

HORROR IN THE WINDY CITY



A Whispers in the Dark Setting

SATURDAY MORNING SCENARIOS

HORROR IN THE WINDY CITY



HORROR IN THE WINDY CITY BRINGS THE EXCITEMENT, INTRIGUE, AND beautiful chaos of late 19th century Chicago to your table using the 5e rules you already know as adapted by the *Whispers* RPG. The sourcebook contains new rules, backgrounds, a new alignment system, NPCs, scenarios, pre-gens for more immediate play, and much more. In short, it's everything you'll need to take your party of investigators to Chicago. It will be up to them to find their way out.

Chicago's historic neighborhoods and organizations (secret and public, mundane and supernatural, criminal and altruistic) are presented with scenario hooks and NPCs of note.

The Dreamlands' incursion into Chicago has had profound effects on the city. Discover what's happened, and the forces shaping the transformation.

No story of Chicago would be complete without including H.H. Holmes, his infamous Murder Hotel, and World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Holmes, his cronies, and his home are explored in exquisite detail and integrated into the provided scenarios.

HORROR IN THE WINDY CITY

A Whispers in the Dark Sourcebook



Saturday Morning Scenarios

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FOREWORD

BEFORE GETTING TOO FAR INTO THIS, I want to thank you for purchasing this book. *HitWC* is the product of a more than just the folks listed as contributors. Everyone that's supported the *Whispers* quickstart rules that M.T. wrote, the *Crow Man Saga*, the broadsheets, and of course *The Devil's City* have had a hand in this product, and your continued support will ensure future scenarios, sourcebooks, and the Core RPG books (I'm thinking it'll be two books by the way, maybe three) make it to your shelves. Once again thank you!

For *Horror in the Windy City* I wanted to create a book that could, with a little squinting, be considered historical fiction, and create a resource that was system agnostic enough to be useful for GMs wanting to explore Chicago during the Gilded Age using other tabletop RPG systems.

The writers and artists researched the fascinating history of Chicago, and H.H. Holmes in particular. One book that was crucial to our research was *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson — one of the best non-fiction

books I've ever read. If you're familiar with Chicago and its history you'll recognize a lot of names, places, and events. Liberties were taken of course, but not as many as you may expect.

While researching the city I was introduced to the phrase 'archival silence,' a term coined to describe the intentional absence of swaths of historical data from an archival record. These gaps are deliberate, intended to silence minorities and marginalized groups, and deny their voice to future generations. In my naivete I did not anticipate this challenge for Chicago, a city that is relatively young and known for its diversity; nonetheless there were significant gaps, in particular regarding African Americans and the native tribes of indigenous peoples.

To aid in the first I enlisted Dr. Robert Green, a professor and Civil Rights expert, to write the chapter *People of Color in Late 19th Century America* (see [page 10](#)). To aid in the second I've included quotes and firsthand accounts from native peoples whenever possible, and there will be a subsequent book exploring the Native American Indian tribes that will be written with the appropriate resources.





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PEOPLE OF COLOR IN LATE 19TH CENTURY AMERICA

By Dr. Robert Greene II
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President, Friends of African American Art and Culture

PUBLISHER'S NOTE. Chicago's story cannot be told without including the native tribes who originally inhabited the land. Portions of their story are shared throughout the book, particularly in the sidebars: *1832 Black Hawk War* (page 19) and *The 1821 Treaty of Chicago* (page 73) which is a first-hand account from Chief Metea of the Potawatomi.

People of Color in the Late 19th Century was written to share the perspective of the people of color who came later and were also instrumental in building Chicago. This section, and the sidebars mentioned above, are not fictionalized. You will not find statblocks for the folks mentioned. I encourage you to include them in your stories, and to do so narratively as an opportunity to add veracity to your game and educate your players.

The image used here of Nancy Green is one of the few remaining from her time as the spokesperson for Aunt Jemima pancake mix. In no way is the sharing of this image meant to be racist or discriminatory—it is, unfortunately, part of our history and one of the few images that remains of the real Nancy Green.



THE UNITED STATES AFTER 1877 WAS A nation continuing to reel from multiple crises: the American Civil War, Reconstruction, labor unrest, and westward expansion at the expense of Native Americans. Across the nation, questions of race, ethnicity, and identity continued to tear the American people apart, albeit not to the same violent extent it did during the 1860s and early 1870s. Nonetheless, racial and ethnic groups—referred to in this essay as “People of Color”—faced considerable discrimination and oppression throughout the nation. At the same time, many of these people continued to see the United States as a nation of hope and opportunity.

By 1877, the attempt to expand democracy in the American South, referred to as “Reconstruction,” had come to an end. During the Reconstruction period, African Americans formally gained their freedom through the 13th Amendment, banning slavery; the 14th Amendment, the first federal definition of national citizenship granting millions of African Americans formal citizenship rights; and the 15th Amendment, which granted African American men the right to vote. The expansion of these rights led to African Americans participating in American politics in large numbers for the first time in history. Several African Americans were even voted to Congress in the 1870s, only ten years after over 4 million African Americans were enslaved throughout the South. All of these Congressmen were elected from states that,





during the American Civil War, were part of the Confederate States of America.

However, throughout the South, many former Confederates continued to resist the rise of Republican, pro-Reconstruction governments. This led to the founding of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the White League, and other groups dedicated to using violence to intimidate, harass, and sometimes kill African Americans and their white Republican allies. While Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States from 1869 to 1877, would break the back of the KKK via the Ku Klux Klan act of 1871 and the creation of the Department of Justice, the combination of paramilitary violence and intimidation at voting locations throughout the South would hasten the collapse of Republican governments, and a severe curtailing of African American political, social, and economic power through the end of the 19th century.

Meanwhile, in the West, the United States Army continued the expansion of the nation through warfare against various Native American tribes. The 1860s and 1870s saw an increase in the “Indian Wars” as the American military went to war against a variety of tribes. These included the Dakota War of 1862 (fought in Minnesota), the Colorado War of 1864-65, and the Great Sioux War of 1876-77. Despite the rare victory by Native Americans against the U.S. Army—most notably, the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876 that resulted in the destruction of the 7th Calvary and the death of Civil War hero George Armstrong Custer—by 1890 Native American resistance had been crushed. In 1890, the Wounded Knee Massacre of Sioux tribe members by U.S. Army soldiers marked a tragic end to the Indian Wars.

Ironically, the end of the Indian Wars also marked an end to a key part of American history—the expansion of the nation from the Eastern seaboard to the Pacific coast. This was seen, by historian Frederick Jackson

Turner, as the crux of American society and development. His essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” was given at the 1893 World’s Colombian Exposition in Chicago. As the Exposition was valued as a remarkable commentary on America’s rise as a global economic and cultural power, Jackson’s “Frontier Thesis” gained attention across the nation. But it said little about the ultimate fate of Native Americans, many of whom were reduced to living on reservations while younger members of these tribes had been sent East to live and work at schools under the Dawes Act of 1887. Their attendance at schools was meant to give Indigenous people an education in European and American civilization and, by extension, to erase the history and culture of Native Americans.

The question of what it meant to be a person of color in the late 19th century also tied deeply into immigration into America. On the West Coast, the immigration of Chinese helped to spur the development of railroads across the West, as Chinese immigrants were used as manual labor along with white and African American laborers. However, the Chinese were seen as a significant labor threat to these groups throughout the West Coast, and labor unions led the charge to end Chinese immigration. In 1882, Congress would pass the first act designed to restrict immigration, the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Immigration from Europe also greatly changed the way Americans thought about race and ethnicity. Before the American Civil War, large numbers of Irish immigrants to the United States encountered considerable discrimination, as they were seen in racially derogatory terms—especially in comparison to native-born white Americans. However, as the 19th century closed, the rise in immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe—of Jews, Italians, Poles, and other groups—also pushed



racial and ethnic tensions in the United States to new and dangerous levels. At the same time, the very idea of what it meant to be American was also changing, as all of these groups began to interact with each other and with white and African Americans throughout the country, especially in major cities such as New York City and Chicago.

As the 1893 World's Fair began, the United States of America grappled with both racial and ethnic tensions at home, while at the same time continuing to embrace itself as the "last, best hope" for freedom and democracy in the

world. The World's Fair showcased this diversity. Attractions at the Colombian Exposition included structures built by Native Americans, and a model of one of the "Indian Schools" designed to re-educate Indigenous peoples in the ways of Americans and Europeans. Some exhibits by African Americans were included, but a full-scale exhibit devoted to the African American experience was not included. The World's Fair represented the best of what America thought it could be in 1893—but its exclusions are today remembered as much as its inclusions.



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FREDERICK DOUGLASS

(c. 1818-1895)



A former slave, orator, writer, intellectual, journalist, political activist. Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland around 1818 (Douglass himself never knew his exact date of birth, but settled on February 14, 1818 due to it being Valentine's Day). Escaping from slavery as a young man, Douglass would become one of the best-known abolitionists in the United States and throughout the Western world. His first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) marked his national debut as a key abolitionist leader, orator, and writer. Douglass founded the newspaper *The North Star*

in 1847, after returning to the United States from a wildly successful speaking tour of Great Britain and Ireland—sparked due to needing to leave the USA as he was still a fugitive slave (fellow abolitionists would raise enough money to “purchase” his freedom). Douglass remained a stalwart of the abolitionist movement as the nation careened toward civil war by the end of the 1850s. He argued, unlike many of his abolitionist comrades, that the Constitution could be a powerful weapon against slavery, holding out hope that the United States could, indeed, become a more perfect union for African Americans.

During and after the American Civil War, Douglass became a staunch supporter of the Republican Party, considering it the only political hope for African Americans. As such, he became one of the most famous men, white or black, in the United States. Douglass repeatedly spoke to enraptured audiences across the nation in the 1860s, 1870s, and beyond—speaking not just on the problem of racism in American society, but also on topics such as “self-help.” He would eventually be named consul-general to the nation of Haiti by President Benjamin Harrison in 1889. While Douglass would resign the office in 1891, by 1893 Haiti named Douglass a co-commissioner of the Haitian Pavilion at the Colombian Exposition.

Douglass was concerned about the noticeable lack of African American representation at the Colombian Exposition. He would be one of several co-authors of a pamphlet decrying the lack of an African American exhibit or pavilion, titled “The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Colombian Exposition.” Douglass feared that the backsliding of African American civil and political rights, which had begun in the mid-1870s but picked up considerable energy after 1890, would not be stopped without constant agitation. Douglass would die in 1895, speaking out against anti-Black racism and in favor of a better, more just United States until his dying day.



W.E.B. DUBOIS

(1868-1963)



In a life spanning almost a century, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born at the height of Reconstruction, and died the day before Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream” speech. In between those two dramatic moments in American history, Dr. Du Bois dedicated his life for human rights for all—but, especially, for African Americans. Becoming the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895, Du Bois dedicated his life to studying sociology and

history. He would also travel the world in his pursuit of knowledge, attending the University of Berlin in the 1890s and during the course of his life, taking trips to places as diverse as France, Britain, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and Ghana.

Du Bois argued that “the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line” in his landmark book of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). The rest of the century would prove him prophetic. But much of Du Bois’ worldview was formed in the 1890s, in response to the rise of “Jim Crow” segregation in the American South at home, and the rise of imperialism by the European powers and the United States abroad. He tried every idea possible to tackle the problem of white supremacy at home—supporting the rise of a “Talented Tenth” of African Americans, to lead them politically, socially, and culturally; to pushing for economic self-determination in the 1930s during the Great Depression; and, before the end of his life, supporting Communism.

Du Bois also took seriously the arts as a tool of fighting for freedom. While Du Bois did not attend the Cololmbian Exposition, the experience of other African Americans there—dissatisfied with the lack of an African American pavilion—would push him to lead the designing of “The Exhibit of American Negroes,” which was part of the larger United States pavilion in Paris. Filled with images of African American life from across the United States, Du Bois’ and his fellow planners made sure to avoid the mistakes made at the Chicago World’s Fair, at least in relation to its lack of representation of African American life.

IDA B. WELLS (1862-1931)

Born into slavery and passing away at the height of the Great Depression, Ida B. Wells witnessed a considerable amount of change within American society—some good, some terrible, but all of it directly affecting her life. Born in Mississippi, Wells was part of a generation of African Americans born into slavery, but too young to remember any of it. As a young woman, Wells would move to Memphis, Tennessee, where she would first burst into regional, and national prominence as a activist for civil rights and human freedom.

Wells arrived in Memphis as a schoolteacher. However, she would quickly transition to

journalism, recording stories about the plight of African Americans living in Memphis. She soon became a fierce investigator of the problem of lynchings across the United States South, extrajudicial killings of African Americans (mostly, but not all, men) which were often justified as responses to reports of sexual assault by African American men. However, Wells investigated many of these lynchings and argued, in her 1892 pamphlet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases*, that in fact most lynchings were attempts to destroy African American economic progress across the South.

Following in the footsteps of her hero and mentor, Frederick Douglass, Wells would go on speaking tours of Great Britain in the 1890s. She would also move to Chicago in the 1890s, quickly becoming one of the leading activists in the city. In 1893, she joined forces with Douglass and other African American activists, angered by the lack of an African American pavilion at that year's Colombian Exposition. Eventually, Wells would go on to found *The Chicago Conservator*, the city's first black-owned newspaper, and was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.

Wells' own life became a remarkable representation of African American life in the 19th and 20th centuries. Making the move to Chicago in the 1890s, Wells presaged the "Great Migration" of the 20th century, in which millions of African Americans moved from the South to the Northern United States. Chicago was among their destinations, and by the early 20th century, African American newspapers such as *The Chicago Defender* would encourage more African Americans to move North—for both greater economic opportunities and greater voting rights.

NANCY GREEN (1834-1923)



Born into slavery in Kentucky, Nancy Green is an African American whom most Americans see every day—and do not even know it. Green is best known as the inspiration for the famous “Aunt Jemima” brand of pancake mix and syrup that is in millions of kitchen cupboards today. Green would find herself at the center of a pancake flour-mix empire, as the R.T. Davis Milling Company sought out an African American woman to fulfill the stereotypical role of “Mammy” in advertising the product. The “Mammy” figure was a throwback to the age of slavery, a symbol of the mythical enslaved woman who cheerfully took care of the master’s family.

Green made her debut as “Aunt Jemima” at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. There, she regaled audiences with tales of her growing up as a slave, while demonstrating the usefulness of the pancake flour she was there to sell. For years afterward, Green would make thousands of appearances as “Aunt Jemima,” and her face would eventually be part of the packaging for Aunt Jemima pancake mix. This lifetime job allowed Green to become active in Chicago, as an outspoken advocate for the poor and in favor of anti-poverty programs. Like Ida B. Wells, Green began her life enslaved, but ended it as a stalwart of African American life in Chicago.



TIMELINES



14 of August 1852. Subjoined the fractional Distances of this Township under the act of Congress of the 5 April of the present year.

The notes used in the Construction
 are contained in the field books
 of the South Range
 West of
 Administration...

None of the Notes State as what
 were executed, nor as the distance of the
 after the Survey being a very...

Book 10 is...
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Surveyors Office
 St. Louis, Missouri 1857
 The above plat, of pp. 21 p. 1 & 2 p. 1 & 2 to East, is conformable
 with the notes as explained in the above marginal remarks, of the
 Surveyors Office Township, contained in field books, which have
 respectively 146, 147 and 78. All files in this Office -
 W. H. ...



CHICAGO PRE-1870

1832 Black Hawk War

In May 1832 the US government mobilized a frontier militia to confront the British Band, a group of Native Americans composed of 1,500 men, women, and children from the Sauk, Meskwaki, Fox, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk, and Ottawa nations. The group was led by Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, more commonly known as Black Hawk, and included 500 warriors. The Battle of Stillman's run occurred on the 14th of May, beginning the Black Hawk War.

The final skirmish began the morning of August 2nd, and was known as the Battle of Bad Axe by the settlers, and the Massacre of Bad Axe by the natives. August 27th marked the surrender of Black Hawk to Joseph Street and the end of the 3-month long war which claimed a combined 77 settlers and soldiers, and 450 to 600 natives.

EDITOR'S NOTE. The Black Hawk War was a microcosm of the time, and well worth learning of in more detail. There are countless books on the subject, including Autobiography of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk.



BEFORE THE COMING OF THE SETTLERS, native tribes lived in and around the area that would later become Chicago. The city's name is a French-derived take on the Native word for shikaakwa, a type of wild leek that grows in the region. For centuries, tribes such as the Miami, Illini, Kickapoo, and Fox, among others, fought for control of this area in a series of brutal conflicts.

In 1671, these warring tribes got their first look at a European when French trader Nicolas Perrot was led by Potawatomi guides to the future site of Chicago to meet with leaders of the Miami tribe. Following Perrot's introduction to the tribes, American, Canadian, and European traders and explorers came and went through the region, but more than a hundred years would pass before the first non-native settler would build his home on the land that would become the Windy City.

Around 1780, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a free Black man from Santo Domingo, Haiti, set up a little farm near the mouth of the Chicago

River. To this day, du Sable is known as "the Founder of Chicago," and several prominent landmarks still bear his name. Tensions between the settlers that followed and the native tribes grew in intensity, giving way to a series of armed conflicts in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These battles culminated in the bloody 1832 Black Hawk War (see nearby Sidebar), which brought an end to native resistance in the area.

In August of 1833, with a population of 350, "The Town of Chicago" was incorporated, but by the end of the decade it would grow to nearly ten times that size. The area's potential as a hub of transportation quickly became clear; the first rail line to Chicago and the Illinois and Michigan Canal, which joined the Mississippi to the Great Lakes, were completed in 1848. With these newfound gateways to Chicago, the population surged yet again, and people from all over the United States and around the world began flocking to what was swiftly becoming America's second-largest city, eager to be a part of this exciting and opportunity-rich new place.



DESIGNER'S NOTE: The ability scores used for skills are less static in *Whispers* RPG than in other d20 RPGs. There may instances in which an Athletics check relies on Dexterity instead of strength, or an Investigation check relies on Charisma not Intelligence. To accommodate such nuances the bonus listed for each skill **DOES NOT** include an ability score modifier. The player/GM will need to add the appropriate ability score modifier to individual checks.

SCENARIO HOOK. In return for the right to live on their lands, the Potawatomi required that Jean Baptiste Point du Sable bind a malevolent spirit that had taken residence in the swamp. The spirit was eventually bound, though it whispered its foul missives into Point du Sable's ear until his death. Distance proved to be no obstacle for it, and he heard the utterings despite the distance he put between himself and Chicago. The encroaching settlers have inadvertently weakened the medicine containing the spirit, allowing it to break free from its shackles and sow discord in the area.

Point du Sable, Jean Baptiste

(c. 1750 - Aug. 18th, 1818)

"The first man to acquire title to Chicago real estate, which was held good to this day, and was for this reason, our first city father – Chicago's first landed citizen."

–L.W. Washington, 1912

Medium humanoid (human), pragmatic

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 18 (4d6+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills History +2, Nature +2, Persuasion +4, Survival +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages English, French, Spanish

Challenge 1

Persistent. Once weekly Jean Baptiste may choose to succeed on an ability check he has failed in the previous hour. To do so he must spend at least 2 hours daily for 1d4 +2 days dedicated to the task.

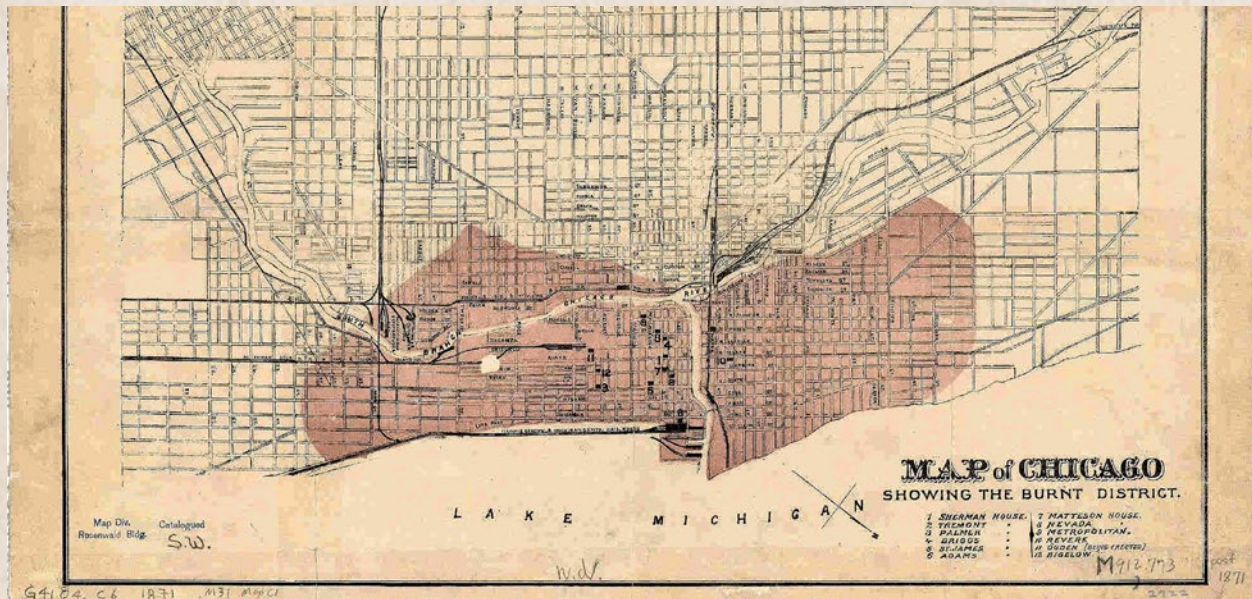
Actions

Musket. Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, range 40/120 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

Hunting Knife. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+1) piercing damage.



SUNDAY, OCT 8TH, 1871 — THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE



When a fire catches in a city and rages — changing crowded, vibrant life into blackened, empty destruction — it is called a conflagration.

People weren't surprised by a heat wave in October; it's a common enough occurrence in the Midwest. The problem was that it followed a scorcher of a summer. Chicago rainfall for July through September is usually 11.3 inches; that year it was a meager 3.7 inches.

The population had exploded from 4,865 in 1840 to over 300,000 in 1871. The city was built quickly and with abandon. Engineers choose expediency over safety or even common sense. Homes were next to industrial buildings that were next to shops, with another house stuffed in between. Much of downtown Chicago was made out of wood due to its low cost and ready availability. Wood was in every structure — and it was tinder-dry.

The Chicago Fire Department had 185 firefighters and 17 horse-drawn steam engines, all of which were kept busy. Fires were a part of life in the city and watchmen were stationed

to keep a sharp lookout for a blaze. Saturday, October 7th, a fire broke out at 10:00 pm and it took firefighters until 4:00 the next afternoon to extinguish. Four city blocks were destroyed, the firefighters were exhausted, and some equipment suffered major damage.

That night, Sunday, October 8th, another fire broke out at or near the now notorious O'Leary barn. The calls for help went out quickly but the watchman went to the wrong address. By the time firefighters arrived at the O'Leary barn six buildings were burning, and the strong northeasterly lake winds carried embers in a blizzard of fire. The firebrands ignited nine separate fires that merged into a conflagration that raged for 36 hours.

8:30 P.M. The first fire begins near O'Leary's barn on the southwest side of Chicago on the eastern border of the South Branch of the Chicago River. In the aftermath, a local reporter blamed Mrs. Catherine O'Leary, an Irish immigrant, who was known to sell milk in the neighborhood. The reporter claimed



Mrs. O'Leary was milking a cow and left a lit lantern unattended, while the O'Leary family claimed they were asleep and had to be roused from their beds when the fire broke out.

9:00 P.M. Call goes out from a watchman stationed across the river at the Court House tower, Matthias Schaffer. Trying to gauge the address through a telescope, he misjudges and sends the alarm to the wrong firehouse over a mile away. When he corrects the mistake, he's told a second address would confuse the firefighters. It's argued they would spot the true emergency on their way to the incorrect address, and so the correction never goes out. Two steam engines, only three blocks away from the O'Leary fire, remain at their station while the fire grows.

10:00 P.M. Firebrands are carried north by the wind and start the second major fire. The wind intensifies and superheats. The Court House bell sounds the alarm, but many ignore the warning as just another run-of-the-mill fire.

11:30 P.M. The Fire Marshal, now on site, sees salvation on the horizon in the form of a pile of residual ash from Saturday's fire which should act as a firebreak. With nowhere to go, the fire should extinguish itself. Instead the wind carries the embers across the river to the South Side Gas Works, igniting the third major fire.

MIDNIGHT, OCTOBER 9TH. Firebrands cross the South Branch of the Chicago River farther north, igniting the fourth major fire. Witnesses report seeing whirls of blazing wind launch masses of flame, "fire devils," as far as half a mile. Some citizens flee north, others gather on bridges in the hopes of getting a look at the blaze, not comprehending the danger. The surface of the river, covered in grease, waste, and wooden boats, ignites. The congested streets, sidewalks, bridges and roads — all made of wood — are aflame.

1:30 A.M. The wind carries firebrands east to the Court House, igniting the fifth major fire.

O'Leary, Catherine

(c. 1827 - July 3rd, 1895)

*Late one night, when we were all in bed,
Old Mother Leary left a lantern in the shed;
And when the cow kicked it over, she winked her
eye and said,
"There'll be a hot time in the old town,
tonight."*

—unknown

Medium humanoid (human), rational narcissist

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 7 (3d6-3)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)	17 (+3)	13 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +5, Cha +4

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +4

Damage Resistances psychic

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Aklo, English

Challenge 1

Esoteric Knowledge. Catherine O'Leary applies her proficiency modifier to any Intelligence-based ability checks.

Doddering Disguise. Catherine O'Leary has advantage on Deception checks to appear frail, infirm, or harmless.

Action

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4-1) piercing damage.



Watchman Matthias Schaffer barely escapes with his life. Officials realize the Court House cannot be saved, and release the prisoners in the basement jail moments before the alarm bell, still ringing, plummets through the tower and into the inferno.

2:30 A.M. Firebrands from the O'Leary barn fire spread east across the South Branch of the Chicago River, igniting the sixth major fire, while the Court House's cinders fly north across the Chicago River igniting the seventh major fire. The blaze consumes the Pumping Station but somehow leaves the limestone Water Tower untouched. Without the Pumping Station there's no water to fight the fire.

7:00 A.M. The eighth and ninth major fires begin joining their predecessors. Firebrands fly across the Chicago River, igniting the eighth and ninth major fires. The fire rages north, unstoppable, until the following day.

10:00 A.M., OCTOBER 10TH. Rain breaks. The struggling firefighters are able to extinguish the conflagration. The tally of destruction: three square miles of the city, 300 fatalities, another 300 missing, and over 1,000 left without a home.

SCENARIO HOOK. City Alderman James Hildreth (**local politician**) sees the O'Leary fire and, already unhinged by the previous night's fire, decides to take matters into his own hands. "If we can destroy the buildings before the fire reaches them, the city will be saved!" Rebuffed by the Fire Marshal, Hildreth snaps and goes on a bombing spree intent on stopping the fire. The heroes must track down Hildreth, his wagon filled with explosives, and avoid the deadly traps he's left in his wake.

SCENARIO HOOK. The night of the inferno, a gathering of deranged cultists across the street from O'Leary's barn called forth an aspect of Cthugha, whose appetite knows no bounds. The investigators receive a tip about the ceremony

after Saturday night's fire, which is simply a taste of what's to come. They must find the cultists and stop the ceremony before Cthugha destroys the entire city.

SCENARIO HOOK. The heroes are caught unawares and must race through the fiery gauntlet in the hopes of escaping the conflagration. However, the streets are overrun with looters, criminals, and other less savory individuals taking advantage of the fiery chaos.

Local Politician

"What is the use of being elected or re-elected unless you stand for something?"

—Grover Cleveland

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4 OR Persuasion +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any two

Challenge 1

Orator. A local politician that is able to speak to a non-hostile creature(s), that can understand them, has advantage on their next Charisma-based ability check against that creature(s).

Action

Derringer. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 10/30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6) piercing damage.



1872 — MONTGOMERY WARD FOUNDED

Aaron Montgomery Ward founded the first big business mail-order service in Chicago, changing the face of retail and Chicago forever. His model was simple — purchase goods, resell directly to consumers, removing the general store from the process — and allowed him to lower prices drastically. Ward's first catalog was a single page, 8 inches by 12 inches. By the turn of the century it contained over 20,000 items in a 540-page illustrated book. Ward's company had grown to employ over a hundred clerks, and was the single largest user of the U.S. Postal Service.

Richard W. Sears and Alvah C. Roebuck would add their names to the burgeoning market with the Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogs that would overtake Ward as the top mail-order retailer within a few short years. With the top two mail-order businesses residing in Chicago it became a major center of the American economy.

In the span of a generation the catalogs had become icons of American consumerism, and served as much more than a simple list of goods

for purchase and a marketing tool. Schools adopted them as readers, farmers used them as almanacs, and folks across the country thought of them as symbols of progress that listed the goods they desired and worked so diligently to attain.

SCENARIO HOOK. Hidden within the pages of the latest mail-order catalog are all the objects needed to perform an incantation of great power and destruction. The material components are spaced throughout the enormous tome of retail goods. Was their inclusion the result of foul machinations, or pure chance? Regardless of intent, with their growing circulation it's only a matter of time before someone, or something, seizes the opportunity.

SCENARIO HOOK. Safe in the deepest bowels of the Montgomery Ward office at 825 North Clark Street is the Ur-catalog. By the mid-1880s the catalog was popularly known as the "Wish Book." None but a select few knew how accurate the moniker really was, as the discharged catalogs served as a conduit of psychic energy to their progenitor.



1873 — CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Before the flames of the Great Chicago Fire had been doused, a plan was hatched by two prominent Englishmen, A.H. Burgess and novelist Thomas Hughes, to provide relief to the troubled city in the form of thousands of books. A call for donations in the United Kingdom generated over 8,000 books, including some provided by poet Alfred Lord Tennyson, economist J.S. Mill, and even Queen Victoria. The volumes were delivered as a token of England's solidarity with the still smoldering city with the understanding that Chicago would use them to create a free library, benefitting all of its beleaguered citizens.

The Illinois Library Act of 1872 was passed, allowing cities to create taxpayer-funded libraries, and on January 1st of the following year, the Chicago Public Library opened its doors with a mandate to service the common man. "The Book Room" was created in the old abandoned water tank where the donated books had been stored, at the corner of LaSalle

and Adams Streets in the still-rebuilding part of town. The enormous metal tank was nearly sixty feet in diameter and over twenty feet tall, its rounded walls stocked with volumes from floor to ceiling. Though the library would change address several times over the next twenty-four years, none would match the unusual nature of the original iconic building.

SCENARIO HOOK. While poring over texts the PCs discover schematics for The Book Room that detail a strange, clockwork-like mechanism in its bowels. A successful DC 14 Intelligence check, or a consultation with someone knowledgeable in engineering or architecture, reveals that the entire room can be spun at astounding speeds for purposes unknown.

SCENARIO HOOK. Years after the library has moved to another location, the PCs are asked to go back to the abandoned tank to locate a hidden arcane volume, only to discover that someone else has already found it and is living in the tunnels beneath the former library.



1881 — *UNSIGHTLY BEGGAR LAW*

In May of 1881, Aldermen James Peevy and Alvin Hubbert introduced a resolution to the Chicago City Council entitled a “Resolution to Remove Beggars from the Streets”; it was soon known as the Ugly Law.

Peevy had taken some of the wording for his bill from a similar Ugly Law passed in San Francisco two decades earlier. Versions of such clear discrimination against the poor and disabled had been seen in the previous century. In 1729, it was suggested by London merchants that public whippings, being herded off to workhouses, or even institutionalization were appropriate for street beggars who tried to get passersby to give them coin in exchange for “exposing... dismal sights.”

The Ugly Law, as outlined by Peevy, was to “abolish all street obstructions” within Chicago, which was a deceptive way of referring to the poor as a whole, but particularly “perfect wrecks.” This meant anyone who was “diseased, maimed, mutilated or in any way deformed.” In addition to those born with a disability, it included victims who had suffered a life-altering

injury as well as wounded veterans of the Civil War some sixteen years prior. Entire groups of citizens were told their very presence in public was illegal, and the Chicago Police wielded the Ugly Law with impunity. At the very least they had to move on; worse was being charged fines they could never pay or thrown into lock-up.



SCENARIO HOOK. A small group of beggars, cast out by society because of the Ugly Law, decide to take matters into their own hands. Calling themselves “The Ugliest,” they form a roving strike force that travels the crowded streets in search of easy marks. One or two people act as “Decoys”: obviously disabled, they put on a big

show on a street corner, begging for help. Meanwhile several “Hunters” roam amongst the gathering crowd, picking pockets while the fools are distracted. This could be a random encounter for the heroes, who might try to stop The Ugliest mid-crime. Alternatively, they could follow the beggars back to their base of operations, perhaps under a bridge, where they keep their loot. However, The Ugliest will be ready for a fight.



1885 — HOME INSURANCE BUILDING

After the Great Fire, downtown Chicago had to be rebuilt. The Home Insurance Company of New York hired architect William Le Baron Jenney in 1883 to design their Chicago headquarters. They required a large fireproof building that could somehow fit within the limited footprint available in the financial district due to the building boom of the 1880's.

Inspiration is said to have struck Jenney when he saw his wife casually lay a heavy book on top of a wire birdcage. At first, he was alarmed that the songbirds inside would be crushed, but when he realized the metal frame easily supported the weight he was ecstatic.

Jenney's design looked like a metal skeleton and employed a new and exotic building material — steel. Until that point, buildings had solid foundations of stone and masonry, with thick walls that carried the enormous weight of the building. Due to the weight, buildings were rarely taller than a few stories and windows, which provided limited natural light, were a luxury. Now the walls were merely a skin to protect the building from weather, so glass windows covered the Home Insurance Building. The building itself was a giant that



stood ten stories and is considered the first skyscraper. Despite the weight being a third of a traditional building its size, the city engineers halted construction at one point to ensure Jenney's steel-based design was sound. And, of course, now that wood had been replaced by less flammable building materials the fear of another Great Fire had been snuffed out.

Jenney's design paved the way for what's known as the Chicago School of design for architects and engineers. One member was Daniel Burnham, who later went on to design another building with a steel skeleton: the Flatiron Building of New York City.

The original height of the building was 138 feet, but two additional floors were added in 1891, making the new height 180 feet.

SCENARIO HOOK. The pause in initial construction is due to a dark discovery — the souls of those killed in the Great Fire are still trapped in the ground where they died a horrific death. Spirits with glowing cinders for eyes haunt the construction site; the heroes must perform a rite of passage and set the souls free. The city is asking for help but will claim complete deniability if anything happens to the heroes.



MAY 3RD, 1886 – HAYMARKET AFFAIR



By 1886, tensions between union workers and anti-union interests had reached a fever pitch. With the aim of improving working conditions, among them establishing an eight-hour work day, protests were commonplace, and with those protests came conflict. Frustrations grew as laborers' demands were stonewalled by leaders of industry, generating a sense of hopelessness which grew into embitterment, and in time rage. The clashes between various factions within the workers' ranks, the Chicago Police, the Pinkertons, and hired union busters became increasingly contentious.

A national general strike was called for May 1st, 1886. Over the next few days, striking Chicago workers met in Haymarket Square near the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company factory for daily rallies. The gatherings began peacefully, but on May 3rd tensions flared

between strike-breakers and the striking workers, resulting in police firing into the crowd and leaving two dead.

These deaths galvanized the laborers, who showed up the next day in droves, with over 2,000 workers joining the protest. Following a blistering speech from union organizers, the police arrived en masse to break up the demonstration and clear the area. All hell broke loose, however, when an unknown person threw a homemade bomb into the ranks of the police. The explosion sparked chaos, which gave way to gunfire. In the aftermath, several police officers and workers lay dead, with many more wounded.

In the aftermath, the police arrested a group of eight anarchists suspected of involvement in the bomb plot. While these men were sentenced to either death or long-term imprisonment



Pinkerton

“Vice may triumph for a time, crime may flaunt its victories in the face of honest toilers, but in the end the law will follow the wrong-doer to a bitter fate.”

—Allan Pinkerton

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 16 (3d6+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

14 (+2) 12 (+1) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 11 (+0) 10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one

Challenge 1

Subdue. When a Pinkerton reduces a creature to zero hit points with a melee weapon attack, they can choose for their target to immediately stabilize.

Action

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4+1) piercing damage.

for crimes related to the incident, no one was prosecuted for throwing the explosive device. Their identity remains a mystery to this day.

SCENARIO HOOK. Union dock workers at a mysterious import/export company begin disappearing. Is it a case of union-busting bosses going to extreme measures, or something far more insidious? As the PCs investigate the missing workers, they uncover the strange truth about the company’s real business.

SCENARIO HOOK. Who threw the bomb? And why?



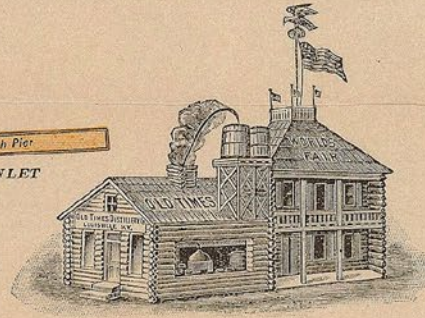
CHARLES LEMMON
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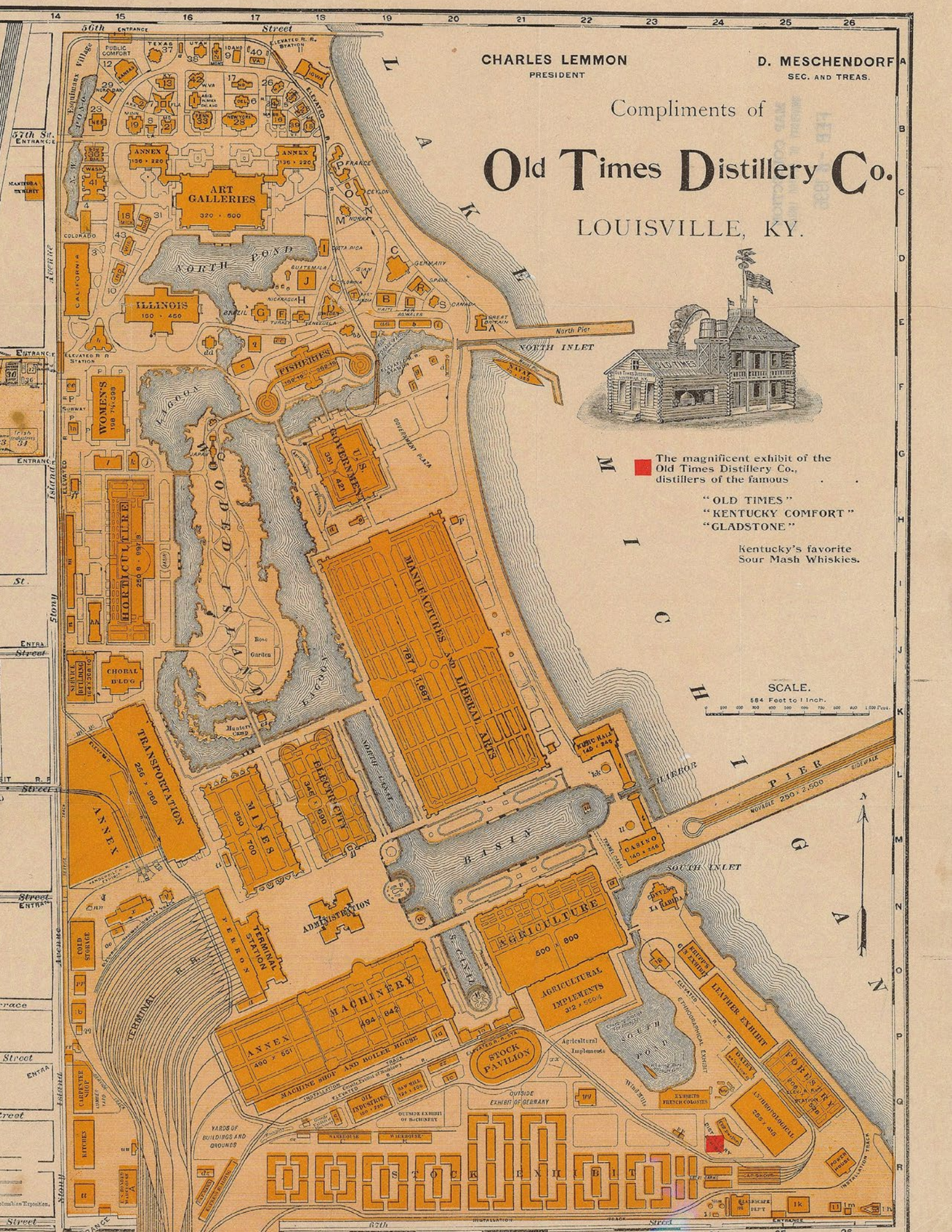
"OLD TIMES"
"KENTUCKY COMFORT"
"GLADSTONE"

Kentucky's favorite
Sour Mash Whiskies.

SCALE.

584 Feet to 1 Inch.

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 Feet





MAY - OCTOBER, 1893 - WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, commonly known as the Chicago World's Fair, was an event of both breathtaking magnitude and extraordinary cultural and industrial significance that stunned the world with the scope and quality of its offerings. Under the watchful eye of architect and Director of Works Daniel Burnham, Chicago became host to arguably the largest public spectacle of the 19th century, setting a new standard for all such events that came after.

Following the success of the wildly popular 1889 Paris World's Fair, civic leaders from around the United States, in hopes of outdoing the French, began to discuss plans for an event to celebrate the 400-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus's journey to the new world. This was to be no small task, as the Parisian affair had enjoyed massive attendance and unveiled a colossal and revered centerpiece that remains to this day: the Eiffel Tower. To top that, America had its work cut out for it. After a rigorous and heated nationwide city-selection process, and much to nearly everyone's surprise, Chicago, Illinois was chosen to host the fair.

At massive expense and through the labor of an army of workers toiling around the clock for months, the exposition opened in May of 1893, comprised of almost 200 buildings and a stunning collection of manmade lakes and canals over nearly seven sprawling acres. Pavilions showcased the best, brightest, and often the newest ideas in the fields of manufacturing, mining, electricity, transportation, women's issues, and more. The titanic event, which was not an immediate hit, nonetheless impressed all who entered the

grounds, and word of the exposition's quality spread far and wide.

Burnham's design for the fair focused on neoclassical architecture, with an emphasis on beauty and aesthetic achievement, from the immaculate landscaping to the pathways to the buildings themselves. The primary buildings comprising the Court of Honor, the visual centerpiece of the exposition, were not permanent stone structures. They were instead building frames stuccoed with a mixture of materials that when painted white gave the facades a brilliant gleam, leading the area to henceforth be known as "the White City." Anchored by the majestically domed Administration Building, the area was home to no less than fourteen magnificent structures, including buildings devoted to Manufacturing, Electricity, Mines and Mining, Forestry, Transportation, Anthropology, and more. The Court also featured a magnificent pavilion known as the Woman's Building. The only structure in the White City designed by a woman (Sophia Hayden), the building celebrated works by women in art, literature, history, the sciences, and more.

These buildings encircled an enormous reflecting pool known as the Grand Basin where attendees could enjoy leisurely gondolier rides around the Court. All of this was presided over by a regal 65-foot-tall bronze statue of a woman, a globe with an eagle perched upon it in her right hand, a staff with a plaque reading "Liberty" in her left.

Visitors could see exhibits that ranged from new breakthroughs in agricultural technology, to the introduction of a souvenir called the elongated coin (aka the squashed penny), to





the scandalous gyrations of “belly-dancers.” Cultures from 46 countries around the globe were represented, including displays from Java, Ceylon, Norway, Congo, as well as those of several Native American tribes.

The entertainment was varied and dynamic, as well. On any given day, you might enjoy John Philip Sousa’s marching band, gamelan music from Indonesia, Harry Houdini’s magic show, or a group of Hawaiian hula dancers. Celebrities, politicians, and well-known personalities from all over were in attendance. You might find

Burnham, Daniel

(Sept 4th, 1846 - June 1st, 1912)

“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably will not be realized.”

—Burnham

Medium humanoid (human), rational narcissist

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Skills Deception +6, Insight +3, Persuasion +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages English, Latin

Challenge 6

Orator. When Burnham is able to speak to a non-hostile creature(s), that can understand him, he has advantage on his next Charisma-based ability check against that creature(s).

Action

Derringer. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 10/30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

yourself rubbing elbows with the likes of Helen Keller, Nikola Tesla, or Frederick Douglass, who published and distributed at the fair a scathing pamphlet decrying the exposition’s exclusion of a display featuring black Americans.

Houdini, Harry (aka Erik Weisz)

(March 24th, 1874 - Oct. 31st, 1926)

“The easiest way to attract a crowd is to let it be known that at a given time and a given place someone is going to attempt something that in the event of failure will mean sudden death.”

—Harry Houdini

Medium humanoid (human), benevolent narcissist

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 55 (10d6+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Cha +8

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +6,
Performance +3, Sleight of Hand +6,
Thieves' Tools +6

Condition Immunities Frightened,
Grappled, Restrained

Senses passive Perception 16

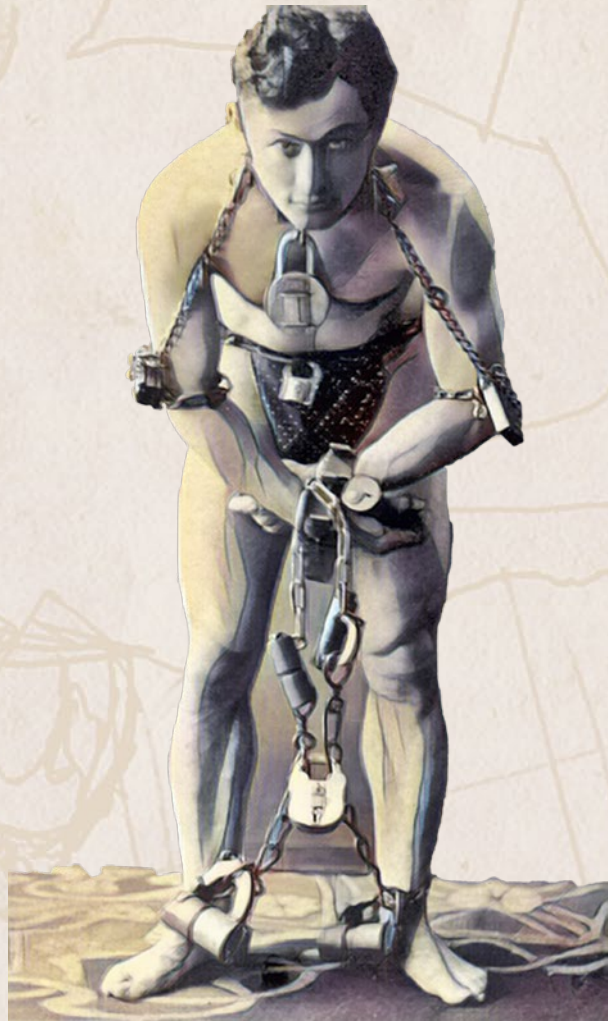
Languages English, Hungarian, Yiddish

Challenge 6

Debunk. Houdini has advantage on ability checks to avoid being deceived.

Action

Derringer. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 10/30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) piercing damage.



The event boasted a wide variety of food and drink offerings, from Pabst Blue Ribbon beer to Juicy Fruit gum to Shredded Wheat cereal to the introduction of the world's first brownie, invented by Chicagoan Bertha Palmer specifically for the fair. The nearby stock yard (see [page 66](#)) ensured that the Vienna Sausage vendor never ran out of frankfurters.

Just off the exposition property, attendees could take in the excitement of “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World” (see [page 37](#)) in which crowds by the thousands thrilled to feats of daring horsemanship, astounding rope-tricks, and eagle-eyed sharp-shooting, all expertly presented

by Bill Cody himself, crack-shot Annie Oakley, and a retinue of performers from around the world. While not officially associated with the fair, Buffalo Bill's show proved to be an irresistible draw, and no small number of those who made the trek to Chicago for one event inevitably found themselves taking in the other.

But it was the prize gem of the exposition that had everyone talking. Paris had set the bar high with its introduction of the Eiffel Tower, but Chicago, not to be outdone, unveiled an enormous and unforgettable structure of its own: the first-ever Ferris Wheel. A dizzying 264 feet high with 36 cars carrying 40 people each, the ride treated its passengers to a breathtaking view of the city and became by far the most popular attraction at the fair. The Ferris Wheel took in staggering amounts of money, and is cited by many as the element that ensured the fair's success and profitability.

Reaching its conclusion October 30th of that same year, the World's Columbian Exposition ended not with celebration and fireworks, but instead with a somber, mournful tone. Due

to the assassination of Chicago's mayor Carter Henry Harrison just two days before the end of the fair, Burnham and his fellow exposition officials chose to eschew the eagerly-anticipated closing ceremonies to instead honor the mayor with a public memorial service.

SCENARIO HOOK. The PCs discover a journal written nearly a hundred years previous that describes a ritual to open a portal that would allow ancient evils into the world. Closer examination of the author's illustrations reveals that creation of the portal requires an enormous metal ring with numerous spokes radiating wheel-like from the center, and that the ritual requires the blood of 1,440 people.

SCENARIO HOOK. Carter Henry Harrison was a man with countless enemies due to his steadfast political support of labor unions, Catholics, immigrants, the working class, and his role as owner and editor of the Chicago Times. That Patrick Eugene Joseph Prendergast murdered him is of no doubt, but what force was able to focus the man's insane rage on Harrison so effectively?



*BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST
& CONGRESS OF ROUGH RIDERS OF THE WORLD*



Cody, William "Buffalo Bill"

(Feb 26th, 1846 - Jan. 10th, 1917)

"Every Indian outbreak that I have ever known has resulted from broken promises and broken treaties by the government."

—Buffalo Bill

Medium humanoid (human), narcissistic pragmatist

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 44 (8d6+16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

12 (+0) 18 (+4) 14 (+2) 11 (+0) 10 (+0) 16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +5

Skills Animal Handling +3,
Performance +6, Sleight of Hand +3,
Survival +6

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages English, a smattering of
countless Native American dialects
(enough to get by)

Challenge 6

Steadfast. Buffalo Bill does not gain disadvantage while frightened.

Action

Lucretia. Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Hunting Knife. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

"This publication heralds the sixteenth consecutive yearly presentation of a national, historic and heroically educational exhibition, which it is speaking entirely within the lines of demonstration and literal truth to say has never had and never can have a counterpart, is the only possible introduction and reproduction to America and the world at large of the men and incidents associated with the most thrillingly romantic, picturesque and progressive era in its country's marvelous history; is fraught with an atmosphere of realism, a magnitude of illustration, an intensity of interest and a superbness of personality which have made its strikingly appropriate title a household word wherever Old Glory flies, and has achieved most unique and enviable fame, and continuous, prodigious and phenomenally surpassing success in many lands and before countless millions.

Nor should it be overlooked or forgotten that in the recent war with Spain the influence of "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World" was strikingly manifested in the suggestion, formation, and even the popular naming of the most fearless and famous single military organization in all martial annals—Teddy Roosevelt's Regiment of Rough Riders. Moreover, perusal of this and other announcements will further demonstrate that Colonel Cody has enlarged the scope and attractiveness of his international, martial and equestrian exposition to keep step with our territorial expansion...

"It is singular how popular, to use the word in its very best sense, Buffalo Bill is among the nations, regardless of creed, color or conditions. I returned to this country a few weeks ago after touring the world for two years, and everywhere I heard the name of Buffalo Bill."



Miss Annie Oakley, the world-famous dead shot, with Buffalo Bill's Wild West, is deservedly and immensely popular and ranks among the most remarkable women of this remarkable era. "Sitting Bull," the redoubtable and dreaded Indian Chief, was so impressed with her skill that he adopted her into the Sioux Nation under the name of "Watanya

Cicilla," or "Little Sure Shot." In one day she shot at 5,000 glass balls, loading the guns herself, and breaking 4,772 balls. She is also a most accomplished rider and shoots unerringly from the saddle."

—*The Rough Rider, Vol I, 1st edition, 1899*
published by Cody & Salsbury

Oakley, Annie (aka Phoebe Mosey)

(Aug. 13th, 1860 - Nov. 3rd, 1926)

"When a man hits a target they call him a marksman. When I hit it, they call it a trick. Never did like that much."

—Annie Oakley

Medium humanoid, (human, Lengian), rational benevolent

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 45 (10d6+10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	21 (+5)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Int +4

Skills Animal Handling +3, Perception +3, Performance +3, Survival +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages English, Leng

Challenge 6

Otherworldly. Annie has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Foul Blooded. Annie makes Animal Handling checks with a -2 penalty (included above).

Expert Shootist. Once per turn Annie may add double her proficiency bonus to an attack with a firearm (included below).

Flurry. Annie may use her bonus action to make a ranged weapon attack with a firearm.

Actions

Multiattack. Annie makes two revolver attacks or one other attack.

Revolver (.44). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Hunting Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.







THE MIDWAY

Whispers RPG plug-in encounters for investigators of all levels
By Matt Corley and Robert Ford

How to Use This Section

Few tools are as useful to the GM as an encounter that can be dropped into an existing campaign to fill in a narrative gap or maintain pacing. The encounters below are intended to serve that purpose. A good rule of thumb is to expect each plug-in encounter to take the group 20-30 minutes.

The tents can easily be moved to any circus, fair, or carnival, or reskinned as happenstance meetings with odd folks in their homes or businesses. The scenes are narratively driven and there's no combat — however that doesn't mean they aren't dangerous, or that the PCs can act without fear of consequences.

The Midway is a sprawling quilt of the world, stitched together by the smells and flavors of culinary delights. Fresh naan bread sizzles in cast iron skillets. Frying onions and exotic meats perfume the air, along with the gossamer-thin scent of freshly spun cotton candy, and apples lacquered in a coating so rich and deep and crimson they appear to be crafted from original sin itself.

Accents and dialects and languages merge together, creating a dull heart murmur among the crowd, an indecipherable tone of everything and nothing at the same time. The haunting music of Indian sitars and Chinese pipas and drums are the underlying soundtrack of the event, inescapable no matter where one walks. The place is a metropolis of cultures — not so much clashing, as simply melting together.

Past Buffalo Bill's Wild West exhibit, the scent of horses and buffalo, the whoops and hollers from performers, and the lightning crack of sharpshooting demonstrations, a cul-de-sac of tents nests tightly together like a spider's egg sack. The banners strung to the sides of the tents have no discernible theme among them, and it appears the organizers grouped them together by default.



Tent One: Cockroach Races

A tall man wearing a charcoal gray suit with a matching bowler hat stands at the entrance of the first tent, one flap peeled back and tied open. His body is thin, almost spindly; his face is gaunt and too-lean, with the exception of his eyes which seem too large and bulging for his skull to properly contain. Both his movements and his voice are silken smooth, a well-practiced efficiency expending nothing beyond the essential.

“Step right up folks! Dr. Philburn Wrathbone, en-to-mologist, at your service! Amazing, but true, insect labor is the future! But don’t take my word for it, see for yourself!”

The interior of the tent is dim and an odd whispering sound can be heard from within, along with an occasional chittering noise. It smells faintly of copper and, oddly, of ozone. Inside the tent, the whispering noises and odor are stronger. There are tables and shelves of glass aquariums filled with things that twitch and squirm. Even in the dim light, the glint of chitinous shells can be seen. A single massive huntsman spider rests on a piece of driftwood. A praying mantis meditates on an ancient, manicured bonsai tree.

A tall display with a wide glass-top table is the main attraction and Dr. Wrathbone waves the group closer. The glass display is lined with a long oval shape divided into individual tracks. At one end there is an extension that appears to be a “starting gate” of sorts.

DEVELOPMENT. After the PCs have had a few moments to take in their surroundings Dr. Wrathbone steps into the tent and continues his pitch.

“Time is money and money is time, folks. Amazing, but true, in the future we’ll be using our insect friends to deliver mail more efficiently than the Pony Express!”

He taps a single bony finger on top of the glass and there’s movement at the starting gate. Cockroaches the size of a blacksmith’s thumb line up beside each other, their antennae twitching in excitement. He proceeds to discuss the merits of entomological transport, the hardiness of nature’s perfect creation — the members of the Blattodea family — and invites the PCs to witness a demonstration of their speed and agility via a race.

“Care to... place a wager on the winner?” Dr. Wrathbone’s smile seems too wide, too... toothy. He spreads his arms to present the array of cockroach participants beneath the glass, and a single roach crawls from the sleeve of one arm, perching on his hand. “Hazards of the trade.” He chuckles sheepishly as he gathers the insect and slips it into a pocket of his suit. “Could do penny bets, if that’s all the excitement you’re after, but you all don’t seem the boring type.”

DEVELOPMENT. If the PCs are not betting there is one roach per PC; the race is quick, and not particularly interesting. Dr. Wrathbone rushes them out of the tent with an invitation to return later if they’d like make things more interesting with a wager.

Race Prep. PCs that agree to a wager are asked to choose a roach, name it, place it on the track, and finally name their wager. Wrathbone is very particular about the order and the specifics of the ritual. PCs succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Wisdom) check can’t help but be reminded of a sacramental offering in a religious service. The race will not start until all



four steps have been completed to Wrathbone's satisfaction. Wrathbone names his cockroach Suydam.

The Wager. When it's time to bet Wrathbone speaks to the contestants:

"The best bet is one that stings if it's lost, eh? The memory of your first heartbreak, the feeling in your smallest finger, an irreplaceable family heirloom, your middle name perhaps?"

"Afore you balk remember, a wager's only as good as the reward, and I assure you the prize will be worth the wager. It'll change your life mate."

The PCs should be given time to think about what they are willing to bet, and what they would like in return should they win. The more unusual the stakes the better as far as Wrathbone is concerned. The GM determines if the terms are acceptable to both sides, and the fallout from losing (or winning). PCs choosing to bet money may win as much as the bet, for example a \$1 bet pays out \$1.

The Race. All participants roll a d20, adding their proficiency modifier if they are skilled at Animal Handling or Nature. Participants skilled in both add their proficiency modifier twice. Dr. Wrathbone rolls with advantage. The roaches finish in the order determined by the result of the roll. The highest is first, the next highest is second, and so on. To win the wager, the PC's cockroach must come in first place. Alternatively, a kind GM may rule that anyone whose roach beats Wrathbone's roach wins their wager.

Tent Two: Light of Ra

"The ancient ones and the future are now, kind people! Experience how they harnessed the secrets of the esoteric for their own bidding!"

