


Requires the d20 Modern™ Roleplaying Game, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Brainwashed

by Preston P. DuBose



 **12 to Midnight, Inc.**
tell yourself it's just a game

Brainwashed

By Preston P. DuBose

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This module is dedicated to my parents, who are quite glad I didn't turn out like the victim in this adventure... although I'm sure they sometimes wonder.

About the Cover

Nicole Cardiff is a recent graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, and she loves doing RPG work. She has been fortunate enough to work with both 12 to Midnight and White Wolf this summer, and she hopes to be able to paint more for both of them!

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Author's Notes

Mission Creep: the gradual process by which a campaign or mission's objectives change over time, especially with undesirable consequences.

Fear Effects, our version of a sanity system, was well into production when I answered a call from Ed. I remember he started the conversation with “You’re gonna kill me, but I have an idea.” He went on to explain that he thought it would be a good idea to write a few examples of how his horror rules would work in practice. If he, Jerry, and I each wrote one short encounter demonstrating the rules, it wouldn’t greatly impact our *Fear Effects* production schedule.

I thought it was a good idea, and after an impromptu conference call with Jerry we voted to implement it. However, I suggested that if we were going through the trouble of adding sample encounters, it would be really nice if they were all related instead of just independent scenes. I volunteered to write an outline that we could all work from, and that was that.

The original idea was for a five-page adventure summary, similar to the style I used in *Green’s Guide to Ghosts*. I had just finished reading F. Paul Wilson’s excellent novel *Gateways*, so the idea of an adventure in which the heroes intervened on behalf of a brainwashed “cultist” was fresh in my mind. (Incidentally, if you like modern horror, read Wilson’s *Repairman Jack* series. The first book is called *The Tomb*.) However, I can’t blame Wilson for the creatures that populate this adventure. They are entirely my own creations and are an outgrowth of the need to demonstrate the specific “levels” of horror outlined by *Fear Effects*. Guess I’m just that twisted.

Several days later than promised, I came back to the group with my outline. It was quickly apparent that my idea wasn’t something that could easily be split up among three people. It would be too much work to maintain consistency. So I ended up taking on the challenge of writing the entire thing myself.

I quickly hit five pages, and I knew there would be at least that much again before I was done. *Fear Effects* edged closer to the finish line, and I kept writing. I replaced the outline style with the longer, traditional

adventure-writing style. I hit 12 pages and predicted 18. Then I hit 18 and predicted 24.

The adventure (the working title was *Intervention*) wasn’t complete, but *Fear Effects* was. After much deliberation, we decided to release *Fear Effects* without the adventure that was written specifically to showcase it. It was clear that *Brainwashed* wouldn’t be ready for several more weeks, and we couldn’t afford to sit on it until it was. However, that left us with an entirely new problem.

When we planned on the *Fear Effects* cover (illustrated by the multi-talented Cris Griffin), we did so with *Brainwashed* in mind. We’d expected the two to be bundled together, so the cover served a dual purpose. It was a great illustration of “fear”, and the “tin-foil hat lady” was a direct reference to the adventure. Now we’d need another cover, and it would need to illustrate the adventure in such a way as to not spoil any surprises.

In my “art director” mode, I can come across as a real hard case. I have very high expectations when it comes to art, and Nicole Cardiff’s work on this cover met them in every way. The same is true of our interior artist, Steve Bentley. I gave him my concepts and within a few days he delivered the amazing work you see in this publication. Thanks to both of you for your outstanding professionalism. You’ll definitely be hearing from us again.

Finally, thanks go to you—our customers, fans, and friends. Being an indie publishing company is a hard road, and at the end of the day your kind words and support are what keep us going. As long as you keep supporting us, we’ll keep delivering. Thanks.

Preston DuBose

Since joining 12 to Midnight, Preston P. DuBose has written adventures and served as webmaster, layout artist, and art director. In January 2005 he was elected to serve a term as President. He lives in Texas with his wife and son.



Section 0: GM Preparation

0.1: Introduction

East Texas is an unlikely spot for a commune, but Harmony Farm has a long-standing reputation in the community as a place for kooks and weirdos. Still, everyone knew the old hippies and their friends were essentially harmless. Now something is different. The residents of Harmony Farm have been recruiting on the campus of East Texas University—and everyone who visits the farm comes back different ... if they come back at all.

0.2: Levels

This adventure is written for 4 fourth-level characters. Refer to *Appendix 3: Experience and Mechanics* for information on how to scale the adventure.

0.3: Play Notes

This adventure demonstrates the use of 12 to Midnight's *Fear Effects* rules; however, those rules are not required to play and enjoy the game. If *Fear Effects* is used, become familiar both with those rules and the contents of this adventure.

The scenario presented here cannot possibly anticipate all of the possible character actions, but aims to present enough background and source material for you to react accordingly when the players inevitably go “off the map.” As you read through the adventure, keep your players in mind and make notes of scenes where they may derail the action, then consider your possible responses. Use the premise and concept presented here, then twist it to make the story your own!

0.4: Setting the Mood

Brainwashed is a classic horror adventure in the style of H.P. Lovecraft. Using props or controlling the gaming environment may enhance the mood in parts of this adventure. Many players also enjoy lowering the lights or playing by candlelight. Others enjoy listening to spooky music played softly in the background. When experimenting with these ideas, make sure to get input from the players—after all, they are your “audience.”

0.5: GM Background

When more than a dozen hippies pooled their meager resources in 1969 to buy land, they found that East Texas was the only place they could afford. Over the years, high ideals gave way to harsh realities, and many of the original tenants drifted away. Yet those

who remained managed to keep the farm just prosperous enough to pay the bills. New tenants came and went: drifters, dreamers, the homeless, and the hopeless. Locals called the strange outsiders “Harmonists,” after the sign over the gate reading, “Harmony Farm.” Whether one was a conspiracy theorist afraid of government assassins or a refugee from a small-time, bankrupt circus, all found their way to the welcoming arms of Harmony Farm.

Two months ago something changed. Everyone within five miles of the farm felt the rumble of a brief earthquake—highly unusual for East Texas. While geologists were left scratching their heads, most people went about their lives with nothing more than new gossip over their morning coffee. Alice Masters was not one of them.

The morning following the earthquake, Alice visited the pasture to check on Harmony Farm's milk cows. She saw a strange sight—a mound of dirt thrust up from the earth where before there had been only tranquil pasture.

Even stranger was a metal fin protruding from the mound. Her curiosity piqued, Masters climbed the mound and used her hands to try to uncover the buried metal. Hours later, her husband found her still scabbling at the earth to uncover the mysterious object. Something about the object was beauti-

What is Fear Effects?



Fear Effects is 12 to Midnight's own set of add-on horror rules.

These rules do not require the use of a sanity score. Instead, they rely on a saving throw called a Horror check. You will see references to three different kinds of Horror checks mentioned in this adventure: *minor spooks*, *medium shocks*, and *great frights*.

If you aren't using *Fear Effects*, be sure to check it out. It makes any mediocre game great, and any great game (such as those by 12 to Midnight) even better. However, if you still are not convinced to run this adventure using the *Fear Effects* rules, then just ignore comments in the adventure about *minor spooks*, *medium shocks*, or *great frights*.

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ful, haunting, and hypnotic. Before he realized what he was doing, Alice's husband found himself working alongside her. Hours later, they returned to the farmhouse only long enough to get shovels and bring some of their fellow Harmonists. In ones and twos, other members of the farm visited the site and felt the compulsion to uncover the buried object.

For the first few weeks, it seemed like discovering a wondrous mystery. Basic farm work was left neglected as more and more of the Harmonists worked from dawn to dusk uncovering the metal behemoth. Before long, it became clear that the mound of earth represented only the tip of the iceberg, and much more of the object remained underground. Still, as more and more of the thing was uncovered, the compulsion to completely unearth it grew stronger.

However, not all Harmonists felt the call. At first, those who felt fear and revulsion upon seeing the object tried to warn their friends, but those warnings fell on deaf ears. As the compulsion grew stronger, the Harmonists' demeanor slowly changed. Hurt and disturbed by the dark change falling over the once-friendly haven, most of those few who were resistant to the compulsion slipped away seeking new sanctuary.

Not everyone gave up so easily. Alex Walker, a former trapeze artist from a small-time, bankrupt circus, had found shelter at Harmony Farm and he was not ready to give up without a fight. One evening, when the eerily silent workforce trudged home after a long day of digging, Walker confronted the group on the farmhouse steps. He threatened to expose the

alien ship—because by that point there was no denying what it was—to the government. Alice Masters shared a look with her fellows, and without a word the entire group descended upon Walker.

They dragged his limp, unconscious body back through the pastures to the excavation site. After no more than a few minutes, the skin of an exposed portion of the ship bulged with internal pressure. A three-legged creature wormed its way through the membrane to land, cat-like, in front of the prisoner. Moments later, the flesh harvester accepted the sacrificial offering.

Candace Branard had watched from a second-storey window as Walker was beaten and dragged away from the once-peaceful farmhouse. Now she lay curled up in a ball with her eyes clenched shut. Still, the scene replayed itself over and over again.

Before finding a measure of sanctuary at Harmony Farm, Branard had been on the run from government agents—or possibly the Illuminati—who were trying to implant messages into her brain. She had thought that, with the farm's remote location and the ever-present aluminum-foil hat shielding her brain, she would finally be safe.

Candace barely bit back a scream at the surprising touch on her shoulder. Nick Maddox stared at her with wide eyes. "OK, Aunt Candy?" The boy's innocent face was lined with concern. Candace forced herself to bury her fear and sit up on the old hardwood floor. The mentally handicapped boy dropped into her lap and she

Your 12 to Midnight Guides

Jackson Green

Jackson is a true believer in the paranormal and has done extensive investigations of hauntings and ghostly activities. He will offer advice and background information.



"Wait a sec, guys. I just want to check the recorder I left in Lance's room last night."

Professor Glen McClanahan

The professor is an expert researcher and investigator. He will offer aid regarding the use of skills and mechanics of the game.



"I carry a prism around with me for ten years, and the one time I need it it's in the truck!"

Lance Carson

Lance is a skeptic, but open to the possibility of a world beyond the one we see. He will offer advice on dealing with players who go "off the map."

"We're facing murder charges, and you guys are worried about pizza?"



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automatically wrapped her arms about the skinny nine-year-old.

Candace smothered another scream at a noise from the small bedroom's doorway.

"Hey. It's me. Did you see?" the silhouette of a large man asked.

"Tom?"

"Yeah. Look. You and Nicky hide somewhere. I'm going for help."

"No! They'll get you like they—"

"Not if I leave right now. They all left. Back to that thing."

"Then we'll all go!"

"Uh-uh. What if I'm wrong? Just stay here out of sight. I'll be back with help as soon as I can."

"Who can help? Don't you see? The government will just cover it up like they do all their other mind-control projects."

The silhouette was silent, then sighed. "You've got to trust somebody, Candace. I don't believe the entire world is out to get us."

"But what—"

"Candace, I'm not having this conversation with you again—not right now. I'm going. Take care of Nicky. Ken and Suzie would want that, if they were in their right minds. If I'm not back in 48 hours, then they got me and you're on your own."

Tom Warden was a big guy. He just could not help himself—he liked to eat. Diets and health food had never made a dent. Moving to Harmony Farm had changed his life, and probably saved it too. He had lost more than 200 pounds since moving in almost a year ago, and he planned to lose 100 more. Even so, his 310-pound frame caused the old wooden stairs to creak loudly with every step.

From the foot of the stairs, he crept out the front door. As silently as possible, he walked down the private dirt road, trusting faint moonlight to guide his steps. After several minutes with no sound of pursuit, he breathed a sigh of relief. Before long, the farm's fenced entrance leading onto the county road came into view.

The grin splitting his face turned into a grimace as pain lanced his back. Tom stumbled and felt another ice-hot poker enter his side. The ground rushed to meet him and all was blackness.

The flesh harvester hovered over its victim. It had not intended to deal a deathblow, but these new creatures

were soft and weak. It would be more careful in the future. Living flesh was better food.

Minutes later, the harvester salivated with frustrated hunger at the flesh before it. The prey was too large! It would not fit! The flesh harvester left the corpse where it lay. There would be other prey.

The obsessed Harmonists took Alex Walker's threat seriously. The next day was spent erecting an old circus tent that, ironically, had belonged to Walker when he came to Harmony Farm. The tent hid the excavation site from any passing planes, and a cover story for the tent's presence quickly followed.

More people were needed to dig, but leaving the ship was almost unbearable. Before doing so became impossible, some Harmonists cleaned themselves up and drove a dilapidated truck into town. They photocopied a handwritten flyer advertising a giant party at their farm and paid college students to pass the flyers out on campus.

That night, a few dozen vehicles pulled up in front of the funny big top set up in the middle of a field. Alcohol was freely available and music pounded from the tent. Once inside, the compulsion embraced them.

The grin splitting his face turned into a grimace as pain lanced his back.

The next morning, they were ejected and told they would not be allowed to return until they had recruited as many of their friends as possible. For the next four nights, the "harmony parties" continued, each bigger than the last.

Candace and Nicky hid upstairs, keeping watch from second-storey windows and locking the bedroom door when their former friends made brief visits for necessities. During the day, while all the pseudo-cultists slaved under the tent, Candace risked quick trips to the bathroom and kitchen. If the other Harmonists noticed Candace and Nicky's furtive presence in the house, they made no indication.

Candace waited two days for Tom to rescue them. She almost ran out the front door at the approach of the first vehicle on its way to the tent, but fear and paranoia locked her legs in place and the moment passed. That same night, a new sound intruded upon

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their fragile sanctuary. Scraping and rattling sounds issued for several hours from a nearby bedroom while Candace and Nicky hid in their closet. Terrified, Candace refused to leave the closet until Nicky threw a tantrum she feared would bring attention. An anxious search revealed leathery globes suspended from the ceiling of the next bedroom. Fear wrapped her in a leaden blanket—outside or in, no place was safe. Candace snatched Nicky, the only person in the world she could still trust, and fled to the familiar security of their bedroom hideout.

On the fourth night, Candace awoke to the sound of cattle bawling, although she could not see what was happening out in the darkness. Afterward, the sounds gradually diminished and she heard dozens of people walking past the farmhouse on their way back to the tent.

