

Future/Perfect, Part 2

A Scenario for *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game*

Written by Dennis Detwiller

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The Home of the Mounds

Chester is a sleepy little town in Meigs County, Ohio. The county seat is in the even smaller town of Pomeroy, on the Ohio River just over 10 km to the southwest; county deputies keep the peace in Chester. The West Virginia state line is on another bend of the Ohio River, just under 10 km to the east.

Chester is home to the Parsons Plastics factory, the major employer, and several smaller manufacturing plants. The economic dips that have come and gone since the Great Depression have somehow passed Chester by, and people like it that way.

The 2,000 people who call Chester home love it; its small-town flavor has not been marred by the bustle of city life. Life goes on there much in the same way as it has for the last eight decades.

It's also home to the Chester Mounds. Ohio has long been known for the Great Serpent Mound, an earthwork thought to have been created almost 3,000 years

ago. It is the largest earthwork in the world. Chester has mounds of its own.

The Chester Mounds draw tourists and add a lot to local flavor. They are a series of interlocked earthworks totaling nearly 200 m in length, supposedly built by the Adena culture. From the air, they are clearly visible as three snakes pointing inward, tongue-to-tongue, undulating out in a bizarre triskelion. That symbol is everywhere in Chester, from the town seal to the local baseball team, the Chester Serpents.

The people love their mounds.

But that's not all Chester can claim. Over the decades, it has produced some exceptional people in the shadow of that mound. Its most famous son, Arthur Hunt, the town drunk turned eccentric genius, forged an empire on consumer electronics. A statue dedicated to him sits in the middle of town. A four-meter image of Hunt cast in bronze beckons to the west, his hand outstretched. With an uncharacteristic smile on his face, Hunt's eyes point towards the mound.

In recent years, several odd crimes marred the town's beloved mounds. Douglas Yale—the deceased Ohio River Killer, who murdered and ate his victims—was connected to vandalism that cut into the priceless construction. And a local coven of nuts, the New Star Crusade, are often busted for trespassing at odd hours.

The mounds seem to draw people in.



Briefing

Future/Perfect Part 2 assumes the Agents have already investigated *Future/Perfect* Part 1. Agents with a taste for adventure will not be hard-pressed to begin looking into the past of Arthur Hunt, particularly if they uncovered his “oddities” in Part 1. Chester is a natural place to start pulling apart the secrets that cover Hunt’s life like a shroud.

If the Agents failed to gain the testimony of Monty Greene in Part 1, Delta Green can provide it in audio files from some follow-up investigation. The Agents’ case officer can make noises about locating and removing any further threats that have to do with Hunt’s past. It’s well known that such “infestations” can corrupt entire towns.

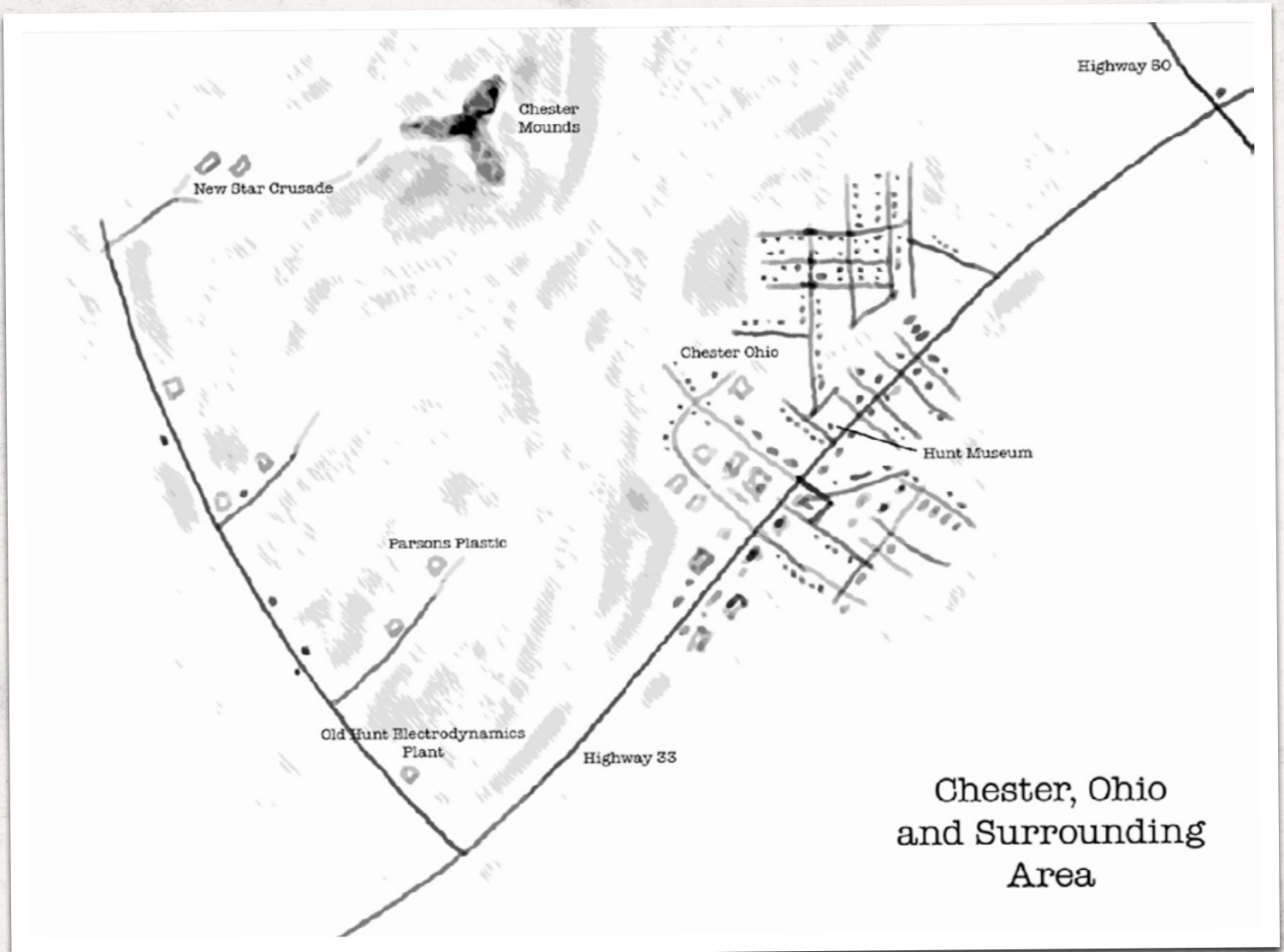
Delta Green’s leaders have not forgotten the horrors of Innsmouth, an entire town devoted to the worship of the Great Old Ones. Could such a horrific and dangerous threat go overlooked for decades in the center of the

country? To Delta Green, the only thing worse than another Innsmouth is an Innsmouth that goes undiscovered until it is too late.

Future/Perfect Part 2 is ostensibly set in 2018. If your campaign is set in a different year, adjust the dates accordingly.

Starting with Part 2

If your Agents are entering *Future/Perfect* through Part 2, the investigation should focus on the New Star Crusade and its connection to the Ohio River Killer (see page 5). Perhaps an agent from Cincinnati—see **THE CINCINNATI CELL** on page 3—never managed to shake a suspicion that something strange was behind the Ohio River Killer and has convinced the Program to send help. The players can be drawn into the mystery of Arthur Hunt, and from there to Hellbend (*Future/Perfect* Part 1) and Duxbury (*Future Perfect* Part 3).



Delta Green in Chester

Delta Green prefers to insert Agents into FBI investigations, but that's not an option here. Whether the Agents are following clues about Arthur Hunt from Hellbend or are following old leads about the New Star Crusade, there is no active case for them to officially investigate. The Ohio River Killer case was resolved with the death of its suspect, years ago, and authorities have not connected it with missing-person cases since then.