A dark-skinned man wearing loose-fitting linen pants and shirt stands in front of the second tent. Large square banners on the outside sport symbols of the Great Pyramids and the Eye of Ra.

'Egypto-Energy' is written in large hand-painted lettering across the top. He tips his red felt hat and smiles warmly, genuinely.

Within the tent's interior is an impressive pyramid structure of smooth stone, almost reaching the fifteen-foot ceiling. Like the banners on the tent, the pyramid is decorated with the Eye of Ra, carved into the surface of the stones. Spiraling down from the peak of the pyramid are multiple ropes of braided copper ending in a thick grip of gold. A semicircle of chairs faces the structure.

When a PC acknowledges the gentleman, read or paraphrase the following:

"My name is Baako. Please, please, take seats. Allow me to demonstrate." He hands each of you the end of a copper rope and meets your gaze. "Whatever happens, do not let go of the connection. Verrrry important."

Baako pulls the flaps of the tent closed, several small oil lamps providing the only light. "We are tapping into the great beyond, the all-knowing Ra. Chant with me 'Em heset net Ra!'"

He kneels before the pyramid and begins to murmur unintelligible words beneath his breath. There's a light buzzing sensation in the grips



the PCs hold, as well as a humming noise, like a fuse box being pushed to its limits. In front of Baako, on the surface of the pyramid, the air ripples and begins to brighten from an invisible source.

DEVELOPMENT. Each PC chooses if they hold onto or drop the rope. When they've decided, read or paraphrase the following:

An arc of blue electricity crackles along the copper ropes, jumping from cable to cable. The grips vibrate with a jolt.

Eldritch power surges into anyone holding the rope. PCs that dropped the rope must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be struck by the questing fingers of energy. If a PC stated they threw the rope away (as opposed to simply dropping it) they have advantage on the Dexterity saving throw. PCs holding the rope, or failing their Dexterity check, take 1 point of electrical damage.

Read or paraphrase the following,

The air continues to brighten into an oval, and shadows move behind the glow, as if something is trying to come through.

“Concentrate! Chant, chant!” Baako cries out as he raises his hands toward the pyramid. Sparks cascade down the copper ropes and another jolt happens.

Another surge issues through the copper wire as detailed above. PCs can release the wire with a successful DC 12 Strength ability check. If at least two PCs keep hold, read the following:

The oval has taken form; a glowing portal, and shadowed hands can be seen testing the division.

Baako screams and jumps away from the structure and the portal blinks out of existence.

“I told you it wasn't ready yet!” An Egyptian woman yells as she runs into the tent and up to Baako. “I told you!” She takes his hands in hers. “Let me see what you've done to yourself.”

Both palms of the man's hands are blistered. The woman shakes her head and winces at the sight. “The burn ointment is in my bag. Remember, a thick coating and then wrap the bandages loosely.”

Baako sheepishly walks away from the tent without a word, and the woman humbly addresses the group. “A thousand pardons for my husband's... enthusiasm. This is a work in progress.” She pulls a leather pouch from her waist and reaches inside. “As a token of apology, take this, please. It is a stone from the tomb in the Great Pyramid itself. It will bring you knowledge.”

ASSETS. The stone is in fact a shard of pottery containing bizarre hieroglyphics of tentacled creatures, gaping maws, and a portion of what appears to be a bird's head with lines of power radiating from it. While carried the shard grants its owner a +1 bonus to Intelligence-based skill checks.





Tent Three: The God of Many Eyes

The World's Fair is the perfect setting for encounters with cultures, tribes, and peoples from all around the world, all without leaving the confines of Chicago. The following encounter can occur without context, or be inserted into a scenario in which the investigators have been sent to learn the hidden wisdom of an indigenous tribe.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. This encounter highlights some of the nuances of the *Whispers* RPG iteration of 5e.

The last tent in the group is the largest of the three, and the tightly stretched canvas is the color of scorched wood. No banners decorate the exterior. There are no signs giving the slightest hint of what awaits inside. But there is the sound of drumming, a low and slow bass drum pattern that resonates in one's very bones.

As the group arrives at the third tent, a man yanks the flaps open. Every visible part of his body is painted in swirls and whorls of tribal decorations. A horizontal swath of blood-red paint divides his face in half from jet black on the top, and bone white across the bottom. Around his waist is a thick skirt of grass. His expression is serious as he studies the group waiting to get in.

DEVELOPMENT. Entering the tent can be as easy or challenging as the GM wishes and should take in the context of the encounter. It can be as simple as paying a penny for entry, knowing a password, or simply asking what's inside. Regardless of the group's methods of ingress PCs with passive Perception 14 or more can't help but feel that they were expected.

The tent is darkened except for the light of knee-high torches at the front of a low stage. Flames flicker and silver smoke curls upward

toward the ceiling, and a soft brushing noise emanates from above.

On stage, a thickly muscled man painted in the same way as the greeter sits on a short wooden stool. His eyes are vacant and faraway as he pounds a large drumskin with two thick-handled sticks. The air smells of burning sage and incense.

"Sit, sit." The greeter motions at the soft cushions on the ground. "The gods, and we, welcome you to the dance." Flames dance in his dark eyes and he takes the stage as two beautiful women step onto the platform from some hidden area behind a curtain. They are dressed exactly the same – painted red faces and dark red robes reaching their ankles.

DEVELOPMENT. The PCs are invited to participate in the ritual dance. To successfully complete it they must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity (Athletics) check and a DC 12 Constitution (Athletics) check.

Fail Both. Investigators that fail both checks lose their rhythm and fall to the floor gasping for air, and are stunned until the end of their next turn.

Fail One and Succeed One. A PC that fails only one check may push themselves to their limits and repeat that check if they like. PCs that succeed the re-roll proceed as if passing both checks on their first try. If they fail, they fall to the ground unconscious for 1d4 minutes, and gain one level of exhaustion for their efforts.

Succeed Both. PCs that succeed both checks find they are easily able to match the dancers' movements and stamina, completing the performance in a state of euphoria from the exertion.

If at least one PC completes the holy dance read or paraphrase the following:



The women begin a dance, elegant and graceful, twisting and whirling, but somehow their faces remain forward the entire time, their eyes intent on the sitting group.

They align in front of one another, the appearance of a single woman with four arms and four legs, undulating like water. Without effort and absent your own volition you mirror their movements, taking a spot in the protective circle of bodies surrounding them.

Everything is lost, except the drum's penetrating beat.

DEVELOPMENT. The dance's particular combination of physical movements, psychic intent, and expenditure of stamina combine to weaken the walls of reality within the tent. The outward effect of the thinning varies with each permutation of the ritual, and any of the following effects could occur:

- A rift opens in the center of the group, allowing participants to physically enter the Dreamlands. It stays open as long as there are at least two dancers participating in the ritual. The portal allows ingress and egress from the Dreamlands. The rift closes 1d4 rounds after the dancers stop.
- Shimmers and ripples emanate from the air as if from hot concrete. Each participant of the ritual may concentrate on the nascent vision, and if they succeed on a DC 12 Sanity check they gain a morsel of knowledge they have been seeking (as determined by the GM).
- Auditory, sensory, and optical illusions assail the dancer, exposing their mind to eldritch lore from the collective unconscious of humankind. Each participant of the ritual must succeed on a DC 13 Sanity check or lose 1d2 Sanity until completing a long rest. PCs that lose Sanity from this effect have advantage on Arcana checks until the temporarily-lost Sanity is recovered.
- Each participant is targeted by an illusory grasping claw that only they can see. Each dancer must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence check or believe the illusion is completely real, and that it is reaching out to slash at them and drag them into a waiting portal [+4 to hit, reach 10 ft., 3 (1d6) psychic damage]. On a success the target cannot perceive the claw by any means, and it cannot harm them. The effect lasts for 1 round, and then disappears.



1889 – *THE FOUNDING OF HULL HOUSE*

Jane Addams was looking for a house. She, along with Ellen Gates Starr, were about to open the first settlement house in Chicago. They were inspired by Toynbee Hall in London, where university students from Oxford and Cambridge lived and taught adult education to residents of the working-class Whitechapel district. It was part of the “settlement movement,” which encouraged the integration of upper and lower levels of society both in terms of proximity as well as social life. Addams believed something similar could work in Chicago’s Near West Side neighborhood of immigrants – but first she had to find the house.

She had seen it before while exploring the city, and was immediately taken with the piazza that ran along three sides of the home complete with Corinthian pillars that appeared to stand guard. After weeks of fruitless searching Ms. Addams agreed to purchase a property sight-unseen, only to discover it was the mansion that had so beguiled her. It was called Hull House, after real estate magnate Charles J. Hull who built the home for his wife, Millicent Ann Coe Loomis, in 1856. They lived there until her death in 1860. Addams spoke openly about the ghost of Hull House, which was described as a woman in white and believed to be Millicent. According to Addams this ghost had no ill

intentions; at worst it was indifferent to its housemates.

Hull House would go on to become a shining star in the community, a leader for all to follow.

SCENARIO HOOK. The heroes hear of attacks nearby Hull House. A creature described as “a devil baby” has killed several men, viciously tearing them apart. The creature is a golem and servant of Hull House. Addams and her top lieutenants are actually modern-day knights errant, using their wits and a bit of magic to protect the neighborhood. The attack victims are all horrible, abusive, and men. Many of them had influence in the city and important allies. The attacks have drawn attention to Hull House, and its reputation for protecting its charges regardless of the cost.

SCENARIO HOOK. The neighborhood is terrorized by a wailing demon that prowls the perimeter of Hull House, trying to break in. The PCs are summoned in the hopes they can stop the creature. The wailing demon is the ghost of Charles Hull, who died in 1889, seeking to be reunited with his beloved wife. Millicent has been trapped in the Hull House attic, either inadvertently or intentionally at the GM’s discretion. Her disposition at leaving her home and that of Addams should be adjusted to meet the needs of the table.



Golem of Hull House

“He created a golem out of clay from the banks of the Vltava River and brought it to life through rituals and Hebrew incantations to defend the Prague ghetto.”

—*The Golem of Prague*

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 68 (8d8+32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Condition Immunities

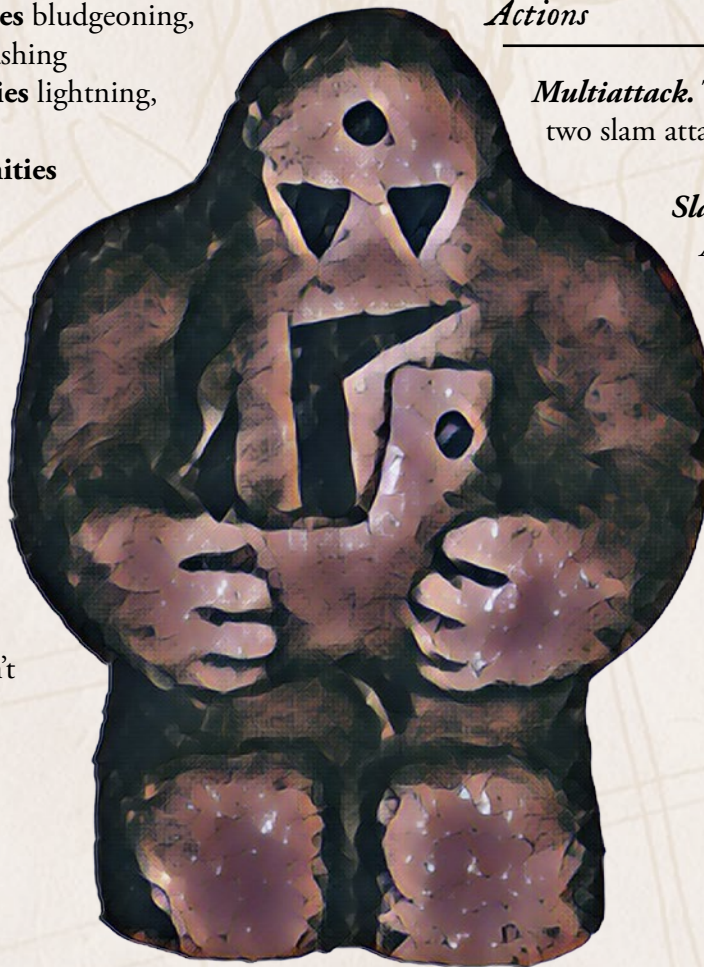
charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages

understands English, Polish, Yiddish, but can't speak

Challenge 6



Berserk. Whenever the golem starts its turn with 25 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, it goes berserk. While berserk, it attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, it attacks an object. Once it goes berserk, it continues to do so until destroyed or regains all its hit points.

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

1890 — UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO FOUNDED



Founded in 1890 in Hyde Park near Lake Michigan (see [page 58](#)), the University of Chicago was funded by the joint efforts of John D. Rockefeller's donation of \$600,000 to the American Baptist Education Society, who provided an additional \$400,000. Two years later their doors were open for classes with William Rainey Harper (see **university dean**) serving as university president.

Harper served as the university president until his death in 1906, and during his tenure established three schools within the university: the divinity school (1891), the business school (1898), and the law school (1902). Harper is notable for hiring Amos Alonzo Stagg to become the first athletic director. Stagg was an acclaimed athlete from Yale, and had been working for the Young Men's Christian Association (see [page 51](#)).

SCENARIO HOOK. President Harper, an avid religious scholar and semiticist, learned the true nature of the world as a young man at Yale. In addition to its stated purpose of education the university offers special courses, assistance, and training to exceptional students. Harper has a keen interest in current events, and wouldn't shy away from proactively introducing himself to investigators whose battles with Evil become know. Alternatively, PCs whose actions are questionable may find themselves on the wrong end of William Harper's ministrations.

SCENARIO HOOK. Amos Stagg's experiences at Yale, more specifically as a member of The Order of the Skull and Bones, would change him forever. In his position as athletic director Stagg evaluates students for inclusion into his own cadre, The Curators. Stagg and his charges take an active role in policing the city, and hold a narrow view of right and wrong.



Stagg, Amos

(Aug. 16th, 1862 - March 17th, 1965)

"I won't know how good a job I did for twenty years. That's when I'll see how my boys turned out."

-Coach Amos Stagg

Medium humanoid (human), benevolent utilitarian

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 39 (6d6+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)

Skills Arcana +3, Athletics +6, Insight +3, Persuasion +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages English, Latin

Challenge 3

Inspire (3/day). Amos may use his reaction to impart advantage on the next ability check, Attack roll, or saving throw that an ally makes. The ally must be able to see and hear him, and be within 60 ft.

Action

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) bludgeoning damage.

University Dean

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Persuasion +4, and any three of the following: History, Investigation, Nature, Religion, or Medicine

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any three

Challenge 1

Expert. A university dean applies double their proficiency bonus to any two skills they possess.

University's Influence. A university dean has the full backing of their institution and its alumni at their disposal. The exact effects are left the GM's discretion but can be considerable.

Action

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.





MAY 11 - JULY 20, 1894 - PULLMAN STRIKE



George Pullman was a Chicago engineer who, in 1864, introduced the Pullman Palace Car, the first sleeper car on a train that offered European luxury to the American middle class. In 1880 he founded Pullman, IL — a company town next to his factory where Pullman owned the homes, the shops, and even the church. He wanted to create an experimental utopia and used his employees, whom Pullman considered unwashed and ignorant, as guinea pigs.

Pullman's concept for the town was the same as his idea for the sleeper car — surround the person with the finer things and they'll love it.

The town of Pullman had indoor plumbing, underground sewers, and daily garbage removal. Workers were assigned a home according to their position within the company. If an employee didn't live in Pullman, their status within the company was shaky at best, with the exception of Pullman himself, who lived in a Chicago mansion. No one owned their home; they were rented from Pullman.

Pullman was a prohibitionist and forbade alcohol within the town. The only place that served liquor was the Hotel Florence (named for Pullman's daughter), where guests from



out of town could purchase overpriced drinks, but locals weren't welcome. Following his own religion of Universalism, Pullman believed the residents could all share the one church. For the 9,000 residents, who came from a wide range of cultures and religious beliefs, this wasn't appealing, and the church often stood empty. Pullman's iron grasp extended to social gatherings and those that weren't Pullman-organized were forbidden. The workers were living in a beautiful town with modern conveniences, but the people weren't free.

The economic depression sweeping through America in 1893 was the worst of its time to date. To preserve the company's coffers, Pullman ordered a 25% drop in wages for his employees but kept rent and prices in town the same, gouging his utopian workers at both ends. When a group of workers called for a meeting with Pullman he fired them, prompting the entire Pullman workforce to go on strike in May of 1894.

They were joined by the American Railway Union, the ARU. The president of the ARU, Eugene V. Debs, knew that a strike by Pullman workers alone would be ineffective, but if Debs could interrupt national train service, which the country had quickly come to depend upon, then the strike would achieve national attention. Debs appealed to the train switchmen — fellow members of the ARU — who sided with the Pullman workers, and on June 26th they refused to handle trains that had Pullman cars. The effects were felt overnight — trains west of the Mississippi weren't running.

No trains meant no mail. President Grover Cleveland ordered U.S. attorneys to get involved. Tensions were growing. On July 2nd the Attorney General got an injunction from the circuit court that ordered the ARU to stand

down and resume normal train functions. The injunction was completely ignored, and now it was war.

Garfield, furious at the dissent, sent the Army to support the injunction, ruffling the feathers of Illinois Governor John Peter Altgeld who had also sent in militia to restore order. The combined 10,000 soldiers plus police weren't prepared for the desperate people of Chicago, who fought back.

On July 4th, protesters turned over train cars and built barricades to prevent the army from reaching the rail yards. On July 6th they destroyed hundreds of train cars. The breaking point came the following day, when soldiers opened fire on protesters, killing approximately 30 people and leaving more injured. The strike quickly ended and the soldiers withdrew on July 20th.

Two months later the very first Labor Day was celebrated, signed into law by President Garfield to honor America's working class.

SCENARIO HOOK. It's July 6th and the rail yards are in danger. The heroes get word through a contact that a group of protesters plan to hijack a train and send it barreling into the crowd at full steam in the hopes of igniting a war. The heroes must find the caboose and stop its deadly voyage, all while navigating the chaos of the riot. The repercussions of their success or failure will have consequences on a national scale.

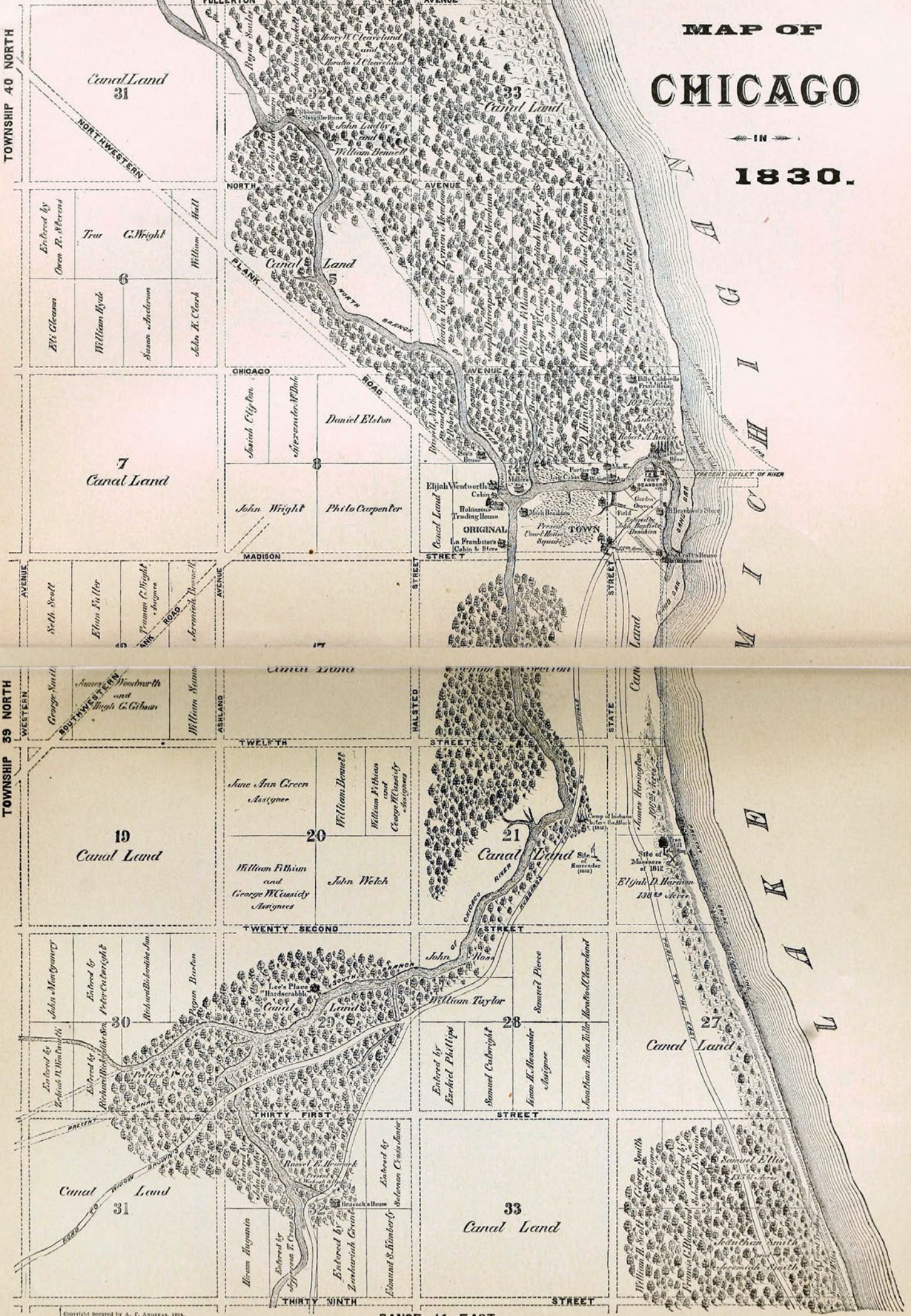
SCENARIO HOOK. A friend of the PCs, who lives in Pullman and works for the company, dies under mysterious circumstances and they are asked to investigate. Posing as guests at the Hotel Florence, they learn that a Pullman executive is a preternatural being with an agenda all its own for the utopian township, and its inhabitants.

MAP OF CHICAGO

IN 1830.

TOWNSHIP 40 NORTH

TOWNSHIP 39 NORTH



Copyright Secured by A. J. ANDREAS, 1884.

RANGE 14 EAST

CHICAGO AND VICINITY



CHICAGO AND ITS ENVIRONS HOLD countless possibilities for intrigue, opportunity, and adventure. The locations listed are but a small sample of those available to the GM, and are not meant to be an exhaustive list.

A town that began with modest agrarian roots grew with such speed and vigor that it was nigh-unrecognizable to residents that had been absent for just a few years.

The road from rural town to metropolis truly began in 1848 with two momentous events that cemented the city's place as a hub of shipping for the country: the opening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and the construction of its first rail line. The canal opened the way for shipping from the Great Lakes all the way to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. The synergy of the rails and the shipping lanes changed the

city nearly overnight and the rest, as they say, is history. The maps on [page 55](#) and [page 56](#) perfectly illustrate the city's rampant growth from 1830 to 1888.

For some, life in the city was full of splendor, hope, and limitless prospects, but for most urban life was a daily struggle against overcrowding, starvation, and disease. Cholera, yellow fever, and tuberculosis took the lives of thousands annually. Estimates of infant mortality from 1850 to 1899 ranged as high as 25%, and average life expectancy at the time period was a mere 40 years.

SIGHTS. The changes wrought over the course of a few decades were dramatic. Few if any cities rose in prominence over such a short period of time as Chicago. Swamps were replaced by farms, farms subsumed by the inexorable sprawl of the city, and the city became a thing



of concrete with the lake breezes serving as its breath.

Folks of all colors, creeds, cultures, and means could be found in the teeming masses of Chicago. Neighborhoods of abject poverty abutted those of wealth. The city saw the birth of architectural marvels such as the Ferris Wheel and the skyscraper, while at the same time its citizens walked in filth.

SMELLS. Chicago's name is a derivation of *shikaakwa*, an Algonquin word that can be translated as "stinking onion." As the population rose the aroma of onions and swamp water were replaced by heady smells of overflowing sewers, public cesspools, unwashed masses, trash, and industrial runoff. It was dirty. It was odorous, and the only relief citizens could hope for was a lake wind to provide a brief respite.

WEATHER. Chicago is approximately halfway between the equator and the North Pole, located on an expansive inland sea, and home to significant swings in yearly and day-to-day temperature.

Winters are brutally cold and accompanied by significant snowfall. Temperatures regularly

fall below freezing and dips to Artic levels aren't unheard of. These temperatures, when coupled with the gusting winds known to buffet the city, can create an environment inhospitable to all but the hardiest of creatures. The city can count on at least one major snowstorm and winds of more than fifty miles per hour at least once each winter.

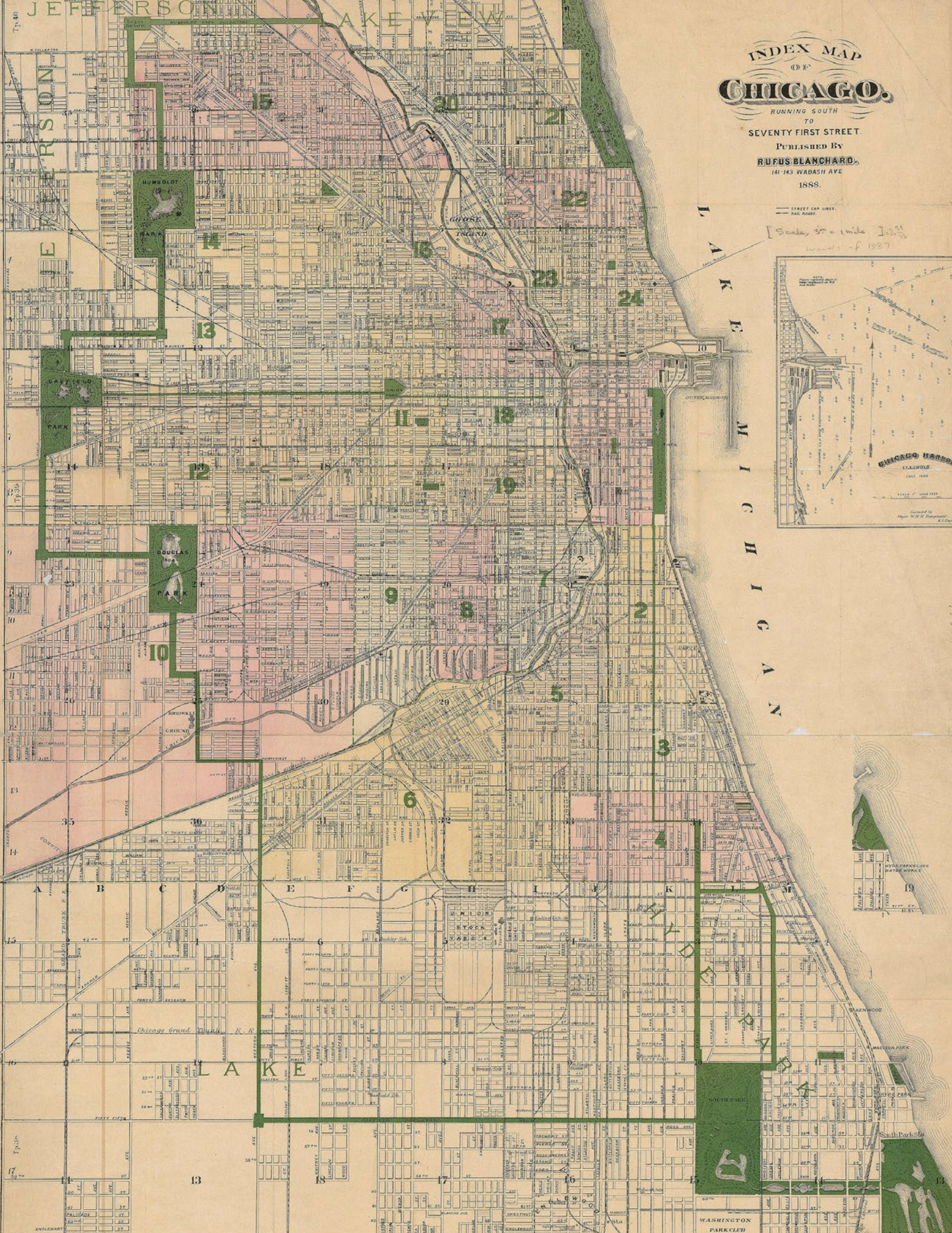
Springtime tends to be unpredictable, when the city experiences its most extreme weather swings. Hail, flooding, and tornadoes are not uncommon. Frequent temperature swings of 50 degrees or more in a 24-hour timespan play havoc with the city's industry and citizens.

Summer weather tends to be pleasantly mild, seldom rising above the mid-80s, though periodic heat waves are not uncommon with thermometers indicating 100 degrees or more on the most sweltering days. Precipitation, and the accompanying thunderstorms, is highest during the summer months.

Autumn tends to be milder and more predictable, though most city residents can remember a late heat wave or early blizzard.

INDEX MAP OF CHICAGO. RUNNING SOUTH TO SEVENTY FIRST STREET. PUBLISHED BY RUFUS BLANCHARD, 141-143 WABASH AVE. 1888.

Scale, 30 = one mile
March 1887



Legend table with columns for 'TYPE OF PROPERTY' and 'COLOR'.

Vertical text on the left side: 'JEFFERSON LAKEVIEW' and 'CHICAGO'.



LAKE MICHIGAN & THE CHICAGO RIVER

Chicago was incorporated as a township in 1833 with almost 200 citizens. When the Illinois and Michigan Canal opened in 1848, its population exploded to 20,000. The canal allowed ships to travel from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi, opening up trade as far as New Orleans with Chicago as the gateway. 1848 was also the year the first railroad tracks were laid in the city. People came from all over the world looking to make their fortune. Construction efforts struggled to keep up with the boom — planning and safety measures were skipped in favor of speed and keeping costs low. Chicago became a national shipping hub; work was easy to find but it was often backbreaking physical labor.

1850s

In 1852 and again in 1854, the stagnant water, combined with the waste from every animal, business, and person in the city, led to cholera epidemics that killed several thousand people. Citizens demanded the city do something about the filth that threatened to overwhelm them. Engineer Ellis S. Chesbrough came up with a plan to build a network of pipes at ground level and then raise the city buildings via jacks, which would create a new ground level above the new sewage system. One of the engineers that worked on this project with Chesbrough was George Pullman (see Pullman Strike, [page 52](#)).

SCENARIO HOOK. A building important to the PCs is raised, revealing a small tunnel in the exposed cellar that leads to a mass grave of human and animal bones. The building's superintendent's offspring, Jericho and Gemma (**killers**), have been killing for years and hoping no one will ever figure it out.

SCENARIO HOOK. Notorious bank robbers The Braxton Boys from Cairo, Illinois have

Killer

"I have always seemed to enjoy everything that hurt. The desire to inflict pain, that is all that is uppermost."

—Albert Fish

Medium humanoid (human), any non-benevolent alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one

Challenge 1

Assassinate. During its first turn, the killer has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the killer scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Actions

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4+1) piercing damage.





come to Chicago looking to make a big score. After robbing the Oak Park Trust and Savings Bank they disappear into the sewers by using a new innovation: a “manhole.” The First has hired the PCs to bring The Braxton Boys to justice and recover the money. A band of Pinkertons are also on their tail, and they’re not keen on sharing the bounty or the prestige with the investigators.

1860

As the Chicago River and Lake Michigan grew, major shipping accidents were bound to happen. On September 8th, 1860 the PS Lady Elgin made a return trip to Milwaukee from Chicago, carrying a private charter of 500 supporters of Milwaukee’s Irish Union Guard. It was steaming northward against gale force winds when an overloaded lumber schooner, the Augusta, collided with Lady Elgin in the middle of the night. Augusta had no running lights, and pierced Lady Elgin mid-ship below the waterline. The damaged Augusta immediately left and headed for Chicago, thinking the much larger Lady Elgin had escaped without incident.

The porters tried to plug the hole in the Lady Elgin with mattresses but it was no use. The Lady Elgin broke apart and all but the bow had sunk. Nearly 300 people died, including the Captain who, trying to save a passenger, was thrown by the storm into rocks.

SCENARIO HOOK. Saboteurs were hired to sink the Lady Elgin in the hopes of taking out the Irish Union Guard. The investigators learn of the plot at a time of the GM’s choosing. Can they stop the sabotage before it happens? Or must they rush out to rescue the doomed ship?

1867

The sewers didn’t help clean up the Chicago River, which was thoroughly polluted. People

had to get their drinking water from the shores of Lake Michigan, where the river emptied out and the lake water was just as contaminated. Once again Ellis S. Chesbrough had the solution — they would build the Chicago Lake Tunnel. It was a passageway 60 feet beneath the surface of the lakebed that went two miles straight out from the shoreline with a tower at either end. The tower in Lake Michigan allowed the city to collect fresh drinking water though the Lake Tunnel in the city at the Chicago Water Tower (see The Great Fire, [page 22](#)).

1887

Initially the Lake Tunnel was a success, until the first big rain of the season caused the putrid river water to rise enough to reach the Lake Tunnel and befoul Chicago’s drinking water. As always, Ellis S. Chesbrough had a plan: The Chicago Drainage Canal, a new passage that would connect the Chicago and Mississippi Rivers. The canal had to be dug so deep that when it crossed the Subcontinental Divide, gravity would actually reverse the direction of the Chicago River, releasing the Windy City’s refuse into the Mississippi River and eventually the Gulf of Mexico.

SCENARIO HOOK. The reversal of the Chicago River was an event of sufficient import that it roused the Deep Ones (see [page 65](#)) living in Lake Michigan from their stoic observations of the nearby land dwellers.

Within their community there are two factions. The first wishes to see Chicago returned to its marshy origins. The other, more pragmatic by far, seeks to minimize the humans’ impact on them and their lake while remaining hidden.

Each group needs allies and agents on land, and an alliance with the investigators could be enough to swing the scales in favor of one faction over the other.



Hopaza roksi

“Stir not murky waters if you know not...the creatures that dwell beneath the surface.”

—Bryan Davis

Tiny monstrosity, malevolent

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 3 (1d4+1)

Speed 10 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunity cold

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1

Blood Frenzy. The hopaza roksi has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Amphibious. The hopaza roksi can breathe air and water.

Action

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 piercing damage.





Hopaza roksi, Swarm of
“Stir not murky waters if you know not...the creatures that dwell beneath the surface.”

—Bryan Davis

Medium swarm of Tiny monstrosities, malevolent

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 10 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunity cold

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 2

Blood Frenzy. The hopaza roksi has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a tiny creature. The swarm cannot regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Amphibious. The hopaza roksi can breathe air and water.

Action

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 11 (4d4+1) piercing damage, or 6 (2d4+1) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

SCENARIO HOOK. The frigid depths of the lake are home to small, squid-like monsters (**hopaza roksi**) that have begun using the sewer pipes to gain access to the city. A clutch of eggs has hatched and infested the submerged cellar of an abandoned tenement. The juveniles are voraciously hungry, coming out at night to prey on any squatters on the upper floors.



The Dropped Anchor

The empty hull of a wooden schooner sits in the far corner of the Chicago Shipbuilding Company along the South Branch of the Chicago River. Typically, much larger ships are under construction here, such as The Malta, the first all-steel freight vessel built on The Great Lakes. Drop cloths cover the rear half of the schooner's wooden skeleton, hiding the entrance to a speakeasy hidden in the bowels of the ship called The Dropped Anchor. This

is where dockworkers and stevedores get drunk while some of the city's shadier citizens are able to quietly go about their business of trading information for money and power.

At the far end of the speakeasy are two huge anchors bolted together, one stacked on top of the other, so they come up to waist height and create the bar. The only light comes from small torches that hang almost at floor level in an attempt to keep the place from attracting too much outside attention. Conversations are kept low, otherwise the bartender — a Norwegian with a handlebar moustache called Ivar (**thug**) — will crack the offending loudmouth over the

Informant

"A listening ear is a running mouth."

—Unknown

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Any one of the following: Insight +4, Investigation +4, or Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 9 (or 13)

Languages any two

Challenge 1

Ear to the Ground (1/day). The informant has advantage on an ability check that allows them to add their proficiency bonus.

Action

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Doctor

"The patient, treated on the fashionable theory, sometimes gets well in spite of the medicine."

—Thomas Jefferson

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Latin plus any three

Challenge 1

Stabilize. A doctor may spend 10 minutes to tend the wounds of a creature and stabilize it with 1 hit point. Once a creature has benefited from this feat, it can't do so again until completing a short rest.





noggin with his billy club to shut them up. The tables are cleaned and glasses cleared by an older Egyptian couple, Maho and Selk, who have a strict policy against loitering.

SCENARIO HOOK. The PCs have a contact at a shipping yard along the Chicago River, a dockworker named Hooky Walsh (**informant**). The PCs meet Hooky at a speakeasy hidden inside the hull of a ship under perpetual construction, The Dropped Anchor. Before Hooky is able to share his information a rival gang of dockworkers attacks, lobbing fire bombs at the timber in the shipyard.

NOTABLE NPCs. In the back corner of The Dropped Anchor sits poor Widow Huber (**doctor**). Little is known about her other than she's a German immigrant who lost her husband years ago to typhoid. The widow assuages her grief with copious amounts of whiskey and gin. Mrs. Huber is a competent physician, and can be convinced to give discreet medical aid. She'll keep things quiet as long as the drinks are flowing. However, they better keep an eye on her, otherwise she'll just pass out before actually helping anyone.

Finnegan's Fishworks

On the North Branch of the Chicago River are a series of businesses that depend upon the river to make a living. Rough waters mean desperate people; when the waters are unnavigable there's no fishing, no shipping, and no money. But there's one place that always seems to do well regardless of the weather: Finnegan's Fishworks. They sell most of their catch at market, but

locals know that if times are tight you can always get a fish pastie for a few pennies.

The factory lot has a high wooden fence surrounding it like a fortress, which keeps thieves out and looky-loos uninformed. The pasties are sold out of a window that opens right onto the street by the proprietor himself, Hal Finnegan, who reminds customers, "Fish so fresh you'll swear you hear it screamin'." Finnegan has a wink and a joke for his customers but never lets anyone besides his staff inside Finnegan's Fishworks. The staff is comprised of Finnegan's four sons, each a vicious oaf.

The yard houses several buildings and a pier where Finnegan's two fishing boats are docked. The day's catch and fishing nets are set out to dry all over the yard, hidden from the street by the fence, but in full view of anyone floating by on the water. It's a temptation for beggars and thieves alike as long as they approach from the river. The Fishworks appears empty while the boats are gone, but is in fact protected by dogs, booby traps, and Finnegan himself hiding in the shadows with his favorite cleaver.

SCENARIO HOOK. Finnegan's boats go out on the water nightly to collect food, both above and beneath the lake's surface. Smaller boats, with a crew of one or two sailors, are easy targets for the Finnegan boys (as **thug** with Deep Blooded traits). The sons pause their fishing, raid the lone boat, execute the passengers, scuttle the vessel, and return with valuables and the bodies. The nightly catch is taken to market but any "extra meat" is reduced to the filling for Finnegan's fish pasties.



The Grosse Pointe Light (Evanston, IL)

After the wreck of the Lady Elgin the citizens of Evanston, on the lakefront just north of Chicago, petitioned the state government to take action. Thirteen years later, in 1874, construction was finished on the Grosse Pointe Light.

The old lighthouse keeper, Captain McNamara (**ship's captain**), would come into town during the day and was a charming local character. Locals say something changed after the accident. There was a big storm; Lake Michigan was churning as though trying to scoop up everything from its own bed and hurl it onto the shore. The next morning McNamara crawled into town, cut to pieces and nearly dead. The Captain said he was on storm watch in the lighthouse when he saw something on the shore, but when he went to investigate, he fell. McNamara recuperated, but since then hardly ever comes into town and folks fear for his state of mind.

SCENARIO HOOK. McNamara did indeed see something that night but lied about falling. He thought he was coming to the rescue of a drowning victim, but instead it was a **deep one** tossed to the surface by the storm. McNamara fought and subdued the deep one and has since kept her locked in a cage in the lighthouse cellar as his prisoner.

The trauma of the storm, compounded with the solitude of the lighthouse, has driven McNamara quite mad. He now spends his time in the cellar with his captive, Aiteri. Their relationship began as captive and tormentor, but has since grown over the isolation. At various times McNamara has believed that the creature was his enemy, his child, and most recently his bride.

Ship's Captain

"A ship in port is safe. But that's not what ships are built for."

—Rear Admiral Grace Hopper

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 9 (2d6+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any three

Challenge 1

Mariner. A ship's captain applies double their proficiency bonus to ability checks related to sailing their ship.

Action

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.





Deep One

“My family aren’t always nice, and they do what they must to protect their own.”

—Aphra Marsh, *Winter Tide* by R. Emrys

Medium humanoid (deep one), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8+2)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +2, Religion +2

Damage Resistance cold

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Aklo, Deep One; at the GM’s discretion they may also speak the language of the nearest surface dwellers

Challenge 1

Ageless. A deep one does not grow feeble with age, nor do they stop growing as they mature.

Amphibious. A deep one can breathe air or water with equal ease.

Action

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) slashing damage.

SCENARIO HOOK. The PCs are visitors to Grosse Pointe at the behest of an old friend of McNamara’s who’s worried after him. Or perhaps they learned that the Captain is an expert on the legends of the lake and need his advice.

The Captain, lonely from his extended solitude, treats his guests graciously and invites them to stay for a hot meal and a nip of something strong. In the course of their conversations he mentions his wife, and that she’s canning preserves in the cellar. With that he asks a PC to see what’s keeping her — “these old bones are awful sore from the lake winds.” The Captain’s “bride” has the run of the basement, and immediately attacks anyone who’s not with him.





THE YARDS



Chicago's Union Stock Yard & Transit Co. was founded in 1865 as the home of the burgeoning city's meatpacking district, in direct response to the US government's purchases to feed Union troops during the Civil War. Initially, the Yard was owned and operated by a union of nine railroad companies; by the 1890s the Vanderbilt family has cemented exclusive control over the "hog butcher for the world" and its considerable economic power.

Early History

Prior to the genesis of the Union Stock Yard, the meatpacking district — located at Madison Street and Ogden Avenue — was comprised of smaller businesses and known as Bulls Head Stock Yard. The processing plants were located in close proximity to the railroads for ease of transportation, and in time the railroads began to operate their own factories.

The combination of the westward expansion and the Civil War quintupled the number of hogs and cattle processed from 1860 to 1864. In 1865 a 375-acre swath of marshlands from

Halsted Street to South Racine and 39th Street to 47th street was purchased by a union of nine railroad companies and the Yard was born. Initially this land was outside the city limits. Within half a decade it had been incorporated and subsumed by Chicago's rampant growth.

Big Business

The importance of the growth and economic impact of the Yard to Chicago's growth as a metropolitan city and economic powerhouse cannot be overstated. Once again, the railroads and their ability to transport goods across the country with relative ease transformed a local industry into a nigh-unrecognizable behemoth whose tendrils wrapped the city in their crushing embrace.

At the time of its opening the Yard processed — a euphemism for butchered — nearly two million hogs, cattle, and sheep annually. By the end of the century that number rose to nine million. To meet national demand, Chicago meat fed literally 80% of the country, a workforce of 25,000 folks was employed, and



enough livestock pens were built to hold well over one hundred thousand animals at any given time. One man, Timothy Blackstone, controlled the Yard as its founding president, a role that he was bequeathed in addition to his duties on the board of directors of the Chicago and Alton Railroad.

The Gate (1879)

The Union Stock Yard Gate is located on Chicago's South Side in the center of Exchange Avenue and its junction with Peoria Street. Designed by Daniel Burnham (see [page 34](#)) and John Root as part of their other works at the Yard, the Gate is a testament to Chicago's progress and a monument to the city's work ethic. A bust of Sherman, John B. Sherman's prize-winning bull, was added by Root to the upper archway, and observes all who enter and leave the Yard.

SCENARIO HOOK. Sherman is more than decoration and provides a modicum of protection to the inhabitants of the Yard from preternatural events and predators. The details of its protections and potency are left to the GM, but what is known is that H.H. Holmes has politely refused to visit the Yard; "The wholesale slaughter of livestock is not agreeable to my sensibilities."

Timothy Blackstone

Timothy Blackstone's (**entrepreneur**) first exposure to the supranatural was in 1847 as a student in Connecticut. The encounter with a ravaging madman of cannibalistic intent left physical and psychic scars that would never fully heal. As a result, he dropped out of school and left his home state, ostensibly to recover from a mysterious injury and to find employment. For nearly two decades he was able to put those experiences behind him.

Mr. Blackstone's first tour of the stock yard shattered the self-imposed psychic walls he'd erected to protect his sanity from the events he'd experienced as a young man. The sounds of braying livestock being led to slaughter and the overwhelming tang of copper in the air brought the memories to life and again he was standing before the ghoulish cannibal he'd narrowly avoided all those years ago. The sights, sounds, and smells of the abattoirs would be irresistible to creatures, like calling deer to a salt lick. Shock turned to iron resolve, and Blackstone's life was forever changed.

Since taking the post he has used his considerable resource to monitor the Yard, and quell any unnatural activities that are

Entrepreneur

"I always tried to turn every disaster into an opportunity."

-John D. Rockefeller

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Any two of the following: Deception +4, Intimidation +4, Performance +4, or Persuasion +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any two

Challenge 0

Seal the Deal (1/day). Prior to their roll an entrepreneur may give themselves advantage on a Charisma based ability check.





discovered. His efforts have been successful, but he is concerned that the Yard's rampant, cancerous growth will soon outstrip his ability to protect it from outside forces. He is unaware of the Grobowskis.

SCENARIO HOOK. The investigators have been asked to meet Mr. Blackstone at the Gate for a lunch meeting. He tells them that cattle have been disappearing, and he suspects that a predator from the lake is responsible, as most of the attacks have been on creatures near water. At the GM's discretion any of the following are likely culprits: a carnivorous cryptic from the depths, folks looking to make money by stealing cattle, or a rogue cadre of ghouls (see *page 70*) taking advantage of the easy pickings.

Town of Lake

Founded in the 1850s by S.S. Crocker and John Caffrey, Town of Lake is situated just south and west of the Yard with convenient access to the railroad tracks of Leavitt Street. The township remained of modest size, around a thousand folks or so, until the widespread introduction of the refrigerated boxcar, which allowed the neighborhood to become a center

of meatpacking for the nearby rails. Initially populated by Irish and German immigrants, as the town expanded Poles, Lithuanians, Slovaks, and Czechs arrived, with each community forming their own parishes.

Town of Lake's reputation as a crime-ridden haven for the poor, and a dangerous neighborhood for outsiders, is largely undeserved and the product of malicious, xenophobic rumors spread by certain factions of the city's elite. The truth of the matter is that crime is virtually unheard of and Town of Lake is one of the safest villages in the city, particularly for its denizens. They keep to themselves, protect each other fiercely, and are content with their slice of the city.

SCENARIO HOOK. The PCs are hired to investigate and recover an item of personal value for an NPC of the GM's choosing. Their investigation leads them to Town of Lake and rumors of its dangers. The item in question, and the gent who stole it, have been seen in Town of Lake recently. The inhabitant's reaction to the intrusion is predicated on how they are approached by the PC's. Town of Lake is an awfully large place with a lot of shadows for folks on the outside looking in.



Bubbly Creek

“Bubbly Creek” is an arm of the Chicago River, and forms the southern boundary of the Union Stock Yards; all the drainage of the square mile of packing-houses empties into it so that it is really a great open sewer a hundred or two feet wide. One long arm of it is blind, and the filth stays there forever and a day. The grease and chemicals that are poured into it undergo all sorts of strange transformations, which are the cause of its name; it is constantly in motion as if huge fish were feeding in it, or great leviathans disporting themselves in its depths.

Bubbles of carbonic gas will rise to the surface and burst, and make rings two or three feet wide.

Here and there the grease and filth have caked solid, and the creek looks like a bed of lava; chickens walk about on it, feeding, and many times an unwary stranger has started to stroll across and vanished temporarily. The packers used to leave the creek that way, till every now and then the surface would catch on fire and burn furiously, and the fire department would have to come and put it out. Once, however, an ingenious stranger came and started to gather this filth in scows, to make lard out of; then the packers took the cue, and got out an injunction to stop him, and afterwards gathered it themselves. The banks of “Bubbly Creek” are plastered thick with hairs, and this also the packers gather and clean.

*—Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* 1906*





THE GROBOWSKIS

Inherent Evil

Whispers in the Dark *does not paint with a broad brush. It encourages nuance, shades of grey, and individuality, and thus dispenses with HPL's abhorrent characterization of those unlike himself as evil or lesser.*

To that end you will see that few intelligent creatures are predisposed to a particular pattern of behaviors. In the statblocks of intelligent beings you will likely see "any," "unaligned," or possibly "not applicable."

The Grobowskis, led by their matriarch Rosa, have been a constant presence in the Yards since immigrating to the city in 1867 from Eastern Europe. They occupy a cluster of three shanties in Town of Lake, and have a reputation of enduring diligence and taking on work that most folks balk at. They keep to themselves, asking nothing of their neighbors, but always answering calls for aid. While they keep to themselves, they are valued members of Town of Lake and universally respected, particularly Rosa.

By the 1880s Rosa's presence is felt more than seen, as she has retired to her home and does not visit with non-family due to illness.

The reality of the situation is the Grobowskis are a displaced clan of **ghouls** that have taken full advantage of the Yard's opportunities — opportunities that are tailor-made for creatures with their particular skills and proclivities. They view the Yard and Town of Lake as their territory and defend it with ruthless efficiency; they are the reason so few incidents, mundane and otherworldly, occur in this area of Chicago.

Ghoul

"Everyone must be his own scavenger."

—Mahatma Gandhi

Medium humanoid (ghoul), any alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 13 (2d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +3

Skills Athletics +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages any two

Challenge 1

Ghoulish Resilience. Ghouls are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition. Ghouls have advantage on saving throws against disease.

Action

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) bludgeoning damage.

The Credo

Appearances at all times, at any cost.

Do not foul our home.

We do not waste, so that we do not want.





Rosa Grobowski

“*Jak sobie pościelesz, tak się wyspisz.*
(As you make your bed, so must you lie.)”

—Polish proverb

Medium humanoid (ghoul), utilitarian rationalist

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +5, Cha +5

Skills Arcana +3, History +3, Insight +6,
Persuasion +3

Damage Resistances bludgeoning from
nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion,
poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception
12

Languages English, Polish, Russian
Challenge 5

Ghoulish Resilience. Rosa is immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition. She has advantage on saving throws against disease.

Canny Insight. Rosa has advantage on ability checks to detect lies and falsehoods.

Orator (3/day). When Rosa speaks to a non-hostile creature(s), that can understand her, she has advantage on the next Charisma-based ability check against that creature(s).

Actions

Multiattack. Rosa makes two attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) bludgeoning damage.





Babcia Rosa (see Rosa Grabowski), as she insists on being addressed, holds her family to a rigid code of conduct (see The Credo) and brooks no dissent. As she moved into her second century of life, the physical features marking her as a ghoul became more pronounced, and forced her to limit her contact with outsiders. When outside of her home she dresses in mourning regalia, complete with dark veil, to disguise herself and discourage others from bothering her.

Deviations from the Credo are met with swift finality, ritual drowning in the lake being the most common method of punishment, and are a community affair. All ghouls, regardless of their relationship with the Grobowski, are held to the Credo if they are within Chicago's city limits.

GM'S NOTE. The Grobowski are not a family of evil monsters. They are intelligent, thoughtful, and understand how good a situation they have. They will do nothing to endanger their lot in life, and do much to protect it. That said, they are viciously efficient when the need arises, and Rosa's canny leadership and century of experience have served them very well.



CABBAGE PATCH (AKA OLD TOWN)

Located in the triangle formed by North Avenue, Clark Street, and Ogden Avenue, the land that would one day become known as Old Town was settled by German immigrants in the aftermath of the second iteration of the Treaty of Chicago in 1833, which removed the indigenous peoples from the land. The settlers took advantage of the swamps' recent transformation into arable meadowland, and covered it in fields of celery, potatoes, and the cabbages for which the neighborhood was named.

Early History

Prior to the Treaty of Chicago in 1833 the stretch of swamp that would eventually become Old Town served as home and trading center for Potawatomi, Miami, and Illinois tribes of indigenous peoples.

The treaty gave the United States government all land west of Lake Michigan to Lake Winnebago in return for promises to the Potawatomi of cash and tracts of land further west. A war party five hundred strong gathered

The 1821 Treaty of Chicago

We meet you here to-day, because we had promised it, to tell you our minds, and what we have agreed upon among ourselves. You will listen to us with a good mind, and believe what we say. You know that we first came to this country, a long time ago, and when we sat ourselves down upon it, we met with a great many hardships and difficulties. Our country was then very large; but it has dwindled away to a small spot, and you wish to purchase that!

Since you first came among them, they have listened to your words with an attentive ear, and have always hearkened to your counsels. Whenever you have had a proposal to make to us, whenever you have had a favor to ask of us, we have always lent a favorable ear, and our invariable answer has been 'yes.' This you know! A long time has passed since we first came upon our lands, and our old people have all sunk into their graves.

Our country was given to us by the Great Spirit, who gave it to us to hunt upon, to make our cornfields upon, to live upon, and to make down our beds upon when we die. And he would never forgive us, should we bargain it away.

We sold you a fine tract of land at St. Mary's. We said to you then, it was enough to satisfy your children, and the last we should sell: and we thought it would be the last you would ask for.

Take notice, it is a small piece of land, and if we give it away, what will become of us? The Great Spirit, who has provided it for our use, allows us to keep it, to bring up our young men and support our families. We should incur his anger, if we bartered it away.

—Chief Metea of the Potawatomi





in full dress and armed for battle, and danced their final war-dance in 1835 before leaving the Chicago area.

SCENARIO HOOK. The original inhabitants of the swamps that would become the Cabbage Patch lived in symbiosis with the land and the creatures living in its shadows. The ways of the new settlers have torn that link asunder, and as a result a ravaging spirit, a lesser wendigo, has taken hold of one of the settlers to assuage its hunger. The PCs encounter the creature in their wanderings, or perhaps they have a reputation as skilled hunters and are called in to stop a string of “bear attacks.”

From the Ashes

By the 1850s the Cabbage Patch was born, and had been settled by German-Catholic immigrants. The neighborhood was known for its Victorian homes, beautiful cathedrals, and Clark Street which followed a ridge along Lake Michigan to give those traveling it a breathtaking view of the inland sea.

The Great Fire of 1871 (see *page 22*) unleashed flaming devastation on the Cabbage Patch. When the smoke cleared virtually all of Old Town had been burnt to cinders, save St. Michael’s Church, one of only seven Bavarian-built churches to survive the conflagration. St Michael’s brick walls prevented its total destruction.

The Great Fire proved to be no more than a brief inconvenience to the inhabitants of the Cabbage Patch, and in short order the neighborhood was rebuilt better than ever, becoming a thriving part of Chicago’s growth.

St Michael’s Church

On Sunday, October 17th, 1852 forty-three families gathered for the dedication of St. Michael’s Church. The parish expanded their

Preacher/Priest

“The way to right wrongs, is to turn the light of truth upon them.”

—Ida B. Wells

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Religion +4, and one of the following:
Intimidation +2, Performance +2, or Persuasion +2

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any two

Challenge 0

footprint, adding a rectory and school soon thereafter. The parish’s early years were marked with internal bickering and a stream of priests until Bishop James Duggan turned control of the church to the Redemptorists, whose had a reputation for instilling harmony and excellence in parishes in Germany. Father Joseph Mueller (**priest**), the sixth pastor in eight years, said his first Mass at the church on February 26, 1860.

Father Mueller’s appointment marked the beginning of growth and prosperity for St. Michael’s that would include a new brick church at the corner of Linden Street and Hurlbut Avenue. The church was topped with a 200-foot tall steeple making it among the tallest structures in Chicago, visible for miles around. That is, until the Great Fire.



The folk of the Cabbage Patch were determined to rebuild their sanctuary, and to do more than rebuild. They were going to create a church without peer. On October 12th, 1873 the new church, rebuilt with the help of original brick structures, was consecrated and rededicated. In 1887 a new spire, nearly 100 feet taller than the previous, was added. Mathias Schwalbach, famed maker of tower clocks and inventor of the typewriter, built a four-face clock for the tower. Lastly, a gilded cross, taller than two men and four times as wide, crowned the tower.

SCENARIO HOOK. On September 29, 1869, the feast day of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Michael's new church building was blessed and dedicated. The ceremony was attended by the entire parish who unknowingly contributed a portion of their psychic strength to protect the church's grounds from supernatural forces. A Great One has designs on infiltrating the Dreamlands adjacent to Chicago, and their efforts have been stymied by the church's protection. The Redemptorists know much of the forces in the darkness and enlist the Investigators to get to the bottom of a recent spate of increasingly destructive vandalism.



LINCOLN PARK



In 1860 the land just north of City Cemetery was rechristened from Cemetery Park to Lake Park. The name was changed again five years later to honor the recently assassinated President, Abraham Lincoln. The park covers more than 1,200 acres, stretches seven miles along the coast of Lake Michigan, and is the verdant jewel of the metropolis. It's home to the city's most noted conversation efforts, a marked change from its original, more morbid purpose.

Repurposed Land

Prior the opening of the park and menagerie, the land surrounding the pond that would become the zoo's centerpiece was the City Cemetery, the final resting place for more than 30,000 residents of Chicago. It served this purpose from 1843–1866 when folks came to the conclusion that burying tens of thousands of bodies so close to Lake Michigan could have



unforeseen and unfortunate consequences to the city's primary source of drinking water.

The Tomb, installed in 1858, remains in the park as a reminder of its original function. "...it would be impossible to remove the vault, except at great expense, and the Commissioners preferred it to remain as an interesting reminder of the Park's origin."

SCENARIO HOOK. Reginald Taff has been a resident of the swampland bordering Lake Michigan since time immemorial. The Ojibwe tribes referred to him as Dibiki-Gikinjigwen, the Dark That Embraces, and left him to his own devices. When the swamp was subsumed, he found work as a caretaker in the City Cemetery, and with its closure maintains the park as a groundskeeper. Mr. Taff's motivations are as inscrutable as his origin.

Taff stands a modest five feet tall, has no visible hair on his lithe body, and is rarely seen without his rake. His affect is that of a doddering old man, but PCs succeeding on a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check realize it's an act to hide his true nature.



