



MODERN

THE DEAD

OF WINTER



By Stan!

A Short Urban Arcana Adventure for Four 12th-Level Characters

As the days remaining on the calendar dwindle, it seems as though life does, too. The days grow shorter, the wind grows colder, and all around us the landscape turns stark and barren. Trees take on the appearance of skeletons, and the bright leaves of autumn are buried under freshly fallen snow.

The world becomes even more chilling when its metaphorical death is accompanied by murder most macabre. Bodies have begun to turn up all around the city—bodies that have been mauled by some ferocious beast until they are practically unrecognizable.

The Dead of Winter sends the heroes in pursuit of the monster behind these grisly killings. Can they solve the case before this blood stains the pristine promise of the coming new year?

LEVELS

You, the Game Master (GM), need a copy of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* and a copy of the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting* to run this adventure. To get started, print out the adventure (including the map) and read it through. Familiarize yourself with the various GM characters and their individual motives and abilities. Then make sure you are familiar with the rules for combat, movement, and cover from Chapter 5 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. You should also be familiar with the rules for casting magic spells and performing incantations (found in Chapter 10 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* and Chapter 3 of the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting*, respectively).

The Dead of Winter is a short scenario for four 12th-level heroes. With slight modifications, you can make it suitable for heroes at other levels, or for groups as large or small as you're comfortable adjudicating. See the Scaling the Adventure sidebar for guidelines on adapting it for other groups.

The text that appears in shaded boxes should be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. Opponents' statistics are provided in abbreviated form.

This adventure can be set in any large city. A map showing the major encounter areas is provided. With a little work, the locations presented in the adventure could be adapted for any locale.

BACKGROUND

The events in this adventure are clear and self-contained. The primary GM characters, Nicholas St. Andrew and Audrey Petersen, are the leaders of an occult religion. In order to achieve a specific goal, they have been abusing the trust placed in them by their fanatical followers.

If you are running *The Dead of Winter* as a stand-alone adventure, the story requires no deeper meaning. The plot that Nicholas and Audrey have devised is based simply on their desire for personal power and their occult religious fervor. However, if you are running this adventure as part of the *Heartless* campaign, the heroes should gain some insight into how their recent cases interconnect and what challenges still lie ahead.

The Children of Chaos

The Children of Chaos is a religious cult whose members worship the elemental force of chaos as embodied by the Roman god Janus. They pray for power, deliver “sacrifices” in the form of random acts of destruction and violence, and publicly profess their belief in magic and the occult. In

Scaling the Adventure

The situations described in this adventure are suitable for heroes of any level. To tailor *The Dead of Winter* for your game, make the following adjustments.

- **In The Sewer:** The various encounters in the sewer can be adjusted simply by increasing or decreasing the number of GM characters present until the EL is appropriate for the heroes.
- **The Beast:** For lower-level parties, begin by reducing the number of Hit Dice that Nicholas St. Andrew has added using the *delego vitae* spell. If that technique does not decrease the challenge rating enough, use a dire tiger (from the *D&D Monster Manual*) or an ordinary tiger (from the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*) instead of the beast. For higher-level parties, increase the number of levels St. Andrew has magically added and choose a tougher base creature, such as a grendelspawn queen or a young dragon, for the beast.
- **Nicholas St. Andrew:** If St. Andrew is too tough for your heroes, redefine him at a character level at least 2 higher than the party's average. (You may also need to rationalize how a lower-level acolyte could cast the high-level spells that St. Andrew uses before and during the adventure if you make this adjustment.) If you need to make St. Andrew a more difficult challenge, advance him using Tough hero and/or Ecclesiarch levels until his character level is at least 2 higher than the party's average.

A Heartless Tale

The Dead of Winter can be used as a stand-alone adventure. You can place it in your campaign anywhere you see fit—particularly if you used the information in the Scaling the Adventure sidebar to modify the opponents for your campaign. The scenario requires neither previous knowledge on the part of the heroes, nor any understanding of a larger plot on your part.

However, *The Dead of Winter* is also the fourth in a series of five adventures that, when strung together, become a more complex and detailed tale of deception, murder, and lust for power. This series constitutes a campaign entitled *Heartless*. The first three installments—*The Petersen Counterstrike*, *Blood Sugar*, and *The Final Feast*—are available as free downloads from the d20 MODERN section of the Wizards of the Coast website.

The Dead of Winter features components such as spellcasting, magic items, and supernatural creatures. As the series concludes, though, its elements will become even more fantastic. As a result, you may wish to wait until all five chapters of *Heartless* have been released before deciding whether to use the storyline as it is presented or adapt it into something that better suits your campaign.

truth, they are easily manipulated individuals gathered into a loose coalition by the cult's founder, Nicholas St. Andrew, who regularly takes advantage of their gullibility. But thanks to the loyalty St. Andrew inspires in his followers, no connection between him and the cult has ever been proven in a court of law. The Children of Chaos are so fanatically devoted to their leader that, when captured, they refuse to do anything other than mouth random words of devotion or make oblique threats to society as a whole. To date, not one of them has ever implicated St. Andrew in any of the cult's activities.

Over the years, cult members have committed numerous acts of vandalism, obstruction of justice, destruction of property, and occasionally petty theft. Recently, however, they have stepped up their criminal activities. In the past few months, groups of these cultists have instigated a hostage crisis, a candy-tampering emergency on Halloween, and a magical attack on a food bank on Thanksgiving. (If the heroes played through *The Petersen Counterstrike*, *Blood Sugar*, and *The Final Feast*, they aided in resolving those incidents; otherwise, the details are unimportant.)

The cult's usefulness to Nicholas St. Andrew is nearly at an end. He plans to use its members one final time in a way that will dissolve the Children of Chaos forever.

Bringing in the Flock

The Children of Chaos have not yet realized that Nicholas St. Andrew formed the cult for the sole purpose of gaining a source of expendable manpower. He needed people he could use, abuse, and even kill with impunity. The Children of Chaos filled that role admirably, willingly doing anything he asked of them, no matter how self-destructive it was.



Nicholas St. Andrew

Nicholas St. Andrew considers himself one of the world's leading experts on the occult and pagan folklore. Most recognized authorities in those areas, however, consider him nothing more than a charismatic confidence artist and an accomplished thief. Some also suspect that he is the leader of the cult known as the Children of Chaos, but thus far no one has been able to prove more than a tenuous connection between St. Andrew and the cult.

For years, Nicholas has passed himself off as a legitimate scholar and funded his occult projects by convincing gullible, rich patrons to subsidize his research into ancient mysteries. Most of his benefactors believe that Nicholas is trying to recover Noah's Ark, locate Solomon's Mines, or pursue some other archeological pipe dream. In truth, he has used his patrons' donations to bankroll the theft of various occult artifacts. In this way, Nicholas has amassed an extensive collection of sacrificial daggers, several stone and ivory altars, and a library full of scrolls and tomes.

During the course of his occult research, Nicholas stumbled onto what he believes is a method of gaining godlike powers. (He is uncertain of exactly what those powers might be, but he is greedy enough to covet them all the same.) At the beginning of the *Heartless* campaign, the pair of idols necessary to perform the complicated ritual was in the care of Department-7. Thus, St. Andrew's first challenge was to find a way to acquire them.

To that end, he developed a connection with Audrey Petersen, the wife of Department-7's archive curator, and together they planned a way for several members of the Children of Chaos to "liberate" the idols. Once St. Andrew had them in his possession, he used other members of his cult to activate them via rituals that prepared the way for his great ascension. These events are detailed in the previous installments of the *Heartless* campaign.

By and large, the cult is composed of loners and outsiders—people who had few friends before joining and few contacts outside the group afterward. In other words, they are unlikely to be missed, and if they turn up dead, the police probably won't devote much effort to investigating. Dozens of murders happen every day in a large city, so the death of someone nobody cares about isn't usually a high-priority case.

Before he can undertake the final rite and gain access to the supernatural power he craves, St. Andrew must perform many smaller ceremonies. The most horrendous of these involves killing six people via a ritual in which he must harvest their still-beating hearts. St. Andrew plans to use the remaining members of the Children of Chaos for this purpose.

