3 PER 4
CON 3 WIL 4
Life Points: 34
Endurance Points: 35
Speed: 12
Essence: 20

Qualities: The Gift, Essence Channeling 2, Contacts (Police) 2, Contacts (Street) 2, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Addiction (Heavy Drinker) -2, Recurring Nightmare, Resources (Below Average) -1

Skills: Brawling 2, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 2, Climbing 1, Guns (Handgun) 2, Hand Weapon (Club) 2, Humanities (Law) 1, Occult Knowledge (The Dead) 2, Questioning 2, Research/Investigation 3, Smooth Talking 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Surveillance 3

Metaphysics: Necromancy 3*, Death Speech (Level 2), Death Lordship (Level 2), Death Mastery (Level 1)

**This already includes the special bonus for being in the Twilight Order*

Possessions: A rundown apartment in South Baltimore (Conveniently located next to both the railroad tracks and Interstate 95), a rundown primer-gray Camaro on the street outside, a decent camera, the phone number of a friend on the force, the phone number of a friend on the street, and a refrigerator that has more alcohol in it than food.

BIG TROUBLE
IN
LITTLE
ITALY

CAST MEMBERS

TATIANA PETARAS

Out of Town Seer

Gifted Cabal of Psyche Reluctant Hero

Tatiana is a cute woman in her late twenties with short black hair and dark eyes. She wears stylish glasses and baggy clothes (She is rather short and petite, so most clothing looks baggy on her anyway. She usually goes with a big pair of khakis, a pair of doc martins, and some kind of small top). She is currently in Baltimore to visit her Grandma Sophia in Butcher's Hill.

There is no Cabal of Psyche presence in Baltimore, the Seers are clustered in the larger college areas of Washington DC or Philadelphia. Tatiana herself is from Philadelphia, and now she's part of the Cabal of Psyche group at Princeton. She always had flashes of the Sight, but she didn't learn to control it until she volunteered for a remote perception experiment at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Center. The members of the Cabal who secretly work at PEAR immediately recognized her as one of their own.

The only thing that Tatiana wanted out of her trip to Baltimore was some time with her seventy-three year old grandmother. She certainly didn't expect to find two Covenants willing to start a war with each other. Now that she is here, she can't help but try to find out what is really going on.

STR	1	INT	2
DEX	3	PER	3
CON	2	WIL	4
Life Points:	22		
Endurance Points:	26		
Speed:	10		
Essence:	15		

Qualities: The Gift, Attractive +1, Charisma+1, Photographic Memory, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Emotional Problem (Phobia, Fear of Heights)-2, Honorable-1, Impaired Vision (Corrected with Glasses)

Skills: Bureaucracy 2, Computers 1, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 2, Humanities (Psychology) 3, Instruction 3, Language (Greek) 2, Occult Knowledge (The Sight) 3, Research/ Investigation 2, Writing (Academic) 2

Metaphysics: Mindsight Art 3, Mindsight Strength 2, Mindtalk Art 2, Mindtalk Strength 2, Mindtime Art 3, Mindtime Strength 3*

**This has been raised by 1 with the Special Bonus from being a member of the Cabal*

Possessions: All her stuff is back in Princeton. All she has with her is a six year old Honda Civic, a large back pack with a few days worth of clothing in it, a video of Mel Brooke's High Anxiety that was shoved inside her backpack, (Her room mate at Princeton likes to joke Tatiana about her Acrophobia), and a corner of her grandmother's apartment in Butcher's Hill to call her own.

LESTER UMFREVILLE

Mild Mannered Vampyre

Undead Solitaire Weird One

Lester is a dark-haired young man who wears horn rim glasses and clothing straight out of the fifties. He looks a lot like Buddy Holly. Lester is sixty-four years old, but he doesn't look a day over twenty. He was turned into a Vampyre back in 1959 by a particularly nasty member of the Undead named Gethsemene Ash.

She did it on a whim. Lester was a freshman in college planning to become a math teacher. He was a typical Mundane. Gethsemene thought it would be hilarious to take such a normal Mundane, who had no real belief in the Supernatural, and turn him into one of the Undead. She tried to turn Lester into a sadistic killer like herself, but he didn't really have the taste for it. Lester is so concerned with doing the right thing that he might as well be an Iscariot.

He finally got away from her a few years ago, and has started a new unlife for himself in Baltimore. He figures that it is safe enough here. Gethsemene doesn't even like to leave Manhattan, she is certainly not going to go searching for him in Baltimore. He got a job bartending at one of the many bars in Fells Point (This is one of the bars which features live music instead of drunk yuppies) and has managed to stay off the collective radar of the Sentinels and the Storm Dragons. This recent trouble could change that completely, so Lester wants to get things back to the Status Quo.

STR	4	INT	4
DEX	6	PER	2
CON	5	WIL	3
Life Points:	46		
Endurance Points:	n/a		
Speed:	22		
Essence:	69		

Qualities: Attractive +1 (He looks like a nerd, but it's a Cool Buddy Holly kind of nerd), Contacts (Other Vampyres) 4, Increased Essence +20, Situational Awareness, Photographic Memory

Drawbacks: Cowardly-1, Honorable-2

Skills: Brawling 1, Climbing 1, Computers 1, Craft (Bartender) 3, Dodge 2, First Aid 2, Humanities (History) 3, Occult Knowledge (Undead) 3, Research/Investigate 2, Science (Mathematics) 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1

Metaphysics: Vampyre, Manipulate Emotions, Mirage, Increased Essence +5

Possessions: What appears to be Buddy Holly's old wardrobe (Including a pair of horn rimmed glasses that he doesn't really need anymore, but wears anyway. They are something familiar and comforting from a time when he had a pulse), a small apartment in Fells Point near where he works (His apartment is the one with the heavy black drapes), and a large map of the city (It's marked with the locations of the Chapel House, the Charles Street School, and most of the homes of the Gifted in Baltimore. Lester needs to know what streets to avoid so he doesn't run into some zealous monster hunter).



OTHERS

NEFERHENI TOWSON

Youth Violence Task Force Cop

Potential Hero Avenger

Neferheni (It's Egyptian for Beautiful Song. Her two brothers got stuck with goofy Egyptian names as well) is a fit African-American woman in her late twenties with short hair and light brown eyes. She prefers to go by the nickname Henny and has been a police officer for the last five years. She has been on the Youth Violence Task Force for two years now.

Her youngest brother Abe (Short for Abebayankh) was killed by gang violence when he was only fifteen. Henny feels that no one should ever have to go through the trauma that her family went through. Once the violence on Charles Street and Little Italy start, she will investigate it relentlessly. This could bring the two Covenants involved to the unwanted attention of the Mundane authorities

STR	2	INT	2
DEX	3	PER	3
CON	2	WIL	3
Life Points:	26		
Endurance Points:	26		
Speed:	10		
Essence:	15		

Qualities: Contacts (Fellow Police Officers) 5, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Adversary (Gangs) 2, Obsession (Baltimore's Youth)

Skills: Brawling 2, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 3, First Aid 2, Guns (Handgun) 2, Guns(Shotgun) 2, Hand Weapon (Club) 2, Humanities (Law) 4, Intimidation 3, Questioning 3, Streetwise 4, Surveillance 3

Possessions: Standard police gear, a Class IIIa Vest, 9mm Handgun, Police Baton, Handcuffs, First Aid Kit.



MARK EVANS

DEA Agent

Pre-Heroic Fanatic

Mark Evans is a DEA Agent who has been working undercover in Baltimore to fight the growing Heroin epidemic in that city. He has been operating as a low level drug dealer named George Caxton for the past year. George Caxton looks like a beach bum in his early thirties with long unkempt blond hair, blue eyes, and a permanent tan. Even when he wears a suit, he looks like a beach bum who has been forced into a suit. Mark Evens looks like that, except clean shaven and with shorter hair.

If the Cast discovers the Red Lotus plan to deal heroin in Baltimore, they might be able to send Evens in the Dark Covenant's direction. Once he gathers enough evidence, the DEA main office is only an hour away. A large enough bust will stop Arishma Maruyami's plans, even if he has mastered the metaphysical martial arts.

STR	2	INT	3
DEX	2	PER	3
CON	2	WIL	3
Life Points:	26		
Endurance Points:	26		
Speed:	8		
Essence:	15		

Qualities: Contacts (DEA) 5, Multiple Identity, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Important Obligation, Zealot (Anti-Drug)

Skills: Acting 4, Brawling 2, Dodge 2, Driving (Car) 1, Electronic Surveillance 3, Guns (Handgun) 3, Humanities (Law) 4, Questioning 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 4, Surveillance 3

Possessions: A .45 caliber Handgun, a badge that identifies him as DEA Agent Mark Evans, a set of cards and papers that identifies him as smalltime drug dealer George Caxton



BIG
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ITALY

OTHERS

CHARLOTTE YAMAZAKI

The Third Member of the Mount Washington Coven
Beginning Gifted Wicce Student

Charlotte is a cute Japanese-American woman with long black hair that has been dyed Kool-Aide Blue. She is also a student at University of Maryland Baltimore County Campus. She has been a college student for the past seven years. In that time she has pursued degrees in Fine Art, Dance, Physical Therapy, Literature, Women's Studies and Philosophy. She is currently thinking of switching to Elementary Education.

During this long educational journey, Charlotte has also been pursuing mystical knowledge. The thing that separated her from every other young woman with a henna tattoo and a book on feminine power was that she actually has a potential talent for the Metaphysical. Belinda recognized this talent and recruited Charlotte to be the third member of the Mount Washington Coven. She has been a member of the Coven for the past six months.

STR	2	INT	2
DEX	3	PER	3
CON	2	WIL	3
Life Points:	26		
Endurance Points:	26		
Speed:	10		
Essence:	20		

Qualities: Attractive +1, Photographic Memory, Situational Awareness

Drawbacks: Minority (Asian), Reckless, Resources (Hurting) -2

Skills: Acrobatics 3, Dance (Jazz) 2, Fine Art (Sculpture) 3, First Aid 4, Humanities (Wicce Theology) 3, Rituals (Wicce) 2, Unconventional Medicine (Herbal Medicine) 3, Streetwise 2, Writing (Creative) 3

Metaphysics: The Gift, Essence Channeling 1, Increased Essence Pool +5, Insight 1, Blessing 1

Possessions: A crappy little apartment in Arbutus near the University of Maryland Baltimore County Campus, a rusty old Fiat, and the assorted clothing and gear of a terminal college student.



ADRIEN LENOIR

Personal Aide to Collin Knox
Beginning Gifted Rosicrucian Student

Adrien Lenoir is a thin young man with dark blond hair and blue eyes. He was born into a Rosicrucian family and was exposed to things supernatural at a young age. He was initiated into the order at the age of twelve and barely made it through the ordeal. He is now only a year younger than Collin, but he has remained a Squire this whole time. His parents fear that he just might not have the knack for magic.

Collin doesn't care about any of that. He knows all about disappointing one's family because he has been doing it his entire life. Knox's life has been easier ever since the New York Shrine assigned Lenoir to Baltimore. Even if he isn't the best Magician around, he makes an excellent personal aide. Appointments are kept in order, the Benz has never run better, and he makes one hell of a good martini.

STR	2	INT	3
DEX	2	PER	3
CON	2	WIL	3
Life Points:	26		
Endurance Points:	26		
Speed:	8		
Essence:	15		

Qualities: The Gift, Charisma +1

Drawbacks: Emotional Problem (Fear of Rejection), Cowardly -1

Skills: Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Bartending) 3, Hagglng 2, Humanities (History) 2, Language (Latin) 3, Magic Theory 1, Mechanic 3, Occult Knowledge (Spirits) 2, Rituals (Rosicrucian) 2, Smooth Talking 2

Metaphysics: Essence Channeling 1, Spirit Mastery (Ethereals) 1, Warding 1

Possessions: Nice clothes, nice things, a nice room at Knox's townhouse in Federal Hill, and pretty much anything else Knox's generosity gifts him with.





CONVERSION NOTES:

Conversion to Call of Cthulhu: The knowledge to create the mysterious Hand might arise from the hidden civilization of K'n-yan, making the Hisatsinom shaman possibly a devotee of Tsathoggua.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY?

Dead Mans Hand is suitable for 2-6 ordinarily equipped characters of any skill level. Remember, action scenes are meant to be intense and difficult. If your players are getting off too easy, add additional "baddies."

USING THIS ADVENTURE

Read this entire adventure before playing to familiarize yourself with the format. Text marked "**To be read aloud**" is meant to be paraphrased or read to the players. Things marked **GM's Note:** are important points you should pay special attention to.

PLOT SYNOPSIS & BACKGROUND

An ancient Hisatsinom treasure map leads a group of treasure hunters to a piece of an ancient puzzle. A piece which could be the key to finding the fabled "Dead Mans Hand".

The only hurdle that stands between the heroes and the fabled treasure is that it is lost in the past. Now the heroes must find a way to enter the past and finish up what the first group of treasure hunters started 100 years ago.

FUTURE ADVENTURING

This story is the first in a trilogy. It is very open-ended, leaving the players with half the locator, the Freemasons with the other half, and both parties with an idea where a D.M.H. piece may be. The second part has the players managing to get the first piece of the "Hand", then setting out to find the other half of the locator and the second piece of from the Freemasons. The last installment will include the players seeking out the last piece with the Masons, and who-knows-what in

hot pursuit.

The last will include the players seeking out the last piece with the Masons and who knows what in hot pursuit.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

It is suggested that you allow the heroes to be either descendents of the original party, or friends of a descendent that has the map. This will allow the players access to the map and make the adventure personal.

The GM could also place the map into the player's hands directly through an agency such as the Hoffman Institute. The choice is the GM's to decide, but the players must have the map for the adventure to begin. Once the players have the map they will find it to be written in a strange language. Having natural curiosity about the strange and unusual, the players will want to translate and search out the locations on the map. Also, if the GM had the map be a belonging of one of the player's ancestors, that player should want to follow in their footsteps.

USEFUL SOURCES

WEBSITES

Canyon de Chelly

<http://www.nps.gov/cach/>

Arizona

<http://www.state.az.us/>

Hisatsinom

<http://home.earthlink.net/~jsmog/hohokam.html>

<http://raysweb.net/canyonlands/pages/anasazi.html>

Canyon de Chelly Music

<http://www.teleport.com/~canyon/cr7019.htm>

Mapping Information

<http://www.arizonaguide.com/maps/mapsindex.shtml>

<http://www.mapblast.com/mblast/index.mb>

GM INFO

It is completely up to you how involved you make the states and cities visited in this adventure. I have included the resources for you to gather information. Please use them carefully as they may contain too much stuff for one GM to use fully.

HISTORY

DEAD MAN'S HAND

A shaman of the Hisatsinom people originally created the DMH. How the young shaman had the knowledge and ability to create such an item is another mystery for another time. Essentially the DMH was a Gate Key capable of opening a portal to the center of the Earth, more precisely to the land of Agharti. Using the portal the young shaman was able to bring back vast amounts of advanced sciences for the benefit of his people. These sciences greatly enhanced the Hisatsinom people's way of life, including; advanced agriculture, architecture, and war tactics. This knowledge, however, came at a cost. Each trip the shaman took in to Agharti caused his body to age 10 years. The brave shaman managed to take four trips into the land of Agharti before the strain of his age became too great, each time enhancing his people ten fold.

Meanwhile the young shaman's wife bore him a son. The shaman loved his son greatly and planned to take him to Agharti when he was old enough. After the birth of his first child, the shamans' wife got pregnant by another man. The young shaman thinking that this child was also his, rejoiced. However, when the young shaman took his fifth and final trip into Agharti he was told the truth by the inhabitance within.

The aged shaman was angered and heart broken by the news, and during an uncontrolled rage the shaman committed a crime that Agharti had never experienced before. For his crimes the shaman was banished from Agharti and his own son was cursed to destroy the Hisatsinom people he loved so dearly.

When the shaman finally returned from the land of Agharti he was but a shell of the man he used to be. His people tried to use the advanced techniques to cure him. However, nothing seemed to work, and the shaman slowly seemed to lose his will to exist. Meanwhile, the two sons grew up together thinking of themselves as full brothers, each loving the other dearly. When the young men came of age, they were told of the DMH. Both were given five tests to see who was worthy of traveling to Agharti. As the tests went on the oldest brother began to lose, to quicker witted younger brother. During a meal with the older brother, his uncle suggested sabotaging the younger brother's tests. Appalled by his suggestion the brother demanded to know why he would suggest such a thing. The uncle told the brother that his younger brother, was not the shaman's son and therefore he had no right to win the DMH. Hurt and outraged that this knowledge had been kept

from him, he allowed his uncle to sabotage the tests.

During the younger brothers final test an accident occurred that nearly cost him his life. An investigation into the accident revealed signs of sabotage. The night of this revelation the younger brother was having dinner with the uncle. The uncle revealed that it was the older brother who had sabotaged the tests. The younger brother also demanded to know why he would say such things. In response, the uncle explained that he was not his father's son, but another's.

Rushing to find his brother and the truth to his uncle's claim, he found his brother holding the DMH with a sinister look in his eyes. At his older brother's feet was the Keeper of the DMH, a close friend of his mothers, a respected elder, and, according to the uncle's story, his father. Watching in horror the younger brother could do nothing as the eldest stepped into the Agharti gate.

The younger brother rushed to the Keeper's side as the older brother stepped back out of the gate. His face aged and stone like, the older brother brought with him death. Thinking quickly the younger brother snatched the DMH from his brother's grip and fled as quickly as he could. Taking his wife and her family, the younger brother fled into the Agharti gate.

The older brother swept death throughout the Hisatsinom people seeking his younger brother and the DMH. What people remained, gathered together in order to strike him down. Using everything they had, they managed the impossible, and fatally wounded the brother, but not before destroying themselves in the process.

As the Darkmatter levels fell, the younger brother was forced to leave the realm of Agharti. He returned to find the Hisatsinom nation in ruins. Using what power he had learned from the Agharti, the brother broke the DMH into three pieces, knowing it would be a while till the D*M levels were high enough to destroy it. He sent his own three sons to distant lands to hide the pieces until they could be destroyed. In order to find those pieces he created a DMH locating device, and per the instructions from the Agharti people, broke that in half and hid those two pieces. Finally, he created a map to find the locator pieces. On this map he scribed, in his own blood, the destiny of his people, the Hopi, the "Keepers".

D.M.H. MAP

This map contains instructions to where the two halves of the locator were hidden.

A Navajo brave stole the map. He later traded it to a Spanish trader, who thought it might be a map for buried treasure. The untranslated map is DMH-1 and the translation is DMH-2. The ancient inscribed copper map appears to be in perfect condition with no mystical properties. The blood of the last group who attempted to retrieve the locator still stains the left side. Chemical dating of the blood or the map reveals that the map is well over 1,000 years and the blood is around 100 years old. The map is impervious to age, fire, and tearing; it may, however, be disintegrated by acid or blown apart.

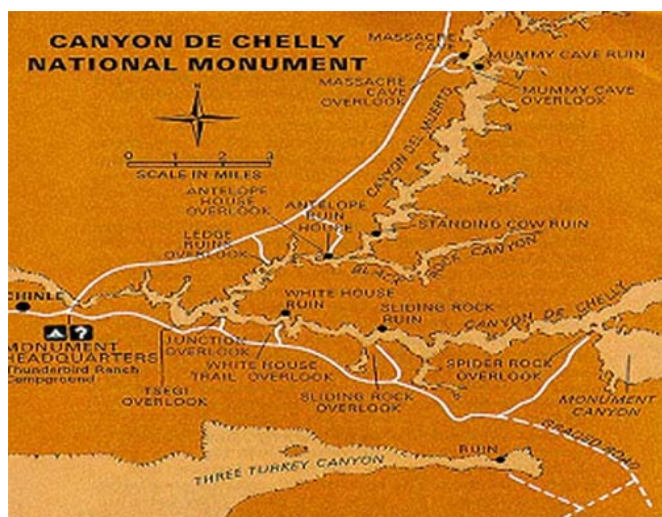


LOCATOR

This device created by the Dead Man’s Hand has the ability to locate the three essences of the “Hand”. When it was hidden, it was split into two separate parts in order to reduce its power. Separate, each piece could be used to locate one essence, however; they must be joined to find the last essence.

CANYON DE CHELLY

(Pronounced d’S HAY)- 41.86 km long. Placement of the first locator piece and the location of the “Long Walk” where over 3,000 Navajo Indians were marched 300 miles to reach Fort Sumner. Due to the increase in Darkmatter and the terrible atrocities that occurred, this Canyon has become much more than quiet rock. Once smooth rock formations have been replaced with jagged, razor sharp pikes. To those unlucky enough to enter the Canyon at night, will find it very hard to navigate due to its constant warping nature.



In the canyons are ruins of several hundred prehistoric Indian villages, most of them built between A.D. 350 and 1300. The earliest known Indian occupants constructed individual, circular pithouses, so called because the lower parts of the dwellings were pits dug into the ground. Their chief weapon was a spear-throwing device, now called an atlatl. It wasn’t until later that they used the bow and arrow. They grew crops of maize and squash. Instead of making pottery, they were excellent weavers, making ornate baskets, sandals, and other woven articles. Because of their fine basketry, these earliest Indians were commonly referred to as Basketmakers.

In later centuries, the Basketmakers adopted many new ideas from other cultures, such as the making of pottery, the bow and arrow, and bean cultivation. The style of their houses gradually changed through the years. The pithouses

were replaced by rectangular houses of stone masonry, which were connected together in compact villages above the ground. These changes basically altered Basketmaker life; and, because of the new “apartment house” style of their homes, the canyon dwellers after 700AD were called Pueblos. Pueblo is the Spanish word for village, and it refers to the compact village life of these later people. Most of the large cliff houses in these canyons were built in the Pueblo period between 1100AD and 1300AD.

During the 1200’s, a prolonged drought parched what is now the Four Corners region of Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. About 1300, the drought, and perhaps-other causes, forced the people of Canyon de Chelly and other nearby Pueblo centers to abandon their homes and scatter to other parts of the Southwest. Some of the present-day Pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico are descendants of these pre-Columbian people. The canyons continue to be occupied sporadically by the early Hopi Indians of Arizona, also related to these Pueblo people. The Hopi were probably here only during the times when they were growing and harvesting crops.

About 1700 the Navajo Indians, who were then concentrated in northern New Mexico, began to occupy Canyon de Chelly. An aggressive people related culturally and linguistically to the various Apache Indians in the Southwest, raided for a century and a half the Pueblo Indian villages and Spanish settlements along the Rio Grande Valley. These attacks inspired the successive governments of New Mexico (Spanish, Mexican, and American) to make reprisals, and Canyon de Chelly became one of the chief Navajo strongholds.

In 1805, a Spanish punitive expedition under Lt. Antonio Narbona, who later became governor of the Province of New Mexico, fought an all-day battle with a band of Navajos fortified in a rock shelter in Canyon del Muerto. Narbona’s official report to the Governor stated that 115 Navajos were killed, including 90 warriors. Because of this, the rock shelter is called Massacre Cave.

Navajo raids continued into the American period. A military campaign was begun and in 1864 a detachment of United States cavalry under Kit Carson engaged the Navajos in Canyon de Chelly. The raiding was brought to an end by the removal of more than 8,000 Navajos to new lands in eastern New Mexico. This first reservation experiment failed, and after 4 years the Navajos were permitted to return to their homeland.

Today, many Navajos are salaried employees. They still farm in a limited way, but sheep herding, which they acquired from the Spaniards in the 1700’s, is declining among them. Their distinctive circular houses of logs and poles are called hogans.

CANYON DEL MUERTO

56.36 km long. Placement of the second locator piece, also the area where over 113 Navajo Indians were slaughtered and 33 were captured. Both the rise of Darkmatter and the piece of the locator have trapped the tortured souls of those killed at the site. Using his shamanistic powers, Muli, also the ancient, uses the spirits to protect the place that he believes the locator rests. He promised the spirits if they succeeded in protecting the locator piece he would send them on. More on the Canyons later.

NPCS

MULI

Muli is a descendent of the Keepers, whose purpose is to ensure the safety and security of the “Hand” at all costs. Muli, unlike his other “Keeper” brethren, does not believe in violence; so he chooses, instead, to follow and guide the players. Muli appears both in the present and the past. When he is encountered in the past, do not mention that he could be the Ancient’s twin, but rather that he resembles the Ancient, and could be related. This of course will allow the players to trust him, but not automatically follow him around like a lost puppy. Muli, in the past is quiet and mysterious, revealing his vast knowledge only when requested. Usually followed by the statement “You never asked”.



He is a well-formed Native American of 24 with an overly sunned look. He speaks English well enough, but prefers to speak Hopi and Hisatsinom. Muli can speak French, Spanish and every Western Indian tongue. Muli will actively seek out the players in the past once they have the map, informing them they will need a guide to enter Navajo territory. Character specifics can be found later on.

CHARLES WINTERFORD AKA CHUCK

Chuck is actually Charles Winterford a recently indoctrinated member of the Freemasons. He has been instructed to search out an Indian artifact of unknown description that may or may not be the greatest treasure ever discovered. This, to Chuck, is a joke of some sort played on him by his fellow lodge members. However since they are allotting him resources and men to do so, he figures he might as well go along. Chuck is allotted an ordinary amount of resources as long as they are used productively. His trader wagon contains an assortment of weapons and supplies. He also has Stock boys (number equal to the party size) who are actually Ordinary skilled soldiers. Chuck was chosen because of both his

naivness and booming personality. He was told to act as an artifact collector and to purchase anything Indian or important looking that might come his way. He can offer the heroes almost any amount they can come up with as long as it’s reasonable. Once the players get their hands on the map in the past, Chuck will attempt to join the Journey, through bribery if he must. If he is not allowed to accompany the party, he will attempt to follow the players, planning to use his boys to take whatever they find. If Chuck accompanies the players he will have his boys follow a day back, in case he needs them. Chuck can be presented to the players through GAMBLING, random city encounter, etc.... He will actively seek out the players once he finds out they have the map, using his wealth to gain the players trust. Chuck’s personality is that of a used car salesman, very loud, very boastful, and extremely persuasive. Character specifics can be found later on.

EVIL

Represented by an assortment of characters throughout the adventure. Evil knows what the players may find and will help them find it. However too much reliance on evil’s guidance can lead to extremely deadly ends! Represent evil’s guidance as rumors that encourage the players along or people who happen to know more than they should. Do not over-use! If players notice that everyone but them knows what is going on, they’ll get suspicious. If the players take this on as a “Holy Quest”, evil will quickly step in to be a major pain in the arse. Use horse thieves, saloon brawls, bank robberies, ECT... these shouldn’t directly harm the players, just slow’em down. If these have absolutely no effect on the players or if it encourages them on, feel free to throw more aggressive “bad-dies” at them. Once again, be warned, evil is sly and devious and does not want the players to figure out the importance of their quest. This is true for both the past and the present evil. It exists in both times.

WHAT THEY KNOW

FREEMASONS

Freemasons have had about 100 years to study the first piece of the locator they found on their first expedition. However, all they have managed to find are fables and stories told to them by bribed or tortured Hopi. So far the piece of the locator they have does nothing, and will continue to do nothing until someone manages to get their hands on the other piece. Most of the Masons have given up on their piece and are thinking of letting another society take a look and see if they can get it to do something. Once the players begin their search for the piece, Mason spies may pick up on the heroes’ trail following them to see what they know. Depending on the research success and the resources the players use will depend on whether or not the Masons pick up the trail.



The Freemason conspiracy has an Awareness-intuition score of 15/7/3.

If the roll is an Ordinary success (15 or less), the Freemason leadership is alerted.

On a Good success (7 or less) other allied conspiracies, such as NSA and Aquarius, learn of the Holy Quest.