The next day, she steeled herself for escape.

0.6: Plot Synopsis

The following plot synopsis is designed to show you *one way* in which the adventure might play out for your group by taking a hypothetical group of characters through the adventure. It is not the *only* way, or even necessarily the *best* way. That is for you and your players to decide. Use this synopsis as a guide to help you understand what to expect as the adventure unfolds.

The heroes are contacted by Jim Simpson, a parent concerned for his son's welfare. He explains that his son, Russell, has joined a cult called the Harmonists and severed all ties to his friends, family, and college career. He asks the heroes to intervene on his behalf—find his son and make sure he is well. If his son is in trouble, Jim wants them to remove Russell from the cult's clutches—either willingly or unwillingly. Jim has already contacted a professional cult “deprogrammer,” who has agreed to work with Russell after he has safely returned.

The heroes' first step is to learn more about the Harmonists and where they might be keeping Russell. That information is surprisingly easy to find. They learn from Russell's campus friends that the Harmonists are hippies who live in the country at a place they call Harmony Farm. A few nights ago, they began holding a series of nightly raves. Those who attended came back enthusiastically praising the

Harmonist way of life and encouraging their friends to attend the next rave. Before the next night, every new Harmonist packed a few belongings and moved out to Harmony Farm for good.

A ten-gallon container of fruit-flavored drink on the table is an ominous reminder of another cult's tragic end.

The heroes' plan to infiltrate the cult through the nightly rave is unceremoniously aborted. Upon reaching the farm that night, they discover a metal gate barring the entrance and a sign announcing, “No Harmony Party Tonight.” One investigator, who scouts the other side of the gate, discovers the grisly remains of a large, middle-aged man. Alarmed that Russell could be in more immediate danger than they anticipated, the heroes decide to take a chance and sneak onto the property in search of Russell. They hide their vehicle farther down the gravel county road and cross the fence into a pasture.

In the darkness of a new moon, the heroes travel several hundred yards before encountering the mutilated corpse of a cow. The heroes then realize that the field is littered with such carcasses—it appears the entire herd was mutilated.

No sooner does this strange reality set in than they see a woman running through the field toward them. In pursuit is some sort of unearthly, spider-like creature. The woman falls and, despite the horror of the situation, the heroes leap into action to save her. Although they eventually kill the creature, the stranger dies as well. One curious investigator picks up her odd, tinfoil hat for examination and jokingly wears it himself.

Proceeding through the pasture, the heroes eventually reach an old, rambling farmhouse, its windows completely unlit. The farmyard broods in silence. Taking a big chance, they enter the house and find it almost completely deserted. One hero finds a young boy while searching the kitchen. He appears to suffer from a mental handicap and is unable to provide much useful information. A ten-gallon container of fruit-flavored drink on the table is an ominous reminder of another cult's tragic end.

Upstairs, another investigator makes a strange discovery. The ceiling of one bedroom bristles with

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hanging cocoons the size of basketballs. Some cocoons already hang empty, while others wriggle and pulse with inner life. Fortunately, none of the remaining cocoons open before the investigator douses the room with diesel and sets it aflame.

Before long, flames engulf the entire farmhouse, casting orange light and dancing shadows across the yard. With the added light, the heroes notice another handwritten sign beside a dirt track. The sign reads “Harmony Party” with an arrow pointing up the rutted road. The investigators follow the dirt path through another pasture and into an adjoining field where they are presented with yet another strange sight—a row of vehicles parked near a giant circus tent. The tent is lit from within, yet all is quiet.

Approaching the tent with great care, the investigators are treated to an even more bizarre sight. Dozens of people silently stand in a serpentine line ending at an excavated spacecraft. The heroes debate plans such as cutting the tent supports, driving for help, filling the tent with tear gas, and so on. Eventually, one impatient hero takes the decision out of her comrades’ hands and enters the tent near the rear of the line. To her surprise, nobody seems to notice. After a few minutes of experimentation, she realizes that everyone in the line is in a deep trance.

The other heroes enter the tent and begin their search for Russell. Eventually they find him and pull him out of line. While Russell follows docilely, the remainder of the entranced cultists closes the gap. Now the arguing renews—this time over what to do with the remaining cultists. While the investigators argue, the cultist nearest the ship passes through a membrane into the vessel itself. One hero attempts to follow, but backs out in horror at what he sees within—the semi-dissolved remains of several people.

He tries to stutter out a description of the ship’s interior, but he is interrupted when a freakish creature steps from the ship. Two heroes feel a sudden love and appreciation for the alien being standing before them, but three others—including the one wearing the tinfoil hat—feel only shock and horror.

One hero attempts to follow, but backs out in horror at what he sees within...

In the ensuing battle, one hero is gravely injured, lying unconscious and bleeding at the feet of the revolting alien creature. Finally, a few lucky blows put the creature on the defensive. It activates a button on a device it holds in one tentacle, causing the mesmerized cultists to attack the heroes from all sides. The creature retreats to its ship, which heats the very air around it as it powers to life. Some seconds later, the vessel disappears in an explosion of color and odor.

With the removal of the alien’s mind-control device, the mesmerized pseudo-cultists return to normal. They have only dream-like memories of their strange experiences on the farm. In the following days, a mushrooming investigation involving local, state, and even federal authorities cordons off the crash site and interviews all those involved. The final, official explanation is that one or more people drugged the victims with a substance that resulted in hallucinations of alien contact. Any evidence to the contrary is suppressed or discredited.

Section 1: Intervention

1.1: A Plea for Help

The heroes are contacted by Jim Simpson, the father of a missing college student. Mr. Simpson's residence is unimportant and can be situated in any city or town convenient to the heroes. The reason Mr. Simpson selected the heroes is best left to the GM, but a godparent-type relationship would establish a strong motivation for following the rescue through to the end, even in the face of the paranormal encounters to come. Either one of the heroes is Russell Simpson's godparent or, if the heroes are too young, Jim Simpson is a hero's godfather. However, if you have already used a similar hook in earlier adventures, consider the following:

- The heroes have a reputation for investigating and dealing with "unusual problems."
- The heroes have ties to law enforcement or private security/investigation.
- The heroes have ties to, or familiarity with, the Pinebox area.
- The heroes need help or information from Mr. Simpson as part of another adventure.

As you set up the plot hook, the important points to convey are below. Rather than "info dump" the heroes with read-aloud text, consider engaging them in an interview to dole out the information.

Russell Simpson is a sophomore at East Texas University, riding on a baseball scholarship. According to his roommate, Russell met a girl who invited him to a party out at an old hippie commune called Harmony Farm. When he returned, it was as if he had found religion. Later that same day, he packed a few belongings from his dorm room, withdrew from college, and moved to the farm. Upon learning the news, Jim Simpson drove several hours to Pinebox to find out what happened to his son. He was shocked and hurt when Russell sent a handwritten note to the Harmony Farm front gate telling him that he had shed his worldly connections and did not want to see him.

Jim Simpson learned very little about Harmony Farm during his brief stay in Pinebox, but what little he learned disturbed him even more. The farm was founded in the 1960s by a group of hippies who were little more than a local oddity up until a few months ago. At that time they started actively recruiting new

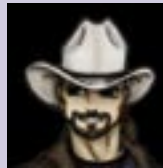
members. Apparently, Russell is far from the only ETU student to disappear to the farm over the last few days. In fact, it is the latest buzz on campus. Yet the recruits are all adults, which means the authorities cannot act without evidence of coercion, which has not been forthcoming.

Simpson believes that Russell and the other recruits have been brainwashed. He wants the heroes to go to Pinebox and bring his son back home—willingly or unwillingly—for professional "deprogramming."

Simpson offers to arrange for the heroes to speak with Russell's roommate, Alex Briggs, upon their arrival in Pinebox, and gives sketchy directions to Harmony Farm. He also provides them with a photo of his son.

Did you remember to

- Provide the heroes with a photo of Russell and hire the heroes to bring him back for "deprogramming"?
- Establish Russell's connection to Harmony Farm?
- Arrange for the heroes to meet Russell's roommate?



What's in this One-horse town?

In the last census, Pinebox, Texas was home to 11,977 permanent residents. Records from nearby East Texas University (ETU) indicate an enrollment of an additional 10,051 students. Approximately one third of the student body commutes from the surrounding area.

Your heroes can find a dozen chain fast food joints and an equal number of small locally owned restaurants. The cuisine ranges from steak houses to Cajun, and BBQ to Tex-Mex fare. The best of these include the Pizza Barn, Mom's Diner, Hamburger City, and Suzie's Catfish Emporium. Characters needing supplies can shop at one of two grocery stores, a small Wal-Mart, a hardware store, two lumber companies, a gun and hunting supply store, and four pawn shops.

The town's only movie theater closed after the establishment of a new student-only theater in the ETU student union. Three bars along "the strip" cater to students, while two other establishments in Pinebox are frequented by the locals.

For more information on Pinebox (including a detailed map) visit www.12tomidnight.com.

1.2: Research

Heroes who employ the *Research* skill find surprisingly little information on Harmony Farm. Refer to the table below.

Table 1.2: Research Results

Roll	Result
5	Harmony Farm has no Web site of its own.
8	Harmony Farm has no telephone service.
16	Harmony Farm was established as a hippie commune sometime in the 1960s. The inhabitants dedicated themselves to living a simple life. For their few monetary needs, they grew organic vegetables and sold them at the local farmer's market.
18	According to campus newsgroup posts and an article in the ETU student newspaper, Harmony Farm has been holding nightly raves. Those who attend return only long enough to tell their friends how amazing it is on Harmony Farm before moving there for good. ETU has lost a pair of star athletes and untold other students to the farm in the last four days.

The deed and plat (property map showing boundaries) to Harmony Farm (**Handout 1: Harmony Farm Survey**) can be found in the Golan County Courthouse, which is open during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. The heroes may find the plat useful if they plan to sneak onto the farm, but only in that it shows the outline of the farmhouse in relation to the property boundaries and roads.

Did you remember to

- Provide the heroes with information up to the result on their *Research* roll?
- Provide a copy of **Handout 1: Harmony Farm Survey** if researched?

1.3: Roommate

Should the heroes choose to interview Russell's roommate, Alex, they are invited to his dorm room. Read or summarize the following:

The door to Russell's old dorm room stands wide open, offering a view similar to dorm rooms everywhere—a pair of beds and built-in desks on opposite walls, Brazen Hussey beer posters, a TV, a bulging laundry hamper, unused textbooks, and a well-used game console. In fact, the game console is in use right now by two young men, while a third eggs them on. One player suddenly shouts, "OWNED!" in triumph and tosses the controller in the air.

The winner is Alex Briggs, Russell's former roommate. After noticing the heroes, he invites them in and offers any information he knows. Unless asked to leave, the other two resume playing the game. Alex and Russell have been roommates since they were freshmen, and he is genuinely concerned about his friend. (See *Appendix 1: Cast of Characters* for Alex's profile.)

When prompted with the right questions, Alex can provide the heroes with the following information:

- Harmony Farm is a hippy colony nobody on campus had ever heard of until a few days ago. That is when four attractive students stood out on the campus quad and handed out flyers.
- The flyers advertised a party over at Harmony Farm, with live music and a local band.
- Those who went to the party came back singing the praises of Harmony Farm and invited their friends to join them for another party. At the same time, they brushed off questions about what happened, saying, "You've got to see it for yourself."

...Russell gave his former roommate the rest of his belongings, saying he would not need them after he "ascended".

- Russell was recruited by a girl he wanted to date and became hooked after his first trip. He tried to recruit Alex, but Alex felt leery of the sudden change in his friend's behavior.
- The same afternoon, Russell packed a duffel bag with some of his belongings and told Alex he was moving out to Harmony Farm. Most chilling, Russell gave his former roommate the rest of his belongings, saying he would not need them after he "ascended". He went on to say that he had finally found purpose in his life, but refused to elaborate.
- Russell's behavior alarmed Alex, which led him to alert Russell's father. After Russell's father failed to bring his son home, he contacted the local authorities. They were either unable or unwilling to help. That is when Jim Simpson opted to find other help.
- Alex has noticed that Harmony Farm still advertises Harmony Parties every single night.

Brainwashed

As long as the interview remains non-confrontational, Alex offers the heroes whatever help he can, including accompanying them out to the farm. If the heroes are underpowered, the GM may even consider having Alex's two game-playing friends offer to come along. Kidnap Russell? Sounds like fun! For all three, use the same statistics as provided for Alex Briggs in *Appendix 1: Cast of Characters*.

Did you remember to

- Provide information on how Russell came to be recruited by Harmony Farm?
- Have Alex offer to accompany the heroes on the intervention?

1.4: Visiting the Rumor Mill

Heroes who spend some time (1d4+1 hours), either on campus or around town, using the *Gather Information* skill learn the following:

Table 1.4: Rumor Results

Roll	Result
14	Harmony Farm has been a local oddity for three decades. It was originally founded as a communal farm by more than a dozen couples, but the number of original inhabitants slowly dwindled to only three families. Other residents seem to come and go from time to time. The locals consider them crazy but harmless.
16	The trouble with Harmony Farm began the previous Thursday. Flyers began showing up all over campus for a "harmony party" out at Harmony Farm. With the lure of a live band, the first party drew a decent crowd. Those who attended the rave returned as converted believers, although they were elusive as to just what it was they believed. These new converts, in turn, recruited even more people before moving out to Harmony Farm for good.
20	A new, strong gate has been installed at the front entrance to Harmony Farm.

Characters currently living in Pinebox get a +6 circumstance bonus to their skill check. Characters native to Pinebox but currently living elsewhere get a +4 bonus.

Heroes who consider infiltrating Harmony Farm by posing as recruits may wish to speak with genuine converts. Oddly, no such converts can be found. Each and every one has moved to Harmony Farm, and recruiting has ground to a halt.

Did you remember to

- Provide local gossip about Harmony Farm, up to the amount allowed by the skill check?
- Explain that not a single person who has recently visited Harmony Farm can be found in Pinebox? Each and every one has moved out to the farm.