His biggest worry is that the removal of so many hearts is likely to attract the attention of the authorities and the media, even if the victims themselves are unimportant. While the police might overlook several deaths from random violence or unfortunate accidents, deaths that appear to be the work of a psychotic serial killer would surely become

front-page news. Thus, he realized early that he needed a way to hide the truth about what he was doing and ensure that any investigators made false deductions.

The Beast

The answer to Nicholas St. Andrew's dilemma came in the form of a spell. In the course of her studies, Audrey Petersen came across a spell that would summon a great beast to do the caster's bidding. As long as it was fed human flesh at least once per day, it would remain a loyal servant. St. Andrew immediately realized that such a creature could simply feed on the corpses of the ritual victims when he was finished with them. Not only would that arrangement keep it properly fed, it would also help to mask the details of the crimes. Investigators who examined the remains the creature left behind would be hard pressed to notice that the heart was missing from every victim, let alone realize that it was removed before the mauling attack.

Because the victims' hearts had to be removed in a special way and then stored in a particular manner, St. Andrew knew he could harvest no more than three hearts in a single day. Thus, he would need a base of operations where he, Petersen, and the beast could live unseen for a period of several days.

Audrey Petersen

Audrey Petersen is the wife of Professor Grant Petersen, curator of Department-7's occult archives. But Audrey, an intellectual in her own right, became jealous of her husband's position, which she felt made her seem to be second best. In fact, Audrey resented her husband deeply for rendering her little more than a "trophy wife" by not giving her credit for the work she did with him. Thus, she was ripe for recruitment by St. Andrew.

Audrey helped Nicholas plan and execute the theft of Barrik the Glutton and Ventry the Emaciated, the two ancient idols he needed for his plan. At first, she didn't believe in magic and the occult; she wanted only to embarrass and discredit her husband. Since then, however, she has been studying and training with St. Andrew, learning the occult secrets he has uncovered and helping him plan the final stages of his bid for supernatural power.

No one has seen or heard from Audrey since the night of the theft. Even the Department-7 officials, with all their resources, can only surmise that she is with St. Andrew. There remains some uncertainty as to whether Audrey is a willing accomplice or another of the cult leader's duped followers. The authorities have a great many questions to ask Audrey about her role in the recent criminal activities perpetrated by the Children of Chaos.

The truth is that Audrey knows exactly what she did. She helped St. Andrew plan multiple cold-blooded murders, and she would do it all again just for the thrill of being taken seriously at long last. St. Andrew is the first person in years who has entrusted her with real power and responsibility, and she loves the feeling. Nevertheless, Audrey is canny enough to play the uncertainty angle for all it's worth, since that tactic might turn out to be the key to avoiding jail time if the plan doesn't go well.

He began by securing a hideout in the city's sewer system—an abandoned maintenance garage. The sewer passages connected with subway tunnels and the basements of municipal buildings all over the city, allowing the two to travel unseen wherever they needed to go. And after their work was done, they could get back into the sewers through any manhole.

The next step was to summon the beast. When it appeared, St. Andrew augmented its power with life force “borrowed” from a willing Petersen via another spell. That same night, St. Andrew performed the first two murders. The cultists were so honored to receive a visit from their “High Priest of Disorder” that they allowed him to approach freely. St. Andrews gave them injections of sodium pentathol to render them unconscious, then performed the ceremony to harvest their hearts. When the rite was complete, he allowed the beast to feed on the bodies.

The next morning, the newspapers were filled with stories about monsters roaming the streets. Those reports drew the attention of Department-7.

SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins when the heroes are assigned to investigate several maulings that have taken place in the city recently. Though the attacks have occurred in different parts of town, they appear to have been performed by the same monstrous creature, which has torn its victims apart savagely and consumed part of each one. No eyewitnesses to the killings have stepped forward thus far, but wherever such a death has taken place, several people have simultaneously reported seeing some sort of monster prowling the neighborhood.

Through investigation, the heroes discover that all the victims were secretly members of a cult known as the Children of Chaos. Shortly thereafter, another body is discovered, but this one has not been so thoroughly mauled. In fact, the remains reveal that the victim was probably ritually murdered *before* the corpse was savaged.

Forensic evidence soon provides the heroes with a way to locate the beast's lair. When they find it, they also find the creature's master, the evil acolyte Nicholas St. Andrew. They manage to interrupt him in the midst of performing an occult ritual designed to bring him great power. The adventure concludes when the heroes defeat St. Andrew and his magical beast.

Character Hooks

As GM, you know best how to involve your players and their characters in an adventure. This scenario is constructed specifically for heroes employed by Department-7 in its role as an officially sanctioned investigative agency. This arrangement allows the heroes access to the types of information that police or federal agents would have. If Department-7 fills a different role in your campaign, use some other agency that fills the appropriate role and modify the references in the adventure accordingly.

If the heroes are not employees of Department-7, a similar organization, or an appropriate investigative agency, you can use the following adventure hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to make them appropriate for the characters' interests.

Idol Rumors

The second and third installments of the *Heartless* campaign featured Barrik the Glutton and Ventyr the Emaciated—the idols that Nicholas and Audrey stole. Each is inscribed with a short verse that cryptically explains its powers. But the idols are a matched pair, and their inscriptions work together to provide insight into the power that they can unlock when used jointly. If the two idols are held side-by-side and the lines of verse read directly across the pair, the combined inscription is as follows.

Sugar and meat makes
the blood of a man boil in
Vengeance . . . Hunger.
Feeds the Spirit. Leaving Him empty
So that He may return after death
to do his chores with the power of
Unholy Gods.

While each idol holds its own power, the true purpose of the pair can be achieved only by using them in tandem. Any person who performs the proper rituals using the two idols together discovers how to perform a third ritual—one that unlocks a supernatural conduit to even greater power. This power is St. Andrew's true goal; the events of *Blood Sugar* and *The Final Feast* were merely diversions to mask the activation of the two idols. Nicholas wanted Department-7 to believe that he was merely advancing the cult's agenda of spreading chaos so that its agents would not delve deeply enough to discover his actual goal.

Nicholas now has the means to perform the final ritual, and the events of this adventure are the direct result of his attempt to put it to use.

- One of the beast's first victims was a relative or friend of the heroes. They probably had no idea that he was a member of the Children of Chaos, but his personal foibles are of no consequence to them. Their loved one is dead, and they want answers as to why.
- The heroes find the first victim. Stumped for a good explanation, the police try to pin the crime on the heroes. In this kind of setup, self-interest should spur the heroes to seek out the real culprit on their own.
- A zoological society believes the beast is a rare—perhaps previously unknown—species of predator that has made its way into the city because “game” is so plentiful there. The members of this organization know that the police intend to simply kill it, so they hire the heroes to find the beast first and at least try to capture it for study.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The Dead of Winter is a freeform investigative adventure with a site-based resolution. Encounters A and B describe a



series of grisly murders and the avenues that the heroes may take to investigate them, and Encounters C and D detail the lair of the culprits. Heroes who have played through the previous adventures in the *Heartless* campaign may already have some insights into the character, methods, and goals of the primary villain, Nicholas St. Andrew (see sidebar). If not, allow the heroes ample opportunities to discover relevant background information if they so desire. The adventure can be completed without such details, but the resolution may be more satisfying for the players if their heroes at least partially understand the motives of their opponent.

Before beginning play, you must decide at what point to bring the heroes into the investigation. You can draw out the tension and extend the playing time by having them assigned to the case just after the first murders, but the information provided in encounter A is sketchy at best and requires more research on their part (see the Ongoing Investigations sidebar).

Alternatively, you can bring the heroes in at the point when the occult connection becomes apparent—when a body with glyphs and runes carved in its flesh is found. This avenue makes for a shorter, more focused adventure, since the heroes actually start with enough information to locate the beast's lair.

In either case, the adventure begins when a senior officer from Department-7 calls the heroes into a briefing room. Use the appropriate introductory material below.

In From the Start

If the heroes are assigned to the case at the very beginning, read aloud or paraphrase the following when they get to the briefing room.

From the grim silence that fills the room and the look of absolute concentration on the supervisor's face, it's not hard to deduce that today's assignment is extraordinary. After everyone is seated, she immediately launches into her briefing.

"There were two killings last night," says the supervisor in a tone that brooks no interruption. "Bad ones. Open the files on the table and you'll see what I mean."