If the conspiracy rolls a natural 1, the players manage to draw the attention of nearly every society

HOFFMANN INSTITUTE

The institute is well versed in ancient Indian lore and do have a few files detailing a mysterious object known as the DMH, but have written them off as child stories. If the players manage to translate the map and reveal it will lead them to the DMH, the HI will encourage the players to separate the fact from the fiction.

FINAL CHURCH

Has a little too much knowledge about the DMH due to their unholy ties with creatures from the beyond. If they manage to figure out that the players may get their hands on the DMH, they will allow the players and Masons to do the footwork. After the players or Masons manage to get one of the pieces several sects of the FC will be sent in to relieve them of it and the Locator and then murder everyone involved gruesomely. <-Thanks Jim

OTHERS

Getting the Freemasons involved may also mean getting the Rosicrucians involved and the FC might be followed by the Hidden Order. I leave this chaos up to the GM if they can handle a full-blown conspiracy then so be it.

ACT ONE-TREASURE CANYON

RESEARCH:

The players will have to do research in order decipher the map. The language and locations on the map are strange and no player has ever seen it before.

- +4 the players do not need to research.
- +2 the players use a small bookstore or library.
- +1 the players use the HI database.
- +1-3 the players take special measures to cover up their work.
- 0 the players use the Internet or unencoded e-mails.
- 1 for every two times the players fail a research roll.
- 2-4 players openly ask questions about the map
- 3 the players critical fail any research rolls

"LOCATION ON MAP"

The locations on the map can be found through Investigate-Research skill checks 1 every hour with Navigation-Surface, and Knowledge-Computer as related skills.

- 3 failures: The locations on the map do not match any known geographical site on earth, however it does resemble one of the channels on Mars.
- 1 success: Geographically it appears to be a canyon of some sort and if the scale is correct it is a decent sized one at that.
- 3 success: The canyon resembles a reduced version of the Grand Canyon suggesting that it might also be located near Arizona.
- 5 success: The map depicts both Canyon de Chelly and Canyon del Muerto located within Chinle, AZ.

"LANGUAGE ON THE MAP"

The language on the map is a dead language and will be very difficult to find and exact translation. A +3 step penalty is set on the research if the players are trying to find a translation, a +2 if the players are only trying to find out what language it is. The heroes can attempt a Research skill roll once every 2 hours with Social Science-Linguistics as related skill. Only those looking for a translation can go past 3 success.

- 3 failures: While researching the map the players gain the attention of another illuminati group of the GMs choice. This other group has an idea that the map is fairly powerful and will attempt to steal the map away from the players. However, this group does not believe the map is worth their agent's life, unless they are of the Final Church. Therefore if the players manage to wound or kill their agents the group will harbor bad feelings, but scuttle back into the darkness.
- 1 success: The language appears to be a variety of Native American texts.
- 2 success: The language is very close to the Hopi Indian's language.
- 3 success: The language is actually Hisatsinom, the ancestors of the Hopi Indians.
- 5 success: The players are able to completely translate the map, give the players DMH-2.

"CANYON RESEARCH"

Both canyons are fairly easy to research, players using Net Savvy or a well-stocked library as their related skills receive a -2 bonus. The players need to get at least 2 success while making an Investigate-Research skill check every hour. As the players work toward getting the appropriate number of success paraphrase the following bits of information about the two canyons. GMs may also read to the players the history of the canyon detailed earlier.

Canyon de Chelly

- 41.86 km in length
- Location of the “Long Walk” where over 3,000 Navajo Indians were marched 300 miles in order to reach Fort Sumner
- Once inside of Hopi territory, but now inside of Navajo
- Pieces of the lost Hisatsinom tribe have been found around the canyon
- Over 83,000 Acres
- Spanish for Rock Canyon

Canyon del Muerto

- 56.36 km in length
- Location where over 115 Navajo Indians were slaughtered and 33 were captured
- In Spanish it is the Canyon of the Death

**SETUP**

Players have received the map, DMH-1, and researched the location to be Canyon De Chelly in Arizona near Chinle. They may also have scheduled a tour upon their arrival. If not have them check out or print off the webpage <http://www.canyondechellytours.com> upon arrival at the Holiday Inn.

SETTING: CHINLE, A.Z

Info at <http://chinleaz.areaguides.net>

Time:	2001
Coordinates:	GPS
Latitude:	36.2 N
Longitude:	109.5 W
Nearest Airport:	Gallup Municipal Airport GALLUP NM 87301
Population:	5,059
Suggested Lodging:	Holiday Inn Chinle Canyon De Chelly Garcia Trading Post Chinle, AZ 86503

SCENE ONE: ARRIVAL

***GMs Note:** Until the players get to tour the canyon, make all the scenes light, happy, and easy w/ just a little bit of paranoia here and there. You are trying to lull the players into a false sense of security.*

Arrival in Chinle, AZ should go with out a hitch, provided the players have the money to transport themselves from where ever they are to Chinle, AZ. The Holiday Inn is a typical Inn; 10 floors with about 40 rooms per floor. Rooms can accommodate up to two people comfortably. Each room contains a DSL line for Internet access, cable TV with 102 channels and a full stocked mini-bar. The hotel also offers room service. Besides these basics, the Inn also includes, a full service restaurant for breakfast, dinner, and business meetings. It also has a decent sized indoor swimming pool w/ hot tub and weight gym. The players are assigned to room 23+, depending on the number of people in the party. Allow your players time to get prepared for the tour, whether it's sleep, calling the institute, or prepping weapons. (Remember to make the idea of a tour a pleasant one. The players should think that touring the Canyon and grabbing the treasure should be a walk in the park.) The Tour of the Canyon will be action packed; the players will have no time to re-equip back at the hotel once it starts. This, of course, does not mean allowing your players to carry fully visible assault rifles on the tour; that's a little bit crazy.

SCENE TWO: VISITOR CENTER

The drive or hike to the Canyon de Chelly is less than 3 kilometers from the Holiday Inn along Route 191. Upon arriving at the canyon there will be three places of interest. They include: Cotton Wood campgrounds, Thunderbird Lodge Canyon tours, and the Visitor Center. The canyon closes to visitors after 11:00pm and the tours are no longer running, so the following sections are written as if your players arrived at the grounds during the day.

COTTON WOOD CAMPGROUNDS

As you enter the sparsely grassed camping grounds, there are about 10 picnic tables scattered indiscriminately. For every two tables there is also a small cast iron grill cemented into the ground. Around these grills are several families who, by the smell of roasting hot dogs and hamburgers, are enjoying the warm day. Most of the children are playing on the single set of playground equipment. (Since the players must pass through here in order to enter the canyon this is a good place to have another agency agent follow or confront them.)

THUNDERBIRD LODGE CAMPING TOURS

Due to lower cost and pre-made tour schedules, most people who come to Canyon de Chelly schedule their tours with Thunderbird Lodge. These tours include a trip around the South Rim all the way to Spider Rock Overlook. The



tours are taken in the Lodges own vehicles, with 10mins stops during the tour for pictures and history lessons. Overall this is probably not the best place for the players to schedule from since the tour does not pass near where the players need to be, nor does it allow for a lot of freedom to roam into the canyon.

THE VISITOR CENTER

Is a small building about the size of an average rest stop. The temperature inside of the building is amazingly 65*f. A huge change from the blazing 102*f outside. It is setup like a typical information center with plenty of fliers and souvenirs detailing the many ways to explore Canyon de Chelly and spend extra money. A small, mouse faced girl stands behind a round counter with a large “Information Desk” sign wrapped around it. Her nametag identifies her as ‘Alice Lovmore Chief Information specialist of Canyon de Chelly’. Players may spend as much time asking questions to “Miss know-it-all”; she knows almost all there is to know about the Canyon de Chelly and Muerto. She does not, however, know anything about the map, the Dead Man’s Hand or a treasure. She readily assures the party that if there were a treasure in the canyon it most assuredly would have been found by now. This shouldn’t dishearten the players, however if it does, she will assure the players that there are still areas of the Canyon that are much harder to explore than others, maybe its in one of those.

If the players haven’t scheduled a tour by now, Alice will be more than happy to set one up for them as soon as possible. Alice’s method will take up to 2 hours and cost about 1.5x normal price (that’ll teach the players to be ready ahead of time)

No matter whom the players call for a tour from, they will have to be guided by a certified Navajo guide, even if they use their own vehicles.



GM Note: If the players are working for the Hoffman Institute and think to call to the institute for a guide, they will be told that all the Navajo guides are either on assignment or leave. This is true no matter the ranking of the HI employee. If the one of the players is a Navajo Indian, they may go through the 2-year training it takes to be certified as a guide. Even then a supervisor must accompany them.

On the off chance that the players try to sneak into the canyon during the night without a guide, play paranoia and fear to the maximum. Using eerie noises, changing paths, disembodied footsteps, the works until your players re-think their actions. GMs remember both Canyons are treacherous with quicksand, shear cliffs and angry Indian spirits. It is both extremely dangerous and stupid to attempt these Canyons at night even with lanterns and flashlights. If your players don’t understand this, allow them to experience a near death experience or two, they will learn quickly. If that doesn’t work have them meet up with a Navajo guide, who just happened to be camping under the stars somewhere inside the Canyon. He will inform the players that they may stay at his camp until morning, then he will be more than happy to guide them. Once again if a player chooses this time to be a genius and has the money and resources to hire a helicopter, remind them that the Canyon is not government land. The canyon is on the Navajo reserve and is not the property of the United States Government; therefore it is illegal to fly without the approval of the Navajo people. Not to mention it is a death wish to attempt to land anywhere inside the canyon without a proper “Guide”.

GM Note: The players are about to be taken on a tour they won’t forget, including a sudden storm, tortured Indian spirits, a glance into the past, and an angry canyon. Almost all of the action occurs once the players reach Massacre Cave. The only warning that the players are given is the slow gathering of thunderclouds that seem to appear out of nowhere. Until the players reach Massacre Cave the clouds appear to be nothing more than fluffy white cumulous clouds. However, once they get to Massacre Cave Overlook, the clouds will take on a much different appearance. At this point the easy feeling of the adventure ends. Turn off the lights, turn on the hard rock, do whatever it takes to change the mood dramatically; its time for the fun to begin.

SCENE THREE: TOUR-DAY

GM Note: Whoever you chose to guide the players will either be a friend or contact of Muli, or a member of the Hopi tribe. They will immediately recognize the map for what it is, and after the tour inform Muli of the happenings and on the status of the map.

The length of the tour depends on whether or not the players have the appropriate vehicles. They will need SUVs or



large trucks to transverse the Canyons. If the players do not the appropriate vehicles, the guide will provide a 12- seater Unimog. The map has two X's. The first lies inside the Canyon del Muerto right on top of Massacre Cave. The other lies in Canyon de Chelly somewhere inside Bat Canyon. At this point the GM should have the guide lead the party to the Massacre Cave "X". If the players decide they want to go to the Bat Canyon "X", they will have a beautiful sight seeing tour, but nothing to show for it. There is nothing at the Bat Canyon "X" except old ruins and rocks.

The tour to Massacre Cave includes a trip along the North Rim. Showing off the Ledge Ruins Overlook, Antelope House Ruins Overlook, Mummy Cave Overlook, and finally Massacre Cave Overlook. The whole trip covers about 26 kilometers of travel, but if the players want to skip the overlooks and head straight to Massacre Cave it is only a 16-kilometer trip.

As the players suit up and get ready for their tour into Canyon del Muerto, any player listening to the radio or watching the TV can make an awareness-perception roll to catch something about a 30% chance of a thunder storm.

Outside the temperature has cooled down to about 90 degrees F and small wisps of clouds can be seen slowly making their way across the sky. As you look down at your watch you notice that it's time for you to meet your guide and to start your tour. Climbing into the Unimog is an interesting experience. Even with the A/C going at full blast the truck could still pass for a mobile sauna. The irritating humidity only increases the unpleasurable feeling of running on only several hours of sleep. Looking out the windows you can see the beautiful landscape of Canyon del Muerto.

Taking in the sloping sandy brown cliffs and the rich green basin, you can understand why the Navajo would want to hang on to this spectacular sight. As the players near their first stop the guide will begin to explain some history about Canyon del Muerto. (information can be found under canyon research). When he talks about the Indians killed make sure he says it mysteriously and ominously.

LEDGE HOUSE RUINS OVERLOOK

The first stop of the canyon tour is the Ledge House Ruins Overlook. From atop the ledge the players can just make out what appears to be adobe structures built into the side of the cliff face. If the players are having a true-guided tour, they will be informed that these ruins were originally part of an Indian settlement, other than Navajo. The society known as the Hisatsinom, also known as basket makers, originally built these structures nearly 800 years ago. One day the Hisatsinom decided to pack up and disappear, leaving almost nothing except ruins, their baskets and fertile land. Finding the lands completely empty the Navajo people claimed it their own. By the time the players arrive at the Ledge Ruins the thunderclouds have gathered together, concealing the sun. If any of the players ask, it appears the rain is still a few hours off.

ANTELOPE HOUSE RUINS OVERLOOK

These ruins look almost exactly like the Ledge House Ruins with the exception of the path leading down into them. There are amazing displays of Antelope cave drawings inside the ruins. The drawings look to be about 150 years old.

*Any players that get engrossed in the antelope painting will have to make a Will-Awareness check. If the player succeeds, they will swear they can still hear the antelopes echoing hoofs in the basin below. On an amazing success, they can hear a ghostly chanting of Hisatsinom war chants (If you took the effort to find eerie or Indian music now is the time to play it). Any players who choose to stay up at the Overlook instead of going down into the Ruins can also make a Will-awareness roll difficulty +1. On any success the player will notice an entire herd of antelope spring out of nowhere in the basin below. The antelope appear to be fleeing from something as they charge full speed along the rocks below.

After leaving the Ruins the players will begin to get the feeling of disembodied eyes watching them. Any attempts to find their watcher will fail, but allow the players to roll anyway.

The overhead clouds have begun to take on a dark black color, making the normally bright Arizona day strangely dark. This also has the added effect of lowering the temperature by ten degrees.*

DRIVE TO MASSACRE CAVE

By now the players probably have noticed that something supernatural is going on, if they haven't do not enlighten them. This could also be the time that the players decide to turn back, deciding it foolish to continue on with the storm looming overhead. At this point you have two choices: Convince them through the guide that it's a good idea to keep going, they won't get a refund, its better to examine the Canyon in the reduced temperature, ect. Or, it could be time to force the hand of their pursuers and chase the players further along the Canyon.



PURSUIT

Since players don't always listen to the rationale of your NPCs, no matter how much sense it makes, it's a good idea to have a few baddies here and there to convince the players of the path they need to take. This happens to be one of those times and the Freemason agents that have been following them since the Cotton Wood Campgrounds make good baddies. The pursuit scene should be sudden and without a lot of planning on the players part. After the players take the hint and flee, mostly likely taking the Unimog, unless it's disabled during the fight. The Indian guide will suggest that they head up to Massacre Cave where they will find the most cover.

*(It will take some time for the Freemasons to recollect themselves and head after the players. *Note* only give the Freemason a vehicle if the players also have one, if not then delay the Freemason pursuit by giving them engine trouble. When the Freemasons examine the engine they will find a large Indian spear stuck through the engine block. Now continue the pursuit with the Freemasons also on foot.)*

For dramatic effect you may want your players to make stamina-endurance rolls to make the run to massacre cave increasing the penalty every 20 min. It should take the players a little less than 45 min to get to the Massacre Cave Overlook.

GM Note: *If the players decide to mosey on back to the Visitor Center to schedule another tour during better weather, they will just happen to cross paths with the Freemason agents who have been tailing them. Allow the Freemasons to have a group two men larger than the tour party, with superior firepower. Surprised and caught off guard, the agents take a couple pot shots at the players, completely forgetting proper agent etiquette. If the players stay to have a nice firefight with the Freemasons they will find themselves outmanned and outgunned, having not expected a gunfight. If the players are driving the Unimog when they encounter the Freemasons they will try to take the vehicle out. Do not allow the scene to turn deadly yet, there will be time for that later. However, if the players do not get the hint and turn tail, graze a couple of them to get them moving in a hurry. Remember to take into account that there is a ton of cover around the cliff edges, including large stones and the Unimog itself. On the off chance that the players seriously wound a Freemason, the players had best run quickly, allow the Freemasons to use full power.*

MASSACRE CAVE OVERLOOK

Unless the players arrive at the Massacre Cave Overlook of their own free will, the guide will have very little time to explain its history.

As the players reach the Massacre Cave the sky overhead roars with the sound of thunder. The clouds are now extremely dark blocking out the light from the sun causing the day to appear more like night and the temperature to drop another 10 degrees.

The environment around the players has completely changed. Instead of being hot and arid, it has become windy, wet, and very dark. Any players who lag behind or attempt to forge their own path are at a +4 penalty to movement-trail-blazing rolls. If that player thought to bring an electric torch or flashlight the penalty is only +2. It is important to note that the Arizona soil isn't used to so much rain at one time, so mudslides occur often and walking or driving become very slick and dangerous. In fact if the players haven't already, the guide will suggest abandoning the Unimog in favor of walking. He does not want to slide his car off a cliff.

To be read aloud.....

Strong winds bash at your exhausted body as the roaring sky crackles with malicious lightning. The flickering lightning has become your only natural source of light casting an eerie strobe affect on the surrounding environment. Lucky for you, your guide seems undaunted by the sudden dark clouds that have blocked out the sun. Looking ahead at the rain-silhouetted form of your guide, you can tell by his determined stride that he appears to be relying purely on instinct to guide him. Wherever your guide is taking you, all you can do is pray is that it is shelter out of this abominable weather.

With the sky growing ever darker, the wind pulling at your clothing, and the disorienting lightning overhead, you find yourself wondering if you'll ever be able to find shelter from this kind of storm. Ahead of you, you can barely make out the sound of a person yelling, over the raging storm. Blinking in complete disbelief you find yourself staring at where your guide used to be, you can feel panic slowly gripping at your stomach. Cautiously you take a few steps forward trying to see whatever pit trap befell your guide. As you step forward a pair of strong hands suddenly catches your leg. Gasping what you believe to be your last breath you prepare for the inevitable sudden stop you should be experiencing anytime now. However, instead of a sudden stop you feel more hands guiding you slowly along a very narrow and steep path. Opening your eyes you hadn't noticed you closed, you are overjoyed to see your friends and guide heading down toward an open cave.

Feel free to at anytime during the narrative to have your players make Dex checks to keep their footing. It might also be dramatic to stage a scene where one of the players nearly goes over the cliff side, to be saved by the teamwork of the other players.

INSIDE THE CAVE

The insides of Massacre Cave are completely dark, with the exception of when an occasional lightning bolt. The cave is little more than a cliff overhang that pushes about 40 ft into the canyon face. The inside of the cave is completely barren. To stay out of the storm, the players will have to retreat to the back wall of the cave.

(If the players have any flashlights, glow sticks, or torches, feel free to have them run out, burn out, or just go out, upon entering the cave. This leaves the players feeling vulnerable in a pitch-black unfamiliar cave with a terrible storm outside, think of it as a mood setter for what happens next.)

After the last player enters the cave and joins the rest of the party, wait about 10 seconds and then inform the players that the weather outside has begun to quiet down. As the players move back toward the mouth of the cave read the following.

To be read aloud.....

Light begins to pour into the cave yet you can still hear the loud pops of thunder outside. These pops are followed by the almost inaudible sound of the wailing wind. Listening carefully you can almost make out a pattern in the popping sounds, like old muskets being reloaded then fired, like in those old civil war movies. Listening more intently then before, the strange wailing wind begins to take on an almost human tone. With a sudden horrid revelation, you realize the almost human sounding wind is more than wind, it is in fact the embodied sound of human suffering.

Peeking outside reveals a grizzly scene of a massacre and utter chaos like none you have seen. Around the edges of the canyon rows of Confederate soldiers stand at attention. Their recently fired rifles still wafting smoke. As you watch in stark disbelief and horror, the soldier's commander barks out another order for the soldiers to ready their weapons. Simultaneously, as you watch helplessly, the soldiers bring their rifles to sight level. Cold and unfeeling the commander's order to "fire" is lost in the popping roar of rifle fire. Forcing yourself to look down into the canyon basin below, you can feel the blood drain from your face.

Below, the inside of the canyon basin is littered with Native American bodies; some still, others rushing to aid. The blood of the "still" ones flows into the canyon river, trailed closely by the blood of those fell by the last hail of shots. A sickening icy grip wrenches your gut as you watch the once white rapids turn a grotesque pink.

Struggling to help the massacred Indians you try to call out to help them in some way. Your calls for mercy and help only add to the ever-growing wail of human misery that lifts up from the canyon floor. Falling to your knees the scene around you begins to blur as uncontrollable tears pour from your eyes.

Through the laborious sobs you can feel a steady warmth on the back of your tear soaked hands. Lowering your hands you can see eerie flickering of lights engulf the cave. Shadows dance and weave to the hypnotic melody of the lit campfire in the center of the cave. Behind the campfire sits an aged Native American of an undeterminable age. The flickering light of the fire seems to change the apparent age of the man at will. The man beckons you forward motioning you to take a seat around the fire.

After the players decide to go over and sit with the elderly Indian and after they have gotten comfortable, he will begin to speak in a very cryptic and strange language. As the words flow from his mouth the fire begins to portray a scene. As long as the players are watching the fire they will see the origin story of the DMH inside of the burning flames.

(At this time read aloud the history of the DMH from the history section of this adventure, leaving out how the DMH works and what it does.)

After speaking his tale, the Indian will switch over to English, addressing the players each by first names, then introducing himself as the Hopi.

If the players haven't deciphered the DMH map text by now he will go ahead and read it aloud for them. After reading the mission on the map, he, the last Ancient of the True Hopi will instruct the players on their next course of action.

He will explain that because they hold the map they were chosen by the locator to find the DMH and destroy it. However, the locator piece that used to rest in this cave was found by the last explorers and hidden somewhere else in the canyon.

He will continue to explain however that all is not lost, and that he may have a way for the heroes to find where the other group hid the piece. This method is an extreme method and can only be used once to locate the piece, so the heroes will have to get it right on their first try.

He explains that he is able to open a rift for the players to enter into the past. They may not, however use their own bodies, but the ones of the last explorers.

(If the players are confused its Ok, it is to be expected. Allow them time to question Muli the Ancient. He will encourage them to make a decision quickly, for there is a limited window of opportunity.)

The Ancient will allow questions for about 5 minutes before demanding that the players decide now.

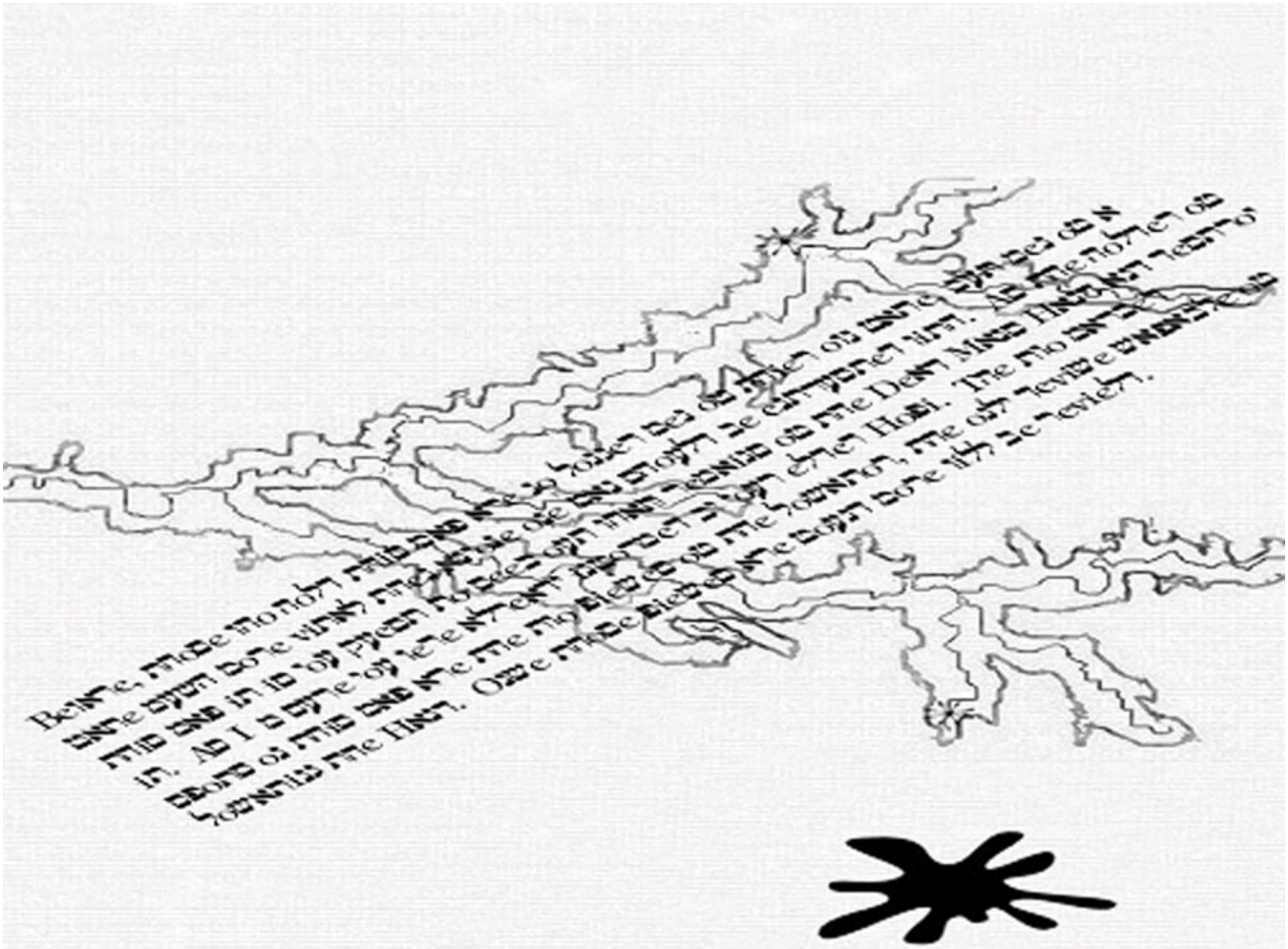
(Your players should understand that this is the only way to further the plot and must go along with it. Any player who decides not to go along can sit in the cave with the Ancient until the others get back from their quest.)

Before beginning the ceremony, the Ancient informs the players that they have exactly one week to find out what happened. At the end of the week or in the event of their death, they will be transported back to their own bodies, none the worst for ware. However, like he said before, this ceremony can only be done once and only at this point in time. So the players must move swiftly and with extreme caution if they wish to fulfill their destinies.

By now the players are probably expecting a large hoopla of a ceremony filled with chanting, dancing, and singing. To their mutual surprise, the Ancient reveals a single wineskin full of a thick brown liquid. He pours this foul smelling concoction into clay mugs and distributes them to the players. After a quick prayer for the players well being and success, the Ancient gives the nod for the players to down the drink.



PLAYER HANDOUT (THE MAP)



END OF ACT ONE.

Look for Act Two in the next issue of Demonground.

Author's Note:

Special thanks to: My beloved Angela; for her constant encouragement and love. Darren Millar (Dazm) and to you D*M listers; also for the encouragement. Jim Clunie; who was one of the great previewers. Pal Wilhelmssen; who was also a previewer. And to those wonderful websites I included for the wealth of info and ideas they supplied.





NEEDED FOR THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure takes place in a shopping mall of considerable size. A detailed map of the mall is desirable, but you could make do with good descriptions of a dozen shops. It is suggested you use a mall you are familiar with. Otherwise, if you don't want to make one up, the Night City Sourcebook for Cyberpunk (an excellent resource for modern horror) contains a useful mall layout. Also, Steve Jackson Games recently produced a floorplan "Mall of the Dead".

RULES ADDENDUM: SURPRISE

This simple rules addition for surprise attacks is intended to make the game more dramatic, and as a consequence, will likely lead to a higher attrition rate.