Lincoln Park Zoo (est. 1868)

In 1868 New York City's Central Park Commissioners gifted their counterparts in Lincoln Park two pairs of swans and the Lincoln Park Zoo was formed. Donations of other wildlife followed and the park's swans were joined by a puma, elk, wolves, eagles, and peacocks. The zoo's first purchase, a bear cub from the Philadelphia zoo, was particularly adept at loosing itself from its enclosure and was regularly found wandering the park. Bison from the zoo were purchased by the US government in 1896, and relocated to Yellowstone National Park in an attempt

to replenish herds that had been hunted to extinction in the wild. The zoo's first director, Cy DeVry, began his tenure in 1888.

Lincoln Park Conservatory (est. 1890)

"A luxuriant tropical growth, blending the whole into a natural grouping of Nature's loveliest forms."

Lincoln Park Commission Annual Report,
1892

The garden situated at the front of the Conservatory was planted in the late 1870s, more than a decade before the building's construction. The structure replaced the original greenhouse that had been in place since 1877. The Conservatory is a Victorian glass house consisting of four rooms, and housing exotic plants from around the world. The four rooms are: the Palm House, the Fern Room, the Stove Room (later renamed the Tropical Room), and the Display or Show House.

SCENARIO HOOK. Truly exotic, even otherworldly, plants can be found in the Conservatory.

Nature Museum (est. 1898)

Founded in 1857 by Robert Kennicott and William Stimpson the Nature Museum was Chicago's first museum dedicated to nature and science, and quickly gained a reputation as one of the finest in the country. When its collection was lost in the Great Chicago Fire (see [page 22](#)) it was rebuilt on the same location, only to be lost a second time due to financial hardships. The Chicago Academy of Sciences abandoned the Memorial Building location, and moved to Lincoln Park in 1898, becoming the first of Chicago's museums in parks.





BEYOND THE CITY

Thirty railroad lines meet in Chicago making it the beating heart of the Midwest. A growing city needs to be fed, and for that it relies on rural communities in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Chicago's factories process lumber from Wisconsin, grain from Illinois, and meat from all over the region.

The connectivity of the railroads makes the Midwest a region, instead of an array of towns and cities. They're the veins and arteries of industry, funneling everything the Midwest makes into Chicago, and linking the communities more surely than any shared boundary.

SCENARIO HOOK. Intentionally or not, many of the new rail lines follow the same path as the nearly-depleted ley lines crisscrossing the United States. The lines are slowly being reinvigorated as workers sacrifice their blood, sweat, and lives to lay the tracks. An unidentified railroad baron has hatched a plot to fuel a blood sacrifice of prodigious strength by instigating a collision. Time is limited, the stakes are high, and powerful forces are working against the PCs.

Illinois

By 1890, a quarter of the population of Illinois lives in Chicago with the rest of the state increasingly separating itself from the growing metropolis. Miners and farmers don't move to the Windy City, at least not in any great numbers. Their life is quiet and regular with one focus: making sure goods move to and from Chicago to keep the money rolling in. The shift to growing corn — a literal cash crop — over the last three decades has eliminated variety and diversity from the vast fields of central Illinois.

Further south near St Louis excavation is underway on Monks Mound. Archaeologists have discovered that the Cahokia Mounds are the remains of an entire pre-Columbian city, lost to time and ripe for study.

SCENARIO HOOK. The discovery of the secrets within the Cahokia Mounds has created a brisk and profitable trade in artifacts. The folks involved will do anything to protect their profits, while the descendants of the mounds' peoples view the excavation as sacrilegious.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin was founded on the fur trade, but it too changes with time and by the late nineteenth century lumber is where the money is. Farming — especially dairy farming — is hugely important. Villages and towns spring up wherever there are resources to sell; lumber is king, but precious metal mines of all kinds riddle the state, and with goods come the railroads to transport them. German, Scandinavian and other European immigrants have turned forests into farms, while Wisconsin's indigenous people have been displaced, making up just a small proportion of the population. Their numbers dwindled steadily, and by 1890 there were 6,095 living on reservations.

The 1890s are a time of boom or bust for Wisconsin. A family's fortunes can wither with one bad harvest, and isolation means folks are on their own if their health deteriorates or food becomes scarce. Like any frontier, disease, poverty, and crime are common, and when combined with harsh winters the outlook was grim for folks that weren't prepared.

SCENARIO HOOK. Black River Falls is one of Wisconsin's most remarkable towns. Strange and



eccentric people are drawn to it like a magnet — or perhaps perfectly reasonable folk turn strange in its borders? The local newspaper, *The Badger Banner*, is regularly packed with reports of madness, suicide, and murder. The connection is there, but it keeps eluding the locals. A group of curious strangers with knowledge of the bizarre might just see the pattern before it's too late.

Iowa

Iowa is an agricultural powerhouse built by the railroads crossing through it. The iron behemoths changed the small subsistence farms into great sweeping affairs of expansive fields stretching as far as the eye could see, producing commodities to be sent (mostly to Chicago) by rail.

There were few places in the Midwest more welcoming to immigrants than Iowa. In 1850, nearly 20,000 of Iowa's residents were foreign-born; just a decade later that number had increased fivefold, and the number of African American residents had risen from just over 1,000 to five times that. By 1890, there are over 300,000 foreign-born people in the state. Some of those immigrants formed communities based on communally-held property and shared socialist or religious values.

Most of the indigenous people of Iowa were displaced in the mid nineteenth century, as they were throughout the Midwest. Members of the Meskwaki tribe returned to Iowa and re-settled some of the land they had lived on after buying it back from the state. By the 1890s they were largely ignored, living independently on their privately owned land.

SCENARIO HOOK. The tight-knit communes of recent immigrants shun contact with outsiders,

and yet some of them prosper far in excess of their peers. The folks of these communities have tapped into forces, natural or preternatural, for their good fortune. Like all deals there comes a time to pay the price, and who better to pay it than a nosy stranger no one will miss?

Indiana

By the end of the 19th century Indiana is experiencing unprecedented prosperity. The discovery of a natural gas belt led to a boom in gas production starting in the 1880s. In 1876, miners in search of a new coal seam bored so deep they encountered an earth-shaking noise and a noxious stench. The miners feared they'd drilled straight into Hell and plugged up the hole, only revisiting it when natural gas was discovered in Ohio in 1884 and Eaton residents realized the true nature of their discovery.

Cheap fuel brought heavy industry to Indiana: iron and other metal manufacturing industries moved to the gas field, creating new towns to house workers and serve their businesses.

Indiana is rapidly transitioning from a farming economy to one based on industry, and it is lucrative. Additional money means more funding for arts and more cultural clout. The vitalization came to be known as their Golden Age of Literature, producing such masterpieces as *Ben Hur: A Tale of Christ* by Lew Wallace, *Little Orphan Annie* by James Whitcomb Riley, and *The Freedmen's Case in Equity* by Maurice Thompson.

SCENARIO HOOK. Residents of Eaton weren't far off in their initial fears of opening a portal to Hell itself when they dug too deep.





DREAMLANDS

Dreamlands Overview

The Dreamlands exist outside the boundaries of the mortal realm, and are typically only accessible during sleep, hence their appellation. There are of course exceptions to every rule. Select creatures are able to travel between the Waking world and the Dreamlands at will (house cats being the most common), and eddies where the two planes commingle encourage visitations between the lands. The manifestations of these pseudo-portals take myriad forms and characteristics, from physical manifestations such as cold spots and static electricity buildups, to a sense of grim foreboding or inner peace, and even visual disturbances or synesthesia. The ‘thinnies’, as they’re often called, occur either naturally over the millennia or abruptly in response to a psychic phenomenon of extreme magnitude.

Chicago’s age precludes the former, and its colorful history has produced numerous examples of the latter. Each of the following examples demonstrate ways in which the Dreamlands may manifest. It’s important to note that these realms are created by the events that spawned them, or the Dreamers that thought them into existence. There are no limits as we know them, and with realms perpetually being created, destroyed, lost, and found, all things are possible. The forthcoming *Whispers* RPG Corebook will explore the Dreamlands in more detail.

ABATTOIR FIELDS (1865)

The dream realm metaphysically adjacent to the Stockyards (see [page 66](#)) has been shaped by the slaughter of countless thousands

of animals for their meat. The combination of the creatures’ psychic cries and physical anguish, combined with the inevitable emotional toll it took on the workers, created a nightmare realm of death and murder.

The sky is bathed in rusty brown, bruised clouds hang stagnant, the pervasive humidity carries the smell (and taste) of copper, and there is no escaping the persistent buzzing of flies. What little exposed ground remains is a viscous mixture of blood, organic runoff, and sucking mud. Everything native to the Fields is a shade of red and brown, the only exception being the countless harvest stables of concrete with walls of clean, white tile.

For many humans and prey animals the environmental effects are unsettling, calling to mind the feeling of being hunted. They are nervous and easily agitated, and look to escape the nightmare realm as soon as they’re able. Predators — ghouls, for instance — find the realm a comforting oasis and land of plenty. Insects and vermin of all varieties thrive in the Fields. Members of the Grobowski clan (see [page 70](#)) that are able to visit the Abattoir Fields are considered blessed by their peers. Rosa (see [page 71](#)) is known to spend many of her dreams in this ghoulish paradise.

The following are some of the environmental effects creatures visiting the Abattoir Fields may experience:

- Perception checks that rely on smell are at disadvantage
- Vegetarians have a -1 penalty to fear checks and a +1 bonus to initiative
- Carnivores have a +1 bonus to Intimidation checks and a -1 penalty to Insight





THE CONFLAGRATION (OCT. 8TH, 1871)

The aftereffects of the Great Fire of 1871 persist long after the conflagration was extinguished and buildings were rebuilt. Lives, neighborhoods, and communities have risen from the ashes, but the fire continues to burn in the Dreamlands.

Glowing embers and smoke fill the air, drastically reducing visibility for any unfortunate enough to visit this hellish land. Smoldering rubble and a heavy layer of ash coats everything, reducing the cityscape to a literal charcoal painting of decimated neighborhoods in blacks and greys. There are no trees or bushes

The Conflagration is sparsely inhabited by spirits from the disaster and elementals who find the environs ideally suited to their tastes. Additionally, the demesne is known to Asag (see *page 91*), whose connection with dreams makes this a particularly attractive lair. Should he gain control of the Conflagration the citizens of Chicago would be in dire straits.

The following are some of the environmental effects creatures visiting the Conflagration may experience:

- All objects beyond 30 feet are heavily obscured
- Checks to avoid levels of Exhaustion are made with disadvantage
- Survival checks to follow creatures or objects that leave tracks are made with advantage

THE COURT (MAY 1ST, 1893)

The newest section of the Dreamlands was created by the conjoined psyches of Chicagoans and the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Exposition. This embryonic land responds to fluctuations in the dreams of its visitors, creating a landscape of ever-changing wonders, curiosities, and marvels. The overwhelming emotions molding the Court of Honor are of hope, unity, and progress.

The eldritch powers of Chicago have noted the unique opportunity associated with the birth of a Dreamlands dominion, and will do nearly anything to subvert it to their tastes. H.H. Holmes has been dispatched by the Spider Goddess (see pg. 55 of *The Devil's City*), and hunts the grounds with the tenacity of a fell beast. The Black Star Society (see *page 103*), too, has their eyes set on the biggest stage in the world. Could there be a more appropriate venue for the King in Yellow?

The following are some of the environmental effects creatures visiting the Court may experience:

- Sanity checks are made with advantage
- Performance checks are made with advantage
- Initiative checks for dreamers unaware that they are in the Dreamlands are made with disadvantage.

THE WORLD'S FAIR HOTEL (1887)

The construction of the World's Fair Hotel included consecration of the building site, and dedication to Atlach-Nacha. That connection has been further reinforced by Holmes through ritual sacrifices and rites of devotion. The exact details of the hotel's existence in the Waking world and the Dreamlands is left to the GM, to suit the tone of their campaign and the needs of the stories they tell. For further details on the World's Fair Hotel see *page 123–page 182*, and specifically the Dreamlands Intrusion sidebar on *page 150*.





HOLMES & CO. DRUGGIST

CLUBS, CULTS, AND COTERIES



THE 19TH CENTURY SAW THE FORMATION and proliferation of countless clubs formed around a common ideal, activity, or occupation. These organizations allowed their members to meet, share information and discuss their activities in safety, and to pool resources towards common goals. While many clubs were only for social gatherings and entertainment, others used their influence to further their agendas and hide their secrets behind mundane activities.

CHICAGO SPORTS. The nature of sport and its popularity are on the rise as Americans begin to experience the luxury of free time. As an activity it is one of the few that allows folks from disparate backgrounds to compete against one another.

THE QUADRANGLE CLUB. One of the oldest and most prominent social clubs in the city is the Quadrangle Club. Membership is traditionally limited to University of Chicago faculty, but more recently has opened up to well-heeled citizens.

JACK BLUE. Born of the need for reform, Jack Blue members do not often know of one another, but their presence is felt throughout the city. Comprised exclusively of the working class they wield considerable influence due to their numbers and their occupations.

THE NIGHTWORMS. The 'Worms, as they're derisively referred to by more genteel clubs, are dedicated to the preservation and sharing of all written materials. They do not believe in censorship, nor do they shy away from unseemly subject matter.

THE UNION LEAGUE. No organization holds as much overt political and economic power as the Union League. An invitation into their ranks is considered a stepping stone to success and carries considerable prestige.

UNIVERSITY CLUB OF CHICAGO. Academics, private historians, and patrons of the arts: members of the Club seek to preserve art in all its forms. They do not concern themselves with social or economic standing, though their requirement of a degree from an institute of higher learning often has the same effect.

THE WHITECHAPEL CLUB. Polite society is dismissive of the distasteful activities of the hooligans who claim membership in the Whitechapel Club. Their over-the-top behavior and excesses are public knowledge, and yet for a certain set of folks they are seen as one of the most exclusive and attractive societies in Chicago.

THE BLACK STAR SOCIETY. The Society's focus is on the performing arts with its membership split between performers and the patrons who fund them. They are a motley crew and poorly organized, but manage to produce shows regularly.





CHICAGO'S SPORTING CULTURE

Prior to the 1860's, most people in Chicago thought of "sports" as betting on animals or people getting hurt. Cockfights, dogfights, and bear baiting were common forms of entertainment as well as bare-knuckle brawls in the backrooms of taverns and drinking holes.

Baseball, popular around New York City (invented in 1839), had yet to catch on beyond the east coast. Then, during the Civil War, Union soldiers would play the game to pass the time, occasionally even inviting Confederate soldiers to join them. When the war ended in 1865, soldiers returned home and brought baseball with them, setting the groundwork for what would become America's favorite sport for well over half a century.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1866, and the days of attaching razor blades to roosters and watching them tear each other apart were numbered. Filling the gap were newer sports like basketball (1891), football (1869), as well as the European import known as soccer. Horseracing maintained its popularity, and fancy racetracks with private boxes were considered "places to be seen" amongst the wealthy.

By 1871 Chicago had its own professional baseball team, the White Stockings. With the rise of baseball, people began to accept that exercise in the form of sports had physical as well as moral benefits. Gymnasiums and private athletic clubs began to appear across the country. Universities started athletic rivalries, competing in baseball, football, and basketball, as well as track and field.

Bare-knuckle boxer John L. Sullivan was considered a hero during his national tour of

1883–84. He would famously accept a challenge to a fight from anyone at any time during the tour as long as it was fought according to the Marquess of Queensberry Rules, with a reward of \$250 going to the winner. Sullivan knocked out eleven challengers during the tour, and the reward was never claimed.

SCENARIO HOOK. An associate of the PCs was found dead in Lincoln Park, the apparent victim of a **black bear** attack. Authorities are blaming the bear of nearby Lincoln Park Zoo, which is known to escape, though it's never harmed anyone and is barely more than a cub. The victim was truly mauled by a bear, and with a bit of investigation the zoo's bear is cleared and it's discovered that the victim has substantial gambling debts.



The Chicago Athletic Association (est. 1893)

The Chicago Athletic Association is a private athletic club that opened in 1893, across the street from the World's Columbian Exposition. The elite members of the CAA are considered some of the finest athletes in the city, and there's a reason why. The CAA's inner circle worships the Elder God Ithaqua, and use foul magics to imbue a portion of the physical talents they harvest from unfortunate victims. The harvest is invariably lethal to the subject, and involves the removal of the kidneys and subsequent processing to isolate the adrenal glands. Recipients of Ithaqua's Gift often become addicted to the effects, and in time lose themselves entirely, becoming ravenous **wendigo**.



SCENARIO HOOK. An up-and-coming pugilist, Nicholas ‘Sunshine’ Black, has an upcoming bout at an event hall. Sunshine, known more for his iron chin than heavy hands, battered his previous opponent into unconsciousness and left him grievously

wounded. As his next bout draws near the PCs have been hired by a wealthy sports enthusiast to learn the secrets of Sunshine’s newfound strength. Their investigation leads to the CAA, who accepted Nicholas into their ranks just months before his last bout.

NPC Template: Ithaqua’s Gift

The Gift of Ithaqua can be imparted to any humanoid who consumes the ritualistically harvested adrenal glands of another humanoid. Accepting the Gift while knowing its source incurs an automatic loss of 1d2 Sanity, and may be a Major Life Event (see page 242). The effects of the gift are felt within minutes, last for 12 hours, and carry considerable benefits for those willing to pay the price.

CHALLENGE. *The creature’s challenge rating increases by 1.*

SPEED. *The creature’s speed increases by 5.*

ABILITY SCORES. *Increase the creature’s Constitution and Strength by 2. The subject’s Charisma decreases by 1.*

NEW TRAIT: RAVENOUS. *While under the effects of the Gift, and for 12 hours afterwards, the target must consume at least 1 pound of meat per hour or gain one level of exhaustion until their hunger is met up. The creature may eat up to 4 pounds of meat in one sitting, assuaging their hunger for 4 hours.*

NEW TRAIT: ASPECT OF THE WENDIGO. *Recipients of the gift become increasingly hirsute with each dose. The hair is coarse and white, and the effect is permanent and cumulative.*

DRAWBACK: ADDICTIVE. *The receiver of the Gift must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw when the effects cease or gain the poisoned condition for 1 week. They may repeat the saving throw after each short rest, ending the effect on a success. The effects end immediately if they receive the Gift again.*

DRAWBACK: WENDIGO’S CURSE. *When the Gift of Ithaqua is given to a subject they must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC = 10 + lifetime total number of Gifts received) when the effect ceases, or be permanently transformed into a wendigo. For example, Joseph was given the gift 2 months ago, and has requested it again for an upcoming contest of strength. His DC to avoid becoming a wendigo is 12.*



Wendigo

“The hunger inside given to me, makes me what I am. Always calling me, for the blood of man.”

—“Redeemer” by Jonathan Davis

Large monstrosity, malevolent

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d10+40)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +6, Survival +3

Damage Immunities cold

Condition Immunities exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages any it knew previously but can't speak

Challenge 5

Blood Frenzy. The wendigo has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Regeneration. The wendigo regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. It is incapacitated if it starts its turn with less than 1 hit point. The wendigo continues to regenerate until its heart has been destroyed with fire.

Wind's Howl. As an action the wendigo unleashes a sanity-shattering roar that can be heard for miles. All creatures within 60 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature may repeat the save at the end of their turn, ending the effect on a success. A creature that fumbles the saving throw loses 1d2 Sanity.

Actions

Multiattack. The wendigo makes two attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 19).

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10+6) slashing damage.





THE NIGHTWORMS

“Books are uniquely portable magic.”

—Stephen King

The precise origins of the Nightworms are shrouded in hearsay and speculation. What most agree on is that the organization was founded in Constantinople in response to the destruction of the great city’s libraries, either in 1204 CE during the Fourth Crusade or in 1453 CE by the Ottoman Turks during the Fall of Constantinople.

The Nightworms’ directive is simple: preserve, protect, and provide books of all kinds to anyone seeking them. Their belief that knowledge is fundamentally worthwhile, and has no inherent morality, has fueled innumerable debates within their ranks and tension with outsiders. They are willing to pay the ultimate price to defend their credo.

Gaining membership to the Worms requires the pledge to be literate, swear to protect the written word in all forms, and own a collection of books — the larger the better. They gather, store, and protect books to the best of their abilities and support those that do the same. Membership is often a family affair with spouses and scions carrying on the tradition for generations. Chapters can be found in most major metropolitan centers in the U.S. and Europe. They are much less common elsewhere.

Past, Present, and Future

The Nightworms earned their name from their custom of digging through the rubble of fallen and destroyed libraries to rescue the books within. “Like worms from the earth they would flock to sites of fresh destruction, rifling through the upturned dirt and debris in search of their prize.” They focused their energies on histories, philosophical treatises, and speculative

works delving into the nature of the universe. To this day the Worms can be found all over the world — risking life, limb, and sanity — in the pursuit of rare grimoires and tomes.

The Chicago chapter of the Nightworms existed on the periphery of society, little more than a loose collective of like-minded individuals, until 1867 when two of their members — The Widow and the

Dame — came to prominence. The Widow supplied the financial backing, while the Dame used her endless supply of manic energy and organizational acumen to transform the group’s membership from a smattering of decrepit scholars to a thriving collection of folks from all walks of life. Their catalog too has expanded and now includes literature of all types, from the works of Mary Shelley and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to overflowing shelves of penny dreadfuls.

The sweeping changes to the esoteric order have created philosophical schisms:





traditionalists who believe that only works of “historical significance and educational value” are worth saving, and elitists who cannot abide the influx of “the common folk.” Many of the older members belong in both camps, but their numbers are dwindling and they may disappear completely by the turn of the century.

Trail of the Serpents by Mary Elizabeth Braddon. One is to be delivered to the third floor waiting room of the newly opened World’s Fair Hotel in Englewood, and the other to Daniel Burnham’s (see [page 34](#)) offices in the Rookery.

Notable Members



SCENARIO

HOOK. William Frederick Poole served as the inaugural head librarian of the Chicago Public Library from 1873–1887. Poole was inducted into the Nightworms by the Yale chapter in 1848, and his appointment was the culmination of years of work by the Widow and the Dame. Poole has found himself the recipient of increasingly threatening letters from ‘Aristotle,’ damning his role in bringing books to “the unwashed hordes of commoners.” The Dame suspects an internal cell of hoary and disillusioned men from a nearby chapter.

SCENARIO HOOK. The PCs are hired to deliver a pair of books, battered copies of *The*

THE DAME. At nearly 6 feet tall the Dame (her name is not common knowledge) towers over all but the tallest men. A transverse scar bisects her face just below her feverish eyes; a jagged tributary drifts upward, disappearing into her hairline. The Dame wears her features with an aggressive nonchalance that unsettles most.

The Dame’s frenetic energy, intimidating physicality, and innate leadership skills have transformed the Worms into a growing power in Chicago. She has her sights set on annexing the chapter in nearby St. Louis when the time is right.

THE WIDOW. Rich, reclusive, and reserved, the Widow rose to prominence with the death of her husband, rumored to have been a member of the Astor or Vanderbilt families, in the late 1860s. She is among the wealthiest individuals



in Illinois. She keeps a home in Hyde Park, rarely involves herself directly in the affairs of the Worms (preferring her role as patron), and relishes the changes in the city.

Locations and Resources

Chicago's Public Library, founded in April 1872 and located within an abandoned iron water tank at LaSalle and Adams Streets, is a favorite haunt of the more scholarly Worms. It is a rare day when at least one of them does not visit the book depository for either business or pleasure. The University of Chicago Library is also quite popular, and of course there are countless private book collections in the city. When secrecy is called for they invariably meet in residences or private rooms within businesses scattered throughout the city.

Using the 'Worms

The Nightworms' loose organization and broadly defined goals give the GM freedom to develop countless plots and intrigues with them. Their agents may play the smallest supporting role, or perhaps one of their leaders reveals herself as a major player orchestrating citywide intrigues.

The Nightworms easily slot into the roles normally associated with researchers, academics, and fortune hunters, especially when eldritch activities are involved. Their flexible morality may align with the goals and methods of the PCs.

Alternatively, the 'Worms have significant connections in the seedy underbelly of Chicago. PCs may need an ally with skills rarely available in polite society, and find overt criminals distasteful. Once again, the 'Worms are there to do the dirty work.



THE QUADRANGLE SOCIETY (EST. 1856)

The Quadrangle Society is a members-only social club for the faculty of the newly founded University of Chicago, spearheaded by Robert Francis Harper, brother of the university's president William Rainey Harper. While members are principally professors from the university, the club also welcomes members from Chicago society more broadly: any interested parties are welcome to apply, from students to scholars to well-to-do gentlefolk. Like the university itself, the Quadrangle Society is co-ed. All genders are welcomed as members in full standing, and the club places no restriction on members' national or racial background.

Past, Present, and Future

On the surface the Quadrangle Society is a simple social club. It holds dinners, dances, and lectures with a focus on Harper's own field of study, Near Eastern languages, as well as the folklore and mythology of the ancient Near East. A clue to its true purpose lies hidden in its origin and name.

Before the founding of the University of Chicago in 1890, the city's higher educational needs were served by what came to be known as the Old University of Chicago from 1856 until it closed due to nebulous "financial difficulties" in 1886, and burned to the ground in 1890. This was the third fire to afflict the Old University, and it was no coincidence.

Bound into the very stones of the university was a demon, a creature so hideous that its very presence was said to make fish boil alive in the rivers; a creature of living flame and vile malevolence. Its name is Asag, and how it came to Chicago is a mystery — but it was

Elias Woolfe, a professor of Classics at the Old University, who identified its presence, and bound it into the building where he could trap it and render it powerless.

The Great Chicago Fire in 1871 provided Asag with enough power to slip its bonds and escape. Elias and a few trusted associates captured and re-imprisoned it, but its bonds were never truly as tight after that. The Great Fire lived on in the city's collective memory, and Asag fed on that enduring fear and the nightmares of flame. The demon slipped free again in 1874, and again in 1890, after the Old University campus closed down and Woolfe and his cabal of magicians lost access to it.

Woolfe died in the final attempt to recapture Asag, and the torch passed to his most able student, Robert Harper. Harper had a single block from the old campus moved to the new University of Chicago, and set into a wall in the campus' quadrangle. Harper felt his old mentor had erred in placing the burden of Asag on so few people, and in 1893, with the founding of the Quadrangle Society, he achieved his ambition of expanding the number and range of folks who knew. The club's inner circle (always eight members to represent the four sides and four angles of the quadrangle) not only knows of Asag but assists Harper in maintaining its ritual bindings, and in researching ways to permanently dismiss or destroy the demon.

At this point in time the club is diligent, purposeful, and altruistic. After Harper's death in 1914, it will slowly shift its purpose to revering, and then serving, the demon it was founded to destroy.

SCENARIO HOOK. The seeds of change were first sown in 1897 with the introduction of Ezra McFarland to Robert Harper. McFarland



ingratiated himself with the older man first as a mentee, and in time as a confidant and constant companion. The wary eye of Esther Altman keeps young Ezra in his place, for now.

Notable Members

ROBERT FRANCIS HARPER. An extroverted socialite and sparkling conversationalist, Robert's diligent attention to his work — both at the university and for the club — is often a pleasant surprise. His demeanor masks constant exhaustion and dread, which he keeps at bay by running himself ragged. He hates to be alone, unless he's distracted by his (so far fruitless) research into destroying Asag, and there is a desperate edge to his cheerfulness. He takes cocaine to buoy up his spirits and provide energy, but this often leads to rash decisions and fits of temper. Robert is a gaunt man with thinning blond hair. He is always well-dressed but also always tired, often with dark circles beneath his eyes. His tin of cocaine lozenges is never far from reach.

ESTHER ALTMAN. Elias Woolfe recruited Esther as his assistant in subduing Asag while she was still an undergraduate. She bears the marks of the 1874 recapture of the demon in the form of burn scars covering her legs and chest. Her injuries lead to difficulty both breathing and walking (she uses an oak cane), but she remains a powerful, strong-willed woman who doesn't suffer fools, interruptions, or condescension. That iron will makes her a talented incantationist, and Esther is the occult powerhouse behind Asag's ongoing imprisonment. She is a champion of education for Chicago's poor, and a tireless advocate for the equality of women and minorities. Esther is a stout, conservatively-dressed woman in her mid-forties with round glasses and a steely blue gaze.

WALTER RUSELL. Walter is neither an occultist nor a scholar, but a lawyer. He was only meant to be part of the club's general membership, part of the screen of respectability that stops people suspecting their true occult purpose. Being smart and insightful, he quickly realized the club had a hidden agenda and, after a few weeks of sleuthing, uncovered it. Walt is now part of the inner circle of the Quadrangle Society and participates in their binding rituals, but his main occupation is making sure no one else finds out about Asag, through a combination of lies and misdirection, and occasional hiding of evidence. Walt is a slender, fashionable African-American man in his mid-twenties with a charming smile and a gentle, infectious good humor.

Location and Resources

In a few years' time, Harper will open a dedicated clubhouse on East 58th Street but in 1893, the year of its founding, the club operates out of a suite in the Barry Hotel on 59th Street, which is always open for members to call in and socialize.

Using the Quadrangle Society

Asag is a minor avatar of Cthugha, with the ability to invade dreams. None of the club members know that it invades the restful sleep of their neighboring Chicagoans and makes them dream of flame. It might prey on a player character, or one of their allies. Asag might slip its bonds and roam the city again, causing fires until it is recaptured. Alternatively, another significant fire might free it.

The club might recruit characters with a reputation as scholars of the Near or Middle East, or a passion for the occult. Perhaps rumors of secret rituals taking place on campus reach the characters, and prompt them to investigate.



JACK BLUE (EST. 1860)



The Jack Blues are a secret society that spread their influence wherever the working class struggles to survive. The Blues are a loose network of individuals dedicated to supporting union efforts and improving quality of life in the “labor-city” of Chicago. Construction workers, railroad laborers, meatpackers, woodworkers, miners, teamsters, and repair people are just a few of the jobs under the subtle protection of the Blues. Due to the potential dangers of union association, members of this society keep their involvement secret, asking variations of the phrase “Do you know Jack Blue?” to identify other members of the organization. This phrase has led to their unofficial title. Jack Blue’s members come from all races, genders, and cultures due to Chicago’s vast immigrant population.

Past, Present, and Future

The network of Jack Blue was born in 1860 as poor labor conditions and a massive influx of laborers led to increasingly dismal quality of life for the workers of Chicago. Fed by the growing global interest in socialism, workers across different industries began to meet in pubs, saloons, and tavern halls to discuss implementation. These meetings gave rise to workers willing to trade resources, find each other better jobs, and provide childcare — whatever they could do to improve life for their fellows. As Irish immigrant John Fitzpatrick began to make headlines with his calls for radical change in labor conditions, Jack Blue’s numbers swelled. Over time discussions shifted





from day-to-day favors to organizing strikes, rallies, and strategies to protect the interests of those who weren't in a position to demand change for themselves.

Jack Blue is a vast network, with members in the employ of virtually every company in Chicago, including the McCormick Reaper Works, Montgomery Ward (see [page 26](#)), the Pullman Company (see [page 52](#)), and the Union Stock Yard (see [page 66](#)). To ensure their safety, the Blues rarely meet in large groups. Instead, they prefer to send coded messages and have developed a catalog of passphrases to communicate with one another in plain sight.

Members of Jack Blue will play a vital role in the development of the Chicago Federation of Labor, which officially founds in 1896. Their presence and efforts are felt throughout the city, and even through the whole country as they grow in size, scope, and ambition.

Notable Members

RALEIGH BRIGHT. Mr. Bright is a South African man who fled conscription by the British during the First Boer War (1880). He fled to Chicago with the help of his contacts, and soon became a sought-after handyman. Raleigh is an extremely active member of Jack Blue, using his growing company to investigate the internal workings of businesses, factories, and affluent residences across Chicago. If a message needs delivering, no door is closed to him. Raleigh is a stocky middle-aged man with a bottle brush mustache and a trustworthy face. He is often found wearing the denim overalls of his trade. Mr. Bright is jovial, disarming, and never forgets a face.

ALIZA KARLSSON. Frau Karlsson immigrated from Germany as a child in 1855 and grew to become an advocate working to improve the labor conditions of Chicago's many railroad

laborers. Karlsson is married to an engineer who works for the Pullman Company (see [page 52](#)), and uses this connection to volunteer her time distributing food and first aid at work sites. Aliza uses her experiences on the worksites to write sensational articles for the radical newspaper the Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung, a working-class editorial established by veterans of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Aliza's articles highlight the poor conditions and clear dangers of working on the railroads. She writes these articles in secret, using pen names to protect her identity.

Aliza works directly with railroad laborers who face the most dangerous situations, working within Jack Blue to get them aid, support, and sometimes job relocation. She has also been called upon to draft articles, pamphlets, and posters for labor rallies led by Blue members.

Aliza is a handsome woman in her late twenties who keeps her ash-blonde hair in neatly pinned plaits. By day, Aliza is the picture of a devoted wife and mother. In the evenings, she conducts her work with the same level of duty and care.

BAILEY ABBOT. Mrs. Abbot is a well-to-do widower whose family has lived in Chicago since its founding in 1833. Since her husband's death, she has converted several family properties into boarding houses. Bailey's sympathies have always lain with the poor and hungry of Chicago, and she opens her rooms to those who need them most. Over time she has grown integral to the work of Jack Blue, providing temporary or permanent homes for troubled immigrants, those fleeing domestic violence, or those fired over labor disputes. Bailey is a large woman with dark hair and a crooked smile. She is never afraid to speak her mind, which makes her somewhat ostracized from the Chicago elite who share her level of wealth.





Location and Resources

Members of Jack Blue use their numbers and ubiquitous presence to great effect. There are few buildings inaccessible to them, tools and supplies can often be procured, and their ability to draw attention to their actions can create much-needed distractions for clandestine affairs. Additionally, the Blues include the most skilled and talented workers in the city who are eager to lend their skills to the cause. Members of Jack Blue are careful not to assemble in large groups, but smaller gatherings are held in small community churches and pubs.

Using the Blues

Chicago is a hotbed for labor disputes and political action, and campaigns including those elements can make great use of the Jack Blue and its members. At its core, Jack Blue is an organization meant to protect and aid the people whose voices are not heard and whose needs are overlooked. These are the very same folks who are often preyed upon by supernatural forces and more mundane criminals. Regardless of their adversary, members of Jack Blue are the first to shine light into the darkest corners.



THE UNION LEAGUE (EST. 1862)

The Civil War (1861–1865) caused businessmen and politicians on the Union side to band together. They founded the Union League of America in cities across the land. The Chicago council began in 1862, and was renamed The Union League Club of Chicago in 1879.

The members of the Union League were leaders of their communities and believed they had a moral obligation to better their city and help the common man. Their message was to support the Union and the Federal Government while building bridges in the spirit of moving forward. They promoted the rights of every citizen, equality for women, and encouraged a strong, united America. While enthusiasm for such noble goals was high, club member C.R. Satter led the push for the Union League to also offer physical amenities, like so many social clubs of the day. With over 1000 dues-paying members footing the bill, land was purchased and a home for the club was built from the ground up — The Union League Club House.

The Union League Club House was a Baltimore brick building with four stone pillars marking the main entrance. It sat in the heart of downtown Chicago, a beacon that called out to the wealthy and powerful. Standing five stories tall, it boasted a private dining hall only available to members and their out-of-town guests. Chicago residents who weren't members could not enter, heightening the exclusivity of the club.

Crossing the threshold into the building led to a grand staircase with a bay window

that revealed one of the main draws of the Club House: the second floor Library. With high vaulted ceilings, it contained over 3000 volumes, special research sections that rivaled any private collection, as well as 80 morning and evening editions of city newspapers from across the United States. Not all members lived in Chicago; the Union League would invite notable politicians and world leaders to join, and the top two floors of the Club House featured private rooms for members who required accommodations while in town. While the exterior of the building was traditional, the interior was eclectic and meant to reflect the many facets of the membership. An expensive art collection covered the walls, including Monet's *Apple Trees In Blossom*.



The War Room

There is another room in the Club House, one that's hidden from most of the membership: The War Room. Used only by exclusive members in times of great need, the War Room serves as a command center. A giant mechanical globe sits in the middle of the room, perpetually spinning on its axis. The walls are hung with hand-drawn maps of the city with detail down to the block. Pieces of red ribbon are pinned to points of interest, such as the Water Tower or City Hall. Used in conjunction with the Library, this is where the secret lords of Chicago make life-or-death decisions and wield their power.



Notable Members

JUDGE JAMES B. BRADWELL. The first elected President of the Club, Bradwell is considered by all to be an excellent leader. An avid photographer, hunter, as well as musician, the man with the kind blue eyes and long white beard resembles St. Nick in a three-piece suit. Bradwell has been a longtime advocate for women's equality but found great resistance to his proposal to allow women to join the Union League. He was crucial in opening the building to women.

C.R. SATTER. One of the best insurance brokers in the United States — just ask him. He handled the claims for The Great Fire (see [page 22](#)) and it was his statement that blamed Mrs. O'Leary's cow knocking over the lantern as the cause of the conflagration, despite other witnesses that declared neither the lady nor the animal had anything to do with it. Although he has his own home in Chicago, Satter takes full advantage of every luxury provided by the Union League and practically lives in the Club House as though he were the owner himself. Although he agrees with the goals of the club, Satter will always put himself first and would easily misbehave as long as he thinks he won't get caught.

WILLIAM LEBARON JENNEY. A noted architect of the day, he's described as the father of the American skyscraper. He designed the Union League Club House as well as the Home Insurance Building (see [page 29](#)). A family man and sensitive to the plight of children and the vulnerable, Jenney often reminds the membership of their obligation to help those less fortunate as well as the much more exciting activities involved with shaping the world. He's taken it upon himself to mentor younger architects and brought Daniel Burnham and Louis Sullivan into the

Union League, where they were all heavily influential in the decision to bring The World's Columbian Exposition to Chicago in 1893 (see [page 33](#)).

EUSTACE BRANCH. It's difficult to miss this wisp of a woman who stands a head taller than most men, with hair the color of a Brandywine tomato. Branch is the curator ("Not the librarian!" she'll cry) of the Club House Library and can usually be found deep in the stacks, reading. She can seem distracted when dealing with questions from club members, but any mention of something otherworldly will grab her attention. While the majority of the Union League dismisses magic and the supernatural as poppycock, Branch is of a differing opinion. She's actually a Lengian (see *WitDQS*) scholar in hiding who's positioned herself in our world to be an authority on dark magic and the horrors that hide in the shadows. No one knows her true origin, but higher-ups within the club know that when the unexplained occurs, a visit to the Library and particularly Ms. Branch can be enlightening.

Using the Union League

Virtually all businesses of note and folks of influence in the growing economy of Chicago have ties to The Union League whether they realize it or not. No activity of significance to the city escapes their notice, and if the PCs grow in stature — financially or socially — they will inevitably draw the attention of the League.

The League is not inherently evil, though they are certainly self-serving, and with the exception of Ms. Branch, are unaware of the supranatural forces living in shadows of the city. Their reaction to this knowledge is at the GM's discretion, but will be heavily influenced by the aforementioned Ms. Branch.





UNIVERSITY CLUB OF CHICAGO (EST. 1887)



The University Club of Chicago is a private social club started by a group of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton alumni. Their goal is to promote literature and art, and all persons seeking admission must have received a college or university degree. Since its origin, the Club has amassed both libraries and galleries filled with remarkable collections.

The University Club of Chicago was founded to give people of learning a place to gather, pool resources, and share ideas. The rapid expansion of Chicago flooded the city with scholars intent on putting their new educations to use, and the University Club capitalized on this excitement to grow its influence quite rapidly. The Club began as a series of open rooms to meet and debate, but as more members joined, the goal of accruing collections began to shape the Club's needs.

Past, Present, And Future

Founded in 1887, the Club operates on the third and fourth floors of the Henning & Speed Building at 22 West Madison Street. In 1895

the Club established a stand-alone committee building at 30 North Dearborn, containing both a burgeoning art gallery and a library with over a thousand rare volumes.

The Club's accumulated resources make it an ideal research spot for visiting scholars or those without access to University libraries. The Club routinely hosts lectures from honored society guests, but these events are only open to the organization's members. Any person who holds a degree is welcome to apply, though priority is given to those sponsored by current members.

The University Club of Chicago will grow to become a historic part of the Chicago landscape; the central point of Cathedral Hall will be the world's first "gothic skyscraper." The facility includes private dining rooms, restaurants, fitness facilities, galleries, libraries, and overnight accommodations for members.

Notable Members

RUTH DENSMORE. An alumna of Evelyn College for Women, Ruth was the first woman to join





the University Club of Chicago. She is also responsible for bringing many more women into the Club, a staunch advocate for women's education, and is likely to take any women interested in higher education under her wing. She holds degrees in Greek and Classical studies, which has made her integral to curating the Club's artistic and literary collections. Her scholarly pursuits have established her as the preeminent translator of Latin and Greek texts amongst club members. Ruth shares her passion for the Classics, teaching courses throughout the metropolitan area. Ms. Densmore is a short woman with thick glasses and a no-nonsense attitude. She is often ruffled in appearance from long hours in the library and prefers everyday functional clothing.

HADLEY MOORE. Mr. Moore, despite lacking formal status as a member, is instrumental to the University Club's artistic pursuits. Hadley was born into money and spent most of his life losing, then gaining back, that fortune through an array of exotic hobbies. These pursuits took him all over the world, and now he puts his connections to use acquiring art pieces for the burgeoning University Club collection. Mr. Moore's practices might be legally questionable, but none of the University Club members can argue with his results. For the right price Hadley can find an objet d'art in any hidden corner of the globe. Rumor has it that Hadley employs a network of private investigators that stretch far beyond his home base of Chicago. Hadley is an attractive man in his late thirties who blends in easily amongst affluent crowds. Despite his age, he continues to dress like a party-minded collegiate, sparing no expense to fulfill his outlandish tastes.

ARTHUR PRICE. Dr. Price is one of the few University Club members to possess medical, rather than humanities-based, degrees. He studied psychology in the cutting-edge John Hopkins University laboratories and then moved to

Chicago to continue advocating for the mentally ill. Dr. Price's holistic approach to mental health includes education in the fine arts, and he frequently discusses his ideas with other scholars in the Club. While Price does have a small collection of patients he sees, most of his work is focused on improving the methods and qualities of asylums. Arthur is a young Frenchman with a kind face. He cultivates a stable and nonthreatening appearance that places others at ease. Due to the occasional need for self-defense in his work, Arthur maintains a fit physique.

Location and Resources

The University Club has a wealth of books and art pieces in its ever-growing collection. These treasures are a comprehensive collection from notable periods of recorded history and exotic cultures. Those with a membership (or connection to a club member) can expect assistance finding specific books, laboratory space, lecture halls, lodging, or research aids.

Using the University Club

The University Club of Chicago is rife with helpful scholars capable of finding, interpreting, or using a wide variety of information. The entirety of club resources are only open to members, but asking a member for help can still yield a catalog of results.

The libraries and galleries contained within the club walls are filled with rare, unusual, and sometimes dangerous pieces that cannot be found in public facilities. The University Club is one of the few places in Chicago where a wealth of occult tomes can be found.

SCENARIO HOOK. The University Club and the Nightworms (see *page 88*) are opposite sides of the same coin, and it is only a matter of time before they clash over rare tomes. Neither side is likely to condone violence on their behalf, but accidents do happen and memories are long.



THE WHITECHAPEL CLUB (EST. 1889)



Like other successful businessmen of the day, newspaper reporters and editors were members of a social club: the Chicago Press Club. It provided lunch as well as a lovely gathering hall when the members elected to meet up after work and unwind. The tone was formal and dry, and drinking to excess was frowned upon. Unfortunately, such an arrangement was necessary so that higher-ups at the papers could bring in outside guests to rub elbows and show off. Some industry folk hated the façade of the Chicago Press Club and chose to drink elsewhere.

Past, Present, and Future

One such place was Henry Koster's downtown saloon that featured two key attractions: It had a back room where the reporters could gather and blow off steam in private, and it was conveniently located on "Newsboy Alley", a backstreet with access to the rear entrances of several of the city's newspapers. This allowed both reporters as well as their editors to discreetly step out of the office and swing by Koster's back room saloon for a quick nip during office hours without being noticed.



The biggest story of the day was the notorious serial killer Jack the Ripper terrorizing the streets of the Whitechapel district in London. This caught the pickled imagination of the reporters in that small room off of Newsboy Alley and they christened themselves “The Whitechapel Club.” It wasn’t unusual for a reporter to encounter death as part of their job; in fact, it was fairly routine at that time in Chicago. Starvation, illness, and brutality all made regular appearances in their lives with gallows humor the only coping mechanism — besides booze. The Whitechapel Club became a secret society that laughed in the face of death by electing Jack the Ripper their president, despite the fact that, of course, he never appeared at any of their midnight meetings.

The Whitechapel Club took over the back room and announced their presence to the neighborhood with a new entrance off the alley: A large oak door bound with wrought iron decoration. The transom above featured a skull and crossbones done in stained glass with the motto, “I, too, have lived in Arcadia.” This is a supposed quote from Death that means even in the nirvana-like paradise of Arcadia, death still roams free. Members decorated the Whitechapel Club with morbid memorabilia from their adventures. Chicago Herald reporter Charlie Seymour brought blood-soaked blankets from out West. A coffin sat in the middle of the room as a bar with the name of each member etched into brass nails set into the wood. A noose hung in the center of the room as a makeshift chandelier while the walls were covered with guns, arrows, spears, and any other weapon a member could find.

The club was almost exclusively journalists but a few others were allowed in, such as the asylum superintendent who studied skulls to determine the differences between a healthy patient and one afflicted with mental illness. The doctor was invited to join the Whitechapel

Club — provided he brought along his skull collection.

The skulls were turned into sconces for hidden gas lamps with jewels set into the eye sockets that cast an eerie glow when lit. Two skulls, reserved for special guests of the club, became drinking vessels by sawing off their lids and lining the interior with silver. A mysterious red punch was served, a ghastly combination of juice and alcohol, in addition to a tapped keg that kept the membership “socially lubricated.”

The Whitechapel Club reveled in death but their cynical nature prevented them from believing in the supernatural. They believed life was a series of random, painful encounters and our only choice in the matter was how we respond; they chose to laugh. While they sported the trappings of a cult of devil worshippers, they behaved like deranged pranksters who manipulated anyone foolish enough to listen to them. To the members of the Whitechapel Club, believing in “magic and monsters” was admitting your own gullibility — which was poison to any journalist. In one of their most famous stunts they built an eighteen-by-twenty-foot pyre and cremated the body of a man who allegedly donated it to them upon his suicide. The members wore black robes and circled the pyre, chanting.

Behind the Scenes

One of the members is manipulating the club. Gilbert Fry, a popular humorist, has been in the thrall of dark spirits. Using the club’s mocking tone and fascination with blood, Fry has successfully staged several blood rituals while everyone believed they were just putting on a drunken show. He burns incense inside the club, which seems harmless amongst the cigars and cigarettes, but in fact it’s a powerful opiate that makes the members quite open to Fry’s suggestions while struggling to recall events later on.





SCENARIO HOOK. Mr. Fry's blackouts and use of mind-altering incense is at the behest of an unknown intelligence that visits him in his dreams. It has warned him away from the World's Fair Hotel in Englewood, the Barry Hotel on 59th Street, and appears to be biding its time as it gathers information and influence.

Notable Members

FINLEY PETER DUNNE. The youngest editor of a Chicago newspaper at 21 years old and author of a popular series of articles that laughed at life in Chicago. Also a member of the Chicago Press Club, Dunne was one of the creators of the Whitechapel Club so he could have a place to complain about all the uptight stooges at the other place. He arranged for his newspaper to pay for the funeral pyre but then published the story as though it were an exclusive scoop.

CHARLIE SEYMOUR. A sports reporter who, when he's not on the road following a baseball team, is stoking the fire in the Whitechapel Club and sipping ale from a skull. Seymour says he came up with the club name and challenges anyone to fisticuffs if they dare question him.

GILBERT FRY. You never see Gilbert Fry without his trademark straw boater and waxed

moustache. He fancies himself a gentle dandy and often punctuates his sentences with a wink. In an attempt to impress a lady, he went swimming in Lake Michigan and nearly drowned. Since then he occasionally blacks out and wakes up in the Whitechapel Club.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT. One of the famous guests of the Whitechapel Club, Roosevelt was required to carry a sword that had been used by a wagon driver to murder his own wife.

LIZZIE BORDEN. The infamous murder suspect was the first woman granted admittance to the club. She arrived dressed all in black and, when a member attempted to interrogate her about her alibi, told him to mind his manners and playfully chopped her hand like a hatchet at his head. The room exploded with cheers, laughter, and toasts to her good humor.

Using the Whitechapel Club

The Whitechapel Club has its eyes and ears out for outlandish claims, extraordinary stories, and larger-than-life characters. They care little of the veracity of the claims; they're much too sophisticated to fall for such tomfoolery, and are apt to invite the investigators to a macabre dinner, especially after a particularly well-publicized investigation. Groups that include journalists or writers are of especial interest.



THE BLACK STAR SOCIETY (EST. 1890)

The Black Star Society is both a loose organization and a movement to support all aspects of the Chicago arts scene. From literature to painting to ragtime music and even the men and women creating advertising posters, all may feel the fingers of the Society. Their most prominent members are theater folk: producers, financial backers, actors, and playwrights. As a social club they support up-and-coming artists and modern art forms, and are a source of minor scandals due to its members' wild behavior.

The Black Star Society is more than its deep pockets and Bohemian behavior suggest. Like a creeping fungus its members, benefactors, and patrons infiltrate everything they touch with their true nature: the glorification of Hastur.

Past, Present, and Future

The Sunshine Society's work began in 1890, with the arrival in town of an English theater company called The Daumier Troupe. They performed modern plays to the public, and achieved great acclaim. For a select group of actors and socialites they hosted a special performance: a staging of carefully chosen scenes from the infamous play, *The King In Yellow*, whose second act is thought to drive audiences mad from the irresistible, inconceivable truths it reveals. The Daumier Troupe's presentation was just enough to expose the minds of its audience

to the Greater Truths leaving them shaken and craving more, but without shattering their sanity.

Thus began the Black Star Society, when members of the audience banded together under a common purpose. They spread the word through smaller, shorter readings of scenes from the play, in the hope that with enough creatives grasping for The Truth that The

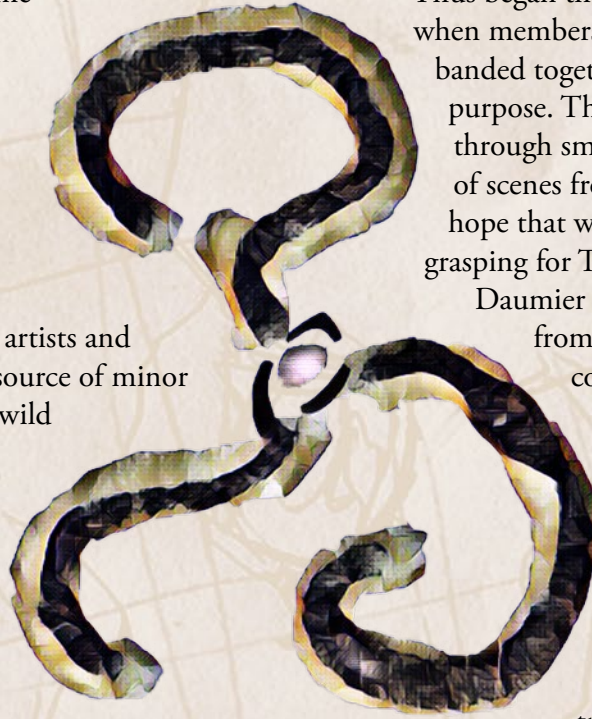
Daumier Company had kept from them, they would collectively recreate it.

They are close. The fragmentary detail of Impressionism and the lurching syncopation of Ragtime have provided fertile ground for the translation of the King's messages to new media. The

work continues, as members become more and more obsessed with revealing the underpinnings of the cosmos. With growing detachment and increasing influence they hope to share the glorious, heartbreaking knowledge of Hastur with Chicago. The World's Fair, with hundreds of thousands of spectators alongside thousands of performers, is an opportunity to spread Hastur's message on an unprecedented scale.

Persons of Note

ANTHONY FRENCH. Anthony is a young, talented Impressionist painter; a short, slight young man with feverishly bright eyes and an animated manner. His frenetic energy is





endless, never waning or flagging. Anthony's a recent recruit to the society, and a rising star. His greatest work, a series of phenomenally detailed depictions of the unreal city of Carcosa that he visits in his dreams, are reserved for the eyes of the Black Star Society. Rumors circulate the Society that he can work magic through those paintings, adding things — or people — into his art, and just as easily retrieving them from it.

HENRIETTA BUTLER. An African American woman and émigré from the South, Henrietta has used her relationship with the Black Star Society to propel her career to new heights, even as her prodigious talents further the Society's goals. The Ragtime music she composes is uneasy but fascinating, and it lingers in listeners' minds for days, twisting their thoughts into strange patterns and disquieting visions. She is booked to perform at the World's Fair, and looks to the event with feverish excitement. Henrietta is charming and beautiful, and her preternatural magnetism causes people to flock to her performances like moths to the flame. She's canny enough to never reveal her true intelligence, letting others take her for a pretty face and invariably underestimating her. Ms. Butler is one of the society's best recruiters, capable of capturing the attentions of almost anyone she focuses on, and she is the most likely member of the Society to be encountered by outsiders.

DAMIEN QUIGLEY. Damien is the money man. He doesn't have an ounce of talent in him, something he admits freely and with good humor. He makes up for that deficit by sponsoring artists and encouraging them to create the great works he cannot. He was in attendance at The Daumier Troupe private performance, and the most affected by it. Damien is rarely seen in public, a dramatic change for a man who used to be at every party and in every gossip column. His once

outgoing personality has changed such that it disturbs people: he breaks off conversations to murmur lines from an obscure play, or appears to listen to music no one else can hear. He hasn't noticed that his invitations to social occasions have dried up. His focus, energies, and resources are spent desperately trying to recall, and piece together, each line of *The King In Yellow's* second act.

Location and Resources

The Black Star Society's members have access to the best venues and talent in Chicago. They never hire people or places directly, always relying on intermediaries and anonymous support to arrange events. This proclivity for obfuscation, and a preponderance of legitimate support for the arts, makes it extremely difficult to identify the society's eldritch work without attending a show and risking falling under the influence of the art.

Damien Quigley is a major investor in the Art Institute of Chicago, due to complete construction in 1893, which will give the Black Star Society access to the most prestigious venue in the city.

Using the Black Star Society

Performers, artists, and creatives of all kinds from any background or social standing, including the PCs or their allies, may be invited to work on a project sponsored by the Society. The scope and extent of effects from the experiment vary greatly, as does the participants' understanding of their role in their patron's plans. The Black Star Society is nothing if not creative.

The World's Columbian Exposition is too great an opportunity for the Society to resist. The damage they could do, by spreading their message to visiting artists or performing one of their great works to the huge crowds, is immense, possibly even cataclysmic.



GANGS & ORGANIZED CRIME

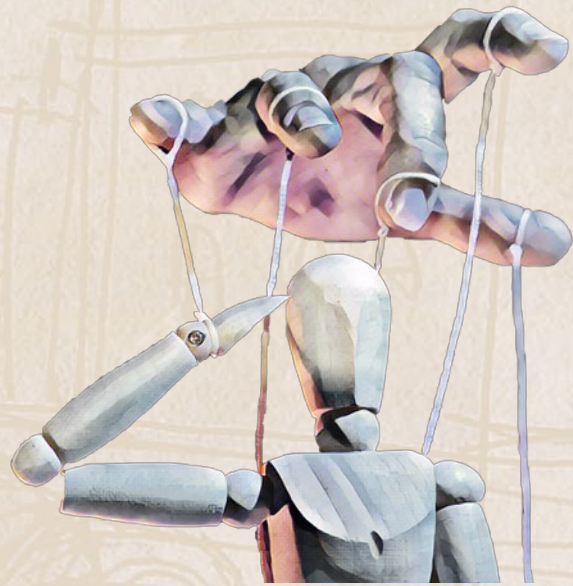
DESIGN NOTES: This section includes actual persons, human trafficking, murder, arson, violence, racism, vice, discrimination, and corruption. The information here is based on reported history or fictional interpretations of history. As always feel free to adjust to fit your table.

CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS FOUND THEIR way into Chicago as a result of the brutal living conditions of the day, growing governmental greed, and working-class rebellion. In addition to these factors, criminal enterprises from the East Coast expanded outwards and rapidly-growing Chicago was a logical choice. Systemic harm and oppression against a booming immigrant population ignites criminal activity across the city. Both domestic and international corruption finds its way into the heart of the city, with underhanded interests sneaking into city hall. Behind every potential politician could be criminal involvement and insidious manipulation of democracy.

Chicago's criminal elements can be divided into four categories that encompass the majority of crime in the city. Jack Blue (see *page 93*) is an example of an organization with internal factions whose methods are outside the law. Each of the subsequent categories are described in more detail in the following pages.

ANARCHIST ACTIVISM. Splinter groups of aggressive anarchist activists fighting for change against the suffering and plight of the day. Acts of terror and violence against authority send the loudest message possible.

INSTITUTIONAL CORRUPTION. Chicago's growth in population, importance, and economy was the perfect breeding ground for governmental corruption from city councilors and low-level politicians to the highest offices in the city.



ITALIAN MOB. The Italian Mob, which operates across the South Branch of the Chicago River in the Levee District, provided the central hub of vice and pleasure in the city. Saloons, brothels, gambling parlors, and more existed in the notorious red-light district.

STREET GANGS. Many gangs were founded in the Valley, a vast ghetto of primarily Irish immigrants. Their activities centered around small acts of larceny such as stealing fruit from street vendors with some escalating to kidnappings or murder.



GRAY WOLVES

The Gray Wolves are elected officials that have joined together to ensure the city rises as one of the richest in the world. In order to obtain the lofty goals of financial success, fame, and praiseworthiness, they are willing to paint a picture to all and ensure that the colors are vibrant, bright, and attractive. Their brushes of choice? Fraud, corruption, and deceit.

No Gray Wolf could be viewed as honest, but those on the inside view this as part of the game of politics, and for them life is good. It benefits the Gray Wolves to ensure that the violence of the street gangs and the vice of the mob continues, as the protection racket money will find its way back into the pockets of crooked politicians.