Inside the manila folders are preliminary police reports and a handful of grisly crime scene photos showing two bloody heaps that are not immediately recognizable as human bodies.

"The media have been told that one of these cases appears to be a dog attack and the other is being investigated as a robbery and potential hate crime." She places both fists on the table, and her gaze takes on a steely quality. "You should have two days at most before some reporter makes a connection between them—if there aren't any more incidents."

She lets the weight of those words hang for a moment. "Let's close this one quickly, folks," she says, picking up a folder. "The holidays are coming up, and the last thing we need is a bloody New Year."

The folder contains very little information. The police had only just begun their investigation when it became apparent that these cases were not ordinary murders. The police chief

immediately sealed the scenes and called for aid from Department-7.

The reports provide the following information.

- Both killings happened during the night, one at approximately 10:00 PM, and the other at about 3:00 AM.
- The victims were found on opposite ends of the city, and neither set of remains appears to have been moved.
- Both victims appear to have been mauled by a carnivore of exceptional size. The claw and bite marks are larger than any of the investigating officers have ever seen before.
- Beyond the fact that both were male, there is no apparent connection between the victims. One seems to have been a middle-aged Caucasian, and the other a Latino in his late teens or early twenties.

Once the heroes ask any questions they have and gather their gear, continue with encounter A, below.

Joining an Investigation in Progress

If the heroes join the investigation after clues indicating an occult connection have been found, read aloud or paraphrase the following when they enter the briefing room.

"I'm sure," the senior officer says without preamble, "that you're all aware that the police have been investigating a series of animal attacks lately. Standard mundane violence—probably a cougar that escaped from the zoo—not our sort of case, right?" She glances about the room, then slams her fist on the table. "Well, it turns out that we've got a clever perp on our hands. Lights!"

The room goes dark, and the click of the slide projector is followed by the appearance of a black-and-white image on the wall. It depicts a man's torso missing its left shoulder and arm. The upper chest has been brutally ravaged, evidently by the claws and teeth of some fearsome predator. The sternum, however, has been split evenly, and the skin on the right side of the chest is marred by a series of small incisions.

"These marks are part of a warding spell," she says, indicating the pattern of incisions. "This particular set seems to be from a purification ceremony. In other words, some sicko has been ritually killing these citizens, then covering his tracks by having a pet chow down on the evidence. Lights!"

The overhead fluorescent bulbs pop to life again. "Animal Control hasn't had much luck figuring out what sort of animal was responsible," she continues. "But now we know that the net should be cast a little wider. Department-7 is taking over the investigation immediately, and I want this one closed fast. Too many people have died already because the cops were out of their depth and we sat around saying 'not our thing.' So let's give everyone an early holiday present and wrap this up."

Each hero receives a folder containing all the evidence police have gathered from the various attacks. Reading it reveals the following information, plus any additional details you wish to include from encounter A, below.

- Six attacks have taken place over the last four days at various different places in the city. All been virtually identical except this one.
- The most recent attack was apparently interrupted by a pizza delivery van. The driver reported seeing a “giant tiger on steroids” tearing the arm off the body and a man dressed in a long, black coat holding a softball in his hand. The man called to the tiger, and they both fled into the night.
- No one witnessed any of the other attacks, but several people have reported seeing a large creature roaming the surrounding neighborhood.
- Different witnesses have described the creature as a lion, a dragon, a werewolf, and a sabertooth tiger.
- The victims have been from all races and walks of life, but all were loners and outcasts. Other than that, no discernable pattern has emerged.

When the heroes have collected their gear, continue with encounter B, below.

A. BODY COUNT

The first section of the adventure is investigation. You can stage this portion as a series of encounters in which the heroes get to poke and prod around the crime scenes, or as a fast overview in which you simply provide them with the

Heartless Insight

Heroes who have been through the earlier installments of the *Heartless* campaign may have greater insight into the situation than those who have not. In particular, characters who have performed exhaustive research on the spell fetishes found in *Blood Sugar* and *The Final Feast* may have gained some insight into what Nicholas St. Andrew is planning.

In particular, the heroes may suspect that the cult leader plans to perform a ritual designed to grant him enormous supernatural power. If they have deduced this much, allow each hero to attempt a DC 25 Knowledge (arcane lore) check to discover that the dark rite requires several human hearts harvested according to a particular ritual.

As GM, you may decide that the heroes’ past inquiries would have prepared them for the current situation. If they are putting clues together in insightful ways, you may allow each of them to attempt a DC 25 Knowledge (current events) check. On a success, the character realizes that no matter what other parts of the body are ravaged by the beast in an attack, the chest cavity is always torn open, and the heart is always one of the organs that is missing in its entirety.

Alternatively, you may decide that other Department-7 researchers have unearthed information pertaining to St. Andrew and his plans. In this case, the Department-7 archivist can provide any of the information you want the heroes to have from the Background section above.

important information that can be gleaned from the evidence on site.

The First Victims

On the first night, Nicholas and his beast claimed two victims. The body of the first, a middle-aged white male named Percival Evans, was found on one of the docks where he worked as a longshoreman. The last time anyone saw him, he was sitting by himself in a local dive and drinking more than his usual amount of whiskey. The police examiner reports that Evans was killed at approximately 10:00 PM—about 15 minutes after he left the bar. He was never reported missing, though his employer was aware that he had not shown up for work that day.

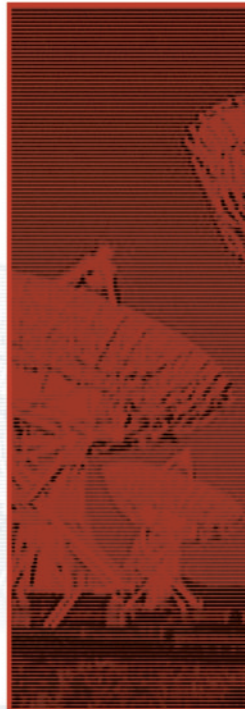
The second victim was a 19-year-old Latino male named Emilio Sanchez. His body was found in an alley behind the condemned building in which he had been squatting. Although the neighborhood is home to several major gangs, not one of them has ever claimed this young man as a member. Still, everyone seems to know him as “that loco.” Sanchez was killed at approximately 3:00 AM. Between 2:45 and 3:15 AM, local police received several complaints from residents who claimed that they heard wild animals growling and snarling in the neighborhood. The police found no animals, but they did come across Emilio’s body.

Significant Clues

Depending on how thoroughly they investigate the crime scenes and interview the officers who handled the preliminaries, the heroes may turn up any or all of the following facts and clues.

SPOT OR GATHER INFORMATION DC	INFORMATION GAINED
10	Both victims still had their wallets, keys, and other personal items.
15	The wounds on the bodies indicate that the creature responsible had claws at least 6 inches long. It also had a bite radius of more than 12 inches.
15	Similar or identical fur was found on and around both bodies. Preliminary lab tests indicate that the animal is some kind of predatory feline.
18	Most of the marks on the bodies were bites, indicating that either the victims put up very little resistance or the animal had some way of subduing them while it ate.
20	The bodies appeared to be lying where they first fell. They had not been dragged or carried elsewhere.
20	Approximately 75 pounds of flesh from each body were consumed. One corpse was missing its left arm and a significant portion of its chest and abdomen. The other had been torn in half and was missing most of its torso plus several strips of flesh from its right arm and leg.

Police and federal records reveal nothing about the victims’ connection to the Children of Chaos. However, if the heroes run either name through Department-7’s database, some



affiliation with the cult (known member, suspected member, cell leader, or the like) is revealed. However, there is no indication that the two men belonged to the same cult cell or had any interactions with one another.

The Next Victims

Over the next few nights and days, three more victims turn up in different parts of the city. The location where the body is found is always reasonably close to the place where the victim lived or worked.

Each body is in more or less the same condition as the first two—that is, severely mauled by some large predator, but with no other discernable wounds. In some cases, witnesses claim to have seen a person on the scene, but no one can provide any helpful information in that regard.

Significant Clues

Specific details and misleading evidence are left for you to create as needed. Thorough investigation, however, turns up the following information with the appropriate checks.