Firstly, in a surprise situation, determine the Initiative of all parties involved.

Secondly, have the side being ambushed make an Average test of Observation. (In the Mists ProtoDimension this test is Difficult.) Those who fail the test are considered surprised and take no actions until the ambushing party has made its attack or open movement. Those who are not surprised move and attack normally.

THE MALL FROM HELL

The Grand Court Mall in Pittsburgh, PA was a multi-billion dollar project in its time. It served the community's shopping needs for over two decades. Now, while it attracts its share of gangs, it has become the center of an even greater evil. Two months ago, a series of events, which could only be described as hauntings began. While merely an annoyance at first, the events have grown in intensity since that time and the city fathers have been forced to evacuate and shut down the mall. Mystics and parapsychicists brought in to examine the premises have unanimously agreed that there must be a gate somewhere in the building. While it has become far too hazardous for them to enter and search, the number of creatures

and the atmospheric changes surrounding the building can be explained no other way. The city government sent in a SWAT team to find this gate, but they didn't come out. Now they have put out the call for experienced investigators to probe the structure. They will foot the bill for equipment, and will pay handsomely for a successful mission. Basically they want their mall back.

BACKSTORY

Somewhere in the mall is The Skylight Gallery, where numerous artists exhibit their latest and most interesting work. One of these artists was Takoshi Yahama, an unusually talented and Empathically endowed painter. Somehow, perhaps not known even to Yahama, his painting "Misty Night #9" has become a protodimensional gateway. This is the source of the creatures and supernatural energy so pervasive in the mall.

PART ONE

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

What follows is a series of linear encounters meant to lead the players to the Skylight Gallery. They should be used in order for best effect. Only under the most dire circumstances should the player be allowed to skip any of the encounters (i.e. they had better be doing something very clever). Many of these encounters are combat based, so expect a lot of shooting.

The mall is large, covering several city blocks, and the first thing the investigators will notice upon entering is the thick mist that covers the floor. It is so thick that they cannot see their feet. It seems about two feet deep so caution must be taken when walking. Howls, groans and other mysterious noises echo throughout the mall, and an occasional shadow is seen moving behind storefronts. Most of the glass windows are broken, and merchandise lies strewn about the mall. Most of this merchandise, however, lies beneath the mist, adding an element of danger to characters' normal motor skills.



ENCOUNTER ONE

The first thing the players will encounter upon entering the mall is a kiosk covered with advertisements. It is not remarkable in and of itself, but it is important that someone read the advertisements. Along with an announcement of a skateboarding tournament, and ad for a dentist, and ad for a psychic, and a Sale at Toji-Suits Unlimited (a division of Toji-corp), there is a large poster depicting a new exhibit of the works of Japanese artist Takoshi Yahama. It is in the Skylight Gallery on the top floor. One painting mentioned by name is "Misty Night #9".

ENCOUNTER TWO

As they round a corner minutes after entering the mall they are attacked by a large pack of CHUBS. There are 12. They do not get surprised as the Mists are not as enveloping here as they are used to. Still, they are tenacious fighters.

ENCOUNTER THREE

This encounter takes place as the players walk near a set of stairs (leading downward) or stand near a balcony. A SNAPPER makes a grab for one of them. This is considered surprise, as the floor beneath them is full of the Mists, from floor to ceiling. The claw appears without warning and does damage to the first character it finds.

ENCOUNTER FOUR

At about midway, the players hear what is obviously a human moan. It is the sound of a man in pain. If they choose to investigate, they find several SWAT team members huddled in a doorway. Only one is truly conscious, frightened out of his wits, all the others are silent. Their firearms hang useless by their sides, and they are severely injured. They have obviously taken quite a beating. He relates a tale similar to the players own, but they have been involved in many more fire-fights. Dozens of groups of CHUBS, six or seven SNAPPERS and some kind of flying things attacked them. There are now only six of them left.

At an opportune moment the remaining SWAT team will rise up and attack the players, as they are all possessed by SQUATTERS. If the players do not investigate the groan, the SWAT team will try to surprise them moments later.

ENCOUNTER FIVE

The players will have almost made it to the Gallery when they are attacked by TWISTERS.

ENCOUNTER SIX

Outside the Gallery is a man in a suit. He appears at first to be dead, but will wake up as they approach. He is Albert McKibbon, owner of the Skylight Gallery. HE IS NORMAL. He has lost his voice and hearing due to emotional shock and will merely stumble towards the players with his hands outstretched. Award extra points to anyone who doesn't shoot him.

PART TWO

NIGHT GALLERY

This appears to be a normal art gallery...except for the six foot tall painting, done in incredible 3-D, which is spewing forth a continuous stream of Mist. Punctuating this are occasional CHUBS, TWISTERS, and SWOOPS. Having reached the gallery the players are at a critical juncture. They can attempt to destroy the painting, all the while being attacked by abominations, not knowing whether such a deed is even possible, or they can cross over and look for a solution on the other side.

If they choose the former, go directly to The Mists. The players will have an additional exit other than the one presented there. If they try to destroy the painting it will explode with hurricane force, but rather than hurling them away it will suck them in. They may attempt an IMPOSSIBLE test of AGILITY to grab the frame and hold themselves there, but a further FORMIDABLE test of STRENGTH will be required each phase they attempt to maintain their grip. When they finally do fall into the protodimension they will be treated to a world of horrors beyond belief.

PART THREE

THE MISTS

The protodimension of the Mists is not horrible in its appearance. A black, starless sky overlooks a bank of fog, which seems to stretch on forever. It is six to ten feet high in most places, but rolls like a sea of whip cream. Here and there bits of rock jut toward the sky, giving purchase for the players. Inside the Mists they can only see about two feet in front of their faces, so every attack is a surprise attack. Inside the mists are the creatures from the mall, only in greater numbers. Assume each character will be engaged by three creatures every other round (three per minute). These are not necessarily attacking at the same intervals, so randomly determine who is being attacked during the first round and whoever is not being attacked then will be attacked during the next round. Each wave of creatures will attack for ONE round only, then break off to allow a fresh group to attack one round later.

The characters will be attacked whether in or out of the Mists, but when out of the Mists the attacks are not treated as surprise.

RANDOMIZING ATTACKS IN THE MISTS

Roll 1D20	Creature
1	Swoops
2-5	Twisters
6-10	Chubs
11-15	Squatters
16-19	Snappers
20	Swoops

THE OBJECTIVE

On a rock outcropping 400 meters distant from their current location, the players see a black stone obelisk. DIFFICULT Foreboding rolls at this point will give only the clear indication that the obelisk is their objective. Foreboding rolls made once they have begun the journey will alternate between images of their horrible deaths and those of a hideously twisted oriental man.

Upon reaching the obelisk, they will find it featureless. However, when someone with Human Empathy of five or greater touches it, it will begin to glow with mysterious and archaic Japanese characters. One round after this, a SWOOP will begin to descend toward them. Riding the SWOOP is a small, deformed oriental man. This is Takoshi Yahama. He is insane, and overwhelmed with power. He believes he has created this place through his art (he has, in fact, merely contacted a proto-dimension which already existed). He does seem to have a special rapport with the creatures of this realm. They obey him, and do not attack. Yahama wants to keep the characters as his servants, and as agents on the "other side". He believes he can extend this dimension to Earth and be all powerful. He does not know that the painting has already started that process. If the painting has been destroyed he is thwarted, but the only way to get back to Earth is to use the obelisk. Yahama knows nothing of its function; it was here when he arrived.

GOING HOME

Making the obelisk work is mind over matter. In game terms it means two things; The CHARACTER must make a DIFFICULT test of INTELLIGENCE to find a path and follow it home. The PLAYER must also be able to give an accurate enough description of one of the locales in the Mall that the referee is convinced that the player was paying attention in Part One. If they didn't destroy the painting before, they may go back and do it now, with the same results.

SWOOPS

Strength:	12
Constitution:	10
Agility:	15
Intelligence:	8
Education:	6
Charisma:	6
Empathy:	10
Initiative:	6
Move:	20/40/80
Skill/Melee Dam:	8/4D6
Hits:	50
Appear:	1D4

Special: Swoops have a natural body armor of 2, and make a combined BEAK/CLAW attack. They have a natural Project Emotion Skill of 16. The emotion they project is Fear.

These flying monstrosities are the high end of the food chain in the protodimension of the Mists. They do not live in the Mists, but rather in the starless sky above them. They are silent, darkwinged predators that are all that remain of the devolved alien sentients of this world. They attack from above, hauling a victim high into the air and dropping him to his death. They look like nothing so much as giant leathery manta rays.

CHUBS

Strength:	10
Constitution:	10
Agility:	5
Intelligence:	5
Education:	2
Charisma:	5
Empathy:	6
Initiative:	3
Move:	5/10/20
Skill/Melee Dam:	7/2D6
Hits:	35
Appear:	2D5

Special: Chubs have a natural armor of 1. They have a Foreboding of 8, which they use as a precognitive ability while hunting.

Chubs would be the low end of the food chain. Attacking in packs of varying sizes, these creatures use their teeth and front claws to shred their victims. They look like a cross between an armadillo and a feral dwarf. They use their Foreboding to know where their prey will run in the next few moments and try to set up and ambush them.



TWISTERS

Strength: ***
 Constitution: ***
 Agility: ***
 Intelligence: 8
 Education: 10
 Charisma: 10
 Empathy: 10
 Initiative: 6
 Move: 30/60/90
 Skill/Melee Dam: 10/2D6
 Hits: ***
 Appear: 1D3

Special: Twisters are incorporeal denizens of the Mists. They do damage with their Telekinesis skill of 20.

Twisters are like ghostly snakes that attack by entwining their victims. They are almost invisible in the Mists until they tighten themselves around you. They will flee at the first Empathic attack, but will return 1D10 rounds later. They will eventually choose a new victim at that time.

SNAPPERS

Strength: 15
 Constitution: 20
 Agility: 5
 Intelligence: 1
 Education: 2
 Charisma: 10
 Empathy: 2
 Initiative: 4
 Move: 10/20/40
 Skill/Melee Dam: 10/6D6
 Hits: 75
 Appear: 1D3

Special: Snappers have a natural armor of 3.

Snappers are perhaps the most frightening creatures of the Mists, because they never show themselves completely. All you ever see of a Snapper is a huge, lobster-like claw, as big as a man, snapping at you out of the Mist. They are dumb, and use no strategy, but will track their prey if it is moving slow enough.

SQUATTERS

Strength: ***
 Constitution: ***
 Agility: ***
 Intelligence: ***
 Education: ***
 Charisma: ***
 Empathy: 10
 Initiative: ***
 Move: ***
 Skill/Melee Dam: ***/***
 Hits: ***
 Appear: 1D6

Special: Squatters have the unique Empathic discipline of Possession. This is made as a roll versus Human Empathy (which they have at 20). The level of success times 10 determines the level of control, read as a percentage, i.e., Level One means control 10% of the time, Level Two 20% of the time, etc.

Squatters are possessing spirits. They have virtually no existence except as Empathy. All other mental and physical attributes are those of the possessed being. Their main effect on their host is to turn their thoughts to evil and bloodletting. No real cunning is used, although a highly intelligent character might try to lure another character away from the group and kill them then.

SWAT TEAM MEMBER

Strength: 8
 Constitution: 7
 Agility: 8
 Intelligence: 7
 Education: 7
 Charisma: 4
 Empathy: -
 Initiative: 5(-1)
 Move: 2/8/15/30
 Skill/Melee Dam: 6/4
 Hits: 30
 Weapon: XM22 AIW

Additional: Each SWAT team member is wearing CES IIB, which has an armor value of 1 all over, and reduces Initiative by -1.



Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	— Recoil —		
						SS	Brst	Rng
XM22 AIW	3	6	2-3-Nil	4	50	4	6	55



New DarkTek by Lee Williams

"I saw what this thing did to a person. His damn flesh just melted clean off his body. It was the most disgusting thing I ever saw.

"But it was the screaming that still haunts me. He screamed through the whole thing, as his face slid off his skull. I hear that sound every night in my sleep.

"We had to shoot him in the end. We didn't want to, but we just couldn't stand by and let that just happen to him."

- Eyewitness Report

DESCRIPTION

A twisted product of combined human and extraterrestrial engineering, the Skeletonator is a terror weapon designed to instil fear into those who witness its use. This device does not seem to be perfected, and does not always work to its full capacity. When it does though, its effect is described as horrendous.

The weapon itself is about 50 centimetres in length. It is a sickly blue colour and somewhat resembles a bulbous shotgun, although it has a slot in one end instead of a recognisable muzzle. It utilises life energy drained from its operator to generate the beams.

This weapon was first used in Brazil in the late 1940s; its first recorded victim was apparently Joao Prestes Filho of Aracariguama who died before he arrived at the hospital.

EFFECTS

When activated the device fires a narrow beam of pale green light, similar to the 'ray guns' reported in UFO encounters over the years. If the beam hits a living target, the target immediately experiences total panic and flees the scene. There is no possibility of passing a Panic test.

Twenty minutes after exposure to the beam, the target must make a Formidable Constitution test. If the test is successful, the fear wears off and the subject suffers no further effects from the beam. However, if the test is unsuccessful, the full horror of the Skeletonator becomes apparent.

The flesh of the hapless victim begins to literally fall away from the bones, starting with the face and jaw and progressing down the body rapidly. The skin and muscle tissue drops off, until the bone structure is quite bare. The victim remains conscious throughout – although still in a state of utter terror – and witnesses the whole hideous process. Eventually, there is nothing to keep the vital organs in place and the victim will finally die.



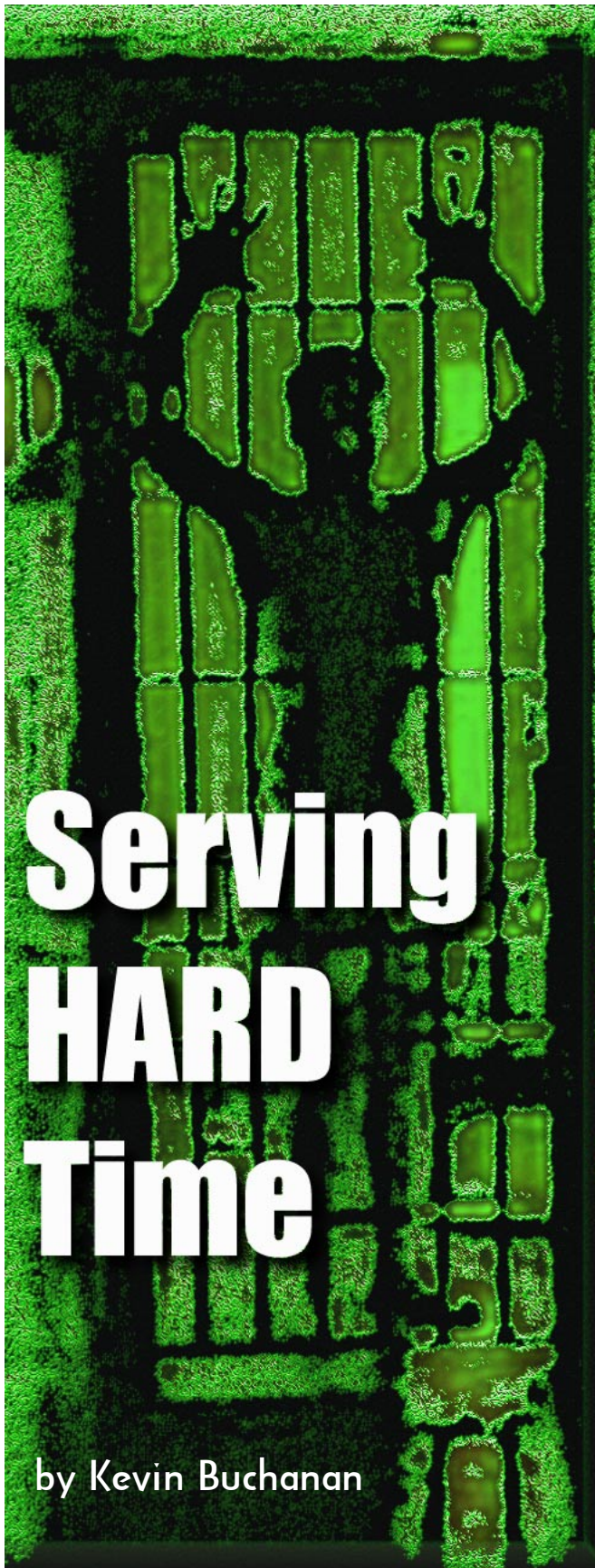
THE SKELETONATOR

	ROF	Pen	Bulk	Mag	Recoil SS	Range
Skeletonator	1	*	2	8	0	40

**Body armour does not protect against this weapon*

User Cost: Recharge, Life Force, 1 point per 2 shots.

Weight: 3 kilos.



Serving HARD Time

by Kevin Buchanan

Whilst Dark Conspiracy is ultimately a story of Good against Evil, it has always also been about the 'Shades of Grey' between. Not all of the villains our heroes must face are truly evil, by the same token not all of our heroes will be post-modern shining knights.

Many Minion Hunters break the law, often to a large degree...and though this is usually part of the struggle against the Darkness the Law is the Law. Some are already criminals in any case, and a smart referee can easily bring up some past illegality...

Here then, you will find alternative ways of dishing up punishment for those that get caught in the act.

Roll on the following table to decide a characters fate if they are facing a prison sentence:

1 - 2	Next Term - Penal Draft
3 - 4	Next Term - Fugitive
5 - 7	Next Term - Bail Slave
7 - 10	Next Term - Prisoner*

* As per the career listed in the DC rulebook
The new career options from this table are presented below.

PENAL DRAFT SOLDIER

The prisons were brimful when you were captured, so you were given an option: go to the slammer or join up, so you decided to join the military. You're kept under closer scrutiny than most soldiers, and you get dirtier jobs than most units. You also know that if anything happens, you'll be amongst the first to get thrown into it, but it's better than slopping out in one of those hell holes they call prisons these days.

Entry Requirements:

Forced due to capture whilst engaged in Criminal activities.

1st Term Skills:

Melee Combat (Unarmed)	2
Small Arms (Rifle)	2
Small Arms (Pistol)	1

Subsequent Term Skills:

Only one term is served as a Penal Draft Soldier. Player may choose to continue in the military after this term as normal, but can never make officer.

Contacts: 1 contact is earned per term in this career, either Military or Criminal. On a d10 roll of 8+ the contact is foreign.

Special: No Income is earned for this term. Only one term served in Penal Draft.



FUGITIVE

The idea of prison was too much for you, and fortune favoured you. An opportunity to fly the coop came up and you took it. Now you live day-by-day, evading the law and trying to make ends meet. You do whatever work you can find, or steal to stay alive.

Whatever, it's better than spending years sealed up in those cages.

Entry Requirements:

Entered after being forced into a prison sentence as a result of criminal activity.

1st Term Skills:

Stealth	2
Act / Bluff	2
Streetwise	2

Subsequent Term skills:

Select 6 levels from the following ...

- Melee (either Armed or Unarmed)
- Small Arms
- Climbing
- Swimming
- Stealth
- Streetwise
- Act / Bluff
- Disguise
- Language

Contacts: 2 contacts per term. Choose from Criminal, Law or Media. On a d10 roll of 10 the contact is foreign.

Special: Income for term earned as fugitive is half the normal. Each term roll vs. intelligence. If failed the character is apprehended and returned to prison without a roll on the above table. If you succeed as if passing a difficult skill test, then you have permanently evaded pursuit and successfully created a new identity. You may choose your next career term as normal.

BAIL SLAVE

You were ready to go to prison, and then you found out that someone had paid your bail. This was no friend or family though, as the prisons are filling up the government had to find something else to do, so now you face spending your sentence working for this corporation. You work on a factory floor, or performing maintenance in the ducts of some corporate monolith, with a collar on your neck that can knock you cold if you do a thing wrong.

It's probably better than prison, but this is the kind of life you turned to crime to avoid.

Entry Requirements:

Entered in lieu of serving a prison sentence.

1st Term Skills:

Mechanics	2
Electronics	2
Engineer	1

Contacts: 2 per term in this career; choose from criminal or corporate contact. On a d10 roll of 10 the contact is foreign.

Special: Only one term is served in this career, and then the character is released, as they would be from a prison sentence. No secondary activities may be taken during terms in this career. No income is earned for this year. Bail slaves are forced to wear a hypodermic collar, which may be triggered at any time by your 'owner'. Effective range 100 miles. Contains tracker device.



"You may ask yourself, 'Why us? Why now?'"

"This one is easy. Us, because we're here. Now, because we're here now."

- Zena Marley

Early 21st century Mercenary-Philosopher



EKIMMAL

by Darren Millar

This article is intended to be used with the DARK MATTER rules system, the idea for the Ekimmal was inspired by 'Flesh for Eihort' a CALL OF CTHULHU adventure featured in Demonground 12.

EKIMMAL

The Ekimmal are an infant form of the Ekimmu. An infant Ekimmal once successfully integrated with a host eventually develops (about ten years) into the entity known as the Ekimmu.

DESCRIPTION:

The typical Ekimmal appears as a large arachnid about the size of an adult's fist. The creature moves about on its six rear legs, its front legs are approximately 1.5 times longer than the rear and end in sharp points. The Ekimmal is a white/pale yellow in colour and has a very soft rubbery skin.

ENCOUNTER:

Depending upon the success of an Ekimmal infestation, expect to encounter anything from a couple to dozens of infected hosts. Ekimmal will only be encountered underground or at night, as their delicate skin is highly vulnerable to sunlight.

Ekimmal are parasites that are only capable of attacking sleeping or unconscious prey, typically humans. They attack their prey by stabbing the two front appendages into the spine. The Ekimmal then injects itself into the targets circulatory system and into the brain. The target has a chance to resist the invasion of the parasite by making a *physical resolve* check (5 Rolls) the effects are as follows:

0 successes	Ekimmal completely controls host and has full access to memories and personality.
1-2 successes	Ekimmal has control over motor functions of host but not mental functions. Host acts as a savage animal and are typically used as guards in an Ekimmal lair.
3 successes	Ekimmal fails to control any functions, host goes into a coma and the invading Ekimmal uses the host body to reproduce itself, 2-3 new Ekimmal will grow in 10 days.
4 successes	As 3 successes however host gets an additional <i>physical resolve</i> check every 3 hours to avoid infection. If the host receives a blood transfusion in this time the Ekimmal will die.
5 successes	Ekimmal fails and dies in the host's body. Ekimmal fluid will be discharged over a few days as body waste.

If an Ekimmal successfully takes over a host it's original body can still be seen attached to the host. The exoskeleton appears as loose flap of skin easily concealed by clothing. The discarded exoskeleton remains attached to the host for approximately six weeks while various nutrients are absorbed into the host to aid in the development of the Ekimmal parasite.

HABITAT/SOCIETY:

The original Ekimmal reached the Earth through a doorway over 3000 years ago. These creatures eventually evolved into the Ekimmu of today, until recently the Ekimmal were extinct on this planet. In 2001 a doorway opened in England, and 23 Ekimmal came through. In the 12 months since their arrival the original creatures have evolved thus: 3 completely controlled hosts, 8 partial successes (treat as Ghouls see campaign book) and 30 Ekimmal. It is obvious that these creatures reproduce very slowly.

In a typical Ekimmal community any controlled hosts will integrate with a local community to 'recruit' new hosts usually from the homeless community where individuals are unlikely to be missed. The 'Ghouls' guard the Ekimmal lair protecting any incubating hosts; Ghouls also require large amounts of proteins found only in the host's bodies. This in turn requires that a Ghoul requires to cannibalise large amounts of meat; in a human community this usually requires grave robbing to provide large amounts of 'nearly' fresh meat. Five Ghouls could live off one human corpse for one week. Controlled hosts will try and maintain the secrecy of a community at all costs, however if the community is uncovered the individual Ekimmal will scatter in order to allow themselves to develop into an Ekimmu.

EKIMMAL GAME DATA

STR 1
 INT 9 (d8+5)
 DEX 12 (D6+9)
 WIL 11 (d4+9)
 CON 1
 PER 10 (d6+8)
 Durability 1/1/1/* (Do not fatigue)
 Action check 14+/13/6/3
 Move sprint 24 run 12 walk 2
 Actions 1
 Last resorts 0
 Attacks
 Infest Auto Only possible on unconscious targets

Defences

+4 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks.

Skills

Athletics [12] – *jump* [14]; Acrobatics [12] – *dodge* [14];
 Stealth [12] – *hide* [16]; *sneak* [16]



ART GALLERY

EVIL

by Norm Fenlason

Norm Fenlason sent this picture to us quite some time ago.

We've been waiting for just the right article to come along so we could use it.

But time and high tide wait for no man, and we decided it was high time to let it stare at someone else for a change.

Hypnotic, isn't it?





By Jonathan Turner

Revised by Lee Williams

Into the Dark

Atmosphere building for Dark Conspiracy

Tumbleweeds scattered across the desert floor in a night breeze that carried the heavy smell of a thunderstorm. They battered against the side of a small ramshackle hut that lay beside what had once been a highway. Two rusted, forgotten gas pumps slumped like bent metal guardians on the forecourt, oblivious to the weeds and the drifting sands. A shutter on rusty hinges slammed on one window next to a door that was caked shut with sand. A sign hung forlornly over the windowless door – ‘Dave’s Diner and Donut Shop’. It bobbed around sadly in the desert wind.

Dave didn’t do much business these days.

Headlights flashed across the diner suddenly, throwing stark shadows. A car like a metal shark approached slowly, with the strains of ‘Harlem Nocturne’ clearly audible over the growl of its engine. It whined to a stop on the forecourt.

The door opened slowly, saxophone chords sliding mournfully out into the night. The driver got out just as the first fat drops of summer rain began to fall. He pulled his fedora low over his eyes, his raincoat blowing open to reveal the squat ugly barrel of a laser, LEDs blinking in the darkness...

NOTE: This article was originally published in a slightly different form in the January 1993 issue of the now-defunct magazine *Role Player Independent*. Though dealing primarily with starting players and referees, the advice is still sound for those of us with more experience.

It is presented here for your enjoyment, with the author’s permission. – LW.

Dark Conspiracy is a game that likes to mix its genres. Take some Fifties-style clothing and cars from the nearest film noir movie. Throw in a dash of cyberpunk style (cyborgs, corporations, toxic disaster and road warriors) and stew for a while before tossing in a liberal dose of horror. Add paranoia to taste, and there you have it. But, what to do with it? How do you serve it, if you want to carry my pathetic culinary metaphor a bit further?

Dark Conspiracy offers a unique chance at mixing the film noir, gothic, and cyberpunk styles to reach an extremely satisfying role-playing experience. And yet, most people I know who have the game have said to me that they felt the background was a little underdeveloped – that while the game had potential for developing a unique feel, the rulebooks didn’t offer hints on how to make full use of that potential.

What I hope to do in this article is to provide a few tips for refs and players on how best to reach the feel I have worked hard at creating in my own campaign. The game has several idiosyncrasies all of its own, which set it apart.

In short, I hope to offer tips on how to make your

players know when they’re playing Dark Conspiracy. While unfortunately the film noir elements outlined in the basic rules were never developed as fully as I’d hoped in the supplements, that doesn’t mean my ideas are wrong or not in keeping with the spirit of the game.

Here’s Looking At You, Kid

First off, unless your players have all read the rulebooks, they won’t be aware of the Retrotech theme, which is the main thread of the game’s film noir element. So, tell them. Take a few minutes to set the game world up. Tell them that bigger, boxier telephones and small black and white TVs are all most people can afford. Let them know that cars are being based on Forties & Fifties styles and that there’s even a fashion throwback too (I like to call it Retrochic) Admittedly, the Retrochic theme doesn’t come in for much of an examination in the rulebooks, though it is mentioned (1st Edition, p146). Basically, you know how most men wore a suit and a hat in the Forties? Retrochic is like that, suits, raincoats and hats. Women wear longer skirts and blockier high heels, and hats are in vogue for them too.