The Program could arrange a highly restricted "training exercise," without telling the local authorities or FBI office about it. Otherwise, the Agents must go to Chester off the clock, taking vacation time or sick leave, and telling their families whatever excuses they can manage. The impact this has on each Agent's Bonds and career is up to the Handler.

Whatever brings them to Chester, the Agents must establish a base of operations. At your discretion, their case officer could give them access to useful assets in Cincinnati: a pair agents who have worked in the region before, and a Green Box that has been untouched for years.

Room and Board

Chester, Ohio is located 130 km from the Cincinnati airport, and is dotted with several small, out-of-the-way hotels, motels, and rental cabins. The Agents' best bet lies with the anonymous motels that dot Highway 50, northeast of town. They are technically out of the jurisdiction of Chester, Ohio, and are home only to traveling businessmen and tourists. In other words, people who mind their own business.

Staying at the Regency Motel or a bed-and-breakfast in Chester proper is higher profile and therefore more dangerous. In such a town, there is little else to do except talk about strangers. If the Agents stay in town and are implicated in some type of crime, numerous witnesses will step forward reporting their schedule in detail to the Meigs County Sheriff's Office, making it much more likely that such charges will stick. If the Agents are public about their investigation, this draws even more scrutiny. Staying in town also makes it far more likely that a deputy takes an interest, especially if some sort of crime seems to have been committed.

The Cincinnati Cell

A Delta Green team operating out of Cincinnati was devastated recently by an operation gone wrong. Six months ago, an occult-connected man named Zacharias Wilkes killed two of the team's four agents.

The two remaining agents (a local police officer and a DEA agent) are very paranoid about their involvement in the operation and in Program in general. They have made it a policy to meet only when vitally necessary. DEA Special Agent Rigoberto R. Young and Cincinnati Police Sergeant Stephen Moreno are not exactly knocking down doors to get back into the action. For the last half-year, they have looked into their case officer's requests independent of one another, hoping to prevent any outside investigation from linking them together.

If instructed to meet with the players' Agents, they choose an out-of-the-way spot: an isolated highway overpass, an abandoned railyard, or a dilapidated farm; perfect ambush territory. They assist in whatever way the Agents need, though they seem reticent and evasive.

Sergeant Moreno, particularly, is on edge. He appears well adjusted and normal, though cautious, but he has been wracked with severe nightmares since the shootout that ended the lives of his teammates.

Special Agent Young is made of somewhat sterner stuff. Though he does not wish to be involved, he does his duty to the best of his ability. However, Young requires alcohol. Without it, he becomes unfocused, jumpy, and prone to mistakes.

This is not to say that these agents are useless. Special Agent Young has access to federal information on the New Star Crusade and Danen Ignis (see **THE NEW STAR CRUSADE** on page 15), as well as information on Douglas Yale. Sergeant Moreno can access the state police database, and look up nearly any major crime in Meigs County in the last 40 years.

The Cincinnati team investigated the oddities of the Yale case briefly in 2015, but nothing came of it. By then, the Ohio River Killer had been identified as Douglas Yale and had been found dead in the woods.

The Green Box

Green Box #419 is located three km outside Cincinnati, in a facility called Park-N-Store-It. It's a corrugated steel box, six meters square (20 feet by 20 feet), with a steel rolling-top door. The door is padlocked with a rusted Yale lock.

Moreno and Young do not even know it exists.

Park-N-Store-It is surrounded by a four-meter (12-foot) fence topped with razor wire. It is accessible only during business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The key to the unit is hidden on top of the lip of the door, amidst moss, rotting leaves, and water. It is obvious it has not been used in years.

Inside, the unit is packed with what seems to be the remnants of an estate: old tables, chairs, and a disassembled bed, all wrapped in plastic and covered in dust. Two paintings, each bound carefully in yellowed muslin bound with wire, are stowed in the corner. They are propped up on milk crates to keep them away from potential flooding. Many of the items are marked in fading pen with the following inscription: "Pickman-Wright Estate 01/12/69."

Those opening either of the two paintings are in for an upsetting turn of events.

Painting 1: The Tower

This painting of an ancient stone tower with staggered windows is haunting in its simplicity. The painting is signed "R.U.P."



Anyone staring at it finds themselves drawn to the crows circling the tower. Those failing a **Sanity** roll find they can hear the birds as they wheel in the sky, and continue to stare until pulled away. After ten minutes, the viewer sees the birds move (costing 1 SAN).

Those unfortunate enough to come upon the painting alone and are trapped, staring, and who fail a second **Sanity** roll, are not seen again. They will be observed going into the unit by the manager, and the painting will be found unwrapped and pointed at a set of footprints in the dust.

This painting has a side effect, one that the Program would be most interested in. Items smaller than a person left facing the uncovered painting for more than 10 minutes vanish, never to be seen again. The Agents might discover this by accident if they leave the painting uncovered with a chair or footstool in view. This method can permanently remove nearly any piece of evidence to a place where it is quite literally, beyond human reach.

Painting 2: The Bride

This unfinished painting of a pale woman clad in crimson seems to catch the light in amazing ways, making it difficult not to observe at length. A viewer must make a **WP**×5 roll or stare at it closely, becoming drawn to the woman's lips, which are painted black. The viewer must make a **Sanity** roll or see the lips move and hear the whisper of the word "Kadath." This costs 1 SAN. The painting does nothing else. The painting is not signed.



Chester History

Lying on the Shade River, Chester was a rural community from the earliest days of Ohio. It was the original county seat of Meigs County from about 1821 until the county seat moved to Pomeroy in 1841. Author Ambrose Bierce was born nearby in 1842.

In 1923, an incredible transformation took place. A local drunk, Arthur Hunt, suddenly became the town's resident genius. Drawing reporters from all over the state, Hunt went on to form Hunt Electrodynamics in Chester. He patented 60 significant electronic inventions and then left town, all in a matter of four years. Hunt left a large Hunt Electrodynamics plant behind, which rapidly supplanted the waning Crescent Machine Company as the number-one employer in town.

By 1943, a new company arrived through the workings of Hunt Electrodynamics: Parsons Bakelite Company, a plastics manufacturer for the war effort. This small business exploded over the next two years.

The Hunt plant closed in 1953 during the restructuring of Hunt Electrodynamics after the death of Arthur Hunt. Parsons Bakelite Company, renamed Parsons Plastics, has remained the top employer in Chester for the past 60 years, producing light sockets, plastic tubing, and cheap plastic screws.

Chester Township Facts

- » **AREA:** 118 square km (45.5 square miles)
- » **POPULATION:** 1,284 (1950 Census); 2,496 (2010 Census)
- » **FOUNDED:** 1821
- » **INDUSTRY:** Plastics, Tourism
- » **TEMPERATURE:** High 40 C (104 F); Low -78 C (-109 F)

The Ohio River Killer

The most cursory Internet search for strange events in Meigs County turns up the story of Douglas Yale, the Ohio River Killer.

In 2010, Douglas Yale joined the New Star Crusade. At first, there was little special about Yale. He was a quiet man with a long history of psychological problems, but

he faded into the group, sticking close to Danen Ignis and doing whatever was asked of him. But soon, Yale began causing trouble in town, something the group tried to avoid. Yale was arrested twice for drunk and disorderly conduct and once for assault. When Ignis confined him to the farm, he turned his problems on the Crusade.

In 2011, after an armed confrontation, Yale was ejected from the New Star Crusade. For six months, he vanished, only seen from time to time in town. Rumors persisted that he was living in the forest in an old tent. He was known to frequent the mounds at night. On October 21, 2012, a county deputy discovered him defacing the mounds.