1.5: Moving On

When the heroes have concluded all their research and preparation, describe the 20 minute drive through rural East Texas. Read or summarize the following:

As you leave Pinebox for Harmony Farm, it is as if you slowly travel back in time. The paved, double-lane highway gives way to blacktop that more closely resembles a series of patches than a paved road. It is almost a relief to turn onto a gravel road, which at least has fewer potholes. The road narrows, and barbed-wire fences press in from either side. Should another vehicle come flying around a curve in the road, there would be nowhere to go. Fortunately, this stretch of road is completely dead, just like the area's cell-phone coverage.

When you have finished setting the mood, continue to *Section 2: Harmony Farm*.

Section 2: Harmony Farm

Refer to **GM Map 1: Harmony Farm**. The heroes have two choices for entering the farm. They may either approach openly through the front gate or infiltrate from some other point on the property. It does not matter which method they choose, as anyone who might see them is mesmerized and completely indifferent to the heroes' presence.

Should the heroes approach the front gate, proceed to *2.1: The Gate*. Otherwise, skip to *2.2: The Field*.

2.1: The Gate

Read or summarize the following:

The entrance to Harmony Farm is an inauspicious break in the miles of barbed-wire fence. It is marked with a new, heavy-duty steel gate and an older, modest, wooden sign, touched with faded, flaking paint barely displaying the name of the commune. A chain and padlock keep visitors outside the gate ... or inhabitants from leaving, for that matter. Hanging from the gate, a freshly painted sign reads "No Harmony Party Tonight." A rough, gravel road leads up the hill from the gate.

A successful *Disable Device* check (DC 25) allows the heroes to pick the padlock. The chain can be broken with a bolt cutter (Strength check [DC 10]) or by ramming the gate with a vehicle (*Drive* check [DC 15]). Failure at ramming may result in damage to the vehicle and occupants. Refer to *Vehicle Movement and Combat* in the *d20 Modern Rulebook*, or simply apply 3d4 points of damage to the vehicle and each occupant. Occupants get a Reflex save (DC 15) for half damage. Finally, if they are in a vehicle with four-wheel drive, the heroes may drive through the barbed wire fence on either side of the gate. While this ruins the vehicle's paint job, it does not result in mechanical damage or damage to the occupants.



A Note About Weather

Want to make the adventure *really* scary? Add a torrential downpour. It makes communication more difficult, slows movement through the fields, and severely cuts characters' ability to spot and hear danger in advance. Remind the heroes constantly about the drops stinging their faces and soaking their clothes. Play it up! A lifetime of horror clichés have taught us that nothing good ever happens during a thunderstorm, so use that deep programming to set the players on edge.

2.1a: Crime Scene

After the heroes have penetrated the property boundary, allow them *Spot* checks (DC 14) to notice a body lying near the road. Read or summarize the following:

Up ahead, you notice a buzzing swarm of black flies in the tall weeds in the ditch beside the gravel road. The smell of road-kill assails your nostrils.

Characters who investigate find a fly-covered human corpse! Seeing this body is a *minor spook*. The corpse is Tom Warden, one of Harmony Farm's residents. The body has been outdoors for several days. There appears to be a stab wound in his back. Flies help mark an old trail of blood leading up the road a few dozen yards before trailing off. The large, rough gravel of the road holds no footprints.

Warden was a large man (310 pounds) in his thirties and wore blue jeans and a T-shirt. His clothes are torn and bloody. Characters with a strong stomach can retrieve a wallet from his back pocket. The wallet contains a driver's license, a few dollars of cash, three credit cards, and a pair of photos (One of a dog, and another of a parrot). The wallet is the only thing Warden was carrying at the time of his death.

Did you remember to

- Provide options for breaching the farm's front gate?
- Allow the heroes an opportunity to *Spot* Tom Warden's body and to make *minor spook* checks upon discovering it?

2.2: The Field

This encounter can take place in any location on the farm, no matter whether the heroes infiltrate the farm from the main gate or by breaching the fence. No matter from which direction the heroes approach, they must cross open pasture to reach the farm-

Brainwashed

house. At night, a pair of lights burn in two of the farmhouse's upper-storey windows, and during the day, the house and out-buildings can be seen poking up from the top of a small hill. After the characters spend a few minutes crossing open ground, read or summarize the following:

As you climb a shallow rise in the ground, the farmhouse peeks into view several hundred yards away. The pasture stretches up in a gentle slope before you. The field is fairly flat and bereft of tree or shrub. You are woefully exposed. Vulnerable. The quiet of the countryside is almost oppressive. Where are the sounds of dogs barking, birds singing [or, at night, crickets chirping], and farm animals calling? The sounds of your own passage seem magnified by the silence.

2.2a: Mutilation

While they are a good distance from the farmhouse, have the heroes make a *Spot* check. The highest score represents the first character to notice the corpse of a cow 75 yards ahead. From that distance, it is difficult to make out much detail beyond the fact that a cow is lying on the ground. As the heroes get closer, read or summarize the following:

As you approach, it becomes plain that the animal is dead. More than dead—mutilated. The cow's chest cavity has been opened and most of the innards removed. Fortunately, the wind is blowing the worst of the smell away from you. In fact, it isn't just one cow—further up the field more bodies litter the landscape. Some appear to have been there for a couple days, while others seem disturbingly recent.

Encountering the mutilated cattle is a *minor spook*. The cattle mutilations were the actions of the mesmerized pseudo-cultists working with the flesh harvesters. Since the cattle were too large for the harvester to carry, the harmonists slaughtered the cattle in the fields and cut out pieces that could be feed to the flesh harvester.

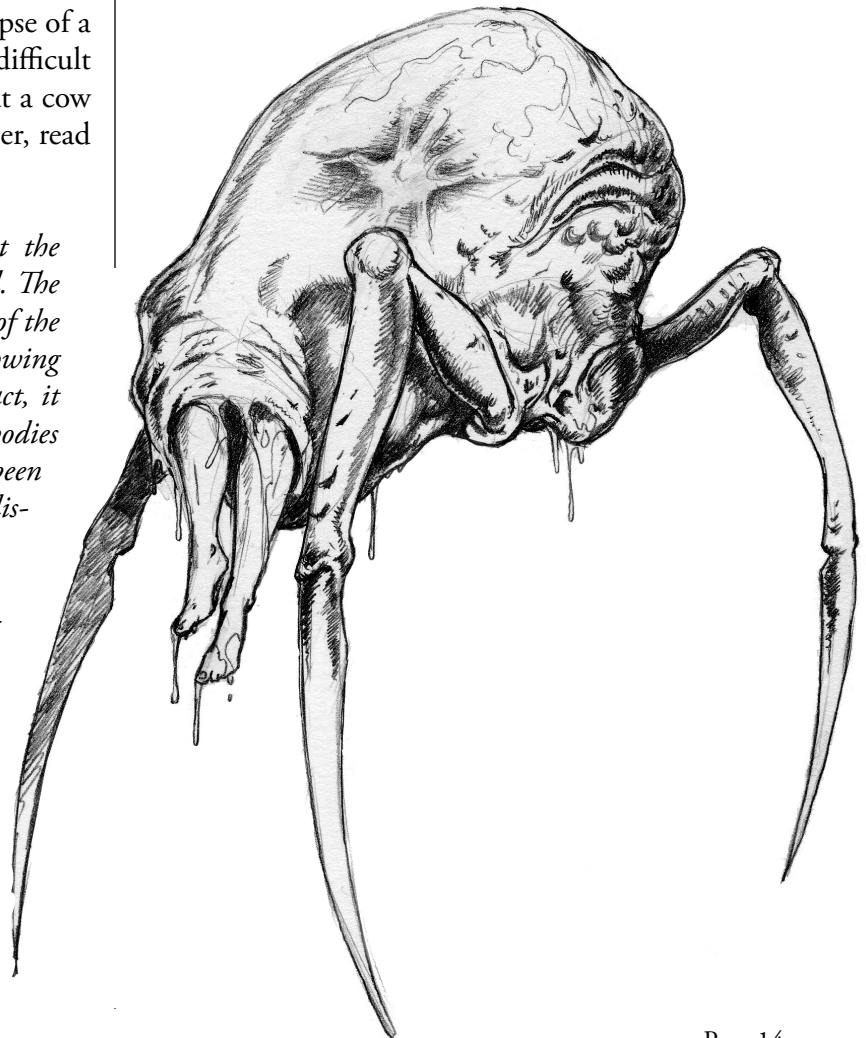
Heroes who spend time *Searching* the area (DC 18) discover trampled grass and even a few shoeprints around some of the

carcasses. There are no blood trails or other signs of what became of the cattle's internal organs because they were removed by the flesh harvester (below). Characters with the *Track* feat can use their *Survival* skill (DC 15) to find a trail of trampled grass leading to the circus tent. (See *Section 3: Tent of Horrors*.)

2.2b: Flesh Harvester

Before the heroes finish examining the cattle mutilations (or recovering from a failed *minor spook* check), Candace Branard enters the scene running at full speed (120 feet per round) in the general direction of the heroes. Each round, give the heroes an opportunity to *Spot* her at 300 feet (DC 20), 180 feet (DC 15), and 60 feet (DC 10). If the heroes have not noticed Branard by the fourth round, her scream (described in the read-aloud text below) automatically draws their attention, but too late to act during the surprise round.

When the heroes notice the middle-aged woman, read or summarize the following:



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Motion out of the corner of your eye draws your attention to a scene that merely underscores the surrealism of your situation. A woman, in her late forties or early fifties, is running toward you at full speed, weaving precariously through the mine-field of mutilated animals which separates you. A generous amount of flab bounces with each step, and the entire top of her head gleams with metal. Could that actually be a tinfoil helmet? The entire situation might be comical if not for the terror on her face. The source of her fear is evident. Less than thirty feet behind her, a creature straight out of a hellish nightmare menaces her heels.

The creature moves on three insect-like legs and stands more than a meter tall. You see no eyes, ears, or nose; only a gaping mouth.

All of these details you absorb in an instant. Almost simultaneously, the woman becomes aware of you for the first time. With a strangled, wordless scream, she attempts to change direction away from you. Instead, she stumbles and hits the ground with a painful thud in a tangle of arms and legs. The clinical, detached part of your brain registers the shiny helmet wrenching from her head, revealing a white streak in her auburn hair.

Have the players roll initiative. Seeing a flesh harvester for the first time is a *medium shock*. The creature is poised to pounce upon Branard on its initiative.

Tactics

The flesh harvester moves using a tripod of spindly, spider-like legs. It typically leaps onto its prey and grapples with it while trying to swallow it. Alternatively, when threatened, the harvester uses its pointed, rigid legs to stab its victim. (See *Flesh Harvester* in *Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures and Technology* for statistics and a full description.)

Branard is dazed from the fall for one round, so the flesh harvester easily overcomes her and swallows her whole unless a hero gets the drop on it and damages the creature first. If a hero harms the creature before it has an opportunity to ingest Branard, it attacks that hero instead. Being ingested invokes a *great fright* horror check on the part of the victim.

If the creature ingests Branard, it is heavily encumbered and unable to use its leaping ability. If left alone, it attempts to retreat with its prize at maximum speed (15 ft. while heavily encumbered) back

to the circus tent. (See *Section 3: Tent of Horrors*.) It attacks only to defend itself and disengages as soon as prudent. Successful attacks on the flesh harvester also inflict half damage to Branard, or any other victim ingested by the creature.

2.2c: Aftermath

If Branard was even partially ingested by the flesh harvester before the heroes attack it, she is almost certainly dead from suffering half the damage inflicted upon the creature. Even if she somehow miraculously survives, the shock of being chased by the creature sends her into extreme catatonia (#93 on the *Fear Effects* table), making her completely non-responsive. The heroes may choose to retreat carrying Branard, leave her there, or take her with them to the farmhouse. If left alone, Branard is unharmed for at least the next 16 hours. After that, sunburn, dehydration, and the other usual effects of nature start taking their toll.

The shiny helmet that came loose from Branard's head when she fell is, in fact, a tinfoil hat she wore to fend off the mue-lok's mind control. (See *Section 3: Tent of Horrors*.) Wearing the hat (or a similar one crafted in the house) protects the user from the alien's mental domination.

Did you remember to

- Provide the heroes with opportunities for *Spotting* the mutilated cattle (and require a *minor spook* check if using the *Fear Effects* rules)?
- Introduce the flesh harvester (and require a *medium shock* check if using the *Fear Effects* rules)?
- Require a *great fright* check (if using the *Fear Effects* rules) for any hero ingested by the flesh harvester?
- Describe Candace Branard's tinfoil helmet?

Tinfoil Helmets



Making a tinfoil helmet is really easy! Just get a roll of tinfoil and

wrap it once around your head. Cut it, then fold down the part that sticks up above your head.

If you try this, you'll learn two things very quickly. The first is that tinfoil helmets are HOT, not exactly being made of a breathable material. The second is that they're fragile. They have a break DC of 1, which means any sort of scuffle is likely to tear the tinfoil, possibly causing it to fall off your head.

2.3: Farmyard

The heroes' approach to the farmhouse is unimpeded. Refer to **GM Map 2: The Farmyard**. As they draw near, read or summarize the following:

The farmyard is silent and still. A gravel road ends in front of the farmhouse. Nearby is a very large, neglected garden; a carport with two old Volkswagen busses; a tractor shed; a chicken coop; and a barn. Several older vehicles have been abandoned and left to rust in the pasture, including the trailer from an 18-wheeler with the words "Allen & Allen Family Circus" stenciled on the side.

The same menacing stillness that the heroes experienced earlier looms over the property. All the farm animals (chickens, dogs, milk cows) are missing from their respective outlying buildings, having been captured by the flesh harvester. Two vehicles—a 15-year-old pickup truck and a 1969 VW Beetle—are parked under the carport. Larcenous characters may scavenge radios and personal belongings totaling a Wealth bonus of +2. Heroes examining the trailer may *Spot* (DC 18) signs (such as flaked rust and a handprint in the dust) that it has been opened recently. It now sits empty.

2.3a: The Trail

A heavily used dirt vehicle track visibly leads away from the house through a pasture. This trail was created over the previous week by the vehicles of ETU college students driving to the rave. In fact, a small cardboard sign staked into the ground directs drivers with the words "Harmony Party" and an arrow pointing away from the gravel driveway across the pasture. A series of signs along the trail leads from the farmhouse to the circus tent that conceals the alien ship. The heroes have a good chance of finding the trail if they *Search* (DC 10) the area around the farmyard. Even if they do not actively look for it, the heroes may still *Spot* (DC 12) the trail if they are within line of sight by 60 feet.