The cyberpunk style element is the other half of the equation. Your group would be boring if everyone looked like that, so your bikers and punks will want to dress in their usual anarchic gear. That’s the sort of weird mix you are looking for, kind of like *Naked Lunch* meets *Terminator*. I describe it to players as a ‘black and white’ world, where only the blood and the high tech are in colour. Picture Bogart whipping out a laptop or a laser and you’ve got it.

Even in cases where technology that is rare in the present has become everyday, it often looks chunkier and old fashioned. The Sikorsky JumpAbout is a perfect example of this. While they might provide a relatively cheap method of VTOL travel, they still look like they flew out of an episode of *King of the Rocketmen*. Cars like the LeBeouf, Lancer and Ariel are all further examples of older, chunkier engineering and styles. These contrast nicely with the glossy, ultra-neat hi tech whiz-bang gizmos like lasers, holographic TVs and jets which most people can only worship from afar.

Maintaining a balance can be tricky of course. Have a scene such as a café, with a jukebox in the corner crying lonesome rock and roll while your player-characters brood over chipped mugs of bitter black coffee, smoking and discussing their plans. Suddenly a police VTOL cruiser screams past outside in the rain, lights strobing and sirens wailing. Constantly contrast the old and the new. Most people see only one world or the other, but the players 'run the blade' between both. Remember to dress your NPCs 'in genre' and so on, and it will all help to enhance the atmosphere ('genre' is a French word. I use it to show how smart I am. Now you can use it too. Who says role-playing isn't educational?☺)

The ETs are also an example of the Retro theme. Most of them look like they've walked (or crawled, or oozed) straight out of a Fifties B-movie, but they are still treated seriously. It's like rediscovering those old small-town-in-the-middle-of-the-desert-taken-over-by-aliens ideas all over again, only better.

Please don't fall into the trap of running a regular horror game with a dash of cyberpunk thrown in; this isn't *Beyond the Supernatural*. Dark Conspiracy should have a highly individual touch to it – a sense of hopelessness in the face of a massive invasion. Its style is dark and cynical, but not in the 'oh no this is so hopeless I've just gone mad' way of Call of Cthulhu. The characters can turn things around. They are the last reluctant heroes in a crumbling world. Drive that point home at every opportunity.

TIME FOR A LITTLE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION...

Players have a tendency to stroll through games letting loose with big guns, blowing up communist orphanages and nerve-gassing nests of orcs. In many cases, players think little about their characters beyond how they can get the best skill packages/stats/weapons. They enjoy it, sure, but is it really so challenging? That's an article in itself, but I have a few ideas here on how to force your players to pay attention to what's happening to their characters. Sure, it's one thing to describe a world to someone, but what if you can actually get them to live in it?

I'm not encouraging any biochemistry students out there to create things that gestate inside your friends, but rather the use of a few props and other mood setters that might enhance your game. The proper background music can be a big help here, and movie soundtracks can really enhance the mood of a game. I especially recommend Dead Again, Cape Fear, Aliens

and anything by John Carpenter, Alan Silvestri or Howard Shore. Other tunes can add to the retrochic style. There are several rock and roll compilations out there which enforce the atmosphere well, and of course your bikers and assorted punks will need the Rolling Stones, Faith No More, Red Hot Chili Peppers or whoever.

Where you play is important. Picturing a grimy, cold city street or an underground alien lair is difficult at the best of times, but it's even worse if you're in Grandma's front room...then again I don't know what your Grandmas are like. Anyway, the point is that if possible you should pick where you play to reflect the style. Ideally, it should be an inner-city office, an industrial complex, or English country house, something that is not available to everyone if you know what I mean. Venetian blinds are essential. There is nothing which adds to the mood more than the strips of light from a Venetian blind falling across your gaming table. I'm serious, try it and see. No milk and cookies either. Players should drink bitter black coffee from small white café cups, preferably with an art deco design. For a change, anyone who smokes is equally welcome, Marlboro and Bull Durhams especially. Leave your Benson & Hedges at home.

If you want to go a step further, then once you've got used to the game have your players dress as their characters as a one-off. I must point out here that we're not encouraging cross-dressing or anything! Even though it sounds dumb, it forces players to think that little bit extra about their character. What kind of tie would he wear? Are cowboy boots in vogue for bikers? And so on. This attention to detail helps to flesh out your player-characters, which is a generally accepted Good Thing. Anyway, don't tell me none of your players wore mirror shades when Cyberpunk 2020 came out. Get the picture?

IT'S IN THE TREES...IT'S COMING!

Horror is a funny old game. One man's nightmare is another man's giggling fit. The rules provide a lot of leeway about creatures, which allows you to do pretty much what you want. I personally think the horror in DC leans towards being 'scientific' horror. By this I mean the sort of new-wave grossness you'll find in movies like *Reanimator*, the *Aliens* series, and *Rabid*.

This is opposed to strictly traditional horror like vampires, werewolves and their ilk. While of course there are creatures like this in DC, they bear little relation to their traditional counterparts. To illustrate this argument I point to the way the DC rules try to explain some traditional creatures in scientific terms. For example, Lesser vampires are victims of iron-deficiency porphyria, and Medusas and Moreau Werens are victims of bizarre experiments. Darkling biocomputers are constructed from the brain slices of humans and animals. Yellow Zombies are infected with an organism, which eats their nervous system and takes over.



Scientific horror also gives your characters the chance to experiment and find alternative ways of tackling monsters, as it fits quite neatly into the genre ('genre' is a French word...) Everyone knows you drive a stake through the heart of a vampire or shoot a werewolf with silver bullets. No surprises there, but say for example the players come across some Yellow Zombies. They kill some, and get a sample of the organism, which causes the condition. After testing, they discover it's some kind of cancer, which kills cells and replaces them with duplicates of itself. The players are now equipped with the capability to create a vaccine or something to fight the creatures. They will hunch forward over the table as you spout juicy little tidbits of pseudo-scientific garbage. Watch their eyes as they chatter excitedly about what they've discovered. It's like those scenes in the Alien movies where everyone looked at screens with neat little graphics on them, and Ash or Bishop explained a little more about the aliens, or maybe the experiment scenes in Day Of The Dead.

Using scientific horror and giving players the chance to study monsters provides referees with the golden opportunity of encouraging players to use their brains, instead of simply flexing those trigger fingers. Do it right and they might even try to capture and study the monster, rather than simply letting fly with 40mm high velocity explosive rounds...or maybe not. (I suppose they could study the bits that were left after the smoke cleared☺)

As for the traditional 'black magic', this has been replaced by empathic powers in DC, and as the rules point out 'black magic' was the attempt of primitive cultures to understand sophisticated alien creatures of great power. Sure, throw in traditional monsters, I don't mind, but there are only so many you can think of. Scientific horror allows you to create more creatures and beasties which are your own sick little children...and the players won't know how to stop them.

In the end, the unknown is always the most terrifying.

KILLER ZOMBIE CLOWNS STORM SHOPPING MALL... FILM AT ELEVEN

The Dark Conspiracy rules refer to American tabloids as places where you can rip off great ideas. The Journalist PC career is supposed to work for these rags. In the USA, you can pick up these literary marvels at the checkout counter of any supermarket. They have such titles as 'Strange Things In My Basement', 'UFO Stories' and 'Cannibal Babies Ate My Lesbian Lover' (probably in the basement)

Until 1993 the UK had nothing to compare to this. Even the Daily Sport wasn't in their league. Then the National Enquirer was unleashed over here, bringing with it its cannibal lesbian sister paper, the Weekly World News. The WWN is essential reading for all DC referees. This may seem like blatant advertising, but you will be handed grade A1 scenario ideas on a plate. Where would we be without such headlines as 'Family Of Seven Found With Brains Missing', 'Screaming Faces Appear In Rock Floor', 'Plane Missing Since 1937

Lands...With 36 Corpses On Board', 'Family Go Into Hall Of Mirrors And Don't Come Out', and of course my own personal favourite, 'Satan Escapes From Hell'. Check it out, gentle readers.

GET THE PICTURE?

Cyberpunk had a well-established and understood literary base when it was introduced into role-playing. People could get behind it easily. Of course Dark Conspiracy didn't (apart from the Mike Stackpole trilogy), but there are quite a few flicks you could watch to give you ideas. Check out Chris Carpenters' DC-IMDB if you haven't already (<http://www.chriscarpenter.org/dcimdb>)

My personal picks are:

The Naked Lunch; Gratuitous retrochic picture. Talking insectoid typewriters and giant reptilian thingies are all quite DC, even if the plot isn't. Watch for the style rather than the substance (or substances...)

Christine; No doubt about it, this and Maximum Overdrive had something to do with the vehicle animator spirits of DC. Watch for the sound track especially...rock'n'roll is so creepy.

Scanners; This one has everything...an exploding head, the empathic underground, wooden acting and a villain with a hole in his forehead. Sheer genius.

Lifeforce; Vampires from space. A terrific British horror movie, with soldiers firing helplessly at things and some interesting space scenes. A prime example of characters trying to save the day through experimentation...and failing miserably.

Rabid; Experimental skin grafting leads to a thing growing in somebody's armpit which drives people sociopathic. Excellent scientific horror from David Cronenberg, the master of the genre (that word again)

THE DARK IS RISING

So you've got your suit, kevlar vest, your trilby and a raincoat. Your combat shotgun is loaded and you're packing some extra clips of HEAP for your 44 Desert Eagle. The Dead Again soundtrack is playing in the background, it's 4am, it's raining, and a six feet tall insect just spilled your drink...

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?





A FEW GOOD MEN FBI ECHO GROUP

BY JONATHAN TURNER

NOTE: This article was originally published in a slightly different form in the July 1993 issue of the now-defunct magazine *Role Player Independent*. It is presented here for your enjoyment, with the author's permission. – LW.

The rain was washing the trail of blood into the gutter, carrying it away into the darkness. Sheriff Baxter followed the crimson stain with his eyes, back to where the latest victim was being zipped into a black plastic body bag. Emergency lights threw crazy shadows dancing across the walls as the boys from the morgue tossed the corpse onto a stretcher. They were being kept busy this week, four murders in as many days. Everyone expected Baxter to come up with the answers, to catch the killer before he struck again... but he had no witnesses, no survivors and no clues. Nothing.

The sheriff snapped around at the sound of the helicopter. It swept in low over the Haddonfield town square like an angry black wasp, a searchlight stabbing down through the rain. Baxter fired up another cigarette as the chopper flared and settled down, tossing around papers and trash in its rotor wash.

The skids had barely touched the wet tarmac when the sliding door was thrown open and a tall man in a black suit jumped out. Three others carrying aluminium briefcases joined him. They strolled across the town square as the chopper lifted off into the clouds again.

The leader pushed his way through the crowd of onlookers and crossed to Baxter. He put out a skinny hand and smiled tightly. "I'm Special Agent Crane," he said. "You can relax now. We'll take care of everything".

WE'RE FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU

The Dark Conspiracy world is hauntingly familiar and yet horrifyingly different from our own. Apart from the direct consequences of the invasion, such as the Greater Depression, there have been quieter, subtler changes. One of these has been the emergence of empathically aware humans. Why this has happened, no-one is particularly sure, but governments who have been trying to create psychics for their own purposes for years are now putting the empaths to good use.

Even though it no longer has the jurisdiction it once held, the Federal Bureau of investigation is still North America's most potent law enforcement agency. More than any other government group (with the possible exception of the CIA), the Feds have seized on the rich opportunities provided by empaths. There now exists a covert section within the FBI known as Echo Group that is made up entirely of empaths. The name comes from the phonetic radio alphabet, as in Echo for E, and E for Empath.

Using this article, DC referees should be able to get all the information they need to incorporate the Echo Men into a game. There are two options here: first, Echo Group agents can show up in your adventures as faceless guardians in black suits who help the player characters out of a really tight spot, or they can hinder them for reasons of 'national security'. Secondly, you might allow your players to join Echo Group joining character generation. Indeed, any player who chooses the Agent option will find that Echo Group makes an ideal employer.

BACKGROUND

It was the early 1990s before the US government had realised the extent of the damage caused by the ET explorers on Io. By that time, the Dark Ones had consolidated their foothold on our world.



In an organisation as large as the FBI there were bound to be some agents who suddenly became empathically aware. Although initially small in numbers, these agents were soon identified and separated from their colleagues for 'continued ability evaluation'. After two years the first fully trained FBI empaths emerged from the covert testing centre at Quantico. By this time, evidence of Darkling influence was steadily emerging throughout the world. These agents were assigned to tackle the investigation.

Although most of their work was to be connected with gathering intelligence on the Darklings and methods of combating them, these empaths would also prove instrumental in tracking ordinary criminals. The Behavioural Science Unit already specialised in finding that strange American phenomenon, the serial criminal. But now, Echo Group agents were able to predict where the killers would strike next, cutting down on hundreds of man-hours of work. Of course, the abilities of these PreCogs were not 100% accurate but they were right more often than they were wrong. At last the Bureau had a way of seeing the future, even if it was only in unreliable flashes.

The holding cell was bare except for the wooden table and chair. Agent Carpenter rolled up his sleeve and injected himself with the empherol. Crane and another agent leaned against the far wall in the shadows cast by the single unshaded light bulb. Baxter watched them warily from the corner of the cell.

Carpenter's head was taped with EKG sensors; wires trailed out from under his shirt to a nearby monitor. The microphone of his headset hovered in front of his dry lips as he closed his eyes and began breathing deeply. There was no sound apart from the rain on the little window, and Carpenter's breathing. Crane folded his arms. Minutes passed.

Carpenter's eyes flickered half-open. "Rain, cold..." he mumbled. "Dark, can't see much..." he moaned softly. "Steel...girders...rusted now...old, very old..." Baxter straightened up, frowning.

"No, not girders" mumbled Carpenter, "Tracks... railroad tracks. Old grey building, near here...holes in the roof, letting in the rain..." He opened his eyes and pulled the EKG pads from his head. "That's all I can get, it's blocking me out".

Crane turned to Baxter. "Know anywhere like that?" Baxter nodded, disbelief on his podgy face. "Sure, it's an old station yard about a mile outta town". Crane pushed open the door of the cell. "Get all your deputies to meet us there" he snapped, "and tell them all to bring shotguns".

The FBI was not the only government group to enlist empaths. The Central Intelligence Agency also trained and mentally 'equipped' certain agents, but while the FBI was mostly concerned with creating law enforcement agents with a difference the CIA wanted psychic assassins – the Shadowmen.

At the moment there is a growing animosity between the two groups, as they attempt to poach promising empaths from each other. While the FBI tries to play mostly above board, the CIA has no such morals, resorting to kidnapping and brainwashing on numerous occasions.

DUTIES

Echo Group specialises in dealing with incidents that are in some way connected with the Dark invasion. They smash cults, track down Minions, research DarkTek, and shoot monsters in the head. Most of their work is investigative in nature: they form small well-motivated teams depending on their assignment (more of this later).

As well as their work on behalf of the Bureau, some agents also act as liaison officers with the military and other government agencies. Several agents are assigned to the Presidential Protection Unit, to keep the POTUS safe from Darkling influence. Special forces teams who occasionally have to deal with Dark Minions will also have at least one Echo Man acting as an adviser.

The Bureau realises the value of the Echo Group PreCogs in predicting normal crime as well as Darkling oriented incidents. The vast majority of the PreCogs (those with very high Foreboding skills) are stationed at Quantico. Most of their work is carried out in the vast subterranean tunnels of the nearby Presidential Emergency Facility. Deep underneath the fields and cities of Virginia they spend their time 'scanning', in an attempt to keep ahead of the Darklings. PreCogs have access to the latest empathy boosting drugs (such as third generation empherol) as well as electronic aids that boost their talents.

Despite everything the PreCogs have to go through, they are still treated like any other Echo Group agents. They still have to go over the Quantico assault course three times a week and train in unarmed combat, forensics, and law like everyone else. Mental and physical discipline are of paramount importance.

Apart from the empathic intelligence gathered by the Echo Group scanners, the bureau also has access to the latest nationwide computer database. This information system is a direct descendant of the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP) that was formed in the late 1980s to track serial criminals. Law enforcement groups throughout North America provide information for the Echo Database. Anything that could hint at a surge of Minion activity is entered into the database and closely scrutinised by the Echo Men.

Teams are then assigned on a perceived priority basis. Violent murders that could point to the formation of new cults

or monster activity, and any new areas of Demonground that crop up are given top priority. The civilian law enforcement agencies that provide the information don't know what it is for. They are only instructed to put anything 'weird' into the database. Occasionally they enter plain rumours and hearsay, but that happens less often these days.

Once a Darkling threat has been identified the choppers lift off, the black Oldsmobiles screech out of the garages, and the men in black suits and sunglasses head out to save the day. Sometimes they even manage to pull it off...

A CASE OF TEAM SPIRIT

There are only around a hundred agents in Echo Group. As you can imagine, they are extremely overworked. On the plus side they have access to top class government resources, and probably know as much about the Dark Minions as anyone else on the planet.

As far as equipment goes, the Echo men get what they want. The standard issue firearm is the Colt Krait 10mm pistol, usually with a quick acquisition laser sight mounted under the barrel. If the team needs something heavier, they carry either Uzis or H&K MP-7 submachine guns, again with sighting attachments, extended clips, gas venting (-1 to Burst Recoil Rating) and other neat add-ons. Shotguns are also popular, particularly the Mossberg Stakeout, the HK CAWS or the Armalite Stormcloud. The ten gauge Ithaca MAG-10 Roadblocker, which is capable of firing solid slugs straight through the engine block of a car, is also a favourite.

The teams also have access to a wide variety of specialised equipment, depending on what their intentions are. These are noted in the team descriptions below. These are the most common types of team, although 'custom' teams are occasionally called for on certain missions.

HAWK TEAMS

This is the sort of team that is most likely to be encountered by player-characters. Consisting of four agents with various abilities, the Hawk team specialises in the initial investigation of suspected Minion activities. Hawk teams usually consist of one PreCog, an Animal Empathy specialist (often known as a Doolittle), and two 'scanners' who are adept at Human Empathy and Thought Projection.

As well as their empathic expertise these agents will share other skills. One will be a mechanic and driver (or pilot), one is a weapons specialist, and another will have various language abilities should the situation warrant it. At least two of the team members will be medically qualified and of course, all will be able to operate electronic equipment.

Their shiny aluminium briefcases contain such items as laptop computers, microwave communication units, night vision equipment such as infra red or ultraviolet goggles, a chemical analysis kit, bug detectors, a compu-nav, and in some cases a Distorter. Additional weapons will also be available if necessary. All agents will be wearing light body armour

(AV 1) constructed from light Kevlar weave under their black suits.

They will spend their time at a site gathering information by interviewing witnesses (using appropriate empathic skills), collecting specimens, carrying out autopsies on victims and generally just turning up and acting like they owned the place. See Sidney Poitier's performance in *In The Heat Of the Night* if you need further tips on how to play Hawk teams.

JAGUAR TEAMS

Jaguar teams fall into two distinct groups of strike units. The first is a typical Special Forces type unit, trained and equipped with the best combat equipment available. These teams are used mostly to bust up cults, rescue hostages, clean out beastie nests and so on. They are the hammer to the Hawk team's anvil. Most Jaguar teams consist of eight members. All agents are empathically able to defend themselves against psychic attack, but their true skill lies in combat. These are the sort of dudes who can field strip three weapons blindfolded while disarming a cruise missile and arm-wrestling Steven Segal...well, you know what I mean.

They wear whatever armour suits the situation at hand, whether it be light body armour or close assault stuff. Their weapons are equally varied; anything from an MP-7 to an M-60 or MM-1 is available. The weapon mix is typical of most special forces – each team of eight is split into two four man fire teams, each fire team has a heavy weapons trooper who carries a machine gun, grenade launcher or something equally as fancy, including the occasional laser.

Before going into a combat situation the Jaguar team usually has a PreCog see if they can get a 'flash' to determine what might be waiting for them. Other more gifted agents will also scan the area in question using Human or even Darkling Empathy to see if they can pick up the number of targets, and whether or not they are human. Jaguar teams are able to handle most small-unit activities. If they need anything really heavy such as armoured vehicles or air support, the job is turned over to the military.

The second type of Jaguar team is completely psychic in nature. They are sent in to empathically overcome or destroy selected targets. These teams wear the requisite black suits and shades, and are usually found in number. They all have extremely high EMP skills, particularly Thought Projection, Human Empathy and Project Emotion.. As well as this, some of the team will also have telekinetic and pyrokinetic ability. These teams are the FBI version of the CIA 'Shadowmen'.

Their attack methods usually entail using Project Thought to render the target blind and deaf before immolating them with Pyrokinesis or using Telekinesis to toss them out of a window, in front of a tram or something equally as fatal that still looks accidental. Having a bunch of highly trained empathes suddenly arrive and mess with your mind overcomes all but the strongest targets. What's more, there is absolutely no evidence at all to suggest a suspicious death.



COBRA TEAMS

These units are specifically for interrogation. They comprise four agents with high abilities in Human Empathy, Project Emotion and Project Thought. The team splits into two pairs and take it in shifts to work over the target. As well as their empathic abilities, they are well versed in psychology and intimidation so that they can extract the best information in as short a time as possible. Cobra teams are used to interrogate cultists, abductees, or anyone else who piques the Bureaus' interest.

COUGAR TEAMS

Cougar teams are advisory units who are attached to other groups when needed. They are usually gifted PreCogs who are well briefed on the various species of Minions. They will be attached to military teams who may be tackling something a Jaguar team couldn't, or to other specialist organisations carrying out Minion related investigations, such as NASA.

The chopper settled back down into the town square again, rotor wash blowing sheets of rainwater from puddles onto the waiting Hawk team and police. Emergency lights flashed off the black canopy as the side door slid open. The chopper's crew chief helped the agents load the bulky body bag. Black ichors oozed out through the zip and splattered onto the chopper's deck. Crane waved his colleagues on board and clambered in himself.

He grabbed the door handle ready to slide it closed, but Baxter leaned forward and stopped him, yelling over the whine of the turbine. "So that's it Crane? We don't get any explanation? What the Hell was that thing?" Crane squinted at him through the rain for a second, and then shook his head slowly.

"That's on a need to know basis only, Sheriff". Baxter nodded, and stepped back from the chopper. "I figured as much. You Washington boys ain't too hot on public relations are you?" Crane half-smiled, half-sneered as he pulled the door across. "We get the job done" he yelled.

Baxter ducked down, as the turbine's whine became a roar. The chopper lifted off in a cloud of spray, navigation lights strobing as it pulled up into the night sky. Baxter watched it go, lighting up another cigarette and inhaling deeply. He muttered a reply to no one in particular.

"I sure can't argue with that," he drawled.

SO, YOU WANT TO BE IN THE FBI

As I have mentioned, Echo Group can also be used as an employer by player-characters, either past or present. A word of caution though; this article was originally written even before the GDW Empathic Sourcebook came out, so no Empathic Disciplines were available at the time. Therefore they are not used in this article, which is why the list of EMP skills may not meet with everyone's approval. If you feel that a particular discipline is necessary for your game then Psionic or maybe Mystic might suit. Otherwise, just use it as-is.

ECHO GROUP AS A CAREER

Entry requirements: Previous term as Government Agent and Empathy 6+ and Human Empathy 3+.

First Term Skills: Human Empathy 2
Interrogation 1
Observation 2
Small Arms Pistol 2

Subsequent Term Skills: A combination of any seven skills from Group A. Alternatively, for every two levels not taken from Group A take one level from Group B.

GROUP A

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Biology | Computer Operations |
| Demolitions | Interrogation |
| Luck | Medical |
| Melee Combat Armed | Melee Combat Unarmed |
| Observation | Persuasion Small |
| Arms, Pistol | Small Arms, Rifle |
| Streetwise | Swimming |
| Vehicle Use, Wheeled | |

One level in any Empathic Ability listed on the basic character sheet

GROUP B

- Darkling Empathy
- Pyrokinesis
- Telekinesis

Contacts: Three per term, Government, Law Enforcement, Journalist, Medical or Military.
On a 1D10 roll of 7+ the contact is foreign.

LET'S GO TO WORK

As I've said, Echo Group teams can be used by referees to either help or hinder the player characters. They can bail them out, get in their faces, or do both depending on your whim. No matter what though, these teams will make excellent contacts for those who are battling the Dark. As previously mentioned, player-characters are most likely to encounter HAWK teams. For this reason I have included NPC details of one such team below.

I also know that most of you will be too lazy to generate them otherwise...

SPECIAL AGENT JACK CRANE

Level: Elite

Skills:

Interrogation	7	Leadership	6
Medical	5	Melee Combat Unarmed	5
Observation	9	Small Arms Pistol	6
Human Empathy	7	Project Emotion	6
Project Thought	5	Telekinesis	5

Initiative: 5



Physical Description: Crane looks suspiciously like Willem Dafoe's character in *Mississippi Burning* – fit and tanned with slicked back hair, glasses and a sharp Sixties suit and tie.

Motivation:

Hearts, Jack : Crane is an incredibly astute man who has a mind like a vice. It is for this reason that he has risen to such a high post in Echo Group within such a short time. PCs trying to put one over on him will find it difficult.

Clubs, Three: Crane is not impressed or intimidated by threats against him. He knows he can handle himself.

SPECIAL AGENT KAREN RODGERS

Level: Veteran

Skills:

Computer Operation	5	Electronics	5
Interrogation	8	Medical	5
Melee Combat unarmed	5	Observation	5
Small Arms Pistol	5	Foreboding	4
Human Empathy	5	Project Emotion	5
Project Thought	5	Telekinesis	4

Initiative: 4



Physical Description: Agent Rodgers' right hand is a metal prosthesis. She doesn't like to talk about what happened to the original one. She is tall, blonde and thirty-ish, and also taken to dressing in sensible black suits albeit of the female variety.

Motivation:

Spades, Six: Rodgers is ambitious and hopes to rise within Echo Group soon. To her, this means getting the job done.

Clubs, Four : Like Crane, violence doesn't scare Rodgers and she will use it if she has to.



SPECIAL AGENT HARVEY WHITE

Level: Veteran.

Skills:

Demolitions	5	Melee Combat Unarmed	6
Observation	6	Small Arms Pistol	8
Small Arms Rifle	6	Human Empathy	5
Project Emotion	6	Project Thought	4
Pyrokinesis	4		

Initiative: 4



Physical Description: Exactly like Harvey Keitel in *Reservoir Dogs* down to the shades, the suit and the two automatic pistols.

Motivation:

Clubs, Seven: White sees violence as the way to get the job done. If anyone gets in his way, he breaks them in two. He's very good at intimidating people into seeing things his way, with the exception of his colleagues of course.

Hearts, Six: Mr White's violent streak is tempered by his loyalty to Echo Group and his fellow team members. He's the kind of guy who goes back to rescue wounded people and so on.

AGENT JOHN CARPENTER

Level: Experienced.

Skills:

Mechanic	5	Melee Combat Unarmed	4
Pilot Fixed Wing	4	Pilot Helicopter	5
Small Arms (Both)	4	Wheeled Vehicle	6
Animal Empathy	5	Empathic Healing	4
Foreboding	8	Human Empathy	4

Initiative: 3

Physical Description: Thin but muscled, with suit, shades, moustache and a ready smile.



Motivation:

Hearts, Nine: Carpenter is a sociable, happy-go-lucky type who gets on well with people and animals in equal measure, being this HAWK team's Doo-little.

Clubs, Four: Guess what? Fights don't scare this guy either.



"As the fight continues, I find great comfort in the simplest things. A ray of clear sunlight revealing a blue hole in the gray sky. The sweet song of children laughing.
 "It is at these times that I remember what we are fighting for. And why we must win."
 - Zena Marley
 Early 21st-century Mercenary-Philosopher



LINACRE

by Lee Williams

Richard Linacre (pronounced LIN-aker) has had something of a chequered career. Starting out straight from high school as a professional soccer player without having gained any formal qualifications, he nevertheless enjoyed a reasonably successful tenure with one of the largest clubs in the English Midlands. However, an arthritic condition spelled an early end to his playing career, so he changed tack shortly after.