Yale flew into a rage and seriously injured the deputy, who only survived by shooting Yale five times with his sidearm. Still, Yale escaped. One of the largest manhunts in Ohio history followed.

For the next seven months, through one of the worst winters in Ohio history, Yale eluded capture. In that time, three people disappeared: nurse Maureen Poch, age 30; farmer Ignatius Gerhard, age 88; and Sabrina Callard, age 6. When their remains were found, Yale became the sole suspect. In each case, bones, teeth, and hair ground up into a disgusting pile, all the meat dissolved away. The state crime lab could not identify the dissolving agent. It said the remains had been exposed to the elements too long. (An Agent with **Medicine** 50% or higher or who succeeds at a **Medicine** roll finds that explanation dubious. If asked, a medical examiner at the crime lab says it's the best explanation they could find for a strange situation. But the examiner could tell dozens of stories just as weird.)

In 2013, Yale was captured at the Chester Mounds on the summer solstice. Local authorities keeping an eye on rites performed by the New Star Crusade saw him at the edge of the forest. Despite a hail of bullets, Yale survived to be captured. He was catatonic and unresponsive, and was thrown in the Meigs County lockup.

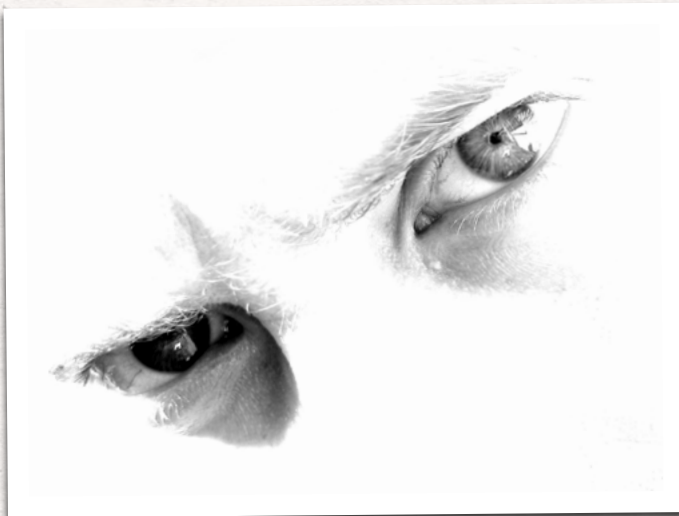
After a day and a half in custody, Yale vanished from his cell on the night of June 23, 2013, along with Deputy Arthur Falstaf. Falstaf had a distinguished career, but he left his post without warning the night that Yale vanished. It was strongly suspected that somehow, for unknown reasons, Falstaf helped the killer. The deputy has not been seen since. The New Star Crusade was placed under tight

surveillance for weeks, and hunkered down at the Ignis farm, but was quickly eliminated as a suspect.

Over the next month an a half, four more people disappeared, their distinctive remains found by hunters, hikers and travelers in the back woods of the county. The bones and hair had been ground up into compressed piles, picked clean of meat. In this time, Yale became nationally famous as the Ohio River Killer. Reports compared him to the likes of Ted Bundy and the Son of Sam. Dozens of reporters descended on Chester to cover the story. Numerous television shows would be made about the murders, due mostly to their brutality and cannibalistic nature.

In October 2014, the case took an even stranger turn. Bones found by hikers near the Chester Mounds were identified as those of Douglas Yale. There was no mistake; the man thought to be responsible for seven confirmed and one suspected death was dead. Yale's bones were picked clean and had been scattered. Police and the press observed the poetic justice that he had apparently been killed and eaten by animals much as he had done to his victims.

In death, Douglas Yale remained as much of a mystery as in life. Despite numerous sensational books on the subject, few solid facts on Douglas Yale exist. Yale's childhood—what of it is known—is the standard tale of an absent father, a drunken mother, and deep poverty. Yale experienced various brushes with the law throughout his life.



Yale's nightly walks at the mounds had affected him badly, and he degenerated slowly into madness. He was ejected from the New Star Crusade when Danen Ignis realized his charge had lost his mind.

Even after Yale's bones were discovered in October 2014, murders and disappearances in the area continued. But no one in law enforcement connected them to the dead Ohio River Killer.

To residents, the Douglas Yale case is old news. It is something akin to the story of Jeffery Dahmer or Richard Speck, yet another lost person looking to matter in the world. Few give a second thought to the strange fact that Yale survived a huge shootout unscathed, or that he escaped from a secure jail and abducted an armed deputy. It's just another strange part of a strange story.

A Haunted Place

The truth is, nothing much is wrong with the town itself. There are unnatural anomalies (such as the mounds, the Ohio River Killer, and Arthur Hunt himself) but Chester is surprisingly normal. Its obsession with its mounds and the triskelion snake image is just a natural bit of town pride. Chester has no supernatural significance. But the players don't need to know this. As far as they are concerned, the town can seem sinister and just "a little *too nice*." In fact, playing up this apparent veneer of good will can be a great way to enhance the paranoia. And paranoia is what *Delta Green* is all about.

The Mound Builders

Archeologists believe the Chester Mounds were built by the Adena culture, which rose and fell long before the first Europeans arrived in North America. The Adena left behind a legacy of earthworks and ancient mound structures from as far east as West Virginia all the way to the edge of Oklahoma. They are thought to be responsible for the construction of the Great Serpent Mound and Chester's more modest triskelion of serpents.

Little is known of these people, and it remains a matter of archeological debate whether a single culture was responsible for the various earthwork structures found across the eastern U.S. or a mixture of tribes with similar rites and rituals.

Archeologists agree that the earthworks they constructed date from between 2000 and 100 BCE. These earthworks are some of the largest in the world, and some (such as the Chester Mounds and the Great Serpent Mound) are intricate and detailed.

The Adena are thought to be the predecessors to the modern Indian tribes that populated the area when Europeans began populating the continent. Many Indian tribes claim to be unbroken descendants of the Adena, but no one has definitive proof.

For more information about the Chester Mounds, see page 19.

The Last Age of the Serpents

The truth of the early Adena culture has long been lost to humanity. It was in fact a series of human “fiefdoms” ruled by singularly powerful serpent folk nearly 3,000 years ago. These few serpent folk, numbering fewer than six, awakened from a three-million-year slumber to find their old kingdom wiped from the surface of the Earth.

The first of the serpent folk to awaken resurrected a handful of its powerful cousins, and an army of more degenerate ophidians, who had survived the downfall of their culture 750,000 years before. They hoped to forge a new serpent-folk culture in the wilds of the mam-mal-overrun world.

Unfortunately, the serpent folk are secretive and reclusive. Each created a small kingdom, using their magics to enslave the primitive human cultures. Disputes erupted in a pointless war between them. This war lasted nearly a thousand years. The conflict ended with the human cultures discovering the serpent folk’s weakness. There was a reason the serpent folk were strict vegetarians: their bloodlust was so great that once tempted by blood, they would feed until glutted and then enter a torpor in which they were eminently vulnerable.

This quickly led to the death of most of the serpent folk, bringing their reign to an end. However, one of them, Xichlasa, reentered his long slumber. His twenty-five most valued guards were buried with him. The rest of his army of degenerate serpent folk guarded his tomb. Xichlasa would later become Arthur Hunt.

These degenerate serpent folk remained in the area until the Shawnee appeared nearly 2,500 years later. By that time, the serpent folk could not offer significant resistance. The Shawnee killed and drove off the creatures.