If the team finds and follows the trail, go to *Section 3: Tent of Horrors*.

If the team is unable to find a trail at DC 10, they deserve the feeling of crushing frustration until they remember to take 10 or aid one another.

Did you remember to

- Allow the heroes to examine the farmyard?
- Provide the heroes with opportunities for finding the trail leading to the alien ship?

2.4: Harmony Farmhouse

If the heroes turn their attention to the farmhouse itself, read or summarize the following:

The farmhouse looks like little more than a large patchwork of additions. Several rooms, and even a wing, jut from the two-storey wood-frame building like spiky growths. The old building certainly has no shortage of "character," and would be ideally suited for communal living. The house stands dark and eerily silent, with an air of abandonment.

Refer to **GM Maps 3 & 4: Farm House**. The front door stands half open. The house is empty of people except for Nick Maddox. (See *2.4b: Nick Maddox*.) While the commune's farmhouse has no telephone service, it does have electricity and plumbing.

Should they care to do so, the heroes could spend several hours carefully *Searching* the entire building. In such an instance, they find the following:

Table 2.4: Farmhouse Search

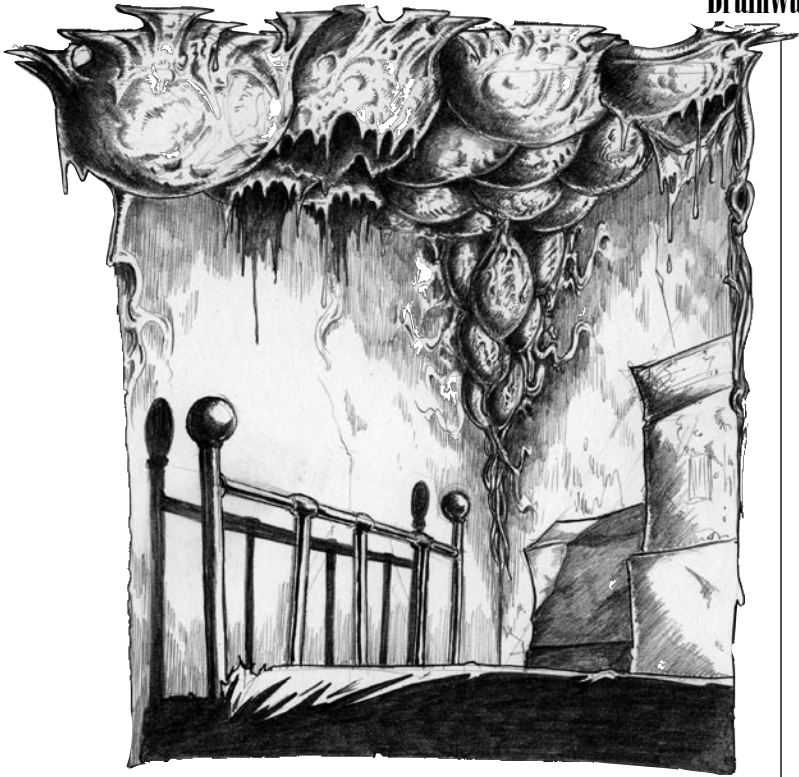
Roll	Result
DC 10	<i>2.4a: Cocoons</i> and <i>2.4b: Nick Maddox</i> .
DC 14	Billfolds and purses with identification for several recent Harmony Farm converts; also, many sets of their clothes and personal items.
DC 18	A huge laundry pile of dirty, muddy clothes. These are from the converts' early days of excavating the ship, when they still occasionally returned to the farmhouse for food and rest.

Characters may still find the cocoons or Nick Maddox if they enter the appropriate rooms.

2.4a: Cocoons

A worn and scarred staircase in the entry foyer leads up to the second storey. Upstairs, a hallway runs perpendicular to the staircase and makes an L turn before ending. Most of the upstairs rooms are bedrooms, although windows mark each end of the hallway. Heroes who enter any of the upstairs bedrooms on the north side of the house have a chance to *Spot*

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(DC 15), through a window, the faded, yellow top of a circus tent peaking above the tree line. This sight is not visible from ground level.

If the heroes explore upstairs, pick a room at random and read or summarize the following:

The heavy curtains in this 10×10 room are drawn tight, allowing little outside light to penetrate the gloomy interior. An old, iron bed frame leans against one wall, and dusty cardboard boxes form miniature skyscrapers on the bedroom floor. Leathery fixtures shaped like oblong basketballs hang from the ceiling on strands of wet mucous. Some such shapes hang empty, while others wriggle and pulse with inner life.

These objects hanging from the ceiling are the cocoons of flesh harvesters. Seeing the cocoons is a *minor spook*.

If the heroes defeated their first flesh harvester without difficulty, you may use this opportunity to have another hatch before their eyes. An already-hatched creature could hide in a dim corner of the room. Because the heroes have already encountered a flesh harvester, this does not require another *medium shock* check.

If your investigators are barely hanging onto their sanity, none of the remaining cocoons are on the verge of opening. They pose no immediate threat to the

heroes. Save the heroes, and their sanity, for the final showdown with the lead alien. If the heroes choose not to destroy them, the cocoons are found the following day by the authorities and quietly removed. Subsequently, the authorities deny any evidence of their existence.

2.4b: Nick Maddox

If the heroes enter the kitchen, read or summarize the following:

This room, the largest you've seen in the house thus far, is obviously the kitchen. A long dining-room table dominates half of the room, while the other half is anchored by a food-preparation area that would do a soup kitchen proud. Two refrigerators and a freezer line one wall. On the kitchen table rests a 20-gallon cooler, half filled with a red liquid. Beside the cooler is a ladle and an open can reading "Sug-R-Aid."

Allow any heroes in the kitchen a *Spot* check (DC 15) to notice someone hiding under the table. Should anyone approach the cooler, give them a *Listen* check (DC 16) to hear Nick Maddox quietly talking to himself. If the heroes attack first and ask questions later, Nick screams at the top of his lungs and tries to scramble away. If the heroes notice him under the table and approach him non-violently, read or summarize the following:

As you focus on the figure under the table, you realize that you are looking at a boy of no more than 10. He is kneeling under the table with his arm over his eyes, rocking back and forth as much as the table legs allow. The top of his head is wrapped in a pointed, tinfoil cone hat that is bent against the table bottom. Muffled words drift up from beneath the tablecloth, but you can't quite make out what the boy is saying.

Nick is the mentally handicapped son of one of Harmony Farm's original residents. He is a loving, gentle child who does not understand what has become of his family. He awaits the return of "Aunt Candy," who instructed him to hide while she fled for help. See *Appendix 1: Cast of Characters* for Nick's profile.

Brainwashed

The boy is coloring a notepad and quietly chanting, “No such tings as monstas. No such tings as monstas.” Heroes who treat Nick gently can coax him from his hiding spot. He is using Candace Branard’s journal as a coloring pad (**Player Handout 2**). Some of the writing remains legible under the coloring, and Nick’s drawings hint at monsters. Earlier entries in the journal include her conspiracy theories involving the Illuminati, Vatican assassins, Area 51, and “brain pacification waves” hidden in a children’s television show about puppets living in an apartment building. There are no later entries.

Unfortunately, Nick does not really understand what is going on and can only provide the heroes with basic information, such as his name and vague references to his parents and a “san’box”. Nick points the heroes toward “the san’box” if they inquire, but refuses to go himself. Nick is unaware the circus tent has been erected, but only remembers his family digging with shovels. In his mind, they were playing in a sandbox. If characters had not yet found the trail (see 2.3a: *The Trail*), it is easily visible after he points it out.

The cherry-flavored drink is a leftover from the harmony party. It is heavily spiked with alcohol, which lowers resistance to the mue-lok’s universal dominator. Heroes who drink at least a cup of punch must pass a Fortitude save (DC 14) or suffer a –1 penalty to their Will saves and Dexterity for the next hour.

Because of Branard’s frequent use of foil, the heroes should have no difficulty finding a supply in the kitchen large enough to fashion protective helmets for the entire group, should they so desire.

Did you remember to

- Provide any heroes on the second floor with an opportunity to *Spot* the circus tent from a window?
- Provide the heroes with an opportunity to discover the cocoons on the second floor?
- Provide the heroes with an opportunity to discover Nick Maddox with Candace Branard’s journal (**Player Handout 2**) in the kitchen?
- Allow the heroes to find foil with which to create additional hats?

Section 3: Tent of Horrors

3.1: Circus Road

The trail leading from the farmhouse to the circus tent is well worn from the passing of many feet and wheels. The trail leads through a pasture to a tree line that serves as a wind break. A gate hangs open in the barbed-wire fence that separates the pasture from the woods. An old, rutted road cuts through 50 yards of dense trees before abruptly opening onto another field.

The windbreak separating the pastures is comprised of tall pine and other local woods. Heavy briars, resistant to cattle grazing, make up much of the thick undergrowth. Because of the briars, movement through the tree line is cut in half anywhere except along the cleared road.

A patched and faded circus tent dominates the pasture 125 yards from the edge of the trees. At night, the old canvas glows from the illumination inside, but otherwise there is no outwardly visible sign of movement or occupation. Large (waist- to shoulder-high) mounds of earth randomly dot the area around the tent. Just like the other pastures the heroes crossed when approaching the farmhouse, the area is deathly silent. No birds call; no dogs bark. The well-worn trail from the farmhouse leads directly to a closed flap in the big top.

3.1a: Big Top

Should the heroes leave the relative protection of the tree line and approach the tent (or examine it with binoculars), they can discern additional details. The words “Allen & Allen Family Circus” appear as a faded emblem on one portion of the tent. Upon closer inspection, the heroes can see that the tent is patched and torn in many places, and patches of mold give the canvas a blotched appearance.

Furthermore, the ropes staking the tent in place are equally worn and frayed; in fact, some appear to have frayed and been knotted back together. Although it might not be very difficult to slice through an individual rope, the sheer number of ropes used to hold the tent in place makes bringing it down a time-consuming task.

Despite being spotted with mildew, the old rope and canvas is susceptible to fire, and the entire structure quickly burns like a bonfire if set aflame.

With the canvas ripped in several places, just about any section in the wall makes a likely entrance. The trail leads directly to a 10-foot-wide section of canvas with two flaps hanging shut.

3.2: Tent of Horrors

Heroes who look inside the tent find what they were looking for—and more. Refer to **GM Map 5: Circus Tent**. Read or summarize the following:

The air smells heavily of freshly turned earth. A snaking row of dirty, disheveled people winds its way around the massive circus tent. Each person stands as still as a statue, staring straight ahead at the back of the head of the person in front. Each one is covered almost head to foot in dirt and grime, making identification difficult. Because of the way the line doubles back and snakes around, it is difficult to count the people in it. At best estimate, the number is more than 50 and less than 100. The rear of the line terminates near the tent entrance, while the other end descends into a large pit dug more than twenty-five feet deep. Discarded shovels, wheelbarrows, and buckets litter the area, giving testament to the secret work conducted by the residents of Harmony Farm.

Extending from the pit is a spacecraft. A single look at the ship's alien geometry is enough to trigger primitive, instinctual alarm. Lines double back on themselves without bending, and strange curves hint at motion in unseen dimensions. The glossy black substance forming the ship's skin speaks of volcanic forces forging unnatural mysteries.

Seeing the spaceship is a *medium shock*.

Bringing Down the Big Top



Sure as anything, one or more gaming groups out there will decide to cut the ropes or otherwise drop the tent. Does that sound like something yours would do? Then read on.

The tent is held in place by 49 ropes. The tent becomes quite unstable after more than half the ropes are cut. The tent collapses when 2/3 of the ropes are cut. Of course, placement is important too. Cutting every other rope is less effective than cutting all the ropes on one side.

Brainwashed

The people in line are completely oblivious to the heroes' presence. If pushed, pulled, or otherwise moved, they tamely follow the heroes' physical prompts. However, unless restrained, they return to their



Less is More

The heroes probably enter the circus tent with wild expectations of battle. Give them plenty of time to explore the area and hatch a plan for saving the mesmerized victims. The nature of RPGs assures them that they will have one last big encounter with a “big bad evil guy,” but keep them guessing when the hammer will fall. Use the opportunity to build the tension. When the mue-lok finally makes its appearance, they will be quaking in their boots!

places in line at the first opportunity. Even characters who are restrained attempt to return to the line. For example, a character whose shoelaces had been tied would shuffle or even hop back to the line. Because

they are otherwise unresponsive to their surroundings, those who are injured or in danger take no measures toward self-preservation. If the tent catches fire, all of the mesmerized humans inside stand by passively while they burn to death.

3.2a: Final Harvest

The line descends into the pit, ending at the spacecraft. The bottom of the pit is not visible from the tent's edge. Heroes must enter the tent and stand within 30 feet of the excavation's edge to see where the line terminates at the bottom. Read or summarize the following to those who risk approaching the pit.

The line snaking its way around the tent descends into the pit and terminates at the alien ship. The first person in line stands with the palms of his hands pressed against the surface of the craft. Here, unnatural geometry gives way to organic symmetry. In places, the freshly turned earth is tainted with an oil-black stain. The ship bleeds this oozing substance from several cruel slashes and gouges in its skin.

As a person pushes against this part of the ship, the resistance diminishes and he sinks into its surface, disappearing completely at the end of five rounds. In this manner, the line moves forward roughly every five minutes. Each time a person enters the ship, a damaged area improves. Describe the line abruptly

moving forward during any dramatically appropriate moment.

3.2b: Finding Russell

Russell Simpson, the reason for the heroes' trip to Harmony Farm, is standing third from the front of the line when the heroes enter the tent. Like all of the other Harmony Farm dupes, he is covered in dirt and sweat and looks extremely haggard. He has not bathed or shaven in a few days, nor has he eaten since the previous day. In this condition, Russell has a *Disguise* of 11. Characters may make an opposing *Spot* check if nearby, or *Search* check if they actively seek him.

Fifteen minutes after the heroes enter the tent, Russell takes his turn to sacrifice himself to the ship. The process can be interrupted and Russell (or any other victim) pulled out up until the moment he completely disappears from view at the end of the fifth round. Russell is just as unresponsive as all the other mesmerized victims standing in line.