Becoming a reporter for the local paper, he built a reputation in the media that eventually led to him becoming one of the main sports commentators for a leading national British TV network. His own hard work and perseverance had taken

him from talented but unqualified sportsman to respected TV personality within a few short years. His ready smile and natural intelligence made even the dullest sports broadcast brighter for the audience.

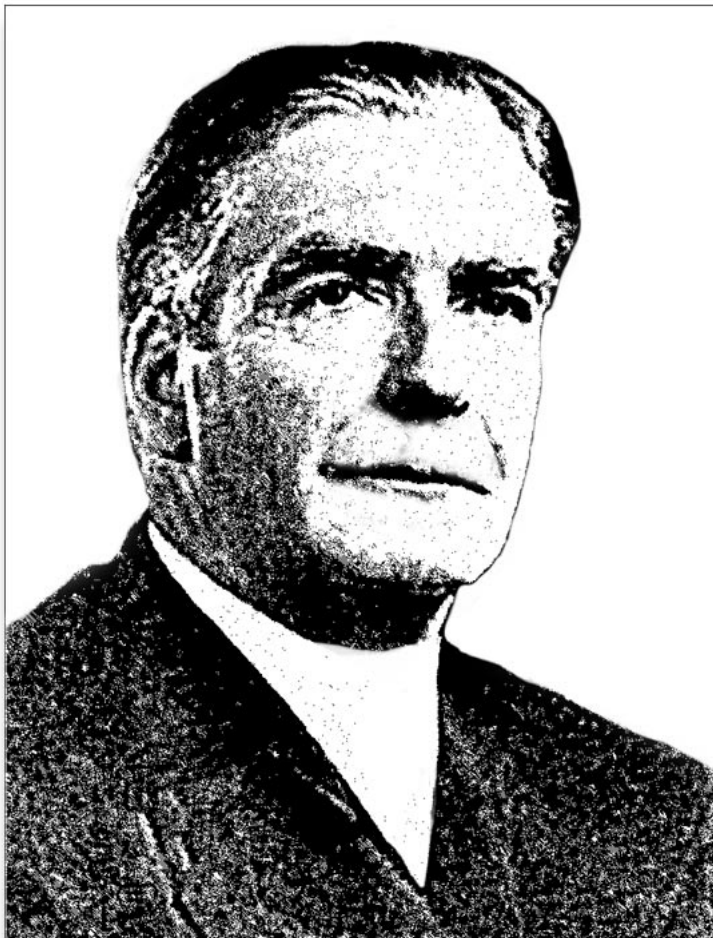
Life though is strange. After several years of comfortable living and toeing the corporate line, Linacre experienced what he believed to be a psychic vision. This was all the more unsettling for him, as he had previously dismissed it as nonsense. The experience changed his entire outlook on life, and he took drastic steps to accommodate his newfound world view.

Quitting the network, he began researching paranormal and conspiracy theories. When the cash flow began to dry up, he collated the fruits of his research into his first book – 23 Pyramids. This first collection of seemingly half-baked ravings turned out to be a surprise best seller, and from there on Linacre's course was set.

During research for his second book – Serpent Invasions – he stumbled across some genuine “evidence” of extra terrestrial visitations to Earth. When he realised that there may be a real invasion threat being kept hidden, he contacted his old friends at the TV network and they offered him a slot as interviewee on an early-evening talk show. As the show was one of the biggest ratings winners on British TV at the time, Linacre thought that he had a chance to make people aware of the threat posed by the aliens and their human collaborators in the business world.

Arriving on set wearing pale orange clothing, the host greeted Linacre affably enough. However, when the host asked why Linacre was wearing orange clothing and he explained that the colour had beneficial properties and warded off negative “psychic waves,” the audience began to chuckle. His point that it was the colour used by Buddhist monks for many centuries went over the head of the audience. Things went rapidly downhill after that, with the host deliberately trying to goad Linacre into making himself appear more and more crazy. The show was not a success for him.

A few weeks later, he was offered the chance of another interview on a late night talk show, this time





hosted by one of his former sportscaster colleagues. This was an even worse disaster for him, as the show was popular with people who had just returned from the pub and the host wanted to give them something that drunks appreciate...an argument.

From the first question, he was deliberately offensive to Linacre. This treatment went on for some 20 minutes, until eventually the inevitable happened and Linacre lost his temper. Raging and swearing at the host, he stormed off the set and went home. That very night, he decided that if TV was no longer going to accept him then he would begin his first lecture tour.

Since then, he has travelled around the world talking to audiences of ever-increasing size. He still researches conspiracy theory and psychic phenomena, and finances his tours with yet more books and video presentations. Although still seen by the majority of the public as a bit loopy, his works are nevertheless gaining in popularity as the world spins ever closer to the Darkness and people begin finally to realise the possibility of Linacre actually making sense. Of course, these people are also thought of by the majority as being somewhat out to lunch...

RICHARD LINACRE

Strength:	4	Education:	4
Constitution:	5	Charisma:	6
Agility:	3	Empathy:	3
Intelligence:	7	Initiative:	2

Skills:
Act/Bluff 3, Business 2, Foreboding 4, Human Empathy 4, Instruction 3, Leadership 2, Luck 4, Melee Combat 4 (he was a soccer player once), Observation 3, Persuasion 4, Philosophy* 5, Production* (TV) 4, Production* (Stage) 4, Project Emotion 2, Psychology 2, Streetwise 3, Wheeled Vehicle 2, Willpower 4.

(*For details of this skill see Getting Jiggy With It in DEMONGROUND 5.)

DESCRIPTION

Linacre is of average height and medium build. He has blue eyes, which sometimes seem to be looking at something that others cannot see. His hair is greying and is just long enough to cover his shirt collar, and he is clean-shaven. He normally dresses in jeans or casual trousers and shirts, but on rare occasions he may wear his pale orange clothing. Due to his belief that the colour protects him from psychic emanations, his Willpower is increased by one point for as long as he wears this clothing.

Linacre is also an untrained (and unsuspecting) mystic empath. This enables him to get his message across to people in a sympathetic way and most people who see his lecture tour show come away feeling that maybe he's not such a loony after all. He has no direct control over his Empathic abilities however.

The continued media campaign against Linacre has made him into an almost "Cassandra" figure, destined to tell the truth (or at least the little that he knows of it) and yet not to be believed. Of course, the media in Dark Conspiracy is controlled by the corporations who have much to gain by making him a figure of ridicule...

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It may be obvious to many readers that this character is based upon a certain British conspiracy theorist with many unusual views on life. These include accusing the Royal family of being 12 feet tall blood-drinking lizards...

Coincidentally of course, if you are looking for conspiracy ideas to incorporate into your games then try this website:

<http://www.davidicke.com/icke/index.html>



"Aliens have landed on earth, of that there is no question. Hundreds of people have run afoul of them over the past few decades. They've been hiding out behind the megacorporations and the shells of the national governments since the late Forties. All the while, they conduct their fiendish experiments on whichever poor souls they can get their hands on.

"But you know something - if it hadn't of been for their damned meddling on lo, there's a good chance that we wouldn't be in the mess that we're in now.

"Think about that the next time you're protesting for alien rights."

- Zena Marley

Early 21st-century mercenary-philosopher

CONNOLLY

By Rory Thompson

BACKGROUND

Connolly is a fixer, with contacts everywhere. If the PCs are after something important, chances are he can get it; if he can't, he probably knows who can. Connolly operates mainly out of Seacouver, but his business frequently requires travel.

Connolly is a strong leader with a knack for keeping a cool head. He rarely lets any law enforcement get close to his deals; with his information network, he seems one step ahead of the law.

While he can easily avoid capture by human authorities, other groups are taking an interest in his dealings. A number of Dark Minions are watching Connolly, as he has more connections to their activities than he realizes. He works in much the same manner as the Darklings themselves - in shadow and secrecy. Their paths have crossed many times, often with both parties being aware of the other's presence. At present, Connolly is too involved to ignore, but not a big enough threat to take out of the picture...yet.

MOTIVATIONS

Connolly's main focus is support - groups of Minion Hunters, underground empaths, Resistance cells, anything that

opposes the Darkness. He uses subtlety as his greatest tool; if he drew any more attention to himself, the Dark Minions would definitely act against him.

One more thing: he loves puns. The worse the pun, the better.

Eight of Hearts: He has a sense of duty towards his fellow man, at least the ones who aren't consciously assisting the Darkness. Although, he feels there are some people who deserve to be thrown to the Darklings...

Four of Clubs: "Violence isn't the answer" - is a phrase that won't come from Connolly's mouth. He knows there are times when talking is best; when it isn't, you better stand clear. Sometimes, it takes a severe beating to get someone to "cooperate." It just isn't the first method he tries.

SKILLS

An Experienced NPC, Connolly's Charisma and Empathy are quite high (9 CHA, 7 EMP), while his other attributes are average. His Initiative is 4. For skills, most are average for a character in his position. His Small Arms (Pistol), Bargain, and Luck are higher (7s, with 5 for Luck). His native languages are English and Spanish.

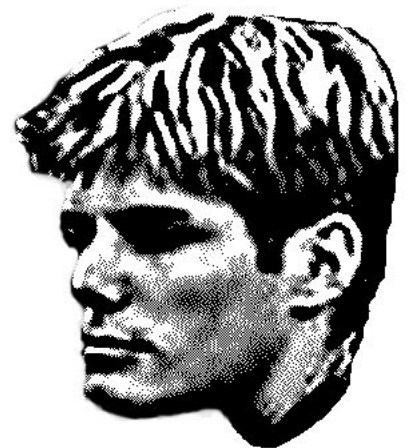
EQUIPMENT

Connolly carries a Desert Eagle (.357 caliber). His trenchcoat has a thin kevlar

layer woven into the lining (armor value of 1; aimed shots to his front bypass the coat). Connolly can have anything else the referee feels appropriate.

APPEARANCE

Connolly is a 6 foot, 2 inch Caucasian male, of average build. His brown hair is cut just below his ears; long enough to fall into his eyes. When combined with his toothy grin, it's fairly intimidating. He carries himself like a true professional; the determination can be seen in his deep blue eyes.





In April of 2001, the suburbs and outlying villages of the Indian capital, New Delhi, were terrorised by a mysterious creature that leaped out at its victims and slashed them with its steel talons. This entity soon acquired the nickname of “Monkeyman” and its attacks soon caused mass hysteria and panic on the streets of the vastly overcrowded city.

Several different theories were soon dreamed up to explain the strange beast’s origins and behaviour, along with an ever increasing and wildly differing number of eye-witness descriptions. Some said it was an alien, or possibly a local version of a Chupacabras; others reported it sometimes wore clothing and so forth.

However, the most popular theory of its origin was that it was a robot creature of some kind, programmed by the neighbouring Pakistani government to spy on official goings-on in New Delhi. Its furry hide was to allow it to blend in with the large numbers of monkeys that reside in and around the Indian capital.

Actually, the explanation offered by the local police isn’t too far from the truth. The beast is actually a cyborg prototype undergoing field-testing when it

broke control from its Darkling creators and ran amok in the city. The cyborg – standing about 5 feet (150cm) tall – was built by the Machine Lords of Mecha-niaca as a test version of an intelligence-gathering unit. It was indeed designed in the image of a monkey, but it was programmed to disguise itself as best it could if it was spotted as a fake.

This explains the reports of it wearing clothing and walking like a human being. The Monkeyman has also been seen to leap vertically to a height of at least 20 feet (about 6 metres) from a standstill.

In order to maintain the power levels for its cybernetic inner workings, the prototype merely has to recharge from any electrical source. In New Delhi’s outskirts it is normal to see poor people taking power from streetlights and road-signs, so viable sources are everywhere. Electrical recharging is required once every 48 hours.

However, the cyborg cannot easily repair its outermost flesh covering, which is why it sometimes draws blood from its victims; human blood plasma helps the skin and hair to regenerate quickly.

It attacks its hapless victims with razor sharp steel talons, that it can withdraw or extend at will from its fingers. If the prototype is prevented from taking blood for more than 28 days, its skin will wither and eventually peel away, revealing its true form.

At the moment its primary purpose is self-preservation and it will use its claws if it feels threatened. Otherwise, if spotted, it will merely use its tremendous speed and agility to escape. The rumours of it being able to make itself invisible are not actually true; it is however very skilled at evasion and camouflage.

MONKEYMAN (CYBORG)

Str: 10 Edu: 2 Move: 3/10/25/50
Agl: 8 Cha: 2 Skill/Dam: 6/2D10
Con: 10 Emp: 0 Hits: 40/80
Int: 6 Init: 7 # Appear: 1

Special: extremely sharp talons ignore 1 level of AV. Has internal armour on head, chest and abdomen of AV1. Infra-red vision and enhanced hearing built in.



GAWAG

GROSSER AUTO WERKE AG

by Lee Williams

The latest rising star of the European economy in the dark times has to be Grosser Auto-Werke AG. The corporation was formed by the amalgamation of almost all the car and truck works remaining in Central and Eastern Europe during the Greater Depression, and just recently they have added the major Russian manufacturers to the combine.

The founder and current CEO of GAWAG is Frederick von Erlach, a former board member of VW Audi Group. He persuaded the board to back his plan and using a vast network of business contacts dating back over 20 years, he was able to deliver more than he promised. The already massive parent corporation split their holdings in two, with Erlach in charge of the Eastern European half. The name GAWAG was given to this division, and like many vehicle makers have done (Toyota/Lexus for example) the two parts exist as autonomous companies.

A NOTE ABOUT PRICES

Even in the world of Dark Conspiracy I feel that many of the prices of vehicles are far too high, excepting luxury limousines and things like Ferraris. Therefore the prices given here may be different to what you would use. Feel free to alter them to suit.

1000 Series

Comes in a choice of variants: 4-seat hatchback, 2-seat delivery van, or pickup. The hatchback's rear seats are a little cramped but not quite to the point of being unusable. The van and pickup, though small are ideal for urban business use. The van is basically a pickup with the cab rear panel removed and a permanent roof badly grafted onto the body; the roof seams often leak in heavy rain. The 1 litre engine delivers drive to the front wheels and comes with 4-speed manual or 3 speed automatic transmission.

GAWAG 1000 hatchback

Price: \$8,900

Fuel Type: Gasoline, Alcohol

Load: 100kg

Vehicle Weight: 850kg

Crew: 1 plus 3 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 90/15

Combat Move: 50/10

Fuel Capacity: 80

Fuel Consumption: 5

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1

GAWAG 1000 cargo van/pickup

Price: \$8,200

Fuel Type: Gasoline, Alcohol

Load: 300kg

Vehicle Weight: 850kg

Crew: 1 plus 1 passenger

(plus 2 more if no cargo)

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 90/15

Combat Move: 50/10

Fuel Capacity: 80

Fuel Consumption: 5

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1





1400 Series

A larger sized car than the 1000 series, the 1400 is fitted with a 1.4 litre motor. However this offers no real performance advantage over the 1000. A police version is offered which has a larger engine and better suspension, and this is popular with cash-strapped forces in Europe and the Republic of Britain.



GAWAG 1400

Price: \$18,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline, Alcohol
Load: 250kg
Vehicle Weight: 1.2 tonnes
Crew: 1 plus 3 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 95/12
Combat Move: 50/10
Fuel Capacity: 80
Fuel Consumption: 6

Combat Statistics
Configuration: Standard
Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values
 HF 1
 HS 1
 HR 1

GAWAG Station Wagon

To save on development costs, the company decided that rather than design and build a station wagon version of the 1400 series, they would use an existing design. The station wagon (also called the Model F, for Family) uses the same drive train as the 1400 series, which makes it somewhat under-powered due to the heavier chassis and body as well as less efficient on fuel use.

GAWAG Station Wagon

Price: \$21,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline, Alcohol
Load: 400kg
Vehicle Weight: 1.5 tonnes
Crew: 1 plus 4 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 90/15
Combat Move: 45/8
Fuel Capacity: 80
Fuel Consumption: 7

Combat Statistics
Configuration: Standard
Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values
 HF 1
 HS 1
 HR 1



GAWAG 1400 Police

Price: \$21,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline, Alcohol
Load: 250kg
Vehicle Weight: 1.2 tonnes
Crew: 1 plus 3 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 100/17
Combat Move: 55/10
Fuel Capacity: 100
Fuel Consumption: 6

Combat Statistics
Configuration: Standard
Suspension: W (3)

Armour Values
 HF 1
 HS 1
 HR 1



GAWAG StreamLiner

The latest styling fad for Nome cars has been the streamlined look. This was no problem for GAWAG, who merely dipped into their back catalogue of blueprints gathered from the several smaller companies they amalgamated and drew out the most appropriate. This 1950s-60s teardrop shaped luxury model was given a more modern engine and slight styling makeover and has been a big hit with those who can afford it. Its rear engine layout has raised a few concerns about handling in the motoring press, but so far no problems have been reported.



GAWAG StreamLiner

Price: \$100,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline
Load: 300kg
Vehicle Weight: 1.3 tonnes
Crew: 1 plus 4 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 110/17
Combat Move: 60/10
Fuel Capacity: 110
Fuel Consumption: 7

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard
Suspension: W (3)

Armour Values

HF 1
 HS 1
 HR 1

GAWAG Sport Coupe

A neat little 2+2 coupe based on the 1400 series but with an upgraded engine and different bodywork. It is becoming a much sought-after accessory for the young professional woman, and a direct rival for the GDM Ariel. Its relatively low price tag is also a plus.

GAWAG Coupe

Price: \$45,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline
Load: 300kg
Vehicle Weight: 1 tonne
Crew: 1 plus 3 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 100/15
Combat Move: 55/10
Fuel Capacity: 90
Fuel Consumption: 6

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard
Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values

HF 1
 HS 1
 HR 1





GAWAG Overlander

Basically this is nothing more than a barely civilianized version of the standard light 4-wheel drive used by almost all of the Eastern European and Asian nations.

GAWAG Overlander

Price: \$18,000

Fuel Type: Gas, Diesel, Alcohol

Load: 800kg (if no passengers)

Vehicle Weight: 1.4 tonnes

Crew: 1 plus 6 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 100/25

Combat Move: 50/15

Fuel Capacity: 80

Fuel Consumption: 7

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (3)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1



GAWAG Cossack Mark 3

This is a sports-utility vehicle, comprising a more conventional body atop the same basic chassis and power plant as the GAWAG Overlander. Much more emphasis has been placed on comfort with the Cossack than with the Overlander, with more room for rear seat passengers than any of its competitors.

GAWAG Cossack Mark 3

Price: \$35,000

Fuel Type: Gas, Diesel, Alcohol

Load: 400kg

Vehicle Weight: 1.4 tonnes

Crew: 1 plus 4 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 100/25

Combat Move: 50/15

Fuel Capacity: 80

Fuel Consumption: 7

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (3)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1



GAWAG Cargo Van

This is a basic delivery van, typical of its type. A minibus version is also available with seating for 10 passengers.

GAWAG Cargo Van

Price: \$30,000

Fuel Type: Gasoline/Alcohol
or Diesel/Alcohol

Load: 1.2 tonnes

Vehicle Weight: 2.5 tonnes

Crew: 1 plus 2 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 90/18

Combat Move: 45/8

Fuel Capacity: 120

Fuel Consumption: 8

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W(3)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1

GAWAG Minibus

Price: \$40,000

Fuel Type: Gas/Alcohol
or Diesel/Alcohol

Load: 250kg

Vehicle Weight: 2.5 tonnes

Crew: 1 plus 10 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 90/18

Combat Move: 45/8

Fuel Capacity: 120

Fuel Consumption: 8

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (3)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1

GAWAG Limousine

Although many top-level executives are still chauffeured about in state of the art German limos, the Retro-look fashion has spread into the highest-level auto market of the DC world. Once again, GAWAG merely had to look into their past portfolio for inspiration. Their new top-notch luxury limo is a resurrected Volga M-13, which is only available in glossy black with lots of chrome detailing. The stately look of this model is preferred by several high-ranking corporate officials to the modern Mercedes and Lexus models. It is available to special order with a more powerful engine, armour plating and all the other features that top executives would expect.

GAWAG Limo

Price: \$800,000

Fuel Type: Gasoline

Load: 500kg

Vehicle Weight: 2.5 tonnes

Crew: 1 plus 6 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights

Cruise Speed: 100/17

Combat Move: 60/10

Fuel Capacity: 120

Fuel Consumption: 8

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (3)

Armour Values

HF 1

HS 1

HR 1

GAWAG Limo (armoured)

Price: \$1,400,000

Fuel Type: Gasoline

Load: 500kg

Vehicle Weight: 3 tonnes

Crew: 1 plus 6 passengers

Night Vision: Headlights, Active IR

Cruise Speed: 110/17

Combat Move: 60/10

Fuel Capacity: 120

Fuel Consumption: 10

Combat Statistics

Configuration: Standard

Suspension: W (4)

Armour Values

HF 4 Roof 4

HS 4 Belly 4

HR 4





GAWAG Patroller

Without doubt the strangest vehicle manufactured by the company is the Patroller. Available to law enforcement, corporate security and military forces only, it is a three-wheeled vehicle based around the 1.0 litre engine mated to an automatic transmission. The driver controls the machine via handlebars as on a motorcycle, and behind him there is a platform atop the engine compartment with seating for 4 passengers (2 facing forward and 2 facing rearward). Alternatively, the seating may be removed and a swivelling weapon mount installed on the platform.

GAWAG Patroller

Price: \$8,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline, Alcohol
Load: 200kg
Vehicle Weight: 0.5 tonnes
Crew: 1 plus 4 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 100/17
Combat Move: 60/10
Fuel Capacity: 80
Fuel Consumption: 6

Combat Statistics
Configuration: Tricycle
Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values
 None. *

GAWAG GTZ-V8

The fastest and most powerful vehicle offered by the company, the GTZ is a roadgoing version of the company's famous 2010 European TOCA winning 'Zadrovni' racer. The drive train configuration is unusual for a 21st century road car in that the engine is mounted in the rear directly above the rear axle. The GTZ is by far the fastest and most powerful car offered by the company, with a top speed of 300km/h (almost 200 mph) and a maximum power output of just over 400 horsepower from the 4.4 litre V8 motor. Although the car has a strong chassis and engine, some of the detail finish internally is a little 'low rent'. The GTZ is available only in the company's red and white colour scheme.

GAWAG GTZ-V8

Price: \$550,000
Fuel Type: Gasoline
Load: 100kg
Vehicle Weight: 1.1 tonnes
Crew: 1 plus 2 passengers
Night Vision: Headlights
Cruise Speed: 130/17
Combat Move: 80/12
Fuel Capacity: 70
Fuel Consumption: 7

Combat Statistics
Configuration: Standard
Suspension: W (2)

Armour Values
 HF 1
 HS 1
 HR 1

* Driver and passengers are treated as mounted targets during combat.





RELATIVE HUMANISM

By Courtney Payton

Somewhere, in a building not far from the Pentagon, seven men sit in a darkened room. There are three rectangular tables that form a 'u' shape around a podium and projector, opening up towards a large white screen at the back of the room. The only light comes from an undecorated fixture that hangs low over the empty space described by the tables and the podium. Three men sit at the table facing the podium, and two sit on either side. All of the men, with one exception, are in their late fifties or early sixties. All of them wear nondescript gray suits and simple ties of unremarkable color. All of them sit with the rigid posture and stone-face demeanor that would mark them eternally as military.

They are waiting, of course, but to the observer untrained in the habits of the armed forces they may have resembled a bizarre form of performance art. There is none of the normal hustle and bustle that occurs directly before a meeting of men; no conversation, no shuffling of papers-in fact, no papers at all. Not a single one of them moves a muscle.

The closest any of them get to losing the appearance of being carved in stone is the youngest in the room—a man of late thirties or early forties. He is sitting on the podium's left, on one of the legs

of the 'u'. His dark hair is cut incredibly close to his skull and his dark eyes dart nervously from side to side, scrutinizing the faces of his companions. He has the look of someone who knows he doesn't belong there, but is trying to make sure no one else figures that out. He sits with a tensed, studied rigidity instead of the natural stoniness that the other men just seemed to possess as a fact of nature.

Finally, a door at the back of the room opens, casting a momentary burst of light as someone enters and then closes the door behind them.

The seven men turn to look at the person entering, even though they all know who it is; he was expected.

The youngest man, upon recognizing the face, immediately jumps to attention and begins to snap a salute.

The man sitting next to him clears his throat loudly and shakes his head.

The younger man looks at his hand, which is halfway to his forehead, as though it is some kind of foreign intruder. He has no idea how it got there. He switches course and waves lamely to the newcomer as he sits back down.

The man takes his place at the podium. He has quick dark eyes and iron gray hair that is still dark at the temples. He wears a dark gray suit with a black tie. He clears his throat.

"Gentlemen, there is something happening. Something which, should it get out of hand, could swiftly become a matter of national importance."

"What is it? Did the drugstore run out of Viagra again, Jerry?" the man sitting next to the accidental-saluter calls out in a gruff voice.

His joke is met with a wave of low chuckling.

The man at the podium grins. "I said it was important to the nation, Bob, not just to you."

There is more chuckling, louder this time.

The younger man looks confused. This is a very important meeting, why are they joking around?

The other men look comfortable with it. This is a very old ritual and they know it well.

The man at the podium begins again. "As I was saying, there is something in an as yet unidentified portion of southern Florida that may soon escalate to a full-scale Situation." He surveys the room. "I assume that all of you are up to date on the so-called 'Zombie Situation'?"

The men nod, the youngest most vigorously. He has read all of the material, twice. Plus, he wants to make up for almost accidentally saluting someone.



The man at the podium nods slowly, giving the man whose head is bobbing like a plastic Chihuahua in the back of a Cadillac with hydraulics a lifted eyebrow. He turns a dial on the podium and the light goes down. Then, he picks up a small remote control and points it at the projector, which clicks. A grainy picture appears on the white screen behind the podium. The shadow of the man creates a black hole in the scene, but it is still obviously a screen capture from a home movie.

The picture is of a man in his mid to late twenties with shoulder length brown hair and wire rimmed glasses. He is wearing a white, button-up shirt, which is un-tucked over a pair of jeans. He is standing in what appears to be a large, empty warehouse.

“This,” the man at the podium says, tapping the picture with his remote, “is Dorian Vanguard, environmental activist. We recovered this tape at a recent zombie attack in the Florida panhandle. I think that you should watch this before I explain any more, it may clear up a few things that I’m going to present later on.” He takes his seat to the side of the screen and clicks another button.

Immediately, the scene jumps to life.

“This is Dorian Vanguard,” the man says excitedly, running his fingers through his long brown hair, “And we are here today to attempt to make contact with a culture that has long been misunderstood by the narrow-minded, ethnocentric society of the West. Too long have they looked down upon other people, simply because their culture and traditions vary from their safely established norm.” He begins to pace feverishly. “And now, we are here to extend the olive branch and say ‘It’s okay, we understand and respect you. We embrace our differences’.”

There is a sudden gasp from the darkened tables as a male voice says softly, “He’s not talking about...”

On the screen there is a sickening thud. Through one of the small, ground floor windows can be seen a dark shape pressing against the glass. It is difficult to make out until the camera zooms in on a face purple with decay. Its eyes, what are left of them, are completely white. There are black blisters covering the face and neck. As it impotently slams itself against the window, these blisters pop and cover the glass with a runny yellow liquid. Soon, the glass is too covered to see through.

The camera pans back to Dorian, who has been joined by two other people; a girl in her early twenties with short blonde hair in a t-shirt and shorts, and another man in his late twenties with a shaved head wearing baggy jeans and a tank top.