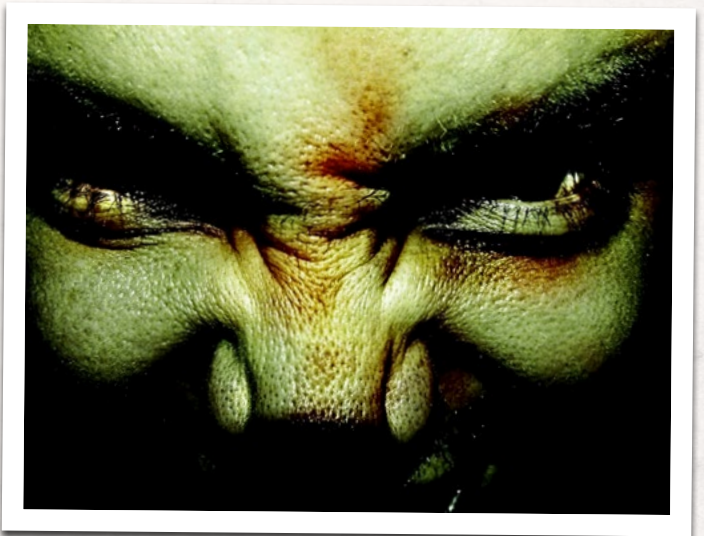
Sensing the evil of the Chester Mounds, the Shawnee placed them in a kind of quarantine. Those who were drawn to their power were slain. Shawnee warriors patrolled to watch for signs of the return of the “strange, white-faced people,” as the degenerate serpent folk came to be remembered. Meanwhile, embedded in the mounds, Xichlasa slept, waiting for a time more suited for his kind.

He slept for nearly 3,000 years, until Arthur Hunt drunkenly dug him up in 1923. The serpent consumed Hunt, took his form, and was let loose on the modern world.

The Hunter

Douglas Yale never committed a single murder—but a doppelganger of him did, eight times before his capture, and eight times after the confirmation of Yale’s death. Yale had come under the psychic sway of a monster called Xa, one of the serpent-folk.

The Chester Mounds are home to the sleeping bodies of 25 more of its kind, “degenerate” serpent-folk who long ago served the ophidian that would take the form of Arthur Hunt. Xichlasa chose to leave them in their slumber until such a time as they would be useful to his cause. They are crude, violent creatures, capable of only physical labor and a blunt, hypnotic mind-control. In the past,



they were his loyal guards and laborers, but in the modern era they were of little use. In fact, in a world overrun by mammals, their presence would pose a huge threat to Hunt's plans.

When their master was roused, the lifting of the wards woke one of the lesser creatures as well. This creature, named Xa, was still trapped within the mound and could only reach out with its primitive mental abilities to those nearby. This power affected the mentally ill more profoundly than others, though nearly anyone who went near the mounds could "feel" something. Slowly, as this creature drew power from those it had "affected," it began to exert more influence and control.

First, Xa drew in local man Chip Brown and then his son Michael Brown, who would become Danen Ignis of the New Star Crusade. But it lacked the power to force their hand to release it from its tomb. The dreams it sent to Michael Brown shaped his mental illness into the New Star Crusade cult, which in turn drew followers that fueled the creature further. Xa was building a charge like a battery: power it would use to affect its escape.

Douglas Yale was the key. By the time he appeared, Xa had grown bloated on the power of the New Star Crusade worshippers, and it began to reshape the already damaged mind of Yale. This turned Yale against the Crusade and the townsfolk, and almost derailed the creature's plans.

Finally, after Yale's ejection from the cult, Xa exerted enough influence over him to dig it free of the mound. It consumed Yale and sorcerously became him. Weakened, but finally free, it confronted by Deputy Jason Kisent, who believed he had discovered the deranged Yale defacing the mound. Kisent was lucky to survive the encounter.

The creature lived in the woods of Meigs country, feeding from time to time on people who had misfortune to cross its path. It would secretly return to the mounds on the summer solstice to psychically draw strength from New Star Crusade cultists, replenishing its reservoir of "power" with which it could manipulate minds.

For the most part, the subtleties of human culture were lost on Xa. It cared little for the developments of the world since its entombment, thirty centuries before. Masterless, it had no motivation save survival and satiation.

When Xa, disguised as Yale, was discovered near the mounds on the night of the summer solstice June 21, 2013, it was nearly drained of all its power protecting itself from a devastating hail of gunfire from more than a dozen officers. The hunt lasted more than two hours, and ended with the creature, still in the guise of Douglas Yale, in the Meigs County jail.

The creature soon worked its powers on Deputy Arthur Falstaf, controlling, consuming, and then becoming him. It escaped and slowly but surely continued its killings, in the hinterlands of the county, in the guise of Falstaf and others. Xa has both grown hungrier and more fastidious in its hunting, burying the remains of its feasts with great care.

The conventional case against Yale died with him in October 2014. Xa still wanders the back woods of Meigs County, utilizing its human disguises as a natural camouflage to lure unsuspecting travelers to their deaths.

Timeline

Adjust the last few years to suit your campaign.

1906: Arthur Hunt born in Chester.

1922: Arthur Hunt arrested for drunkenly defacing the Chester Mounds.

1923: Arthur Hunt frees the ophidian Xichlasa, who devours and replaces him. To Chester, Hunt suddenly becomes an unexpected genius.

1930: Arthur Hunt patents the Hunt Mark I Resistor and launches Hunt Electroynamics.

1940: Arthur Hunt moves to Hellbend, California, the site of a second Hunt Electroynamics plant.

1943: Parsons Bakelite establishes a plant in Chester.

1952: Arthur Hunt dies in Hellbend, California. The Hunt Museum opens in Chester.

1953: The Hunt Electroynamics plant shuts down.

1954: Parsons Bakelite becomes Parsons Plastics.

1992: Teenager Scott S. Cogan convicted of beating another boy to death during a party at the Chester Mounds.

1998: Michael Brown leaves Ohio University and returns home to Chester.

2000: Michael Brown's father Chip dies. Michael Brown forms the New Star Crusade and changes his name to Danen Ignis.

2003: Chester Township launches the first of three costly attempts to interfere with the New Star Crusade. All fail.

2010: Douglas Yale joins the New Star Crusade.

2011: Douglas Yale is ejected from the New Star Crusade.

2012: Douglas Yale frees Xa, a "degenerate" serpent-man that once served Xichlasa, from the Chester Mounds. It devours and replaces him. Deputy Jason Kisent catches Yale defacing the mounds. Yale injures the deputy and flees. Over the next two years he is linked to three murders in the area.

2013: Douglas Yale is captured at the Chester Mounds. He soon escapes from the county jail, apparently with the aid of Deputy Arthur Falstaf. Falstaf is never seen again.

2014: Hikers find bones, identified as Douglas Yale's, in the woods a few km from Chester.

2015: Delta Green's Cincinnati cell looks into the Ohio River Killer case but finds nothing.

2017: The Cincinnati cell loses two of its four members.

2018: The Agents are sent to Chester.

The Hunt Museum

Following his sudden and cryptic death in 1952, the town of Chester constructed a museum to celebrate Arthur Hunt, its most famous and prodigal son. The Hunt Museum is a sleepy, rarely visited piece of Chester history. It sits in the center of town, a two-story stone structure with nine rooms. It is fronted by a small park with a statue of Hunt in its center, beckoning to the west. People often come to the park (its official name is "Malcolm Chester Park," but is most often called "Hunt Park") but rarely visit the museum.

The building is maintained by the city, and is open for free to the public, but is almost always empty. Up until the summer of 1990, the museum employed two full-time personnel. Now it only employs one, part-time. It is slowly dying, losing support as a landmark and getting less and

less funding each year. Right now, Parsons Plastics is the main supporter, but the future of the museum remains uncertain.