3.2c: Flesh-Engine Membrane

Heroes brave (or stupid) enough to try entering the ship in the same manner as the mesmerized victims may do so. Read or summarize the following to those who touch the ship's membrane.

Despite its glassy appearance, the ship feels warm and inviting to the touch. Your fingertips tingle as you make contact with the smooth surface. The skin of the ship envelops your hand and gently draws you into its embrace.

Heroes can get any single limb into the ship in one round. Removing it from the ship takes the same amount of time. Leaning forward through the membrane to look inside also takes one round. Read or summarize the following to heroes who peek inside.

You see an irregularly shaped chamber roughly fifteen feet long at its widest point. Every surface glows with a deep, purple light and glistens with wetness. The floor slowly undulates, rolling the partially dissolved corpses of several people. With a sickening shock, you realize you are looking at a giant mouth—from the inside.

Brainwashed

Entering the ship enough to see its contents is a *great fright*. Furthermore, victims must make a Fortitude save every round to stave off the effects of the poisonous alien atmosphere. Failure results in two points of temporary Constitution damage. Finally, once every five rounds, the chamber is filled with aerosolized acid, which aids in the digestion of the flesh, which is the ship's fuel. Living beings in the chamber at the end of five rounds are showered in acid, resulting in 1d12 points of damage.

The membrane has 18 hit points and a hardness of 3. Should a hero damage the membrane enough to open it, the ship's poisonous atmosphere evacuates in a 15-foot burst centered on the membrane. Any person in this area must make the same Constitution save as above. The membrane heals itself exactly one round later, and the cloud of gas dissipates at the round's end.

Did you remember to

- Require a *medium shock* check from heroes who see the spacecraft?
- Give the heroes an opportunity to find Russell?
- Allow foolhardy characters to enter the ship, requiring a *great fright* check from those who do so?

3.3: Dominator

Heroes who damage the ship, disrupt the flow of people entering it, or even enter it themselves, draw the attention of the mue-lok. At any dramatically appropriate moment, every human under the effect of the universal dominator turns to look at the heroes. They speak in unison.

“What disturbs The Visitor?”

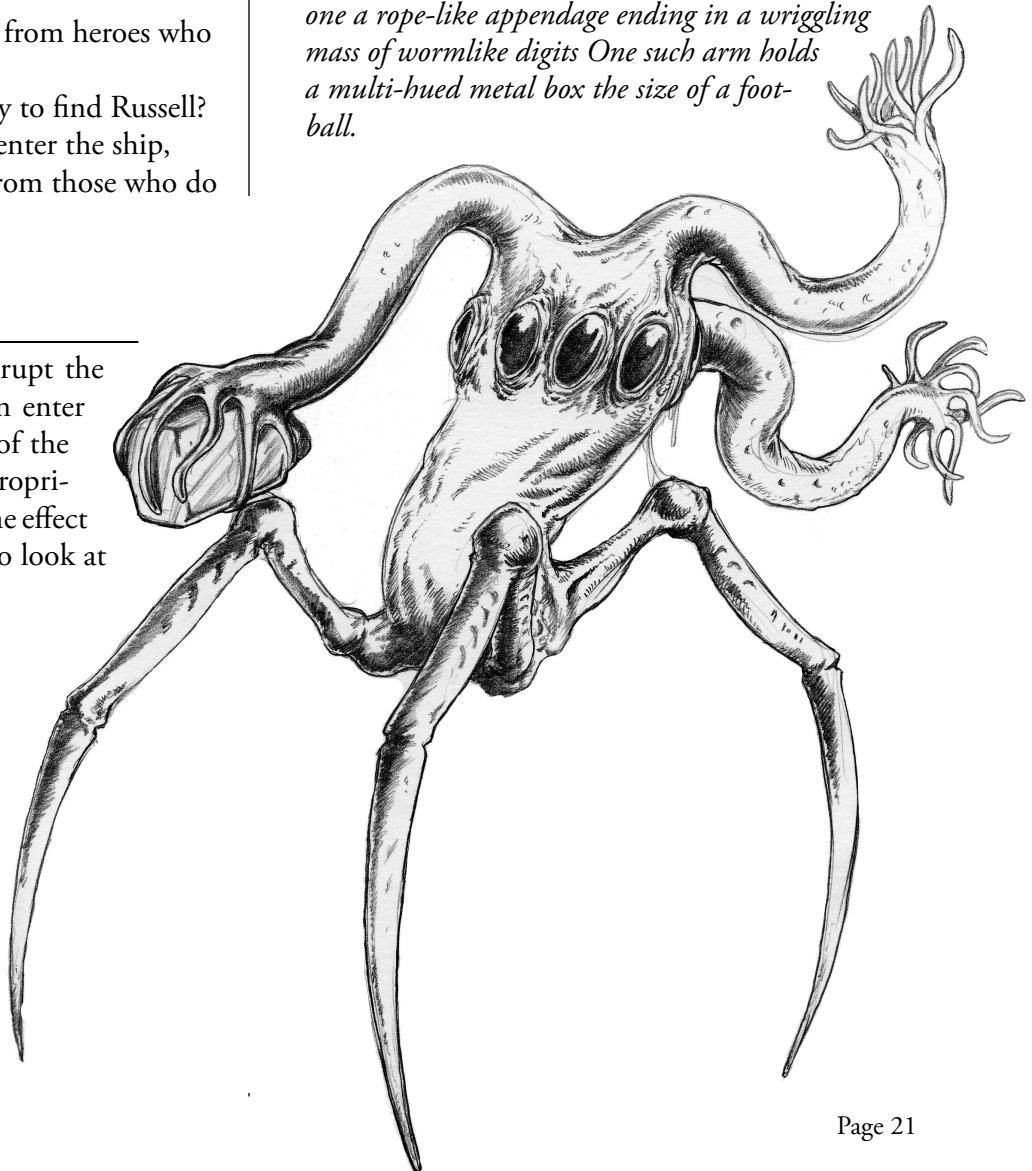
Regardless of the heroes' response, the impromptu Greek chorus says,

“You must be trained to the yoke if you are to be found worthy. Submit to the yoke or submit to the flesh harvester. In submission is freedom. In service is purpose.”

3.3a: Mue-Lok

This bizarre conversation is really an attempt to distract the team while the mue-lok makes her entrance. Heroes who succeed in a *Spot* check (DC 17) notice the creature anyway as it emerges from its craft. Read or summarize the following to those who pass the check:

A hint of motion out of the corner of your eye warns you of a new threat. A creature steps through a membrane from a hitherto solid-looking portion of the alien ship. Like the previous creature you encountered, this one walks on three insect-like legs. Unlike that creature, this one moves with a sinister intelligence. The extraterrestrial has no neck, nor anything that would pass for a face. Grey ovals appearing in a band around its torso may be eyes, ears, or some other sensory organ altogether. The alien's three arms emerge from the top of its body, each one a rope-like appendage ending in a wriggling mass of wormlike digits. One such arm holds a multi-hued metal box the size of a foot-ball.



Brainwashed

Those who spotted the alien may act during the surprise round, however, encountering the mue-lok is a *great fright*. On the mue-lok's turn, during the surprise round, it raises the universal dominator in its tentacle and activates it. (See *Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures and Technology*.) Heroes wearing tinfoil hats are immune to the universal dominator and do not require checks. All others must succeed at a Will save (DC 14) or be mesmerized. For those who fail the save, read or summarize the following:

You realize in an epiphany that you were about to make a terrible blunder. While this creature is unquestionably strange, it certainly poses no threat—just the opposite, in fact. This is a historic opportunity to interact with an alien life-form; to plumb the secrets of the universe. This interstellar visitor is the key to a new age of technological and social wonders. It is incomprehensible that your first reaction was anger and aggression to what you feared and misunderstood. Fortunately, it is not too late. You can take your place in line with the other lucky souls who await final enlightenment inside the visitor's ship. In fact, even as you move to your place in line you are overcome by such visions of wonder and awe that the dirty, mundane world around you fades to little more than an unpleasant daydream.

Tactics

The alien's only ranged weapon is the universal dominator, thus the mue-lok must resort to melee attacks against heroes who prove immune to its effects. In addition to regular attack actions, the mue-lok has two special full attacks it may use if the situation arises (See *Mue-Lok* in *Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures and Technology*). Either full attack requires that the alien drop the universal dominator. Dropping the universal dominator does not reverse its effects on those mesmerized, but the alien can no longer issue telepathic commands to its subjects.

Being alien, the mue-lok cannot distinguish between unconsciousness and death in its victims. When using its strangle attack, it drops its victim as soon as he falls unconscious.

As a last resort, if the mue-lok maintains its hold on the universal dominator during combat, it may interrupt the flow of human fuel to its ship's living engine, causing them to attack the heroes instead. These attackers number in the dozens, making it highly unlikely that the investigators could fend off the attacks for very long. Because of their mesmerized state, the pseudo-cultists are limited to unarmed melee attacks.

We advise you to avoid a protracted battle with every individual cultist. Instead, describe the crushing odds that would eventually overwhelm the heroes, as well as the necessity of injuring or killing innocent victims in the fight. However, if mass combat is necessary, you could might want to use our mob rules (see sidebar). If you are really a glutton for punishment and want to run each attacker individually, we recommend the stats for Low Level Taxi Driver found under *Supporting Characters* in *Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes* of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*.

The mue-lok uses this distraction to retreat to the ship and escape. (See *3.4c Alien Escape*.) While the ship is not fully healed until it ingests all the

pseudo-cultists, enough have already sacrificed themselves to its hunger that it can make another short jump away from immediate danger.

Destruction of the universal dominator (hardness 5, hit points 15, break DC 20), or its departure from Earth via the ship, allows victims to recover from its mesmerizing effects. Recovering victims experience a *medium shock* as they experience feelings of violation over what they were willing to do and how deeply they were manipulated. The universal dominator does not function for humans, and if retrieved by humans remains inert. However, the device offers numerous plot possibilities for future adventures.

Did you remember to

- Require a *great fright* check from everyone (except those who fall prey to being mesmerized) who sees the mue-lok?
- Attack the team with the universal dominator?
- Follow up with melee attacks until the battle's conclusion?



Mob Rules

If you think you might want to make the encounter more challenging, throw a few mobs at your heroes. No, combat doesn't have to take all night. Rather than roll for each attacker individually, treat them as a unit. Check out *Modern Dispatch 30: Mob Rules* for our rule supplement on handling mobs in combat.

3.4: Wrap-up

The final encounter may result in one of many outcomes. As always, use the ending that works best for your campaign. Here are some options:

3.4a: The Heroes Retreat, Defeated or In Fear

Heroes with a healthy sense of self-preservation may decide that the threat they face is too overwhelming and opt to live to fight another day. Eventually, a deputy from the county sheriff's department arrives with a search warrant to check out other reports of missing students. Within hours, the farm is swarming with Texas Rangers and local authorities. Heroes who have had previous encounters with the Texas Rangers near Pinebox may recognize Captain Felix Crow in charge. Detectives find dozens of skeletons that had been ejected from the ship as indigestible. Mass suicide is quickly ruled the cause of death by the so-called cult, despite conflicting evidence to the contrary. Nick Maddox's parents are among the dead, as is Russell Simpson. Any photographic or physical evidence of alien activity is quickly ruled a hoax, and the heroes are warned not to perpetuate wild stories of aliens.

3.4b: The Mue-Lok Dies

With the death of the alien, colored lights on the universal dominator go dark and the ship emanates an ear-piercing shriek that gradually rises in tone. The creature's victims are free but now reel from the *medium shock* of sudden recovery. After ten rounds, the ship explodes in an earth-shaking eruption. Living beings within 30 feet of the vessel take 12d12 points of damage, with half damage in 30 foot increments: 6d12 at 30 feet; 3d12 at 60 feet; 1d12 at 90 feet. The explosion rends the circus tent into flaming pieces and sends them flying across the field like comets. The number of pseudo-cultists who survive the blast is left to the GM's discretion.

The explosion draws the attention of everyone from miles around, and within hours the farm is swarming with the Texas Rangers and local authorities. Heroes who have had previous encounters with the Texas Rangers near Pinebox may recognize that Captain Felix Crow is in charge. The explosion is officially declared to be a mass suicide by the so-called cult. It is left to the GM's discretion to decide whether or not Nick Maddox's parents and Russell Simpson were

among the survivors. Any photographic or physical evidence is quickly ruled a hoax, and the heroes are warned not to perpetuate wild stories of aliens.

3.4c: The Mue-Lok Escapes

Sure, you can kill off the alien and finish the adventure cleanly, but why should anything be nice and neat? This is not Hollywood! For long-term campaigns, this adventure offers the potential for a recurring villain. The mue-lok's ship travels not only through space, but also through what we perceive as time. If the battle goes poorly for the alien, it retreats to its ship, entering through a membrane that proves impassable to other life forms. From within the ship, it uses the remaining humans under its domination to threaten the heroes.

It hints at having already encountered the heroes 12 years from now in this same field. At that encounter, the heroes were well prepared and almost destroyed the ship. The mue-lok hastily fled, but the

Any photographic or physical evidence is quickly ruled a hoax, and the heroes are warned not to perpetuate wild stories of aliens.

damaged ship only moved backward in time and not place. From the mue-lok's perspective *that* was its first encounter with the heroes. From the heroes' perspective, *this* is their first encounter, which would warn them to be prepared 12 years hence. Confusing? Possibly. Cool? Heck yeah! Considering the event is set 12 years from the present campaign time, chances are good that your campaign ends before the heroes ever reach that distant future event—which means it can safely be assumed to happen as described without the group doing anything to invalidate it.

If this sounds like the ending for you, read or summarize the following:

As one, the remaining humans turn to face you and speak in chorus. "My study of your species is incomplete. All data indicates that you perceive

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time as linear, yet your appearance immediately after our encounter, in this same location, 12 cycles hence, contradicts that conclusion. This is the second occasion in which you have thwarted my goals. Nevertheless, your resistance is pointless. When I return, you will serve as the lowest of slaves, fueling my ship with your own flesh.”