“Jesus,” another voice from the tables says, “He got people to go with him on this?”

Dorian is still focused entirely on the camera, but his two companions are looking nervously at the thing battering itself against the window. In addition to the irregular ‘thud, thud’ of it slamming against the glass, it has begun to make an eerie vocalization.

“Dorian, are you sure this is a good idea?” the girl asks ner-

vously.

Thud, thud goes the window. “Muuuuuuuaag,” groans the thing. It appears to have been joined by several others.

Dorian looks back at her, irritated. “Of course it’s a good idea. We are giving understanding to these people. We are telling them that we respect their culture.”

The guy in the tank top looks back at Dorian. “Dude, they don’t look like they want understanding...or respect.”

Thud, thud, thud. “Muuuuh.”

“Don’t they eat us?” the girl asks, sounding close to tears.

“Yes, but how is that any different from the tribes of the Amazon and certain tribes in Africa? Is it any different from the barbarians who eat the flesh of living animals and enslave them for their own feeding purposes?”

“It’s different,” says the guy with the shaved head, “If they are going to eat us.”

The girl is crying now. “Dorian, you said that once they understood that we wanted to respect them then they wouldn’t eat us!”

Dorian sighs, “Well we haven’t explained yet, now have we?”

Thud, thud, thud, thud. “Muuuuuh. Muuuuuuuuaaaaaaagh. Waaaaagh.”

The window is crawling with the black shapes now. So are the other two windows that are barely visible within the screen shot. The glass is smoky with whatever liquid oozes from their open skin.

Dorian’s two companions have taken a reflexive step back from the wall, even though they are already several feet away.

“Dorian,” says the guy, “Can they understand? Are they capable?”

Dorian sighs and rolls his eyes. Slowly, as though he is explaining to a very small child, he says, “Of course they can understand. They’re humans aren’t they?”

“No!” the girl screams, “No! They aren’t human! Jesus Christ Dorian, look at them!”

The glass of the windows is beginning to crack under the pressure. Outside is a mass of writhing, moaning corpses.

“Yes they are,” Dorian says soothingly, “Now I’m just going to let them in and we can talk it over.”

“You are crazy,” the guy with the shaved head says, “You can’t let them in!”

“Yes I can,” Dorian says heading for the door. “You’ll see, once we talk to them it will be different.”

The guy heads Dorian off, getting in between him and the door. “There is no way I am letting you open that door.”

Dorian lifts his hand about waist high; his back is to the camera and is blocking what he is holding. The look on the guy’s face changes.

“I am opening the door,” Dorian says, his voice deadly calm. “The only choice is whether or not you will be alive when it happens.”

The guy’s eyes flicker back and forth between Dorian’s face, and whatever he is holding in his hand. Finally he

lunges towards Dorian.

There is a loud explosion, and the guy falls over, a dazed look on his face. He says, "I'd rather be shot and die quickly than be torn apart by those things." He speaks so softly it is barely audible on the tape. Then, his head lolls to one side and his eyes stare ahead blankly.

There is silence outside for several seconds. Then the thumping and moaning begins anew.

The girl is screaming hysterically now as Dorian walks calmly to the door; a small pistol now visible in his right hand. She manages to shriek, "Dorian, no, don't!" and then he has undone the latch and stepped back from the door.

Slowly, grotesque parodies of human beings shuffle into the door. They are in various stages of decomposition, some missing eyes, noses, and limbs. Most of them are a dark red in color and very puffy, their skin distended tightly over swiftly expanding gasses and bodily fluids. Many have sores that ooze pus and other terrible liquids. All of them are making that chilling moan that could be heard even through the walls of the warehouse.

The girl continues her screaming, although now it sounds farther away. She is no longer on the screen.

Dorian opens his arms wide and begins to speak. "My friends, I welcome you! Too long you have been victims of an unjust persecution."

The zombies stop their strange limping progress and regard Dorian curiously, their heads lolling sickeningly to one side.

He continues, "I am here to tell you that we understand you! Your desire to eat flesh does not necessarily make you bad people. If you will just listen to me..."

His speech is cut short as one of the nearby corpses smacks him in the head with one clumsy swipe.

"Muuuhuuuwwaaaag," the other zombies agree.

"Wait a minute! No, I'm here to help you! No! AAAaaaaaaah!!" Dorian can be heard screaming for several minutes, even though the swarm of rotting corpses piling in from the open door quickly covers him. They find the corpse of the guy with the shaved head and quickly settle down to feed on that as well. The girl's screaming is cut short soon after.

The screen goes white and the man takes the podium again. Slowly, the light brightens. All of the men look unruffled except for the youngest. He is pale and his hands are trembling, even though he does his best to hide it.

One of the men sitting directly in front of the podium speaks up. "Did he honestly think that he could communicate with them? What an idiot."

The man next to him, a large man with wrinkled jowls, adds, "Well, that certainly was amusing but I fail to see the reason why we were called here today."

The man at the podium sighs. "I was getting to that, Chester. As you recall, I said that this video would provide some interesting background."

The lights dim again, though not as dark as they were for the movie. A picture appears on the screen. It appears to be a

forest. There are several dark blots winding throughout. Were it not for the fact that it is broken in several places, it would almost look like a very odd system of rivers, or a small grouping of lakes.

"This," began the man at the podium, "Is a picture of a section of Southern Florida. We believe that it is a mass migration of the animate dead."

The picture jerkily began to change and the groups could be seen making their way across the screen.

"Here is time lapsed photography over the course of one day...they move pretty slowly."

"A mass migration?" says one of the men, "You mean, besides moving en masse towards a large source of food?"

The man at the podium nods. "Yes. In fact in this tape, they appear to be moving away from a food source-something that we have yet to witness."

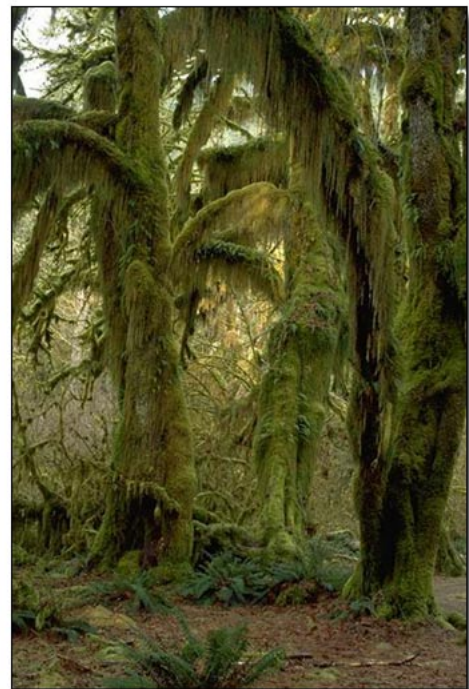
"So...what are they moving towards?" the younger man said shakily.

The picture on the screen changed. Now it seemed to be showing a large gathering of the living dead in a clearing of swampland.

"This is a satellite recording that we made at fourteen hundred hours yesterday. There isn't any sound, but I'm sure we can guess what they're saying."

The scene begins to move. Putrid corpses mill about, bumping into each other and every once in a while giving one other an experimental nibble. One poor bastard in a 'meat is murder' t-shirt is gnawing at a tree trunk with a confused expression on its lifeless face.

Suddenly, the mood changes. They all turn in the same direction and begin to make their moaning noises louder. As





if on cue, another zombie totters up onto an old tree stump and waves its arms listlessly.

The tape froze.

"There," the man at the podium says, "Do you recognize him?"

There is a confused silence before someone says, "Hey... isn't that our old pal Dorian?"

The picture on the screen zooms in a little and, sure enough, the face of Dorian Vanguard is barely recognizable. Half of his long brown hair is gone in uneven patches and his glasses hang from one ear, broken. His neck is open, revealing dark spongy matter that glistens sickeningly. Part of his nose is gone and it is cocked irregularly to one side. When he opens his mouth, a thick whitish yellow liquid bubbles out from a sore on his cheek.

What little attention the zombies seem capable of giving is given to Dorian's corpse. It stands on the stump and reels for several minutes before the tape is paused again.

"But what does it mean," the man with the jowls says.

"Well," the man at the podium says, "We know that this clearing is the destination for those droves of zombies. He seems to have incredible drawing power."

"Wait a minute," says the younger man, looking even more nervous. "You mean to say that they are moving with purpose? A purpose other than food?"

"Yes," the man at the podium says, "That is exactly what I am saying. That is the reason this meeting was called. To keep you gentlemen abreast of this new information and decide how to proceed."

"Why? What makes this gentleman so different?" asks one of the men.

"We're not sure," says the man at the podium.

"Wait a minute!" says the younger man. "Wasn't this guy a vegan?"

"Well...yes, I believe so," says the man at the podium. "Why?"

"Well, maybe his refusal to eat meat or animal products allowed him some form of protection against the total mind decay usually caused by becoming one of the animate dead."

There is a surprised silence.

"What is your name again?" asks the man at the podium.

"Christopher Jameson, sir," he replies proudly.

"There aren't any sirs in here, son," the man at the podium says, "Just call me Jerry. You're taking over for Lester, aren't you?"

It wasn't really a question, but he nods in response anyway.

The man at the podium nods and turns his attention back to the rest of the men. "We should probably do some tests to corroborate this vegan theory. It's a shame that they tore the corpses of his friends to pieces too small to come back..."

"Well," says the man sitting next to Christopher Jameson, "This would be an excellent opportunity to blast the hell out of a large group of them."

"How populated is this area?" one of the men asks.

"Not as populated as it used to be," another one counters.

There is a light smattering of laughter. There is no doubt that most of the people who used to be in the surrounding towns were at the ghastly meeting that they just saw on the screen.

"Then I guess that the only question is; what should we tell the public?"

"How about the truth?" the younger man says.

There is a round of real laughter at that.

The man at the podium wipes a tear of laughter from his eye. "No, seriously. What should we tell them?"

"Exploding swamp gas?"

"Plane crash?"

"New weapons testing?"

"Environmental protesters trying to save the swampland from developers!"

The man at the podium rubbed his chin. "I like the irony of that one. 'Eco-terrorists blow up prospective land developers'. It has a nice ring to it."

"This has to be done soon."

He nodded curtly. "I expect this operation to go off ASAP. Once they are taken care of, tell your boys what we are looking for. We hope that this is just a fluke, but if it isn't...they will become even more dangerous if they gain the ability to organize themselves."

The man with the jowls stood up, "I'll go and start testing on the vegan theory. I tell you, I never did trust those bastards." He left the room muttering to himself.

The man next to the younger man stood up. "We should all go and coordinate air strikes as soon as possible."

The six men remaining nodded and, one by one, they left the room.



ECO TERRORISTS BOMB PROSPECTIVE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Early yesterday afternoon, a group calling itself "The Swampland Liberation Front" demolished the site of a prospective retirement community. Several workers were killed and hundreds of acres of swampland was destroyed. A press statement by the group read: "With fire we have cleansed Mother Nature of the terrible disease. Now she will be able to return to her former pristine wilderness."

The group's leader, Dorian Vanguard - who has been missing for several months - is thought to have perished in his own attack, along with several of his followers.

The White House has issued a statement saying that this level of eco-terrorism will not be tolerated. New anti-terrorism laws are being pushed through the Senate, and will be in effect soon.



LEGENDS

by Michael Layne

From: dgrpg@delta-green.com
Subject: DG: Legends

How about our Delta Green Hero? I'd say Reggie Fairfield would make a good candidate, although it's unlikely he'll ever come jumping out of the shadows, guns blazing, to save your skin.

That's what he wants Lepus to think, you know...

"Reggie's not dead, man. He faked his own death and now he's out there somewhere. Oh, he's retired, you know. Spent his whole life fighting the good fight, then he left it to us. Probably never see him again.

But maybe some day, in the hour of our greatest need..."

There's one for you: "Reggie's Last Case." "Reggie's Last Ride."

The legend goes that Reggie was helped from the ruins of the bunker by Agent BEDIVERE...

The veteran Agent shook his head, noting the extent of Reggie's wounds, and the inadequacy of the small first aid kit under these circumstances.

Reggie knew the score, and asked BEDIVERE for one last favor:

"My Thompson, Agent BEDIVERE... "

Reggie indicated the enchanted M1928A1 at his side — the weapon which, it was said within Delta Green, was given Reggie by a mysterious sorceress to help him defeat at least a handful of the terrors of a monstrous universe, and buy Humanity precious time. He had used it in the War and after, smiting beings from his race's darkest nightmares and beyond. Some said its violin case could cure even such wounds as those through which Reggie's life was now seeping... but that case was apparently forever lost...

There were many more modern-looking weapons around today, but the Thompson M1928 series .45 caliber submachine gun had a special magic all its own — especially one such as this one, with the foregrip and the drum magazine. To gaze upon it was to call up shades of Eliot Ness... of World War II commando raids... of Churchill brandishing a Thompson in the famous photo... of the Raid on Innsmouth, where the story of Delta Green began!

"You must deny it to Lepus!" Reggie ordered. "This Thompson must not fall into the hands of Majestic, for Lepus to brandish as a trophy, or use for unworthy deeds! Go up to the point, and throw it into the sea!"

Naturally, it was not as easy and straightforward as that. BEDIVERE could think of reasons why such a special weapon should be retained, and had hopes he could keep it from Lepus... But, in the end, Reggie's stubbornness won out.

Up to the point hiked Agent BEDIVERE, and, before he could talk himself out of it, he took a last look at the well-oiled Thompson, seeing how the moonlight glinted from its



barrel, and from the smooth walnut of the buttstock. Shaking his head that this wonder would be lost to the world, he flung it out to sea.

As it descended from its arc, a hand thrust up from the water.

Deep Ones! was BEDIVERE's first thought.

But, no, in the moonlight, he could see this was not the scaly arm and hand of those aquatic monsters... The arm and the slender hand were pale as the moon which showed through the gaps in the scudding clouds, and, as it effortlessly caught the Thompson, BEDIVERE was reminded of the tale he had heard of another Hero, and another enchanted weapon...

The Thompson in its grip, the hand and arm descended as silently and mysteriously as they had risen, and BEDIVERE stood there in thought for several minutes after the waves had closed over the submachinegun.

As he made his way back down to where he had left his leader, he brushed tears from his eyes.

He had not cried when half his unit had been wiped out by that Dark Young in Michigan, or for the friends he had lost in the "Thresher" or the "Scorpion", or when the C-124 with that brave SpecOps team had been downed by those flying things over Cambodia. There had been no visible tears, even when the JCS had picked out Delta Green as the scapegoat for the failed Cambodia op, and had disestablished the Agency...

But now, he couldn't blame the wetness of his face on the rain, or even the smoke — the rain had put out most of the fires, and the breeze was blowing the remaining smoke in the other direction. And the rain had stopped now, the clouds clearing away, as if Nature was pausing to watch, as if the Moon wanted to look down upon the passing of a Hero.

BEDIVERE was sufficiently occupied with these thoughts that he was within a few dozen yards of Reggie, by the time he realized his leader was not alone.

The color of a moonless night, with no markings, the helicopter crouched in the clearing. Its rotor turned lazily, but BEDIVERE could barely hear the "whoosh-whoosh" of the blades, and there was none of the vacuum-cleaner turbine howl one associated with modern helicopters. Its sleek lines seemed to combine speed and stealth. He was sure that he would have heard any normal helicopter, even as occupied as he had been with his thoughts of the Thompson and Reggie. Plainly, this was no ordinary helicopter.

He stepped closer, his hand darting to the butt of his Glock. If Majestic was going to steal Reggie's corpse for some horrible experiment, it would — literally — be over BEDIVERE's dead body!

He had fifteen rounds of 10mm in the magazine, and one up the spout, and he was a recipient of the Navy Expert Pistol Shot medal, with Gold "E"! He would probably fight and die, but he would take an honor guard with him, for Reggie's sake!

A woman in a black flight-suit seemed to materialize from the shadows, and held up a hand, like a guard at a gate, as she

stepped in front of him.

"We're not with Lepus," she said, with an accent BEDIVERE couldn't place. "We're here to help your General... to take him to the land of dreams, where he can be healed of even these grievous wounds, and where the evil rabbit man and his minions will never find him. Come, BEDIVERE... I shall escort you to your General.. to your friend."

And if you were with Majestic, you could have simply blown me away where I stood, BEDIVERE realized. His pistol would have never cleared leather.

The downwash from the rotor gently whipped at his face as he let her lead him back over to Reggie. His hands stayed at waist level, but he didn't reach for the sidearm, even when he saw that there were two more of the mysterious women in black flight-suits with Reggie. They had him on a Stokes litter, and one of them was adjusting an odd-looking IV bottle on a stand latched to one side of the Stokes.

"I'm back, General," he said, a bit unnecessarily. If anything, Reggie looked weaker than when BEDIVERE had left him, and he hoped these three women knew what they were doing.

"What did you see?" Reggie's body might have been severely damaged, but the old steel was still there in his voice.

BEDIVERE told him, leaving nothing out... The Thompson... The sea... the hand...

Reggie nodded. It was plain that BEDIVERE had obeyed orders - he could never have made up something like that...

"Well done, Agent BEDIVERE! Well done!"

A "Well Done" from Reggie was something BEDIVERE valued more than his Commodore's star, his Navy Cross and other decorations, or even his gold dolphins.

"I'm going to have to go away for awhile..." stated Reggie. "I'm sorry — I know the job isn't finished... But I'm not fit for duty, now... I'm going to have to heal..."

"Your orders, Sir?" The rain must be starting back up... or maybe it was the smoke...

"Evade the remaining Threat forces, contact Joe Camp and the others via covert channels..." His voice grew softer, a sign of his weariness. He reached up to clasp BEDIVERE's hand. "Take charge of Delta Green, people... Carry out our mission!"

"We're going to need to get him aboard, now!" announced one of the women.

Reggie let BEDIVERE's hand go, and gripped the side of the litter. Without prompting, BEDIVERE took the fourth corner of the Stokes, and his gaze shifted from Reggie's pale face to the inscrutable features of the woman opposite him, on the port quarter of the metal litter.

"When will he be back?"

And how are we ever going to get along without him?_

"Not for a long time," she told him, sadness in her eyes. "But he shall return, in your hour of greatest need! On three, BEDIVERE... One... Two... THREE..."



Their burden would have been difficult for one person, but was light when they all acted together.

The stretcher slid through the side door of the stealth helicopter, locking into place with a series of clicks. Two of the women vaulted into the cabin, one making her way forward.

BEDIVERE caught a glimpse of odd-looking medical equipment and monitors within the cabin, and began to climb aboard, himself. The third woman held up an arm to block him, shaking her head.

“Where we go, you cannot follow... Not yet...” she told him. He could hear a bit of regret in her voice. “We have a long flight ahead, and can’t afford the extra weight. And besides...” She looked sideways at Reggie, and back at BEDIVERE. “He gave you your orders. Carry them out, Agent.”

BEDIVERE nodded, reached over, and shook Reggie’s hand. “Until we meet again, Sir!” There seemed nothing further for anybody to say.

As one of the women slid the hatch shut from the inside, he backed clear. Silent and stealthy helos had rotors, and rotors still had a way of dipping...

And he couldn’t afford to be killed by a rotor blade. He had his orders, by God, and not Adolph Lepus nor all Majestic, nor all the Greys in the heavens or all the Deep Ones in Neptune’s great ocean were going to prevent him from carrying them out!

There were a few moments, as if the crew of the helicopter were verifying he was clear, and finishing up the final items on their checklist. No running lights came on, and BEDIVERE hadn’t really expected them to. Even the dull-red cockpit lighting was hardly visible.

Now he could barely hear a whine, as the rotor blades sped up, and he could imagine a black-gloved hand easing up the collective, even as a booted foot gave the machine just enough pedal to counteract the increased torque.

Hardly audible, even the artificial tornado of its downwash somehow subdued, the helicopter lifted off, weathercocking into the breeze. Smoothly, it tucked up its feet, wheels folding into its belly, with doors sliding closed to cover the wells.

It held a low hover for a moment that seemed to stretch out, then lifted, at the same time accelerating forward in that slight nose-down attitude peculiar to a helicopter leaving hover for horizontal flight. Even the slight sounds died away quickly, and night seemed to swallow up the stealthy machine.

For a moment, he saw it pass across the Moon, a modern icon of technology eclipsing the silvery disc which ancient men had worshipped as a Goddess... And then, there was just the breeze...

Just the breeze, and his memories of what he had seen.

The night was developing a definite chill now, and BEDIVERE zipped up his field jacket, making sure his Glock was readily accessible. Some of the surviving assassins were still out and about, but he’d get by them, by stealth if he could, by force if he must.

He had been given his orders. He would carry them out.



CALL TO DARKNESS

PART FOUR

by Mike Marchi

"You will be my pawn to return the wayward one to me. Your abilities will serve me. Your powers will enhance my own."

...Enise realized that it was not she the thing was addressing, but Wil. He was bathed in an orange flaming glow. His eyes were rolled back in his head and he made vague choking sounds. In that last moment, all the terror in her mind suddenly snapped free, and she was filled with a single-minded sense of purpose. She focused on Wil. He was the last of her charges. The creature in the room was trying to harm him. That couldn't be allowed. She screamed at the top of her lungs, a feral cry that surely ripped her throat into bloody tatters. She snatched Wil's unconscious form in a grip born of madness, and carried him toward the railing. The gargoyles in the room never raised their heads to watch her. They never even moved as the Dark One's voice rose in a shocked bellow of rage. With a small leap, she cleared the railing. Rock plummeted past and suddenly they were doused in the raging river that ran beneath the throne room. Carried through the dark underground riverbed, bodies smashing against unseen rocks and outcroppings. No air pockets. No reprieve. She felt Wil stiffen and jerk as though he suddenly was shocked back to awareness. Her lungs strained to release the last breath of air. Darkness engulfed her to the point that she barely felt Wil's hand clutch her own. She barely felt the dimensional rift pass over her, as Wil instinctively opened a doorway. And the two of them were sucked out of the river and deposited in a sea of chaos...

RELAPSE

Enise didn't know how to describe the sensations that assaulted her. Something akin to static electricity played across her skin, causing the small hairs on the back of her neck to stand erect. She was falling through a sea of chaos – yet *falling* was the wrong term to use. Falling implied that there was a downward orientation. There was none. This was akin to floating weightless in space. But in space, there was no external motion associated with it. Wherever she was now, invisible forces buffeted her from every direction, causing her to spin and tumble in place, with no rhyme or reason to the motion.

Wil drifted beside her, subject to the same random forces. He had not stirred since they had arrived here – or more accurately, since he had consciously (or unconsciously) plucked them from the frying pan, and deposited them into this void.

Enise could still hear its voices, a cacophony of shrill conversations issuing forth from a collection of shifting faces formed of fire and smoke. It was as if each face had its own mind, holding an independent conversation. When combined, those conversations overlapped and drowned each other out so that no single thought could be followed. She had stood there in the vaulted chamber, unable to tear her gaze away from the Thing hovering over the obsidian throne – unable to

stop her analytical mind from trying to impose order on the chaotic image in front of her. Enise stared into the roiling image, trying to focus on one voice from among the many. She tried to fix her gaze on a single face, and focus on what it was saying, but each face formed for only a few moments before receding into the chaos to be replaced by another. Then she realized to her horror, that the individual voices were unimportant. The combination of voices produced a steady drone of overlapping sounds, which formed a larger, more cohesive message. It spoke, not with any one voice, but via modulation of the multitude of voices, and to her sudden horror, she realized that while she had been focusing her conscious mind on making sense of any one part, her unconscious had been getting the message quite clearly. "You will be my pawn..." it was already there, an echoing multitude, filling her mind with noise, obliterating her ordered thought process. So easy to understand if you stopped trying to focus, and just relaxed your mind. She felt something akin to warmth spread out from the center of her brain – it was so easy, almost seductive. It was like discovering the answer to a question locked away in the back of a memory you no longer realized you had. "Your powers will enhance my own." What powers? She didn't have any... and that was when it struck her. Wil. The thing was speaking to Wil. Not her. The teaming voices

weren't meant for her. Didn't want her. Didn't need her to understand the message. So she grabbed Wil and ran to the railing. And as she did, the screaming multitude of voices rose as one in a keening cry of alarm. Even as she cleared the railing, she knew, for just a split second what it meant to have the Beast focus its full attention on her. It didn't need her ears. It invaded her mind directly, overloading her thoughts with its message of hatred and fury. For only a fleeting moment, she felt the touch of unadulterated evil. And though she and Wil had escaped the chamber, she could still hear the voice echoing.

* * *

Doctor Nicholas Mercer leaned forward and tapped his patient on the shoulder. "Enise?"

There was no response from the auburn-haired woman. She appeared to have stopped straining against the straight-jacket. Nick's brow furrowed. Actually, she appeared to stop doing anything at all. Enise was staring straight ahead with her mouth still slightly open, locked into the shape of the last sound she had been making before the catatonia set in.

Quickly he checked her pulse and respiration. She was breathing; her heart was beating; but her limbs were limp. Her staring eyes were glazed over, and didn't react or even blink. He grabbed both her shoulders and shook her.

"Enise? Enise, talk to me." His voice rose to near panic. "Oh god, Enise. Doctor Westfield! Wake up!"

Nick backed away from the bed and called out over his shoulder. "Rachel? Rachel, I need a staff nurse in here right away!"

* * *

INVESTIGATION

Nick sat at his borrowed desk and stared at the report in front of him. It didn't make any sense. Enise Westfield had suffered some sort of seizure while trying to recount something that had happened in her past. He rewound the tape of her last words, and played it back again.

"We jumped over the railing. The thing...screamed at me. I felt it... in here..."

For a moment, he heard only the hiss of the tape, and her labored breathing.

"Felt it? Felt discomfort?"

Her response at this point had been to look up and glare at him, but he remembered seeing her wince at another sharp twinge. The audio tape revealed none of that.

"Pain?"

More silence on the tape...a vague rustling sound.

"So much anger. The voices were inside ...", more silence...

"Enise?"

"I could still hear them, even though we weren't there anymore."

"Can you describe the voices?"

Silence.

"Enise, can you describe the voices? What did they sound like", again, the tape failed to convey the look he had seen on her face.

"So many... All speaking at once... Fragments... They were angry. They wanted Wil."

Nick closed his eyes and bowed his head at this point. This was where he had made the connection. This was when he thought he had cracked the case. His eyes focused on the slowly turning rotors of the cassette, and he wished once more that he had kept his mouth shut.

"Enise?"

"What?", she sounded far away.

Why did I push it?

"Enise? Did the voices tell you to kill Wil Ohmsford?"

The tape hissed....a sob...

Don't say it!

"Enise, do you still hear the voices?"

Her face had contorted at that point. Twisting into a look of utter anguish. Nick brought his arms over his head and slumped lower in the chair.

"Enise? Enise, talk to me." His rose, cracking as he spoke. "Oh god, Enise. Doctor Westfield! Wake up!"

He heard the sound of a chair scraping rapidly across the tile floor. "Rachel? Rachel, I need a staff nurse in here right away!"

The next several minutes were a jumble. Rachel's muffled voice through the cell door, followed by the clicking of keys in the lock. Nick heard the low whine of Rachel's tazer as she drew it to cover Enise's unmoving form. Then the scuffling footsteps of the two orderlies, Smitty and Jose rushing in.

The tape clicked off.

Nick sat staring at the tape recorder for several minutes, then he suddenly lashed out, slamming the palm of his hand on the tabletop, sending Enise's file contents skittering off the desk and down onto the floor.

Swearing an oath, Nick pushed the chair back and went around to collect the papers. The file contained every scrap of paper that existed about the mysterious Doctor Enise Westfield.

He picked them up one by one, glancing at each page. Her medical credentials (forged). Her social security card (forged). Rental papers from her south-side apartment – no previous rentals. Her bloodwork and lab results – which were the most perplexing, indicating that she was somehow not human, or at least, like no human anyone had ever seen before. Pay stubs from the hospital in Chiwaukee where she had worked for two years. The case files for every patient in her remarkable career. She had an unbelievable success rate. Only one death, at the tail end: Wil Ohmsford.