It contains displays unchanged since 1952, documenting Hunt's bizarre life. It maintains technical drawings, devices, and the original Hunt Mark 1 Resistor—an invention that revolutionized consumer electronics and put Chester on the map. It also houses over 100 photographs of Hunt throughout his life, including one taken three days before his death in 1952.

Mary Jarrard, a 52-year-old historian, is the director and sole employee of the museum. She gives tours, rearranges displays, and cleans the facility. In fact, cleaning is what she spends most of her time doing.

Jarrard is a local expert in all things Hunt. She is forthcoming and open with anyone in authority, allowing them to examine any item in the museum in detail—under her supervision. She'll even remove objects from their display cases for Agents to look at more closely. If the Agents pose as ordinary tourists, they can talk her into that kind of access only with a convincing case and a **Persuade** roll.



The Statue

In the park before the museum, a four-meter (12-foot) bronze statue of Arthur Hunt stands atop a hollow cement pylon. It faces west, towards the mounds. The statue is unremarkable. It was sculpted by Alan Melendez (deceased) of Chicago, Illinois, in 1953, and unveiled in 1954. Hunt Electrodynamics paid for the original statue as well as the museum.

Though it may lead to some suspicion, the statue is completely mundane and has no connection to local unnatural events. Cracking open the base reveals nothing except a 1950s Pabst Blue Ribbon can.

Arthur Hunt in Chester

Arthur Hunt is a local legend in Chester. He's the great success story of the town, almost the inversion of Douglas Yale, the Ohio River Killer. Hunt rose from poverty and a life of debauchery to forge an electronics empire that has stood the test of time, surviving even after his unexpected death in 1952.

But at first, no one in town thought much of him. In fact, he was considered a local ne'er-do-well. He seemed more prone to theft, violence, and lying than any productive endeavor.

Hunt was born to an unwed mother, Emily Harris, on October 19, 1906. He was born in the McMurtry Rail Station, which would later become the Chester Train Station. Having been sent from Chicago to live with an elderly aunt in disgrace, Emily Harris arrived in the tiny bump in the road called Meigs County just minutes before her water broke. She named the child Arthur Hunt, after his absent, and never again to appear, father.

Margaret Harris, the aunt, lived in a farm near the Chester estate, four miles from what would become downtown Chester. She welcomed Emily and the baby into her house, but in 1909 Emily ran off, never to be seen again.

Margaret raised the unruly youth as best she could, but Arthur was a violent, simple-minded child. He was a known troublemaker, ejected from the local school on more than one occasion for fights and theft. It was rumored he couldn't read and write properly.

By the end of the Great War, Arthur Hunt was 12, and had already taken to alcohol. He left school the following year, as the influenza epidemic swept the newly forged town. Hunt was unaffected, but his aunt fell ill. She remained bedridden from 1919 until her death in 1921.

During this time, Hunt held several short-lived jobs. He was a counter-boy at the local five and dime, a street sweep, and an ice delivery man. No job lasted more than a few months. In his 15th year, his aunt died, leaving him a sizable estate, the house, and livestock.

The newly christened Hunt Farm fell into ruin over the next few years. Since 1920, Hunt had maintained his booze habit illegally, purchasing liquor from bootleggers. He began to associate with hoodlums in the county, including a Shawnee Indian named Saucy Jack, a drunken rumrunner who drove the backwoods in a souped-up Ford.

Jack and Hunt became partners of sorts, frequenting the often-ignored Chester Serpent Mounds to drink, play cards, and shoot birds. On May 3, 1922, police found Hunt at the mounds, drunk, carrying a pickaxe and shouting drunkenly about Shawnee gold. Hunt was incarcerated briefly, but he kept visiting the mounds. Soon after the arrest, Saucy Jack and Hunt had a falling out, and the Indian was not seen in the county again.

For nearly a year, Hunt rarely appeared in town.

The Change

On April 9, 1923, Hunt returned to town a changed man. He settled into the newly finished Chester Public Library and began to read. This first vigil lasted eight hours and soon drew spectators. Hunt read books on nearly every subject, and remained mute, refusing to engage with questioners and onlookers. As he read, he seemed to get faster. Soon he was reading each page with a glance of only a second or two.

When the library closed for the evening, Hunt left as easily as he had come, vanishing into the woods, reappearing at opening each morning. He ate and drank nothing during his reading, and kept up this cycle unceasingly for three weeks. Locals remained split on Hunt's motives. Most thought it was a complex con. Others thought Hunt had finally seen the error of his ways. Rumors began to spread that Hunt had quietly educated himself during the previous years.

By week three, Hunt began speaking with the locals again, and it was as if his entire personality had changed. His voice was a quiet monotone without any humor. His English was precise and ordered. His interactions were brief and to the point. Hunt ordered a list of over 200 items from the five and dime, including drafting tools, a table, various metals, torches, and workbenches, as well as various radios sets. He paid in gold, which was odd, but not unheard of.

Hunt disappeared to the Hunt Farm, which, over the next year and half, transformed into a clean and orderly place. Hunt meticulously replaced everything, down to the gate to the road—though, oddly, he sold all the livestock. The electric lights he had installed in 1924 were among the first along his stretch of road. Soon, every room in the house burned with an incandescent bulb.

Hunt hired a local farmhand named Allan Mestmacher to run errands for him in town, and Mestmacher became the local conduit for Hunt gossip. Hunt worked ten hours a day on drawings of complex electrical devices, and built bizarre electronic contraptions. This continued for several years, until it was assumed it would continue this way indefinitely. Then, as suddenly as he had first arrived at the library, Hunt arrived in town again and filed papers to incorporate Hunt Electrodynamics. On the same date, he submitted three thick envelopes to the U.S. Patent Office, and mailed several letters to far-flung corporations in Europe and America.

Within months, Hunt had forged lucrative deals to license small components to various electronics firms, including Westinghouse and Consolidated Edison. He continued to operate from his farmhouse, but now began to make national news. His company posted large profits and its paperwork was meticulous. Considering Hunt was its sole employee, it was considered amazing he could complete all the paperwork himself as well as continue to create and patent inventions.

Hunt's biggest hit, the Hunt Mark I Resistor, debuted on August 5, 1930, and rocketed the one-man company into the stratosphere. When Hunt realized he could make far more money producing the Resistor, he opened the Hunt Electrodynamics plant near Chester. Soon, the plant was the largest employer in town.

It was during the first few years of the Chester plant's operations that Hunt began traveling. His trips took him far and wide, though almost no one in town knew where he was going. Mestmacher reported that Hunt returned from his trips with odd books and items from around the globe, and stickers on his trunks indicating he had been to Istanbul, Casablanca, Cairo, Catania, and elsewhere. By 1938, rumors began to spread that Hunt was planning to leave Chester.

When it was discovered that Hunt had been constructing a town in Death Valley, California—one of the most inhospitable places on Earth—no one was really surprised. Nothing about Hunt could strike the townsfolk as odd anymore. Few had anything bad to say about the man, but Hunt was considered an eccentric at best. Announcements were made that the Chester plant would remain in operation, but Hunt would leave for California.

By 1940, Hunt was living in Hellbend, California, permanently. He was largely forgotten in Chester, trotted out only as an interesting story from time to time. With Hunt's mysterious death in the Hellbend explosion of 1952, the Hunt Museum was constructed in Chester to celebrate its most famous and successful son.



Photographs

The museum's photographs of Hunt feature only four taken before his "rebirth" in 1923. Each shows Hunt in various states of intoxication, including one during the celebration of the end of the Great War where Hunt has climbed a light pole with his pants down.