With this pronouncement, an ear-piercing shriek emanates from the ship. For several seconds, the vessel’s lines and curves appear to twist and vibrate in mind-bending directions, then the tent fills with a blinding kaleidoscope of color and sound. Just as quickly, both the light and the ship are gone. An odor of sulfur and brimstone lingers over the odd outline of the ship’s earthen cradle.

Whether summoned by the heroes or acting upon another tip, Texas Rangers and local law enforcement agencies descend upon the farm within hours. Detectives find dozens of human remains ejected from the ship as indigestible. The Rangers cordon off the area and interview all those involved. It is left to the GM’s discretion to decide whether or not Nick Maddox’s parents or Russell Simpson were among the sur-

vivors. The final official explanation is that one or more people drugged the victims with a substance that resulted in hallucinations of alien contact. Any evidence to the contrary is suppressed or discredited.

3.4d: The Heroes are Mesmerized or Incapacitated with

Fear

This adventure is no walk in the park, and the addition of the *Fear Effects* system makes the scenario that much more deadly. If the heroes have poor Will saves and do not wear tinfoil hats, it is possible that all of them are mesmerized by the universal dominator or become comatose victims of their own fear. If so, the line proceeds normally until all the victims have been ingested by the ship. However, if you want to keep the heroes alive, the ship may “eat” all the humans it needs to heal itself before reaching the heroes at the end of the line. The ship then departs, breaking the universal dominator’s hold on the remaining victims. It is left to the GM’s discretion to decide whether or not Nick Maddox’s parents and Russell Simpson were among the handful of survivors.

Appendix 1: Cast of Characters

Candace Branard

Dedicated 1 / Charismatic 1 Ordinary (CR 1)

Initiative	-1	BAB	+0	STR	14 (+2)
Defense	10, touch 10, flat footed 10	Melee	+2	DEX	8 (-1)
Hit Points	9	Ranged	-1	CON	12 (+1)
Save Fort	+3	Grapple	+0	INT	10 (0)
Save Ref	0	MAS Dmg Threshold	12	WIS	13 (+1)
Save Will	+2	Action Points	0	CHA	15 (+2)

Attacks: *unarmed attack:* (provokes AoO) Atk +2; Dmg 1d3+1 (nonlethal)

Speed: 30 ft.

Facing & Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Skills: *Bluff* +4; *Craft (writing)* +5; *Gather Information* +4; *Investigate* +4; *Knowledge (current events)* +6; *Knowledge (popular culture)* +2; *Spot* +5; **Languages:** English (speak, read and write)

Feats: Confident; Personal Firearms Proficiency; Simple Weapons Proficiency

Hit Dice: 2d6

Reputation & Allegiance: +0; Harmony Farm

Wealth & Possessions: +3; journal

Occupation: Rural

Character Profile

Before finding a measure of sanctuary at Harmony Farm, Branard had been on the run from imagined government agents, Illuminati, KGB, and every other conspiracy theorist's imagined enemy. Branard,

an undiagnosed schizophrenic, believed the phantom noises she sometimes heard were the work of someone trying to implant messages into her brain. After a lifetime of bouncing from one job, one apartment, and one city to another, she eventually drifted to Texas where she thought her enemies would be less likely to track her.

Candace is aware that people think she is crazy—especially after the incident with the police horse. But that was in Dallas, while investigating the old book depository/museum, and she had been on edge the whole time. She could hardly be blamed for that. When she learned of a little commune out in East Texas, the timing and the farm's remote location could not have been better. With her ever-present aluminum-foil hat shielding her brain, she knew she would finally be safe. And for more than a year, she was.

Character Speak

If you didn't grow it or make it yourself, you can't trust it.

Laugh all you want. When you're in a Illuminati concentration camp you won't think it's so funny.

Second gunman? Kennedy was already dead before that motorcade ever started!

Shiny side out! You gotta put the shiny side out if you want to reflect the mind control waves!

Character Statistics**Tough 1 / Smart 1 Ordinary (CR 1)**

Initiative	-1	BAB	+0	STR	12 (+1)
Defense	9, touch 9, flat footed 9	Melee	+1	DEX	8 (-1)
Hit Points	16	Ranged	-1	CON	15 (+2)
Save Fort	+3	Grapple	+0	INT	13 (+1)
Save Ref	-1	MAS Dmg Threshold	15	WIS	10 (0)
Save Will	+1	Action Points	0	CHA	14 (+2)

Attacks: *baseball bat:* Atk +1; Dmg 1d6+1; Crit 20;
Rng —; Bludgeoning; Medium

unarmed attack: (provokes AoO) Atk +2; Dmg
1d6+1 (nonlethal)

Speed: 30 ft.

Facing & Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Skills: *Craft (mechanical)* +6; *Craft (structural)* +5;
Knowledge (current events) +2; *Knowledge (popular
culture)* +5; *Knowledge (research)* +4; *Knowledge
(technology)* +5; **Languages:** English (speak, read
and write); Spanish (speak, read and write)

Feats: Brawl; Personal Firearms Proficiency; Simple
Weapons Proficiency

Hit Dice: 1d10+1d4

Wealth: +1

Reputation & Allegiance: +0; Russell Simpson, East
Texas University

Possessions: 2002 Ford F150, textbooks, computer

Occupation: Student

Profile

Alex Briggs is a 19-year-old Engineering student originally from San Angelo in West Texas. He and Russell Simpson have been dorm-mates and friends since their freshman year. Alex grew up in a conservative Christian family and is suspicious of other religions. He is genuinely concerned for his friend's safety and welfare, which is why he called Russell's father at the first sign of trouble. He has been planning on visiting Harmony Farm himself, but Jim Simpson asked that he wait until he could send more help. With the heroes' arrival, he is eager to help—if for no other reason than to assuage his guilt at not personally going to the farm to intervene himself.

Character Speak

OWNED!

Hey, how about we stop for some beer on the way? Y'all mind if one of you buy? I can pay you back.

Anyone here catch the Jury of Robots show? That show rocked!

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Nick Maddox

Character Statistics

Child

Initiative	-1	BAB	+0	STR	12 (+1)
Defense	0	Melee	+0	DEX	13 (+1)
Hit Points	2	Ranged	+0	CON	10 (+0)
Save Fort	+0	Grapple	+0	INT	7 (-2)
Save Ref	+1	MAS Dmg Threshold	5	WIS	9 (-1)
Save Will	-1	Action Points	0	CHA	11 (+0)

Speed: 20 ft.

Hit Dice: 1d4

Reputation & Allegiance: +0; Mommy and Daddy

Possessions: Candace Branard's journal, crayons

Character Profile

Nick is the mentally handicapped son of two of Harmony Farm's original residents. Although his body is that of a nine-year-old, developmentally he has more in common with a four-year-old. His brain damage, the result of his parents' former marijuana use, is permanent; however, he is a loving, gentle child. Although many other children have called Harmony Farm their home, they have moved away or grown

into adults. Consequently, Nick has many "aunts" and "uncles" who dote on him and help rear him.

Early in the conversion of the farm's residents, Nick was taken to the dig site. Nick proved immune to the mind-control device and eventually left with "Aunt Candy", who was likewise immune. Nick does not know the circus tent has been erected, but only remembers his family digging with shovels. In his mind, they were playing in a sandbox. Nick is confused and vaguely concerned by the change in his daily routine lately, but the presence of "Aunt Candy" kept him mollified. He watched his guardian abandon the farmhouse for help and witnessed the flesh harvester spring in pursuit. He now draws this disturbing scene with his colors as a kind of cathartic release.

Character Speak

"Momma and Daddy at the san'box."

"Aunt Candy go to town."

"Nicky a good boy."

"Shiny hat keeps monstas 'way."

"I want Momma!"

"No juice! Bad juice!"

Jim Simpson

Character Profile

Simpson is in his late 50s and is almost 60 pounds overweight. He has already experienced one health scare that led to triple bypass heart surgery, but stubbornly refuses to change his eating and exercise habits. Simpson is a middle-manager for a regional shipping company, and while he does not earn a particularly high salary, he manages to pay for his son's tuition with the help of Russell's baseball scholarship. After the death of his wife, Simpson and his son grew closer than before. Even into his second year in college at East Texas University (ETU), Russell calls his father at least twice a week.

While Simpson does not consider himself particularly religious, he has a healthy fear of cults. He is old

enough to clearly remember watching images of the Jamestown disaster on television decades before, and he remembers the nightmares that followed for weeks afterward. When he learned of the strange nature of his son's departure from ETU, it triggered old fears and spurred him into action.

Character Speak

Please help me get Russ back. He's all I've got left.

My heart just can't take much more of this.

Look, I'm not a rich guy, but I'll give you as much as I can.

Appendix 2: Cast of Creatures and Technology

Flesh Engine

A non-sentient creature living within an inanimate starship, this creature warps space and time, allowing the ship to travel freely. The flesh engine is fueled by living matter, often collected by flesh harvesters. The flesh engine digests this bio-fuel in a chamber filled with powerful muscles and acids. Inorganic material and bones, which it cannot digest, are periodically expelled as waste.

Flesh Harvester

Creature Statistics

Medium Aberration Extraterrestrial (CR 4)

Initiative	+2	BAB	+3	STR	17 (+3)
Defense (body/legs)	17/20, touch 13/14, flat-footed 15/18	Melee	+6	DEX	14 (+2)
Hit Points (body/legs)	20/4	Ranged	-	CON	10 (0)
Save Fort	+1	Grapple	+0	INT	6 (-2)
Save Ref	+2	MAS Dmg Threshold	10	WIS	12 (+1)
Save Will	+2	Action Points	0	CHA	6 (-2)

Attacks: *Leg Stab* +6 (1d4+3); Full Atk + (1d4+3)

Speed: 30 ft.

Facing & Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft;

Skills: *Balance* +4; *Hide* +4; *Jump* +8; *Listen* +3; *Move Silently* +4; *Spot* +3; *Tumble* +4

Feats & Talents: Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus (leg stab)

Special Qualities: blindsight, halve bludgeon damage, exposed legs, fast healing 2, improved grab, swallow whole

Hit Dice & Advancement: 4d8; 6–7 HD (Large)

Wealth: +0

Reputation & Allegiance: +0; mue-lok

Possessions: none

Exposed Legs (Ex): The flesh harvester's legs may be targeted by an opponent's attack. The hit points and Defense for one leg are provided above. Losing a leg does not affect the body's hit points.

Fast Healing 2 (Ex): The flesh harvester's body regains 2 hit points per round. Fast healing stops working when the flesh harvester is reduced to –10 hp or fewer. Except as noted here, fast healing works just like natural healing. A flesh harvester may regenerate one leg every three rounds, instead of healing body damage.

Fast healing does not provide any benefit against attack forms that do not deal hit point damage. Fast healing also doesn't restore hit points lost to starvation, thirst, or suffocation.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the flesh harvester hits with its leg stab, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action, doing so without provoking attacks of opportunity. No initial touch attack is required. Unless otherwise stated, improved grab works only against opponents no larger than one size category greater than the flesh harvester.

The flesh harvester has the option of conducting the grapple normally, or simply using the part of its body it used in the improved grab to hold the opponent. If it chooses to do the latter, it takes a -20 penalty on grapple checks but does not lose its Dexterity bonus to Defense, still threatens an area, and can use its remaining attacks against other opponents.

When a flesh harvester gets a hold after an improved grab attack, it pulls the opponent into its mouth. This act does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The flesh harvester is not considered grappled while it holds the opponent, so it still threatens adjacent squares and retains its Dexterity bonus. It can even move, provided it can drag the opponent's weight.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The flesh harvester's stomach is as elastic as a balloon, allowing it to swallow and hold up to 250 pounds of living matter. Like a snake,

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the flesh harvester's maw contains powerful muscles that allow it to swallow creatures whole.

If the flesh harvester begins its turn with an opponent held in its mouth (see improved grab), it can attempt a new grapple check (as though attempting to pin the opponent). If it succeeds, it swallows its opponent. The opponent can be up to one size category larger than the flesh harvester.

A swallowed opponent is considered grappled, while the flesh harvester is not. A swallowed opponent can try to cut its way free with any light piercing or slashing weapon (it takes more than half the flesh harvester's hit points in cutting damage for the swallowed opponent to escape). The swallowed opponent may not break the grapple on a flesh harvester.

The flesh harvester's stomach secretes a potent sedative that renders victims unconscious. These sedatives are absorbed through the skin. A swallowed opponent must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) every round to remain conscious. Failure results in unconsciousness and suspended animation. Humans in such a condition can remain alive inside a flesh harvester for up to two weeks. Success allows the victim to continue struggling.

Creature Profile

The flesh harvester is an alien creature resembling the hybrid of a spider and a satchel. It stands more than a meter tall on three spindly, spider-like legs. The harvester's torso is composed of a wide, gaping maw leading directly to a highly elastic stomach. What brain the creature possesses is little more than a hard-wired nervous system. The flesh harvester is a creature bioengineered specifically for collecting living matter for the flesh engine.

The first stage of a flesh harvester's life is larval. It subsists in its parent's stomach, where it feeds off leftover stomach contents. When the parent encounters an environment with a sufficient food supply, it

regurgitates the larvae, which immediately build cocoons. Snug within the cocoon, the creature's metamorphosis into a true flesh harvester occurs within less than a week.

The flesh harvester's stride weaves a complicated, almost hypnotic pattern of motion. However, when harvesting unwilling prey, it uses its powerful legs to spring as much as 35 feet in a single leap. When attacking, the flesh harvester leaps onto its prey and uses its powerful legs to grapple with its opponent while it attempts to ingest it. When threatened, the flesh harvester grapples with its opponent using two legs while stabbing with its third.

The creature may be crippled by destroying one of its three legs, but can only be killed by destroying its body. The flesh harvester's elastic body is highly resistant to bludgeoning, taking half damage from such attacks. Unfortunately, victims swallowed by the creature also take half damage from damage delivered to the harvester's body. The only known method for coaxing a flesh harvester to release the contents of its stomach is to inflict at least two points of fire damage upon it. This triggers a reflex in the creature that causes it to gag.

Since many adult humans are at the upper weight range of a flesh harvester's capacity, harvesters carrying humans are heavily encumbered. Thus they are incapable of leaping and their movement is reduced to 15 ft.