Nick flipped through the pay stubs again, and paused.

He pulled one stub out of the stack and then began rifling through the scattered papers in earnest. His breaths became



more rushed as he did so.

Suddenly he stopped. He had found something he missed earlier. *Her address changed.* Her first few paychecks had not listed the apartment as her mailing address. They listed a north side neighborhood address – and a phone number.

Nick reached across the worn wooden desk and dragged the heavy black rotary phone closer. He picked up the receiver, and then breathing very rapidly, he spun the dial.

Ring

This is insane, he thought. How could the number be the same? It's been four years.

Ring

If it was listed in Enise's name, surely it would have been reassigned by now.

Ring

But what if it wasn't Enise's number?

Ring

What if she stayed with a friend...

Ring - Click

"Hello?" A woman's voice.

"Yes, hello. My name is Nicholas Mercer. I... I don't know if ... this is rather awkward, but would you by any chance know a woman by the name of Enise Westfield?"

Nick could swear he heard a sharp gasp from the woman.

"Who is this? What do you want?"

"I'm just looking for information about Enise Westfield. Do you know her?"

There was a long pause. "*Don't call here anymore.*"

Click

Nick stared dumbfounded at the receiver. *She hung up on me. Why would she do that. Unless she does know something.*

He dialed the number again.

This time it rang and rang. Nobody picked up. After a dozen rings, he hung up and tried again. After another ten he slammed the bulky receiver back onto its cradle.

Damn!

He picked it up again and stabbed the intercom switch. The department secretary, Emma answered him.

"Yes, Doctor Mercer?"

"Emma, I need to have a phone number traced."

There was a pause.

"Yeah?"

"Emma, this is very important. I need to find out who this number belongs to, and where they live."

Nick could almost hear the girl rolling her eyes. "*Doctor...*"

"Emma! I am not going to argue with you. Either find the number yourself, or find someone who can!" for a moment, he considered leaving it at that, and then for good measure, added, "Now!"

The checkered cab slid down the crowded neighborhood street like a cat stalking small prey. Nick was staring at each

brownstone building as they passed. *Two thirty-seven, two thirty-five, thirty-three... Woah.*

The house that stood at Two thirty-one Farregut was unlike any other building on the block. Each of the other houses stood two full stories tall, with Victorian gabled attics comprising a third floor above. Each crumbling structure had to be a century old. The house at two thirty-one was new. Real new. It appeared to have been built in the last year. The modern glass and metal architecture vaulted skyward, at least as tall as the older buildings. Light streamed from a dozen floor-to-ceiling windows on each floor. The front yard was completely surrounded by a six-foot wall, topped with several rows of twisted metal spikes. Nick ordered the driver to stop in front of the building. He paid his fare, and waited for the middle-eastern driver to count the bills and unlatch the door so Nick could get out. Nick stood transfixed by the fluid lines of the house. *Who would build a thing like this, here?*

He stared at it for several minutes, interrupted from his reverie by the sudden realization that the cab had already left, and he was now standing in the middle of the street alone.

Cars lined both sides of the street, packed bumper-to-bumper and leaving a collection of gaps too small to pass through. He walked past three cars before he found a spot large enough to get through to the sidewalk. As he squeezed between a dirty gray Zil and a dented black PT Espresso Cruiser, he inadvertently set off the alarm system of the black car. The horn blared weakly and the headlights flashed a dull yellow-orange. Caught off-guard, Nick tripped over the edge of the concrete curb and fell roughly to the ground. As he thrust his hands into the twisted dusty weeds that choked the parkway, he felt something sharp slice into the palm of his left hand. Embarrassed and injured, he pushed himself up into a sitting position and tried to figure out what had happened. A shard of dark brown glass protruded from the thick, radial pad of his left palm. He grasped the shard firmly with his right hand and yanked it out, stifling an involuntary yelp of pain as he did so. He clamped his fingers down across the wound, to apply pressure. Nick felt his fingers grow slick with blood and turned around to view the injury in the flashing headlamp of the Cruiser. With each flicker of illumination, the headlight dimmed more, and the horn took on a more plaintive wail. All he could make out was an angry gash, oozing thick dark blood. With his good hand, he reached inside his coat and pulled out a faded blue handkerchief, which he folded several times and pressed against the wound. The searing pain of the glass slowly faded away, leaving a dull throbbing ache that seemed to emanate from the center of his wounded hand.

Nick stood shakily, and surveyed the street. Despite the car alarm – now sounding more like a low sustained moan, no people emerged. *At least the handkerchief will contain the bleeding for the moment.* He knew that a block to the west, he would find a small line of shops – perhaps he would be able to clean the cut – avoid a nasty infection. Or perhaps...

Nick lurched forward and ran up to the metal gate set into

the wall outside the glass house. He leaned against the cold stone and pulled on the metal gate. It didn't budge. He surveyed both sides of the stone frame, and found an intercom box. He stabbed the button, and waited.

After a few moments, a man's voice answered. "Yes?"

Nick moved his face closer to the intercom speaker. "Hello? I'm sorry to bother you, but I've been injured."

Nick stared at the speaker expectantly. Surely the person would offer to help him.

"I'm sorry. What do you expect me to do about it?"

"I...", What was he hoping for? "I wondered if I could trouble you for some ... disinfectant? It's rather a deep cut."

"Look buddy, I sympathize with you, really I do, but..."

"My name is Nicholas Mercer. Doctor Nicholas Mercer. I know this is very unusual, but I promise you this is legitimate. I'll be happy to pay you for use of a first-aid kit."

Again, silence from the intercom. *Why do I keep finding myself staring at tiny speakers today?*

Growing anxious, Nick pressed the button and spoke again. "Hello? Are you still there?"

Instead of a reply from the intercom, the front yard was suddenly bathed in a bright blue-white light. Through the gate, Nick could now make out every detail of the rock garden within the wall. The front door opened, and a figure descended the stone staircase. Nick heard the uneven footsteps of the man as he approached. With each step, it became clear that he had only limited use of his left leg. It dragged stiffly behind as he walked. He had close-cropped brown hair, and was wearing dark blue sweat pants and matching sweat-shirt with white block letters C.P.D. across the chest. In his hand, he held a small rectangular white box with a red cross emblazoned across its lid. He paused at the gate, and slid the box through the bars. As Nick accepted the box, he noticed a gold wedding band on the man's left ring finger.

"Thank you very much, Mr..."

"Fader," the man replied. "You don't have to worry about paying me. Just slide the box back through the bars when you finish with it." He turned to go.

This wasn't going the way Nick had planned it.

"Please, I'm sorry to be a bother. But the truth is, I was on my way to see you. Well, your wife, anyway."

The man stopped halfway up the walk. Without turning, he asked, "What do you want with my wife?"

"I told you already, I'm a doctor. A psychiatrist, actually."

Nick saw the man's shoulders stiffen, but he remained facing back toward the house – bathed in the blue-white glow of the floodlights. For a moment, the only sounds were the passing cars on the busy cross street a block to the west and the death rattle of the black PT Cruiser behind him. He pressed on. "I believe your wife is acquainted with a patient of mine. I think your wife may be able to shed some light on my patient's condition."

The man's shoulders compressed another three centime-

ters, but he still remained with his back to Nick. "My wife doesn't do this sort of thing anymore, Doctor."

"Please," Nick pleaded, "Please just ask her if she knows Enise Westfield."

The man's head snapped right, and he glared at Nick out of the corner of his eye. Then, in what Nick assumed was an involuntary response; he saw the man reach down and nervously rub his hand along the thigh of his stiff leg. It seemed like the man stood there for an eternity before finally turning back around to face him again.

"Yes, she knows her. How can she possibly help you?"

"Two days ago, Doctor Westfield suffered a seizure. She's in a complete vegetative state. I believe this relates to an incident from her past. Something happened to Enise during the time period that your wife knew her. I'm hoping she can help me understand what that was."

The man turned back toward the house and began walking again. This time, his uneven steps were quicker than before. He leaned heavily on the railing as he used his good leg to hop up the staircase.

Nick watched the man disappear into the house. The car behind him had at last gone silent. In the distance, he heard the faraway echo of the city sounds: car horns, sirens, dogs barking..."

A loud buzz sounded from the small intercom speaker, a second later the gate swung inward. Nick pushed through, and hurried across the brightly lit courtyard. Halfway to the porch steps, he heard the gate clang shut behind him. This was followed by another audible buzz. In the distance, he heard something that sounded like a turbine wind slowly to life, while at the same time a low hum replaced the silence of the night. A tiny blue spark arced between two of the twisted metal spikes lining the wall. *Electrified*, thought Nick.

He climbed the six smooth concrete steps, and found the front door standing ajar. The door itself was adorned with decorative metal plates, welded into an interlocking pattern to protect the thick glass beneath. It swung silently closed behind him as he cleared the foyer.

The man was standing in the entry hall. The floor appeared to be highly polished stone, the walls translucent frosted glass panels, reflecting a variety of soothing colors. The man looked expectantly at Nick and nodded toward the makeshift bandage. "Let's have a look."

Nick unwrapped the blood-soaked handkerchief and held his hand out for the man to get a closer look.

"Nasty," he said as he pointed to a door on the left. "You can use the bathroom here to clean that up. I'll go tell Sara you're here."

As Nick entered the bathroom, the overhead lights flickered to life. The bathroom was decorated in the same modern style as the foyer. The sink itself had no handles. The spigot simply came to life with tepid water when he placed his hands beneath it. The wound stung when the water hit it. The soap made it sting even more. The steady flow of blood at last



seemed to subside. When he was sure he had thoroughly cleaned the wound, Nick opened a small bottle of disinfectant, and then poured the clear liquid into the gash. Every pain receptor in his hand blazed to life. A fresh stream of blood poured out – only this time brighter red – cleaner. In a moment, the blood flow slowed enough, and Nick was finally able to wrap the cut in fresh gauze. He quietly reassembled the FirstAid kit, and stepped back into the hall.

Nick found the woman already in the hall waiting for him. She had shoulder-length straight brown hair streaked with grey. The hair, along with deep worry-lines on her brow and at the corners of her blue eyes betrayed someone who had been run roughshod through life's wringer.

She fixed her gaze on Nick for so long, that he began to feel uncomfortable. "You want me to tell you about Enise," she said at last.

Nick nodded. "Yes. I'm her psychiatrist. She appears to have lapsed into some sort of catatonia."

She sighed heavily, then pointed toward a doorway behind her. The door slid silently opened and a warm glow rose up to fill the room. Sara pointed at two chairs facing each other across a small round table. "Please, come in and sit down."

"Thank you, Mrs ... Fader"

"Sara Lynn Devereaux," she said with a slight edge in her voice. I kept my maiden name. You can just call me Sara."

"All right Sara. I'm going to try to take up as little of your time as possible. I already know about Enise's ... shall we say 'unique' background."

Sara Lynn's gaze seemed to blaze right through Nick, making him feel uncomfortable all over again. "Do you?"

"Yes. I know she claims to be... from...", Nick paused and looked to the left and right, then whispered, "the future."

Sara nodded. "I see. She told you about that, eh? I'm actually impressed."

"Yes, well in the course of getting that information out of her, she seems to have suffered this attack. Tell me, do you know of any psychotic episodes in her past?"

Sara Lynn's eyes seemed to glaze over for a moment, as she relived a moment...At last she nodded slowly.

"Yes, I think I may be able to help you." And she began to speak...

* * *

SARA LYNN

Sara Lynn awoke with a start. She sat up in bed, clutching the edge of the sheet to her chin. *She's in trouble!* The dream had seemed so real, but now was fading; the details slipping away. *She's in pain.* Sara Lynn shook her head, trying to grasp at the wisps of the dream before they faded completely away. But like a fine mist, the dream evaporated. *Who is "she"?* Try as she might, Sara Lynn could not remember whom the dream had been about. Eventually, she admitted defeat and got out of bed.

Her bedroom in the third floor gable of the Chiwaukee motherhouse was unusually cold. Shivering slightly, she

pulled the comforter off the bed, wrapped it around herself, and headed for the bathroom down the hall.

The sound of her footsteps seemed abnormally loud in the empty house. The rest of her housemates had left earlier in the week to follow up some of the leads from a recent investigation. So far, they hadn't reported back with any success. Since that time, Sara Lynn had been here - alone - holding down the fort.

The temperature in the hallway and bathroom was warmer than she expected. It wasn't unusual for room temperatures to vary in this drafty old house, but the third floor rooms were usually where all the heat wound up. She flicked on the dim fluorescent light and checked her reflection in the mirror. The bags under her eyes told her she hadn't slept well at all.

A few minutes later, Sara Lynn was padding back down the hall to her bedroom. She sat down at the dressing table mirror and began brushing her long dark hair. She felt the tingle of danger in the back of her mind moments before it happened.

Suddenly overwhelmed by the certain feeling that she was no longer alone, Sara turned around and saw the translucent figure of a woman crouching in the corner; her eyes squeezed shut, her hands over her ears and apparently screaming, although Sara could hear no sound.

Sara Lynn moved toward the apparition. She didn't feel fear at the intrusion - in fact, there was something oddly familiar about the figure. *She needs help.* Sara Lynn reached out to touch the woman, but her fingers passed unhindered right through the image. The only sound came just as she disappeared: a distant echo of a scream. And then Sara Lynn was alone once more.

Although she stood perfectly still for several minutes after the woman had faded away, Sara Lynn's mind was racing. *She shouldn't be here. She went home.*

There was no doubt in Sara Lynn's mind that the woman in her dream and the image in the room were one and the same. Doctor Enise Westfield had been one of a group of travelers from another time and place; perhaps even another dimension. They had been here for only a short time, searching for a way home. Along the way, the Dark forces had taken notice of their group. One in particular had taken a special interest in those strangers. In the end, Enise and the others had struck a deal with the devil, and he had promised to send them home. Until this moment, Sara Lynn had never doubted that they had made it.

But now, the doctor had appeared briefly in Sara Lynn's bedchamber. *If she's in pain, she's alive.*

Sara Lynn flung open her closet and began getting dressed. She had a lot of work to do. And she'd need help.

GYUNTER

Professor Gyünter Hjeldorf stood at the podium of the Drake Hotel. The noted parapsychist closed his notebook and called for the house lights to be turned on. A moment

later, the last slide, a poorly focused picture of an alleged ghost was washed out by the illumination level of the room. He spoke with a thick Swedish accent, "...and daht, is vy I am ... convinced ... zat zis photo is a fake.", he concluded with a self-satisfied nod.

Professor Gyünter Hjeldorf was one of the foremost experts in the field of supernatural occurrences. Her contact on the Talamasca web had steered her in this direction. Although he had not yet dealt directly with the Talamasca, Professor Hjeldorf's abilities had been tested from afar via third party contact.

According to his dossier, Gyünter Hjeldorf possessed a keen analytical mind that wouldn't be colored by preconceived notions or prejudice. There was only one problem: he had spent so much time trying to quantify his theories on the supernatural, that he had not, as far as the Talamasca was able to determine, come across any legitimate Dark incursions. At this point, his reaction to proof of the Dark world's existence was anybody's guess.

The presentation was over, and most of the audience was filing out through the door. A small knot of fans crowded around Professor Hjeldorf as he tried to get his things together and leave. Eventually, he seemed to resign himself to the fact that he had to deal with his public. Sara Lynn joined the end of the line and quietly waited for a chance to speak to him. As she approached, she felt the Professor empathically scan her surface thoughts. She quickly tossed up a mental block, and was gratified to see the look of mild surprise that crossed the Swedish gentleman's face.

"Professor Hjeldorf," Sara Lynn began, "I have come across a situation that is a little beyond my area of expertise. It is something that may interest you. Do you believe in other dimensions? ... "

* * *

As the taxi threaded its way through the crowded streets, Gyünter felt like a kid in a candy store. He couldn't believe his luck. The book tour hadn't been going well - it had in fact been going so badly, he was beginning to have doubts about his place in the literary world. Suddenly this woman, Sara Lynn had arrived, and presented him with a chance at definitive proof that his theories on the supernatural were grounded in fact. Her briefcase sat on the seat between them, bearing its precious cargo of portable recording equipment.

As they grew closer to their destination, Sara Lynn began instructing the driver the best way to traverse the maze of one-way streets that marked her neighborhood. He didn't know about the driver, but Gyünter was thoroughly confused by the dark, twisting streets of Chiwaukee, and by the time they reached the end of the ride, he was quite lost.

The cab came to a stop on a side street lined on both sides by tall trees and brownstone buildings. Sara Lynn got out of the cab, paid the driver, and led Gyünter toward the wrought-iron gate of one of the larger houses on the block. The parapets, arches and columns dated this house at well over one-

hundred years old, but the condition of the building and the grounds were impeccable. Sara Lynn opened the front door, and motioned for him to walk inside. They stood in a vaulted entry foyer of polished mahogany. To their right, a spacious parlor; to their left a library that was equally as large, but appeared to extend upward to a second floor. The library walls were filled with volume after volume of leather-bound books. Sara Lynn motioned for him to wait by the door, while she advanced further down the hall to another side chamber. He could hear the sounds of an answering machine being checked. Taking the moment of distraction, he slipped into the library and looked at the nearest shelf. He was shocked to discover a fairly extensive collection of books on the occult and the supernatural. Among the books he found several of his own works.

"Oh, there you are, Professor." Sara Lynn said from very close behind him, startling him out of his reverie. "I see you found your book."

Hjeldorf turned toward her. "Excuse me, miss. But I thought you said you needed *my* help."

"My area of expertise is Mysticism, Professor Hjeldorf. I don't think this situation necessarily falls into that realm."

"But your library..."

"I share this house with others who are not here at the moment. These books are not mine. I need you to help me figure out what we're dealing with here."

"All right, show me where you saw the woman..."

An hour later, he was in Sara Lynn's bedroom pointing his portable video camera and a handful of passive sensors at the corner of the room where Enise had last appeared.

ENISE

The hours dragged by. Sara was handing Gyünter what must have been his sixth cup of coffee when the air density monitor began emitting a high-pitched whine. A moment later, the air in the corner of the room shimmered and appeared to spread open. For an instant, Sara Lynn saw Enise through a dimension-walk portal. Gyünter, overcome with fascination, rushed forward and reached into the opening. Sara Lynn started to warn him, but it was too late, he had already plunged his arm into the rift. He cried out in triumph and began pulling backward with all his might. Sara Lynn focused her empathic abilities on strengthening the portal. Anything to keep it from snapping shut while they were halfway through.

Professor Gyünter Hjeldorf looked at the hand clasped in his own. The hand of a woman snatched literally out of thin air. The only explanation was a parallel dimension. Somewhere in the back of his mind, his brain ran over a myriad of formulae and explanations. He was touching another space! He drew back, digging his heels into the carpeted floor. Inch by inch, he pulled the woman closer. The air around her seemed to stretch and congeal into a sort of membrane that parted for her passage. Suddenly, her full weight was on the end of his arm, and he was dragged to the floor along with



her as she finally passed all the way through. A moment later, there was a vague popping sound, and the portal closed.

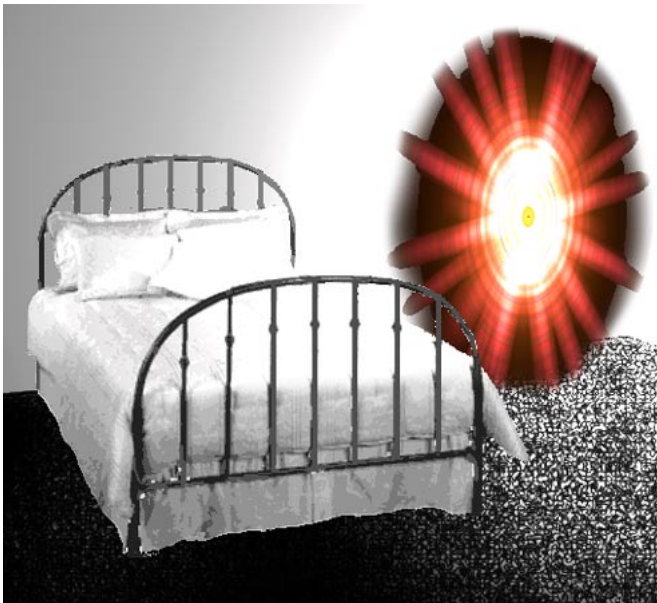
Sara Lynn rushed forward. There was no denying it. The unconscious woman who suddenly dropped into her bedroom was Doctor Enise Westfield. Pushing Gyünter roughly out of the way, she began trying to revive the other woman. Enise stirred, moaning softly at first. The moan grew louder. Then, as if she suddenly realized she was hearing the sound of her own voice, the doctor's eyes snapped open. She cast her gaze wildly about, focusing first on the Swede, and then on Sara Lynn. But the look in those eyes was not one of recognition. Sara Lynn saw only terror and madness. Enise suddenly began thrashing about wildly. "*No! The Eyes! Stay away!*" Gyünter reached out and helped restrain her as Sara Lynn tried speaking softly and reassuringly. "*It was so hungry! The Eyes. The Teeth.*" Hjeldorf motioned for Sara Lynn to hold the hysterical woman down, while he went to his medical bag. He came back with a hypodermic full of sedative, which he injected unceremoniously into Enise's arm. Just before she slipped into sleep, her mind seemed to focus, if only for an instant. "... *Hungry ... Evil ... Sara ... Help him ... He's so alone ...*"

* * *

"This is fantastic!" Gyünter was beside himself with excitement. He ran over to his video camera, verifying that it was still operating. "Proof! Definitive proof of another dimension!" Sara Lynn looked at the Swedish man with a look of annoyance. "That's great Professor, now will you please help me get her on the bed?"

Gyünter continued babbling, even as he helped situate Enise on the comforter. "I need to call John. Yes, once he gets here with the van, we can get the real equipment set up. Then we can go over all the data."

Sara Lynn turned the comforter over and tucked it around Enise's shoulders. "Who's John?" she asked.



"John Proctor. My assistant."

"Professor, I'm not so sure that's a good idea."

"Of course it is. How else can we quantify our data?"

"Look, based on what she said, there's someone else out there who needs our help."

"All the more reason to call in my assistant! Don't worry, my dear. You won't even realize he's here. He's a wonderful young man. Very conscientious."

And with that, the now quite giddy Swede pulled out his cellular phone and began dialing.

JOHN

John Proctor absentmindedly drummed his fingers on the polished mahogany bar as the bartender topped off his drink. He took the shotglass full of amber fire and drained it, relishing the burning sensation that shot down his throat and rested in the pit of his stomach. The warmth spread out from there, and he separated himself one step further from the hell that had been his day. Professor Hjeldorf had been particularly demanding as he wanted everything to be perfect for his presentation at the Drake Hotel. And as far as John was concerned, everything had gone fine. But that Swedish bastard had just kept on about this detail and that. Proctor shook his head. Six more months of putting up with that prick were all he needed to finish his degree. "Itsh jush thaht he's never shatishfied..." he slurred to his dark-haired companion on the right. That man nodded understandingly and continued to listen. John put his arm around his companion's shoulder. "You know what, friend? You're a good listener."

The look of understanding never wavered even as the man smiled slyly at the third man in the group.

"Oh, Malcolm is an exceptional listener," the third man answered. "Never a cross word from that one."

Malcolm smiled again and motioned for his friend to continue.

"No sir! Never a disagreeable phrase."

Proctor turned to the third guy. "But you're a swell fella too, Eddie..." he paused and looked like he was rearranging his tongue before continuing, "You've both been great."

Eddie Frasier tipped his glass back, draining it. He motioned for the bartender to refill it again. "Let me tell you something my young friend. As long as you're buying, we're listening!"

Malcolm looked away, shaking his head. Sometimes Eddie took things too far. He was getting dangerously close to that point now. He reached into his breast pocket and pulled out a small pad of paper and a pen. He scribbled out a quick note, ripped it off, and very pointedly passed it to his large companion. Eddie looked annoyed at the interruption, but read the note. It read simply: "*You're pushing it.*"

Eddie and Malcolm locked eyes for a moment. Finally his gaze softened. "When you're right, you're right."

John turned to Malcolm and focused on him for a full minute before realization dawned in his drunken features.

"You can't talk, can you?"

Malcolm ran his left hand through the mop of black hair on his head. He smiled warmly and then put his right hand over his mouth and slowly shook his head.

The bartender burst out laughing and slapped a five dollar bill onto the bar in front of the mute. "I never would have believed you'd make it the full hour!"

Malcolm pocketed the bill. Eddie pulled a five out of his wallet and passed it over to Malcolm as well. Proctor just looked confused. Eddie nudged the drunken man, "That's pretty much a record for him. You really are caught up in your problems."

John's response was cut off by a high-pitched ringing coming from his coat pocket. His eyes lost focus while somewhere in his alcohol soaked brain, it registered that his cell phone was ringing. He fumbled in his pocket, and raised the phone to his ear. "He ... Hello? Professor! Uh ... But ... You said I could take the night off ... Uh ... Yes, I have the van, but ... a pen?"

Malcolm quickly handed over his pad and pen and motioned for Proctor to use them. "Two thirty-one Farregut, Yeah, I've got it."

John deactivated the phone and tried to stand. "Sorry fellas. His master's voice."

He pulled a ring of keys out of his pocket, took a half step forward, and fell flat on his face, snoring on the bar floor.

MALCOLM & EDDIE

Gyünter and Sara Lynn both heard the car doors slam at the same time. They had just moved Enise into the isolation room in the basement of the motherhouse. The woman was obviously not in her right mind, and fearing that she may come to harm, they had placed her in the padded workout room. Besides, on two separate occasions now, very weak beginnings of dimensional portals had formed in Sara Lynn's bedroom. They feared that should one of these become sufficiently large, it may well suck the Doctor right back out of the house. There was also evidence that several other proto-portals had formed throughout the house. It appeared as though someone was trying to gain entry from another dimension. But when they heard more than one door slam outside, they both hurried up the stairs to meet whoever was arriving.

The three men at the door did not look like they belonged together. Gyünter recognized his assistant John Proctor in the middle. The two men holding him up were complete strangers. Both men were very strong looking, one fair-haired the other dark. The one with the lighter hair spoke first. "Excuse me, but do you know this man? He passed out in a bar uptown, and had just written down this address."

Professor Hjeldorf moved forward and gripped Proctor's face in his hand. "He is completely drunk!"

The dark-haired stranger began nodding vigorously.

"I thought you said he was conscientious, Professor." Sara Lynn snapped at the Swedish man.

"He is. Normally. I am at a loss to explain it."

The sandy-haired spokesman continued, "Well now, this is what happens when you have a dozen shots of whiskey."

Gyünter frowned at his inebriated assistant. "He is useless to me like this. Tell, me gentlemen, could I ask your help carrying some equipment in from the van?"

Malcolm and Eddie just looked at each other and shrugged. Malcolm checked his watch, then nodded to Eddie.

"Sure. I suppose it's the least we can do for ya, seem' how it's sorta our fault your friend here is so...useless."

After the fourth trip up to the third floor of the old house, the two ex-marines were beginning to get a little tired. "What is all this stuff for, Professor? You guys making dirty movies or something?" Eddie asked.

Hjeldorf looked up from behind the massive video camera he was adjusting. "No. We are observing supernatural phenomena." He resumed his tinkering.

Malcolm looked over the equipment with interest. He had seen some of this stuff in the service. It was all state-of-the-art surveillance equipment. There was stuff here that could look through concrete walls from a half mile away, yet all of it was aimed at one corner of this room. It didn't make sense to him, and he flipped out his pad of paper to write that very sentiment down when the cry of alarm came from downstairs.

The three men arrived in the entry hall to find Sara Lynn looking visibly upset.

"Enise is gone. I checked the isolation room downstairs. It looks like she picked the lock and got out!"

"Wait a minute! You guys had a girl locked up downstairs?"