Locales and Resources

THE STORE (EST. 1862)

The Store, a four-story building containing a saloon, hotel, gambling hall, and restaurant, is quite possibly the biggest attraction in Chicago. People from all over visit it in hopes of scoring a major financial victory (despite the prevalent rumor that all the games are fixed), and to mingle and meet prominent members of society. The first floor contains a liquor business, gambling is on the second level, the third floor is the hotel, and Michael McDonald has taken the entirety of the fourth floor as his home.

SCENARIO HOOK. The Store's rise to influence and prestige affords it a measure of protection, and makes it a one-stop shop for information on Chicago's political elite. There are always deals to be made, secrets to learn, and favors to be given (or called in) within its four walls. And there's "King Mike," arguably the most powerful person in the city, pulling the strings and watching it all unfold before him.

CITY HALL

City Hall is where the laws are discussed and the government sits in Chicago. It is a beautiful colonnaded exterior built in the French Renaissance style, and while much of it is publicly accessible, getting access to the actual politics is a chore. It is a dark, overly crowded building with high ceilings, small windows, and the sense of the foundation giving way to the weight of the building.

City Hall is a place where the underlings of politics can be caught doing their civic duties. There are also protestors that can inform about the issues of the day, the economic situation in the various neighborhoods, as well as where the hotspots of the city are located.

Persons of Interest

MICHAEL CASSIUS McDONALD. Few folks are as affable, legendary, or renowned as "King Mike" (**kingpin**). A subtle turn of phrase or a hint of scandal released at his direction can (and does) make or break the careers of Chicago's government officials. His connections, influence, and persona have made King Mike untouchable by the Chicago authorities, and he's savvy enough to not bring overt attention to that fact.

King Mike's caution borders on the paranoid, and long experience has taught him to shun the public spotlight. Attempting to gain an audience with McDonald requires major political maneuvering and earning the trust of those closest to him. Alternatively, investigators asking the right questions, in the correct manner could learn that Mr. McDonald's seemingly endless luck does not extend to choosing lovers, and he has a habit of being caught up in the moment in matters of the heart.



Kingpin

“There’s plenty of business for everybody. Why kill each other over it?”

—Al Capone

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 54 (12d6+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +8

Skills Insight +3, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages any three

Challenge 5

Weighty Presence. The kingpin applies double their proficiency bonus to all Charisma based ability checks.

Actions

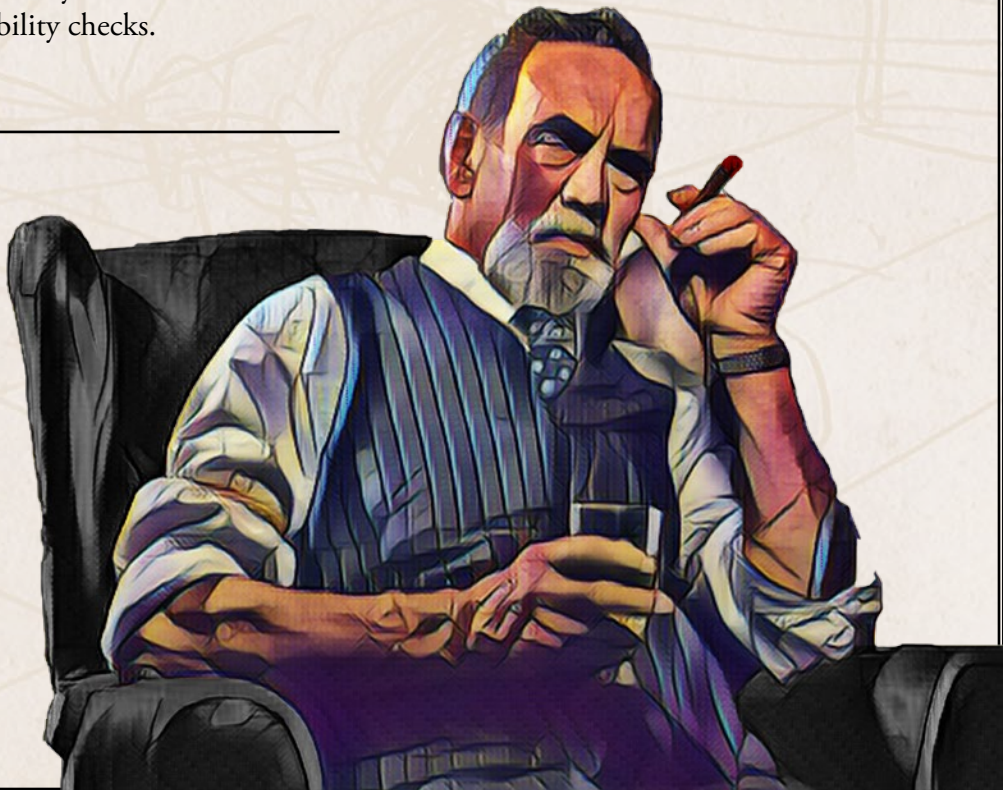
Multiattack. The kingpin makes two attacks or one Irrefusable Offer.

Revolver (.38).
Ranged Weapon
Attack: +3 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage.

Irrefusable Offer. The kingpin commands a creature that it can see within 30 feet to carry out a service, refrain from an activity, or cease a course of action. If the creature can understand the kingpin, they must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to do as the kingpin says.

The effect remains until the task is completed or one week, whichever is longer. The saving throw may be repeated if the target is harmed due to the request, ending the effect on a success. A creature that has succeeded on their saving throw against this effect is immune to it for 1 week.

The creature cannot complete a short or long rest on any day in which they did not attempt to comply with the kingpin’s request.





MICHAEL KENNA. Standing just over five feet tall, but with an unbreakable will and fortitude, Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna (**local politician**) is a saloon owner turned political powerhouse with a steely gaze set upon the position of alderman of the 1st Ward. Kenna has a reputation for helping society’s victims of unfortunate circumstances, folks that turn into allies at the voting booth. Kenna is a politician through and through, doing what needs to be done to get the vote, though his actions are tempered with a firm understanding that without the support of others he’ll never achieve his goals.

Kenna is the principal power that allows the Levee district to thrive. He and his associates benefit the most from mob activity in the area and use their knowledge of the everyday individual to keep their foothold of power.

JOHN “MUSHMOUTH” JOHNSON. “Sometimes that’s just the way it goes down. In a game of winners and losers, everybody goes bust from time to time.” Known by most as the owner of a gambling den, John Johnson (**mountebank**) is also a philanthropist and seer of fortunes, distributing gathered wealth into the rising businesses found in his community. The community respects and grudgingly admires the hustle and gamesmanship of John Johnson; the youngins would love nothing more than to possess his style, flair, and panache. Mushroom’s close relationship to Hinky Dink Kenna has led many to conclude that he’s a lieutenant of the alderman.

Mountebank

“I make people believe something is real when they know perfectly well it isn’t.”

—John Lithgow

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 21 (6d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +2, Insight +2, Persuasion +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any three

Challenge 1

Silver Tongued. Insight checks targeting a mountebank are made with disadvantage.

Smooth. A mountebank has advantage on Charisma-based skill checks when interacting with humans and humanoids.

Actions

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4+2) piercing damage.



Using the Gray Wolves

Gray Wolves and government officials work tirelessly and efficiently to cover up the crime and corruption of its members, and to protect its interests. Investigations into the city's bureaucracy, and those responsible for it, will inevitably draw the attention of the Wolves. Their preferred method of dealing with problems involves bribery, coercion, and economic pressure, but if the circumstances call for it they will do anything to protect their interests.

As allies, Gray Wolves can provide amnesty from criminal charges, access to archived documents, and access to various locations in

the city that might be off-limits to civilians. All doors are opened, resources are available, and if the investigators prove their value the sky's the limit for them politically.

As enemies, the Gray Wolves will make sure that the player characters are the recipients of harassment and have a difficult time enduring life in Chicago. Doors that would normally open will remain shut and it is likely that they find their names slandered in the papers. Investigators that don't take the hint find the efforts of the Wolves escalating, always through intermediaries, until they're spending all their time fighting false allegations and standing outside of closed doors.



THE VALLEY GANG

Irish street gangs came from a shared heritage of hardship. As a criminal organization, they were founded by individuals from the old world that endured fierce suffering and famine. During an extended period of disease and despair, many impoverished souls emigrated from the old country to the new world. They came expecting endless opportunities, but what they found was an abundance of oppression. Piled into dilapidated vermin-filled housing, and without access to many public utilities, life was hell. When society turns its back on the poor and downtrodden, these souls often find themselves in the streets and alleyways. It is there that they learn a day's work can still earn dollar and coin, but the nature of the labor might be best left unspoken and actions performed behind closed doors.

The predominantly Irish street gangs of Chicago focus on pickpocketing and robbery. Many gang members are connected to city hall as they are the children of policemen or politicians. The largest of these gangs, the Valley Gang, bullies, intimidates, and extorts other immigrant populations that reside on their side of the Chicago River. The central opposition to these street gangs are the understaffed and ill-equipped police precincts, and the rival Italian mafia to the south.

Persons of Interest

FRANKIE O'BANNON. Frankie has eyes and ears all over the shadow-filled alleyways in the Valley neighborhood of Chicago. His job is to identify marks, corral them to the appropriate area of the Valley, and ensure the robbery goes off without a hitch. Frankie has pale skin, ginger hair, and a peculiar pattern of freckles on his face, and moves as if the wind itself is

propelling him about the town. He wears a white fedora but is dressed in sullied brown slacks, beige suspenders, and a horizontally striped shirt.

Frankie's brusque, ice-cold pragmatism makes most of the other gang members nervous. Some respect the intensity he brings to his tasks. They often feel that if his world had been different, he'd have been more of a peacemaker; his logic and rationales make a lot of sense. But when trouble goes down, they know Frankie will show no mercy to ensure the survival of the gang.

TERRY QUINN. Terry's job is as simple as it is unpleasant: Do what has to be done, and clean up after yourself. His gallows humor is on full display while he works his trade, but the smile that never reaches his eyes speaks volumes about where his mind is truly at. Terry has chestnut brown hair, a bad burn scar on his left cheek, and tends to dress in a butcher's apron.

Terry lacks personal connections to any government official and has no favors he can call in should things turn sour for the gang. What he lacks in political connections, he makes up for in the loyalty of his fellow gang members and nobody knows their way around the Valley neighborhoods as well as Terry.

CHARLES BYRNE. Charles is a blond-haired skinny youth of eighteen who is responsible for making sure stolen goods, cash, and property get away from the scene of the crime and to the tenements and stores of the Valley Gang. Charles is physically slight, and his talent lies in slipping away unseen from crimes and losing any investigative tail that pursues him across the city. Charles' proclivity for running early and often has allowed him to survive and escape countless skirmishes.





Locales and Resources

BLOODY MAXWELL

The most violent area of crime in the city is the small territory bordered by Harrison Street, Wood Street, 16th Street, and the Chicago River. This is the site of the most violent attempts of robbery, mugging, and aggravated assault. Despite the proximity to the police station, this area goes unchecked — almost as if it reduces and limits the number of incidents in other parts of the city by centralizing it here. No other location in the nation has forged as many criminals of the era as the neighborhood known as Bloody Maxwell.

Sitting in the shadow of the skyscrapers, and constricted by residential overcrowding, the merchants that labor here are proud, hardy, and resolved to make a living. Card tables line the streets, and over forty languages and dialects

can be heard spoken by the people that peddle their wares.

Bloody Maxwell juxtaposes the beautiful diversity and hope of the growing population against the brutal violence of the street gangs. The criminal power here oppresses and preys upon the city's most vulnerable, and law enforcement officials have their hands full twenty-four-seven with the brashness of the street gangs. Bloody Maxwell emphasizes violent crime against the people of the area.

MAXWELL STREET POLICE STATION: The police headquarters is a red-brick building that is viewed by the community as completely inadequate to stand against the terrors of the day. The officers are selective about who they will let in, as the structure acts more like a fortress than a sign of public safety. Sitting in the most dangerous precinct in the nation, the officers are managing their daily reality the best





they can. In the first fifty years of its existence, the police force in Chicago has grown from nine to over twelve-hundred policemen across twenty districts. Policing this area is challenging due to persistent language barriers. The station contains dungeonsque jail-cells in the dimly lit basement.

DEADMAN'S CORNER: This is the location that the West Valley Gang works out of. It's located at the corner of Wright Street and Sangamon. Ragged street vendors peddle their produce, carts are pushed along the road, and there is a high potential for armed conflict against law enforcement.

Using Gangs

The Valley Gang (and similar criminal elements) complicates travel around their neighborhood in Chicago, which is the hotbed of criminal activity. They might be useful for gaining

contacts both in the police force and in City Hall based on their family connections. The violent actions of the gang positions most in-game encounters as hostile, but they value their reputation as a force of power within the Valley ghetto. The gang isn't used to signs of respect or tribute, and that could earn their allegiance, as they are prone to switch sides and support whoever gives them the most benefits. As allies, the Valley Gang are useful as distractions, delays, and systems of surveillance. They respect force, but it's difficult to match their numbers outside of the Italian mob. A gang unafraid of daily shootouts with police at Deadman's Corner is not going to be afraid of a handful of investigators.

As enemies, the Valley Gang will use physical force to threaten, rob, and intimidate the player characters. They are difficult to pin down with accusations of crime given their numbers and numerous ties to officers and local officials.



THE ITALIAN MOB



Mafiosi share a lineage and bloodline that goes back centuries. The shadowy hand of extortion has persisted for over three centuries, finding its way into society at all levels. They exist to provide protection, as society and government often fail the marginalized and forgotten. The Italian Mafia takes the burden upon themselves to see that their family members are provided for, and blood connection can be interpreted in many ways. Mob families often ally with each other. The cost of this protection is loyalty and agreement to perform functions asked of you, the nature of which may come into direct conflict with the law of the land.

Family connections are placed first in the order of things, with the business following closely behind. An oath of secrecy is taken and a code of rules stipulates what behavior and conduct are

Black Hand Extortion

Black Hand extortion is a methodology of criminal behavior imposed by any number of criminal gangs that may or may not be affiliated with each other or associated directly with the Italian-American Mob. Black Hand tactics are simple and follow this method:

- *A note demanding money would be left at the door of a successful businessman – more often than not an Italian immigrant.*
- *If payment wasn't made, the target's name would appear on a tree known as the Deadman's tree.*
- *The next thing left at the door would be a bomb.*





allowed and disallowed. The typical mafia outfit operates in a militaristic hierarchical organization with soldiers reporting to a caporegime, a ranking member of the mafia. Each caporegime reports to an underboss, who reports to the boss. The chief counselor, the consiglieri, provides advice and strategic support to the boss and is somewhat outside the command structure. Associates are those in the employ of the mob, but not members of it. Locales and Resources

THE LEVEE

Dance halls, brothels, gambling parlors, and all manner of vice are located in the four-block loop between 18th and 22nd Street. The Levee grew out of the destruction of the Chicago Fire in 1871. Players, pimps, and politicians helped grow the area into a centralized point of criminal activity, where the racket involves the government turning a blind eye to the activities of the infamous area. To reformers, the Levee is the embodiment of all that is offensive.

The most infamous house on the Levee is the Everleigh Club, est. 1899, where high-priced vice is sold to the city's social elite; while the most heartbreaking of circumstances is found in Bed Bug Row, where the community's most vulnerable citizens suffer in shame and scandal.

BUTTERFLY DANCE HALL

While the Everleigh Club wouldn't come into existence until the turn of the century, the Butterfly Dance Hall (whose specific origins are left to the GM) serves the same purpose.

A lavish south side dance hall located in the Levee District, the dance hall contains a bar for drinks and, less known to the public, a brothel. Ike White (**entrepreneur**) holds close connections to City Hall and works for the mob. The dance hall is a hotspot for kidnapping where young women are forced into prostitution by the club owners. To compound problems, the dance hall pays into the protection racket

established by the City Hall's alderman (**local politician**), so no police raid will touch the vile activity that occurs within.

The dance hall stands two stories tall, with illicit activity occurring on the floors above. A balcony with a band or orchestra overhangs the floor and everyone from factory workers to socialites can be found among the patronage. There is a third floor where two council members live. They host their fundraising events for office here at the dance hall, and the anti-vice coalition ardently opposes this behavior. The basement is often used for mob torture or as a hideout; since the edifice is under protection from police raids it is a good place to lay low, unless a vigilante finds their way inside.

SCENARIO HOOK. Use the Levee District to emphasize the impact of political corruption on the vulnerable. The real money that powers corruption flows from mob-owned establishments into City Hall, and back to individuals of ill repute. Still, conditions within the seedy saloons are ripe for betrayal against the oppressive forces of the day. While the mob relies on loyalty, those they cause to suffer do not share this sentiment.

Persons of Interest

VINCENZO MORETTI. Vincenzo (mafia **soldier**) is a broad-shouldered gentleman with a songlike quality to every word that he speaks. His eerie stillness is unsettling, and he conveys most thoughts with a glance or a quick word. Vincenzo is responsible for the security and protection of his father's restaurant in Southern Chicago. He's well known in his neighborhood and often the target of law enforcement, though none have seen him engage them directly. Vincenzo is responsible for the procurement and distribution of guns for the Mafia. A family man through and through, Vincenzo sees his activities as his best chance to provide for and protect those he loves.

Soldier

"Only the dead have seen the end of war."

—Plato

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 11 (2d6 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one

Challenge 1

Actions

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage.

SALVATORE VELESTRA. Salvatore Velestra is a caporegime, in charge of the soldiers of the mob in his local block. The chief function of his crew is to collect protection payments around the Levee and deliver the funds to Santino Rossi. Salvatore is well-liked by other members of the community for his sunny demeanor, healthy tan, and for not placing his hands on anyone. The white-glove service of extortion is endearing, and the softer approach has won over the hearts of many of the

Caporegime

"In our business you get paid by fear."

—Frank Lucas

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Insight +2, Perception +2, Intimidation +4

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any two

Challenge 1

Motivate (1/day). Each ally that can hear the caporegime, and is within 30 feet of them, makes one melee or ranged weapon attack as a reaction.

Actions

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4+1) piercing damage.

madames and laborers. With that said, Salvatore has had to defend his atypical approach to extortion, and there are always some who see it as weakness to be exploited.



SANTINO ROSSI. Santino Rossi is the second in command (**underboss**) of the local Mafia activity in Chicago, and often the direct liaison to the politicians that require racket-payment for protection. Rossi is a large man, well-fed, the son of a butcher turned restaurateur. He has a wife, several mistresses, two sons, and three daughters. Oftentimes, he is referred to by outsiders as The Family Man, for he puts them in front of any personal interest. Santino Rossi has lived in service of his family his entire life, starting out as a stoop-boy watcher in New York City. Part of his goals and ambitions is to build up a foothold of power that ensures a good life for his family and those under his protection. He is willing to make sure these goals are achieved through every dirty trick in the book.

Using the Mob

The Italian mob at the turn of the century is at the beginning of its growth in southern Chicago. The South Side is watched, protected, and run by the Mafia whose leaders are always looking for new talent and to expand their influence in the city.

As allies, the Italian mob provides access to protection, arms, and a gateway into the social pyramid of the criminal underworld. The Mafia are most likely to ally with relatives or fellow Italian immigrants. Likewise, PCs with connections to government officials or community leaders are sought for their influence.

As enemies the mafia are fearsome. They will seek to destroy you, yours, and everything you hold dear. Where the north side gangs will hurt you physically and rob you blind, the mafia will take a more personal and long-term approach, including your family and friends in the punishment they dole out. Likewise, their grudges often extend for many years, even generations.

Underboss

"This is my plan, there's no plan B. And this world will remember me.

—Bonnie Parker

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 36 (8d6 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Skills Insight +2, Perception +4,
Persuasion +2

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages any two

Challenge 2

Motivate (2/day). Each ally that can hear the underboss, and is within 30 feet of them, makes one melee or ranged weapon attack as a reaction.

Actions

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4+1) piercing damage.



HOT NIGHT IN THE OLDE TOWN

A Whispers RPG Story Arc
By Grant Ellis and Matt Corley

Setup



ACTS OF RANDOM VIOLENCE ARE A common occurrence in the less savory neighborhoods of the Windy City, but few were prepared for the explosion that rocked the Olde Pond Bar at the corner of Harrison and 15th Street. Among the victims was an off-duty police officer, Robert Banion, and his three nearly-grown boys: Hugh, Jack, and Ryan. Adding to the chaos of the neighborhood a German immigrant, Heinrich Ward, is the victim of a brutal mugging the following evening. The investigators are drawn into a power struggle that may leave them sleeping with the fishes.

Scenario Hooks

There are many options for beginning this story arc, and three examples are provided below.

- Robert Banion is an associate of the PCs either directly through prior investigations or indirectly as one of the countless beat cops in the city.
- PCs whose connections are more closely aligned with the seedy underbelly of the neighborhood know of the bar's connection with the Italian Mob.
- Walking home late one evening the PCs come across a man screaming for help. His cries quickly turn to grunts of pain as he's assaulted by a trio of **thugs**.

Key Locales

OLDE POND BAR

Prior to the explosion that reduced the Olde Pond Bar to dust and rubble it was a dilapidated brick building born out of the ashes of the Great Chicago Fire (see [page 22](#)). The proprietor, Jason “Muggs” Maloney, has been left shaken by the events and financially ruined. Onlookers, neighbors, and bystanders are eager to share their insight on what happened and why:

- A panicking cyclist headed south from the scene not long after the detonation. The general consensus is that the cyclist was male and wore working clothes.
- It was a slow evening and fatalities were limited to a police officer, his sons, and the bartender. The bar owner was in the back and escaped with his life.
- The police officer, Robert Banion, is a fixture in the community; his sons, not so much.
- The owner of the bar was taken to a nearby almshouse to have a few broken bones set.

THE BANION FAMILY RESIDENCE

The narrow alley, filled with the refuse of a busted outhouse and the calls of a stray cat, lead you to the ramshackle wooden hovel where five families are piled into a lean two-story structure. The widow Banion is inside with her children and afraid to answer questions.

SOUTHSIDE CHURCH

The beautiful building where Father Moretti practiced his faith is a solace in the South Side. Just outside the first ward of the Levee sits a



majestic chapel patterned after the intricate architecture of the European masters.

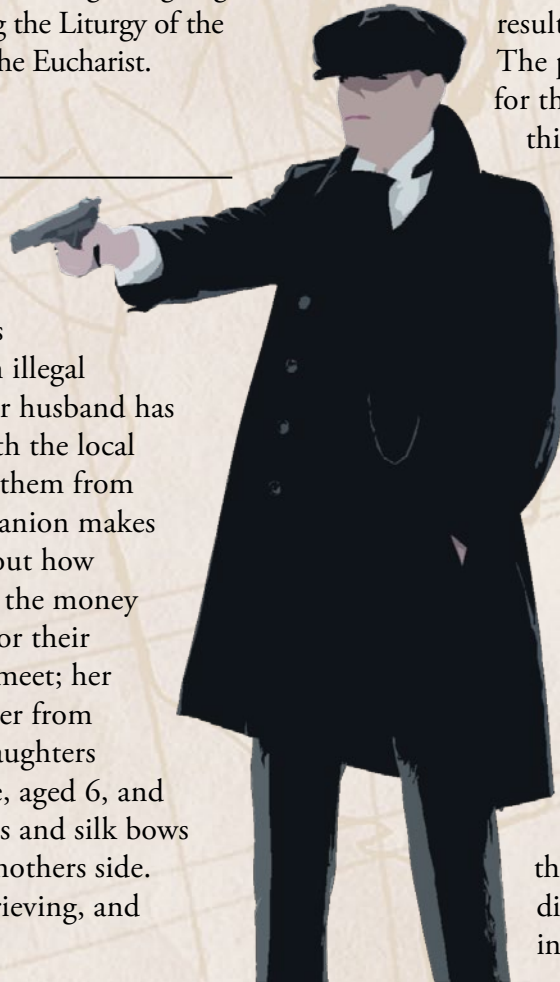
The church is open, but the expectation to adhere to religious tradition on the grounds is common. The primary language spoken here is Italian, though it is not uncommon for non-Italian Catholics to venture into Little Italy to attend services. Pews are constructed out of dark hardwood, and the large arching windows resemble European architecture in their magnificence and grandeur. The stained glass was provided by a generous donation from a local entrepreneur that operates outside the parish. Access to the basement has been temporarily closed off.

During mass a half dozen hard men and women are stationed near the exits, their attention more focused on who's coming and going than on the priest delivering the Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Investigations

THE BANION FAMILY

Victoria Banion suspects that her boys have been involved in illegal activities, and that her husband has used his influence with the local constabulary to keep them from incarceration. Mrs. Banion makes several comments about how she'd come to rely on the money the boys brought in for their family to make ends meet; her consumption keeps her from working. Her twin daughters — Ashley and Patrice, aged 6, and clothed in new dresses and silk bows — never leave their mothers side. They are suffering, grieving, and dealing with loss.



The Banion boys were hired muscle for the West Valley Gang, doing everything they could to ensure food for their siblings, fuel to warm their home, and getting the medical treatment their mother needs. Convincing the widow to share what she knows requires helping the family find closure, securing their future, and uncovering the truth.

THE WEST VALLEY GANG

The West Valley Gang (see [page 111](#)) is a tight-lipped bunch when it comes to their operations, but can be persuaded or deceived into giving up information. Attempts that appeal to their sense of revenge and hatred for the loss are likely to find an eager audience.

The gang is aware of the incident between the Banion boys and an Italian priest that resulted in the death of the priest. The priest was chastising the brothers for their obscenity and cruelty, and things escalated when the priest struck back. With some legwork the investigators learn that the priest was from the Southside Church in the Levee (see [page 118](#)).

BROTHER'S BLOOD

The priest at Southside Church, Father Guido Moretti, was the older brother of a mafioso, Vincenzo Moretti (**underboss**). Vincenzo and his crew are untrusting and laconic. They won't talk to investigators, police, or folks from the outside unless an intermediary brokers a meeting. Without favor from other made-men, penetrating the silent wall of the mob is a difficult task, requiring deception, infiltration, or asking around.



Guido used his position to do favors for his brother, occasionally transporting contraband amongst his religious wares. The church is also considered a sanctuary for folks feeling the heat. While returning from the north side after delivering a payout to members of the city council on behalf of his extended family, Guido was accosted by the brothers. The altercation resulted in the death of the priest and almost as importantly the loss of the protection money he was carrying.

HEINRICH WARD

Herr Ward is a bystander who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He has no direct involvement with the activities, but lives nearby and keeps close tabs on neighborhood goings-on. Herr Ward can be the GM's safety valve and tool to be used as needed if the PCs need a little help. He knows of the Banion boys and their activities, and has guessed that their father has been the one keeping them out of jail. He also suspects their connection to the West Valley Gang. "Boys like that? Where else would they go?" All Heinrich wants is peace in the neighborhood.

THE POLICE

The officers are tight-lipped and no-nonsense, but hell-bent on fighting back against this act of terror against one of their own. If pressed on the issue of letting family off the hook they downplay the situation as "minor transgressions" and that it's just "kids being kids; no harm is done."

SGT. ALISTAIR O'MALLEY. A tall ginger-haired gent, with greying sideburns and freckles for days. He speaks in a thick Irish brogue and makes no attempt to hide exactly what he is: an overworked, overtired, grizzled veteran of beat-policing the streets of Chicago. O'Malley makes no attempt to put up a false front or hide corruption; this is Chicago after all. He

misses the officers who recently died, blames their marriages for their rotten children, but also is sympathetic to the plight of those in the neighborhood. They're as much prisoners as he is. Alistair is useful for helping gain access to city hall and police records, but he is also quick to anger as he's turned to day-drinking to cope.

In Plain Sight

The activities of the West Valley Gang and the Italian Mob are open secrets in many neighborhoods. The higher up the political and social ladder the investigators reach with their inquiries the more secrets they unveil, and the higher the table stakes. Upsetting a concerned citizen with pointed questions in one thing, but insinuating that a local alderman is in bed with the mob can cost them their lives. The situation between the West Valley Gang and the Mafia is made all the more volatile due to the unexpected death of a police officer.

VINCENZO MORETTI

Moretti knew that the only way he would find justice was to take it himself. A full-on north side raid would put too many of his business associates' lives at risk; he would need a more tactical plan. He would hit hard, swiftly, and send the strongest message possible. Moretti is easiest to find, without an intermediary, while walking with his kids to church, on his way from the grocer, or heading to the Levee for a stroll with his wife.

The Mafioso hired an outsider, an anti-government anti-establishment anarchist connected to the Haymarket Affair (see [page 30](#)). The bomber rode to the Olde Pond Bar on their bicycle, planted the device, and made their getaway as the building fell, seeking refuge at the Southside Church. Unfortunately for them, Vincenzo's soldiers were also waiting to tie the remaining loose end to the night's destruction.



Moretti knows folks have been snooping, asking questions, looking at the evidence, and preparing for payback. He's taken refuge in the back room of his family's restaurant, will be packing heat, and is ready to die to avoid capture.

Aftermath

PLAYING ALL SIDES. Capturing Moretti and bringing him to justice, dead or alive, will almost certainly earn the ire of the Italian Mafia. What is less certain is how the other factions react to the investigators. Are they seen as allies to the West Valley Gang or the police? As vigilantes? Or as a new crew trying to muscle in? Truly ambitious investigators may parlay the situation to broker a peace between the rival organizations.

WEST VALLEY GANG. The Banion boys were low-level members of the gang and will not be much missed. There are dozens clamoring to take their place, and the void of their passing

was filled before the fires at the bar fizzled out. That said, retaliation is expected. The PCs have an opportunity to further degrade the gang's strength, or lend their skills in settling the debt owed.

MAFIA CONNECTIONS. The Mafia connection can be much more complex than most. Moretti has gone outside their usual channels, but he did so to protect his family and mob assets, at least tangentially. Protecting Moretti from inevitable reprisals could put the PCs firmly on the path to acceptance with the Mafia. Conversely, bringing Moretti to justice could turn the heat up considerably, unless they're able to spin it as a method to protect the mob.

THE POLICE. The Chicago PD want two things: revenge on Robert Banion's killer and a return to the status quo, the latter being the more important of the two. They would like nothing more than for everyone involved to handle the matter internally, and with as little public attention as possible.



THE WORLD'S FAIR HOTEL

"In all America there was none other like it.... Its stairways ended nowhere in particular. Winding passages brought the uninitiated with a frightful jerk back to where they had started from. There were rooms that had no doors. There were doors that had no rooms. A mysterious house it was indeed – a crooked house, a reflex of the builder's own distorted mind. In that house occurred dark and eerie deeds."

–The Chicago Tribune



THE WORLD'S FAIR HOTEL TOUTS ITSELF as the pinnacle of modern convenience, a haven for women in the chaos of the Exposition, and home away from home for travelers to Chicago. The proprietor, Dr. H.H. Holmes (see [page 185](#)), is a well-known and respected businessman who pulled himself up by his bootstraps to become a successful man of medicine and owner of an entire city block!

The reality of the situation is more dire indeed. Holmes' psychotic imagination, coupled with the urgings of his eldritch patron, have created a hotel purpose-built to sow confusion and discord amongst its guests, and to provide its owner with the tools and safety needed to satisfy his violent urges.

Triggers in the World's Fair Hotel

For reference, any of the following triggers may be present within the scenario as written: body horror, child ghosts, torture devices, forceful imprisonment, human experimentation, cannibalism, hanging, decapitation, burning, suffocation, kidnapping, physical abuse, starvation, rats, spiders, and emotional abuse

A BRIEF HISTORY

The World's Fair Hotel, located on 63rd Street in Chicago, Illinois, began construction in 1887 as a two-story, mixed use structure with retail spaces on the first floor and apartments on the second. In 1892 a third floor was added, ostensibly to accommodate the influx of guests from the upcoming World's Columbian Exposition.

Throughout the building process Holmes employed a string of workers, tradesmen, architects, and dealers to obfuscate the true nature of the building and to avoid paying for services rendered. Thus, Holmes was able to hide the dead drops, doors that led to nowhere, gas lines running to multiple rooms, a furnace large enough for a body, and other eccentricities built into the hotel. He was so successful at hiding his true nature that Holmes' capture in 1895 was largely due to the efforts of those whom he owed a debt, and not the numerous disappearances of his associates. The murders were only suspected, and later confirmed.

The retail spaces served the purpose of attracting new victims to Holmes' lair, providing a steady source of income for his coffers, and adding to the air of respectability that he worked so assiduously to project. The GM is encouraged to adjust the shopkeepers and their businesses to suit their needs. Their current occupants include: a barber, jeweler, restaurateur, a peddler, and Holmes' pharmacy. The workshops are unoccupied, and ready for a new tennant.

The upper floors are reserved for tennants, long-term and short-term, and their activities. The amenities offered are among the best in the city with a fully appointed entertainment





area and reception on the second floor, plenty of rooms, office spaces, and most peculiarly a dentist on the third floor. In short, the building has everything its guests could need contained within its borders. Holmes has thought of everything.

The basement is only seen by Holmes and his lackeys. It is the site of horrific experiments, and the final resting place for countless souls.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: The account above is based on the true history of the infamous building, but has been embellished, polished, and added to as needed for inclusion in the *Whispers in the Dark* universe. The GM is encouraged to make further adjustments to fit their story, and to keep players — whose knowledge of Holmes may be considerable — on their toes.

Physical Characteristics

DOORS. Unless otherwise noted the doors in the World's Fair Hotel have the following stats: AC 15, HP 12, immunity to poison and psychic damage. Smashing a door will be discovered in time either by a guest, visitor, Holmes, or one of his employees. The discovery is at the discretion of the GM and should be consistent with the time of day the occurrence happens, the narrative being told, and the scenario's internal logic.

FLORA. Holmes has exotic potted palms and ficuses on display throughout the World's Fair Hotel. PCs examining them learn the following on an Intelligence (Nature) check:

- **DC 10:** The plants are not native to the Chicago area, and were imported to add a dash of worldly sophistication to the hotel.
- **DC 15:** The plants' broad leaves, short stalks, and expansive foliage indicate that their native climate was one of abundant rainfall

and full shade. They are a member of the ficus family.

- **DC 20:** The faintly violet veins within the stalks are unlike anything you've seen or read of. The plant is unique.

The ficuses have been brought into the hotel from the Dreamlands. They can only survive there, or in places with a strong connection to that realm. PCs that are unaware of the existence of the Dreamlands (see *page 80*) cannot identify them as natives of that other realm. Others with greater esoteric knowledge may positively identify them as natives of that land with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. PCs with a strong connection to the Dreamlands, or who have explored it, have advantage on this check.

LOCKS. Many of the doors within the hotel have locks to protect their occupants and the goods contained within. Guests and merchants have a key to their own room(s), as does Holmes whose master key will open any lock within the building. The locks, unless otherwise stated, require a successful DC 11 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check to open. Alternatively, the door can be smashed (see above).

Deadbolts. Guest are allowed the illusion of privacy in select rooms with the addition of a deadbolt. Unless otherwise stated the deadbolts are only exposed on one side, and cannot be picked. The interior has a knob that is twisted to engage or release the bolt. Any exceptions to this standard are noted as such in the individual room descriptions.

Breaking a Lock. A fumbled Thieves' Tool check indicates that the investigator has broken the lock, and at the GM's discretion their picks. Broken locks have a habit of being noticed at the most inopportune time by guests and employees of the hotel.



PEST FREE. The hotel is uncommonly clean and common pests of the day such as rats, mice, and insects are notably absent. Additionally, pets are not allowed to accompany their owners into the structure. Animals that do find their way into the hotel invariably go missing.

SECRET DOORS. The World's Fair Hotel is home to a staggering number of secret doors and passages, many of which have no internal logic. Unless otherwise noted these doors can only be found by PCs actively looking for them and succeeding on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. At the GM's discretion passive Perception (using the same DC as needed to discover the door) can be used to inform a player that their PC senses something amiss with a particular section of a wall, encouraging them to look further. The GM is encouraged to move or remove any doors (secret or otherwise) they feel are unnecessary, and in the case of areas heavily influenced by the Dreamlands the change may be temporary.

SOUNDPROOFING. The rooms that Holmes uses for his malevolent activities have additional soundproofing, and when the door is closed activities within cannot be heard by passersby. At the GM's discretion an investigator touching a wall or door may feel the faint vibrations of a trapped victim with a suitably difficult Perception check.

WALLS. When skill and subtlety fail, brute force may be an attractive option to folks exploring the hotel. Unless otherwise noted, the internal walls of the hotel are constructed of durable lath and plaster (hence the soundproofing). Each five-foot section of the wall has the following stats: AC 16, HP 24, immunity to poison and psychic damage, and damage threshold 2. The destruction of a wall will not go unnoticed, and

those responsible can expect their work to be noticed quickly.

WINDOWS. Glass objects have AC 13, HP 4, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Breaking glass may arouse the suspicions of others depending on its location and the extent of the damage.

Eldritch Characteristics

GETTING LOST. Every facet of the hotel's second and third floor has been designed with the express intent of confusing anyone walking its halls. The angles are just off 90 degrees, ceilings and floors have a slant too elusive to be seen, doors open inward or outward without consistency, knobs are on the left side as often as the right. Gas lights, some of which are nonfunctional, have been strategically placed to create grasping shadows and poorly lit corridors. The effect is subtle on the occupants (Holmes and his cohorts are immune) and manifests as any number of tics and behaviors. GMs are encouraged to pick and choose from the following or create their own nuances:

- Perception, Investigation, and/or Survival checks are made with a -1 penalty.
- PCs that are on edge have a +1 bonus to Initiative checks as they are jumping at every movement and sound.
- Checks to resist fear effects are made with a -1 penalty.
- Checks to suppress an existing madness are made with a -1 penalty.

THINNING VEIL. The Murder Castle exists both physically at 63rd Street and psychically in an isolated pocket in the eastern portions of the Dreamlands (see *page 80*). The effect of the linkage is unnoticeable to patrons on the first floor, and strongest within the Dreamlands



Intrusions on the second and third floor. Holmes' shrine on the third floor can be shunted to the Dreamlands in its entirety by Holmes or his mistress if needs must. The GM is encouraged to devise their own manifestations of the thinning. Below are examples of how Holmes often takes advantage of it.

Obfuscation. The sound and light of the real world are partially shifted into the Dreamlands, imparting advantage on Stealth checks and the like to creatures targeted by the effect.

Disposal. Objects can be temporarily sent to the Dreamlands to hide them from prying eyes and to facilitate transportation.

Escape. The eddies of reality are exceedingly thin, and creatures that can travel to and from the Dreamlands may do so more easily. Transportation to the Dreamlands requires half as much time as normal (minimum 1 round) and any required checks are made with advantage.

Investigating the Hotel

CHECKING IN. Rooms may be rented, when available, for \$2 per night. Rental includes access to the hotel's amenities and a complimentary bicycle.

BOOKSHELVES. There are countless bookshelves within the hotel. To aid the GM in filling those shelves with period-specific literature please refer to Appendix E (*page 245*) for a list of historically accurate publications.

EXPLORING THE HOTEL. Guests of the hotel have greater freedom to explore than visitors, though all are welcome to use the public areas during reasonable hours. Further details are provided in subsequent sections. Folks found in areas they ought not be are asked politely to return to the appropriate spaces, and less politely if refused. Pitezel (see *page 189*), when he is in his cups, is prone to violent outbursts when finding someone where they don't belong.

Holmes and His Lair

Holmes' control over his home and its components is near absolute. While he cannot create or destroy matter, his abilities to manipulate the existing structure are astounding. Holmes' full statblock can be found on [page 185](#).

CLAIRVOYANCE. *As an action Holmes can cast his sight to any location within his lair. The effect can only be used while he is within the hotel (unless otherwise noted), and allows him to see as if he were there, with the limitation that he cannot see outside of the hotel's border.*

TELEKINESIS. *Holmes' control over the inanimate objects within the hotel enables him to open and close doors, windows, and the like*

at will despite any locking mechanisms they may have. Additionally, he can compel them to remain shut, even when unlocked. An object held in such a manner must either be destroyed or forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength check. A favorite tactic of Holmes is to create unexplained noises and sow discord by locking and unlocking doors at opportune times.

BODY AWARENESS. *The World's Fair Hotel and Holmes share an unnatural link that allows him to feel when the hotel has been damaged. This sense enables him to pinpoint and track the destructive tendencies of interlopers. The effect extends to doors, walls, locks and windows. It does not extend to furniture or decorations.*



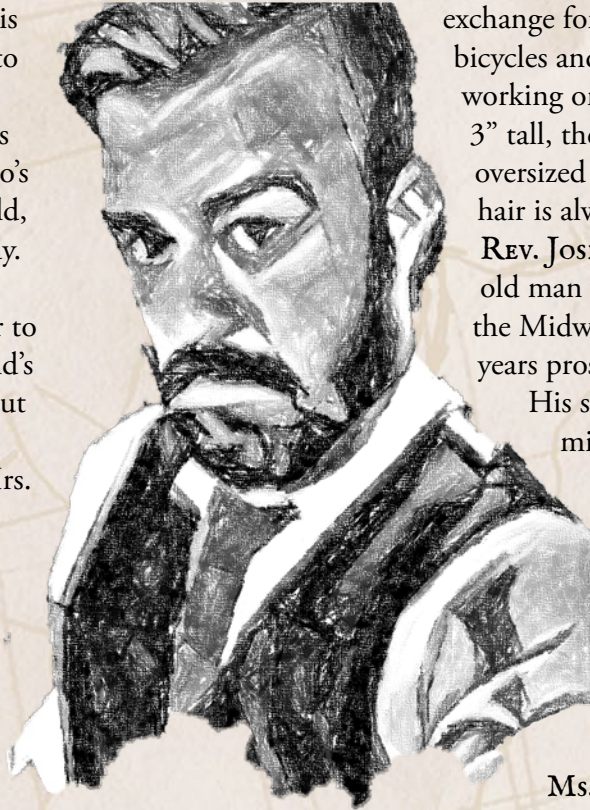


Sample Guests and Visitors

GEOFFREY DARK is a 23-year-old gentleman from the farmlands south of Chicago brought to the hotel by the inexorable pull of fame, fortune, and excitement generated by the city's ever-expanding opportunities. He spent the last of his savings on a room at the hotel, and is desperate for work. Geoffrey is of average height, barrel-chested from working the fields, and his corn silk hair has begun to thin.

MRS. JEANNE THORNTON is a 19-year-old woman who's recently lost her only child, a daughter named Melody. Jeanne is grief stricken, and her husband sent her to Chicago to visit the World's Fair in a good-natured, but misguided, attempt to assuage her tragic loss. Mrs. Thornton's dreams have been filled by a shadowy castle and a child hidden by fog, or is it webs? While walking through Englewood she recognized the World's Fair Hotel from her dream, and is gathering her courage to enter.

PROF. GRANT WOOTEN is a 25-year-old man who received his diploma from the Harvard School of Arts and Sciences in the fall and has come to Chicago hoping to secure a position with the University of Chicago. Prof. Grant specializes in the humanities, and is a 'Harvard Man' through and through. He has strong



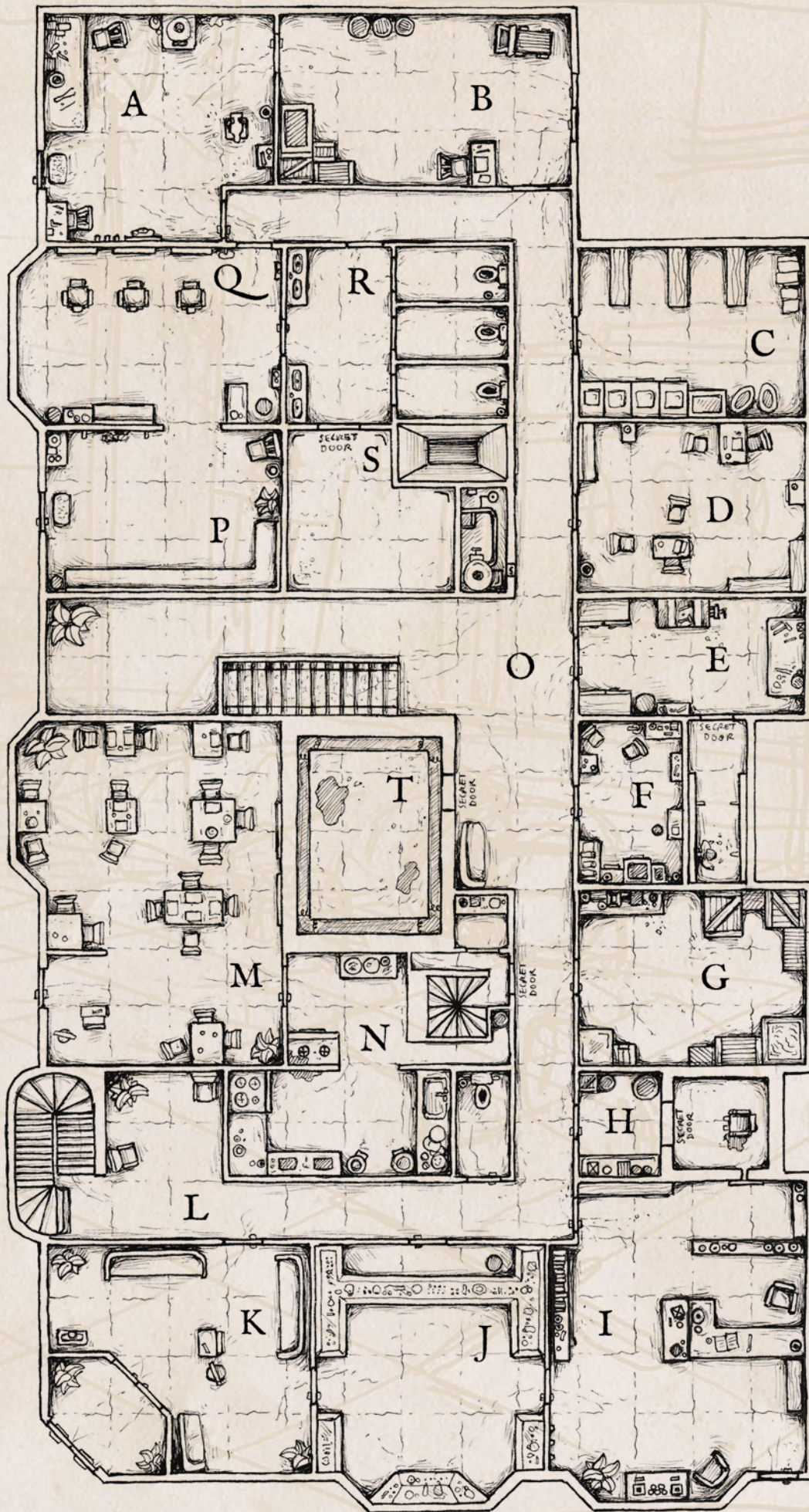
opinions on Miskatonic's recent addition of a women's college, and will share them with little prompting. Prof. Wooten is a tall man at 6 feet, with a trim athletic build from daily calisthenics, and closely cropped black hair.

HATTIE JERMYN is a 17-year-old woman with a talent for tinkering. Their preferred dress is rough denim overalls, and a battered Union cap from the War. They bartered a deal with Dr. Holmes for room and board in exchange for keeping the hotel's bicycles and other mechanisms in working order. Hattie stands 5' 3" tall, their build is obscured by oversized clothing, and their auburn hair is always tucked into their cap.

REV. JOSEPH UPTON is a 41-year-old man who's been wandering the Midwest for the last five years proselytizing to all comers.

His sermons are a unique mixture of Judeo-Christian values and the lore taught to him by his grandmother, a Creek Alektca and religious leader. Holmes would like nothing more than to subvert Upton's faith.

MS. MARJORIE GLIDDEN has spent her entire 37 years in nearby DeKalb Illinois, never venturing outside its city limits. With the urgings of her father — Joseph Glidden, the inventor of barbed wire — she ventured to Chicago to attend the World's Fair. Ms. Glidden's reservations at the Palmer House were lost, and lucky for her a gentleman recommended the newly-opened World's Fair Hotel.





THE FIRST FLOOR

1A. *The Blacksmith's Shop*

The blacksmith's shop is open Monday through Thursday from dawn until dusk.

With metronomic regularity the telltale sounds of a smith at work find their way to the street through the store's open door. The square shop is efficiently laid out — work tables line the walls, with a forge on the leftmost wall and the anvil across from the door. Exhibits of goods and sundry display the smith's skill, and the lake breeze keeps the stifling heat mostly at bay.

The smith's shop, and its equipment, are owned by H.H. Holmes who hires, fires, and replaces craftsmen with regularity. The rapid turnover ensures that they are never able to piece together the purpose of the peculiar orders from their landlord, and that collecting monies for services rendered is difficult.

DEVELOPMENT. PCs scavenging through the equipment are able to find tools that are serviceable as weapons. They find the equivalent of one of each of the following: a quarterstaff, light hammer, and a dagger.

1B. *Stables*

The stale, lingering odor of horses and their manure removes any doubts of the rooms purpose, and yet physical traces of those things are absent. Storage barrels and crates are set to the side, as is a simple writing desk.

Initially built for stabling horses, Holmes is repurposing the room for his growing business of providing articulated skeletons for medical

schools. The door to area 1A opens inwards, and an iron wedge lies nearby.

When the room is not in use, the wedge prevents the door from area 1A from opening, and the double doors to the outside are barred with a wooden beam. The door from the hallway is deadbolted.

DEVELOPMENT. The storage crates and barrels are mostly empty, and their contents — feed for horses — is moldy with age. Atop the desk (there are no drawers) is a depleted pad of paper, a pencil, and an iron paper weight.

The rooms are only unlocked when in use and a delivery is scheduled. During those times Charles Chappell (see *page 191*) is typically present, or in rare cases Holmes himself.

SCENARIO HOOK. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check while examining the pad of paper reveals that the impressions from the previous note spell out the following message: "male, adult, fully articulated to University Chicago" and a date two days in the future. Investigators using the pencil to lightly rub the paper and reveal the impressions have advantage on their check.

1C. *Laundering Room*

The height of extravagance, sophistication, and innovation line the walls to your right: a bank of laundering machines, each with 'Triumph' emblazoned on their drums. The overpowering smells of soaps and disinfectants sting the eyes and nostrils.

This room contains wall-mounted boards for ironing and folding, shelves of cleaning supplies, and wicker baskets to carry the newly freshened linens to the rooms can be found in the room. Holmes is very proud of this room and the machinery within.

The room is open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday and Wednesday to guests and





merchants, who make regular use of it. At other times it is locked.

SCENARIO HOOK. At the bottom of one of the washing machines is a brooch. Its clasp has been broken, but it is clearly valuable (\$15). If taken to Hightower's Fine Jewels for repair (Area 1J), Laurel recognizes it as belonging to a wealthy widow who had brought it into the shop just last week for a cleaning.

1D. *Administrative Office*

A pair of simply made, identical oak desks with matching chairs sit in the room.

Bookshelves, also oak and plain, can be found against the walls. Unlike some other rooms in the hotel, this area is clearly intended for functional use.

An office has been made available to the guests of the hotel and the merchants working there. The door has no locks; the room sees heavy use, and is rarely unoccupied during normal business hours.

SCENARIO HOOK. A loose piece of hotel stationery has been left on the floor near a desk. The paper has three pairs of names. One name in each pairing is circled. The circled name in the final pairing also had a note saying "in the 14th". Sports fans will recognize the names as belonging to up-and-coming pugilists from local boxing gyms.

1E. *Carpenter's Workshop*

The smell of freshly worked pine and cedar identifies the purpose of this room as surely as the worktable and the carving tools laid atop it.

The lock on the room is of a higher quality than typically used (DC 14), and the only folks with keys are Holmes, Pitezl, and Chappell. The

room itself is an unremarkable, though well-stocked, carpenter's workshop.

DEVELOPMENT. The tools are valuable if gathered and taken (\$5 for the lot), and many can be used as weapons (1d4 piercing or slashing damage). The storage shelves and workbenches have nothing of further interest.

Investigators searching the southern wall and succeeding on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check discover a secret door. The door is locked [DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)]. If opened, read or paraphrase the following for the PCs:

A faint waft of dry, cold air comes from the darkened hallway. By the light of the workshop you see four large hooks mounted into the wall, two on each side.

There is no illumination in the hanging room save what finds its way in from the workshop. The room is always cold and dry, much like a walk-in icebox.

DEVELOPMENT. The presence or absence of bodies is at the discretion of the GM and the narrative they are telling. If one or more hooks are in use when the PCs discover this room, they must succeed on a DC 10 Sanity check to avoid losing a portion of their sanity. At the GMs discretion that check may be made with disadvantage if the victim is a close friend or ally, or with advantage if the PC has already discovered Holmes' true nature.

1F. *Disinfecting Room*

The overwhelming smell of bleach, solvents, and other cleaning supplies fills the room to such an extent that the air has become flavorful. Lungs burn with each inhalation, and eyes water.



The disinfecting room sees use by Mrs. Hightower (see area 1J) and Dr. Todd (see *page 160*), both of whom require it for their businesses. They can be found in the room periodically, and when in use the door is often left open to aid in ventilation.

DEVELOPMENT. Vials of acid and poison can be found with little effort. This room is used exclusively by the merchants of the World's Fair Hotel.

1G. Storage

The room is dusty, cobwebs line the corners, and stacked within are the usual packing containers for a hotel. Shelves to your right hold a number of rusted, worn tools, and the space itself is quite large with plenty of room to spare.

The storage room is locked at all times and contains an assortment of barrels, crates, and pallets of goods that fill the room.

DEVELOPMENT. There is a plethora of cleaning products, including immense bottles of chlorine-based bleach and hydrogen peroxide. Their presence in a hotel isn't noteworthy, though the quantity stored is unusual.

SCENARIO HOOK. PCs taking 1d4 hours to thoroughly search the room, and succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check find a letter from Emily Cigrande in which she excitedly describes procuring a job at a local pharmacy. It is dated May 5th, 1892.

1H. Nic's Picks

Nic's Picks is open at the whim of its owner, Nic Smith. Mr. Smith can be found there any day of the week, excepting Sunday, and at any time between noon and 8 p.m.. When he is not within, it is locked.

A frosted glass panel in the door reads, "Nic's Picks." Within the tiny room are an odd assortment of goods, and very few of them at that. In the corner, seated on a stool reading a broadsheet and leaning against the wall is a dapper African-American man.

With languid movements he folds the paper, places it to the side, and greets his visitors. "Good day, and welcome to my shop. I'm Nic, and while I don't have much, I surely hope I have what you need."

Nic Smith's (**mountebank**) stock changes frequently and all manner of object can be found on his shelves. Nic also accepts orders for hard to find trinkets with a specialty in books and religious icons. How long it takes, and how successful Nic is at finding the objects, is at the GM's discretion.



DEVELOPMENT. Mr. Smith is the current alias of Ben Ross, a brother of Harriet Tubman. While his connections pale in comparison to his sister's, he gets the job done more often than not. Holmes and the other inhabitants of the hotel do not know his true identity... at least, not yet.

SCENARIO HOOK. Frederick Douglas (see [page 13](#)) has been appointed by Haiti as one of their representatives at the Exposition. Nic is concerned about Douglas' safety during the event, and would like to retain the services of the PCs in return for a favor at a later date.

11. Holmes' Pharmacy

The pharmacy is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

An attractive young woman looks up from the counter at the sound of the door opening.

"Welcome to Dr. Holmes' pharmacy. The finest apothecary in Chicago. How may I be of assistance?"

The room is spotlessly clean, the shelves are well stocked with an extensive selection of patent medicines, each clearly marked with a list of conditions they treat. Fully half of the bottles include the name 'Holmes' on them.

A wooden chest with levers, buttons, and dials rests proudly on the counter, as true a testament as any of the shop's prosperity.

The pharmacy is well stocked with all the latest patent medicines, elixirs, unguents, and tonics (see Appendix F on [page 247](#) for suitable names, and the nearby sidebar for effects). The woman behind the counter, and Holmes, if he's present, are gracious and knowledgeable about their wares. While the shop is open there is a steady stream of predominantly female customers who insist on discussing their ailments with Dr. Holmes.

DEVELOPMENT. Holmes' assistants are always female, between the ages of 18 and 25, and pretty (**commoner** with Charisma 13+). They are replaced regularly, with few remaining in his employ for more than a few weeks.

Though he is often pulled away for other personal matters and business dealings Holmes maintains a presence in the pharmacy to see to his patients, and can be found there at any time at the GM's discretion.

The wooden chest is an 'Incorruptible Cashier.' The till is a recent purchase of Holmes' and a source of great pride. It can be smashed open (AC 10, 12 HP, immune to poison and psychic damage), jimmied open with a successful DC 13 Strength check, or by pressing the correct series of buttons (DC 12 Intelligence). PCs familiar with the operation of the machine automatically succeed on their check to open the till.

ASSETS. The contents of the till vary throughout the day, starting with \$2 in a variety coinage and ending the day with 3d6 dollars on days that Holmes is present, or 3d4 on days when he is not.



Table of Patent Ingredients

Patent medicines were widely used and distributed throughout the 1800s. They were touted as universal cures, able to treat all manner of seemingly unrelated ailments. With no regulatory oversight of safety or efficacy, patients were taking their lives into their own hands, and relied heavily on their local druggist for advice and selection.

Holmes and his competitor Foley have countless tinctures, elixirs, and solutions available. Most are combinations of the following ingredients with enough alcohol to dissolve them and flavoring to mask their godawful taste. The GM may choose any number of the following as ingredients in a patent medicine. Regardless of the number of components chosen, each dose has one full measure of each ingredient present. The effects are additive and resolved independently in the order of the GMs choosing. For each dose the PC takes they must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving

throw or gain the poisoned condition for the next 1d4 hours. If the PC has had a dose in the previous 4 hours the saving throw is made with disadvantage.

- **COCAINE.** *A feeling of powerfully invigorating euphoria flushes through their body. They have a +2 bonus to initiative and a -2 penalty to Dexterity-based checks for 2 hours due to the frenetic energy.*

- **CANNABIS.** *A feeling of dissociation from your worries and concerns eases the tension from your muscles and mind. You have a +2 bonus to Sanity checks and a -2 penalty to Perception checks for 2 hours.*

- **OPIUM.** *A feeling of numbness erases the pain from your body allowing you to function despite injury. The effect persists for 2 hours. When you are reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright due massive damage, you remain conscious while the opium is in effect. You continue to make death saving throws as normal until stabilized.*

SCENARIO HOOK. A man, Herbert Frost, comes to the pharmacy looking for the woman behind the counter. She was his betrothed until recently, when she broke off the engagement without explanation. He confronts her with the PCs as witnesses. He leaves after being rebuffed, but waits outside for the investigators and attempts to enlist their services to find out why his fiancée had a sudden change of heart.