INVESTIGATE OR GATHER INFORMATION DC

INFORMATION GAINED

10	All the significant clues from the section above (The First Victims) apply to these victims as well.
15	Tests on fur found at most of the crime scenes indicate that the creature is a relative of the tiger, though its exact breed is unknown to modern science.
20	Forensic analysis indicates that all the victims were attacked by a creature of the same species, and in all likelihood the same animal.
25	Lab work reveals that several victims had high levels of sodium pentathol in their bloodstreams. Based on how thoroughly the drug had pervaded the bodies, the forensics experts speculate that it was administered several minutes before each mauling. Thus, the victims were probably unconscious when the actual attacks took place.

Ongoing Investigations

If you plan to let the heroes investigate this mystery from the very beginning, you must be flexible with the storyline. The players may hit upon the right solution after the heroes find only a few clues, or they may get caught up in all the wrong details. As GM, your job is to keep the story moving at an appropriate pace and find a way to make sure the heroes are in the right place at the right time (in this case, in Nicholas St. Andrew's sewer hideout before he completes the dark rite that will bring him untold power).

Unusual Suspects

Once the heroes discover that all the victims were members of the Children of Chaos, they are likely to suspect Nicholas St. Andrew immediately. The downside to this situation is that some heroes may run off in pursuit of St. Andrew with their guns blazing. Such a resolution makes for a short adventure and one that is perhaps less satisfying than a mystery with more depth.

There are no red herrings to distract them from St. Andrew in the adventure as presented. However, you can make it more challenging for them by adding one or more additional suspects if you wish. If you can manage to present reasonable alternatives to Nicholas St. Andrew as a suspect, the heroes are more likely to behave in a sensible, civilized manner. The following groups can provide the heroes with more avenues to investigate.

- **Blood Moon Revival:** This cult has had violent clashes with the Children of Chaos in the past. About a year ago, the leader of BMR died suddenly. A coroner's inquiry determined that the man had had an undiagnosed heart condition, but the cult members believe that Nicholas

St. Andrew killed him using black magic. The BMR has been known to keep panthers and other large cats as objects of worship.

- **Bring Order from Chaos's Heart:** Ostensibly a support group for parents whose sons and daughters have joined the Children of Chaos, this group has attempted to assassinate representatives of the cult who have been captured and put on trial. BOCH has even gone so far as to spread the word through the prison system that it will pay a \$5,000 bounty to anyone who kills a member of the cult. The fact that the cult member slain for that reward could easily be one of their own children is an irony lost on these bereaved parents.
- **Antoine de LaMer:** Antoine is an eco-terrorist whose claim to fame is a book stating that man has usurped the top spot on the food chain from the large predators. He claims that forged metal and gunpowder are unnatural inventions and that humans should go back to carrying only weapons of wood and stone. He was arrested in 1993 for kidnapping executives from a Pittsburgh steel company and making them fight lions in his version of the Roman Coliseum.

Significant Clues

The key to making these unusual suspects work is to present the clues in such a way that they support both the correct resolution and the intended alternative one. For example, allowing the heroes to find hairs from the beast and identify them as some sort of tiger can help them determine what tactics should work against the creature when they find it. However, that piece of evidence may also cast a shadow of suspicion on both the Blood Moon Revival and Antoine de LaMer.

The Big Connection

Once the heroes realize that all the victims were members of the Children of Chaos, they should be able to deduce that Nicholas St. Andrew is involved. (There may or may not be other suspects as well, depending on your use of the information presented in the “Ongoing Investigations” sidebar.)

Exactly when the heroes acquire this information is up to you. You can reveal it in response to an especially high Investigate or Research check result, or after a particular number of bodies have been found, or simply when the players need a helpful hint to keep them on the right track.

Through Department-7’s resources, the heroes can easily get a list of other known members and ex-members of the Children of Chaos cult. With that information in hand, they can begin to function a little more proactively, perhaps by maintaining surveillance on or providing protection for potential targets. Such activities may help the players feel that their characters are finally in control of the situation, rather than scrambling to keep up with events that are moving faster than they can handle. Regardless of their efforts, however, one more murder occurs shortly after this revelation. Proceed to encounter B when you are ready to give the heroes another important clue.

B. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

This encounter revolves around a killing that began like all the others but was not completed in the usual way. This time, the killer was interrupted and left his business unfinished. Although the victim is still beyond help, his body provides a good deal more information than the others did because it was not completely devoured. In addition, there is a witness who can offer more complete descriptions than the previous ones could.

How It Went Down

This victim was a white male in his early twenties named Philip Juneau. He worked as a 3rd-shift lineman for the phone company and was responding to a report of intermittent service outages at the time of his death. Philip had gone into an alley, intending to enter the sewer system and check one of the junction stations there (area D3). He was quite surprised to find the High Priest of Disorder waiting for him in the alley.

St. Andrew approached Juneau and subdued him in the same way as he had the other victims. He performed his foul ritual, carving runes into the man’s flesh and then removing his heart. But just as he had set the beast to consuming the remains, a pizza delivery van pulled into the alley. The driver had an extra pizza and a six-pack of beer that he wanted to enjoy in peace, so he had sought out what he thought would be a private place. Instead, his headlights shone directly on the victim and the beast and outlined St. Andrew in stark silhouette. The driver immediately put the vehicle in reverse and fled the scene. Before the van even hit the street, he had dialed 911.

St. Andrew decided to take the beast back to his lair before any more company could arrive. However, since it had not yet eaten its fill, he had to struggle to get it to follow

him. In doing so, he stepped in the victim’s blood and left tracks—something he had been careful never to do at any previous crime scenes.

Significant Clues

Exactly what information the heroes get from this crime scene depends on what questions they ask and how good their investigative skills are. Depending on how thoroughly they investigate the crime scene and interview the witness, the heroes may turn up any or all of the following facts and clues.

SPOT OR GATHER INFORMATION DC	INFORMATION GAINED
10	The driver describes the beast as a “giant tiger on steroids” and the man as “a guy dressed in a long black coat holding a softball.” (The “softball” was the victim’s heart.)
10	The left half of the body has been mauled in exactly the same fashion as the corpses of the previous victims. Most of the left lung is missing, as are the left shoulder and arm.
15	The flesh of the victim’s chest has been marked with a series of arcane symbols. The chests of previous victims have always been thoroughly mauled or missing entirely, obliterating any such disfigurement.
15	The ribcage has been cut open using a sharp, heavy instrument that seems to have been designed specifically for that purpose.
18	Footprints in the puddled blood lead to a nearby manhole cover.
20	The heart has been removed with surgical precision. Examination of the aorta and other major blood vessels reveals that they have been cut cleanly.
20	Throughout the sewer system are access halls where the phone company and other utilities have been allowed to place materials that they do not want accessible to the general public.

Following Up

There will be no more killings after this one. Philip’s heart was the last one that Nicholas St. Andrew needed before beginning his final ritual.

The most expedient way to solve the case is for the heroes to follow the bloody footprints into the sewers. If they miss or choose to ignore this clue, allow them to proceed with their investigation in any way they choose.

Other ways to get the heroes into the sewers include the following.

- **Psychic Friends:** Department-7 employs many different types of investigators. One or more of the organization’s reliable psychics can inform the heroes that their target is underground and will not come up again.
- **Noises in the Pipes:** Police dispatchers inform the heroes that they have received a number of complaints about



roaring and growling sounds coming from sewer grates in a specific part of town.

- **Sensitive Spellcasters:** Characters who have sensitivity to divine auras (such as acolytes and other divine spellcasters) can feel the beginnings of Nicholas St. Andrew's final ritual. The emanations are powerful enough to lead them to his hideout.

C. INTO THE SEWERS

Once the heroes head into the sewers, they have more to contend with than just Nicholas St. Andrew and his beast. Many dangerous people and creatures make their homes in the fetid pipes below the city streets.

Most people imagine that a sewer system is made up of expansive metal tubes, but that impression is often false. This particular city's sewer was built long ago and consists of numerous interconnecting brick and cement passages. Some are filled with several feet of fetid water carrying all manner of waste and garbage. Other sections serve as conduits for runoff from rainfall, so they are relatively dry. Some tunnels are 20 feet tall; others are so small that adults must crawl through on their hands and knees. At irregular intervals, several tunnels meet in a roaring waterfall several stories high. In particularly large sections of the system, railed walkways line either side of the tunnel, allowing workers to pass through even when the sewer water is running high.