Over 60 photos show Hunt in Chester after 1923. In all of them, his expression is identical: a look of bored

detachment. His eyes are passive and strange. He is well kept and clean, though his posture is odd. When standing, he seems to stoop his head forward in a way that seems out of sorts for a young man.

The remaining 36 are varied Hunt Electrodynamics promotional shots, showing an impassive Hunt standing before various constructions around the U.S., including the facility in Hellbend at its opening.

The last photo, taken three days before the Hellbend explosion in August 1952, shows something unusual. Hunt, his face usually implacable, seems to be smirking.

There is also another oddity evident in the photos, since they are displayed sequentially. From 1923 to 1952, despite a gap of almost thirty years, Hunt appears exactly the same, as if he had not aged a day in the interim.

Artifacts

Almost all of the artifacts in the museum are mundane. The Mark 1 Resistor, for example, is advanced for its time but within the realm of conventional science.

However, there is one supernatural item, mixed in with a set of tools in a display entitled “Hunt’s Toolset.” Amidst miters, saws, die-cutting tools and various hammers and chisels is a stained, aged metal funnel. In actuality, it is two funnels, one inside another. Anyone making an INT×5 or Search roll while inspecting the display recognizes that they don’t belong there. Those who have seen Aklo characters before gain a +20% bonus to this roll.

If removed and examined, the funnels appear to be simple metal cones, open on both ends, made of a strange alloy. (Something like bronze, though tests prove inconclusive.) On the tapered end of the cone, the opening is bisected by a complex arrangement of wire. This wire traces out a symbol. Agents familiar with Aklo recognize it as that language. (For details, see the discussion of Aklo in *Future/Perfect* Part 1.)

If both cones are stuck into soil or soft ground, no matter the distance, anything said into one can be instantly and perfectly heard from the other. This “geophone” operates through hypergeometrical principles that are beyond modern understanding. It allows instant communication between any two locations on the planet. Any character with Science (Physics) at 25% or higher loses 0/1D4

SAN watching the devices operate for the first time. As it provides a perfect and secure basis of communications, the device would be tremendously interesting to the Program.

Records

Most of Hunt’s paperwork left Ohio with Hunt in 1940, and is assumed destroyed in the 1952 Hellbend explosion. All that remains in the museum are the smallest scraps of thousands of engineering schematics and documents that Hunt drafted in town and left behind.

Documents reproduced at the museum include various arrest records for Arthur Hunt pre-dating 1923, a birth certificate, his name on the deed to the long-demolished Hunt farm, and little else. His handwriting is a childish scrawl, the signature of someone who obviously has a poor grasp of language.

Post 1923, examples of Hunt’s writing are everywhere. It is block-like, angular and mathematical, though his signature remains the same clumsy scrawl. Copies of the papers incorporating Hunt Electrodynamics show the same methodical, code-like writing.

Hunt’s technical plans on display at the museum exhibit Aklo characters in place of normal lettering. A plaque notes, “This code was used to thwart attempts at theft and fraud.”

The Untitled Hunt Book

Jarrard has been assembling a comprehensive book on Hunt’s life and eccentricities from the perspective of a Chester native. Her book, which is not yet titled but is nearing completion, tracks the rise of Chester, Ohio and the rise of Arthur Hunt. Only with a great amount of convincing will Jarrard allow Agents gain access to a copy of the book. Agents must make two successful Luck or Persuade rolls on two different occasions while talking her into it.

Jarrard’s book is rough, often blank in places save for cryptic notes for future additions, and mostly irrelevant to the Agents. But it includes the only known interview with Allan Mestemacher, Hunt’s assistant in Chester, before his death at the age of 91 in 1999.

The Mestemacher interview mirrors Monty Greene’s testimony in Hellbend (see *Future/Perfect* Part 1).

Mestemacher discusses Hunt's predilection to eating only vegetables, his fear of blood, and his obsession with tinted glasses. He says Hunt spent much of his time talking in a "language I have no way of knowin', like speaking in tongues."

In town, Hunt acted as a quiet, introspective man who went out of his way to avoid conflict or interaction. Hunt seemed to consider Mestemacher "unimportant" and did not put on his "act" when only Mestemacher was around. At the Hunt farm, Hunt was a tyrant, often shouting at Mestemacher for the slightest inconvenience or mistake. He never injured Mestemacher, but Mestemacher lived in constant fear of the strange man. This fear could not, however, kill his curiosity.

On occasion, Hunt deigned to show his servant disturbing things which seemed to defy science. On one occasion, Hunt had Mestemacher run a quarter of a mile out into a field, jam a steel cone into the ground, and wait. Hunt did the same, and when he bent and spoke into the steel cone, Mestemacher could hear him through his cone, as clear as day. Mestemacher was certain that Hunt would patent and sell this invention, but it never came to pass. This item is now on display in the Hunt museum, mistakenly identified as portions of a toolset.

Mestemacher spied on Hunt's travel plans, secretly digging through itineraries and maps Hunt had marked up. Hunt made a circuit of the Mediterranean, stopping at major ports. He bought ancient books—Mestemacher had no idea what they were, though he notes one was in Greek—as well as various "Egyptian artifacts." Where those artifacts and books might be today remains a mystery.

During the later half of his life (after 1941), Mestemacher became devoutly religious, obsessed with the Devil and hell. The interview with Mestemacher is telling, insomuch as the old man seems to tie huge importance to Hunt's choice of "Hellbend," California, for a new home.

Mestemacher made no bones about it. He believed Hunt was a devil from Hell, if not the Devil himself. Mestemacher never explained how he had come to this conclusion, but would only say, "I know. I saw."

The Old Plant

The old Hunt Electrodynamics plant sits southwest of town. It was a large facility for its time, with nearly 1,000 full-time employees.

County deputies frown upon wandering around the ruins of the Hunt Electrodynamics plant. After an injury in 1988, a large fence with razor wire was erected around the entire site. Since the plant is removed somewhat from the town, cutting through or carefully traveling over the fence is quite possible.

The plant is a series of low brick buildings, a large loading/shipping dock, a closed railroad spur, and a large, overgrown parking lot. The Hunt Electrodynamics sign still stands, but the ruins are long since overgrown with vines and weeds. Every window has been broken. The tar roofs on many of the buildings have collapsed from winter snows. Metal struts and frames are rusted.

There is nothing useful to be found here, but this does not mean it's devoid of adventure. Agents arriving at night might surprise a group of teenagers drinking in the ruins, and an interesting game of cat and mouse can take place. The teenagers will be certain the Agents are local deputies in plain clothes, and the Agents might mistake the teenagers (attempting to hide) as something connected to the case.

The Retirement Home

Green Hills Retirement Home is located six km (four miles) from town. Agents using official identification can easily gain access to the facility and walk around with guest passes. Those undercover have a harder time. They must either be a family member or the guest of a family member to interact with one of the retirees. Posing as one is not as hard as it might sound, as long as some footwork and fast talk is done. A **Persuade** roll may be necessary.

The residents range in age from 61 to 101. Some of them were alive and in their prime when Arthur Hunt ran Chester, Ohio. Few ever met Hunt. All clearly recollect his status as town recluse, as well as his habit of appearing (when he did) randomly and on his own terms. When he was seen, it was usually at a distance, and usually at night.

One man, Henry Hearston (age 89), says his father Gary Hearston was a schoolmate of Hunt at the Chester School before his expulsion, and often talked about Hunt's "rebirth" in 1923. Hearston is very clear-minded. From his father's stories, whatever happened to Hunt that year, it completely changed him. The man after 1923 bore absolutely no relation to the man before 1923, save his physical appearance. After 1923, Hunt didn't even recognize Gary Hearston.