1J. Hightower's Fine Jewels

Owned by the widow Laurel Hightower, Hightower's Fine Jewels is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, or by appointment.

The light from a shimmering bay window fills the room and sparkles off the tastefully displayed merchandise. Small displays flank the window, one for women's brooches and the other for time pieces of silver and gold.

An 'I' shaped case runs the length of room. Behind the case is the proprietor. The display is not even half full. The pieces on exhibit are beautiful, though of modest value.

Mrs. Hightower used the last remnants of her assets to lease the storefront from Mr. Holmes, and stock it with as many products as she can afford.





DEVELOPMENT. The locks on the doors leading into Hightower's are of high quality (DC 15), and can be locked from the interior or exterior. The door behind the counter has been boarded up out of sight and cannot be opened without destroying the door.

MRS. HIGHTOWER. A handsome woman in her thirties, with shoulder-length blonde hair only just beginning to grey, Mrs. Hightower is a no-nonsense woman with a serious demeanor and appraising eye. Laurel rejects the notion that a widow should spend the remainder of her life in mourning, and after the loss of her husband she's determined to make the most of opportunities presented to her.

Laurel has advantage on saving throws and ability checks to detect falsehoods and to resist charisma-based manipulations (Use **commoner** stats with Intelligence 12 and Wisdom 14). She does not like nor trust Holmes, believing him to be a womanizing lout.

ASSETS. The jewelry is not overly expensive — the highest-priced item is \$15 — but the items have clearly been selected with care and displayed as well as they can be. Additionally, she has a locked cashbox (DC 13) containing 4d20 dollars.

SCENARIO HOOK. If asked about higher quality items Mrs. Hightower excuses herself briefly and returns with an antique jewelry box. Within are a matching set of earrings, necklace, and brooch. The brooch is a cameo

and within it a picture that bears an astonishing resemblance to one of the investigators. Laurel hasn't looked at the cameo in years, and is just as shocked as the investigators when she learns of the similarities.

1K. *World's Fair Hotel Reception*



The doors to the vestibule and entry to the hotel lobby are always unlocked.

A pair of frosted doors with the words "World's Fair Hotel" emblazoned on them mark the hotel's entrance. The swinging doors open to a small vestibule in which a pair of tropical plants with broad, verdant leaves flank the interior doors.

When characters enter the hotel proper, read or paraphrase the following:

A pair of divans flank an oak door leading into the hotel. A brass plate, 'Hightower's Fine Jewelry, is affixed the closed door to on the eastern wall. In the center of the room is table with a crystal pitcher of water and matching glasses.

Plants, twins of those in the vestibule rest in the corners, and a pair of bicycles have been propped against the wall. Above the bicycles is a sign stating they are for guest use only.



The reception of the World's Fair Hotel is busy and serves to greet shoppers, retailers, and potential guests to the hotel. The couches, sitting table, bicycles, and even the pots holding the exotic plants are in excellent condition, as if they have just been purchased. The lobby sees a steady stream of folks going about their business during the day, only lessening slightly with the setting sun.

DEVELOPMENT. The door to area **1L** has no locking mechanism, and the door to area **1J** is described in that entry.

ASSETS. There are 1d4 - 1 bicycles in the reception for use by guests. PCs traveling via bicycle may take the Dash action with their bonus action. Evasive maneuvers or traveling over treacherous terrain requires a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid falling from their bike and taking 1d4 - 1 bludgeoning damage from the crash

SCENARIO HOOK. The investigators borrow/steal/find a bicycle that is owned by Holmes. He is very attached to his bicycles and regardless of how they came into possession of it, he wants it back immediately. A trio of **thugs** will be sent to forcefully claim their employer's possession.

1L. Hallway

The hallway running through the first floor gives easy access to the shops within, and has a staircase leading up to the second floor. The small sitting area near the hotel entryway contains two comfortable leather chairs, and a plant exactly like the ones in area **1K**.

A runner of dark crimson carpet runs through the center of the hallway, softening each step.



Lamps have been cunningly placed to create creeping shadows and provide scant illumination within the halls. The effect is unnoticeable during the day due to the ambient daylight seeping in from windows and open doors.

DEVELOPMENT. Holmes and his lackeys take full advantage of the preternatural darkness within the hallways when stalking their prey. Dexterity (Stealth) checks they make during the evening hours while in the hallway are made with advantage.

LM. *La Pomme de Whisky*
(aka *The Apple*)

Open daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Baked breads, roasted meats, and the heavenly aroma of apple pie waft from the restaurant to the nearby sidewalk, drawing folks in more effectively than any advertisement.

Waking into the restaurant you see eight tables, most set for dining couples, and a bustle of activity from the diners and staff. A gangly boy and young woman traverse the crowded room with purposeful steps, occasionally disappearing through the swinging doors in the back to the kitchen.

"We're a mite busy, but I can have a table ready shortly?"

La Pomme de Whisky, commonly known as The Apple, opened its doors when the building became habitable and has quickly become the most popular restaurant in Englewood. The owners, Emma and Jonathan Harkness, run the

restaurant with the help of their family. Emma and her daughter, Cas, are responsible for the front end of the restaurant while Jon and Robert cook the food, bus the tables, and keep the place clean.

The Harkness family's turn of bad luck has finally changed with La Pomme. For the first time since leaving their ancestral home in Virginia they have enjoyed a modicum of success. The restaurant is flourishing, and their darling Cas has caught the eye of their landlord, the wealthy and respected Dr. Holmes.

DEVELOPMENT. Jon opens the restaurant every morning at dawn in preparation for the lunch crowd. Robert joins his father a few hours later with Emma and Cas coming in at 10 a.m. to make the final preparations. The children are sent home with the last customer, while

Jon and Emma stay behind to close shop. The Apple is a hive of bustling activity.

While open, 1d4 + 1 of the tables are occupied.

Holmes, Chappell, and

Pitezal regularly break their fast in the restaurant, and can be found here individually or together.



EMMA HARKNESS. Ms. Emma, as her patrons call her, is an imposing woman with a fashionable bob, sparkling eyes, and a ready smile. Behind her infectious good nature is a woman not to be trifled with, as those who mistake her kindness for weakness soon learn the error of their ways. Ms. Emma is a woman of her word and expects the same in kind. She has an eagle eye and keen sense of insight (**commoner**, Charisma 14, Wisdom 13, proficient in Insight and Perception).



Aug 93

Dinner.

Little-Neck clams

SOUPS

Consommé, paysanne*

Cream of celery aux croûtons soufflés

RELISHES

Chili sauce
Radishes

Celery

Pickled onions
Olives

FISH

Sea bass sauté aux fines herbes

Pommes, Quélin

ENTREES

Chicken sauté à l'espagnole

Coquille of lobster, Maryland style

Stuffed egg plant à la française

ROAST

Prime ribs of beef

Roast leg of lamb, mint sauce

PUNCH

AU KIRSCH

VEGETABLES

Sweet corn on cob

Baked sweet potatoes

String beans

Boiled onions, cream sauce

Mashed potatoes

Boiled potatoes

SALADS

Chicory and lettuce

Watercress

Cucumber

DESSERT

Bread pudding, lemon sauce

Sliced apple pie

Cocoanut pie

Banana ice cream

Assorted cake

Grapes

Assorted nuts

Raisins

Watermelon

Peaches and cream

Bananas

Oranges

Cheese and crackers

Demi-tasse

American plan, 6 to 8.15 p. m.

A la carte, 6 to 10 p. m.





CAS HARKNESS. Cas Harkness is a veritable copy of her mother, much to the chagrin of them both. They butt heads often, but will defend the other to their last breath. Cas has rebuffed the attentions of many suitors, but something about their landlord's cerulean eyes causes her breath to hitch.

SCENARIO HOOK. Cas has been offered a nearby apartment of her own as part of a job offer to work intermittently in the pharmacy. She's revealed her intentions to her family, and has moved into the apartment while working both jobs. Holmes' current assistant is threatened by the younger newcomer, and plots to protect her claim on Holmes.

1N. Kitchen

The kitchen is much larger and more industrious than required to service such a small restaurant, with two ovens and an oversized prep area. The door to the coat check is in the northeast corner of the room.

A continually swinging door wafts mouthwatering smells from the kitchen to the dining room. The young man pushes it wide, allowing a glimpse of the kitchen and the head chef, a tall man with dark hair, an apron, and a look of concentration.

The kitchen and its contents were supplied to the Harkness' when they leased the space. It is large enough to service a crowd many times larger than their small dining area could accommodate.

The front kitchen sees minimal use to allow Cas easy access to the coat room, and Robert a safe path to the far sink which he uses exclusively for cleaning dishes, pots, pans, and utensils. The rear kitchen is the domain of Jon Harkness.

DEVELOPMENT. The restaurant's two kitchens are fully stocked with pots, pans, utensils, and any of the hundreds of ingredients needed to room a kitchen. Everything in the front kitchen is cleaned and organized as if it sees little use.

PCs that rummage through the spices, herbs, and produce for at least 10 minutes and succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check realize that the kitchen contains no basil, rosemary, dill, mint, or onions. With this realization any PC with a formal knowledge of cooking, as determined by their backstory or background, knows that this is unusual. Further, PCs with this knowledge that succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check remember that spiders are purported to avoid those plants. At the GM's discretion players that specifically state they are trying to remember how those plants affect animals or insects have advantage on their check.

JON HARKNESS. Mr. Harkness is a tall man with muddy eyes, dark hair, and a short beard. While at work in the kitchen he is focused, efficient, and brusque with anyone interrupting him. The restaurant is their last chance at building a better life for Cas and Robert, and Jon is determined for it to be successful. He works tirelessly, and has little time for himself or leisure activities. The only exceptions are Emma and Cas, whom he dotes on.

ROBERT HARKNESS. Young Robert Harkness knows that in the pecking order of his family he's at the end, and that knowledge eats at him. He toils away in the restaurant without comment or complaint, all the while stewing at the unfairness of his situation. If presented with the right opportunity he would gladly leave them all without so much as a goodbye.

ASSETS. The kitchen contains the usual assortment of utensils and tools needed for a restaurant. The equipment is new, and there are





plenty of spares. PCs may steal a chef's knife (a dagger) or rolling pin (club) if they choose.

10. Grand Hall

The grand hallway is a match to area 1L except that it is wider.

The dark red runner expands to fill the wider hallway. A purple chaise lounge rests in a nook.

As in area 1L the lamps have been placed to create shadows to allow Holmes and his minions to hide.

DEVELOPMENT. The secret door to area 1T is difficult to discover [DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation)] under the best of circumstances. In the evening characters relying on the light from the hallway's lamp make their Investigation check at disadvantage.

1P. Waiting Room

Open daily from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The pleasantly pungent smell of aftershave and liniment coats the air in the waiting room. There is a long wooden bench, leafy plant, and simple oaken table with a pitcher of water in the corner.

A gap in the northern wall leads to the barber's room, from which spreads the conversations of customers.

The success of La Pomme has increased the foot traffic to Shane's Shave and Cut, providing

the proprietor with a steady stream of clients. During business hours it's common for at least one person to be waiting.

1Q. Shane's Shave and Cut

A trio of barber's chairs with red leather upholstery and a mirror hanging behind each are the focal point of the room. The shelves below each mirror contain the accoutrements expected of a barber.

A giant bear of a man, working with fervorous intensity, maintains concentration on the straight razor gliding up and down his customer's throat. When he finishes, he looks up, nods, and goes back to work.

In the corner is a small desk and stool. On the desk a closed lockbox is partially covered by a discarded newspaper.



Shane's Shit and Shave, as the owner calls it with a wry smile, serves the patrons of Englewood as the barbershop of choice for those looking for a close shave from a skilled barber. The shop's nickname comes from the three public bathrooms it's connected to, a source of significant foot traffic.

Despite an entrance in the hallway, folks seem to always walk through the shop on their way to doing their daily. Making the best of the situation, Shane engages them in conversation and offers them a softer seat and a cut when their business is done.

DEVELOPMENT. As a boy Shane was a casualty of friendly fire in the Civil War. The bullet



was never removed from his leg and causes daily aches. Folks that point out there were no Civil War battles in Chicago hear an angry reply, “Well who the hell shot me then?” and learn to leave well enough alone. Shane’s recent treatment of choice is Holmes’ Restorative Tonic; the first bottle was a gift from his generous landlord upon learning of his affliction. A bottle of the tonic is kept handy, and draughts take periodically, “for medicinal use.”

SHANE O’CAHAN. Mr. O’Cahan stands fully six feet tall and two hundred pounds, towering over most of his patrons. His great bushy steel gray beard, and bald pate covered by a bandana, only add to his air of menace. Despite his appearance, gruff demeanor, and perpetual pain, Shane is a kind-hearted man who wouldn’t hesitate to take his razor to the throat of someone threatening an innocent.

ASSETS. The contents of the cashbox vary throughout the day, starting with \$1 in change and ending the day with 1d4 dollars. In a drawer in the desk is an extra bottle Holmes’ Restorative Tonic (the precise ingredients are left the GM’s discretion, see [page 133](#)).

SCENARIO HOOK. Chappell and Pitezal (see [page 189](#) and [page 191](#)) visit Shane’s Shave and Cut regularly for their grooming and can be found in there at any time talking to one another. Something about their conversation unsettles Shane, and the PCs if they’re present. They say nothing overtly disturbing but the innuendo and intimations of something darker are unmistakable.

1R. Public Lavatory

The World’s Fair Hotel’s extravagance extends to indoor water closets, plumbing, and washing basins for its customers, residents, and merchants. The bathrooms are open at all hours

and there is no lock on the hallway entry. The door to area 1Q has a deadbolt that can only be unlocked (or picked) from the barbershop.

DEVELOPMENT. PCs searching the southern wall and succeeding on a DC 18 Investigation (Intelligence) check find a door leading to area 1S cunningly hidden in the wall. The door is always locked (DC 20) and reinforced with iron bands, making it stronger and more durable (AC 17, HP 30, immune to poison and psychic damage, damage threshold 4).

1S. Gas Room

The chamber is noticeably warmer than the hallway, and lacking any means of internal illumination. The weak light from the hallway reveals a featureless room, iron plate walls and nothing else. The stale air is flavored by the aroma of cleaning products.

The gas room is used intermittently by Holmes and his minions for storage of his victims. The room is airtight, soundproof, and fire retardant. Once the door has been shut and locked from the other side there is no exposed mechanism for the victim to pick, and their only hope at escape is to smash through the door.

DEVELOPMENT. The gas room is generally used for short-term storage, and when the barbershop is not open. That said, Holmes has it configured for two types of experiments and is ready to collect data on its functionality once again.

Once the door is closed the room is flooded with gas. The gases can be changed with effort by Holmes, and the examples below are just some of the options available to him. The room was originally flooded with flammable gases, but the victims were too damaged to be of use afterwards, inciting a change in tactics.

Living creatures within the room must succeed on a Constitution saving throw every



minute or suffer the effects of the gas. The DC and effects are agent-specific and listed below.

Hydrogen Peroxide and Sulfuric Acid.

When combined the agents create a caustic gas that readily dissolves all organic matter it comes into contact with. Organic creatures within the room must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. Creatures that do not breathe have advantage on the saving throw. Inorganic and incorporeal creatures are unaffected.

Chlorine Bleach. When Holmes wants the flesh of his victims intact, he saturates the room with the fumes of chlorine bleach, removing all breathable oxygen. Breathing creatures within the room begin to suffocate within 1d4 minutes of the chlorine being piped into the room. Creatures that do not breathe are unaffected.

1T. Hanging Room

This room is always locked (DC 20), and the door reinforced with iron bands making it stronger and more durable (AC 17, HP 30, immune to poison and psychic damage, damage threshold 4).

The room sucks in the light from the hallway as if hungry for it. The invasion of light seems to push out the stale odor of urine and feces originating from a pair of stains on the floor. The walls are covered in thick padding.

A quartet of heavy iron rings, two of which are over the stains, are mounted into the ceiling.

PCs stepping into the room notice that the floor has a slight wobble; any investigator with passive Perception 12 or more notices a 1/8-inch gap where the wall and floor meet. The iron rings are

firmly mounted into the ceiling and cannot be removed without tools, time, and a noisy effort.

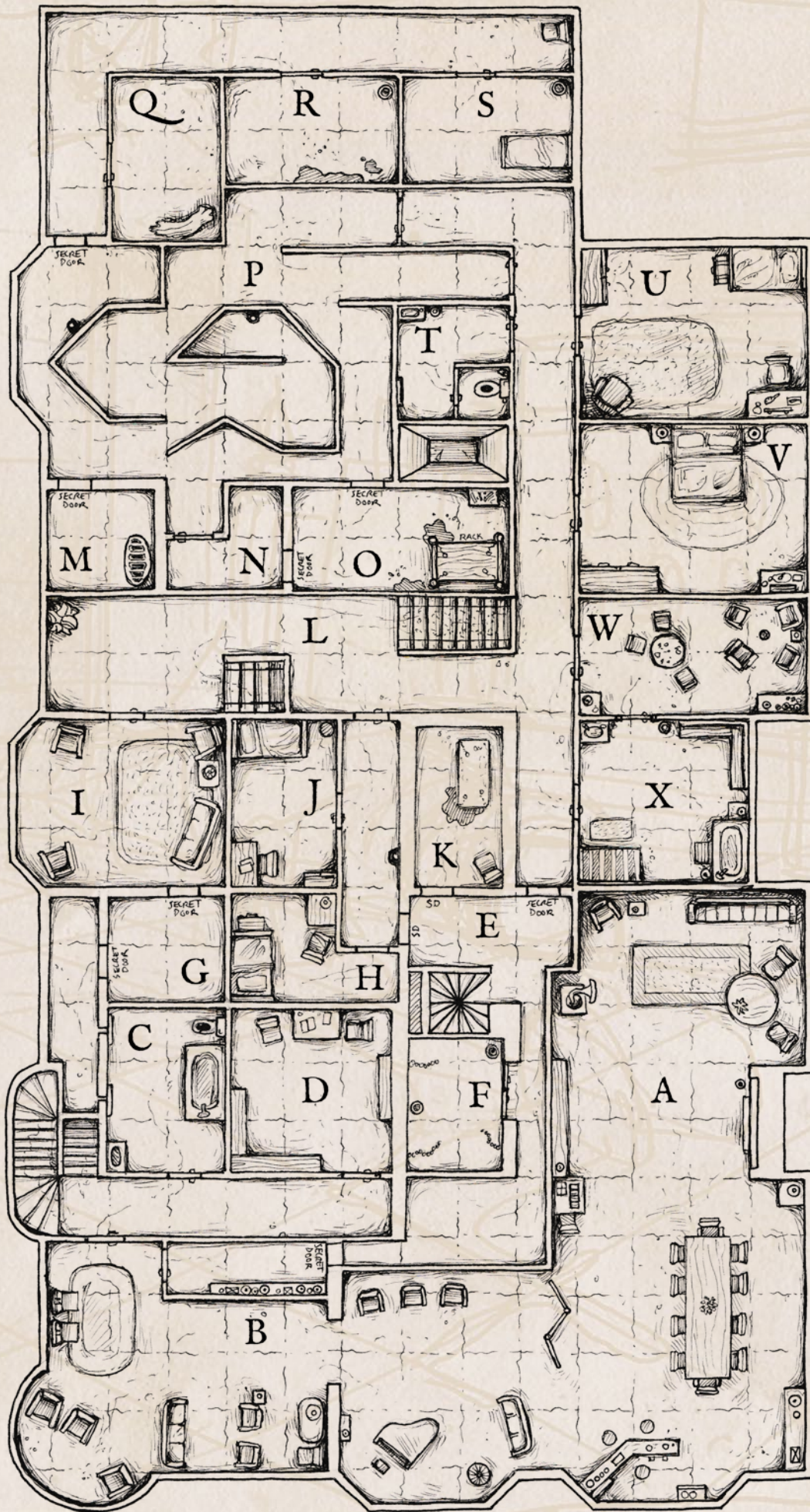
A cursory effort has been made to clean the stains as evidenced by brush marks and the lack of fecal matter. PCs with sufficient light, or darkvision, note that there is a ventilation tube in the ceiling.

DEVELOPMENT. PCs succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Medicine) check while examining the stains note that urine, feces, and blood are all present, and that the stains are likely to have been made within the last week.

The hanging room is a technological marvel with a floor that drops from beneath its occupant's feet at the touch of a remote trigger which has two settings: short and long. When Holmes has call to hang a victim they are brought to the room, strung from the rings, and at the time of his choosing the floor is dropped. The trigger is a piece of the hotel and as such Holmes can control it from elsewhere with a thought.

The Short Drop. The floor drops 10 feet. Those standing on the floor must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. Humanoids whose necks have been placed within a noose when the floor drops take 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If they are reduced to zero hit points from the damage they must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be decapitated. Victims that survive the drop begin suffocating.

The Long Drop. The floor drops 15 feet. Those standing on the floor must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. Humanoids whose necks have been placed within a noose when the floor drops take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage. If they are reduced to zero hit points from the damage they must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be decapitated. Victims that survive the drop begin suffocating.





THE SECOND FLOOR

The second floor of the World's Fair Hotel is broadly divided into three sections: visitors' area, guests' quarters, and Holmes' chambers. Each section is accessed by its own stairway and is, to outward appearances, separate from the others. Holmes and his cronies have access to all parts of the hotel through the use of cleverly hidden secret doors and passages, but for the typical boarder there is a sense of privacy and separation from the public.

VISITORS' AREA. The World's Fair Hotel is rapidly gaining a reputation as an establishment of culture and breeding amongst the social elite of Chicago. The second floor is open to the public from dawn until 10 p.m., though all it takes is a few words from Holmes, Pitezel, or Chappell for it to stay open until the wee hours of the morning. The reception lounge and dining room are available for reservations, and have seen use by such groups as the University Club (see [page 98](#)) and the Chicago Press Club.

GUESTS' ROOMS. Guests of the World's Fair Hotel stay on the second floor, as do Pitezel and Chappell (see [page 189](#) and [page 191](#)). Despite the size of the hotel there are surprisingly few rooms open for rent, a fact that Holmes is very adept at hiding. When pressed, Dr. Holmes makes Pitezel and Chappell's rooms available to guests.

HOLMES' CHAMBERS. A series of rooms, secret doors, and hallways serve as a conduit between the rooms dedicated to visitors and guests, allowing Holmes and his cronies to freely travel unseen between the different areas of the hotel. The walls of these chambers are

especially thick and particularly effective at muffling sounds. Normal sounds, such as polite conversation and walking, are totally blocked by the walls, and sounds of extreme volume are only detected by guests with the most sensitive senses or those looking for disturbances.



2A. Visitors' Dining Room

A grand piano, fully-stocked wet bar, comfortably stuffed leather chairs, and beautifully appointed dining area occupy a large portion of the second floor. The accommodations, amenities, and liquor are top shelf. Exquisite woodwork, valances, moldings, and furniture gleam with a fresh coat of wax whose aroma perfumes the air.

The largest room in the hotel, this room is used regularly for parties and receptions for guests, clubs, and businesses in the area. It remains open for from 6 p.m. 'til 10 p.m. Dinner parties are held monthly and as the occasion requires. The bar is self-service excepting Tuesday through Friday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. when it's attended by a bartender.

The ambiance of the room can best be described as luxurious and welcoming. When the piano is not in use a Volta Laboratory graphophone provides background music for the room's occupants. The hearth is kept warm from October through May, and when not in use is covered with an ornate grate.

DEVELOPMENT. Visitors and guests of the hotel can find refreshments, spirits, and other forms of entertainment within the dining room. For those with a room the activities and refreshments are gratis, and for guests there is a



nominal charge: 10¢ for a hearty meal, 5¢ for an alcoholic drink, and 1¢ for other drinks.

Benjamin Pitezel is often found in a solitary corner of the room in his cups. Chappell and Holmes are much less common, though when prominent members of Chicago's business and social elite are in the lounge Holmes invariably makes an appearance.

SCENARIO HOOK. Bartenders come and go at the whim of Holmes. Many are fired for fabricated slights to avoid payment for their services. Others catch the attention of the killer in their midst or his allies, and meet less kind ends. A young man, Donathin (**mountebank**), is tending bar tonight and a drunken Pitezel cannot take his eyes off him. Don's twin brother, Michael, stood in that very place months ago. Investigators with a passive Perception 15 or more hear Pitezel saying, "Can't be him. E's nothing but ash."

2B. Reception Lounge

The heady smell of tobacco smoke and leather commingle into an aromatic miasma that evokes the impression of privilege, money, and arrogance as surely as a room full of well-heeled politicians.

The corner of the room offers an excellent view of the city and provides ample light during the daytime hours.

The reception lounge is the most popular room on the second floor and is rarely unoccupied during civilized hours. Hotel guests are often found here, as are social clubs. The room has the air of a place where decisions are made and lives changed.

DEVELOPMENT. The butler's pantry is kept locked at all times [DC 11 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)], and is used to store the silver dinner sets used in the hotel. Investigators taking 1d4 x 10 minutes to look through the silver and

succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check are able to identify four different sets of silverware in the cabinets. Further details cannot be determined at this time, but with a sample, some luck, and effort, investigators may be able to find the original owners.

Pitezel and Chappell know nothing of the silver if asked. An embarrassed Holmes admits to purchasing the silver from a pawn shop, and mentally notes their interest in the matter. Investigators succeeding on an opposed Wisdom (Insight) check versus Holmes' Charisma (Deception) realize he's not telling the truth.

ASSETS. The cabinet, 10 feet long and 5 feet high, is fully stocked. The silver could fetch a pretty penny on the open market (1d4 x \$500).

2C. Visitors' Bath

A glistening white enamel tub, large enough for a big man to soak in, lies a few strides from the doorway. Tucked in the corner opposite the bath is an elegantly carved oak table with wash basin, a perfect match to the tub.

At the foot of the bath is a modern toilet, its seat down, again its exterior is gleaming white and spotless. A pair of full-length mirrors hang on the wall opposite the tub.

The visitors' bath has indoor plumbing, an interior lock, and strangely enough a bathtub. It is always clean, and monogrammed towels bearing the hotel's initials are neatly arranged near the wash basin.

DEVELOPMENT. The full-length mirrors opposite the tub are mounted in place by a combination of screws and adhesive, and cannot be removed without damaging the wall. If the mirror is broken (AC 13, HP 4, immune to poison and psychic damage), a hole the size of a nickel is found at eye height behind it.



2D. *Visitors' Study*

A pair of sparsely populated walnut bookshelves occupy the corner of the room. They extend from floor to ceiling and have ample room for new volumes. They smell faintly of varnish, as sure a sign of their newness as their lack of contents. The curio cabinet, a three-shelved affair with windows of protective glass, is similarly uninhabited.

A pair of chairs, a writing desk, and a pad of stationery complete the room's furnishings. The stationery bears the hotel's name in florid copperplate, as do the fountain pens in a nearby cup.

The visitors' study has no lock and, like the lounge, can be reserved for use by groups. The room is typically used by folks looking for a quiet space away from areas 2A and 2B, and hotel guests regularly find their way to this quiet room. The shelves contain books from a range of current authors with a preponderance of pulp tales. The books are in good condition, though they are not valuable.

DEVELOPMENT.

Holmes will not knowingly leave any books, notes, or clues to the activities within the hotel in the study. That said, this room is

not locked, and countless folks come and go. A hidden note within the books is always a possibility.

2E. *Hidden Hallway*

A pair of anterooms are connected by an unremarkable hallway. The northern chamber has an oddly narrow alcove, and the southern chamber has a tightly wound spiral staircase leading to the floors above and below. The hallway has a faint musty smell, and when there





are guests in areas **2F** and **2K** it is accompanied by the smell of waste from the prisoners.

At the middle of the hallway is a thick wooden door reinforced with heavy bands of iron and featuring a shuttered viewport. The lock on the door can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check, or it can be smashed (AC 15, HP 32, immune to poison and psychic damage).

The hallway is used by Holmes, Pitezel, and Chappell to hold their victims and to travel unseen by the inhabitants of the second floor. All of the doors in the hallway open inward. The secret doors leading to area **2B** and area **2L** are visible from the hallway, do not require a check to find, and are not locked. The doors to area **2K** and the hall near areas **2H** and **2J** require a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discover. Both are locked, requiring a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check to open. Curiously, the secret door to the hallway has been papered over on the opposite side and can only be traversed by ripping through the wallpaper.

The spiral staircase leads down to the first floor and up to area **3G** on the third. Read or paraphrase the following for investigators traveling the staircase.

Within moments the gloom of the stairwell increases, swallowing the telltale sounds of steps on the metal staircase and enveloping everything in its inky embrace. All sights and all sounds are lost. The only indication of up and down is the pull of gravity.

2F. Holding Chamber

This cell is primarily used as a temporary holding cell for folks that Holmes will soon be taking up to his shrine on the floor above. Due to its proximity to guest's rooms he is judicious in its usage.

The barren chamber smells of copper, feces, and the heady stench of the unclean. Three chains, each a yard in length and ending in a metal collar, are mounted into the walls. There is a drain and a chamber pot.

The chains are cunningly placed so that they can each hold a single prisoner by an appendage, or all three can be used to stretch out a single victim with one at their neck and the other two splaying their legs apart.

DEVELOPMENT. Escaping from the chains becomes increasingly difficult as the subject is more securely bound. The chains can be broken with a successful DC 18 Strength check, and the locking mechanisms of the manacles picked with a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check.

- **1-point Restraints.** Either of the above checks can be attempted with no penalties.
- **2-point Restraints.** Either of the above checks can be attempted. The entrapped creature has disadvantage on their check.
- **3-point Restraints.** The entrapped creature may attempt to break the chains but cannot reach the locks to attempt picking them. The creature has disadvantage on their attempt to break the chains.

2G. Hidden Storage

This serves as a storage room for the luggage and accoutrements of the World's Fair Hotel guests that are not afforded the opportunity to check out.

Neatly stacked piles of luggage rest against the walls of the room. All manner of baggage is present, and the majority is in good repair.

DEVELOPMENT. Searching the luggage is a time-consuming process, taking 3d6 x 10





minutes. Holmes and his cronies have removed all valuables and identifying characteristics, but they are bound to miss something.

2H. Pitezel's Room

Stale air, an unmade bed, and a shoddy table with a kerosene lamp fill the cramped room. Atop the table is a photograph, and at the base of the bed a battered strongbox.

Benjamin Pitezel's (see *page 189*) room is utilitarian, and rarely used for more than a place to sleep. The photograph on the desk shows a young boy, barely in school by the looks of him, and a girl several years older. The photograph is of his children, Howard and Alice Pitezel, and the only personal touch in the room.

DEVELOPMENT. Investigators looking at the strongbox notice that the locking mechanism has been broken. If the photo goes missing Pitezel will grow increasingly agitated until it is found. If it's not found within a few days he will begin to accuse guests and visitors of the theft. Pitezel turns violent immediately upon discovering the picture, attacking whomever he deems the culprit.

ASSETS. Within the strongbox is a half-full bottle of rotgut and a well-used hunting knife.

2I. Second Floor Lounge

Three comfortably upholstered leather chairs and a divan are placed around a luxurious rug. The not-unpleasant smell of pipe smoke hangs in the air.

A picture window, with curtains matching the rug, provides ample light during the daytime hours, and a lamp rests on a table for the evenings.

The second floor lounge sees intermittent use throughout the day and most evenings. It is

primarily used by guests seeking more privacy than what's available in area 2A.

DEVELOPMENT. The secret door is typically blocked by the divan. Once located a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check is required to open it.

2J. Chappell's Room

A writing desk, chest of drawers, and neatly made bed fill this modest room. There are no signs of personality or that the room is occupied.

Were it not for the smell of cheap whiskey it would be easy to dismiss the room as unoccupied and unused.

The bed is made, the room clean, and unless he is sleeping the room appears to be unoccupied. Charles Chappell uses his room solely for sleeping, and the odor permeating the room is from the sheets that have soaked in the sweat from his night terrors.

DEVELOPMENT. No check is necessary to discern the location of the smell: the bed. If the bed is unmade, its stained white cotton sheets are revealed and the smell intensifies.

2K. Holding Room

The stale air in the room is permeated with competing odors: tobacco smoke, stale urine, dried excrement, and fresh linens. An overflowing ashtray next the room's only chair is the source of the first and strongest scent, while the other odors come from the metal cot.

The cot, complete with four-point restraints, has linens and a mattress but no pillow. A recurrent, multilayered pattern of pallid yellow, dirty brown, and rusty red stains the translucent sheet and mattress.







The purpose of the room is clear from its furnishings and their arrangement. A victim is strapped to the cot, and observed, often for extended periods of time. The cot and its covers have been freshly laundered, but vestiges of the abuse they have witnessed clings to them nonetheless.

DEVELOPMENT. An investigator examining the bed can easily deduce that the overlapping stains were caused by multiple victims — so many in fact that determining an exact number is not possible. The cigarette butts are all the same brand: Duke's.

SCENARIO HOOK. Holmes and his associates do not smoke cigarettes. In fact, Holmes detests them as a vile, base habit of the lower class. Armed with that knowledge the PCs realize two things: Holmes is not directly involved in whatever goes on in this room, and that whomever is using the chamber has sufficient influence to disregard Holmes' proclivities regarding cigarettes.

2L. Central Hall

The central hallway is the second floor's primary thoroughfare for guests of the hotel. A potted plant, the same species as the ones spaced throughout the hotel, fills its pot near a picturesque window at the end of the hallway.

2M. Body Storage

A draft of preternaturally cold air escapes the room as the door is opened to reveal an iron box in the corner. The container rests on the floor, is knee high, long enough for a body, and topped by a viewing portal crusted over with ice.

Pipes, gauges, and mechanisms of strange design jut from the container at odd angles. A rime of frost and icicles clings to many of the pipes.

An iron coffin, complete with pipes, gauges, and esoteric mechanisms, rests on the floor in this room. The coolness of the room emanates from the coffin, which is crusted with ice, particularly on the glass porthole which is obscured by the frost. The cryochamber is fully functional, but as of yet it is unoccupied. Holmes' experiments, studies, and ambitions will inevitably call for its use.

DEVELOPMENT. The cryochamber is dangerously cold, and PCs touching it with their bare skin risk frostbite and cold burns. Skin that comes into contact with the machinery suffers 1d2 cold damage, unless the creature succeeds on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, in which case they are able to withdraw quickly enough to avoid harm.

Removing the crusts of ice is a laborious task, taking 3d6 x 10 minutes to clear the chamber completely. Cleaning just the glass portal takes only 3d6 minutes. The machinery is sufficiently cold that any water poured onto it immediately freezes over, doubling the time needed to clean the contraption. The machine cannot be opened until the ice is removed.

Once cleared of the impeding ice the container can be opened without damaging it with a successful DC 25 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check. PCs with a background that includes working with complex machinery have advantage on the check. Alternatively, it can be pried open with brute strength (DC 20 Strength check), or smashed (AC 15, HP 35, immune to cold, poison, and psychic damage, resistant to piercing and slashing damage, and damage threshold 5).

2N. Empty Room

The room is empty and unremarkable.





Dreamlands Intrusion

Areas 2M through 2S exist simultaneously in the Dreamlands (see page 80) and Englewood. The skewed reality affects all guests and visitors, with the exception of Holmes and creatures native to the Dreamlands. Chappell and Pitezl are able to navigate the area while wearing the spider brooches gifted to them by Holmes (see page 218).

ELDRITCH UNEASE. Creatures affected by the intrusion find their senses to be unreliable and confusing. Shadows flit unnaturally, sounds echo oddly, and alien odors waft through the air. The intermingling of the realities creates an underlying confusion that imparts a -2 penalty on all Perception and Investigation checks.

At the end of each affected creature's turn they must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma saving throw to be able to continue exploring the intrusion. Creatures that fail their check can either stand in place or retreat. A creature that fumbles their check gains the frightened condition until they leave, and cannot be

persuaded to return under any circumstances until completing a short rest.

FRACTURED REALITY. A creature sleeping in the area, and without the protection of a spider brooch, runs the risk of having their sanity eroded from the stresses of existing in two realities at once. Any creature completing a Short Rest within the intrusion must succeed on a DC 10 Sanity check or lose 1 point of Sanity. Creatures that do not sleep are immune to this effect.

MUTABLE. The inanimate structures within the intrusion are particularly susceptible to manipulation by Holmes and Atlach-Nacha. The GM is encouraged to move doors, locks, windows, and even rooms as desired to maintain tension.

SUPPRESSION. At the whim of Holmes or his mistress the adverse effects of this corner of the World's Fair Hotel can be muted to such an extent as to seem perfectly mundane. This ability can be used on any room(s) within the intrusion.

20. Rack Room

A crudely built rack dominates the room, its cobbled-together form enhancing its inherent brutality rather than detracting from it. Three types of wood were used by its creator: pine, oak, and something darker with a fine grain. The unvarnished slab top is rough, a characteristic easily identified due to the uneven stains of rusty red, and broken splinters.

A solitary table, its top chest high, sits next to the rack within easy reach, providing a convenient resting spot for a half dozen surgical tools.

The rack room sees frequent use by Chappell. He has been working diligently to improve the efficiency of articulation techniques and finds the rack's ability to simultaneously immobilize and elongate the victim to be of particular use during dismemberments.

DEVELOPMENT. Despite efforts to clean up after himself Chappell has been unsuccessful at erasing the evidence of prior uses of the rack. With a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Medicine) check, PCs examining the rack learn that the jagged splinters and blood stains are from wood splinters piercing the flesh of the victims.

An examination of the tools reveals that they are primarily used for dismemberments,



amputations, and delicate work. Investigators whose backgrounds include formal training as a physician know their use without needing a check. Investigators from other backgrounds learn their purpose with a successful DC 12 Intelligence check. Investigators whose backgrounds include harvesting wild game, butchering, or similar activities may apply their proficiency bonus to the check.

A creature strapped into the rack is restrained. A successful DC 16 Strength check will break a buckle. If both arms are bound the check is made with disadvantage. Once an arm is freed, they may use their action to extricate themselves from each remaining addition buckle. While fully bound a Strength check is the only way to free oneself.

ASSETS. The medical instruments are specialized to their purpose, however the largest amputating knife makes a serviceable dagger in a pinch.

2P. Dark Maze

Thick air, flitting shadows and faintly audible skittering sounds fill the corridors. A trick of the lighting makes the hallway appear to stretch unnaturally; corners go unnoticed; the floors and walls appear to move when looked at closely.

Holmes' powers of obfuscation and confusion are rarely more apparent than in this corner of his hotel. The maze's construction appears simple, but due to the subtle geometries employed and his eldritch connection to the Dreamlands (see Dreamlands Intrusion on [page 150](#)) folks entering this section of the hotel invariably get confused and fail to plumb its depths.

DEVELOPMENT. The corridors in the dark maze shift at the whims of their masters and in response to the eddies of the Dreamlands.

No two trips are exactly the same, and the experience of individuals varies greatly even when they are in the same group. Doors may move, disappear, or become hidden. Locking mechanisms can become frozen open or closed. All at the whim of Holmes, Atlach-Nacha, and the needs of the story.

DEVELOPERS NOTE: The Tunnel of Terror scene from Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (particularly the Gene Wilder version) is an excellent example of the atmosphere in the Dark Maze.

2Q. Cold Cell

The frigid cell is empty save a tattered buffalo hide. Bits of rotting flesh remain connected by sinew, and a rancid smell comes off it in overpowering waves.

The cell's connection to the Dreamlands allows it to maintain a temperature fractionally above freezing. Holmes uses the combination of cold, isolation, and the wendigo skin to break the minds and bodies of his victims.

DEVELOPMENT. At the end of each hour within the cell a creature must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1 point of cold damage. Creatures resistant or immune to cold damage or those wearing the wendigo skin for at least half an hour automatically succeed the check.

PCs looking more closely at the skin see that it's teeming with fleas, and gobbets of wet meat remain connected to the underside by strings of gore. PCs examining the skin learn the following with a successful Intelligence (Nature) check:

- **DC 10:** The animal can stand on two legs, at least briefly, and is some type of bear.





- **DC 16:** The length of the arms — and they most certainly are arms — indicates that the animal was a great ape.
- **DC 20:** The proportions of the animal are not quite right, but there is not enough of the creature left to positively identify it, other than to know that it's unlike anything you've ever seen or heard of before.

- **1st Failure:** Gain the trait: Aspect of the Wendigo
- **2nd Failure:** Gain the trait: Ravenous
- **3rd Failure:** Exposed to the Wendigo's Curse

2R. Deprivation Cell

A strong smell of ammonia saturates the air in the cell. The walls and floor are roughly hewn stone, and a small vase has been placed in the corner.

PCs subjected to extended imprisonment within the cell risk losing their Sanity as well as changes to their perspective on morality. At the GMs discretion, extended use of the wendigo skin is considered a Major Life Event (see [page 242](#)) and/or incites Sanity checks. The Sanity check DC is equal to the PC's current Sanity.

ASSETS. The *wendigo skin* was crafted by Holmes to allow its wearer to survive for extended periods of time in frigid wastelands by providing shelter and sustenance. A creature using the skin to cover their body — as a cape, blanket, or the like — is afforded considerable protection from cold. The creature gains resistance to cold damage and is comfortable in temperatures as low as -40 degrees Fahrenheit/ Celsius. The skin's supernatural properties only function while within the Dreamlands.

The skin's other unique property — and the price for using it — is not as obvious to observers. The morsels of meat connected to the skin can be harvested and consumed. There is enough to feed three humans. The meat is nourishing; one portion provides the equivalent of one day's worth of food and water for 24 hours. The skin's magic causes the morsels to regenerate the following morning at dawn.

Creatures deriving sustenance from the wendigo skin must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw after their next short rest, gaining the following with each failure. Any traits gained (see [page 86](#)) are permanent unless extreme measures are taken (GM's discretion).

To an outside observer there is little of interest in the cell, and for as long as the door remains open the cell's true purpose stays hidden. Closing the door of the cell flips a psychic switch, plunging the cell and its occupants into a vacuous area of the Dreamlands.

When the door is closed the atmosphere of the room changes immediately and dramatically; read or paraphrase the following:

Table 2. Sensory Deprivation Effects

ROLL RESULT	EFFECT
1	<i>Regain 1 Sanity (this cannot increase your Sanity beyond the maximum as determined by your Charisma and Wisdom ability scores)</i>
2	<i>Has advantage on Sanity checks until completing a short rest</i>
3	<i>No adverse effect</i>
4–5	<i>Gains no benefit from their short rest</i>
6–7	<i>Gains the frightened condition until completing a short rest</i>
8–9	<i>Develops a short-term madness</i>
10–11	<i>Loses 1d2 Sanity</i>
12	<i>Roll twice more on the table using 3d4</i>



There is no audible warning from the latching of the cell's door. The meager interior light simply ceases to exist, absorbed by impenetrable blackness. The lingering odor of urine is gone. All sounds, great and small, gone. There is simply nothing.

DEVELOPMENT. The sudden loss of all sensory input is extremely disorienting to those within the room. While the door is closed all occupants have the blinded and deafened conditions. Darkvision does not pierce the gloom, and attempts to create sound are ineffective. The presence of another creature provides a modicum of tactile sensations.

After four hours in the deprivation cell, and after each short rest thereafter, prisoners must roll on table 2 to determine how they are affected. The initial roll is made with a d12, and subsequent rolls use 2d6. If the prisoners' time in sensory deprivation is interrupted the process starts over. If there are two or more occupants in the cell simultaneously, they both use a d12 on their daily rolls.

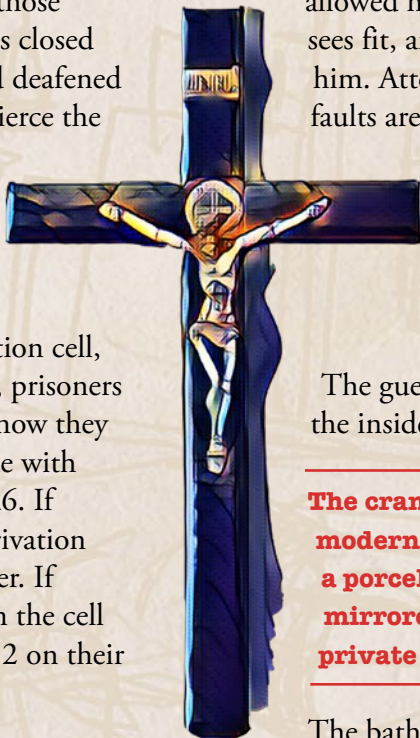
2S. Clara's Cell

The room is clean, the bed is made, and an empty chamber pot sits neatly in the corner. An iron cross has been mounted above the bed.

Clara's cell, named after Holmes' first wife, is reserved for his most attractive victims, and used when he wishes to emotionally break and mold his victims psychologically rather than physically. The room is clean and

indistinguishable from what would be found in countless boarding houses. Guests to the room are allowed to add small touches during their stay.

SCENARIO HOOK. Cas Harkness (see *page 138*) sent a note to her family two weeks past telling them that she has a gentleman caller and moved to Fort Worth, Texas. Ms. Harkness has been living in Clara's cell since. Holmes has allowed her to decorate the room as she sees fit, and she is very much in love with him. Attempts to persuade her of his faults are met with disbelief, and possibly violence, as her sanity has eroded considerably during her stay.



2T. Guest Lavatory

The guests' lavatory can be locked from the inside by engaging the deadbolt.

The cramped room is a marvel of modern plumbing and luxuries with a porcelain sink of running water, mirrored medicine cabinet, and a private indoor commode.

The bathroom is a modern marvel of indoor plumbing and convenience, and sees frequent use by the occupants of areas 2U and 2V.

DEVELOPMENT. The mirror serves as a medicine cabinet and comes stocked with an assortment of Dr. Holmes' tonics from his pharmacy.

2U. Writer's Room

The writer's room can be locked from either side with a key; there is no knob for engaging the bolt.



The room is open, uncluttered, and well appointed. An elegant writing desk of walnut, complete with stationery and the necessary implements, rests comfortably in the far corner. To the right is an over-stuffed chair of supple tawny leather, and a lamp.

A plush rug spreads through the center of the room, and a modest bed with strongbox lie in the far corner.

The room's furnishings and decorations are of the highest quality and staged impeccably. Holmes often rents this room to professionals and solitary boarders.

SCENARIO HOOK. The room's current tenant, Mr. Matthew F. Fields (**commoner**), caught the eye of Holmes while checking into the hotel. Mr. Fields' wealth was obvious from his clothing and mannerisms, and as a traveler from New Orleans he's a long way from home. Pitezel has taken the liberty of placing a length of rope under Mr. Field's bed for use as a ligature for the upcoming kidnapping. Fields, in a bout of tossing and turning from nightmare-fueled sleep, discovered the rope.

2V. Couple's Suite

The couple's suite can be locked from either side with a key.

A large bed with silk comforter, matching duvet and pillows is the focal point of the room. A matching pair of nightstands have been placed in easy reach of the bed's occupants.

Opposite the bed is a vanity, complete with mirror, and an armoire large enough to house the wardrobe of a couple on an extended stay.

As with its neighboring room the couple's suite is resplendent with furniture, linens, and accoutrements of the highest quality. The room is mundane, comfortable, and exactly as one would expect from a hotel with a sterling reputation.

2W. Residents' Lounge

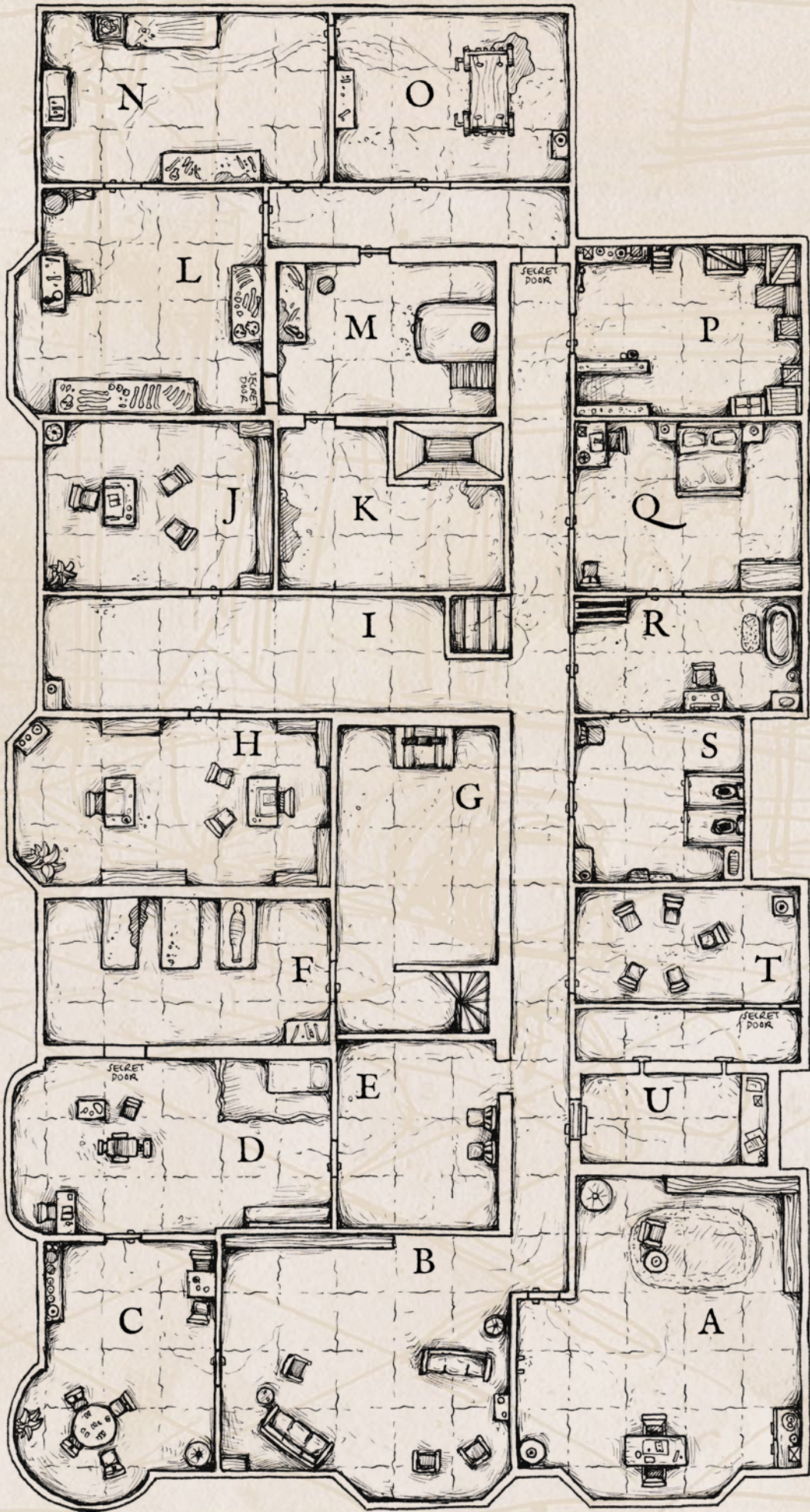
The residents of the World's Fair Hotel are afforded many luxuries and amenities that are rarely found elsewhere. The residents' lounge is open to all guests; the door has a lock, can be opened by their room key, and is intended as a place for them to gather, partake in light refreshments, and enjoy each other's company.

A pitcher of water is always handy, and in the mornings there is coffee. By midday the coffee has been replaced by tea. Freshly baked rolls and pastries are provided throughout the day by The Apple (First Floor, area 1A).

2X. Guest Bathroom

The guest bath is similar to, though more spacious and luxurious than, the visitors' bath in area 2C. There are cubbies in the armoire and shelves assigned to each room for folks to place their toiletries. A cedar step stool has been placed at the side of the tub for easier access.

The doors can only be opened with room keys, and both doors have a manual lock that can be engaged when occupied to prevent unexpected intrusions.





THE THIRD FLOOR

The third floor of the World's Fair Hotel is reserved for Mr. Holmes' office and living spaces, a smattering of meeting rooms, Dr. Ezra Todd's dental practice, and the rooms in which Holmes and his cohorts ply their diabolical trade. The sole public access to the third-floor is via the hotel's central staircase. Investigators may stumble upon other options: Holmes' secret spiral staircase, or ascending the body chute.

PUBLIC SPACES. The public spaces of the uppermost floor of the World's Fair Hotel are accessible to guests and visitors via the guest stairs. Rooms are open to the public for relaxation, and there are meeting rooms scattered throughout. Holmes has made it a point to cultivate relationships with businesses, social organizations, and anyone with influence be it political, economic, or social in Chicago. The rooms are often made available discreetly and free of charge to Dr. Holmes' friends. Almost anyone can be found at the hotel at any given time (the third floor is exempted from the curfew imposed on the second floor by Holmes).

TODD DENTISTRY. Dr. Ezra Todd's dental practice on the third floor (areas **3E** and **3F**) is an oddity as the only business not confined to the retail spaces of the first floor. Dr. Todd's patients come at all hours, and their responses to his ministrations can be heard echoing through the chambers. Drs. Todd and Holmes can often be seen in each other's company sharing a meal or a drink, and observers easily note an air of brotherly comradery between the two. With the exception of Holmes, Dr. Todd does not interact with the other staff of the hotel, and openly dislikes Mr. Pitezal and Mr. Chappell.

OFFICES. Office space on the third floor is available for Holmes' tenants (areas **3H** and **3J**) and all make use of it to varying degrees.

The rooms are shared, and each proprietor has a key that works for both doors. Holmes' office occupies the southeastern corner of the third floor (area **3A**).

HOLMES' CLUTCH. The Dreamlands Intrusion (see *page 150*) from the second floor extends upwards into areas **3K** through **3R**. No one other than Holmes and his minions are allowed in this section, and intruders are dealt with swiftly and with finality. Holmes' connection to the hotel and the Dreamlands alerts him of all movements in these areas, placing all intruders into one of two categories: those with a spider brooch and those without. To identify folks more clearly Holmes must employ additional means.

3A. Holmes' Office

The door to Holmes' office does not have a lock.

An expansive room, lit by the strong orange glow of sodium lamps, is sparsely populated with a mahogany desk cradled in a nook created by a picture window. A matching table rests in the corner with a pitcher of water, fruit, and morsels of bread.

The second lamp's glow illuminates the reading area, lending a Titian cast to the leather reading chair and bookshelves in the far corner. The leather chair and refreshments rest on an oval rug of intricate swirls and spirals.

Holmes' office is staged to be perceived as an innocuous gentleman's office. The furniture is of exceptional quality, and part of a matching set. Holmes has an open-door policy for when he's present, only closing the door at the request of his frequent visitors.

DEVELOPMENT. Holmes is too canny to leave overtly incriminating evidence in his office. He can often be found in the office intermittently



during the weekdays, and for any business meetings he has scheduled.

The Desk. The papers and implements on the desk are uninteresting — a ledger with income and expenses clearly defined, stationery, and a fine fountain pen. The rightmost upper desk drawer is locked [DC 12 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)]. Alternatively, the drawer can be broken and forced open with a DC 12 Strength check. The drawer contains a map of Fort Worth Texas. The intersection of 2nd and Commerce Streets has been circled.

The Bookcase. The bookcase is largely empty; "I've not had the opportunity to fill it with works of note. Have you any suggestions to add to my collection?" This is a smattering of books and objects, all of which are mundane, that Holmes uses as conversation pieces.

The Refreshments. A pitcher of water, bowl of bread, and apples.

SCENARIO HOOK. The map of Fort Worth shows the location of the property of Ms. Minnie Williams and her sister Ms. Nannie Williams. Holmes has dispatched the two women, and has plans to use their property (now his) as the site of his next Murder Castle when his work in Chicago is complete. At the GM's discretion the work in Texas has already begun, and the hotel is nearly identical to the World's Fair Hotel.

3B. *Waiting Area*

A pair of leather couches and three matching overstuffed chairs provide comfortable seating for at least half a dozen folks. Faint scuff marks on the floor suggest that the chairs and couches are moved often to suit the needs of the room's occupants.

A long floor to ceiling bookshelf, partially filled with knickknacks, books, and tchotchkes, occupies the southern wall, and a door bisects the western wall.

Hotel guests, the social elite, and business associates of the hotel can be found meeting informally in the evenings and later hours. On most evenings a serving cart with whiskey and glasses is placed discreetly in a corner.

DEVELOPMENT. The bookcase has been stocked by previous guests and contains dozens of mundane books from penny dreadfuls to local histories, and pulp fictions to oddly specific treatises on the flora and fauna of the Midwest.

SCENARIO HOOKS. The bookshelves have been used to pass communiques between folks who wish to not be seen together. The Nightworms are suspected of hiding 'keys' (a specific printing and edition of a book which is used to untangle their codes) to their book ciphers in public spaces throughout the city. A PC inadvertently borrows a book key while looking for reading material, and the book's intended recipient will stop at nothing to retrieve their lost property.

3C. *Game Room*

A round table, covered in emerald green felt with four chairs around it, fills a place of honor in a nook created by a bay window overlooking the city below. A potted plant sits nearby taking advantage of the ample lighting. A well-stocked dry bar lies just a few steps away.

Use of the game room is first come, first served, and it is rare for it to be unoccupied in the evenings. Most games continue into the wee hours of the morning, as booze flows, cigars are smoked, deals are made, and fortunes lost. Holmes does not partake in the games, though his lackeys have been known to invite themselves to play on occasion.

DEVELOPMENT. The door leading to area 3E has been nailed shut from the other side, and



Playing Cards

Playing cards is a game of skill, luck, and obfuscation. Each of these aspects can be influenced by the attributes of the players, creating a complex interplay between the opponents' strengths and weaknesses. The rules below are guidelines for a generic card game, can be adjusted as needed based on the specific game played and the folks involved, and are not meant to replace the intricacies of poker and its cousins.

PLAYING CARDS. *Each participant in the game rolls a d20. The higher the roll the stronger their hand. At the end of the game whomever has the highest roll wins the hand. After the initial roll the total may be changed in the following ways. Each maneuver is independent of the other and the effects are combined:*

- **A GAME OF SKILL.** *Participants that have proficiency in playing card games may add their proficiency bonus.*
- **CHEATING AT CARDS.** *Once per hand, a character succeeding on a Dexterity (Sleight of*

Hand) check (they only roll once) against each other participants' passive Wisdom (Insight) may reroll their d20 and use their choice of the two rolls. A participant fumbling their Sleight of Hand check is immediately caught, as are any whose activities are noted by their insightful opponents. The consequences are left to the GM, and are often severe, if not fatal.