The sewer ceiling is lined with pipes that bring fresh water into buildings and dump waste water onto the tunnel floors. Gratings, manholes, and occasionally even freight elevators lead to the surface. Doors, garage-style gates, and portcullises lead into building basements, access hallways, and storage spaces.

Getting lost in this maze of sewers is quite easy because the passageways often do not follow the same layout as the streets above. A DC 20 Navigate check is required to accurately determine where in the city a given spot in the sewers lies. A hero with the Emergency Services starting occupation receives a +5 competence bonus on this check.

Random Sewer Encounters

Before the heroes find the lair of the beast, they may encounter one or more of the obstacles on the following table. Either roll on the table after they enter the sewer, or simply choose the obstacles you wish them to encounter.

D%	ENCOUNTER
01–07	Alligators
08–22	Gang meeting
23–38	Gas leak
39–54	Rats
55–75	Survivalists
76–00	No encounter

You can also add some nonthreatening encounters, such as a lost child, one or more homeless people, or a dead body that has nothing to do with the current adventure. (This corpse could, however, serve as a segue into whatever you have planned for the heroes next.)

C1. Alligators (EL 10)

In a part of the sewer where the water is at least 3 feet deep, the heroes encounter several creatures that are usually considered urban myths—sewer alligators.

Brought home as pets from tropical vacations, these alligators were flushed down toilets as babies when they proved difficult to raise in an urban environment. The hardest managed to survive and banded together to form a thriving colony. The alligators usually eat refuse, rats, or household pets that have wandered or fallen into the sewer system, but they are more than willing to make a meal of trespassing humans as well.

GM Characters: Six full-grown alligators live in this section of the sewer.

Alligators (6): Use the Huge Crocodile statistics found in Chapter 8 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* for these creatures.

Tactics: One or two alligators float in plain view, while the others swim quietly in from the rear and sides, trying to surround the intended victims.

C2. Gang Meeting (EL 12)

Several of the city's street gangs have staked out "turf" in the sewer system. The police don't look for them there nearly as often as they do in the streets and alleys, so the gangs can do just about anything they like without fear of prying eyes. They are just as protective of their subterranean turf as they are of the areas they claim in the city proper, and intruders must pay a heavy toll in either cash or blood.

In this encounter, the heroes stumble onto a meeting of one of the gangs. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when they approach the group.

A light shines from just ahead, illuminating a group of youths dressed in identical jackets. Most are sitting on the floor around a Coleman lantern, but a few are standing, lounging against the tunnel walls. The smell of cigarette smoke permeates the air.

GM Characters: There are 1d4+6 gang members attending the meeting.

Gang Members (1d4+6): Use the Mid-Level Thug statistics from Chapter 8 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* for the gang members.

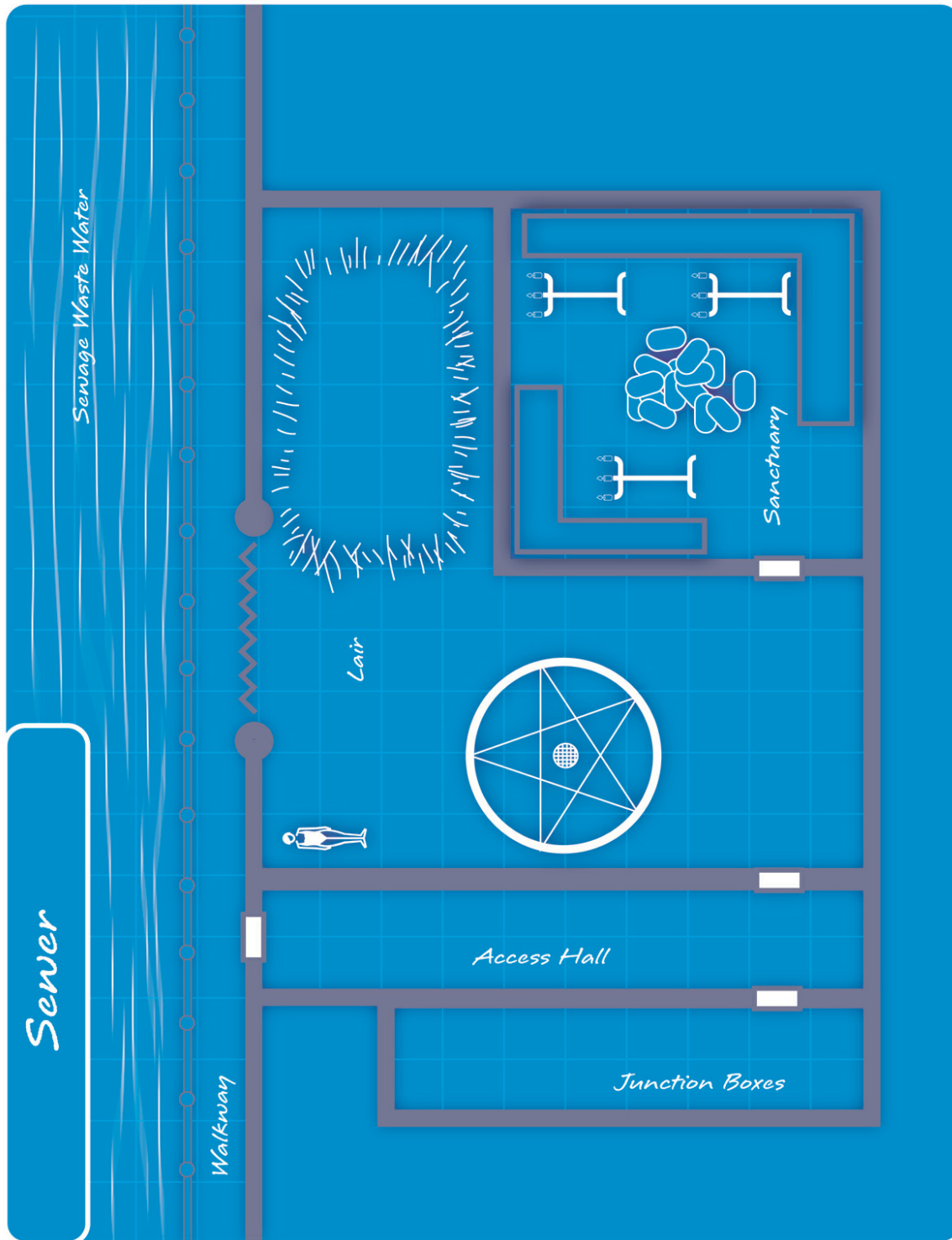
Tactics: The gang members allow the heroes to walk into their presence, but several of them surreptitiously circle around to trap the intruders while they talk to the others. The gang members are full of bravado and threats, but if the heroes approach respectfully, show no fear, and have enough firepower to defend themselves, the gang members are willing to talk and open to making a deal for "safe passage."

If the heroes do not show them proper respect on their home turf, the youths attack and fight to the death. If the heroes manage to chase the kids off after such a fight, the gang seeks vengeance on them from that day forward.

Development: If the heroes manage to establish peaceful communications with the gang, its members can offer the following information in answer to the right questions (no check needed).

THE DEAD OF WINTER

10



- They have seen Nicholas St. Andrew and his beast coming and going from time to time.
- So far, they have not given him any trouble because they don't know how they would deal with the beast, which they describe as "a damn big cat."
- They can describe exactly where the cultist makes his home.

A hero who offers the gang some tangible reward and makes a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check can convince its members to lend a hand in taking St. Andrew down.

Appealing to their sense of civic responsibility is not enough because they don't feel any.

C3. Gas Leak (CR 8)

The ground beneath the city is honeycombed with pipes, tunnels, and conduits that carry water, waste, and power. Often, several services run along the same path, which is convenient for construction but also dangerous when something goes wrong. In this encounter, the heroes pass through a section of tunnel where one of the pipes carrying natural gas has sprung a leak. The gas poses two dangers to the heroes: asphyxiation and explosion.



When the heroes enter the affected stretch of tunnel, each of them can attempt a DC 15 Spot check. On a success, the hero notices the smell of gas in the air. Any hero who fails the check may try again once per round until he succeeds.