Gary Hearston worked at the train station for thirty years as a porter. He was employed at the station when Hunt began shipping large amounts of items in and out of Chester, items Hearston had to move. The main port of call for these crates was Istanbul.

Residents reveal nothing else about Hunt that can't be found elsewhere in town. If the Agents have not explored the museum, some of its details can be gleaned here.

John Maskenogi

Anyone in Chester asked about Shawnee history points the Agents to John Maskenogi, a local author. John Maskenogi is half-Shawnee, and has made a comfortable living writing about the Shawnee culture. He is a local Chester celebrity and is considered the expert on the Adena. He knows all the most popular Shawnee stories and often gives speeches at the local colleges and bookstores on the subject.

Maskenogi has released several speculative books about the mounds and their relation to Shawnee legend, often exaggerating supernatural concepts to drum up sales. In person, he comes across as a learned, serious student of Native American occult lore, somewhere between shaman and historian. This is mostly a charade. Since he stumbled on this source of money, he has cultivated the airs of a true believer, but he privately thinks it's all hogwash.

Maskenogi is a natural contact to develop in the area, and he can act as a researcher for those who seem to be in authority in any case involving the mounds. But the Agents would be wise to be paranoid about having an exploitative writer along on their investigation. He plans to exploit his involvement in a new book filled with details about the case, particularly details that the Agents would

prefer to leave unreported. If the Agents are investigating unofficially but using their real names, that's even juicier.

Of course, Maskenogi keeps this idea to himself until the Agents are long gone. Careful Agents could find out about his plans by poking around Maskenogi's house or vehicle for notes. Otherwise, a year after the operation ends, the Agents may learn that a new book describes their exploits in exciting ways that could get them investigated and fired or prosecuted.

Shawnee Legends

An Agent can learn these stories from Maskenogi or by researching the Shawnee online, in nearby libraries, and by talking to historians with a successful **History** roll.

The Shawnee have their own theories about the Mound Builders. They tell stories of a time when the Shawnee encountered "strange, white-faced people" who lived inside the mounds. These people feared the sun and worshipped a god called Maneto ("The Snake"). After hunting in the area soured, the Shawnee made war on them and forced them from the mounds. The beings fled west or died defending their mounds.

More specifically, there is a legend about the Chester Mounds. It is said that when the Shawnee made war on the strange people, their last shaman "drew down a star" and smashed the earth in revenge, killing himself and his wives and a Shawnee chief. At the point of impact, the Shawnee themselves built the three Maneto mounds: snakes turned in upon themselves to prevent the spirits of their enemies from escaping and haunting the Shawnee.

A geological survey of the Chester Mounds placed them on a cryptoexplosion structure—it is highly likely that it was subjected to a meteor impact sometime in the past—but historians regard the Shawnee stories as myths.

Maskenogi's Writings

Maskenogi has written four books on the mound builders and the Shawnee, drawing parallels between their cultures and concluding that one culture became the other. As his books developed a following, they turned from history to sensationalism.

The Mound-Builder Mystery (2010)

This largely academic title postulates a connection between the Adena and Shawnee cultures, using verbal traditions, comparisons of wood and stonework, and other conventional archeology.

Shawnee Legend and the Snake Mounds of Ohio (2012)

This is an interesting weave of oral tradition and songs exploring Shawnee legends about the mounds. It does much to contradict Maskenogi's first book. Far from implying the Shawnee descended from the Adena culture, it claims the Shawnee arrived to find another culture of "moon-faced people" occupying the mounds, and drove them off after several large skirmishes. This title was a surprise hit, selling 10,000 copies worldwide and placing Maskenogi on a short list of scholars on the subject of the mounds.

Maneto: The Snake God (2015)

This more sensationalistic title examines a particular Shawnee tale related by John T. Walker, a full-blooded Shawnee over 90 years old. The story is of the Chester Mounds and their role as a site for worship of Maneto, the snake god. Walker (now dead) paints a picture of the site either as a site of worship built by the "moon-faced people" to the snake-god Maneto, or as a "spirit trap" built by the Shawnee after the moon people were driven off. Walker's stories are fascinating, often contradictory, and quite involved. Due partly to a book deal with a larger publisher, this book sold twice as many copies as Maskenogi's previous title.

In the Shadows of the Mounds (2016)

This title is by far Maskenogi's least academic. It is full of unsupported suppositions, hearsay, and sensationalistic inventions. It is an uneasy mix of his former historical work and straightforward fiction involving the Douglas Yale murders, the New Star Crusade, and other oddities of the mounds. It ultimately posits that the spirits of the "moon-faced people" inspired the Ohio River Killer's crimes, and suggests those spirits may have been disturbed by the New Star Crusade. The book was a commercial success, breaking his last sales record by more than 5,000 copies, driven mostly by interest in the Ohio River Killer.

The New Star Crusade

When Michael Brown quit his job as a professor at the Ohio University in 1998 and settled in Chester, Ohio at his family farm, little was thought of it. But when it was discovered that he was assembling an "army" of believers on his property and arming them, local authorities became interested. There was nothing they could do, of course, unless Brown did something first.

Brown—who changed his name to Danen Ignis—formed the New Star Crusade officially in 2000 after the death of his elderly father. By 2001 his newsletter, *Crusade*, had 3,800 subscribers. Lost and troubled souls were drawn to the Brown farm from as far as Stockholm, Sweden, and Osaka, Japan. They freely gave their personal fortunes up for a chance at redemption. Ignis' influence grew with his wealth. By the 2010s he was a multimillionaire.

Ignis claimed his group was a revival of the culture that worshipped at the Chester Mounds in ancient times. He was certain that if they prayed and made offerings at the mound, a new star would descend and take them from the Earth to another, purer world. But there would be conflict. Forces would attempt to stop them. They needed to be ready.

Early attempts at legal wrangling cost the county dearly. The county had a very clear "hands off" policy against the cult, but even that backfired. Back before Douglas Yale, townies often trespassed on the farm, and county deputies refused to act with "necessary speed and clarity" to keep them off. Ignis taped phone calls to the sheriff's



office, and recorded their arrival times. The shortest was over two hours. He filed a personal suit against the county and cost them \$800,000 in damages.

When the state of Ohio tried to intervene and block the cult from using the mounds for worship, Ignis spent nearly \$3 million on legal fees in four court battles. A final, pitched battle fell just short of the Ohio Court of Appeals. Ignis won handily on the grounds of freedom of religion. The cult was permitted to perform its solstice rites. Ignis also made national news and drew in new followers. Locals called them nuts, but for several years they performed their rituals in peace.

The Cult in Detail

The New Star Crusade is dedicated to the following principles:

- » Danen Ignis is the reincarnation of the mystical leader who constructed the mounds millennia ago.
- » Those who accept Ignis as their leader are imbued with the spirit of the people who helped build the mounds and are opened to spiritual wonders.
- » Through worship at the mounds, they will call down “others” who will descend from the Pleiades and take the cultists to a new and better world.

Its membership worldwide is about 8,000, though most are not far enough down the road of delusion to fully embrace the mythology. Fewer than 50 have fully dedicated themselves to the cult, pledging all their earthly possessions as well as their bodies to Danen Ignis.

The cult is not a recognized religion, but is fastidious in all matters legal and financial. Ignis is a stickler for playing the system. His personal wealth is in the tens of millions of dollars, all gained from devoted followers. He does not risk it recklessly.

Those in town, particularly the sheriff’s deputies, know very well that although Ignis may be insane, he is methodical, and is very adept at exploiting the legal system. The sheriff’s office monitors the farm but can do little else. Ignis pays his taxes and bills on time, and spends copious amounts of money in town.