- **WAGERS, BLUFFS, AND TELLS.** *Once per hand a participant may use Charisma (Deception) or Charisma (Intimidation), their choice, to improve their chances of winning by attempting to influence the behavior of another player. The character makes a Charisma check (they only roll once) that is compared against the passive Wisdom (Insight) of each opponent.*
 - *If they succeed against all of their opponents they may add their proficiency modifier to their roll.*
 - *If they succeed against half or fewer of their opponents they subtract 1d4 from their roll.*

can only be opened by smashing it down (DC 20 Strength).

PCs wishing to play cards can generally find a spot with a bit of patience, as turnover can be quick when the stakes are high. To be invited the investigator much have table stakes, be able to pay the ante for each hand, and cover their losses.

3D. Dental Theater

The door to the dental theater is locked at all times, even when in use. When a procedure is in process Dr. Todd engages an interior deadbolt for additional privacy.

The room is fastidiously clean, organized, and exudes a sense of compulsive symmetry.

To the left an assortment of bottles, phials, tools, and surgical equipment are stored with meticulous attention to placement. Opposite the shelf two gleaming white sheets are hung from ceiling to floor, affording privacy to whomever or whatever is behind them.

The focal point of the room is the intricately constructed chair situated in front of the door. Its stark beauty, finely crafted iron, plush leather, and engraved wooden inlays, is marred by the heavy restraints on its arms. In easy reach of the chair is a metal table and a tall stool.





There is also a desk with ledger near a barred door. Incongruously this door is blocked by three planks, hastily affixing it to the frame to prevent its opening.

Dr. Todd's dental practice operates by appointment at all times and days. His nascent practice is small but growing steadily, and he has been known to provide free care to folks unable to afford such extravagances.



DEVELOPMENT. Investigators can gain admittance to the room by knocking, if Dr. Todd is present, or via more illicit means if he is not. The theater and morgue in area **3F** serve also as the doctor's living quarters, and as such he is rarely absent. Behind the white curtain is a surgical cot, its sheets as clean as the curtains.

The medicine shelf contains dozens of bottles of soporifics, analgesics, and other remedies. There are tablets, elixirs, and injectables. Each

Todd, Dr. Ezra

"Every tooth in a man's head is more valuable than a diamond"

—Miguel de Cervantes

Medium humanoid (human), narcissist

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 16 (3d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +2, Insight +2, Investigation +2, Medicine +4, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages English, French, Greek, Latin, Polish, Spanish

Challenge 1

Miskatonic Alumni. Dr. Todd applies his proficiency bonus to ability checks involving eldritch knowledge.

Actions

Cane. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d2) bludgeoning damage.

bottle is neatly labeled, with open bottles in the front and unopened behind them. The contents are organized alphabetically by the name of the drug.

The ledger on the desk contains the names of the patients that the doctor has seen since setting up shop three months ago.

Polite and inquisitive investigators will find Dr. Todd eager to answer questions about himself and his practice. Should a PC address



him by his first name or as mister, his tone goes cold and face flat as he immediately corrects the speaker, "It's doctor, thank you. I didn't attend Miskatonic University to be called 'mister'."

Barred Door. At the mention of the door Todd's cheeks redden, and after a calming breath he explains that its placement is an unintentional oversight of the laborers, and one that he will correct as quickly as he is able.

Chair. Todd's eyes take a feverish glow at the mention of his chair. "It's amazing isn't it? Designed it myself, and commissioned the finest craftsman in its construction. The true innovation is the gas chamber atop which facilitates anesthetizing the patient."

Chappell/Pitezel. "Heathens and imbeciles. They stink of cheap whiskey and common labor."

Chicago. "Magnificent. The city grows and changes with such speed that to blink is to see an entirely new metropolis."

Cot. "For patient recovery of course." PCs succeeding on a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check note that he appears to be holding something back (that he too sleeps there).

Holmes. "Brilliant man. Would have thrived at Miskatonic University. We often discuss the wonders we could have experienced there."

Medicine. "Just tools of the trade. I believe in humane treatment and would be most upset to find out that my patients felt any discomfort from my ministrations." This is completely true.

ASSETS. The dental tools are the equivalent of jeweler's tools, and a PC succeeding on a DC 12 Intelligence (Medicine) check can salvage a healer's kit (with 5 uses) from the remaining equipment and the medications on hand.

3E. Dental Reception

No effort has been made to soften the harsh lines of the room. Its purpose, to wait until

called, is clear from the pair of pine chairs placed against the wall.

A framed diploma is mounted on the northern wall, and a closed door with brass nameplate — Dr. Ezra Todd — is on the opposite wall.

The only object of personalization in Dr. Todd's waiting room is his diploma, from the Miskatonic University School of Medical Arts. It's signed by Dr. Allen Halsey, Dean of the School of Medicine, and the college's president Victor Maddox. It is dated May 19th, 1891

3F. Morgue

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Holmes confessed to 27 murders in 1896, though most historians suspect the number to be quite lower. Still others, in particular papers producing sensationalist articles, estimated scores of victims with the supposed body count reaching 200 by the 1940s. What does this mean for the GM and the investigators? Simply that anyone that Holmes has come into contact with may find themselves in this room, resting on the metal slab awaiting discovery.

The morgue is only known to Drs. Todd and Holmes. Chappell and Pitezel have not been entrusted with knowledge of it.

Cool, dry air smelling of must softly oozes out of the room when the door opens.

A trio of tables, identical apart from what lies upon them, are placed perpendicular with the south way jutting into the room. There is sufficient space between each for a single person to examine their contents. A body wrapped head to toe in sheer ivory gauze rests on one of the tables, the central table is unoccupied, and the final table





is bare excepting a wine-colored pool of viscous liquid that has spilled to the floor below.

The room is filled with cool, dry, and stagnant air. PCs that have spent time in graveyards or mausoleums will recognize the smell of old, arid decay. The morgue is used sporadically for long-term storage of bodies when a controlled environment is called for. The combination of atmospheric conditions and post-mortem treatments allow the body to lie in rest free of decay for an extended period of time.

DEVELOPMENT. Two of the three metal surgical tables are unoccupied. The final table has a single humanoid in repose, wrapped in sheer white fabric. PCs wishing to look under the gauze will have to cut through, as there is no seam for them to unwrap. Any bladed tool will cut through the tacky covering. PCs succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Nature) check correctly identify the covering as the product of a spider's spinneret.

Opening the door to area **3G** without a key requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check. PCs examining the handle beforehand notice a fine coating of greasy dust with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. There is enough poison on the handle to affect two targets before needing to be reapplied. A creature exposed to the poison must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but with both the poisoned and paralyzed conditions for 1d4 hours, even after regaining hit points.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. A favorite tactic of Holmes, who's immune to poison, is to close the door behind himself when leading someone to area

G, knowing full well that they must touch the door handle and subject themselves to the venom if they wish to follow him.

3G. Shrine Room

The walls and ceiling of the room are blanketed in wispy strings of gauze obscuring sight as effectively as any stone wall. The webs ebb and flow as if under the sway of an ethereal current.

PCs with a passive Perception 11 notice asynchronous movement in the webs, which is easily identified as unnatural due to the chaotic, discordant nature of the movements.

Paraphrase or read the following for PCs moving deeper into the room revealing the shrine:

A rectangular shape, waist high and an arm's span in length, rests in a place of honor. Initially it appears as a glob of densely packed webs, but soon its outline and solidity reveal it for what it is... an altar.

Atlach-Nacha's shrine exists equally in the Dreamlands and Chicago, its dual nature allowing it to act as a conduit between Holmes and his mistress. Their connection is the source of his preternatural abilities (see *The White City Devil*, page 188). Holmes is immediately aware of anyone within the room as long as he is in within the walls of the World's Fair Hotel.

DEVELOPMENT. The entirety of area **3G** is heavily obscured for any objects beyond 10 feet. The effect does not impede Holmes or arachnids.

Offerings on the Shrine. Atlach-Nacha's shrine offers supplicants a direct line to the Great Old One. An offering placed on the shrine by a creature whose intent is to appease





the Great Old One will be judged based on the merit of their oblation. The GM is the sole arbiter of the appropriateness of the offering, and the Great Old One's response. At the very least an offering should incite a Sanity check and be considered a Major Life Event (see *page 242*).

Destroying the Shrine. With sufficient effort, tools, and time, the shrine to Atlach-Nacha can be destroyed. It has the following stats: AC 19, HP 99, Damage Immunities: bludgeoning damage from non-magical weapons; psychic, poison, necrotic; Damage Resistances: piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons; cold, thunder. If the shrine is reduced to zero hit points it is destroyed. It regains 1 hit point at the start of each round.

COMPLICATIONS. Damage to the shrine or webs, or repudiated offerings, trigger hostilities from a **swarm of spiders** and a **servitor of Atlach Nacha** (see *page 222*).

ASSETS. At the GM's discretion offerings from prior supplicants may be present. Taking them without permission is sure to raise the ire of the Spider God and her servants. Lóng Yá (see *page 218*) is destined to be an offering to Atlach-Nacha and may be found here at the GM's discretion (see *Scene 7. The Dragon's Tooth* on *page 204*).

3H. Retail Office

The retail office is locked at all times, and keys are held by Holmes, his staff, and those who've rented business space in the hotel. Holmes has created this oasis for his tenants to give them the opportunity to work on the administrative matters of their businesses in privacy, away from distractions.

The businesspersons of the hotel can be found in the offices at all hours of the day or night. Each has an assigned shelf for their

records, and the utilitarian desks contain the pens, papers, and other trappings of tedium associated with keeping business records.

DEVELOPMENT. The honor system is strictly enforced by the businesses of the World's Fair Hotel. Each business leaves the bulk of their records, files, and ledgers in this room with the only protection being the door's lock.

Sensitive (and incriminating) documents are rarely found here, though mistakes are made. Searching the room is a tedious task taking 3d6 x 10 minutes. If investigators are able to narrow their search to a single area or business they cut the time to 1d6 x 10 minutes.

3I. Central Hallway

The hallway stretches the length of the uppermost floor, and sees regular traffic from Holmes, his employees, and visitors.

3J. Bookkeeper's Office

The bookkeeper's office is dedicated to Holmes' business affairs. The door is always locked, and occupied by Georginia Yoke Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"The World's Fair Hotel Office" is engraved on the closed door.

Ms. Yoke answers the door to a polite knock while working.

The western wall of the office is a floor to ceiling bookshelf. There is a tidy desk with a pair of matching chairs facing it, a ficus, and a gramophone in the corner.

The air is perfumed by the scent of lilacs, though none are visible.

Ms. Yoke is charged with maintaining the financial records of the World's Fair Hotel and



Dr. Holmes' other financial ventures. She is besotted by the charming doctor, loyal to him in the extreme, and protective of his time and assets.

DEVELOPMENT. Ms. Yoke (**commoner**) is hostile, though not violent, to any woman questioning her about Dr. Holmes regardless of the line of inquiry. She values his time and privacy more than her own, and cannot be persuaded to knowingly provide details of his comings and goings. Under no circumstances will she allow the PCs to see the ledger. Other topics are safer for discussion, and Ms. Yoke keeps her eyes and ears open around the hotel.

ASSETS. The financial ledger of Dr. Holmes is of great interest to a number of interested parties. A PC with a head for numbers or training in accountancy (per their Background) and sufficient time — several days at the least — can track his financial transactions across the city and in doing so note discrepancies in cash flow, inexplicable deposits, and a surprisingly low payroll.

Areas K through O are part of the Dreamlands Intrusion as described in the Second Floor (see sidebar on page 150).

3K. *The Body Chute*

The body chute runs from the third floor to the basement, and is purpose-built for easy transport of victims to Dr. Holmes' subterranean labs. The chute has only two openings, here and in the basement's main chamber. See *The Chute* on page 173 for additional details.

3L. *Chappell's Abattoir*

Mr. Chappell's workshop has a lock which is engaged when no one is present in this area.

The moist air smells of pennies, the aroma no doubt due to the gruesome display of

bones covering the two worktables in the room. They stand some small distance apart, and are arranged with similar specimens. Pieces of muscle and sinew remain stubbornly attached.

A desk with a plate empty save a few morsels and crumbs, a goblet, and cutlery overlooks the street below.

The abattoir is used by Chappell — Holmes prefers to work in the basement — to cleanse skeletons of any remaining organic matter after their processing in area 3N. The bones and tools of the trade are arranged haphazardly, giving the impression of a busy workshop.

DEVELOPMENT. The abattoir tells the story of previous victims. Their remains are brought into the room, cleaned up for further processing, and taken elsewhere. Chappell is not an organized fellow, and the components of the victims are inevitably intermingled due to his inattention.

Examining the Bones. There are three skulls, which can be identified as such without a check. To gain additional insight, investigators much look more carefully. PCs spending 1d4 x 10 minutes examining the bones learn the following from an Intelligence (Medicine) check:

- **DC 10:** There are three femurs and three skulls. The femurs do not match each other, indicating they are from different donors. Two of the skulls are from fully grown humans and the third is smaller, either from an adolescent or a diminutive adult.
- **DC 15:** There are four humeruses with matching pairs of ulnas and radiuses. One pair of arm bones is consistent in size with a fully grown human, probably male.
- **DC 20:** The presence of physical inconsistencies in the long bones suggest that there are at least five different victims. Without additional context it is impossible to definitively determine if the skulls are from the



same bodies as the other bones, and the lack of pelvises prevent gender from being determined.

Examining the Desk. The remnants of the meal are cold and stale from exposure to the air, but have not yet begun to show signs of decomposition such as mold.

ASSETS. There are two bistouries that can be used as *daggers*, and enough smaller pliers, stiff wires, and pins to piece together a set of *thieves' tools*.

3M. Furnace Room

An industrial furnace dominates the room. Opposite the furnace is a table with an assortment of heavy tools, thick gloves, and a stool.

The furnace's heavy iron door is secured with a latch, and streaks of ash cover the floors and walls.

The furnace heats the hotel's rooms and water. When the furnace is in use the room is stiflingly hot, though not dangerously so. The furnace operates on gas, though the nearby stack of firewood can be used in a pinch.

DEVELOPMENT. The furnace is used primarily by Chappell to dispose of the unwanted muscles and tissues generated by articulation of victims, and any flammable effects those folks may have. PCs sifting through the ashes may come across bits of metal from buttons or pins.

ASSETS. The heavy tools used for stoking the furnace can be used as *clubs* (x2).

SCENARIO HOOK. In a drunken stupor Chappell placed the garments of a victim into the furnace for burning without thoroughly checking them for valuables. PCs sifting through the ashes find a pocket watch engraved with,

"You Must Unlearn All You Have Learned. To aid you on your journey, MBH".

The locket was a gift from Maria B. Hayden, noted spiritualist, to a disciple in England. Positively identifying her, the recipient of the watch, and the repercussions of Chappell's careless violence, are left to the players and the GM.

3N. Harvest Theatre

The harvest theatre is locked at all times.

The smell of copper from the prior room intensifies with entry into this operating theatre. The air is saturated to the extent that respiration is an effort, and each inhalation brings with it the cloying taste of metal.

A grisly cairn of limbs rests on a table near the wall. The mass of arms and legs of differing sizes and skin colors indicates a plethora of victims.

A metal table, slotted with grooves, rests opposite the doorway and is unoccupied. An empty basin is at the head of the table. The only other piece of furniture in the room is a cabinet.

DEVELOPMENT. Anyone with passive Perception 11 or more notices drag lines from area 3O to 3N.

ASSETS. One of the bone saws can be used as a makeshift weapon (1d6 slashing, finesse).

3O. Elongation Chamber

Both doors to the elongation chamber are locked at all times.



The open room is home to a wooden table with four-point restraints, each ending in thick leather manacles. The shackles are connected to an axle with a handled flywheel.

Chappell's rack is used exclusively to aid him in preparing bodies for the articulation process. The subject is bound, stretched to facilitate separation of the joints, gutted, and finally disassembled. When not in use the room is empty and there is little of interest within it.

DEVELOPMENT. A creature strapped into the device has the restrained condition. A successful DC 18 Strength check will break a buckle. If both arms are bound the check is made with disadvantage. Once an arm is freed, they may use their action to extricate themselves from each remaining additional buckle. While bound, a Strength check is the only way to free oneself.

3P. Storage

Guests and tenants have access to this room to store their belongings. The room is kept locked, and can be opened with a room or business key.

The guests of the World's Fair Hotel have their own secrets and stories, some of which can be found by rifling through their things. A search of the room takes 3d6 x 10 minutes; if searching for a specific item the PCs can decrease the time to 1d6 x 10 minutes.

3Q. Master's Bedroom

The master's bedroom is always locked when unoccupied, and at the GM's discretion when occupied. The lock is complex [DC 16 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)], and the door reinforced (AC 17, HP 24, immune to poison and psychic damage).

The room's decorations are tasteful, unmarred from use, and call to mind the term, 'new money.' Each piece is placed just so and the ensemble is coordinated with perfect harmony. A person of superior tastes, and considerable means, assembled the room.

The armoire, bed frame, chairs, and desk are all constructed of a dark, almost black, wood with grains so tight as to be imperceptible, and polished to a reflective sheen.

Holmes' room is the epitome of style, class, and success. He bills himself as a self-made man, and his personal quarters are a testament to that perception. That every scrap of furniture and decoration has been purchased on credit is of no concern.

DEVELOPMENT. Holmes takes great care to ensure that there is no incriminating evidence, or telltale signs of his true nature, within his room. His frequent guests arrive and depart unaware of the danger they've placed themselves in.

The ebony armoire is filled with fashionable men's clothes, shoes, and typical clothing for a dapper gentleman of means. There is a journal on the writing desk.

PCs examining the underside of the desk, or succeeding on a DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check, find an unmarked wooden dial. The dial controls the flow of gas in area BJ and is currently in the "off" position, so can only be turned clockwise. PCs turning the knob clockwise to the "on" position and succeeding on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check note the faint sound of gas moving through a hidden pipe.

Either (or both) of the following entries could be found in the journal (for additional examples please see *The Devil's City*):





I am unsure what disgusts me more. The newly created confectioners' abomination 'cracker jack' or that a flapdoodle would deign to masquerade as a woman to emasculate his betters. The gall to believe that a crowd of gentlefolk could be fooled by such vulgarity. Even the yokels from the country knew the trickery for what it was. The Exposition has drawn all manner of simpleton, charlatan, and buckster.

A successful harvest depends on the farmer spending countless hours in the dirt sowing and tending the fields for weeks, months, even years. The hunter studies, understands, and stalks their prey following scat and trails through the darkest jungles with preternatural patience akin to the lions of the savannah. And there is the arachnid. The perfect, silent, efficient hunter. Waiting for a foolish morsel, the choicest victual, to drop in their lap; no need to fatten or flatter before the slaughter, merely a razor's cut, a reaping, and a final exhalation of breath.

ASSETS. The lavish furnishings in the room are valuable but they are too unwieldy to loot, and ebony is an extremely dense wood, making them nearly as heavy as metal.

FOR THE GM. Any clues or signs of misconduct found within the room could easily be manufactured by Holmes in an effort to confuse the investigators or to draw them out into making a public accusation.

SCENARIO HOOK. The furniture in the master's rooms is very expensive, and Holmes has not seen fit to make good on the bill. The merchant, Petersen Fine Furnishings, has

enlisted the assistance of the investigators to repossess the furniture after all polite attempts at collecting funds due were unsuccessful.

3R. Master's Dressing Room

The doors in the dressing room are always locked. The furniture is of the same material and style as that in area 3Q. There is a tub, vanity with mirror, and a chest.

DEVELOPMENT. The doors from the hallway and area 3S have deadbolts on the interior, which are usually engaged, allowing Holmes to prevent unexpected access to the room. There are no exposed mechanisms outside of the dressing room, and the locks cannot be picked from outside. Additionally, the deadbolts require a key. Locking or unlocking the deadbolt without the key requires a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check.

ASSETS. As in area 3Q, the furnishings in the dressing room are extremely valuable. The tub, in particular, is priceless due to the difficulty of working with ebony and the size of the tree required to create it. Should PCs manage to salvage the tub its unique properties would make it an ideal component of ritualistic cleansing.

3S. Lavatory

The lavatory is a larger version of the one found in area 2T on the 2nd floor, except that it has no lock or deadbolt.

The spacious room is a showroom of modern conveniences and luxuries.

The bathroom is a modern marvel of indoor plumbing and convenience.





3T. Seance Room

There is a deadbolt on the interior that can only be engaged from the inside.

Five chairs—simply made, sturdy, and without embellishments—are arranged in a semi-circle. There is a gramophone in the corner.

Scratch marks on the floor indicate that the chairs have been moved roughly and without consideration.

The unadorned room has been used periodically by spiritualists and bored socialites to host seances. A table is brought into the room from storage and the appropriate music played on the gramophone. Holmes finds the activities of these fools amusing, and has been known to use his connection with the hotel to spice things up at opportune times.

DEVELOPMENT. The secret door to the vault is well hidden — DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find — and locked. The entirety of the latching mechanism is secreted within the door and wall, and cannot be accessed without extreme means. PCs succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check locate a section of the wall that is denser than its surroundings due to the presence of the hidden lock. Holmes uses his mastery of the hotel's features when access is required.

3U. The Vault

FOR THE GM. Countless stories, including at least one about Holmes, include the use of a walk-in safe as a murder weapon. The victim is trapped inside the infernal device, and succumbs to the inevitable lack of oxygen as time ticks away. Or maybe, just maybe, they're rescued at the very last moment,

gasping for air, by the plucky hero. It is in this manner that we recommend using the vault, as a plot device to maximize dramatic tension.

A magnificent edifice of baroque iron, brass handles, and bands of iron mark the entrance to the hotel's vault. There is an upper and lower dial set into the door.

Holmes is very proud of the vault, and shows it off to guests whenever the opportunity presents itself. There are four tumblers per mechanism, and the vault is among the most secure in Chicago. No one other than Holmes knows the combination.

If PCs gain entry into the vault, read or paraphrase the following:

The steel plate door opens soundlessly and smoothly, revealing a room that is mostly empty. The air is stale and vaguely musty from the paper goods stored within. The back wall contains a cabinet with scores of safe deposit boxes.

All but a handful of the boxes have keys hanging from them, and the ones that do not have keys are locked shut.

Gaining access to the interior of the vault is not easy (or even possible) for most guests and visitors to the hotel. If it is open or unlocked, it is because the master of the hotel wishes for it to be so.

DEVELOPMENT. The vault is spacious enough for half a dozen folks to stand comfortably within. The walls are exposed steel. At the end of the vault is a cabinet of lockboxes, and a smattering of documents lie on top.

Airtight. The vault is hermetically sealed once closed, containing enough air for a Medium sized humanoid to survive for 24 hours, after which time it begins to suffocate. Each additional occupant decreases the air



proportionally so that two can survive for 12 hours, four for 6 hours, and so on.

Unlocking the Vault. Opening the vault requires a series of four consecutive DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) checks, the upper and lower locks each have two sets of tumblers, to hear the inner workings falling into place.

Breaking In. No vault is impenetrable, at least with sufficient time, effort, and tools. Holmes' vault is of such sturdy construction that forcing it open would require the use of explosives or heavy machinery. PCs determined to break into the vault should be encouraged to do so as a downtime activity, or the GM may

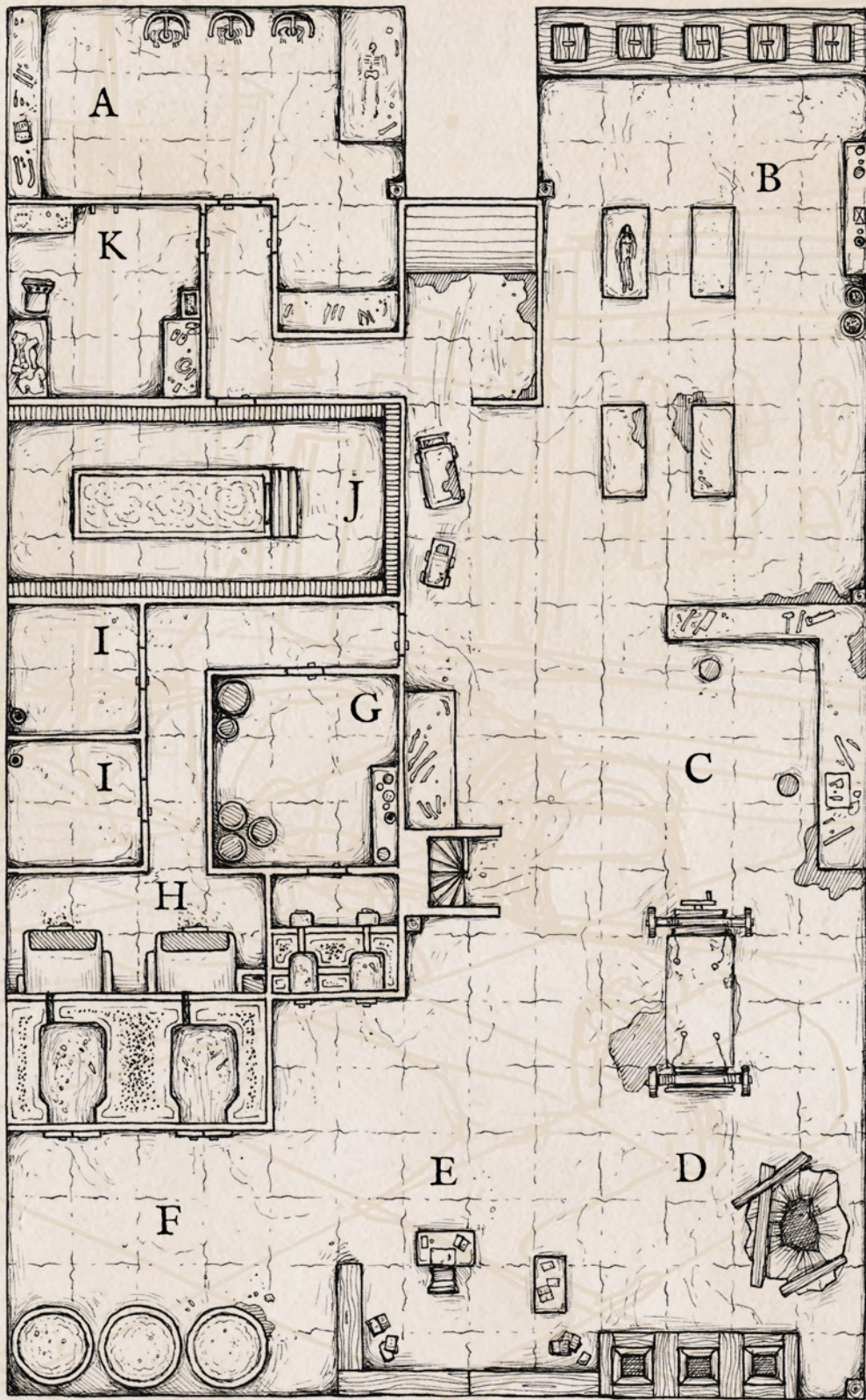
choose to handle it narratively. As such, no statistics are provided.

Safe Deposit Boxes. There are four rows of twelve safety deposit boxes, each measuring 8" square on the face and two feet long. The boxes are free to use for hotel guests and businesses, or can be rented for a minimal fee. The locks appear more impressive than they are, and can be opened with a DC 11 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check, or by a determined individual with a hammer, crowbar, or similar lever. The contents of the boxes change regularly and the table below can serve as inspiration for the treasures contained within.

Table 1. The Curious Contents of Safety Deposit Boxes

DI2	DESCRIPTION
1	<i>Lóng Yá (see page 218)</i>
2	<i>A deed of transfer from Ms. Minnie Williams to Mr. Alexander Bond bequeathing a property in Fort Worth, Texas to the man. The land is at 2nd and Commerce Streets.</i>
3	<i>Six tickets to the World's Fair Exposition.</i>
4	<i>A bottle of wine, dated 1879, from Jaques Brothers' Winery in Washingtonville, NY.</i>
5	<i>A bag with 113 quarter dollar coins in it.</i>
6	<i>A marked specimen bag labeled, "Eltdown England, 1882". The bag contains half a dozen shards of pottery covered in strange symbols.</i>
7	<i>A life insurance policy from Fidelity Mutual Life Association for Benjamin F. Pitzel. The policy lists Mr. Pitzel's wife and five children as beneficiaries.</i>
8	<i>Three pitch-black feathers that can be identified as from a crow with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Nature) check.</i>
9	<i>A receipt for a bicycle rental, dated 2 months ago.</i>
10	<i>2d100 US dollars.</i>
11	<i>A well-preserved copy of the San Francisco Examiner, January 20th, 1889 edition. The paper has been folded so that a story by Ambrose Pierce, Chickmauga is front and center.</i>
12	<i>A folded-up board covered in felt and divided into an 8x8 grid. Laying on top of the board is a wooden container with 64 chips. The chips are identical, ivory on one side and ebony on the other. There are no instructions, though a character (or player) may recognize it as Reversi.</i>







THE BASEMENT

At 45 feet below the floorboards of the first floor, the basement of the World's Fair Hotel lies deeper than expected. As a result of its depth and insulation it shares many of the characteristics of a cave. Its temperature and humidity are constant, except when affected by Holmes' experiments. No sounds escape its depths.

DOORS. Unless otherwise noted the rooms in the basement do not have locks.

BA. Bone Room

A trio of metal contraptions, gleaming in the room's bright lights, line the northern wall. Each is as wide as a man's shoulders and affixed to the wall at chest height. A work bench, full of tools, runs the length of the western wall. A table, covered by a gauzy white sheet, occupies the northeastern corner of the room.

The room is spacious, tidy, and its constituents clearly in their intended places. Read or paraphrase the following for PCs that explore southeastern corner:

The worker's table sees heavy use as evidenced by the dents, dings, and scratches in its wooden surface. The raw wood is covered in overlapping stains from prior projects.

The bone room sees heavy, though intermittent, use by Holmes and Chappell in their side business of selling articulated skeletons to local medical colleges. When the room is in use a body, or parts of one, can be in any of the work stations.

The Chute

At Holmes' insistence a coal chute was built with an opening on the third floor that empties into the basement. There are no openings on the first or second floors. Workers that questioned the logic of placing it on the third floor instead of the first were promptly dismissed. The chute is used to facilitate the delivery of bodies, living and dead, to the basement for further study.

Investigators wishing to climb or descend the chute may do so with a number of checks equal to 100 divided by their climbing speed. Each check is a DC 8 Strength/Dexterity (Athletics) check. Falls are less deadly due to the cramped quarters, inflicting one quarter the normal damage.

The use of a secure rope results in an automatic success, and PCs that present a reasonable strategy for navigating the chute have advantage on their check (such as bracing with their back and legs against opposite sides). Creatures with a climbing speed automatically succeed on all checks.

The process of articulation begins and ends within this room. Subjects are prepared for a chemical bath by removing the majority of their organic components from the skeleton. The bath removes the smaller pieces and they are brought back to the examination table for articulation.

The skeleton is laid out on the examination table, holes are drilled at the connecting joints, and wires threaded through to hold it together. The process is time consuming, requires meticulous attention to detail, and entails a breadth of skills that few possess (or care to).

DEVELOPMENT. Holmes and Chappell have affixed three harnesses to the walls. They are a





ghastly amalgam of leather and metal that allows a humanoid body to hang vertically on the wall. Straps allow it to be tightened or loosened to accommodate something as thin as a skeleton or as large as a heavily-muscled human.

A creature strapped into the harness has the restrained condition. A successful DC 18 Strength check will break a buckle, allowing them to use their newly-freed hand to unbuckle them on the following round as an action. While bound, a Strength check is the only way to free oneself.

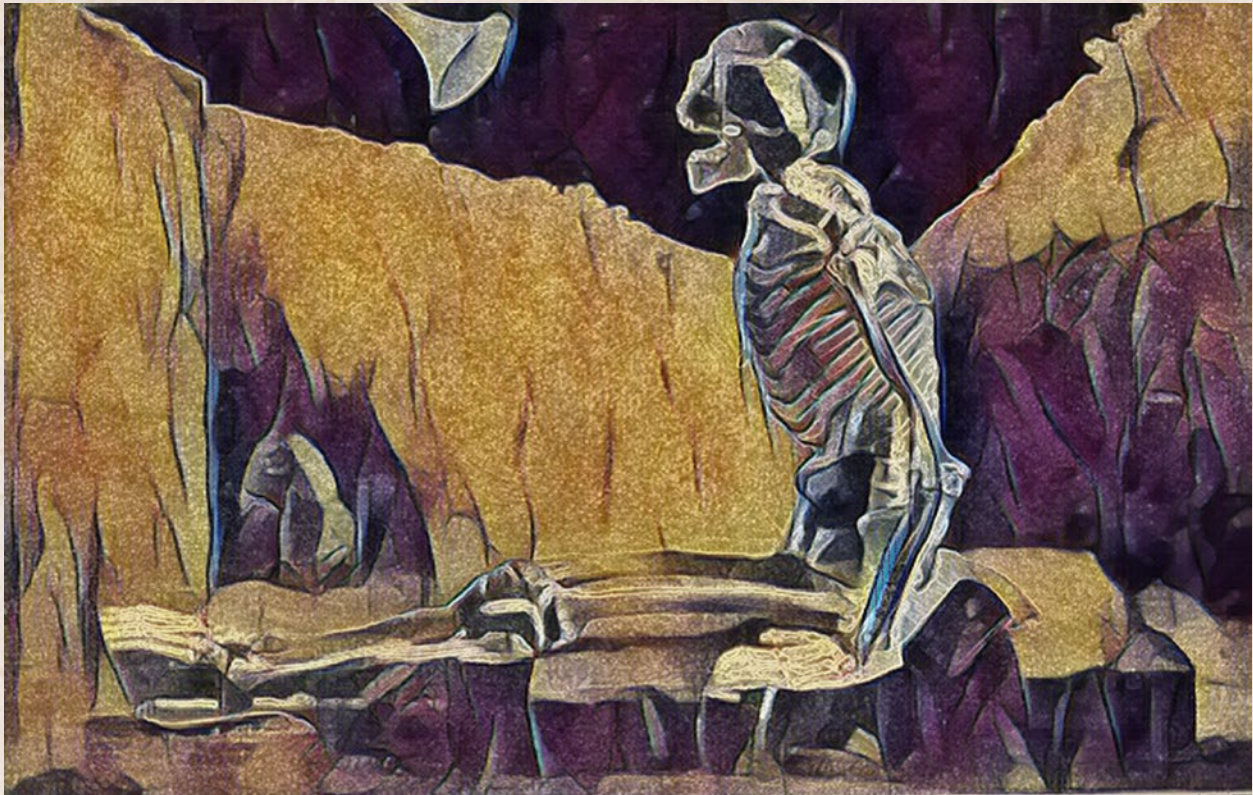
Bone saws, amputation knives, forceps, and other cutting tools are strewn about the table on the western wall. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Medicine) check reveals that they remain serviceable and in excellent working condition despite having seen heavy use as evidenced by the nicks in the table's surface.

The tools on workbench south of the examination table are delicate with long, thin

razor-sharp blades. An investigator with a medical or hunting background can identify their purpose: flaying or flensing of skin. Other PCs may learn the same with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Nature) or Intelligence (Medicine) check. As before these are clean, well-used, and in excellent condition, the table unmarred by errant tool marks.

A metal table, the width and length of a bed, occupies the northeastern corner of the room. Three pliers hang from the wall in easy reach. Matching handles mark them as a set, while their jaws of different shapes, lengths, and girth speak to specialized purposes. A spool of heavy-gauge wire and a hand-powered drill lie nearby.

ASSETS. There are countless tools that can serve ably as weapons. Any of the following can be found with ease: clubs, daggers, a hand axe, a quarterstaff, and light hammers. There are sufficient small, precise tools to piece together a set of thieves' tools.





BB. Morgue

The northeastern corner of the expansive basement is dominated with four metal tables. North of them is a built-in wooden shelving unit with five closed lids, and against the eastern wall in easy reach is a long row of low shelves.

If there are bodies on one or more of the morgue tables, read or paraphrase the following,

The occupant of the table lies in quiet repose. Their unnatural stillness, pallid complexion, and subtle aroma of decay identifying them as unliving as clearly as would any grievous wound.

The morgue is used to store bodies after Holmes has completed his ministrations in the surgery (area **BC**). They do not often stay here for an extended time, and their next stop may be articulation (area **BA**), disposal vats, the pit, or the furnace (area **BF**).

DEVELOPMENT. PCs exploring the morgue have the opportunity to learn quite a bit about the activities of Holmes and his cronies.

CONTROL BOX. An obtrusive box is mounted on the wall near the examination tables. On the box there are three dials arranged in an upside-down triangle.

- **Upper right dial:** Controls the flow of gas to the basement lights, as is readily apparent by anyone adjusting it. Changes to the light immediately notify all occupants in the basement, with the exception of anyone in area **BJ**.
- **Upper left dial:** Controls the flow of gas into area **BJ**. To anyone outside of area **BJ** it appears to do nothing.
- **Lower left dial:** Controls the depth of floor in area **1T** on the first floor. The dial clicks into place with each height: left = regular height, middle = short drop, and right = long drop.

Disabling the Box. Rendering the box inoperative while simultaneously hiding the fact that it was tampered with requires a successful DC 14 Intelligence check and a subsequent DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check.

Smashing the Box. Destroying the box by brute force requires no roll, just intent and a weapon. Each dial reacts differently to the destruction, cannot be further manipulated, and one of the following occurs. Once broken they cannot be fixed without specialized tools and sufficient time.

- Stuck in the current position.
- Stuck in the 'off' position.
- Stuck in the 'on' position. If it has multiple 'on' positions, it is at the maximum.

Examination Tables. Each examination table is heavily constructed, weighing several hundred pounds, with a network of grooves to facilitate drainage into a collection cistern below. The tables are unwieldy, though marks on the floor near their feet suggest that they have been moved with some degree of regularity.

Disposal Vats. Each of the five vats are used for organic refuse that Holmes does not wish to save, re-use, or experiment on. The lids are not locked, and held shut by a simple latch. When opened a warm, moist breath of air comes from the container, carrying with it the eye-watering fumes of lye and the stomach-churning scent of decay. PCs wishing to search through the abominable sludge must succeed on a DC 10 Sanity check to steel themselves for the gruesome task.

Shelves. The shelves contain well-worn copies of dozens of medical texts, treatises on alchemy, and grimoires of esoteric religions. The books often have dog-eared passages, notes in the margins, and missing pages. Any of the following may be found here: *Book of Little Known Remedies*, *The Witches Procession*, *The Art of Dying*, *Health and Longevity*, *Treatise on*



the Physical and Medical Treatment of Children, The Chemistry of Life and Health, and Woman's Hand-Book in Health and Disease. Other similar tomes may be found here at the GM's discretion.

BC. Surgery Theater

A pair of metal shelves arranged into an L-shape give the semblance of a room. The instruments, metal trays, and tools are a horrid mixture of paraphernalia from an abattoir and field surgery. A metal farm house sink is inset into the table.

Opposite the shelves is a narrow spiral staircase sheathed in darkness. The stairs rise rapidly which, combined with the tight spiral, make negotiating it more akin to climbing a ladder than walking up a staircase.

A table, fully ten feet long and half as wide, is placed against the western wall, near the stairwell. The wooden surfaces gleam with fresh polish, and an assortment of objects are meticulously placed on its green-felted surface. From your vantage, at least one item appears to be a leg bone.

This room is defined by the metal shelves jutting from the walls. A body trolley stands against the far wall, and a pair of drains near the tables allow for easy clean up.

DEVELOPMENT. The theater is the room in which Holmes spends most of his time when he's in the basement. It is the area of his ingress and egress, and where his experiments occur. While not in active use the space is typically left open and clear of obstructions.

The objects stored on the L-shaped shelves vary based on Holmes' current subject. They can be mundane or esoteric in the extreme. Surgical tools and mortars full of unidentifiable



ground-up powders are most common. Books, candles, and keepsakes may also be found.

The sink is connected to Chicago's growing water and sewer network and has running water. Tools are cleaned promptly after use and either hung up to dry or left in the basin. A pair of drains in the floor also connect to the sewers.

Holmes has a proclivity for taking souvenirs from his victims, which he then displays on the table near the staircase. Each memento is precisely placed on the gleamingly clean table. The details of those souvenirs, their impact on the investigators, and how the investigators use the knowledge gained from examining them, is left to the GM's discretion.

ASSETS. There are plenty of tools and surgical instruments on the shelves that can serve as weapons. One of each of the following can be found: club, dagger, hand axe, and light hammer. There are precision tools that can be pieced together to form a set of thieves' tools.

SCENARIO HOOK. The PCs examine the drains within the floor (or sink) and find a gore-covered silver cameo. The cameo's interior hides



a skull with tentacle-like worms emanating from it. The cameo marks its wearer as a member of the Nightworms (see *page 88*), an organization whose attentions have not yet turned to Holmes.

BD. *The Delve*

The far corner of the open room is dominated by an oversized table with integrated restraints. Thick leather manacles, one for each limb, are connected to an axle with a handled flywheel. The restraints wrap around the axle, allowing them to be tightened or loosened with a turn.

There is an open pit, partially covered with discarded lumber, near the rack. The hole's margins are well defined by the broken flooring, and its bottom is lost to shadow.

DEVELOPMENT. The open area near Holmes' surgery see little use, and is primarily a storage area for the rack and for the disposal of unwanted items.

Pit Holes. Whereas the disposal vats in area **BB** are akin to organic composting bins, the pit holes are simply refuse-filled bins of inorganic trash. Each is covered with a lid, and when they are filled to overflowing they are unceremoniously dumped into the excavation pit.

The Rack. Holmes' experiments with the rack ended years ago. He can tell you at a glance how many turns of the wheel it will take to dislocate the joints of a victim, and how many more will be needed to separate them from their limbs entirely. These days it is primarily used as a torture device to extract information from its victims. A creature strapped into the device has the restrained condition. A successful DC 18 Strength check

will break a buckle. If both arms are bound the check is made with disadvantage. Once an arm is freed, they may use their action to extricate themselves from each remaining addition buckle. While bound, a Strength check is the only way to free oneself.

The Excavation. The excavation hole is meant to provide GMs with options for the campaign. It can be used as a method of escape into the sewers below the city, a repository of clues, or whatever fits best in your campaign. Nothing evokes the curiosity of players so much as an open pit in a dungeon.

BE. *Doctor's Study*

A school desk, battered from the bored attentions of its former occupants, sits facing the openness of the basement as if waiting for its student to sit and the lecture to begin. An open notebook, fountain pen, and blotter cover the desk.

Shelves overflowing with books rest against the southern wall. Some volumes lay discarded on the floor, and others on a table.

The books, pamphlets, and grimoires in the basement are quick-references that see heavy use by Holmes during his work. They are largely mundane treatises, though at the GM's discretion esoteric studies are also present.

SCENARIO HOOK. The desk is covered in initials and crude figures from its previous owners. A closer look reveals a set of much more recent initials — freshly carved, in fact, as evidenced by the wood shavings on the ground.

BF. *Final Processing*

Three metal vats, large enough to hold hundreds — if not thousands — of gallons, occupy the corner of the basement. They





have metal lids calling to mind images of enormous cooking pots boiling on a stovetop.

Opposite the metal containers are a pair of furnaces with oversized iron doors. The doors are bifurcated and wide enough for a large man's shoulders to fit through with room to spare. They are held closed with a latching mechanism. A length of rusty chain is threaded through the handles, preventing opening.

Each of the three metal vats is 6 feet in diameter, 5 feet in height, filled to within a foot of the top, and holds 500 gallons. The tank in the southwestern corner contains 20% sulfuric acid, the center vat water, and the final vat is filled with a 10% sodium hydroxide/lye solution. When not in use the lids are kept on.

DEVELOPMENT. The characteristics of acids and caustics is explored in more detail in area **BG** and the sidebar *What If?* on page 179. The liquids in this area have been diluted sufficiently that they can be handled with relative safety by knowledgeable characters. The dilution does not change the number of dice rolled; instead, it changes them from d6s to d2s. The only exception is "touching it" in which the damage is unchanged but the time increased to one round.

The furnaces are fed by natural gas lines, and only lit when Holmes expects to have need of them. They are primarily used for cremation. Their victims are not always incapacitated, hence the need for the chains woven through the handles.

BG. *Admixture Storage*

Five glass containers, three in the southeastern corner and two in the northeastern corner, are conspicuous for their size. They are waist height, nearly as wide as they are tall, filled to the neck, and plugged with a glass stopper. There is no discernible difference between the contents.

A table covered with an assortment of beakers, flasks, tubes, and burners lies against the wall opposite the oversized jars. Burns and pockmarks on the table suggest regular use. There is a door on the southern wall.



The admixture room is used for storage of highly concentrated sulfuric acid and lye. The bench is Holmes' workspace, and the door to the south leads to the furnaces.

DEVELOPMENT. The chemicals in the glass containers are nearly pure specimens of sulfuric acid and lye. The jars in each grouping contain the same substance; the sulfuric acid in the southeastern corner, and lye in the northeastern corner. Each jar's stopper is held in place with a wax seal.

Sulfuric Acid (98% concentrate,

pH 0.3). Without opening the bottle, the PCs will not be able to definitively identify the substance. PCs with passive Perception 14 or more note the slightest yellow tinge to the otherwise colorless solution. Further, a PC that notes that characteristic and succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence check may postulate that the liquid is sulfuric acid. PCs with a background or occupation that includes an understanding of hazardous chemicals may add their proficiency bonus to the Intelligence check. If the bottle



What If?

Players are apt to try all manner of shenanigans and tomfoolery during a game session. The presence of an extraordinarily strong acid and base in the same room may be too great a temptation to resist. Unless otherwise noted both agents react identically to the listed condition. The effects are for the concentrated solutions in area BG. The following are the possible consequences of:

ADDING WATER. The addition of 4 ounces of water creates an exothermic release of heat inflicting 3 (1d6) fire damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage to all creatures and objects within 5 feet on a failed DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, or half as much on a successful one. The damage increases by 1d6 and the DC by 1 per additional 4 ounces of water. The container(s) automatically fail their Dexterity saving throw.

TOUCHING IT. Any flesh exposed to the liquid, no matter how small or how briefly, inflicts at least 1 point of acid damage.

MIXING THEM. The addition of 4 ounces of one agent to the other creates an explosive reaction inflicting 10 (3d6) fire damage and 10 (3d6) acid damage to all creatures and objects within 10 feet on a failed DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, or half as much on a successful one. The damages increase by 3d6 and the DC by 1 per additional 4 ounces of foreign agent. The container(s) automatically fail their Dexterity saving throw.

BREATHING FUMES. Opened containers release fumes into the small room. The effect on the PCs is related to the number of open containers and the ventilation.

- An opened jar fills the room with enough gas to affect the PCs after 1 minute. Each additional jar reduces the time to fill the accordingly (2 jars = 30 secs, 3 jars = 20 secs, etc.) If the door is ajar the time is doubled.

The effect persists until the jars are stoppered and the room airs out over the course of 10 minutes.

- When a creature enters the room for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, that creature must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) acid damage on a failure or half as much on a successful one. If fumes from both containers mix they neutralize each other and create a nauseating odor that causes all breathing creatures to gain the poisoned condition while in the room and for 1d4 rounds after leaving it.

DRINKING THEM. A PC that drinks any amount of the liquid takes 14 (4d6) acid damage per round for 3 rounds before the stomach neutralizes the damage. If they survive, they have a lingering injury (see *WitD QS*) that permanently removes their ability to speak.

HARVESTING IT. The reagents can be scooped into metal or glass containers, of which there is no shortage. Safely gathering a vial requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. A fumbled check results in the character sustaining 3 (1d6) acid damage. Regardless of the chemical, it has the statistics of a vial of acid.

BREAKING THEM. The glass containers are exceptionally thick and very strong. Each weighs 30 lbs when empty and 350 lbs filled. They have the following stats: AC 15, HP 18, resistance to slashing and piercing damage, immunity to acid, necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. If broken the GM is encouraged to apply the following effects to PCs still within the room: *Touching It*, *Mixing Them*, AND *Breathing Fumes*.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. For the purposes of the game all caustic substances, regardless of pH, inflict acid damage.





is opened, the smell of rotten eggs fills the room and the check to identify the solution is made with advantage. If the PCs are aware that Holmes makes use of sulfuric acid, checks can be automatically successful at the GM's discretion.

Lye (sodium hydroxide 50% concentrate, pH >13). As with the acid it is not possible to positively identify the lye solution without opening the bottle. The liquid is completely colorless. If the bottle is opened the biting smell of ammonia is released into the room. Once opened, a successful DC 14 Intelligence check concludes that the liquid is a potent base. PCs with a background or occupation that includes an understanding of hazardous chemicals may add their proficiency bonus to the Intelligence check. If the PCs are aware that Holmes makes use of lye, checks can be automatically successful at the GM's discretion.

Hotel Furnaces. The furnaces for the hotel are lit and running from October through April, and heat the hotel and water running through its pipes. They are fed by natural gas lines.

ASSETS. PCs spending 10 minutes rummaging through the contents of the table are able to gather the ingredients of a chemistry set.

BH. *Stoking Room*

Due to the size of the furnaces and the amount of gas they use they are not always in use, but when they are, the room and attached hallway are exceedingly hot.

DEVELOPMENT. When not in use the PCs may explore the room at their leisure. When the furnaces are running at capacity any creature entering the area for the first time on a turn or starting their turn there takes 1 (1d2) fire damage.

ASSETS. A pair of iron-tipped pokers can be used as staffs or makeshift spears.

BI. *Prisoners' Cells*

Both cells are identical when unoccupied.

The prison cell is wide enough for a person to stand arms outstretched and not quite touch opposite walls. A wooden pail sits in the corner, the stench of waste coming from its porous wood.

The doors open inward, have no locking mechanism., and are held shut by a metal latch, similar to an ice box, with a metal pin that prevents it from opening due to pressure from the inside.

DEVELOPMENT. Opening the cell from the outside is merely a matter of the PC using their action to remove the pin and push the door open. To open from inside, the hostage has no option other than brute force. The door is heavy oak and reinforced with iron bands, making it stronger and more durable (AC 17, HP 30, immune to poison and psychic damage, damage threshold 4). Breaking down the door will alert everyone in the basement of the activity.

BJ. *The Chamber*

The room is dominated by a metal tank five feet wide and three times that in length. There is just enough space around it to walk its borders. A trio of steps lead to the tank's door, which looks more like the entrance to a vault than a room, complete with flywheel and multiple locking mechanisms.

The walls of area BJ are lined with asbestos bricks, making it fireproof and adding to its soundproofing. In the center, and running the length of the room, is an elevated metal tank. Rapping on the tank confirms that it is hollow and thick (the tank cannot be destroyed without specialized tools or machinery). PCs that peer into the vault see the following:

An opaque miasma of thick, oily vapor flows down the steps like a heavy fog before





dissipating throughout the room, replacing the medicinal scent with the flavor of burnt meat.

DEVELOPMENT. The gas chamber is used frequently by Holmes, and it's not uncommon for a victim, possibly still living, to be trapped within it at any given time. The description above assumes the chamber has been used as a crematorium, but other options are available to Holmes.

Porthole. PCs that clamber up the chamber see a porthole, a 1-foot radius circle, at the top in the center. A dark greasy film covers it from the inside, making peering in impossible. The porthole is not visible anywhere except from on top of, or within, the chamber. Investigators looking within the chamber notice the outline of the glass window with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The Flywheel. The chamber can be opened by unlocking it [DC 12 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)] and engaging the flywheel. The lock can only be accessed from outside the chamber, and is only engaged with there is a captive.

The Chamber. Escape from the inside, once the flywheel has been engaged, is not physically possible without external aid. The chamber is airtight, containing enough air for a Medium sized humanoid to survive for 12 hours, after which time it begins to suffocate. Each additional occupant decreases the air proportionally so that two can survive for 6 hours, four for 3 hours, and so on.

Gas. The chamber can be flooded with gas (or breathable air) in a matter of minutes. The mechanisms that control the flow of gas are found in area **BB** and in Holmes' study (area **3Q**). The current configuration fills the chamber with natural gas. The damage inflicted depends on the number of rounds that Holmes dedicates to filling the room.

- <10 rounds: the gas is not concentrated enough to catch fire. The chamber's air

supply decreases by one person-day of air per round used to pump in natural gas.

- 11–15 rounds: the room burns for 2 rounds, inflicting 7 (2d6) fire damage
- 16–20 rounds: the room burns for 4 rounds, inflicting 14 (4d6) fire damage
- 21–25 rounds: the room burns for 6 rounds, inflicting 21 (6d6) fire damage
- 26–30 rounds: the room burns for 8 rounds, inflicting 24 (8d6) fire damage

Breathing creatures surviving the conflagration suffocate due to the lack of oxygen. Holmes may, and often does, choose to replace the spent air to prolong the experience for himself and his guests. Additionally, Holmes can refit the chamber to use the gases described in the first-floor area **1S**.

BK. Donation Room

Shelves and benches are filled to overflowing with shirts, blouses, pants, and all manner of garments. They are neatly folded, freshly laundered, and their scent fills the room, pushing aside the decaying aroma of the basement.

When Holmes learned of the nearby offices of the Salvation Army, he saw an opportunity to increase his standing in the community, rid himself of unwanted evidence, and satisfy his perverse sense of humor.

DEVELOPMENT. PCs can find women's clothes of all styles, sizes, and quality while rummaging through the room. Men's clothes are less common, though there are plenty if the PC isn't too picky. Investigators succeeding on a DC 13 Intelligence check, and spending an hour cataloging the contents with the intent to determine how many victims are represented by the garments, realize that there are at least 20 different victims based on the sizes and quality of outfits.







4

HOTEL STAFF

MUDGETT, HERMAN WEBSTER (AKA H.H. HOLMES)

(May 16th, 1861 - May 7th, 1896)

The hotel continues to serve its purpose most admirably, as does my role as their apothecary. They see me as their trusted ally, dispenser of kindness, and as a gentleman whose only concern is their wellbeing. I smile at the very thought of their misguided notions. The cattle in the stockyards know more of their fate than the strumpets drawn to the web of comfort I've created, and the oblivion I sell in each bottle of my medicines.

—From the diary of H.H. Holmes

In his nearly 35 years walking the earth Herman Mudgett used countless aliases to perpetrate a series of increasingly violent crimes. He is credited as America's first serial killer, and most widely known by the nom de guerre Dr. H.H. Holmes. Mr. Mudgett confessed to 27 murders and has been implicated in as many as 200, but most historians believe the actual body count to be nine. His execution, just nine days before his 35th birthday, was for the murder of his coconspirator Benjamin Pitezel.

Horror in the Windy City focuses on Mudgett's activities as H.H. Holmes in Englewood upon his arrival in August 1886. By this time Mudgett had two wives, Clara Lovering (b. 1878) and Myrta Belknap (b. 1886), and fathered children by both women. He wed his final wife, Georgia Yoke, on

January 17th, 1894. At that time, he was still married to Clara and Myrta.

Upon arrival in Chicago, Holmes secured employment at a pharmacy owned by Dr. Holton, which was located across the street from the lot upon which Holmes would build the infamous World's Fair Hotel. Holmes took ownership of the pharmacy after Holton's untimely death, and sold it for a tidy profit months before opening his own apothecary in the newly built hotel across the street.

Holmes' final years of freedom were spent swindling insurance companies, seducing women for their assets, and avoiding his many creditors. His hotel served as a cover for illicit activities, a sanctuary, and a murder weapon during that time. There are dozens of books on the exploits of Mr. Mudgett, and the GM is encouraged to use them to add veracity to their game.

THE SPINNER IN THE DARKNESS

I first felt her nudging tugs on my psyche while enrolled at the University of Michigan. My studies led to an expansion of my mind, and with it my dreams. It was through those subconscious journeys that I was called to greatness. Tentative pulls turned to irresistible urges, and on that fateful night in Mooers Forks the pact was sealed. I am metamorphosized by my time in her care. I am of two parts longing to be made one.

—From the diary of H.H. Holmes

Mudgett's pilgrimage to Chicago was initiated by a series of dreams from Atlach-Nacha in which he was shown the entirety of the city entombed in a pervasive blanket of webs. With the coming of the World's Fair Exposition





Holmes, as he's now known, is preparing a Grand Working for one of two goals: bringing Atlach-Nacha to Chicago or bringing Chicago to the Dreamlands to expand her realm.

USING MUDGETT

Mudgett's relationship with Atlach-Nacha and the evolution of his Dreamlands self has resulted in two distinct beings. There is H.H. Holmes who is gifted with supernatural abilities, incalculably dangerous, but still human; and there is the White City Devil, who is something Other. When Holmes enters the Dreamlands he instantly assumes his White City Devil persona. Holmes and his master would like nothing more than for the White City Devil to manifest in Chicago. Either of the two may exist in the Dreamlands Intrusions, but otherwise they are bound to their worlds.

Legendary Action

Mudgett, in either of his guises, can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below while within the boundaries of the World's Fair Hotel. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. He regains all spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

DESIGN NOTE. Outside of combat Holmes may use these actions at-will as a free action.

Clairvoyance. Holmes can cast his sight to any location within his lair. The effect can only be used while he is within the hotel (unless otherwise noted), and allows him to see as if he were there with the limitation that he cannot see outside of the hotel's border.

Telekinesis. Holmes' control over inanimate objects within the hotel enables him to open and close doors, windows and the like at will despite any locking mechanisms they may have. Additionally, he can compel them to remain shut, even when unlocked. An object held in such a manner must either be destroyed, or forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength check. A favorite tactic of Holmes is to create unexplained noises and sow discord by locking and unlocking doors at opportune times.

Body Awareness. The World's Fair Hotel and Holmes share an unnatural link that allows him to feel when the hotel has been damaged. This sense enables him to pinpoint and track the destructive tendencies of interlopers. The effect extends to doors, walls, locks and windows. It does not extend to furniture or decorations.





Holmes, Dr. Henry Howard

"I was born with the evil one standing as my sponsor beside the bed where I was ushered into the world."

—H.H. Holmes

Medium humanoid (human), malevolent narcissist

Armor Class 17 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 39 (6d6 + 18)

Speed 30 ft., climb 15 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

13 (+1) 15 (+2) 16 (+3) 13 (+1) 13 (+1) 20 (+5)

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +4, Medicine +2, Persuasion +4, Stealth +2

Damage Immunity poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages English, French, Latin, Leng

Challenge 4



Assassinate. During his first turn, Holmes has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit he scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Charming (1/day). By spending ten minutes in conversation with a human or humanoid, Holmes can sway them into his service. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be enamored for 1 week. The enamored target obeys verbal commands, is protective of Holmes, and won't willingly betray him.