"She's deranged," Gyünter said as if in his own defense.

"She's not well." Sara Lynn amended. "She was locked in her room for her own protection. Only - she's escaped"

After getting a brief description of the missing physician, Malcolm and Eddie headed off in opposite directions down the crowded neighborhood street. It was dark out, which wasn't going to aid their search any. The only thing they had to go on, was the odd clothing their quarry was apparently wearing. After a few blocks, Malcolm heard the sound of whimpering coming from behind a tree in a corner lot.

He approached quietly, not wanting to spook his prey. The woman under the tree was seated on the ground with her head buried between her upraised knees. She wore a black one-piece body suit with yellow piping. In her hands, clutched across her knees appeared to be a broomstick. Satisfied that this was the woman he sought, the mute stepped forward and gently laid his hand on her shoulder.

He was amazed by the speed of her reaction. With a sharp whistling sound, the broomstick lashed out. He heard the crack of it against the side of his head before he even saw it move. He instinctively dropped and rolled with the blow, rising back to his feet in a defensive stance. The woman crouched before him, the broomstick spinning from hand to hand, too quickly to be seen. She emitted a feral growl and



lashed out with the stick again. This time he was ready. He parried the blow and rolled into a new position, closer to the tree. He hoped its proximity would limit her range with the staff. She came at him again, feinting toward the tree trunk as he had hoped, but then quickly reversing the staff's momentum and sent it whistling toward his skull. Malcolm tucked into a roll forward and scissored her legs with his own. Be the time the staff struck the ground where he had been, she was already tumbling to one side. He flipped over and tried to grab the stick before she regained her balance. As soon as his hands found purchase on the rough wood, she released it and punched him squarely in the nose. Bright streaks of light shot through his field of vision, disorienting him momentarily. He dropped backward, using the staff as a counterbalance and rolling neatly back to his feet. He tossed the broomstick straight up into the air and dove at her legs. As he'd hoped, her attention was drawn upward toward her weapon. He hit her full force and bore her to the ground. Then, a moment later, he had her in a headlock and was laying her down as gently as possible. She thrashed and shrieked, but he didn't release her. Slowly, her struggles subsided, and she started sobbing. At that point, she went completely limp, all the fight worn out of her. Very carefully, Malcolm released her and pulled the pad of paper out of his pocket. He wrote a quick note and handed it to the sobbing woman, "Doctor, My name is Malcolm. I'm here to help."

For a moment, Enise and Malcolm locked gazes. For a moment he believed she seemed to accepted what he had written. And then suddenly she lashed out at him emitting a ferocious snarl. Malcolm parried the blow and responded with a quick jab to a pressure point on her neck, dropping her like a sack of flour.

Satisfied that he at least had the right person, and that she was effectively restrained, Malcolm hoisted her up over his

shoulder, and jogged back toward the house.

WIL

Enise shrieked again. The shapes surrounded her. The darkness called. Wil needed her help. Strangers leered. "You've got to let me go!", she screamed and pulled against the ropes binding her arms. "Wil ... needs me!"

John Proctor looked up from behind the camera he was pointing at the hysterical doctor. He winced and put his hand to his head. "Does she have to keep screaming like that?"

"It isn't her fault you went out drinking last night.", Gyünter retorted. "Keep filming."

"My bag!" Enise cried.

Sara Lynn wrung her hands and looked with concern at her friend. "Enise. It's Sara Lynn Devereaux. You're safe now."

"No!", the madwoman cried back. "Not yet! Too much noise! Can't focus! Need bag."

Gyünter turned to Sara Lynn. "What is this bag she keeps referring to?"

"She's a surgeon. She probably means her medical bag."

The Swede picked up the black bag and began rummaging through the vials. "I don't recognize any of the markings on these bottles."

"No. You wouldn't. But if there's anything that will help her, it's probably in there."

Enise opened her eyes wide, and visibly clenched her jaw. She seemed to be concentrating very hard. "Get ... my ... bag!"

The mystic and the professor looked at each other. Gyünter shook his head. "I have no idea what any of this stuff is. She could kill herself."

Sara Lynn looked into Enise's eyes. Beads of sweat stood out on the doctor's forehead, and she visibly trembled. A tear slid down her cheek, and her voice cracked in a softly pleading tone, "Please?"

Malcolm and Eddie were sitting quietly in the parlor when Sara Lynn called them down to the isolation room an hour later. The mute had refused to leave the house until he was sure the doctor had come to no further harm as a result of his capturing her. Doctor Enise Westfield now sat up in bed, unrestrained. There were dark circles under her puffy eyes, which no longer glowed with the light of madness. She was sipping from a cup of tea. She looked at the big dark-haired marine. "Thank-you sir. I am in your debt." She spoke with a thick accent. It sounded French.

Malcolm smiled and shrugged. He jotted down a quick note and handed it to the woman on the bed. She took the paper, and then a look of sadness flickered across her face. She handed it over to Sara. "I'm sorry, she said. I can't read your language."

Sara Lynn read the note out loud. "It says, 'You have a very impressive technique.' I think he means your ability with the staff."

Malcolm nodded, rubbing a visible welt on the side of his



head.

Sara Lynn's face changed to one of stern interest. "Enise, what are you doing here?"

"Wil wanted to come back. I came to look after him."

"Didn't you get home?"

"Yes. And no. Not exactly the same home we left. Wil didn't feel like he belonged anymore."

"So where is he?"

Enise's features tightened as she remembered something. "We went back to the place that Sebastian first took us ... the same place he sent us home from. When we were there ..." Her face darkened and she began to sweat again.

"Easy Enise, don't push."

"We got some-THING's attention. Wil tried to dimension walk. The next thing we knew, we were ... floating."

"Where? In water?"

"No, in nothing. In static. There was no sound. No sensation." Her breathing started to get more labored. "It was like being in a sensory deprivation tank. We kept trying to stay together, to maintain physical contact, but we started drifting apart. Wil couldn't use his abilities there."

Gyünter looked at Sara Lynn. "Do you understand what she is talking about?"

"I think so, Professor. There is a place between dimensions. A void place, called the interstices. If they were ... if Wil is trapped there, it's no wonder ... It must be the purest dumb luck that you drifted someplace close to our dimension."

Enise shook her head. "He said he was focusing on you."

That statement seemed to bother Sara Lynn. "Yeah. He's probably powerful enough to manage that too." She turned back toward the Swede. "Wil Ohmsford is a powerful neuropath. He has abilities beyond anyone I've ever met. But he is untrained. He can't control them."

"Does that explain what we've been observing?"

Sara Lynn thought for a moment. "It might." It's almost impossible to get out of the interstices. But someone of Wil's raw potential might be able to force some portals to begin forming. He lacks the skill to make them stick."

"So he keeps trying to get here."

"Yes. Opening doorway after doorway, but they snap shut before he can get through."

"Can you help him?" Enise asked.

"Maybe. But the longer he's out there, the weaker he'll become. We're going to have to work fast."

Sara Lynn, Gyünter, John, Malcolm, Eddie and Enise all spread out through the house. They kept a desperate vigil, searching for any sign of a new portal. Then, whenever one was spotted, Sara Lynn raced to that room, and tried augmenting the doorway with her own dimension-walk ability. Sara Lynn even tried opening a portal to the interstices herself, but they could see no sign of Wil Ohmsford within. Eventually, one of the proximity alarms in Sara Lynn's bedroom went off.

In the exact same place that Enise had first appeared, another portal began to form. Sara Lynn went into a trance, and concentrated on the shimmering link to Wil. The others watched in amazement as the air in the corner of the room opened up. Floating in the silent darkness, was the figure of a man.

"That's him!" Enise called out, "You've found him!"

Sara Lynn Devereaux stepped into the open portal. It was well formed. She was confident it would remain intact for a while yet. As she stepped into the void, she found herself plunged into deafening silence and floating free. She reached toward Wil, and caught hold of his shoulder. As he rotated around to face her, she saw something attached to his face. The thing was a mass of biological stuff, gray in color. Four long appendages snaked out from the sides and wrapped around his skull. The center of the body, had a translucent dome, which pulsed with a dark red glow. She recoiled from the thing instinctively, but doing so caused Wil to begin drifting away again. She moved closer to Wil, and grabbed the tendrils which met at the back of his skull. She wrapped her fingers around the pulsing warm tentacles and tried prying them away from his head. The translucent orb glowed a deeper red and she felt its muscles tense up as it resisted her. Steeling herself against its resistance, Sara Lynn pulled as hard as she could. The appendages pulled away and then for just a moment, it seemed to stick at the point of contact with his forehead. Sara Lynn ripped the creature free and tossed it off into the void. A dark stain began to spread across Wil's forehead. The sudden realization that the thing had taken a bite out of him shocked her so deeply, that she didn't even notice when his eyes snapped open. The look in those eyes betrayed neither gratitude nor recognition, but a deep focused gaze of hatred, which if she had she noticed, surely would have chilled her blood.

Meanwhile, back in the room, the others watched as the mystic stepped through the rend and approached the figure in the void. The edges of the portal seemed solid enough, but as Sara Lynn appeared to be fighting for a grip on Wil's head, the rim began to shimmer. The portal flickered momentarily. "My god," Enise whispered. "That thing's going to close."

Malcolm and Eddie both reacted as one. The two of them simultaneously dove for the flickering portal. Malcolm, who timed his leap better, slid nimbly through the opening while Eddie slammed head-first into the nightstand. As Malcolm passed through the opening, he grabbed Sara Lynn by her rear belt loop and propelled her backward toward the portal. This simultaneously increased the speed of his trajectory toward Wil. He slammed into the neuropath's solar plexus, momentarily stunning him. As Wil went limp and his arms and legs flailed out, Malcolm executed a kick-turn and wrapped his legs around the other man's torso. Then flipping over, he lunged his hands back toward the visibly shrinking opening.

When Sara Lynn hit the floor, the wind was knocked out of her with a surprised whoosh. Gyünter raced past her and reached through the breach toward the mute. The two men



grasped hands, and Malcolm immediately began pulling himself and Wil hand-over-hand back toward the gate. The air began to coalesce into a transparent membrane which clung around Gyünter, Malcolm and Wil. There was a strange sucking sound followed by the crash of the three men, landing in a heap on the back of Eddie Frasier, still stunned by his close encounter with the nightstand. With a satisfied pop, the portal snapped closed.

INCURSION

“Get the hell off me!” Eddie Frasier screamed from beneath the tangle of bodies. Gyünter and Malcolm rolled off Eddie and turned Wil onto his back. Eddie stood up, rubbing the bruise on the crown of his head. Everyone in the room turned to look at the latest addition to the group.

Everyone that is, except for Enise. Her gaze was already transfixed on the gaping wound in Wil’s forehead. She could feel the artificial calm of her recently administered sedative begin to slip away. *Another head wound.* She watched as the rivulet of blood ran down Wil’s face, dividing into two around his nose. She moved forward in a daze, unconsciously pulling her medical kit out at the same time. Her medical scanner surveyed the damage caused by the mysterious creature. It had inflicted a deep puncture wound into the area of Wil’s pineal gland. The scanner detected some foreign residue in and around the puncture. It recommended a broad-spectrum antibiotic to stave off infection. Enise followed the recommendation without comment. As she cleaned the wound with a sterile pad, she felt the edges of her composure slipping. As her control began to ebb, her mind’s eye conjured up the image of the fiery cloud with the gnashing teeth and the ever-changing faces that had comprised the Dark One. She struggled to keep from whimpering as the cloud of faces coalesced into the image of Wil with a shaft of fire issuing forth from his forehead. Enise squeezed her eyes shut and tried to banish the image. She concentrated on the feeling of her hands trembling as she applied the bandage. Slowly the image receded into the dark recesses of her mind. She opened her eyes and looked down to see Wil Ohmsford; his eyes closed and his breathing slow and easy. The doctor reached into her black bag, and pulled out a mild stimulant. This she injected into Wil’s neck, and waited. A moment later, his eyelids fluttered open.

Wil sat up and looked around the room. A smile crossed his lips as he spotted Sara Lynn. He turned to Enise. “Doctor.” He said, “We appear to have made it.”

“How are you feeling, Wil?”

Wil stood slowly up, and flexed his knees. “I’m just fine, Doctor.”

“You were attacked by something. It was burrowing into your forehead.”

A look of mild concern flickered across his face as he raised his hand to find the bandage on his forehead.

He shrugged as the smile returned. “Well, it all appears to

be fine now.”

Sara Lynn stepped forward, her brow creased with consternation. “Wil?”

“Yes, Sara Lynn. It’s good to see you again. You’re looking wonderful today.”

Sara Lynn threw a sideways glance at Enise. “What’s wrong with him?”

“Nothing at all.” Wil chimed in. “I feel absolutely fine. Who are all these people?”

Ignoring him, Sara Lynn focused her attention on the doctor. “He sounds like someone in a 50’s sitcom.”

The reference was completely lost on Enise. She appeared to be distracted, and took a moment to respond. “He says he’s fine.”

“Exactly. Don’t you think it’s a little ... inappropriate ... for him to be this ... sane? It’s completely unlike him.”

“Nonsense Sara”, Wil replied. “I’m as sane as you.”

Gyünter stood up, muttering excitedly to himself. “This is extraordinary. Dimensional travel. Simply extraordinary.” The Swedish man turned to his assistant who stood behind the bank of video equipment, adjusting one of the cameras to focus in on Wil. “Are you getting all this, John?”, Gyünter asked. Proctor looked up briefly from the viewfinder of the camera and gave his mentor a grinning thumbs-up. He zoomed the camera in for a close-up of Wil Ohmsford, who seemed to suddenly notice the recording equipment for the first time. The smile on Wil’s face slowly faded away. A moment later, John Proctor was frantically trying to back off the zoom and pan to follow the moving pilot. By the time he re-acquired Wil in the viewfinder, he was almost on top of him!

Wil moved with shocking speed. In an instant he leapt to his feet and traversed the distance to the video camera. He spoke quietly as he moved, “What the HELL?!” the last word came out as a shout that accompanied Wil backhanding the camera tripod, toppling it. Proctor cried out in alarm and dove after the camera, trying to cushion its landing. Sara Lynn grabbed for Wil’s arm and tried to stop him from doing any more damage.

“Let me GO!” He growled as he reached for one of the microphone stands.

Sara managed to hold him back for the moment, and shot a quick glance in the doctor’s direction. “I *told* you he was nuts

The comment snapped Wil out of his rampage and he turned toward the mystic. “You should know better than this!” He turned his head to face the doctor. “They can’t know where we come from. There can’t be any evidence!”

By this time, Gyünter had recovered from his initial shock and placed himself between Wil and Sara Lynn. “Don’t worry about the cameras. This is merely scientific study. Nothing more.”

Wil ignored the professor, shook Sara Lynn’s grip loose and lunged at the rack of EM sensors. Gyünter was unable to grab him and the heavy rack of sensors tipped dangerously

under the onslaught. Professor Hjeldorf grabbed one of the uprights on the rocking shelf in a valiant attempt to steady it. Malcolm and Eddie dove into the fray and restrained Wil by hoisting his feet off the ground and pinning his arms behind his back.

Enise ran to Wil's side, her composure slipping. "Wil! Calm down! You're not well!" But the pilot continued to thrash about wildly. And then, just as suddenly, he stopped. The look of fury on his face was replaced by the furrowed brow of confusion, and then the wide-eyed look of despair. "I ... I can't open a portal!"

Sara Lynn Devereaux looked Wil in the eye. "I'm not surprised with your level of agitation. Where would you go?"

"That place with the giant guy... The healing place."

Sara nodded in understanding. She turned to the Professor and his assistant, who was only now returning to his feet after surveying the damage to the video equipment. "Would you gentlemen mind waiting downstairs?"

Gyünter opened his mouth to protest, but stopped when he saw the look of determination on the mystic's face.

"You two as well," she continued facing the two marines.

"But..." Eddie began, but stopped talking when Malcolm put a hand on his shoulder. In a moment, Wil, Enise and Sara Lynn were the only people in the room.

Sara Lynn closed her eyes and the air before her shimmered into a silvery cloud of light. She motioned for Wil to enter the portal. As he stepped toward it, Enise fell into step behind him. Sara was the last to step into the haze. A moment later it popped shut leaving only an empty room.

Professor Gyünter Hjeldorf paced impatiently across the oriental carpet in the entry foyer of the house. He looked at his watch again and shook his head. John Proctor sat on the wide tufted velvet bench which sat along the east wall of the foyer, watching his boss wear down his shoe leather. The sound of the two marines returning from upstairs caused Gyünter to halt in mid-pace and face the ornate circular staircase. Malcolm and Eddie faced the Swede upon alighting on the bottom step.

"They're not up there." Eddie said simply.

"But it's been over an hour, and this is the only door. Where could they have gone?" Proctor replied. Malcolm pulled the notepad out of his pocket, scribbled something on it and handed the paper to Hjeldorf.

"*Maybe they disappeared in thin air*".

"Well, it doesn't matter. John. Let's go upstairs and check on the equipment. Maybe it recorded where they went."

Now it was Eddie and Malcolm's turn to wait. They were in the middle debating whether to leave when Gyünter came walking back downstairs with the video camera in his hand.

"Well, did that thing work?" Eddie asked.

Gyünter shook his head, "I'm afraid not. When that man knocked it over, the power cord was pulled out."

A moment later, there was a series of hollow thumps from somewhere beneath them. This is followed by the sounds of

two women shouting. Gyünter led Eddie and Malcolm to the basement stairs, and the three of them arrived in time to catch a heated argument between Sara and Enise.

"... we're healed physically." Enise continued, "But it didn't do anything for my frame of mind."

"I was told it would heal anything!" Sara Lynn retorted.

"I'm perfectly fine." Wil chimed in helpfully.

"Shut-up!" Both women responded in unison.

Gyünter and the others looked on in fascination. The wound in Wil's forehead did appear completely healed. There wasn't even a scar. He stood calmly, watching the interaction between the two women. Enise looked well-rested, all traces of fatigue gone. Yet there remained a definite tension behind her eyes. Her gaze was a little too fixed, her eyes open a little too wide. Enise opened her mouth to speak, and then seemed to think better of it. Instead, she said quietly, "Look. Something still isn't right."

Sara Lynn pointed at Wil, while preparing to respond to the doctor, but Enise cut her off, "And if nothing else will convince you of that, just look at *him*."

Wil grinned at the doctor. "Enise, I have no idea what you are referring to." Wil looked at the three men who had just arrived downstairs. He focused his attention on Gyünter.

"I hope you can forgive me for my earlier outburst, sir." Wil steps up to the Swedish parapsychist. "I hope your camera hasn't been damaged."

"Er...that is...no. It is still operational."

"Really? Do you mind if I take a look. I'm quite good with electronic devices."

Gyünter offered the camera, and Wil graciously accepted it. He pressed the Eject button. There is a soft electric whir of servos, and a little door popped open to reveal a small cassette tape.

Even as the little door cycled open, Gyünter realized his blunder. He cried out in surprise and snatched the camera back, but Wil has already removed the tape, and was proceeding to pull the black ribbon out of the cartridge as fast as he possible, "I *told* you, I *don't* want any pic..."

But he never finished the sentence. There was a sudden bright flash accompanied by a sharp electric *crackle*, and suddenly Wil was laying flat on his back, convulsing. Two thin wires trailed from his chest to the little black box in Gyünter's hand. With a small tug, the wires were retracted back into the tazer.

"I tend to agree with the doctor's diagnosis," said Gyünter smugly. "This man is not well."

Finding a roll of duct tape on a nearby shelf, Malcolm flipped Wil onto his stomach and bound his hands behind his back. Although his eyes were open, Wil was unable to control his muscles, and so was unable to offer even token resistance. But his eyes burned with an intense fury.

Then, without warning, a man's blood-curdling scream echoed down from the upper levels of the house. The blood drained immediately from Gyünter's face, as he recognized



the owner of the voice. “Proctor,” he hissed.

Sara, Malcolm, Enise and Eddie were only a step behind the parapsychist as he sprinted headlong up the basement stairs. As they rounded the first floor landing, the cries from above abruptly ended.

Sara had just about caught up to Gyünter by the time they had reached the second floor landing. She passed him on the stairs to the third floor. The dark third-floor hallway stretched out before her. She skidded to a halt at the threshold of her room, and her feet slipped in a pool of thick red ichor. The comforter of her bed was soaked in blood. It had run down the foot of the bed into a puddle that extended more than half-way along the hardwood floor. At the edge of the puddle, two streaks of blood trailed toward the hallway, where the burgundy runner decorated with a cream-colored paisley pattern hid virtually all evidence of its existence. Notably absent from the room was any sign of the source of the blood. Apart from the professor’s equipment, there was nothing else in the room that didn’t normally belong there. Malcolm and Eddie had stopped at the top of the third flight. Apparently, the battle hardened marines had spotted the blood already. They were making motions to each other that indicated the trail went down the stairs the way they had come. With growing trepidation, Sara Lynn followed the others down to the second floor, where the bloody trail left the stairs and continued. Halfway down the second-floor hall, the trail turned toward a closed bedroom door, and disappeared beneath it. A wet squishy sound filtered into the hallway from the room, accompanied by quiet high-pitched moans. Malcolm put a finger to his lips, while signaling for Enise, Gyünter and Sara to be quiet and back away from the door. Then he and Eddie positioned themselves to rush into the room.

Eddie gave the door a firm kick, then dropped and rolled to one side. Malcolm followed the swinging door into the room itself, dropping into a defensive stance beyond the threshold.



The woman who had been straddling the blood-drenched body of John Proctor jumped to her feet and turned toward the door. She was beautiful, completely naked, and possessed striking long dark hair that curled down to cover her breasts in the front, and reached down to her waist in the back. Blood was smeared on her face, and chest. Her fingers, curled into grisly claws that literally dripped with blood. Her mouth opened to reveal elongated fangs and she emitted a sharp hiss of fury. If that sight alone wasn’t enough to stun poor Malcolm into inaction, imagine his shock when two massive flesh-colored wings spread out behind the woman and began rhythmically flapping. The Succubus turned toward the lone window, which she dove through with frightening speed and agility. All Malcolm saw was the enormous wings tuck tightly over the woman’s back as she executed a perfect swan dive through the window and out into the night.

Malcolm ran to the shattered window and looked down toward the back yard of the house. Apart from the splintered remains of the window frame, and a lot of shattered glass, there was no sign of the creature. He turned back to find Enise kneeling over Proctor’s body shaking her head. He was quite dead. Eddie pulled the comforter off the bed and draped it over the disemboweled corpse. Gyünter stood looking at his assistant in stunned disbelief. The look of shock on Sara Lynn’s face was just as acute, but for a far more disturbing reason. In all her years in the Talamasca, it had always been a source of pride that her own motherhouse had never suffered a Dark incursion. She and her cell had always been careful to mask their trail and leave no sign for the Dark Minions to follow. The realization hit her hard. All that was over now. The house had been compromised. A sudden flash of horror appeared on her face, and then she was running down the hall. She didn’t stop running until she had skidded to a stop in front of Wil Ohmsford, still trussed up in the basement.

“How many times did you try to get here?”

Wil looked up at her, rather confused. “I don’t know. A lot. You should be able to tell.”

She was nodding her head vigorously as she spoke.

“Yes. I should. I completely forgot about that.”

“What’s going on?” Eddie asked from behind her.

“Dimensional portals don’t ever really close. The opening just keeps getting smaller and smaller, until it’s too small to see. But it’s always still there. If you open too many portals in one place, the dimensional fabric weakens.”

Gyünter’s eyebrows went up as he grasped what she was saying, “You mean that every attempt he made...”

“...weakened the fabric of reality within this house. My safe-house has been swiss-cheesed with microportals.” She shivered visibly and wrapped her arms across her chest. Her eyes turned up to the ceiling overhead filled with genuine fear.

“This house has become demonground.”

TO BE CONTINUED...

JYS'LYN ORTHAE FAEB S'RIL (JYS'LYN OF THE SACRED FIRE)

PART ONE BY A'LIS

Ae'lishal finished stacking neatly the piles on his desk and rose to come around closer to Il'sara who, by this time, had a rather bored look to her. Her eyes played with the top few pieces of old parchment that lie on his desk.

"Where are the children?" she asked, feigning interest in the writings on the parchment.

"In their rooms I would assume," Ae'lishal began, "am I to begin keeping track of them now as well as you?" He gave Il'sara a curt look.

"Just asking." Il'sara lowered her head as the two of them made to leave the room.

They were walking down the hall now, having left Ae'lishal's chambers, and were heading towards the main entryway of the house. "What of the children now anyway?" Il'sara began again taking on a rarely seen serious tone. "Are they to begin their training? Have their paths been decided upon?"

"I'm afraid not," Ae'lishal responded, "Thesis may be about ready but it is difficult to tell when the Matron will decide on his fate. K'aelion is still too young as is Jys'Lyn, but with her it seems more of a struggle. She still needs a governess to get her through the day and at times I wonder if she is even going to make it, so frail is her body. It is almost as if there is a part of her that does not want to give in to life..."

Jys'Lyn was born into a society of unforgiving tenets and dangerous machinations. One in which a queen ruled from on high and all things cascaded down from her with brutal, righteous force. One in which only the strongest and most cunning could earn the right to walk freely in the open, and even then few chose to do so. In such a society, the child Jys'Lyn would not have survived long.

Before the age that Jys'Lyn would have learned to walk the noble house that she had been born into would be destroyed in a series of wars that were waged on her people's behalf, in the name of their goddess, for the right to an area of land upon which their city would be built. Massive amounts of destruction were called down from above in this holy endeavor to rid the land of the demons which inhabited it.

These wars would become know as the Founder's Wars, and the chaos that ensued during this time brought an end to more than one of the ruling houses of the civilization.

Jys'Lyn remembered nothing of the flight, nothing of being snatched up in the middle of the night by her siblings and carried off to flee the carnage and the death. She remembered nothing of being dropped to the ground, sliding along the harsh rock, as her sister Il'sara, who had been carrying her, was struck down by a priestess of a rival house.

Jys'Lyn would never come to understand that even though the Founder's Wars were about the claiming of the homeland for her people, many houses used the event as a means of carrying out personal vendettas and ensuring their place within the new ruling council by destroying any other house that they could. The child Jys'Lyn would never come to understand the dark and evil of her people.

Within a century of the flight from her homeland Jys'Lyn would die, her adolescence having followed the same pattern as her childhood: frail, always running, and never in control of her own destiny.



Editor's Note: Becky can be credited with bringing a'lis and DEMONGROUND together while attending Origins 2001. a'lis had set up a booth at the art show, and had many stunning paintings on display. The cover image, Jys'Lyn is the first one that caught our eye. When we asked him to tell us a little more about the painting, he gave us the fictional excerpt you see above. It seems that Jys'Lyn is just one of a series of characters of a larger, ongoing work.

To find out more about his work, check out the a'lis web site at: <http://www.ari02.net> e-mail: alis@ari02.net



THE LOOSE ENDS



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NEXT ISSUE

Although titled as our January 2002 issue, Issue 14 will be coming out in Late February/Early March 2002.

Layout of Issue 14 is already underway. The theme of the next issue will be "TERROR", and we already have enough material to make another issue the same size as this one.

And so, we are announcing that we are now accepting material for Issue 15, for release in April 2002.

Issue 15 does not have a theme, so please feel free to submit anything you wish.

Issue 15 deadline is March 1, 2002

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We're not done yet!
DEMONGROUND
Volume 14
already underway...

LUCKY THIRTEEN?

Welcome to our October 2001 issue! *(Yes, we know what day it is).*

Well, we're going to make up for it.

Demonground 14 (originally scheduled for January 2002 release) is already being assembled, and should be available within a month. The theme for issue 14 will be "TERROR".

The April release of Demonground 15 will put us back on schedule. *The deadline for submissions will be March 1, 2002.*

Demonground 16 is slated for July 2002.

Demonground 17 is slated for October 2002.