Creature Statistics**Large Aberration Extraterrestrial (CR 7)**

Initiative	+0	BAB	+4	STR	16 (+3)
Defense (body/legs)	16, touch 9, flat-footed 16	Melee	+6	DEX	10 (+0)
Hit Points (body/legs)	48	Ranged	+3	CON	16 (+3)
Save Fort	+5	Grapple	+4	INT	20 (+5)
Save Ref	+2	MAS Dmg Threshold	16	WIS	14 (+2)
Save Will	+9	Action Points	0	CHA	12 (+1)

Attacks: +4 melee (1d4+3, slam); Full Atk¹ +4/+2/+0
melee (1d4+3, slam)

Speed: 30 ft.

Facing & Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft

Skills: *Bluff* +5, *Computer Use* +10, *Concentration* +6, *Craft (mechanical)* +8, *Craft (structural)* +8, *Diplomacy* +6, *Knowledge (physical sciences)* +8, *Knowledge (technology)* +8, *Listen* +7, *Move Silently* +5, *Navigate* +5, *Pilot* +5, *Repair* +8, *Research* +6, *Sense Motive* +7, *Spot* +6

Feats & Talents: Iron Will, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Spacer

Special Qualities: darkvision 60 ft.; fast healing 3; fear aura (DC 14); multiattack; strangle

Hit Dice & Advancement: 6d8+18; 7-10 HD (Large); 9-16 HD (Huge)

Wealth: +0

Reputation & Allegiance: +0; alien

Possessions: none

Darkvision (Ex): The mue-lok can see in total darkness, out to the specified range (60 feet). Darkvision is black-and-white only, but is otherwise like normal light.

Fast Healing 3 (Ex): The mue-lok's body regains 3 hit points per round. Fast healing stops working when the mue-lok is reduced to -10 hp or fewer. Except as noted here, fast healing works just like natural heal-

ing. A mue-lok may regenerate one leg every three rounds, instead of healing body damage.

Fast healing does not provide any benefit against attack forms that do not deal hit point damage. Fast healing also does not restore hit points lost to starvation, thirst, or suffocation.

Multiattack¹: If the mue-lok is engaged in melee with more than one opponent, it spins its torso and attacks each adjacent opponent with each of its three arms (1d4+3 points of damage per arm).

Strangle (Ex): If the mue-lok has successfully pinned her opponent, her free appendage may make a strangle attack. The strangle attack does not invoke attacks of opportunity and it automatically hits the opponent for 1d8 damage.

A strangled opponent has a -2 penalty on his attempts to break the pin. If the opponent is no longer pinned, then the strangling appendage also releases its grasp. Being alien, the mue-lok cannot distinguish between unconsciousness and death in its opponent and drops him as soon as he falls unconscious.

Profile

The mue-lok is an intelligent, space-faring creature. It walks on three insect-like legs and stands more than a meter in height. The extraterrestrial has no neck, nor anything that would pass for a face. Grey ovals in a band around its torso serve as eyes, ears, and telepathic organs. Its mouth is hidden from view directly below its torso. The alien's three arms protrude equidistantly from the top of its trunk, each one a rope-like appendage ending in a wiggling mass of wormlike digits.

The Mue-lok are a race that was ancient when our sun was born. While their numbers are few and their race is in decline, they wield more power than most humans can comprehend. The mue-lok have long been able to undertake transportation through both space and time, extending their powerful reach toward both ends of eternity. The aliens are at their most powerful when they can manipulate events from a distance and conversely are most vulnerable when forced to act directly. Conquest is their only driving purpose for existence, and humanity represents nothing but a single, near-insignificant world among thousands.

Universal Dominator

The universal dominator is an alien device employed by the mue-lok to subjugate other life forms through mental control. The device also allows the mue-lok to communicate its will to subject life forms.

Being “attacked” with this device requires a Will save (DC 14). Those who fail become mesmerized. The device’s precise effects range from feelings of love and protectiveness to total subjugation of free will, depending on the mue-lok’s need. While the range of this device is only a 45-foot radius, those who have fallen under its influence follow implanted suggestions or commands for up to 24 hours, even outside its effective range.

In humans, the universal dominator excites the pleasure center of the brain, lending an addictive quality to its influence. This insures that those who fall under its control, but leave its immediate area of influence, feel compelled to return.

Humans may recover from the universal dominator’s mesmerizing effects by staying outside its area of effect for 24 hours. Dominated victims who leave and re-enter its field within the 24 hour window do not get a new Will save. Destroying the device (hardness 5, hit points 15, break DC 20) releases all who have fallen under its influence. Those who fall under its effects and later recover experience withdrawal symptoms similar to the cravings of a heroin addict.

Appendix 3: Experience and Mechanics

How to Scale the Adventure

As was stated at the beginning of this adventure, *Brainwashed* was written for a group of four 4th-level heroes. If you plan on running this adventure with fewer or more characters, or characters of a different level, here are some tips for making the adventure easier or more difficult.

Use the Module Modifier (MM) system as follows.

1. Determine the average party level for the adventure. In this case, *Brainwashed* is written for 4 fourth level characters.
2. Find the average party level of the group playing the module by adding all the character levels together and dividing by the number of heroes. If the party has four characters then you have the average. For groups of only two or three characters, reduce the average level by one. For a lone adventurer, subtract two from her level. For each character above four, add one to the average party level.
3. If the average party level is the same as the adventure's, then you have no scaling to do.
4. If the average party level is less than what the adventure is written for, then you need to scale down.
5. If the average party level is higher than what the adventure is written for, then you need to scale up.

Scaling Down: The Basics

Before scaling down, consider adding the GM characters Alex Briggs and his friends to raise the average party level to four. Otherwise, proceed.

First, subtract 2 from the player's average party level to calculate the Module Modifier (MM) and do the following:

1. Decrease all DCs $-2 \times \text{MM}$
2. Decrease damage rolls by $1 \times \text{MM}$ per hit.
3. Decrease hit points of villains and creatures by 5 hp per MM.
4. Use logic to decrease the danger of certain encounters. Example: Use fewer special attacks, or make attacks less strategic.

Scaling Up: The Basics

First subtract 2 from the players' average party level to calculate the Module Modifier (MM) and do the following:

1. Increase all DCs $+2 \times \text{MM}$
2. Increase damage rolls by $1 \times \text{MM}$ per hit.
3. Increase hit points of villains and creatures by 5 hp per MM.
4. Use logic to increase the danger of certain encounters. Example: Use special attacks more frequently or use strategic tactics.
5. Add a new spell or ability every increase of two MM (ELs).

Experience

This section offers *suggested* experience points (XP). As always, use your own judgement in awarding experience. Do not forget to reward players for research (as in Section 1), roleplaying and cleverness—things that can not easily be accounted for in a generic XP table.

The XP listed below is for the adventure's four 4th-level heroes. For awarding XP in scaled-up or scaled-down versions (above), refer to *Table 7-8: Experience Point Awards* in *Chapter 7: Gamemastering* of the *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*. In such instances, the modified EL of the encounter is the Module Modifier (MM). Example: An EL 4 normally gives 1200 XP in your adventure. The average party level was three and the MM was 1. The new EL is 1 and is worth 450 XP.

Table A3-1: *Brainwashed* XP

Encounter	Encounter Level (EL)	Experience (XP)
1.3: Roommate	1/2	200
2.1: The Gate	1/2	200
2.2b: Flesh Harvester	4	1,200
2.4a: Cocoons*	1/2	200
3.2c: Flesh-Engine Membrane	2	600
3.3a: Mue-Lok	7	3,400

*If this encounter involves combat with Flesh Harvesters, refer to XP for 2.2b.

Additionally, consider awarding experience for every well-roleplayed *Fear Effect* as follows: Minor Spook, 50 XP; Medium Shock, 75 XP; Great Fright, 150 XP; Horrific Terror, 350 XP.

3 1/2" Post Oak Tree
Marked with Triple X

4,152.69 feet - S 88° 15' 28" E

1,932.53 feet - N 0° 05' 01" E

877.85 feet - N 1° 00' 30" W

Concrete Mound

Point-of-Beginning

2,013.08 feet - East

COUNTY ROAD

292.66 feet - S 48° 15' 48" W

Private Driveway (Gravel)

Iron Rod

FRAME HOUSE

BARN

Wooden Corral (poor condition)

POND

Alc Rod

1,059.98 feet - S 3° 13' 39" W

1,872.41 feet - S 89° 59' 55" W

COUNTY ROAD

STOCK POND

1,430.76 feet - S 1° 00' 45" E

Iron Rod

Iron Rod

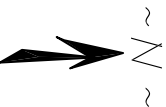
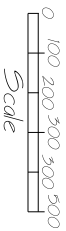
Site Name: HARMONY FARM (as of April 14, 1969)

Approximately 2.07 - 2.2 Acres. Located in Galien County, Texas.

Structures: (A) One (1) Frame house; two story; Avg. cond'n. electricity with indoor plumbing (septic tank); grease trap.

(B) One (1) BARN; fair condition. with wooden corral (poor cond'n).

Description: Majority of the site currently utilized as pasture for dairy cattle production. Classified "AGRICULTURAL".




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Map Scale: As Indicated

HANDOUT 1: HARMONY FARM SURVEY



of them can explain how it ended up in our field. It must have something to do with the earthquake we all felt last night.

I heard the Vatican had their own earthquake weapon, but I would have thought that they would test it somewhere more remote. Then again, this is east Texas. At any rate, Alice and John are still out there. They've been trying to dig it up all day, but they say it's bigger than it looks. They came back at sunset, just long enough to eat. Now they are back out there with flashlights. And people thought I was crazy.

Almost everyone has caught the digging fever—Ed, Sandra, Eliot, Ken, Suzie, Tamara, the Smiths. They are all obsessed with digging it up. What we saw that first day was the tip of the iceberg. The more they dig, the more excited they get. But it's more than that. They get excited and nervous and—I can't know. Something is happening in their minds. It's like they're addicted. They don't get any sleep and they don't stop to rest any more. The more they uncover, the more they seem to lose themselves.

Why am I not affected? The brain shield. People laughed. I knew they laughed. But if it wasn't for the brain shield, I'd be just like them. I don't know. It's just a matter of time before Tom and Alex will become hypnotised too. Who is behind it? I can't tell—there's no markings to indicate KGB, CIA, Vatican or any of the others. Why would they need something like this? They can project their mind control beams from their moon base.

Alex is dead!!! I can't believe they killed him. He threatened to go public with what they found. Tom is going for help. Only Nick and I are left. How long can we hide? There's something here

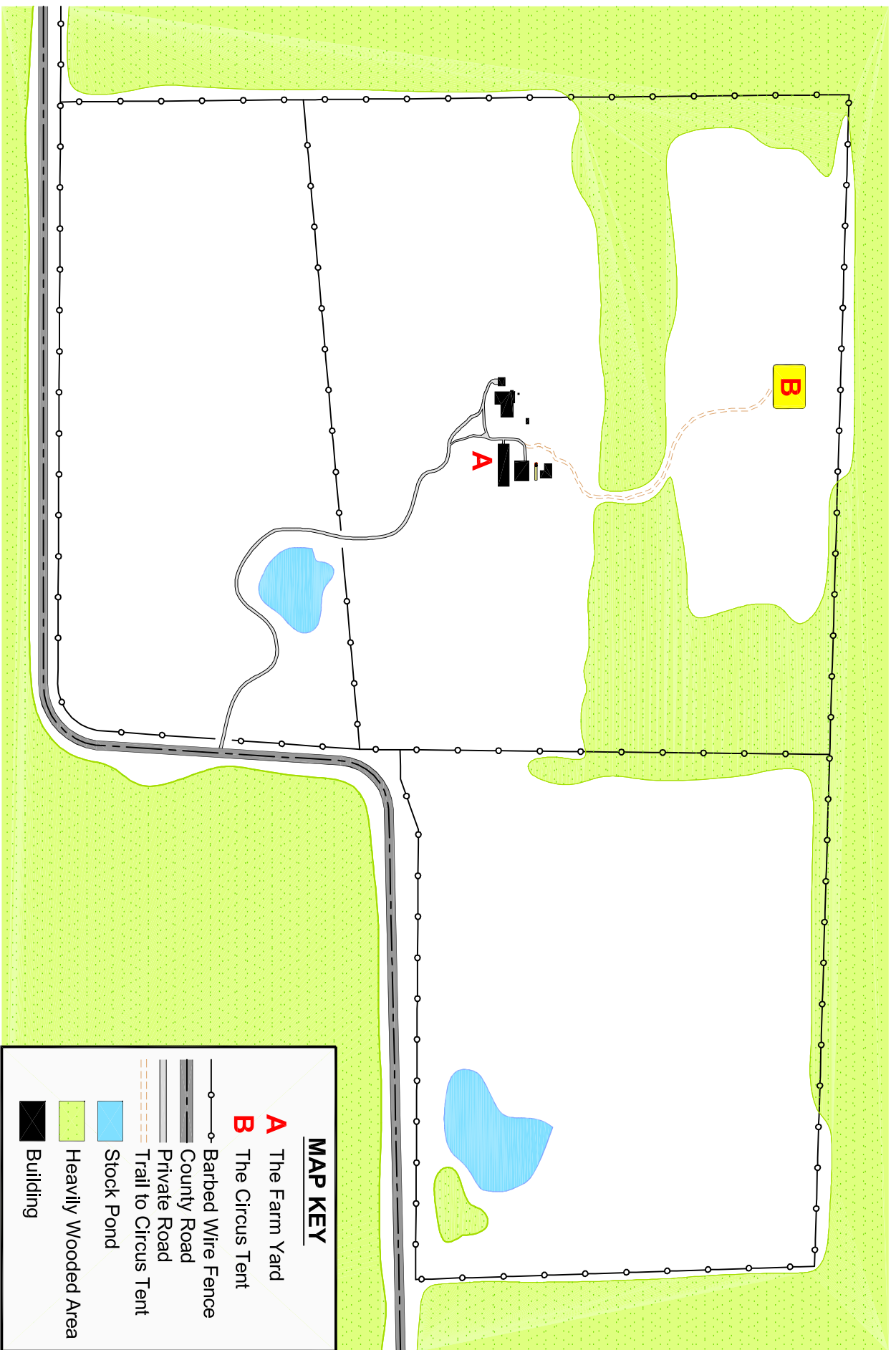


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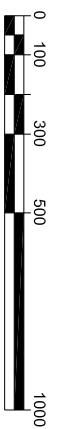
Map Scale: As Indicated