Asphyxiation: Any hero who is not wearing some kind of artificial breathing apparatus (such as an oxygen tank or gas mask) must attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12 + number of rounds of exposure to the gas) each round that she spends in the area of the gas leak. If the saving throw fails, the hero takes 1d2 points of damage and 1d4 points of Constitution damage. Once the hero can breathe clean air again, the Constitution damage heals at a rate of 1 point per 10 minutes.

Explosion: If the heroes are carrying anything that produces an open flame, electrical spark, or other ignition source and they do not extinguish it during their first round of exposure to the gas, it ignites the gas the following round. The resulting explosion deals 8d6 points of damage to everyone in the tunnel (Reflex DC 15 half). Furthermore, the explosion blows a hole in the street above and damages all the other conduits in this section of the sewer (including other natural gas pipes and electrical power lines). Thus, every minute after the first, there is a 10% chance that another identical explosion will occur. This situation persists until the gas is cleared.

Fixing the Leak: To eliminate the danger of explosions, the heroes must shut off the flow of gas through the pipeline and ventilate the tunnel. Finding the correct valve to turn off the gas requires a successful Knowledge (technology) or Craft (structural) check (DC 12 for either). Because the valve is located within the affected stretch of tunnel, the heroes must still make the normal saves against the effects of the gas while looking for or manipulating it.

Once the heroes find the valve, they must turn it off. Doing so without the proper tools requires a DC 10 Strength check. Success means the gas is shut off, but it puts even more strain on an already shaky pipeline. If a permanent repair is not made by a team of experts within 12 hours, the pipes explode as described above. No one discovers this danger unless the heroes themselves remember to report the leak.

Clearing the Gas: To ventilate the tunnel, the heroes need only open a few of the manhole covers in the tunnel ceiling to let in the fresh air. You may make this task as easy or difficult as you prefer.

C4. Rats (CL 5)

In this encounter, the heroes may mistake the lair of some sewer rats for that of the beast they seek. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when they reach this area.

Partially hidden behind a pile of refuse is a large gap in the sewer wall. There are bloodstains on the wall and floor around the entrance, and a musky smell emanates from the fissure.

Each hero may attempt a DC 10 Investigate, Search, or Handle Animal check to determine that the bloodstains are

too small to have been made by the creature the group is hunting. Each hero may also attempt a DC 12 Listen check to hear rustling and squeaking noises in the darkness behind the fissure.

Creatures: Hundreds of rats inhabit this area. Rather than attacking individually, they function as three swarms (see the Swarm entry in the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting* for details).

Rat Swarms (3): CR 2; Medium animal (swarm of Fine animals); HD 3d12; HP 13; Mas 10; Init +2; Spd 15 ft.; Def 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex); BAB +0; Grap —; Atk swarm (2d4, swarm); Full Atk swarm (2d4, swarm); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ swarm, distraction, low-light vision; AL none; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +7*, Swim +7*.

Feats: None.

Possessions: None.

*A rat swarm uses its Dexterity instead of its Strength modifier for Climb and Swim checks.

Tactics: If disturbed (by removal of the refuse, bright light, or a foreign object), the rat swarms hiding in the dark fissure panic and burst from their den in an attempt to get away from the heroes. They swarm over anything and anyone in their way, then move on into the darkness. They have no interest in a sustained encounter. Each swarm moves independently of the others and may head off in any direction it likes.

C5. Survivalists (CL 12)

Afraid of nuclear war, anthrax, global warming, or some other threat too large to protect themselves from in the normal ways, two survivalists have gathered a mass of supplies and built themselves a bunker in the sewers. The pair has staked out a territory that they defend as “private property,” and they have no qualms about shooting trespassers.

GM Characters: The two survivalists living here are paranoid recluses who have no interest in negotiating with the heroes—they just want the group to leave their territory. They do not recognize any governmental authority and are not deterred by badges or declarations of official status.

Survivalists (2): Use the statistics given for the High-Level Terrorist in Chapter 8 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*.

Tactics: If the heroes attack the survivalists or fail a Diplomacy or Intimidate check against them, the two attack.

Development: If the heroes manage to talk their way into the pair’s good graces with a successful Diplomacy check, they can gain some information about the beast, and perhaps some aid for any future adventures in the sewer. The survivalists know the underground tunnels like the backs of their hands and are familiar with everything that happens here. They know about Nicholas St. Andrew, Audrey Petersen, and the beast and have seen them all on numerous occasions. They consider St. Andrew and company to be good neighbors—the kind who mind their own business. But if the heroes convince them (with a successful Diplomacy check and a few facts) that their neighbors are murderers who cannot be trusted, the survivalists are more than willing to divulge the exact location of St. Andrew’s hideout.

D. LAIR OF THE BEAST

Once the heroes locate the hideout that Nicholas St. Andrew has built for himself, Audrey Petersen, and the beast, they have the opportunity to solve the string of grisly murder cases. The following sections describe the area in and around St. Andrew's base.

D1. Sewer

This stretch of sewer is more or less identical to several others that the heroes have passed through. Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes arrive.

This section of sewer is one of the wider passages, with raised walkways on both sides. About 3 feet of brackish water flows through the passage, and the smell is horrible. Every footstep echoes loudly, mingling with the sound of rushing water and noise from the street above.

Along one wall is a steel door and a garage-style, sheet-metal gate. Both are covered in years worth of graffiti, but they also bear official markings. A sign on the door reads "Access 247-D: Authorized Personnel Only." The handgrip at the base of the gate is engraved with the words, "Municipal Maintenance Station 38."

The heroes may have received directions or other guidance to help them locate this particular stretch of sewer (from Department-7 operatives, members of a street gang, or the sewer-dwelling survivalists). But even if they haven't, several clues here should be enough to make them suspicious.

Upon entering this area, each hero may attempt a DC 20 Spot check to notice dried blood spattered here and there along the walkway. The trails of bloodstains lead from both directions on the pathway but are thickest by the door. The blood came from the human hearts that St. Andrew carried here and from various other body parts the beast carried here from the crime scenes for later snacking.

Entrances: The door is made of steel and locked. It leads to the access hall (area D2). The gate is locked from the inside (which may indicate to especially bright heroes that there is another other way into that space). It leads to St. Andrew's lair (area D4).

Door: Hardness 10, hp 120, Break DC 35.

Gate: Hardness 10, hp 75, Break DC 35.

Development: If the heroes pick the lock or break through the door, no one inside the lair hears the noise. However, if they even test the gate, it makes a loud grating noise that reverberates through the lair, alerting St. Andrew to the presence of strangers outside his hideout. Perhaps more importantly, it also startles the beast, which lets out a loud roar and smacks the grate with its paw.

D2. Access Hall

This short, dimly lit hallway leads to the lair and to a regional junction room maintained by the telephone company. Read aloud or paraphrase the following when the heroes approach.

The door opens onto a dank hallway. The three dim bulbs overhead seem to be better at casting shadows than providing light. The walls have been painted in two tones of gray—darker on the bottom and lighter on the top—but they are otherwise unadorned. At the far end of the hallway are two single steel doors, one on either wall.

There is nothing of interest here.

D3. Junction Boxes

This room is a junction for all the local telephone lines. Phone company workers can come here to test the equipment, make changes to service, and even monitor usage.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following when the heroes enter.

The walls of this narrow room seem to be covered with gray metal cabinets. There is no overhead lighting, so only the boxes nearest the open door are visible. Each cabinet has a notation indicating a series of addresses that are evidently somewhere in the blocks above.

The cabinets are junction boxes, each containing 120 small pairs of wires. Each pair corresponds to a specific physical location that has a telephone connection in one of the buildings above.

Development: The boxes do not break easily, but if the heroes persist, they can pull out a pair of wires (Str DC 15) or even pull a box entirely off the wall (Str DC 25). Doing either completely disrupts telephone service for the locations that have been disconnected. A telephone company worker arrives on the scene in 10d6+30 minutes to investigate the problem.

D4. Lair (EL 16)

This area is Nicholas St. Andrew's hideout. He has been living here with Audrey Petersen and the beast while committing the terrible murders that the heroes have been investigating.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following when the heroes reach this area.