If the target suffers harm due to Holmes' commands or receives a suicidal command from him, they repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, they are immune to this ability for the next 24 hours. Targets that succeed their saving throw by at least 4 are permanently immune.

Unarmored Defense. While wearing no armor, not using a shield, and having a free hand, Holmes' Armor Class equals 10 + his Dexterity modifier + his Charisma modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. Holmes makes two attacks.

Knife. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Revolver (.38). Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (2d4+2) piercing damage.

The White City Devil

"I was born with the devil inside me. I could not help the fact that I was a murderer, no more than the poet can help the inspiration to sing."

—H.H. Holmes

Medium outsider, malevolent narcissist

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d8+36)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR DEX **CON** INT **WIS** **CHA**

15 (+2) 16 (+3) 16 (+3) 13 (+1) 13 (+1) 20 (+5)

Skills Arcana +6, Deception +6, Persuasion +6, Stealth +6

Damage Immunity poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages English, French, Latin, Leng

Challenge 7

Spider Climb. The Devil can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the Devil knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The Devil ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Magic Resistance. The Devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The White City Devil makes two claw attacks and one bite or web attack.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Web (recharge 4–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target is Restrained by the web. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).



PITEZEL, BENJAMIN



(May 19th, 1856 - Sept. 4th, 1894)

Benjamin Pitezel was a Philadelphia native and carpenter who joined Holmes' construction crew in November 1889. Pitezel's wife Carrie Canning and five children remain behind in Galva, Illinois. Pitezel's criminal past and amorality earned him a position as a trusted henchman.

Pitezel's carpentry skills saw frequent use creating the racks and work spaces that could not be easily explained. After proving his lack of scruples Pitezel graduated to underling, enforcer, and kidnapper. He has taken to drinking heavily

Pitezel, Benjamin

"For all of these things, I am not the least bit sorry."

—Carl Panzram

Medium humanoid (human), malevolent

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 33 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4, Intimidation +2, Stealth +2

Proficiencies Carpenter's tools

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages English

Challenge 2

Knock Out. Any hit inflicting bludgeoning damage that Pitezel scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit. Additionally, that creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. The target repeats the saving throw at the end of their turn, ending the effect on a success.

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) bludgeoning damage.

Revolver (.38). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4+1) piercing damage.



in the evenings, and it's only a matter of time before he discovers the stupefying effects of Holmes' patent medicines. Pitezel's Demise The saying "live by the sword, die by the sword" has few more poignant examples than Pitezel, whose ultimate fate was inexorably tied to Holmes. Ironically, it was Pitezel's murder that eventually led to Holmes' capture.

"After he'd ceased to breathe, I continued to cut his body into little pieces, and using corn cobs as extra fuel, burned his remains as if they were some inanimate object."

—Holmes on the murder of Pitezel

Pitezel's children were a subsequent casualty of this scheme.

"...Ended their lives by connecting the gas with the trunk, then came the opening of the trunk and the viewing of their little blackened and distorted faces, then the digging of their shallow graves in the basement of the house, the ruthless stripping off of their clothing and the burial without a particle of covering save the cold earth, which I heaped upon them with fiendish delight."

—Holmes on Pitezel's children



CHAPPELL, CHARLES



(c. 1850 - c. 1929)

Holmes' side job as a procurer of cadaver skeletons for medical schools began well before his journey to Chicago, but it is there that he took his hobby to the next level due to the aid of Mr. Chappell. Chappell was first hired in 1891 to process corpses for articulation, which Holmes would sell for a tidy profit. Chappell's first subject was none other than Mrs. Julia Smythe. With each job Chappell learned more of Holmes, and eventually came to enjoy near full-time employment at the World's Fair Hotel.

Chappell, Charles

"That's the great thing about taxidermy, it goes with everything."

—Norman Bates

Medium humanoid (human), malevolent

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Insight +2, Medicine +4, Nature +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages English

Challenge 2

Assassinate. During his first turn, Chappell has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit Chappell scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Actions

Straight Razor. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) slashing damage.

Like Pitezel the work at the hotel, and its intimate connection to the Dreamlands, has eroded Chappell's sanity to next to nothing. The two often spend evenings drinking themselves into oblivion. Chappell is a cold-blooded sadist and coward, driven by his need to inflict pain and a pathological fear of Holmes.



WELCOME TO MY PARLOR

*A Whispers RPG Dreamlands scenario for up to 5 investigators of 4th-5th level
By Matt Corley*

Trigger Warnings

*Prior to beginning *Welcome to My Parlor* the PCs undergo a series of horrific traumas that cause untold pain, mutilation, and their apparent deaths. Those themes continue to be present in the scenario. It is crucial that the GM and the players are all aware of the experience they've signed up for, and that any necessary safety tools are in place. Ultimately the GM's presentation of the material, and directorship of the game, will decide the intensity of the experience. For a list of possible triggers in a *Murder Hotel* scenario please see [page 123](#).*

Running the Scenario



AS WRITTEN THE SCENARIO TAKES PLACE within the Dreamlands (see [page 80](#)) and, at least at the beginning of the scenario, the players and their PCs should not realize that. In escaping the nightmarish realms of the hotel each character will face a horror from their past. GMs wishing to have the scenario occur in the Waking world may need to adjust certain scenes. Unlike most excursions into the Dreamlands by humans, the investigators have been wholly pulled into the realm and occupy their physical bodies.

ORGANIZATION. The order in which the scenes take place is at the GM's discretion, and should be intermingled with the PCs' explorations. Many of the scenes include

suggestions for foreshadowing that will keep the investigators on high alert. Ad hoc encounters can be added to maintain tension as pacing and time allow.

FIRST THINGS FIRST. The players should understand that the primary objective is to escape with their lives. Revenge can come later when they are more prepared and experienced.

FAILURE. Part and parcel to the above statement is the chance that the investigators may not escape, and remain trapped in Atlach Nacha's nightmare realm. This in no way means the story is over. Instead, the players can assume the roles of outsiders affected by Holmes' predations and effect a rescue of the characters they once played.

SANITY CHECKS. The GM is encouraged to add Sanity checks as needed to maintain tension and pacing. The GM should take into account that their Sanity may never recover, and that its slow gradual loss is a horror unto itself.

THE FOG. The Murder Castle resides in a pocket realm utterly controlled by The White City Devil and Atlach Nacha. Escapees from the hotel are immediately engulfed in a greasy psychoactive fog of indigo and crimson.

The fog obscures all forms of sight beyond 5 feet, and when inhaled by a living creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion that cannot be removed while in the fog. When the creature gains their 6th level of exhaustion, they lose consciousness and awaken again in the basement of the Murder Castle still in the Dreamlands.







Synopsis

Welcome to My Parlor begins immediately following the events of *The Devil's City* as the players assume the roles of one of Holmes' unwilling guests. Any pre-gens not chosen for play are assumed to have not survived the horrific experiments visited upon them. Players should read their character's respective chapter, and all players should read the final chapter. Players and GMs wishing to use their own investigators will need to make adjustments along the way.

There is no great mystery or hidden scheme that the PCs must uncover. Instead, their efforts are focused on surviving long enough to escape, preferably with their bodies and sanity intact. Atlach Nacha's connection to the investigators, forged by the rites Holmes subjected them to, holds them bodily in the Dreamlands. It also personalizes the terrors they encounter in the hotel. As the investigators overcome their fears the Spider Goddess' hold slips, eventually allowing them the opportunity to escape.

Fear Itself

Each of Holmes' captives must face their personal demons prior to escaping the World's Fair Hotel. Only in overcoming their fears can they break out of Atlach Nacha's realm, awaken, and escape. GMs should consider discussing these prior to the game so that the players are more prepared to roleplay, and to avoid possible triggers.

- Diana used her immense physical and mental strength to survive situations which few others could. Stepping onto Ellis Island last year she put all of that behind her, and became a new woman. In *Scene 1. Rats in the Walls*, she is reminded how far she was willing to go, and the depths she descended to in the name of survival. How will she react?
- Paul's greatest fear is failing his brother and sister. They are all he has, and they depend on him utterly for survival. In *Scene 2. The Littles*, Paul comes face to face with proof of his failure. Does it break him?
- Victor's experiences in Chicago have been a series of disappointments, failures, and defeats culminating in the loss of his wife to Holmes. In *Scene 3. Lorelei*, he encounters the hateful abomination she's become. Does Victor finally break?
- As a young girl Rosine was captivated by insects of all kinds, but none more so than spiders with their intricate webs, multifaceted eyes, and alien morphology. At least until her father decided her interests were unbecoming a girl of her station, and locked her in the family cellar to "see what those little nasties are really like." In *Scene 4. Creepy Crawlies*, Rosine's childhood trauma is front and center. How will she overcome the demons from her past?
- Shageriin's spiritual connection with his patron, the Dragon, has been shattered by his failure to keep Lóng Yá in his possession. The loss of the relic and apparent subjugation of the Dragon by Atlach Nacha drives Shageriin to (and perhaps beyond?) his breaking point.





The Castle

While within his hotel Holmes is the master of the environment in every way imaginable. He cannot be surprised. He can open and shut doors, windows, and locks at will. He can cause doors that do not have locks to swell and prevent them from opening, or relock a door that has recently been picked by a skillful thief. Holmes may even open a lock after a failed attempt, to instill confusion and discord into a group. These phenomena are tools for the GM to maintain narrative tension and make it clear that the group's movements and efforts are being observed by a powerful force. They should not become tedious or frustrating to the players.

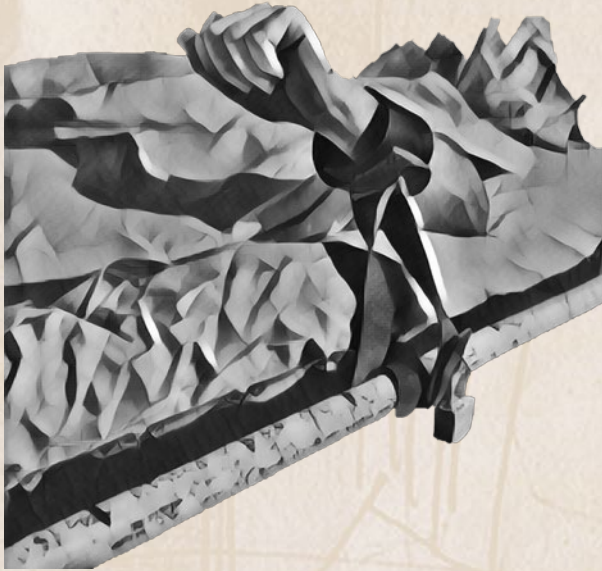
Unanticipated Escape Strategies: Dying in the Dreamlands

Creatures whose Dreamland selves perish can survive in the Waking World afterwards, in a manner of speaking. They can never return to the Dreamlands, gain an indefinite madness, and the death counts as a Major Life Event (see page 242). Additionally, they are no longer of use or interest to Holmes. The characters are placed in holding cells to spend their days waiting for rescue. Note, this disregards the fact that the PCs were physically pulled into the Dreamlands.



WELCOME TO MY PARLOR

Prologue. Waking Up



The first scene occurs in either of the following areas: **3B** or **3C**. The NPCs regain their faculties in fits and starts of jarring sensations. Their senses come forth at differing rates and orders. One may reclaim their sight initially, while another first notices the residing numbness of their extremities.

In lieu of read-aloud text the following snippets provide the GM with descriptions to use as they see fit.

Sight returns first as a blindingly painful, featureless white. Over time it darkens, shapes begin to form, and finally details of the surroundings emerge.

Hearing. Regular, thunderous beats are the first manifestations of sound as the PCs hear their heart restarting, and blood resuming its journey through their veins and arteries. The beats fade into the background to be replaced by sounds of struggle — their own, and those of their companions.

Touch. Excruciating pins and needles replace the pervasive numbness of long-term inactivity. It's when the feeling has returned that you realize bonds hold you in place, your freshly healed wounds itch, and your resting place is the cold, hard surface of a table.

Smell. Odors of unwashed bodies, stale urine, and wet metals are pervasive. The smell of roasted meats and a campfire lies under those more pungent aromas.

Taste. The coppery taste of blood, bite of stomach acids, and sourness of bile compete for dominance in a parched mouth.

DEVELOPMENT. The PCs' first order of business is to escape from their bonds. They are fortunate that the buckles are not overly tightened, and can be shucked in time. The GM may handle the escape narratively, or via ability checks. If ability checks are used the GM is encouraged to reward inspiration for players roleplaying their characters awakening and struggling.

Once freed the PCs will need to gather supplies as best they can from the nearby worktables, and acquaint themselves with one another, relaying whatever details they see fit of their past, their capture, and the treatment they received as the hands of Holmes.

Scene I. Rats in the Walls

Rats in the Walls can occur at any time and in any part of the hotel, the only exception being Atlach-Nacha's shrine room. They will not enter that room under any circumstances. Additionally, it can be repeated. For characters not in the Dreamlands, the rats would be most likely to manifest in the Dreamlands Intrusions (see *page 150*).



*FORESHADOWING*

During the course of the PCs' actions the GM is encouraged to presage the encounter for maximum dramatic effect by periodically sharing any or all of the following with the PCs:

- “Yowls and echoes of skittering, scurrying things lie just beyond the edges of your sight.”
- “Scampering lumps of ebony screech with erratic movements, disappearing into wells of darkness.”
- “Nimble feet run quickly and lightly over your bare feet. Looking down reveals no source for the unexpected sensation.”
- “A sinewy tail wraps around your calf, reminiscent of a cat intertwining your legs in greeting.”

When the encounter begins in earnest, read or paraphrase the following:

A verminous flood of ravening rats scamper from nothingness to appear as if from hiding, though their sudden appearance on an open floor devoid of any hiding places proves that could not be the case.

DEVELOPMENT. At a time of the GM's choosing a mischief of otherworldly rats make themselves known to the PCs. The vermin have been scuttling to and fro between the Dreamlands and the Waking world as they determine if the PCs are prey or predator.

The rats are tactically savvy enough that they may choose to reveal themselves while the PCs are otherwise occupied with another challenge, or immediately after an altercation with someone or something else.

COMPLICATIONS. A trio of **Dreamlands rats** (see *page 221*) are tracking the PCs throughout the hotel, and have deemed them a potential food source. There is a nearly limitless supply of rats and the GM can adjust the encounter as needed for effect.

The emergence of the rodents of unusual size triggers a suppressed memory in Diana, sending her reeling as she experiences a flashback to her trip to the United States. Read or paraphrase the following to whomever is playing Diana:

They come during the sleeping hours. Taking mouthfuls of flesh, leaving disease, droppings, and mites in their wake. Several have been lost, but you survive by tooth and claw, literally catching and consuming the encroaching invaders. Who will outlast whom?

When Diana kills her first Dreamlands rat she must succeed on a DC 12 Sanity check or be compelled to use her next turn field dressing the rodent. She comes to senses the following round, and others defeating the creatures does not trigger this event.

Scene 2. The Littles

The following encounter can occur anywhere in the hotel. Despite its new construction the World's Fair Hotel has already seen more than



its fair share of fatalities. The psychic echoes of the victims haunt its walls, and few are more persistent than those whose life was cut tragically short.

A pair of mylings search for someone to lay them to rest. Below are two options for their manifestations. They appear as Paul's siblings, Mavis and Taavi, or as the scions of Benjamin Pitezel, Howard and Alice. Whether or not the mylings are the spirits of these children is left to the GM's discretion. Perhaps it is all a cruel trick propagated by Holmes and his mistress.

FORESHADOWING

The PCs should sense that they are being observed, and rightly so. Not only is Holmes aware of their movements, but the childish spirits are watching their every action.

- “A short, sharp sound, perhaps the snuffle of a runny nose, echoes softly.”
- “Without warning the hairs on the back of your necks stand on end, and the feeling of being watched intensifies.”
- “Whispering sounds. Possibly two voices. High-pitched and sibilant. The words are unclear, but the urgency is plain.”

Motionless and ephemeral, two silent figures – a boy and girl – veritably appear from nothing. Insubstantial faces with pools of blackness for eyes stare with an unsettling intensity.

Mylings are childlike ghosts haunting the living until they persuade someone to complete a task for them. The task invariable involves laying them to rest in some manner.

DEVELOPMENT. The following assumes that the mylings have taken the shape of either Paul's siblings or Pitezel's children. Regardless of the form they take, the spirits appear as supplicants in need of aid. PCs succeeding on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Religion)

check remember that childlike spirits often find respite when their remains or a cherished object are laid to rest.

Due to their nature the spirits have a limited ability to communicate beyond their immediate needs, and their perceptions of reality are heavily skewed. For instance, they can describe the interior of the room that houses the object of their focus, but cannot tell the PCs how to get there, or how to avoid any potential dangers along the way.

Mavis and Taavi are clothed in rags, gaunt from hunger, and barefoot. The twins' most cherished possession, a ragged doll sewn together from scraps of fabric, was taken from them, and they're unable to rest until it is reclaimed by Paul. The doll can be found in the quarters of Pitezel (area **2H**), or on his person.

Robert and Alice Pitezel appear just as they do in the picture in area **2H**, a girl with her younger brother. There is a clear family resemblance and they stand awkwardly in their Sunday finest. The children want their bodies to be laid to rest either via burial or cremation. Their skeletons have been articulate by Chappell and are bound for Miskatonic University's medical school. The skeletons are most likely to be found on the third floor.

COMPLICATIONS. A pair of **mylings** (see *page 220*) manifest in hopes of enlisting the PCs in their plight. They are not immediately hostile, and if attacked are as likely to flee as they are to retaliate. Once encountered they will not leave the PCs alone until put to rest or destroyed.

Regardless of the form the mylings assume they immediately remind Paul of the plight of Mavis and Taavi. Paul must succeed on a DC 12 Sanity check or be reduced to a nonresponsive state for 1d6 minutes. At the end of each minute Paul repeats the check, ending the effect on a success. If the mylings take the form of





Mavis and Taavi and Paul fails the check he also loses 1 Sanity point.

Benjamin Pitezel (see *page 189*) and the spirits are inextricably connected to each other by tragic events. Pitezel can be found in almost any area of the hotel and is equally likely to stalk them (if he feels he has the upper hand in a confrontation) as he is to run and strike from the shadows (if the PCs prove to be too difficult to fight head on). If the mylings assume the guise of Howard and Alice in his presence his sanity will be shattered, and he falls into a mindless rage of violence.

REWARD. PCs helping the mylings find peace immediately gain 1 Sanity point (up to their maximum as determine by their Charisma + Wisdom modifier) for their good deed.

Scene 3. Lorelei

This scene takes place in the basement, and unlike other scenes there is little foreshadowing before Holmes' abomination reveals herself.

The sounds of wet footsteps echo off the hard basement walls, sounding as if someone were walking in a puddle. The footfalls grow louder revealing an abomination; a mutilated amalgam of shorn muscles, flaps of connective tissues, and gristle holding the jaw in place.

An ambulatory body, advances, stripped of skin and oozing from the exposed musculature, leaving a trail of wet, crimson footprints.

A hoarse murmur comes involuntarily from Victor; "Lorelei..."

Holmes has taken the knowledge gleaned from Chappell and applied it to a series of alchemical, eldritch processes to create malevolent constructs. The creatures are near mindless, violent in the extreme, and implacable

once they've engaged their quarry. The construct moving to meet the investigators is at once familiar to Victor, despite the appalling changes wrought to her.

DEVELOPMENT. While the investigators are otherwise occupied Lorelei appears from around a corner or from a closed room to attack. If needed she will dash from out of sight, possibly surprising the investigators, to begin her violence.

COMPLICATIONS. Lorelei's body has been transformed into a **flesh construct** (see *page 220*). It cannot be reasoned with, attacks until destroyed, and will harry the characters throughout the hotel.

Victor immediately recognizes his wife, Lorelei, and must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or gain the frightened condition while she is visible. Victor can repeat the saving throw at the end of his turn, ending the condition on a success. If the saving throw is fumbled Victor loses 1 Sanity.

Scene 4. Creepy Crawlies

The following scene occurs when Holmes or his mistress begin to tire of the PCs' shenanigans. Ideally it occurs in response to the PCs damaging the hotel.

Spiders pour from the wound in the hotel in a grey tide of skittering creatures of all shapes, colors, and sizes. Black widows, brown recluses, and house spiders emerge in waves widening the injury as if preparing the passage for a larger creature.

The arachnoid procession ebbs to a slow trickle when a misshapen human-like face winnows through followed immediately by its eight-legged body.



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If the PCs do not damage the hotel's structure or the GM wishes the scene to occur at a specific place and time, the deluge of spiders is precipitated by the appearance of a spiderweb-like crack that rapidly expands until opening to allow the arachnids egress.

DEVELOPMENT. The initial wave of spiders are mundane and recognized as such without a roll. The PCs recognize the otherworldly abominations as servants of Atlach-Nacha with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Investigators that have seen images of Atlach-Nacha, or have deduced her association with Holmes, have advantage on this check.

COMPLICATIONS. The **swarm of spiders** rushes towards the closest investigator and attacks. They are joined on the 2nd or 3rd round by the hotel's true guardians, a pack of **spiderlings of Leng** (see [page 223](#)) that have been dispatched to protect the hotel from the depredations of the PCs. GMs are encouraged to consider staggering the spiderlings' appearance to prolong the battle and give the PCs a better chance at survival.

Scene 5. Window Pain

DESIGNER'S NOTE. There are windows not specifically mentioned in the descriptive text of the hotel and many that are not apparent from the maps of the hotel. With the exception of the basement, the GM can place windows as they see fit on an external wall of a room in which guests or visitors are allowed.



Window Pain occurs at a time of the GM's choosing when the PCs find a window revealing the outside. This encounter is ideal for revealing (or confirming) that the Investigators are in the Dreamlands.

FORESHADOWING

Windows and reflective surfaces in the hotel behave strangely showing bizarrely distorted images or nothing at all.

- "A distorted reflection flickers at the edge of sight. The ancient faces reflected are unsettlingly familiar to your own or your companions."
- "The image reflected back is ever so slightly out of sync with reality." PCs with passive Perception 15 notice that their reflections do not blink or seem to breathe.
- A spider scurries over the shoulder of whomever is in the reflection. When they invariably turn to brush it off it is not there.
- Anyone looking at themselves in a reflective surface see that their eyes have been replaced by the crystalline blue orbs of H.H. Holmes.

Swirling eddies of indigo, verdigris, and ebony create everchanging patterns of vertiginous fog that obscure sight utterly.

The effect is dizzying and momentarily

stops you in your tracks, lost in the unexpected landscape outside of the hotel



The windows of the castle reveal its true location and the extent of the Investigators' predicament. They are trapped in a murderous hotel, stalked by creatures from their nightmares, and incalculably far from home. This scene is roleplay-heavy as the players explain what their characters see through the windows, and how they react to that experience.

Shageriin's devotion to the Dragon is tested as he learns that the sacred weapon he's been wielding has been subverted and that his patron is in the grips of the Spider Goddess.

DEVELOPMENT. The PCs may have been able to convince themselves that Holmes and his lair are mundane — dangerous in the extreme, but still a creature of flesh and bone and a structure of wood and plaster. In this encounter that notion is disavowed and they learn how truly perilous their situation is.

FACING FEARS. The PCs are separated into their own pocket nightmares in an instant. Each player should be asked to describe the disturbing images that their PC sees in the reflections, and their reaction. The windows pluck memories and fears from their viewers' minds, playing them out simultaneously for each character. The hallucination incites a DC 12 Sanity check. Investigators that have already faced their greatest fears (see *Fear Itself* on [page 194](#)) have advantage on the check. Additionally, at the GM's discretion players that roleplay their character's actions especially well have advantage on their check.

Succeeded Sanity Check. Overcoming adversity builds character and strengthens resolve, or so the saying goes. PCs succeeding their Sanity check face their terror with grim purpose and overcome it.

Failed Sanity Check. Investigators failing their check are shaken to their core from the vision. The PC loses 1d6+1 minutes from their fruitless struggles, gain 1 level of exhaustion,

and lose 1 Sanity point. PCs that fumble the check lose an additional Sanity point (2 in total).

COMPLICATION. Shageriin has been singled out by Atlach Nacha for special attention. The Spider Goddess has accepted the tribute of his stolen relic from Holmes and uses that connection to attack his spirit. In addition to the above, read or paraphrase the following to Shageriin's player:

Heart hammering and breath ragged from the ordeal, you find comfort and calm in seeing the Dragon reveal itself. But something is amiss. The wisps of fog are in fact webs entrapping your godhead. It struggles unsuccessfully to extricate its partially-cocooned body from the web.

A panel of ruby phosphorescent eyes can be seen behind and above your hobbled deity, taking in the scene with alien patience. The entity's form is clearly arachnid with four pairs of legs, thorax, and abdomen with spinnerets.

This secondary vision rocks Shageriin's faith in his deity and uses his guilt at losing the sacred dagger as the leverage to fracture his senses. Shageriin must roll below his current Sanity with a d20, applying any current modifiers, or become addled. He repeats the save at the end of each turn, ending the effect on a success. While addled the player rolls a d10 at the beginning of their turn to determine his behavior.

- **1:** Shageriin uses all his movement and takes the Dash action to move in a random direction. To determine the direction, roll a d8 and assign a direction to each die face.
- **2–5:** Shageriin doesn't move or take any actions this turn.
- **6–7:** Shageriin fixates on an ally furthest from him, using his movement to get as close to the ally as possible. If Shageriin is able to reach





the ally with an action remaining, Shageriin makes an unarmed attack on the ally.

- **8–9:** Shageriin is frightened but can otherwise act and move normally.
- **10:** Shageriin can act and move normally.

Scene 6. History Lesson

DEVELOPMENT. Hidden within the nooks and crannies of the World's Fair Hotel is a diary from Holmes' time as a student at the University of Michigan. The diary can be found anywhere the GM chooses, and at any time deemed appropriate. It details Holmes' introduction to Atlach Nacha and alludes to the fission of his dreamself from his mortal body.

Study the Book. Reading the book in its entirety takes 6 hours minus the investigator's Intelligence modifier. A negative Intelligence modifier increases the time needed to read the book. PCs reading through the diary make an Intelligence check, and consult the chart below to see what they've learned. At the GM's discretion a PC may study the book exhaustively during downtime between scenarios. In this case, consider them to have rolled a 20 on the Intelligence check without needing to roll.

Skimming the Book. When time is of the essence a PC with Intelligence 14 or more may skim the book, halving the reading time. The PC then makes an unmodified d20 roll to see what they learn based on the chart below.

- **DC 10:** The diary belongs to a man named Herman Webster Mudgett and details his time as a student at University of Michigan's Department of Medicine and Surgery from 1882 to 1884 when he passed his exams. The diary mentions a wife and son — Clara and Robert respectively — and alludes to encounters with countless other women.
- **DC 13:** On graduation Mudgett moved to Mooers Fork, New York. PCs that have seen

samples of Holmes' writing can positively identify that he also wrote this book.

- **DC 15:** Piecing together the disparate details and innuendo, you surmise that Mudgett defrauded at least two insurance companies with the aid of cadavers from the medical school anatomy lab. An entry describing a dream catches your eye: "The comfort of the web and nuzzle of her plentiful arms put to rest my nightmares. Embracing the darkness means freedom and power."
- **DC 18:** You find the following passage near the end of the diary: "Her nudging tugs on my psyche persist and pull at the corners of my mind, expanding it to unimagined greatness. The events in Mooers Forks sealed the pact and I am metamorphosized by my time in her care. I am of two parts, separate and powerful."
- **DC 21:** The pact with the Spider Goddess was sealed at Mooers Fork with the sacrifice of an innocent. The metamorphosis that Mudgett refers to was both actual and metaphysical, resulting in two independent beings, one in the Waking World and another in the Dreamlands, existing simultaneously.

Scene 7. The Dragon's Tooth

DESIGNER'S NOTE. After Shageriin's vision in Scene 5. Window Pain, he may feel compelled to place himself and his allies at the literal center of the spider's web to regain Lóng Yá and aid the Dragon. The player(s) may not want to place themselves in such a dire situation, and if that's the case this encounter can be saved for a later date, perhaps after the PCs have better prepared themselves for infiltration and violence against Holmes. With adjustment this scene can be inserted into any scenario in which the investigators enter Area 3G.



The following scene occurs in Area 3G (page 162).

Ephemeral strands of silver-grey cover every surface of the room. They hang from the ceilings, walls, floors, and objects in the room, creating curtains of webs obscuring vision beyond a few paces. Many-legged creatures scuttle through the pathways created by the network of silken strands.

An evil presence of overwhelming potency pulses from deeper in the chamber.

Holmes has placed Lóng Yá on the altar to the Spinner in the Darkness, and she is pleased. The dagger's ability to store and channel chi is a key element to their plan to bring the Dreamlands to the Waking World.

DEVELOPMENT. Below are options for the GM to choose from, or to use as inspiration for their own take on the encounter. In broad strokes this can be the penultimate scene in the scenario, and the one most affected by the scenario's purpose: a one-shot or campaign kick-off.

One-Shot. Horror RPGs have a well-earned reputation for lethality and PCs that do not survive to tell the tale. The best they can hope for is to slow the inevitable progression of evil, and spend their retirement gibbering about past exploits. If *Welcome to My Parlor* is played as a one-shot, the PCs find Holmes kneeling in supplication at the altar having just presented the sacred weapon to Atlach Nacha. He is joined by mundane spiders and the shrine's guardians. The goal is to rescue the dagger from the shrine and escape the Dreamlands, rather than defeating their enemies. The GM and players are encouraged to use a combination of narrative combat and dice-rolling to enact the battles, sacrifices, and outcomes of the conflict.

Campaign Kickoff. The PCs' current abilities are not conducive to a successful assault on the White City Devil. Instead they can hope to recover the lost relic, and either run like hell to get away or fight the shrine's guardians to secure their passage. Victory is not assured, but their chances are better than in a one-shot. Again, a combination of narrative and crunch in combat can serve the table well.

COMPLICATIONS. A **swarm of spiders** make their home in the room. They are joined by two **servitors of Atlach Nacha** (see page 222). Lastly, the **White City Devil** (see page 188) is worshipping at the altar.

ASSETS. Lóng Yá can be found prominently displayed on the altar. Previous offerings, mundane and eldritch, can be found scattered near the shrine. The exact items found are to be determined by the GM.

Scene 8. *Exodus*

Exodus immediately follows *Scene 7. The Dragon's Tooth* without a break in the action as the investigators search for an exit. As with *Scene 7* the GM should guide the narrative based on their plan for moving the storyline forward.

The PCs feel and sense that the hotel's grip on them is lessening. The effect is subtle — the quality of the light changes, sounds from the street reach the investigators, and the odors of other guests: pipe smoke, alcohol, and perfume are noticed for the first time. No roll is needed to realize that this is their best chance to escape the Dreamlands.

A waft of tobacco smoke mixed with the unmistakable smell of lady's perfume drifts in the air, beneath is the pungent smell of a busy street in a growing town. The odors are curious only because they've not been present before. Thinking on it, there have





been none of the smells and sounds of a busy hotel. At least, not until now.

DEVELOPMENT. The unique circumstances of their capture, the rites they were subjected to, and the power of Atlach Nacha, pulled the investigators bodily into the Dreamlands. For them, escaping is more difficult than simply waking up. With each fear overcome the Spinner in the Darkness' grip on them lessens, and with the final investigator defeating (or succumbing to) their night terror, escape is possible.

GETTING OUT

Busting Out. The investigators take matters into their own hands and forge their own path out of, or through, the World's Fair Hotel, exiting through a window or even a wall; they are quite motivated at this point to leave. This method gains them access to the Dreamlands at large and can be combined with the following approach.

Emergent Egress. Humans are not physically able to visit the Dreamlands without powerful magics and protections, and with Atlach Nacha's connection to the investigators severed the realm wishes nothing more than to expel the PCs. The method of egress may be a portal appearing suddenly in thin air, a door or window that now leads somewhere else, or simply an overwhelming light followed by appearing in the Waking World.

Lóng Yá Recovered. The dagger yearns to leave the vile lair of the Spider Goddess and empathically makes their wishes known to

whomever is holding the weapon. With a sharp slice in the air a thinny temporarily opens up, allowing the party to escape.

Conclusion

Welcome to My Parlor can serve as a jumping off point for an investigation into the depravities of Holmes and an attempt to bring him to justice. The PCs have learned that he has two bodies, an Elder God as a patron, and that the city is in imminent danger. The investigators will need to physically and psychically recover, gain allies and assets, and gather physical evidence of Dr. Holmes' activities. Regardless of their actions they have the attention of Atlach Nacha, Holmes, and the White City Devil. Can there be peace when your enemies can invade your dreams?

ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

Escape into the Weird. Groups wishing to take their campaign into the Dreamlands have an excellent opportunity to do so, as long as they can survive the fog (see *page 192*) long enough to find a path to the Dreamlands proper.

The Basement. A grim ending that can be explored is for the PCs to awaken, again, as prisoners in the basement. Their time is short and they are actively hunted by Chappell, Pitezl, and Holmes as they make their way through the almost familiar passages of the hotel.

FRAUD & ABUSE



HOLMES' HISTORY OF DEFRAUDING insurance companies began as a student at the University of Michigan (1882–1884) where he used cadavers to successfully defraud life insurance companies. Holmes' process was simple: take out a life insurance policy on an acquaintance, impersonate the beneficiary, and present a corpse to collect the benefit. A man of ingenuity and experimentation, Holmes tinkered with the formula endlessly. There are accounts of him manipulating his prospective victims into taking out policies themselves, saving him the initial outlay of funds and providing an extra layer of secrecy.

Inevitably Holmes came to the realization that there were easier methods of body procurement, a tedious chore he did not care for. He also knew that a body in good enough condition could be articulated and sold to a medical school for a tidy sum. The very model of efficiency. Thus began his career as a serial killer.

In July 1894, Holmes was arrested and briefly incarcerated in St. Louis. Surprisingly this was the first time he'd been detained. Ever the opportunist, Holmes befriended Marion Hedgepeth there, and hatched the plot that would eventually lead to his capture and execution. Hedgepeth, for a fee of \$500, would provide the name of a local attorney, Jeptha Howe, who was amenable to Holmes' efforts to fake his own death and collect his death benefit. The scheme ultimately failed, but the plan was sound.

Holmes and Howe adapted their failed plan to include Pitezel as the insured, promised to split the \$10,000 policy, and moved their operation to Philadelphia to hide their tracks. Holmes, under the alias of B.F. Henry, would

pose as an inventor whose lab assistant was destined to be disfigured and killed in an accident. Pitezel would find an appropriate stand-in for the aide's body, and they would repeat the process of claiming the benefit as they had countless times before.

The plan went off without a hitch — for Holmes, at least. Holmes subdued his long-time ally and accomplice with chloroform, set him ablaze, and the payout was collected without incident. To explain his absence Holmes informed Pitezel's wife, Carrie, that he'd gone to London on business and presented her \$500, ostensibly from Pitezel, to hold her over until his return.

At this point we diverge from history where Holmes coerced Mrs. Pitezel into placing three of her five children into Holmes' care with tragic results. In this scenario Holmes chooses to travel light to continue his machinations, and more easily avoid the folks tracking him down.

The PCs assume the roles of investigators hired by a consortium of insurance companies that have been defrauded by Holmes. They have come together to pool their considerable resources and experiences, and bring the villain to justice. The PCs are likely independent private detectives, members of law enforcement, or representatives of the Pinkertons (or a similar organization).

Persons of Interest.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. The willingness and ability of local law enforcement to aid the PCs varies greatly. His crimes are fairly consistent — fraud, petty theft, and defaulting on loans — however the widespread use of aliases muddies the waters. At the beginning of the investigation it should be noted that Holmes is



thought of as a con man, not a murderer. The investigators will be crucial in piecing together the web of crimes Holmes has perpetrated, and bringing to light how serious they are. The death of Pitezel is being actively investigated by the Philadelphia police department.

CARRIE PITEZEL. Mrs. Pitezel (**commoner**) does not believe that her husband is in Europe and is embarrassed that Holmes was able to charm her into not pressing the matter. When Holmes last visited he gave her \$500, "From Benjamin to hold you until he returns from London." She knows that Ben's work with Holmes has taken him all across the country, including long stints west of the Mississippi in Missouri and Texas.

MARION HEDGEPEETH. A career criminal (**thug**) still imprisoned in St. Louis. Hedgepeth is furious at Holmes' failure to repay him for the aid he gave, and he will share what he knows of Holmes' plans to fake his own death for a suitable monetary bribe or for a reduction in his current sentence. He can confirm the modus operandi used to kill Pitezel, as it was the same as the failed scheme in St. Louis.

JEPHTHA HOWE. Howe is a young lawyer (as **local politician**) in St. Louis more interested in making a quick buck than practicing law. He maintains plausible deniability at all times, but does share that Holmes was referred to him by a former client, and that they spoke at length. Resourceful investigators may be able to coerce or intimidate him into revealing Holmes' plan to fake his own death. Howe knows that the scheme was not successful. Getting Howe to reveal more details requires considerable effort as he does not wish to implicate himself in the death in Philadelphia.

INSURERS. John Hancock Company, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and the Prudential Insurance Company of America could conceivably have been targeted by Holmes. Any of these companies, or any

fictitious institutions of the GMs creation, could investigate Holmes' activities. The failed attempt in St. Louis is the most recent, and has drawn the interest of the insurers.

Collections

There is not a single item of worth in the halls of The World's Fair Hotel that was not purchased on credit or stolen outright. Holmes' disinterest in paying his debts, and pressure from his creditors, were primary drivers of the investigations that would eventually lead to his capture.

SMILING BOB'S BICYCLES. Robert James came to Chicago looking to carve out a place for himself in the Land of Opportunity. Bob's Bicycles, his venture in Englewood, has taken full advantage of the town's growing congestion and fascination with bicycles. Business was booming until his stock began to mysteriously vanish. Robert will be out of business and destitute if the stolen goods aren't recovered soon. The reward isn't much, but how dangerous could the job be? Luckily for the PCs Bob has engraved each of the bike frames with his initials. Guests of the World's Fair Hotel may remember that Dr. Holmes marked the hotel's cycles by affixing a metal plaque to the same spot.

PETERSEN'S FINE FURNISHINGS. Originally from the Black Forest region of Germany the Petersens have a reputation as some of the finest woodworkers in the city. They are especially adept at working with exotic hardwoods and filling custom orders for challenging pieces. The Petersens have eldritch connections of their own from the Old Country, and do not take kindly to tardy payments. They are implacable, with connections both mundane and supernatural, and no qualms about using extreme means. They want payment, either in coin or blood,



for their work. Has Holmes' arrogance brought him to the attention of a force he's not prepared to evade?

JACK BLUE. Holmes' refusal to pay wages for work done, his tendency to terminate employment just before payroll is due, and the disappearance of several laborers has not escaped the notice of Jack Blue (see *page 93*). Are the PCs members of the welcoming crew that are sent to explain to Holmes the error of his ways? Or are they investigating the inexplicable disappearance of the group Jack Blue sent to talk to Holmes and Pitezel?

Missing Persons

Each of Holmes' targets has left behind friends, family, and connections within their communities. Those ties inevitably lead to the World's Fair Hotel and its charismatic proprietor.

- Diana's disappearance is not unusual in and of itself. Her occupation as a carnival strongwoman lends itself to a transitory nature as new opportunities present themselves and wanderlust takes hold. What was surprising to the troupe was the simultaneous disappearance of Diana and Mortimer.
- Paul's connection to the hotel is clear and easy to follow. With his disappearance his siblings quickly find their way to the safety of Hull House (see *page 48*). Ms. Addams is keen on sending a representative to Paul's last known employer to find out where he's been, and why he has abandoned his brother and sister. At the GM's discretion Ms. Addams has an inkling that Holmes is more than he appears, and has dark connections with the supernatural.
- Wealth and prestige leave tracks of their own, and Rosine's solvency is no exception. Members of the Union League (see *page 96*) were preparing to offer membership to their society at the time of Mrs. van Tassel's sudden disappearance, and have taken an interest in learning her whereabouts to add her to their ranks.
- Shageriin's history and the aftermath of his disappearance are discussed in the following section, Procurements & Acquisitions.
- Without a family, friends, or a wife, Victor Emory's disappearance would have gone unnoticed were it not for a bill for his services that has not been paid by Holmes. The firm was unable to reach Mr. Emory at his last known address and have dispatched a courier to Dr. Holmes to collect payment.

PROCUREMENTS & ACQUISITIONS

A Whispers RPG Campaign Jumpstart
By Matt Corley and Robert Ford

Background

NAILING FROM THE QING DYNASTY, LI Yu is the sort of man who blends into a crowd. His masculine lines meld with delicate, almost feminine features that make his face difficult to remember. The first two knuckles and the outer ridge of his hands are tough and calloused from some kind of training, though if asked about it he'll avoid an explanation. He wears the simple everyday jacket and pants of a Chinese male, and a string of mala beads around his wrist. The only standout detail is the sprawling tattoo of a Chinese dragon on his forearm — a reminder from his orphaned youth spent in a monastery.

The influence from his time with monks is evident, as Li Yu generally exudes a calm demeanor, choosing his words in a measured way as he speaks. He usually has a selection of Chinese proverbs at the ready for any occasion.

Talk does not cook rice.

A book holds a house of gold.

Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without one.

Patience is a bitter plant, but its fruit is sweet.

Ripe fruit falls by itself — but it doesn't fall in your mouth.

A fast learner, Li Yu caught the attention of the Dynasty for his ease at learning languages, the esoteric arts, and strategy of war. He was called to service as an advisor to the Great Qing and successfully defeated several attempts at an uprising.

The Great Qing fears what's to come in the Dynasty, and even though he is wise enough to know it won't last forever, wants every possible advantage to remain in control. During Li Yu's research into the esoteric, he came across the Book of Eibon and has been searching ever since for pages to complete the volume. His journey has taken him into the gray areas of society: opium dens, back alleys, abandoned ruins.

While the monks that raised him were wise, Li came to fully understand what they did not, harnessing the power of the occult to protect the Dynasty. There is a natural gift inside Li, an attunement that senses when objects of power are close.

Li had heard about rare artifacts being brought to the Fair from distant cultures from around the world. He is taking the opportunity to further his search for the missing pages of Eibon, and to talk with various people to see if they know of other occult-related objects he could use to protect the Dynasty. The Qing wants a full report on what the rest of the world has brought and the inventions being exhibited.

Li is grooming the investigators as his agents. He is savvy and knows that they must gain experience, training, and personal power if they are to succeed in gathering the pages of the Book of Eibon. In this scenario Li meets the PCs, recognizes their potential, and when they succeed their first test — tracking him down — they are given a taste of the powers hidden behind the Veil. In time Li will ask them to investigate the World's Fair Hotel in hopes of finding (or avenging) his friend, recovering Lóng Yá, and liberating pages for the Book of Eibon from Holmes and the Spider Goddess.



Li

*“Knowing is not enough, we must apply.
Willing is not enough, we must do.”*

—Bruce Lee

Medium humanoid (human), rationally benevolent ascetic

Armor Class 17 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 36 (8d6 + 8)

Speed 40 ft.

STR DEX **CON** INT **WIS** **CHA**

12 (+1) 16 (+3) 13 (+1) 12 (+1) 18 (+4) 10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +4, Religion +4, Insight +2, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages English, Mandarin, Leng, Russian

Challenge 3

Unarmed Defense. While Li is wearing no armor, wielding no shield, and is unencumbered, he adds his Wisdom modifier to his AC (included above).

Standing Leap. As a bonus action Li may jump up to 10 ft. high and/or 20 ft. across. The standing leap does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Actions

Multiattack. Li makes two unarmed strike attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) bludgeoning damage.



Adventure Hooks

Sometimes an adventure drops literally in your lap.

Procurements & Acquisitions is an homage to the time-honored fantasy RPG trope of a party meeting in a tavern and an adventure spontaneously forming as a result. The scenes are intended to be played through in a single session, introduce a long-term NPC for the campaign, and can be the starting point for a *Whispers* RPG campaign.

Scene 1. Dine and Dash

From outside, you hear the sound of raised voices. A disheveled Asian man runs into the restaurant and makes his way to a table by himself, as far from the entrance as possible. He nervously keeps an eye on the door, and after a moment seems to calm a bit, though he continues to glance at the table you're seated at as if he knows someone in your party.





The interior of the restaurant is immaculate. Dark cherry wood paneling and crown molding decorate the walls, rising to meet the high ceiling of embossed copper tiles overhead. Not a cobweb or speck of dust has been missed. Eight tables are all the place can hold, but the staff hustle in preparation, as if they're certain of a crowd. The scent of fresh apple pie, baked breads, and roasted meats smell heavenly.

DEVELOPMENT. The investigators have just enough time to spot Li and make a Wisdom (Perception) check to learn the following:

- **DC 10:** The man is Asian, anxious, and of below average height. He has black hair and a thin braid trailing behind him.
- **DC 14:** The man clutches a battered leather satchel to himself. It is partially hidden by his coat and body.
- **DC 18:** In his hurried movements his sleeve rides up, revealing a tattoo of a Chinese dragon on the underside of his forearm.

When the PCs have learned what they can with a quick glance — there isn't time for more — read or paraphrase the following:

You hear additional raised voices from the street and see several people through the window. They are clearly searching for someone and appear to have lost their target as they scan the street. The Asian man lowers his head and turns away from the group outside, and then stands and walks directly over to you, crouching to one knee and using your table to block the view from the entrance.

He withdraws a worn leather satchel from the folds of his jacket and hands it to [insert name of PC].

“Keep this safe, I beg of you. They are closing in on me and this cannot fall into their hands.” Without another word, the man uncoils from his position and runs through the back exit of the restaurant.



DEVELOPMENT. Li bolts from the restaurant, using his considerable speed to evade pursuit; nonetheless, jostling in the crowded street indicates that someone is giving chase. Players wishing to follow should be reminded that dining and dashing is frowned upon, and that with his prodigious speed they have little chance at keeping up with him. Observant PCs may catch a glimpse of the folks chasing after the mysterious man before they too disappear.

PCs succeeding on a Wisdom (Perception) check note the following:

- **DC 10:** The man is being pursued by three others.
- **DC 14:** The investigator catches a glance of an odd character on the clothing of one of the pursuers. With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check they recognize the symbol as a variant of the Elder Sign, thought to ward off wicked spirits.
- **DC 19:** There is something off about the figures; their gait, and when you catch a glimpse of their grimacing faces you note that their irises are black and the surrounding sclera are reflective silver.



Scene 2

Immediately after Li leaves, the proprietor of the establishment asks after the PCs.

Emma approaches from behind the bar, carrying a small tray of fresh bread for the table. She glares at the rear exit of the restaurant. “Lotta nerve on tha’ man, showing his face in here again. The charlatan tried to sell me a jade good luck charm, but I don’t believe in that claptrap.”

DEVELOPMENT. Emma knows Li and is happy to answer any questions the PCs have about the mysterious man. It’s clear that she’s as excited as she is annoyed by the interruption. While answering questions she looks around to see if other customers need help, directs her daughter, and if needed steps away with “I’ll be right back.”

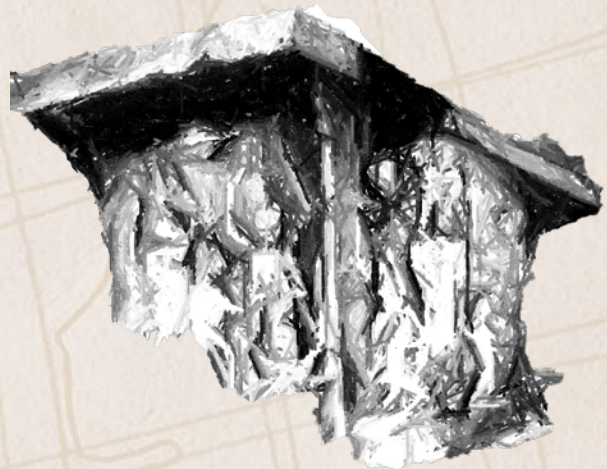
Who was that? “Name’s Li... something or other. Thought he was a vagrant at first, but seems to be doing well for himself in... whatever it is he does.” Li first came into the shop a few weeks ago and caught Emma’s attention by ordering tea. He has since come twice more.

Where’s he from? “Said he’s here from the Great Empire, though I get the impression he’s not going to be leaving Chicago any time soon. He’s got the eyes of a man looking for something. I can always tell.”

Does he stay around here? “I think I’ve a card for him somewhere.” She goes into the back to rummage around, and returns in a few moments, placing Li’s business card on the table. “Has a tent out between Buffalo Bill’s and the Fair, opens at dusk every day. Never been, myself.”

The leather satchel is well made and has seen a lot of use with scuffs and marks covering its

exterior. Within are a smattering of mismatched coins and a collection of loose pages in a flap of aged leather. There are thirteen pages, covered in writings (Mandarin) and two unsettling crude illustrations.



When the PCs begin examining the satchel Emma interrupts them:



“Wouldn’t trust anything the man handed you. Might as well be a coiled serpent waiting to bite, though considering how old that book appears to be, I’m sure you’ll be paid handsomely for its return.”

ASSETS. The satchel has coins from at least four different countries: USA, Canada, Germany, and China, worth a total of \$3.14. Studying the writings proves to be a difficult task as they are written with a cypher using Mandarin characters. PCs able to read Mandarin or finding someone to read it for them note the repeated use of the words “Lóng Yá” (see *page 218*) and a reference to “Eibon”.

Accurately copying the writing is possible for someone that writes Mandarin, otherwise the PC must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity check to create a passable copy. PCs skilled in calligraphy, forgery, or similar talents add their proficiency bonus.

Interlude. Ramblings

This encounter can occur at any time the GM feels is appropriate, and can easily be slotted into any scenario. Patch is intended to serve as a recurring NPC who can assume the role of informant and tentative ally of the party.

A man wearing a threadbare woolen overcoat approaches. He hasn’t had a bath or shave in quite some time, and stinks of living on the streets. He’s jittery — even as he approaches, he glances about his surroundings and jerks as if startled by noises only he can hear.

Burn scars cover the right side of his face, and the eye on that side has gone a blind milky-white.

Almost in a nervous tic, he reaches out to brush invisible “bugs” from his skin as he talks in a low whispering gibberish.

“Beware, the Tcho-Tchos. They’re here, among us. Ohhhhh... Nacha nacha nacha....”

In mid-sentence a police officer comes up to the vagrant, takes him by the arm, and begins to guide him away. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that the two are familiar with each other, and that there are no signs of violence from either of them.

DEVELOPMENT. The homeless man is in a fugue, incomprehensible and incoherent. He keeps repeating “nacha” over and over unless calmed down. If they do not intervene on his behalf he’s arrested for violating the Unsightly Beggar Law (see *page 28*). The cop can be persuaded to leave him alone (DC 12) or bribed (50¢). Attempts to Intimidate the police could result in a visit to jail.

Patch

“Knowledge is a form of asceticism.”

—Fredrich Nietzsche

Medium humanoid (human), ascetic

Armor Class 10 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 5 (1d6 + 2)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9(-1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +4, Perception +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages English, Greek, Latin, Leng

Challenge 1

Ear to the Ground (1/day). Patch has advantage on an ability check that allows him to add his proficiency bonus.



When the immediate concern of arrest has been dealt with the PCs can calm the man down with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Medicine) check or a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. PCs that offer the man food, money, or other gifts have advantage on the check.

When calmed the man reveals that his name is Patch. He is able to talk to the PCs for a few minutes before he loses cohesion for the remainder of the day. The scope and veracity of Patch's knowledge is at the discretion of the GM. He is generally reliable, has a gift for being unnoticed, and his addled mind gives him a unique perspective on the world as it really is.

Scene 3. Li's Emporium

Li's tent isn't the largest on display, but neither is it the smallest. PCs that arrive before dusk find the tent isn't open — in fact, there doesn't appear to be a seam in the thick canvas to enter the tent. At dusk a nigh-imperceptible shimmer (DC 17 passive Perception) crosses the front of the tent, leaving a seam in its wake.

Sitting at a small desk is Li himself, furiously jotting notes. He looks up at the PCs and his face floods with an expression of gratitude.

Li speaks in an even tone of measured wisdom. "I am so grateful to see you. Welcome, please, please come in."

Li stands from the desk and begins running mantra beads through his fingers. He spreads his arms, presenting the displays. "All treasures from the Orient, some older than time itself."

The unusual, the dark, the odd... those are the treasures I offer to the rest of the world. But your path... It seems all of you are seeking the wrong thing. Have you returned my satchel? Is everything still there?"

Keeping the Satchel

Players do what players do, and it is certainly within the realm of possibility that they may choose to keep the satchel and investigate its contents on their own. Should that occur they can learn most of what Li reveals in the following scene independently, though it takes more time and effort. Additionally, Li wants his notes back and is willing to handle it personally if intermediaries are not effective.

There are many folks in Chicago that would be interested in the notes and sketches, not the least of which are Dr. Holmes (see page 185) and the Nightworms (see page 88).

A portion of the tent's interior is sectioned off with a tall foldable wall constructed of lacquered wooden slats and paper. The ceiling is draped with wide silks emblazoned with Chinese dragons and writing. There are shelves and individual displays filled with trinkets and artifacts from the Far East.

DEVELOPMENT. Li waits expectantly for the PCs to return his satchel and its contents. If they keep the money, he makes an offhand comment about always losing his change but is otherwise unconcerned about the minor theft.

Reward. If the PCs have returned the papers and the sketches proceed to *Scene 4. The Reward*. If they have kept the originals for themselves the conversation turns sour, and Li makes it clear that there will be no recompense without them (he cannot be fooled into thinking copies are authentic).

Returning the Satchel. Li accepts the satchel with a solemn bow and looks inside to confirm its contents. If all of the papers are returned, he smiles, looks at the PCs and says, "There are questions you must have, and I am here to answer them as best I can."





Lóng Yá. PCs mentioning Lóng Yá or the sketch of the dagger are given its history and an inkling of its purported abilities. Li explains that the dagger is lost, but he hopes that it is recovered soon, “perhaps with your assistance. When the time is right.” As the PCs gain Li’s trust (and enough experience to have a reasonable chance at recovering it) he shares additional details on Shageriin, the powers of the dagger, and his suspicions about Holmes. GMs are encouraged to be flexible with the timing, and allow the possibility of a search and rescue mission to save the prisoners and artifact.

Eibon. “The strangest and rarest of tomes containing occult knowledge. It was written in the language of the Ancients, and has been translated piecemeal for eons.” The book is named after the wizard attributed with its creation, and contains not only lost histories and terrible knowledge, but also spells of unimaginable power. Li has dedicated his life to recovering the pages and, once recovered, protecting the book from misuse.

The Altar. “It is a place of darkness... evil. And it is close. The foul entity to which the altar is dedicated is waiting for its opportunity, and I fear that time is soon.” The sketch is a rendering of Atlach Nacha’s altar in area **3G** (see *page 162*). Li has not determined who the altar is dedicated to — at least, not yet.

Other Questions. Li is well informed on the activities around the Exposition and the folks that are present at it.

The Jade Necklace. He shows them the cameo from the following scene.

When the PCs have exhausted their questions, or at a time of the GM’s choosing, proceed to *Scene 4. The Reward*.

Scene 4. The Reward

“They say virtue is its own reward. By looking at you I see you would like more than my gratitude. I have gathered much and you may choose one item for your efforts.”

The shop is filled with old artifacts, and Li beckons to the group to choose a single object for them to share. He makes it clear that there will be additional payments for services rendered, and over time the PCs may all come to possess a wonder from his collection.

ASSETS. In addition to the objects of power described below the GM is encouraged to create items that will appeal to the investigators the players have created.

He steps close to a dagger poised on a bronze pedestal. “The Soulstealer. A dagger used only once to sacrifice the daughter of a forgotten Emperor to an equally forgotten god.”

Soulstealer. There is no mistaking Soulstealer for the dagger in the sketches as it has no hilt. The handle is ivory, yellowed with age, and the symmetrical blade is forged to a fine point. Were it not for Li’s story the dagger would garner little attention. When grasped, the handle is always warm to the touch. The dagger is considered magical in terms of overcoming resistance. It has no other bonuses, and does not require attunement.

Li moves to a most exquisite jade carving of an Asian woman holding the branch of a cherry tree ready to release its blossoms. “The last sculpture of Longwei, a great warrior monk. Patience is a bitter plant, but its fruit is sweet.” Li smiles lovingly at



the sculpture. “Longwei gave it as a gift to a traitorous general, but first he soaked it in poison for a month. The general was no more.”

Statuette of Longwei. The poison residue from centuries ago remains embedded in the statuette, a danger to anyone who touches it. Living creatures that handle the statue for at least 1 round with their bare skin must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 1d4 poison damage on a failure. If Li is friendly or indifferent to the PCs he will warn them of this effect prior to their touching it. In addition to the poison the figurine exudes an aura of calm, and its owner makes their first Sanity check of the day with advantage.

Jade Cameo. The cameo is jade and silver with an engraving on the back that has been obliterated with scratches. Li has this to say about the jewelry: “Our dreams are priceless. This bauble protects those treasures from interlopers.” The wearer of the cameo is protected from intrusions into their dreams. Creatures able to enter, alter, or view dreams are not able to use those abilities against the wearer of the cameo.

Li’s Satchel. “It has served me well, lightening the load on my weary shoulders.” The satchel, as long as it can be used, can never weigh more than 15 pounds. It is not larger on the inside than the outside, and the effect is not activated until the objects placed inside it exceed 15 pounds and the satchel is closed.

Toy Cannon. “A toy with a purpose.” The cannon is an amazingly accurate replica of a Chinese cannon small enough to fit in the palm of an adult with a string hanging from its rear. Once daily the string may be pulled, activating the cannon which shoots a lead ball (20/60, +4 to hit, 2d4 bludgeoning damage). The cannon cannot be used again until dawn the following day when it reloads itself. On

an attack roll of a natural 1 the cannon is destroyed and inflicts 2d4 piercing damage to whomever was holding it.

Scene 5. The Job

“Books. Old volumes. That’s been my... main focus as of late. I know of at least two portions of the book of Eibon hidden in this city. I want – I need – you to retrieve them for me. I would myself, but... there are certain stones that can’t be moved, even by me. There’s always a serpent watching from beyond the wall.”

The following prompts serve to guide the GM in a Bookhounds campaign and can be used or ignored as needed.

- How many fragments of the book are there? Where are they located?
- Where in the World’s Fair Hotel is the fragment? Does Holmes know what he has?
- Are other factions interested? The Nightworms? The Black Star Society? Others?
- Are there potential allies?