GM MAP 1: HARMONY FARM



MAP KEY

- A** The Farm Yard
- B** The Circus Tent
- Barbed Wire Fence
- County Road
- Private Road
- Trail to Circus Tent
- Stock Pond
- Heavily Wooded Area
- Building



SCALE IN FEET



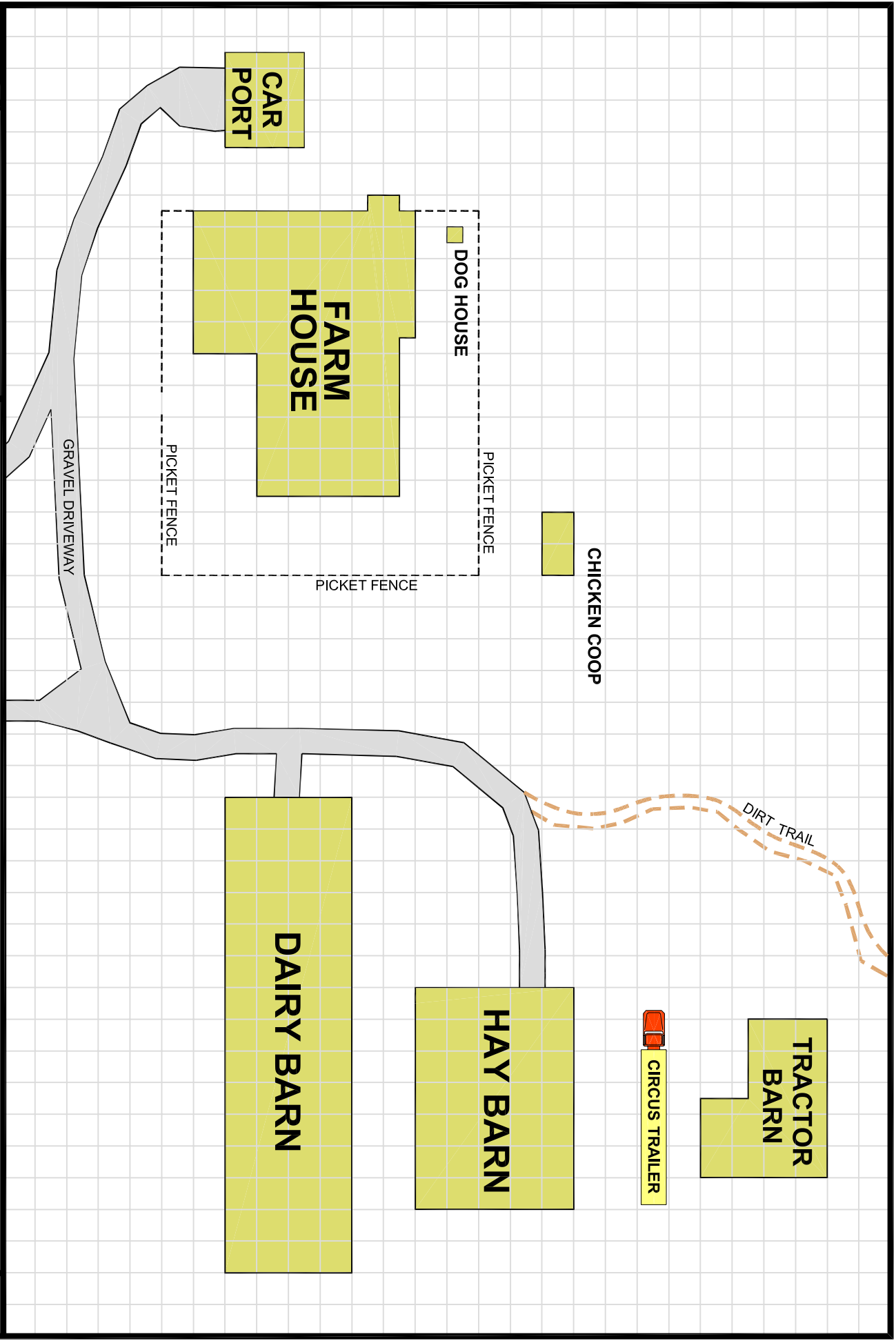


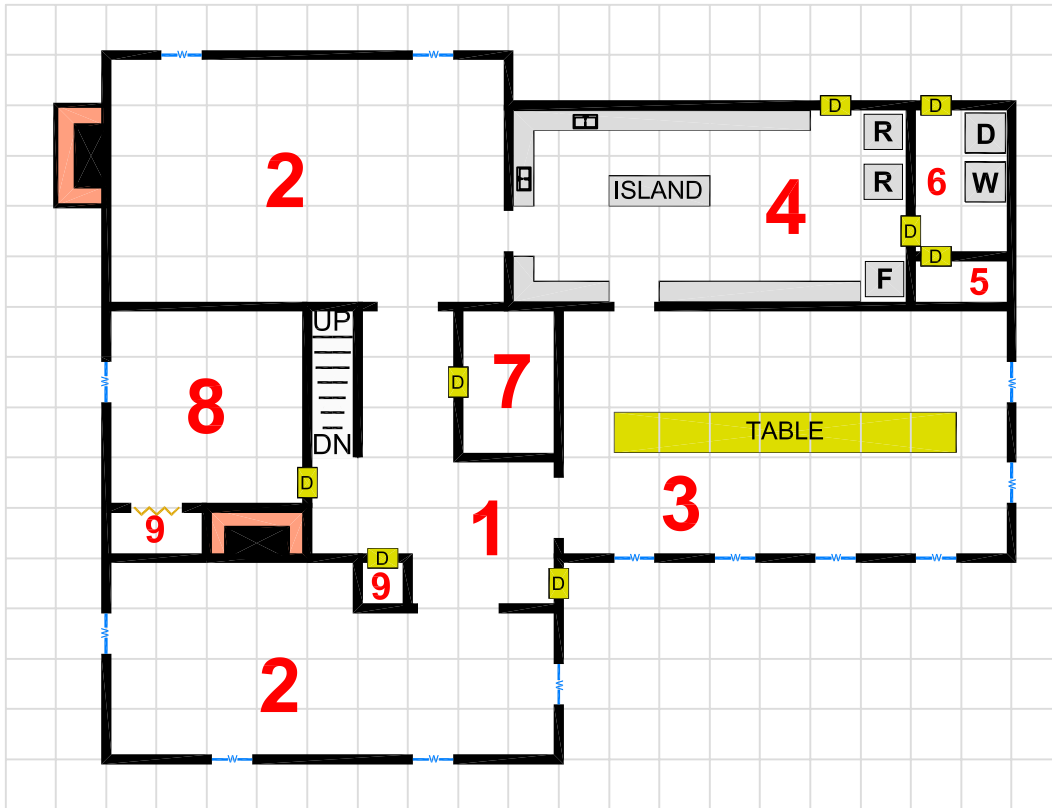
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Map Scale: 1 square = 10 feet

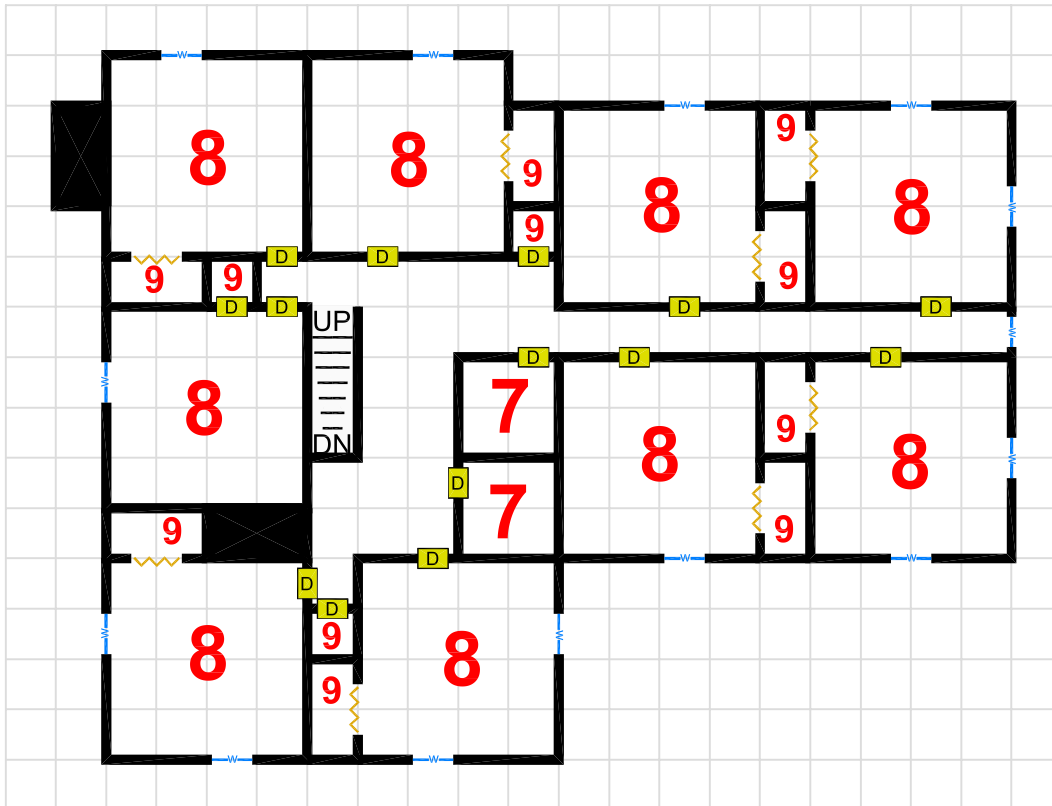
GM MAP 2: THE FARMYARD





GM MAP 3: FARM HOUSE 1st FLOOR

ROOM KEY	
1	= Entry Way
2	= Common Room
3	= Dining Room
4	= Kitchen
5	= Pantry
6	= Laundry Room
7	= Bathroom
8	= Bed Room
9	= Closet



GM MAP 4: FARM HOUSE 2nd FLOOR

MAP KEY	
R	Refridgator
F	Freezer
W	Washer
D	Dryer
D	Door
—	Window
~	Sliding Door
■	Fireplace



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 Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

**GM MAP 3 AND 4:
 THE FARM HOUSE**







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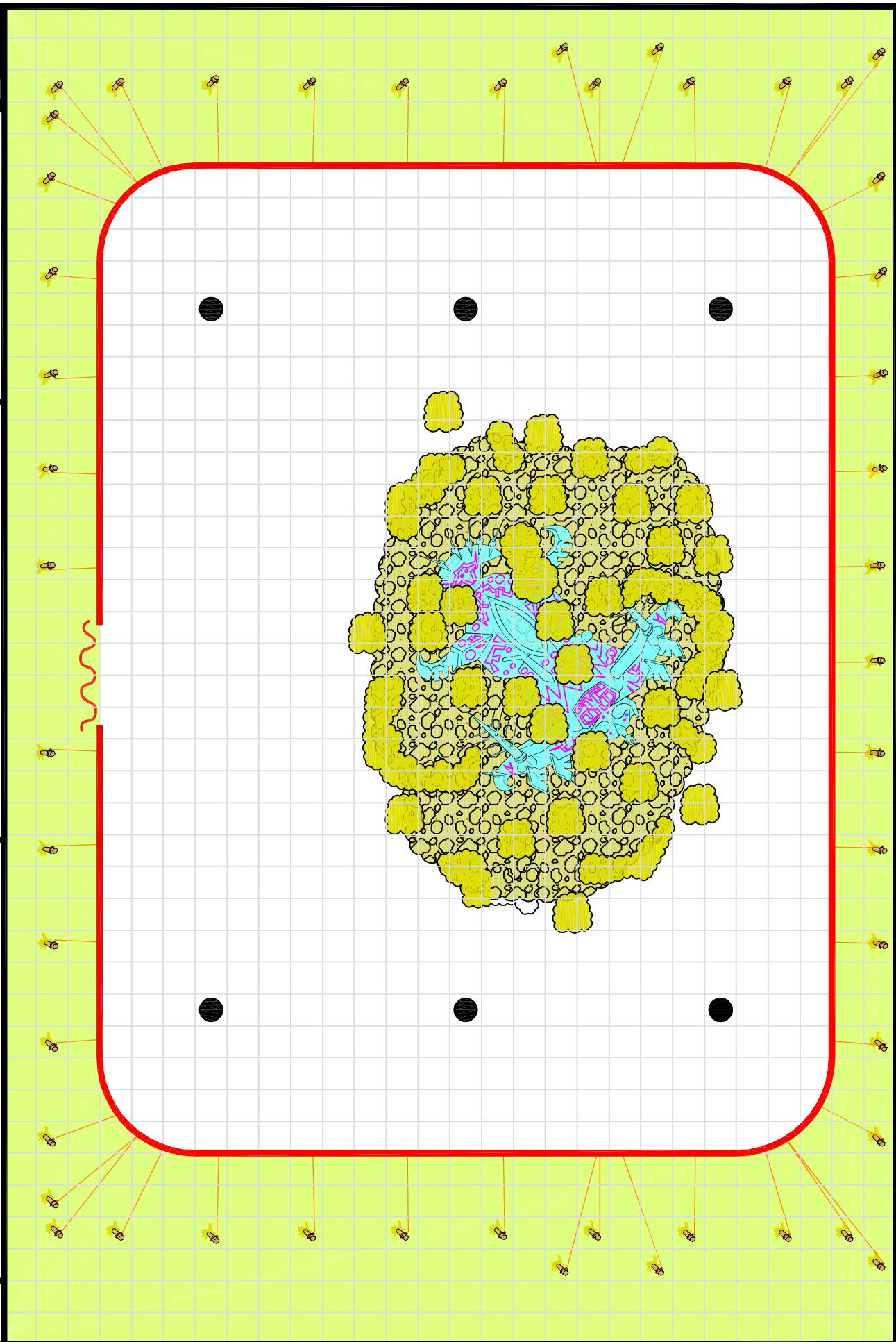
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Map Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

GM MAP 5: CIRCUS TENT

● TENT POST
 — TENT "WALLS"

MAP KEY
 TENT STAKE AND ROPE
 TENT ENTRANCE FLAP



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