This large, L-shaped room smells of motor oil, feces, and freshly spilled blood. It is difficult to make out details because the only sources of light are dozens of squat, black candles spaced around the perimeter of the room.

A woman sits on the floor in the left rear corner, apparently unconscious. Her arms are manacled to the wall above her lolling head.

The other corner is partially blocked from view, but a bed of straw is visible. Deep growling noises emanate from farther back in that direction.

More or less in the center of the room, a pentagram inscribed within a circle has been painted on the floor. The design is centered around a drain that must lead even deeper into the bowels of the city. At each point of the star is a human heart. Perhaps it is only a trick of the flickering candlelight, but all five hearts seem to be beating of their own accord.



Standing over the drain in the center of the design is a tall, gaunt man with thinning hair and a goatee shaved to severe angles. In one outstretched hand, he holds a sixth human heart. His other hand is poised over it, allowing blood to flow onto the heart from an open wound on his palm. As his blood flows over and into the heart, he squeezes it regularly in a mockery of the sinus rhythm it maintained in life. His blood finally trickles out the bottom of the heart and swirls down the drain.

"You are too late!" the man cries. "The final rite is nearly complete. Soon the power of the dark gods shall be mine! Run, fleas, while you still can!"

GM Characters: The man is Nicholas St. Andrew. He has actually finished performing his dark rite and expects at any moment to be filled with unholy energy.

The woman is Audrey Petersen. She is unconscious because earlier in the day St. Andrew used her to power a *delego vitae* spell (see New Spells, below) to boost the beast's vitality. The two have often used this technique to power up the beast, and it has always been their practice to chain Audrey up during the process. That way, should the authorities ever discover the lair, she could claim to have been held captive. In truth she has always been a willing participant, but these two specialize in covering up their actions.

Nicholas St. Andrew (Dedicated Hero 3/Acolyte 10/Tough Hero 1): CR 14; Medium-size human; HD 3d6+3 plus 10d8+10 plus 1d10+1; hp 74; Mas 12; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 18, touch 18, flat-footed 18 (+8 class); BAB +9; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6/18–20, sword cane) or +10 ranged (2d6, Glock 17); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6/18–20, sword cane) or +10/+5 ranged (2d6, Glock 17); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ combat casting, divine skills, divine spells, maximize spell, rebuke magical beast, rebuke outsider, rebuke undead, spontaneous casting; AL evil; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +15; AP 7; Rep +9; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 16.

Occupation: Religious (bonus class skills: Decipher Script, Knowledge [arcane lore], Knowledge [theology and philosophy]).

Skills: Balance +2, Concentration +16, Craft (visual art) +18, Decipher Script +21, Knowledge (arcane lore) +22, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +14, Listen +10, Profession +20, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +12.

Talents: Faith, remain conscious, skill emphasis (Concentration).

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Attentive, Educated, Focused, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Renown, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Studios.

Acolyte Spells Prepared: (6/6/6/5/5/3; save DC 14 + spell level) 0—*cure minor wounds*, *haywire* (2), *light*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*bane*, *cause fear*, *command*, *instant identify*, *obscuring mist*, *sanctuary*; 2nd—*darkness*, *daylight*, *enhance ability*, *hold person*, *resist energy*, *shatter*; 3rd—*bestow curse*, *dispel magic*, *searing light*, *shutdown*, *vampiric touch*; 4th—*cure critical wounds*, *greater magic weapon*, *freedom of movement*, *tongues*, *via negativa*; 5th—*flaming wrath*, *wall of stone*.*

* Nicholas St. Andrew has already cast one 5th-level spell today—*delego vitae*.

Possessions: Holy symbol (a pendant inscribed with a pentagram), sword cane, Glock 17 (9mm autoloader), 2 spare clips of ammunition, various small personal items.

The Beast: CR 14; Large magical beast; HD 22d10+132; hp 253; Mas 23; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Def 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); BAB +22; Grap +37; Atk +32 melee (2d4+11, claw); Full Atk +32 melee (2d4+11, claw) and +26 melee (2d6+5, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., improved grab, improved natural attack, low-light vision, pounce, rake 2d4+5, resistance 10 to cold and fire, smite good, spell resistance 21; AL none; SV Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +14; AP 0, Rep +0; Str 33, Dex 15, Con 23, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +7 (+9 in tall grass or undergrowth), Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +7, Swim +14.

Feats: Alertness, Run, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (claw).

See New Monster section for explanations of special qualities.

Tactics: If the heroes do not leave immediately, St. Andrew orders the beast to engage them in melee combat and keep them as far away from him as possible. From a safe distance, he casts spells to disable and distract his opponents. When he runs out of effective distance spells, he begins shooting at them with his Glock. If the heroes succeed in engaging him in melee combat, St. Andrew starts converting some of his prepared spells to *inflict* spells, which he can deliver by touch. He and the beast both fight to the death.

Development: Once the heroes have defeated Nicholas and the beast, they can "rescue" Audrey Petersen. No matter with they try, she remains unconscious for another 2 hours. See encounter E for her responses to interrogation.

D5. Sanctum

This area is Nicholas St. Andrew's personal library. He and Audrey Petersen have shared this space since moving into the hideout. Read aloud or paraphrase the following when the heroes enter.

Bookcases line the walls of this chamber, their shelves heavy with thick, leather-bound tomes. Small stone and jade idols to nameless gods and censers burning pungent incense fill the niches between books. In the center of the room is a heaping mound of red satin pillows, and three ornate candelabras filled with red candles provide the only light.

The pillows served as bed, reading chairs, meditation pads, and every other type of furniture that St. Andrew and Petersen required.

Development: A successful DC 15 Search check of the mound of pillows reveals the arcane tome that details the ritual St. Andrew used. The book is hand-bound in leather and consists of 96 pages of handmade paper. Four pages were torn out at some point during the centuries since it was written.

The book is written in a bastardized version of Sanskrit that was used by an ancient group of sub-Saharan alchemists and diablerists. If the heroes have played through the *Heartless* campaign and closely examined the two idols, they recognize this language as the one used for the inscriptions on Barrik the Glutton and Ventyr the Emaciated.

Any hero who manages to translate the book discovers that it contains the spells *delego vitae* and *Shere Khan's boon*, as well as the incantations used by the Children of Chaos in *Blood Sugar* and *The Final Feast*, the previous two installments of the *Heartless* campaign. It also has full instructions for activating the two idols used in those adventures. At your option, the book may also contain any other spells or arcane information that you want the heroes to be able to access.

Forensic examination of the pillows reveals more than a platonic relationship and should throw suspicion onto any claims that Petersen was merely a captive.

The bookcases contain numerous other tomes, magic items, and artifacts of your choice. The resolution of *The Dead of Winter* can be used as a springboard to many more occult-themed adventures.

E. RESOLUTION

If all goes well, the heroes can defeat Nicholas St. Andrew in this adventure. Both the cultist and his beast are likely to die in the final battle, since the beast knows nothing but bloodlust and St. Andrew prefers death to ignominious defeat. The heroes should, however, be able to take Audrey Petersen captive.

The Beast

If the heroes turn the body of the beast over to the police or other mainstream authorities, scientists from all over the world study it closely. They eventually conclude that it is a heretofore unknown species related to the tiger. Scientific organizations spend a great deal of time and effort thereafter trying to determine exactly where it originated, how Nicholas St. Andrew came to own it, and whether more specimens are likely to exist in the wild.

If the heroes turn the beast over to Department-7, however, that organization's scientists quickly determine that the beast had extraordinary origins. Thereafter, they help to keep the secret from getting out to the media by feeding promising but inaccurate information to their mundane counterparts as needed.

Interrogating Audrey

The disposition of Audrey Petersen depends entirely on your plans for the heroes. If you plan to continue the *Heartless* campaign, she steadfastly claims to have been Nicholas St. Andrew's captive and not a willing participant in his plans. The police do not believe her story, and they are planning to charge her with several counts of murder, as well as several other crimes associated with the events in the previous three installments.

If you are playing *The Dead of Winter* as a stand-alone adventure, Audrey is considerably more forthcoming. Though at first she insists that she was an unwitting dupe of Nicholas St. Andrew, she eventually breaks down under questioning and admits that she was a partner in the whole process. In hopes of gaining leniency when she is brought to trial for the murders of all these people, she freely answers any questions the heroes have about what St. Andrew was doing, the details of the various crimes, and the goal he had in mind.