DESIGNER’S NOTE. I would be remiss if I didn’t recommend Pelgrane Press’s excellent Trail of Cthulhu book: *Bookhounds of London* by Kenneth Hite. It has everything you could ever need to create and run a Bookhounds campaign.

Conclusion

The investigators gain one level of experience, have a trinket to aid them in their quests, and a greater purpose to guide them as they explore the Windy City.



APPENDIX A: WELCOME TO MY PARLOR STATBLOCKS

Spider Brooches of Atlach-Nacha

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Pitezel and Chappell are never found without the brooches that were gifted to them by Holmes for their service. The brooches are made of black meteoric iron that is curiously heavy, and fashioned into the shape of a spider's web. The brooch marks the wearer as a servant of the Spider Goddess whether they realize it or not.

Once attuned they grant the following abilities to their owners:

- Resistance to poison damage and advantage on poison saving throws.
- Darkvision 30 ft.
- Immunity to the hotel's Fractured Reality ability (see [page 150](#)).

The listed abilities have not been included in Pitezel or Chappell's statblocks.

Lóng Yá

Weapon (dagger), legendary (requires attunement)

Crafted from the discarded tooth of a celestial dragon, Lóng Yá serves the dual purpose of sacred weapon and religious symbol. The artifact has been owned by religious sects and monasteries over the millennia, and was last seen shortly after the Gapsin Coup in 1885.

Once attuned the weapon grants the following abilities to its owner:

- Aberrations, fiends, undead and monstrosities cannot resist damage it inflicts.
- Gain the Vril Initiate feat (see [page 239](#)), regardless of meeting prerequisites. In addition to being attuned the owner must be holding the dagger to use this feat.
- Lóng Yá can serve as a chi (i.e. hit die) battery, storing up to 4 hit dice for later use. Hit dice stored in this way can only be accessed while the weapon is held by its owner and are only accessible via the Vril Initiate feat. To restore lost hit dice the owner must channel their chi into the dagger. They may then regain their spent chi as normal via resting.





Flesh Construct

“The monster was the best friend I ever had.”
—Boris Karloff

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 51 (6d8+24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified
Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 3

Immutable Form. The construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The construct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Perverse. An encounter with a flesh construct always induces a Sanity check when first seen. When calculating the DC for that check they are considered to be CR 4.

Actions

Multiattack. The flesh construct makes two claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Myling

“One foot in winter and one in spring. One foot with the living and one with the dead.”
—Victoria Schwab, *City of Ghosts*

Small undead, any

Armor Class 14 (unarmored defense)
Hit Points 10 (4d4)
Speed 0ft., hover 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Skills Insight +2, Stealth +4
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 1

Incorporeal. The myling can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Action

Melancholic Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) psychic damage and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Sanity check or be stunned until the end of their turn. Creatures that fumble this check lose 1 Sanity.



Rat, Dreamlands

"A rat is neither good nor evil. It does what a rat has to do."

—Jo Nesbo, *Phantom*

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 14 (4d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	11 (+0)	6 (-4)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages none

Challenge 1

Avoidance. If the Dreamlands rat is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Between Worlds. The Dreamlands rat exists in two planes at the same time, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of its next turn. This trait is also disrupted while it is incapacitated or has a speed of 0.

Keen Smell. The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. The rat has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the rat's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Action

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.



Servitor of Atlach Nacha

“You’ve got to start being more careful.”

—Tucker and Dale vs Evil

Medium monstrosity, malevolent

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Acrobatics +2, Athletics +2, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 15 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Leng but can’t speak
Challenge 2

Pack Tactics. The servitor has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of its allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn’t Incapacitated.

Spider Climb. The servitor can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Walker. The servitor ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The servitor makes two attacks, one bite and one claw.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 minute, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Spiderling of Leng

“One foot in winter and one in spring. One foot with the living and one with the dead.”

—Victoria Schwab, *City of Ghosts*

Small monstrosity, malevolent

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 18 (4d6+4)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 15 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Leng but can't speak

Challenge 1

Dreamlands Jump. As a bonus action, the spiderling can shift to and from the Dreamlands.

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Action

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 minute, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.



APPENDIX B: THE DEVIL'S CITY PRE-GENS

DESIGNER'S NOTE: The ability scores used for skills are less static in *Whispers* RPG than in other d20 RPGs. There may instances in which an Athletics check relies on Dexterity instead of strength, or an Investigation check relies on Charisma not Intelligence. To accommodate such nuances the bonus listed for each skill **DOES NOT** include an ability score modifier. The player will need to add the appropriate ability score modifier to individual checks.



PLAYERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO READ THE chapters on each pre-generated PC in *The Devil's City* to get a feel for the characters' idiosyncrasies and foibles. Once the players have selected their characters they should determine the following:

Alignments have intentionally been left blank so the player can determine that aspect of the character's personality. The player is the final arbiter of how each PC is roleplayed and should be empowered to make any adjustments they like.

PSYCHOSES (OPTIONAL): Each of the pre-gens have been subjected to horrific treatment by H.H. Holmes. Not only were they captured and physically harmed, but they have each been unwilling subjects in experiments. Their psyches have been cracked by these events. While within the World's Fair Hotel the PCs suffer from a short-term insanity (see pgs. 28–30, *WitDQS*) of the player's choice. This condition resolves automatically and completely when either of the following occurs: the PCs escape the hotel or the PCs defeat Holmes (in any of his guises).

Players and GMs that prefer to create their own investigators can use the following guidelines:

Starting at 4th Level

Complete the steps outlined in Chapter 3 of the Whispers in the Dark Quickstart rules to create a 1st level PC. For each level gained the following occurs:

- *The PC gains 4 plus their CON modifier in hit points.*
- *The PC must succeed on a DC 11 Sanity check or lose 1d2 Sanity. Note that if the PC's sanity falls to ½ or ¼ their original Sanity they gain a long-term or indefinite madness respectively.*
- *The PC gains any features associated with the new level(s) as defined in Table 1. Proficiency Bonus & Features in Whispers in the Dark Quickstart rules.*



Baider,
Shageriin

4th level Explorer

Adventure.

That was the first word that popped into Shageriin's mind when he finally arrived in Chicago. He had traveled the world, explored places barely known to man, and collected artifacts so fine he would surely please the gods. When he left Nanjing the first time, it really had been an adventure. The rebellion left his city and his people broken, but his sister was married to a kind man, and Shageriin felt no guilt in escaping the country to explore new places. When his sister's husband died in the rebellion, the thought of adventure transformed into the goal of mere survival.

But his nomad spirit sent restlessness through his blood. He left once again, this time for the World's Columbian Exposition in the strange land of America. It was not his first experience at a World's Fair -- just last year he walked the warm streets of Madrid, and a few years before that, Paris. Shageriin doubted any fair could outdo Paris, with the newly constructed Eiffel Tower as the archway into the plaza; the graceful curves of its architecture were an impressive feat.

WHISPERS RPG

NAME	LEVEL	BACKGROUND	ANCESTRY	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE
Shageriin Baider	4	Explorer	Lengian		
STRENGTH	<u>10</u> (+0)	Proficiency Bonus +2 <i>Inspiration</i>		<i>Personality Traits</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		AC 13	Initiative +3		
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics		Speed 30 ft.	Passive Perception 13		
DEXTERITY	<u>16</u> (+3)	Total HP 26			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		Current HP		<i>Ideals</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acrobatics	+4				
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleight of Hand		<i>Hit Dice</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Stealth		Total 4d6	Used		
CONSTITUTION	<u>14</u> (+2)	<i>Death Saves</i>		<i>Bonds</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		Successes <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Failures <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
INTELLIGENCE	<u>10</u> (+0)	ATTACKS			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws	+2	<i>Name</i>	<i>Attack Bonus</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Type</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arcana	+4	Unarmed Strike	+5	1+3	b
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> History	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation					
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature					
<input type="checkbox"/> Religion					
WISDOM	<u>13</u> (+1)	<p><i>Features and Traits</i></p> <p>FOUL BLOODED. You have a -2 penalty to Animal Handling checks.</p> <p>OTHERWORLDLY. You have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.</p> <p>DARKVISION. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of grey.</p> <p>NIMBLE COUNTERPUNCHER. When targeted by an unarmed strike by an opponent in your melee range you may use your reaction to make an unarmed attack targeting them. Your unarmed attacks have the finesse quality.</p>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws					
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Handling					
<input type="checkbox"/> Insight					
<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Perception	+2				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survival	+3				
CHARISMA	<u>12</u> (+1)	EQUIPMENT			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws	+3	\$ 700		Income: \$7/month	
<input type="checkbox"/> Deception					
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidation					
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance					
<input type="checkbox"/> Persuasion					
SANITY	<u>9</u> (-1)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws					
<i>LANGUAGES</i>					
English, Greek, Latin, Leng, Russian		PROFICIENCIES: Navigator's tools, thieves' tools +2			



Emory, Victor
4th level Professional

“You were right,” the voice whispered, cold and smooth as a serpent.

Victor closed his eyes and tried to think of anything: the bronze lion statues, the plan for the White City, Lorelei dancing with him in her favorite blue dress... Lorelei’s disfigured skeleton, dripping flesh, the ragged skin cut away inexpertly the way a rabid dog might tear a person apart.

“When you take away the flesh,” the man continued, pushing Victor down further until his face was half an inch from the acid, “You really can see it – the beautiful architecture of one’s body. Her skeleton, so lovely. I am afraid I have no time to pay you the same favor.”

WHISPERS RPG

NAME	LEVEL	BACKGROUND	ANCESTRY	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE
Victor Emory	4	Professional	Human		
STRENGTH	<u>8</u> (-1)	Proficiency Bonus +2 Inspiration		Personality Traits	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		AC 12	Initiative +3		
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics		Speed 30 ft.	Passive Perception 11		
DEXTERITY	<u>15</u> (+2)	Total HP 18			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		Current HP		Ideals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Acrobatics					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sleight of Hand	+2	Hit Dice			
<input type="checkbox"/> Stealth		Total 4d6	Used		
CONSTITUTION	<u>10</u> (+0)	Death Saves		Bonds	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		Successes <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Failures <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
INTELLIGENCE	<u>17</u> (+3)	ATTACKS			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws	+5	Name	Attack Bonus	Damage Type	
<input type="checkbox"/> Arcana		Unarmed Strike	+1	1 b	Flaws
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> History	+4				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investigation	+4				
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion	+4				Features and Traits
WISDOM	<u>12</u> (+1)	ARDENT SCHOLAR. You have advantage on Intelligence (Investigation) checks made to find information in newspapers, journals, or books. You can accurately recall anything you've read in the last 3 months.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws	+3	STEADY HANDS. You have advantage on Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) and Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Handling					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Insight	+4				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medicine	+4				
<input type="checkbox"/> Perception					
<input type="checkbox"/> Survival					
CHARISMA	<u>14</u> (+2)	EQUIPMENT			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		\$ 500	Income: \$200/month		
<input type="checkbox"/> Deception					
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidation					
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance					
<input type="checkbox"/> Persuasion					
SANITY	<u>11</u> (+0)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws					
LANGUAGES					
English, French, German, Spanish, Welsh		PROFICIENCIES: Artisan's tools (drafting), cartographer's tools			



Kowalski, Paul
4th level Laborer

The boy is vexing. Silent, stoic, and covered in the grime of menial labors.

The invasions into my waking thoughts and fitful slumbers come with urgent frequency. Enticing and appalling at once. Calling to memory Francis, my most intimate of friends from university. Perhaps that's the impetus of my fascination? Yearning to see my Canadian mate after all these years? My bodily state when rousing from the dreams is most intense. Pitezel watches the lad in my stead, and I lay in wait until I can abstain no longer. It is most invigorating.

—From the diary of
H.H. Holmes

WHISPERS RPG

NAME	LEVEL	BACKGROUND	ANCESTRY	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE
Paul Kowalski	4	Laborer	Human		
STRENGTH	<u>14</u> (+2)	<i>Proficiency Bonus +2</i>	<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Personality Traits</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>	+4	<i>AC 11</i>	<i>Initiative +1</i>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Athletics</i>	+4	<i>Speed 30 ft.</i>	<i>Passive Perception 11</i>		
DEXTERITY	<u>13</u> (+1)	<i>Total HP 30</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>		<i>Current HP</i>		<i>Ideals</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Acrobatics</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sleight of Hand</i>		<i>Hit Dice</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Stealth</i>		<i>Total 4d6</i>	<i>Used</i>		
CONSTITUTION	<u>16</u> (+3)	<i>Death Saves</i>		<i>Bonds</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>	+5	<i>Successes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Failures</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
INTELLIGENCE	<u>8</u> (-1)	ATTACKS			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>		<i>Name</i>	<i>Attack Bonus</i>	<i>Damage Type</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arcana</i>		Unarmed Strike	+4	1+2 b	<i>Flaws</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>History</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Investigation</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nature</i>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Religion</i>	+2				<i>Features and Traits</i>
WISDOM	<u>12</u> (+1)				HARDY SOUL. You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>	+3				INNER CALM. You have advantage on the first Sanity check you make every day.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Animal Handling</i>	+2				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Insight</i>	+2				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Medicine</i>	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Perception</i>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Survival</i>	+2				
CHARISMA	<u>10</u> (+0)				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Deception</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Intimidation</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Performance</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Persuasion</i>					
SANITY	<u>11</u> (+0)				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>					
LANGUAGES					
English, German, Polish					
		EQUIPMENT			
		<u>\$ 150</u>	Income: \$40/month		
PROFICIENCIES: Mason's tools, woodcarver's tools					

Stockman, Diana

4th level Athlete

The address, in nearby Englewood, led her to an enormous building and the barbershop it housed. At this time of night it wasn't unusual for a shop to be empty, and she had been summoned so the unlocked door didn't concern her either. The room was softly lit by a kerosene lamp, further proof that she was expected, and a quick glance confirmed its lack of inhabitants. The wall-length bench for waiting patrons was empty, as were the three barber's chairs. Choosing a chair over the hard bench she set herself to wait for the tardy Dr. Holmes.

The man stalking Diana had been warned by Holmes of her strength and athleticism, and that he believed her to be a gentleman masquerading as a woman. Pitezal knew that a weighted cosh could fell the strongest person, and he'd be damned if he was going to risk losing this one. Holmes was in a right fit tonight and crossing him would mean more than a loss of a paycheck. He'd heard her footfalls on the wooden floor, and the telltale squeaking of a barber's chair slowly rotating told him her exact location.



WHISPERS RPG

NAME	LEVEL	BACKGROUND	ANCESTRY	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE
Diana Stockman	4	Athlete	Human		
STRENGTH	<u>16</u> (+3)	<i>Proficiency Bonus +2</i>	<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Personality Traits</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>	+5	<i>AC 10</i>	<i>Initiative +0</i>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Athletics</i>	+4	<i>Speed 30 ft.</i>	<i>Passive Perception 9</i>		
DEXTERITY	<u>10</u> (+0)	<i>Total HP 26</i>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>	+2	<i>Current HP</i>		<i>Ideals</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Acrobatics</i>	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sleight of Hand</i>		<i>Hit Dice</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Stealth</i>		<i>Total 4d6</i>	<i>Used</i>		
CONSTITUTION	<u>14</u> (+2)	<i>Death Saves</i>		<i>Bonds</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>		<i>Successes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Failures</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
INTELLIGENCE	<u>12</u> (+1)	ATTACKS			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>		<i>Name</i>	<i>Attack Bonus</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Type</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arcana</i>		Unarmed Strike	+5	1+3	b
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>History</i>					<i>Flaws</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Investigation</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nature</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Religion</i>					<i>Features and Traits</i>
WISDOM	<u>8</u> (-1)			STAR ATHLETE. On your turn, you can use a bonus action to regain hit points equal to 1d10 + 2. Once used this feature can't be used again until you complete a short rest.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Animal Handling</i>	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Insight</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Medicine</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Perception</i>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Survival</i>	+2			HARDENED MITTS. You have advantage on Strength checks that involve your ability to hold fast or grasp objects such as climbing or grappling.	
CHARISMA	<u>14</u> (+2)				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Deception</i>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Intimidation</i>	+2	<i>\$ 150</i>	<i>Income: \$40/month</i>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Performance</i>	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Persuasion</i>					
SANITY	<u>9</u> (-1)				
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Saving Throws</i>					
LANGUAGES					
English, Guarani, Portuguese, Spanish		PROFICIENCIES: Navigator's tools, whip			



van Tassel,
Rosine

4th level Dilettante

Nearly three weeks had passed since Rosine moved her belongings into one of Henry's rooms within his labyrinth in Englewood. She tried every day to memorize the layout of the building; the way hallways twisted and curved, the disproportions of walls that made no sense, yet still the building stood in one piece without collapse. The place intrigued her, but also disoriented her without fail. There was a restlessness within this maze.

Tonight, her own restlessness came from an increasing worry in her mind that she had made a grave mistake. For the past three weeks, she had been continually charmed by Henry Holmes. They'd traveled around the city, gone shopping and bicycling through the spring air, had eaten at fine restaurants and delicate bakeries. She felt like a young girl again, being pursued by the great courting chase of a relationship.

WHISPERS RPG

NAME	LEVEL	BACKGROUND	ANCESTRY	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE
Rosine van Tassel	4	Dilettante	Tcho-tcho		
STRENGTH	<u>8</u> (-1)	<i>Proficiency Bonus +2 Inspiration</i>		<i>Personality Traits</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		<i>AC 11</i>	<i>Initiative +1</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics		<i>Speed 30 ft.</i>	<i>Passive Perception 13</i>		
DEXTERITY	<u>12</u> (+1)	<i>Total HP 22</i>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws	+3	<i>Current HP</i>		<i>Ideals</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Acrobatics					
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleight of Hand		<i>Hit Dice</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Stealth		<i>Total 4d6</i>	<i>Used</i>		
CONSTITUTION	<u>12</u> (+1)	<i>Death Saves</i>		<i>Bonds</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		<i>Successes □□□ Failures □□□</i>			
INTELLIGENCE	<u>14</u> (+2)	ATTACKS			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws		<i>Name</i>	<i>Attack Bonus</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Type</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arcana	+2	Unarmed Strike	+1	1	b
<input type="checkbox"/> History					
<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation					
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature					
<input type="checkbox"/> Religion					
WISDOM	<u>13</u> (+1)	<i>Features and Traits</i> ALTERED PERCEPTIONS. Your first initiative check of each day is made with disadvantage. AUDACIOUS CHARMER. You add your Wisdom modifier to any Charisma (Persuasion) checks you make (this adjustment is not included in the listed skill bonuses). INURED TO HORRORS. Once daily when you fail a Sanity check you may choose to re-roll the die and must use the new roll. IRON GUT. You have advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws					
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Handling					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Insight	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Perception	+2				
<input type="checkbox"/> Survival					
CHARISMA	<u>16</u> (+3)	EQUIPMENT			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws	+5	<i>\$ 5000</i>	<i>Income: \$400/month</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Deception					
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidation					
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Persuasion	+4				
SANITY	<u>13</u> (+1)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Saving Throws					
LANGUAGES	English, French, Old French Sign Language, Italian, Latin				
		PROFICIENCIES: Thieves' tools +4, derringer			

APPENDIX C: NEW INVESTIGATOR OPTIONS

NEW ANCESTRY



EVERY CHARACTER IN *WHISPERS* IS A human being, but some have ancestries that grant unusual abilities. Subsequent products will explore these and other ancestries in more depth, including history, demographics, and their place in the *Whispers* universe.

Human (Tcho-Tcho)

The Tcho-Tcho have kept themselves apart from the rest of humanity for countless generations, delving into the underpinnings of reality and living as ascetic hunters. Their poisons are among the most potent, and their psyches have been forged by their esoteric studies to provide a modicum of protection against the loss of mental stability.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Inured to Horrors. Your Tcho-tcho upbringing exposed you to the world as it truly is. You know no other way, and accept it for the natural order of things. Once daily when you fail a Sanity check you may choose to re-roll the die and must use the new roll.

Iron Gut. You have advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage.

Skill Versatility. You gain proficiency in Arcana and two skills of your choice.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write your native language, and one extra language of your choice.

Saving Throw Proficiency. Choose one of the following: Constitution, Charisma, or Dexterity.

Altered Perceptions. Your openness to unseen forces is distracting, and requires an effort of will to put aside in times of duress. Your first initiative check of each day is made with disadvantage.

NEW BACKGROUNDS

Athlete

From an early age you excelled at physical pursuits. You may have been a gifted natural athlete, or achieved success through dogged determination, sacrifice, and discipline. Most likely it was a combination. Competitions thrill you, and you seek challenging situations to test your limits. You may be a team member, an individual competitor, or an accomplished amateur.

- **Skill Proficiencies:** Athletics, Acrobatics, and Performance
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Simple, and one martial melee weapon of your choice
- **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Dexterity
- **Additional Languages:** Any one of your choice
- **Equipment:** A singlet or uniform of your chosen sport, a good luck charm, a set of plain clothes, and a comfortable pair of shoes
- **Money:** You have savings of 1d4 x \$50. Your monthly income is 1d6 x \$10.



Explorer

The road is your home, the trail your solace, and new experiences nourish your soul. Sleeping on the ground, foraging for your own food, and enduring the hardships of the road are prices you happily pay to learn more, find new places, and expand your horizons. You can be found anywhere from the jungles to the darkest forests to exotic cities. You have no home, and so are at home everywhere.

- **Skill Proficiencies:** History, Survival, and another one of your choice
- **Tool Proficiency:** Navigator's tools
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Simple, and your choice of one of the following: whip, blowgun, or handgun
- **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Intelligence
- **Additional Languages:** Latin, Greek, and two other languages of your choice
- **Equipment:** A set of well-worn traveling clothes, a journal, waterproof pencils, and a keepsake from your homeland
- **Money:** You have savings of 2d6 x \$100. Your monthly income is 3d4 x \$1.

Laborer

A hard day's work is its own reward. You may work with your hands as a skilled tradesperson such as a carpenter, mason, plumber, or the like. Alternatively, you find purpose and fulfillment through the physical efforts of your labors. The world cannot function without you, and you take pride in fulfilling your role.

- **Skill Proficiencies:** Athletics and two others of your choice
- **Tool Proficiencies:** One of the following: brewer's supplies, carpenter's tools, mason's tools, potter's tools, or woodcarver's tools
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Simple

- **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Strength
- **Additional Languages:** Any one of your choice
- **Equipment:** A set of tools that you are proficient with, a set of frayed clothes, a picture of your family
- **Money:** You have savings of 1d4 x \$50. Your monthly income is 1d6 x \$10.

Professional

You are educated and a noted expert in your field. Your skills may be the result of years of didactic learning, a lengthy apprenticeship, or practical experience. The world needs business folk, architects, engineers, and accountants. Your preferred implement is a pen and paper. You may be self-employed, a partner in a firm, or a junior associate.

- **Skill Proficiencies:** Insight, Investigation, and another one of your choice
- **Tool Proficiencies:** One of the following: cartographer's tools, drafting supplies, jeweler's tools, or gunsmith's tools
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Simple
- **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Intelligence
- **Additional Languages:** Any two languages of your choice
- **Equipment:** A set of good clothes, a set of tools that you are proficient with, a ledger, and a fine pen
- **Money:** You have savings of 1d8 x \$100. Your monthly income is 1d6 x \$50.

Religious Scholar

The call of religion is heard by many, offering a route of escape or peace of mind for its adherents. Unlike priests, pastors, rabbis, and the clergy, your interest in religion is decidedly secular. The beliefs, practices, and history of religions fascinates you. You may be a professor,



an anthropologist, or in the employ of a religion (what better way to gain access to their records?).

- **Skill Proficiencies:** History, Religion, and another one of your choice
- **Tool Proficiencies:** One of your choice
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Simple
- **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Intelligence
- **Additional Languages:** Any three languages associated with the religion you focus on
- **Equipment:** A set of good clothes, spectacles, a journal, a set of tools you're proficient with, and a fine pen.
- **Money:** You have savings of 1d6 x \$50. Your monthly income is 1d6 + 1 x \$10.

Teamster

You've always been good with animals and your sense of direction is uncanny. Those traits, combined with your innate restlessness, have served you well as a driver of wagons and teams of draft animals. The westward expansion has created countless opportunities for you to ply your craft and sate your wanderlust. You are self-employed, without roots, and ready to move at a moment's notice with just the goods you carry.

- **Skill Proficiencies:** Animal Handling, Survival, and another one of your choice
- **Other Proficiencies:** Vehicles (land)
- **Weapon Proficiencies:** Simple, and any one type of firearm (handgun, rifle, or shotgun)
- **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Wisdom
- **Additional Languages:** Any two languages of your choice
- **Equipment:** A set of traveling clothes, and a firearm you are proficient with
- **Money:** You have savings of 1d4 x \$50. Your monthly income is 1d6 x \$10.

NEW FEATS

Hardened Mitts

Through years of dedication to strengthening the musculature, connections, and exterior of your hands, you have developed a grip far surpassing most. In addition, your strikes are more powerful due to the hardness and resilience of your hands.

- Increase your Strength score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Strength checks that involve your ability to hold fast or grasp objects, such as climbing or grappling.
- Your unarmed strikes inflict 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

Inner Calm

Prerequisite: Sanity 10 or less (at the time the feat is taken)

You have seen and experienced things that have shattered your mind. In picking up the pieces and repairing them you've regained much of your previous stability.

- Increase your current Sanity score by 4, up to your maximum as defined by your Charisma plus Wisdom modifier.
- You have advantage on the first Sanity check you make every day.

Nimble Counterpuncher

Your natural dexterity coupled with your martial prowess allows you to take advantage of the singular moment when an opponent is vulnerable after an attack. You gain the following benefits:





- Increase your Dexterity by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Your unarmed attacks have the finesse quality.
- When targeted by a melee strike by an opponent in your melee range, you may use your reaction to make an unarmed attack targeting them.

Resilient Psyche

Choose one Ability score, either Charisma or Wisdom. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase the chosen ability score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain proficiency in Sanity checks.

Steady Hands

Your hands wouldn't waver in the fiercest gale, on the rockiest road, or in the midst of the storm of the century. You excel at the fine, minute movements needed to perform delicate tasks.

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) and Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks.

Gifted Attributes

Some men and women gain exception mental and physical attributes through luck, hard training, or the happenstance of fate. You are one such person. Choose any ability score and increase it by 1 to a maximum of 20. You gain proficiency in saving throws that use that ability score.

Detached Persona

Prerequisite: Current Sanity 8 or less

You've seen things, done unspeakable acts, read forbidden tomes, and lived through experiences that would send a lesser person to the corner in a gibbering mess. To preserve what sanity you have remaining you've developed a callous disregard for the horrors you see. Once weekly when you fail a sanity check you may instead choose to succeed.

Vril Initiate

Prerequisite: Proficiency bonus of +3 or more

The Vril are able to manipulate their innermost energies and vitality to affect the world around them. The abilities of Initiates are limited, as they are unable to efficiently focus their stamina, but remarkable nonetheless.

As a bonus action you may spend one Hit Die to achieve one of the following effects:

- Roll a d6 and add your Constitution modifier, gaining a number of temporary hit points equal to the total. The temporary hit points remain until used or one hour has passed, whichever occurs first.
- Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d6 radiant or necrotic damage (your choice) to the target. This effect lasts for 5 rounds (30 seconds).

Insightful Combatant

When making an attack with a finesse weapon, you use your choice of your Strength, Dexterity, or Intelligence modifier for the attack and damage rolls. You must use the same modifier for both rolls.



ALIGNMENTS

The world of *Whispers RPG*, much like our own, is one of greys, subtlety, and complex decisions. Right and wrong are often muddled, and a minute shift of perspective is all that's needed to see things in a whole new light. During character creation choose up to three of the major behavioral axes below: good vs evil, order vs chaos, and selfless vs selfish. You may wish to choose only one or two to represent your character's naivety and simpler world view. As they are exposed to the horrors and realities of the world around them additional axes may be added, and their place within each axis can shift as well. A player may choose to never add a second or third axis to their adventurer's personality.

Choosing Your Alignment

During character creation you may choose a personality axis that best describes your character:

- Good vs Evil
- Order vs Chaos
- Selfless vs Selfish

Next, choose one trait from that axis that best describes your character's world view. Write one or two sentences explaining how the traits manifest in your PC's personality.

- (Optional) At a time of your choosing (not necessarily at character creation) add a secondary personality axis and choose a trait. This step is optional and some characters may never reach this level of nuance.
- (Optional) At a time of your choosing (possibly during a major life event) add a tertiary personality axis and choose a trait.

This is optional and many characters may never reach this level of sophistication.

Secondary personality traits do not manifest as strongly as the primary one, and tertiary are not as strong as secondary. Those traits may often be suppressed, only coming into play during times of duress or under a specific set of circumstances. None but their closest allies or confidantes may realize your PC's perspective on these matters.

During the course of a PC's life their primary, secondary, and tertiary characteristics may change order of importance, or change altogether. Alignment in *Whispers* is intended to be flexible and fluid. The following example is provided to aid you in choosing your alignment.

ROSINE, a first level dilettante, chooses Good vs Evil and Selfless vs Selfish as her behavioral axes. Once identified the player ranks them in order of importance, the first being the most important and the last being secondary. The first is the investigator's primary personality driver. The extent to which the secondary and tertiary traits manifest is at the discretion of the player, the only guideline being that secondary is more prevalent than tertiary. Rosine's player keeps them in the following order: Good vs Evil then Selfless vs Selfish.

Next the player should choose one characteristic from each chosen axis and write them down in the order of importance determined above. That is their alignment. It is recommended that the player use a few sentences to describe how this alignment is reflected in their character's actions and persona.

Rosine chooses to be a benevolent narcissist. Her player writes the following to describe Rosine's behavior: "She is kind and considerate to those in need, but despite those traits still has bouts of selfish behavior that manifest when everything is going well. In social situations she expects the attention and deference of those around her."



Good vs Evil

BENEVOLENT. You are kind, insist on goodwill to all, and are generous with your time, actions, and belongings. Sympathy, understanding, and consideration are the hallmarks of your personality. You do not suffer from moral dilemmas; the correct path is clearly marked and ready for you to follow.

AMBIVALENT. Your world view is not bound by the terms “right and wrong” or “good versus evil.” Where others act impulsively to such situations your instinct is to wait and see. You keep your options open, behave as the situation demands, and in doing so have many options available to choose from.

MALEVOLENT. Your actions intentionally and consistently cause harm to others — be it physical, emotional, or psychic, you care not. What’s important is your exhibition of power over them, and finding an outlet for your hatred. Your companions are tools to use, and toys to play with; useful as situations arise, but ultimately you will grow bored and discard or break them as your whim dictates.

Order vs Chaos

RATIONAL. Your actions are mathematical in their precision and consistency. There are rules that govern our lives and the world we live in; it is your intention to learn them and abide by them in all things. You live and make your decisions based on analysis, organization, and following the patterns before you. With information the course of action is clear and the results of those actions can be predicted.

PRAGMATIC. You are concerned with the immediate, tangible effects of your actions and the actions of those around you. You’re not concerned with theories or dogma, just the here and now. Things are the way they are for a reason, and that’s as much as you

care to think about it. You do not eschew information, but neither do you value it above chance, instincts, and personal choices.

ANARCHIST. You thrive in chaos and believe it to be the natural state of things. Attempts to force order, rules, and constancy are artificial at best, and detrimental in most situations. You are as likely to allow the flip of a coin to decide your fate as listen to your compatriots. Luck, gut feelings, and supposition are all that you need to lay your course.

Selfless vs Selfish

ASCETIC. You avoid and minimize the material comforts, personal passions, and indulgences in your life. You have the bare minimum to sustain you, and in your minimalism, you have found purity and purpose. The ownership of possessions, wanton fulfillment of desires, and pursuit of comfort are weaknesses of the mind, body, and soul. You lack nothing because you want nothing.

UTILITARIAN. There is value in all things and that value is based on its benefit to yourself and the community. To ignore your needs is to court frustration. To ignore progress is to needlessly limit society. Overindulgence is a waste of resources. Self-importance is to deny the value of others. You see the big picture, neither ignoring or emphasizing the personal, take it all into account, and strive to achieve balance for the greater good.

NARCISSIST. There is nothing more important than fulfilling your wants, needs, and desires. To pursue anything else is unthinkable. Your companions, contacts, and contemporaries are only as useful and necessary as their ability to fulfill your commands and meet your needs. You do not have friends because no one and nothing can compare to the love you have for yourself.





Major Life Events

A major life event can occur at any time — and for some poor souls, many times — in the course of their career as an adventurer. These events have profound effects on their outlook, resulting in emotional, physical, and psychic damage that can manifest in all manner of ways, the most common of which is changes in personality. In the aftermath of a major life event the player has the option to change any or all portions of their alignment to reflect the transformative occurrence, including adding or even removing an axis. The player and the GM collaborate to decide what constitutes a major life event. Below are two examples to aid that discussion.

TURK, a rational utilitarian, is captured, brutalized, and tortured by a band of cultists. His companions rescue him shortly thereafter. Turk has been deeply affected by the trauma and his player has decided that to reflect that experience his alignment should now be narcissistic anarchist. Turk looks after himself first because no one else will, and believes that chance, not good deeds or careful planning, rule his life.

EMMA, an ambivalent anarchist, stumbles upon a shrine to the Earth Mother as she's dying of exhaustion and exposure. The Mother takes pity on her, offers succor, and helps her to complete her journey. Upon reflection Emma sees the greater purpose in all things and that the weak must be protected, as she once was. Emma's player changes her alignment to benevolent.

APPENDIX D: GAMEMASTER'S TOOLBOX

HIT DIE AND CREATURE SIZE

- Tiny – d4
- Small – d6
- Medium – d8*
- Large – d10
- Huge – d12
- Gargantuan – d20

*** Humans, regardless of size, use d6 for their hit dice**





CHALLENGE RATINGS IN WHISPERS RPG

Challenge score is a tool for the gamemaster, and is not intended to be restrictive or set in stone. Countless nuances affect each encounter; some are under the control of the investigators, some under the control of the GM, and many are left to fate and happenstance. Social and Anti-Social Challenge scores are often related, but can vary widely. When recording the Challenge of an NPC the challenge listed is the higher of the two.

Social. The score represents the NPC's relative knowledge and/or influence. An easy rule of thumb is that their breadth of skills and the bonuses associated with those skills are similar to a PC of the same level. They often have features that showcase their influence and ability to impact the scenario in ways more subtle than the application of brute force.

Anti-Social. The score represents a creature that has a better than even chance of defeating

a party of four whose average level is equal to the NPC's challenge. Even in victory the party would likely suffer casualties that diminish their resources or ability to continue the scenario in a timely manner.

Size and Anti-Social challenge score.

Large, huge, and gargantuan creatures have additional hit points, as reflected by a larger hit die, which impacts their relative Anti-Social Challenge score. For each size above Medium the effective Anti-Social Challenge rating increases by one.

Multiple Combatants. As a rule of thumb, to estimate the Challenge score of an encounter with multiple combatants, start with the highest individual Challenge score and add half the Challenge score of each additional combatant to that number to estimate the encounter's challenge

CHALLENGE	SOCIAL			ANTI-SOCIAL			
	PROF BONUS	SAVE DC	SKILL BONUS	AC	HIT DICE	ATTACK BONUS	DAMAGE PER ROUND
0	+2	10	<+3	10	1	<+3	0-4
1	+2	11	+3	11	2-3	+3	5-10
2	+2	11	+3	11	4-5	+3	11-15
3	+2	12	+4	12	6-7	+4	16-20
4	+2	12	+4	12	8-9	+4	21-25
5	+3	13	+5	13	10-11	+5	26-30
6	+3	13	+5	13	12-13	+5	31-35
7	+3	14	+6	14	14-15	+6	36-40
8	+3	14	+6	14	16-17	+6	41-45
9	+4	15	+7	15	18-19	+7	46-50
10	+4	>15	>+7	>15	>20	>+7	>51

APPENDIX E: PUBLICATIONS OF THE 19TH CENTURY



THE BOOK ROOM IN THE OLD WATER TANK.

MEDICAL TEXTS

- 1812 - Dr. Buchan's Domestic Medicine – by William Buchan
1818 - Health and Longevity – by Lionel John Beale
1818 - The Code of Health and Longevity – by John Sinclair
1829 - An Account of Persons Remarkable for Their Health and Longevity – by Thomas John Graham
1838 - The Alternative: Disease & Premature Death, or Health & Long Life – by Joel Pinney
1839 - The Graham Journal of Health and Longevity – by D. Campbell
1842 - On Regimen and Longevity – by John Bell
1853 - Lectures on Life and Health – by William Andrus Alcott
1854 - Household Medicine and Surgery – by John Stevenson Bushnan
1854 - Health, Disease and Longevity – by Lionel John Beale
1857 - The Philosophy of Common Life: Or, The Science of Health – by John Scoffern
1867 - The Management of Health – by James Baird
1870 - The Code of Health and Longevity – by John Sinclair
1870 - Health and Longevity – by Lionel John Beale
1878 - The Vital Resources Contributing to Capacity, Health, & Longevity – by Jerome Kidder
1884 - Medical Diagnosis – by John James Graham Brown, Harry Etter
1884 - Factors in Life – by Harry Govier Seeley
1885 - The Safety-Valve of Life – by William Thomas
1886 - Woman's Hand-book in Health and Disease – by Lucien Calvin Warner
1887 - Practical Medicine and Medical Diagnosis – by Byrom Bramwell
1889 - Universal Health & Longevity Without Use of Drugs – by James Russell Price, Thaddeus Julian
1892 - The Chemistry of Life and Health – by Charles William Kimmins



POPULAR TEXTS

- 1815 – The Devil’s Elixir – by E.T.A. Hoffman
- 1818 – Frankenstein – by Mary Shelley
- 1820 – The Legend of Sleepy Hollow – by Washington Irving
- 1839 – The Fall of the House of Usher – by Edgar Allan Poe
- 1845 – Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass – by Frederick Douglass
- 1847 – Wuthering Heights – by Emily Brontë
- 1850 – The Scarlet Letter – by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- 1851 – Moby-Dick; or, the Whale – by Herman Melville
- 1852 – Uncle Tom’s Cabin – by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- 1853 – The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin – by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- 1867 – The Mysterious Key – by Louisa May Alcott
- 1872 – In a Glass Darkly – by Sheridan Le Fanu
- 1884 – Adventures of Huckleberry Finn – by Mark Twain
- 1891 – The Picture of Dorian Gray – by Oscar Wilde
- 1897 – Dracula – by Bram Stoker
- 1898 – The Turn of the Screw – by Henry James

POPULAR MAGAZINES

- 1885 – Good Housekeeping
- 1886 – The Cosmopolitan
- 1886 – The Sporting News
- 1888 – Collier’s Once a Week (changed to Collier’s Weekly: An Illustrated Journal in 1895)
- 1888 – National Geographic Magazine
- 1891 – The Strand Magazine
- 1895 – Field and Stream

APPENDIX F: PATENT MEDICATION NAMES

Alden's Liniment

Ayre's Diarrhoea Cure

Cure "Himrod"

Pain Killer

Haine's Golden Specific

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Sa-Yo Italian Mint Jujubes

Seabury's Cough Balsam

Clark Stanley's Snake Oil Liniment

Spiller's Golden Tonic

Dr. Jayne's Sanative Pills

Humphrey's Homeopathic Specific No. 3

Infants Disease

Scott's Emulsion

Groves Tasteless Chill Tonic

Dr Johnson's Catarrh and Headache Cure

Ripans Tubules, Chocolate Coated

Madam Zadoc Porter's Cough Balsam

Madame Zadoc Porter's Curative Balsam

Moses Dame's Wine of the Woods

Dr. J.R. Staffords Olive Tar

Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna

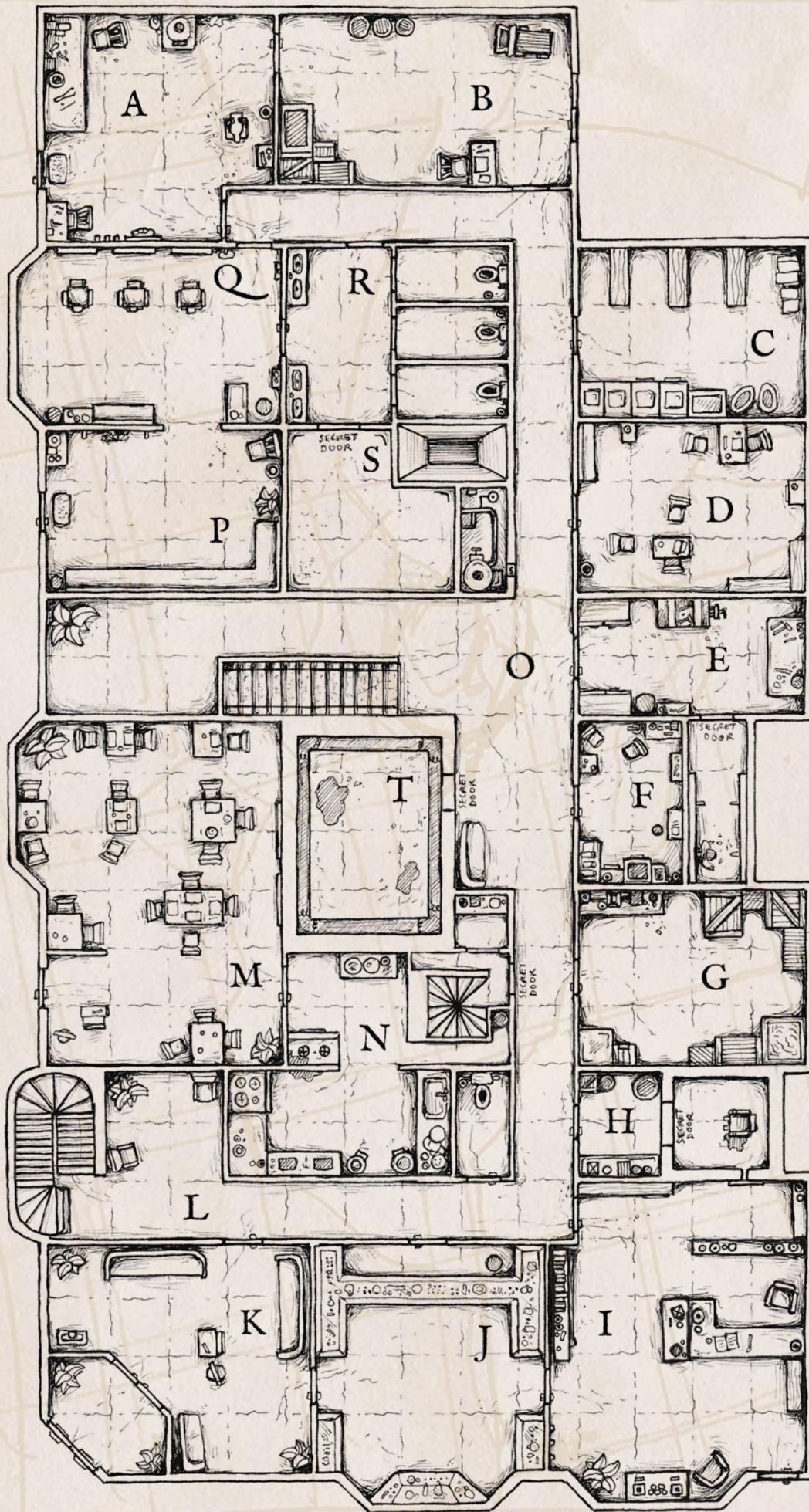
Dr. Shoop's Cough Remedy

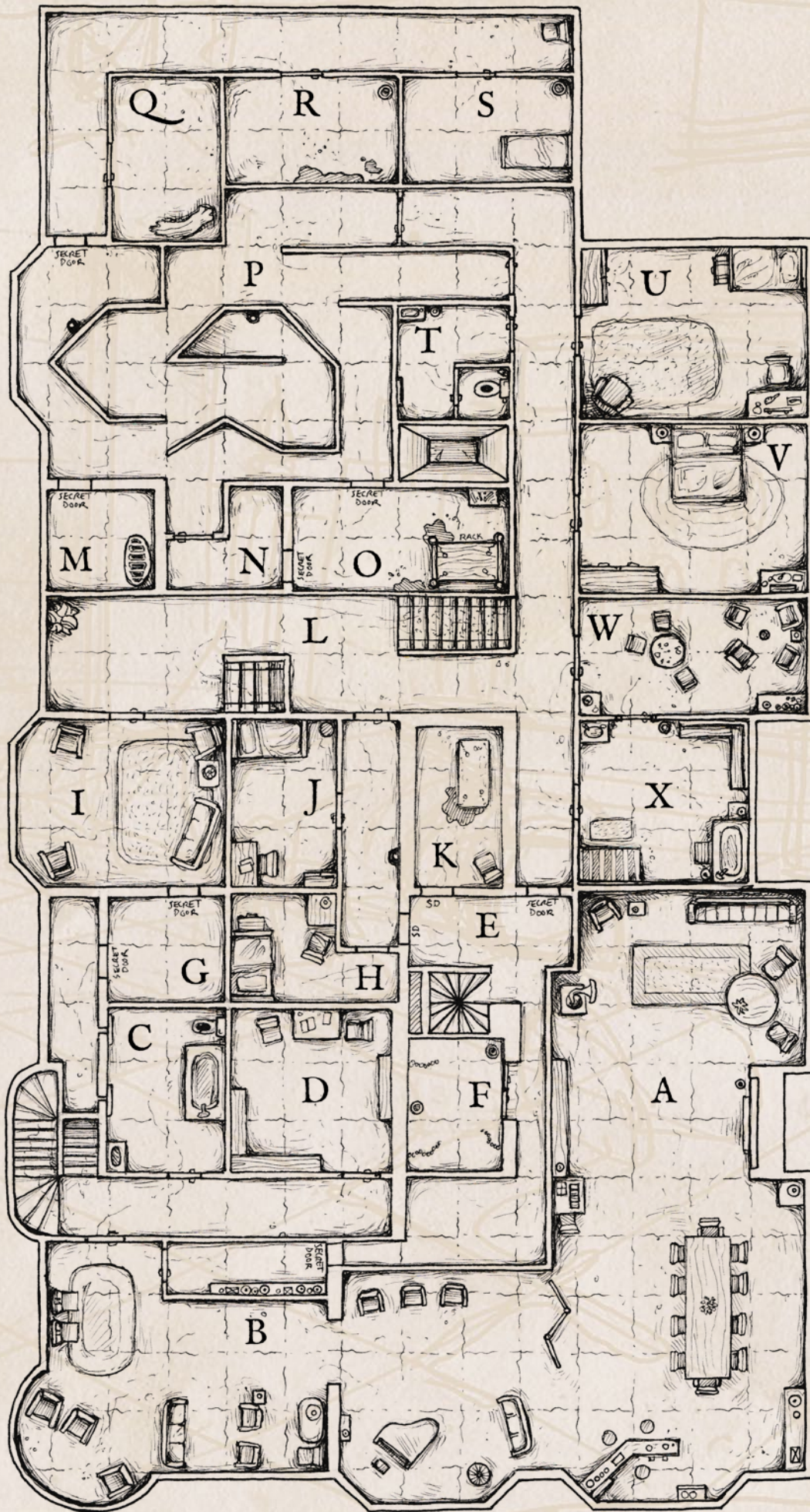
Piso's for Cough and Cold

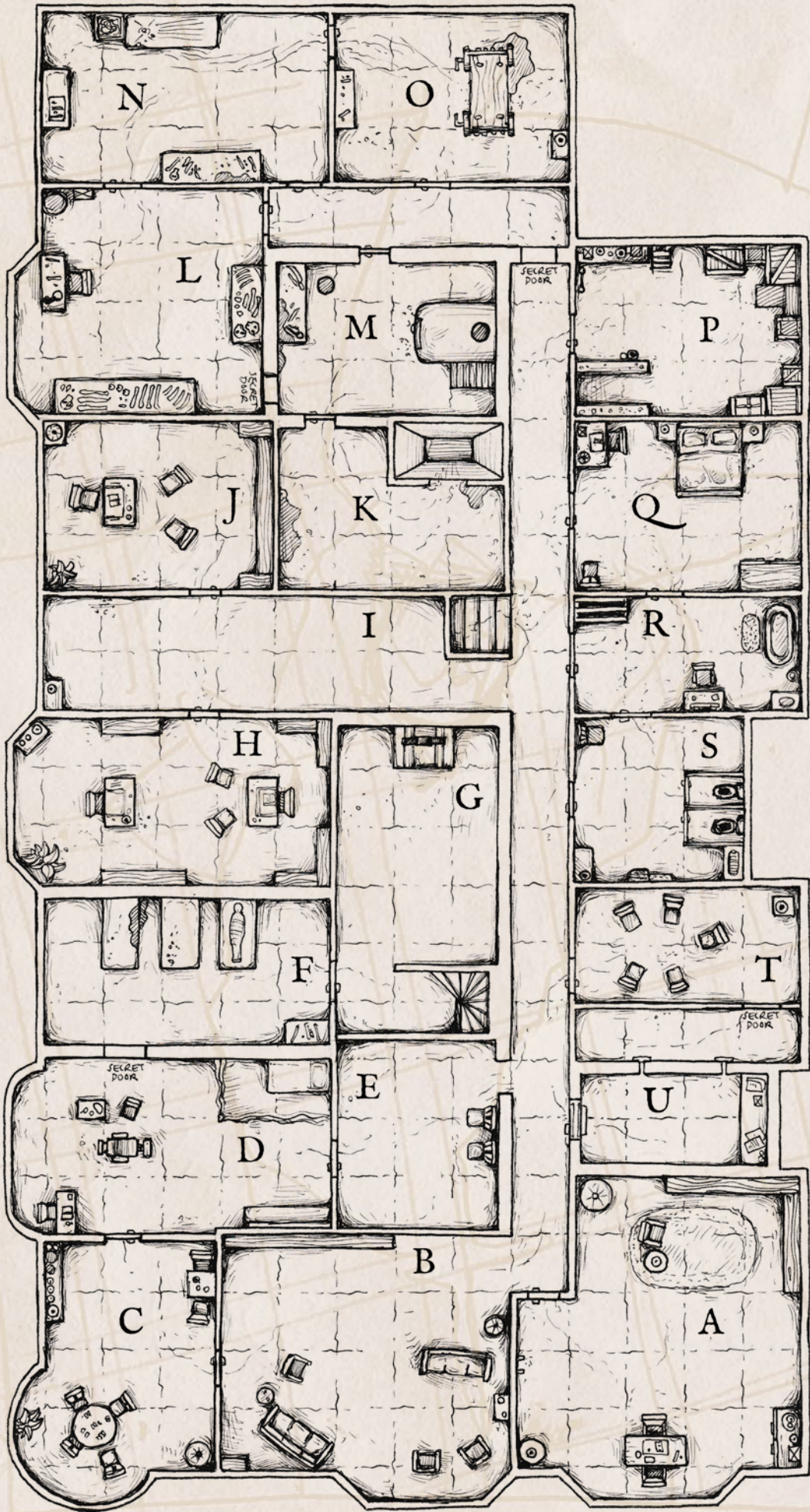
McArthur Syrup of the Hypophosphites of

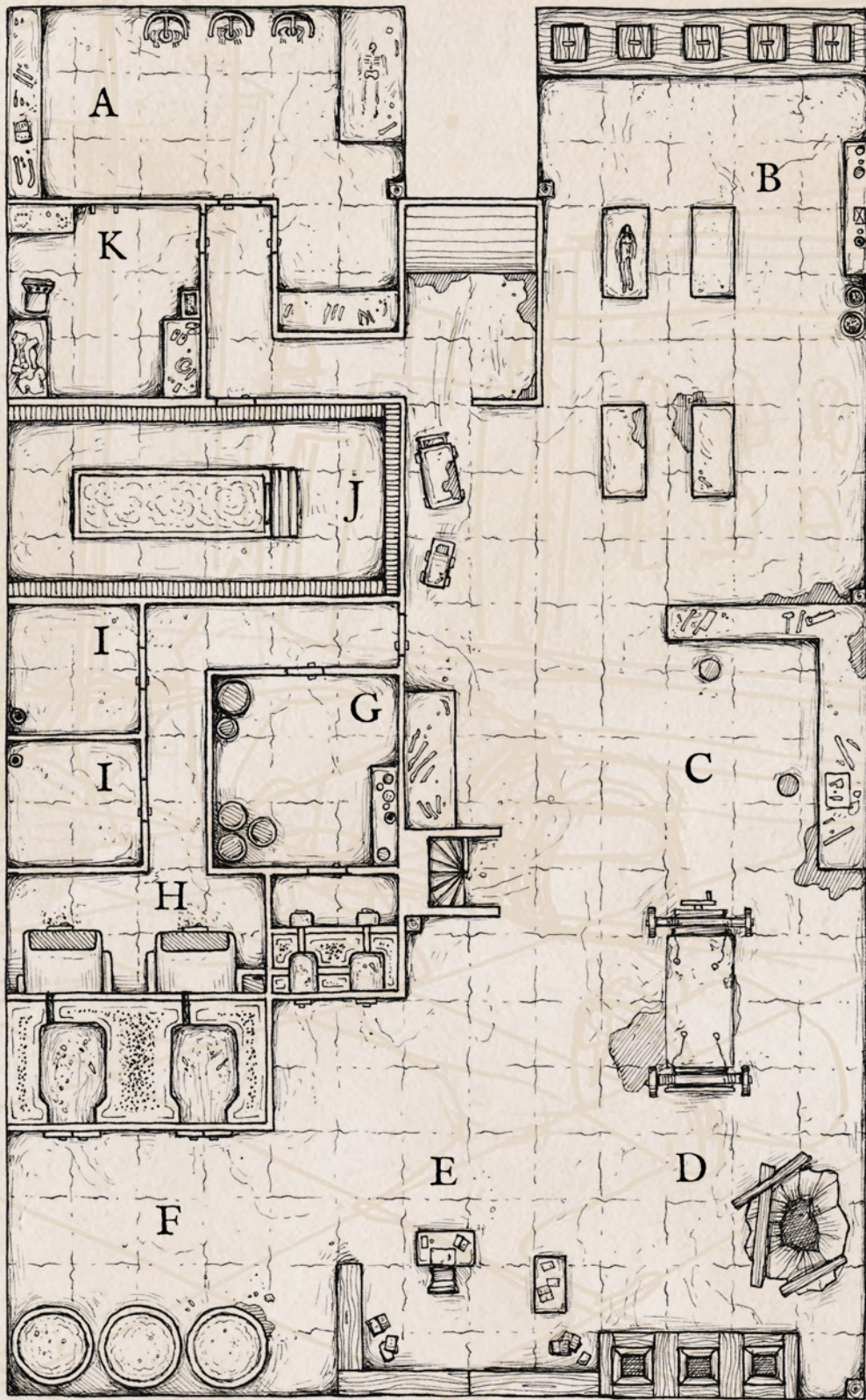
Lime and Soda

APPENDIX G:
WORLD'S FAIR HOTEL MAPS

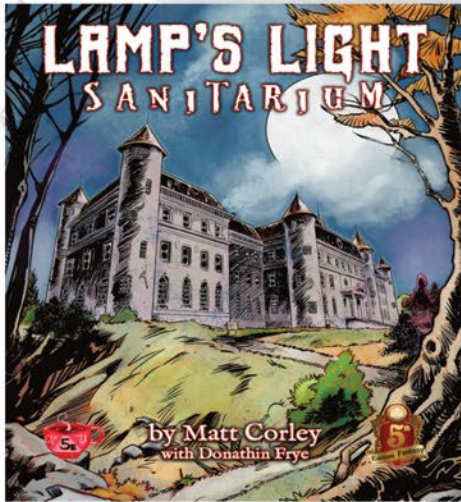






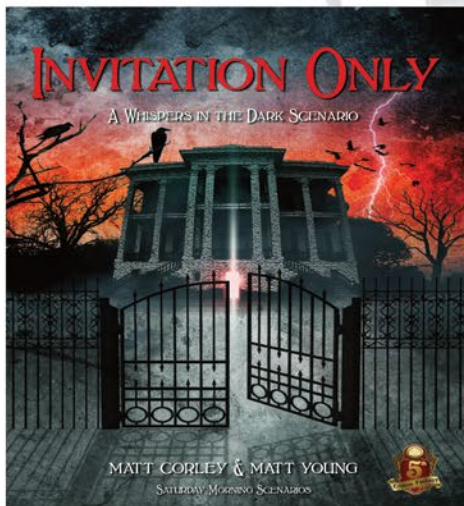


More From Saturday Morning Scenarios



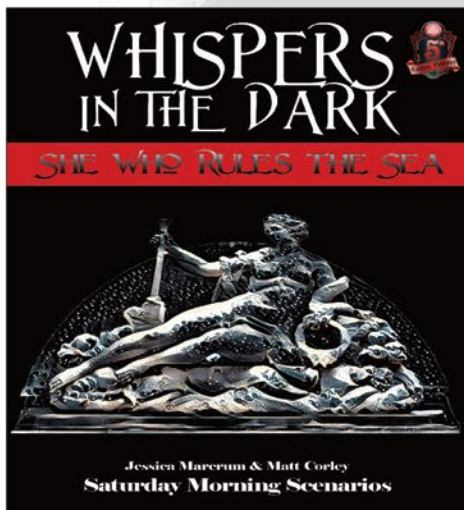
“I backed this Kickstarter and have 0 regrets. The author has put together a fantastic supplement (that) would add a much needed depth to traditional fantasy in an unorthodox fashion.” - Charles G.

“An easy and effective way to bring horror into any RPG campaign. Included are multiple story hooks for a variety of settings so you can seamlessly bring your existing group into a world of eldritch horror. Also included is a sanity system that can give lasting effects to characters which reinforce an actual feeling of dread.” - Peter S.



It is the spring of 1876 and the Crow Man has been stopped, for now, but the forces behind his summoning are at large. The streets of New Orleans have been uncharacteristically quiet in the wake of The Crow Man murders. A plea for help from beyond the grave by an ally brings the PCs back into the thick of things whether they want to or not.

Invitation Only is the sequel to The Crow Man (found in the Whispers in the Dark Quickstart), and takes the investigators further behind the veil of New Orleans' supernatural community.



An invitation-only club for Chicago's elite, the Delphine Society is nigh unrecognizable from the association started by Charles Avingdon Villieport in 1818. Ostensibly dedicated to preserving the business interests of Chicago's wealthiest mercantile families, the lure of spiritualism has changed the society irreparably.

She Who Rules the Sea details the Delphine Society, giving the GM everything they need to insert the organization into their Whispers in the Dark campaign.



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