Heartless Resolution

If you plan to continue with the next installment of the *Heartless* campaign, you should make sure that the heroes gain as much of the following information as you deem appropriate.

- Nicholas St. Andrew claimed to have “nearly finished” the dark rite he was performing, but according to the book in his sanctum, the ceremony was completed the moment his blood washed down that drain.
- The dark rite was supposed to give St. Andrew power from an unholy entity known as the Khor'dyl, though the book never explains exactly who or what that entity is. (The nature of the Khor'dyl will be explained in the final chapter of the *Heartless* campaign.)
- Barrik the Glutton and Ventyr the Emaciated were integral parts of the ritual. If either idol has been destroyed, the dark rite can never be performed again.

REWARDS

The heroes gain the standard experience and wealth awards for the encounters in this adventure. In addition, you may wish to award bonus experience for their investigative work at the beginning of the scenario. Depending on how well they were able to piece together the clues on their own, you can award experience for up to a CR 12 obstacle.

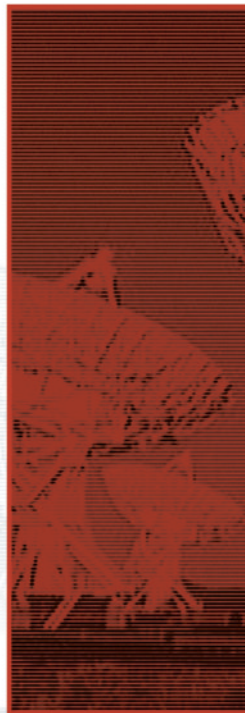
The “beast killings” were big local and national news stories. Depending on how public their actions were, and whether or not Department-7 allows them to take credit for the work they have done, the heroes could gain a significant amount of publicity. Such publicity could result in the characters becoming media celebrities, an increase in the amount of work (or rate of pay) that they receive, or—if things went badly—in public vilification.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

The resolution of *The Dead of Winter* does not leave much room for further adventures outside of the *Heartless* campaign. However, if the two idols (Barrik the Glutton and Ventyr the Emaciated) remain whole, someone else might steal them and start the whole grisly process over again.

Alternatively, you could build an adventure around the mystery of the four pages torn from St. Andrew's spellbook. Were they torn out recently or centuries ago? The answer makes no difference in the context of this adventure, but you could use the content of those pages as the foundation for a whole new scenario. They might describe how to summon the Khor'dyl without the idols, or they could contain other potent spells.

Furthermore, the very existence of a creature as exotic as the beast might motivate a zoological society to hire the heroes to procure another specimen for study. Alternatively, a rich big game hunter, wishing to test his mettle against such a beast, could hire a spellcaster to summon one for him to hunt. If such a beast managed to escape, tragedy would surely ensue.



Continuing *Heartless*

The *Heartless* campaign concludes next month with the free online adventure *Resolutions*.

NEW SPELLS

The following new spells are available for use in any d20 MODERN adventure.

Delego Vitae

Necromancy

Level: Divine 5; **Components:** V, S, F; **Casting Time:** One full-round action per HD transferred; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Two creatures touched; **Duration:** 2 hours per HD transferred; **Saving Throw:** Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes

Delego vitae allows you to transfer life energy from one target to another. The two targets must be connected by a length of rope, twine, or thread, and you must touch them both throughout the casting. When the casting is complete, the subject donating the life energy gains 1 negative level, and the one receiving it gains one additional Hit Die of its racial type and a +1 bonus to both Strength and Constitution for the duration of the spell. The extra Hit Die confers all the normal benefits except additional feats and skill points.

If you maintain contact with both subjects until your next action, you may attempt a DC 15 Concentration check to transfer more life energy. If you succeed, the two subjects are once again affected as above, and the negative levels and benefits stack. You may continue to transfer life energy in this manner until your contact with either of the subjects is broken, or until the donating subject has only 1 Hit Die left, or until you have transferred a number of levels equal to one-half your own character level, rounded down.

When the transfer is completed, the subject that was drained of energy must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the number of negative levels gained) or fall unconscious for the duration of the spell.

When the spell ends, the subject that received the energy becomes fatigued and must attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the number of Hit Dice gained) or fall unconscious for 8 hours.

Focus: A length of rope, twine, or thread that connects the two targets.

Shere Khan's Boon

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Arcane 5, Divine 5; **Components:** V, S, M; **Casting Time:** Full-round action; **Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels); **Effect:** One summoned creature; **Duration:** See below; **Saving Throw:** None; **Spell Resistance:** No

This spell summons a fiendish dire tiger—a powerful creature from a dimension beyond our own (see New Monster section, below). The tiger appears where you designate and acts immediately, attacking your enemies unless you give it other orders. You can mentally direct the creature not to attack, to attack particular enemies, or to perform other actions you

designate. The fiendish dire tiger can perform any action that a normal tiger could and is subject to the same limitations.

The tiger remains with you for 24 hours. At the end of that time, it dissipates into nothingness unless you feed it 10 pounds or more of human flesh. As long as you keep feeding the tiger every day, it remains with you as a completely obedient pet.

Material Component: A vial of human blood.

NEW MONSTER

The following new monster is available for use in any d20 MODERN adventure.

Fiendish Dire Tiger

This animal is similar to the modern-day tigers common to zoos and circuses, but it is more muscular, meaner, and tougher. A fiendish dire tiger measures more than 12 feet long and can weigh up to 6,000 pounds. Though similar creatures may have roamed the earth at the dawn of time, these creatures have survived in a land somewhere beyond the veil of Shadow. They are the subjects of a powerful half-human/half-tiger entity that calls himself Shere Khan, and they exist to do his bidding.

Species Traits

Pounce (Ex): If a fiendish dire tiger leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even though it has already moved.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the fiendish dire tiger must hit with a claw or bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can make two rake attacks (see below). See the Improved Grab entry in Chapter 8 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* for additional information.

Improved Natural Attack: A fiendish dire tiger's claw and bite attacks deal damage as if the creature were one size category larger than it is.

Rake (Ex): A fiendish dire tiger that establishes a hold on its target can make two rake attacks (+12 melee) with its hind legs, dealing 2d4+8 points of damage each. If the fiendish dire tiger pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

Skill Bonuses: A fiendish dire tiger receives a +4 species bonus on Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, this bonus improves to +9.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, the fiendish dire tiger can make a normal melee attack to deal 16 extra points of damage against a foe with an allegiance to Good.

Damage Reduction (Su): A fiendish dire tiger has damage reduction 10/magic. Each time a foe hits with a nonmagical weapon, the damage dealt is reduced by 10 (to a minimum of 0). Magic weapons, however, deal full damage.

Resistance to Cold and Fire (Su): A fiendish dire tiger ignores the first 10 points of cold or fire damage dealt in any attack.

Spell Resistance (Su): An opponent casting a spell that targets a fiendish dire tiger must exceed 21 with a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) to affect the creature.

Fiendish Dire Tiger: CR 10; Large magical beast; HD 16d10+48; hp 136; Mas 17; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Def 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); BAB +16; Grap +28; Atk +24 melee (2d4+8, claw); Full Atk +24 melee (2d4+8, 2 claws) and +18 melee (2d6+4, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., improved grab, improved natural attack, low-light vision, pounce, rake 2d4+4, resistance 10 to cold and fire, smite good, spell resistance 21; AL evil; SV Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +11; AP 0, Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +7 (+9 in tall grass or undergrowth), Listen +7, Move Silently +11, Spot +7, Swim +11.

Feats: Alertness, Run, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (claw).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stan! has been publishing fiction, cartoons, and games professionally since 1982. He has served as a graphic designer and line editor for West End Games, an editor and designer for TSR, Inc., and an author, senior designer, and creative director for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Stan! is currently the Creative Vice President for The Game Mechanics, Inc. <<http://www.thegamemechanics.com>>. His recent projects include the *URBAN ARCANA Campaign Setting* for Wizards of the Coast and the *Modern Player's Companion* for Green Ronin. In what he laughingly refers to as his spare time, Stan! writes and illustrates the *Bolt & Quiver* and *Table Talk* comic strips.

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