Even when the Douglas Yale situation erupted in 2012, no one in Chester dared accuse Ignis. By that time,

everyone in city government knew it was a losing battle. The cult’s lawyer in Cincinnati, Richard A. Goldfarb, sent a strongly worded letter to the sheriff’s office warning them against making a public connection between Yale and the New Star Crusade. No one did.

After Yale’s death in 2014, the New Star Crusade went underground, no longer appearing in public. Ignis has not emerged from the property in some time. The solstice rites continue, however, carefully watched by local authorities but undeterred. The cult performs its rites in isolation, away from the town. The town likes it that way. They’ve learned to leave well enough alone.

Danen Ignis, aka Michael Brown

Michael Brown taught literature at Ohio University for 12 years before he packed up and left it all behind to return to his family farm. Most at the university believed he was on his way home to care for his ailing elderly father. The formerly talkative and social Brown had changed over a period of months, becoming somber and distracted. Most chalked it up to worry and grief, but a few who knew him well could tell something was seriously wrong.

Brown grew up on his family farm less than a kilometer from the Chester Mounds. He spent an unremarkable childhood playing in and around the mounds, and was well known in town as a bookworm. People had fond memories of him, until his return in 1998 and the strange turn of events that gave birth to his cult, the New Star Crusade, and his new name, Danen Ignis. Few understood his motivations. Those were chalked up to greed or insanity.



Brown's father, Charles "Chip" Brown, was a local oddity. For nearly twenty years before his confinement to what would become his death bed, he walked every night at the mounds, often talking to himself. But before his self-isolation and slow descent into madness (harmless as it had been), Chip had been well-liked. He spent his evenings in the local pool hall "shooting the shit."

Chip's descent seemed to begin after his son's departure in the early 1980s. In truth, Chip's obsession with the mounds had driven his son off, and kept the two from speaking for nearly 15 years.

Michael Brown returned home twice in 1997 and 1998 to see his bed-ridden father. At the urging of his dying father, he went out to the mounds at night and waited. There his mind was changed. Each time he returned to the university, he seemed more distracted and distant. The Agents can find many people at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, who knew Brown and witnessed his "illness" developing first-hand. His countenance shifted from affable and outgoing to dark and brooding.

In 1999, he traveled to the University to pick up the remainder of his personal effects. A colleague, Brenda B. Muckelroy, can tell the Agents, "It was like he looked at me and had no idea who I was. Like Michael was dead, like this was a new person altogether. He looked at me like I was a problem to be solved."

With Chip's death in 2000, the farm—which had been gathering random, lost individuals from around the globe for some time—officially became home to the New Star Crusade, and Michael Brown changed his name to Danen Ignis.

Since then, Ignis has held court at the Brown Farm, fighting legal battles to allow his "religion" to perform rites at the Chester Mounds.

Since the legal struggle involving Douglas Yale, the Ohio River Killer, Ignis has not left the farm. He lives a life of isolation, surrounded by devoted followers, sitting on a stockpile of legally purchased weapons that make the local authorities decidedly nervous.

The Headquarters

The Brown farm sits on 25 acres of land west of Chester, Ohio. The property backs up on the Chester Mounds site. A well-worn path runs from the ramshackle buildings of the Brown farm to the mounds.



The buildings of the farm were once sane and ordered, that much is clear, but they have long since degenerated. The main house—a three-story, four-bedroom affair—is now home to over 20 listless followers of the Crusade as well as Ignis himself. The house's powder-blue paint has fractured and peeled, showing a dull, split-wood grey beneath it. The roof sags and the gutters are overfilled. At least half of the front porch is beyond repair, ruined by summer rain.

The top floor is a master suite occupied by Danen Ignis himself. (Nearly everyone in the town knows this, due to his habit of standing on the adjoining patio naked.) The windows are whited out with what appears to be latex paint. An assembly of various weather equipment and electronic antennae jut from its roof. At night, the paint is lit by a dull glow.

The farm has long since stopped functioning. There are no animals or livestock. Instead, the barn is filled with another 26 followers who live on army surplus bunk-beds and share three chemical toilets stashed on the wall away from the road.

Five beaten cars haunt the driveway, most overflowing with random assortments of dry goods for which there is no room in the house or barn. Occasionally, one drives into town to purchase food and supplies for the cult.

A small, weather-beaten port-a-potty, converted to use as a tollbooth, oversees the entrance from the main road. Someone is always here, watching those coming and going. A cheap, wireless intercom system is employed to see who is, or is not, given permission to enter. This

intercom communicates directly to Ignis. It could easily be spied upon.

Most activity on the farm occurs at night. At night, groups of followers can be seen from the road, walking back and forth between the main house and barn. During the day, only lone individuals are spied wandering the grounds.

Cult members walk the perimeter at all times of the day and night, whipped into a frenzy by Ignis' declarations of their pending godhood. They do so unarmed except for a concealed flare gun. They are instructed to fire the flare in case of trouble. When this happens (and it never has, yet), the cult is instructed to arm itself "and come to its brother's aid."

The Guns

Over the years, the New Star Crusade has purchased nearly 2,300 firearms, all legal. These purchases were carefully monitored by Ignis and were all carried out in a wholly legal manner at gun shows throughout the state. Every member of the cult has been issued a gun permit, and has taken a state-run gun safety course.

There are strict rules at the farm as to who can have guns and when. Only those in the house carry pistols. Guards on the periphery of the farm remain unarmed except for flare guns.

Ignis is certain that the guns "will be needed in the future" and that "the time will be evident when they shall be issued to the followers". Although Ignis does not know it, his brush with the degenerate serpent-man at the mounds has given him a glimpse of the possibility of all the serpent-folk waking and descending on Chester. This has led to an obsession with fighting them with maximum firepower.

If, indeed, the creatures stir and attack, the New Star Crusade will be one of the few places prepared to repel them.

Meeting Ignis

Meeting Ignis is as easy as approaching the main gate and asking to see him. (Of course the Agents have to show identification.) As simply as that, the Agents will be escorted by listless cult members into the dilapidated farmhouse.



Ignis is a corpulent, bored-looking man clad in a one-piece cotton toga-like outfit. He is treated with reverence by the cult members, who surround him like pets.

Ignis' acquiescence should not be considered cooperation; he's a very clever man. He records the conversation with the Agents and then have them "looked into" by his rather pricey lawyer in Cincinnati. If there's anything to be found (such as the Agents being on vacation miles from their jurisdiction), Ignis will find it. But it may take some time (on a successful **Luck** roll, it takes 1D6+2 days for him to track down the Agent's dirty laundry.)

Ignis is forthcoming with his beliefs. He does, in fact, believe the New Star Crusade mantra he spews. He warns that "forces in the Mound are evil", and that the cult's worship is necessary to keep those forces contained. In fact, he does his best to convert the Agents to his cause.

Strangely enough, Ignis would make a fine Delta Green friendly, capable of both monitoring the mounds

and—in case of disaster—mustering enough firepower to defend the town. He also is smart enough to keep his mouth shut. But few Agents will be able to see past his “cult leader” status to make such a call.

Sneaking Onto the Farm

Sneaking onto the farm and spying on the cult is much more difficult than simply walking in. During the day, it is virtually impossible, as dozens of eyes are trained on the farmhouse and barn.

At night, it's still difficult. The Agents must make a successful **Sneak** roll. The Agent with the worst skill must make the roll. The **Sneak** roll is opposed by a cult member rolling **Alertness**. If the cultist wins, she fires a flare gun and alerts the whole farm.

Within minutes, 20 armed cult members converge on the spot where the flare was fired. They do not fire unless fired upon. If this is not enough to scare the Agents off, deputies arrive shortly thereafter. Needless to say, if the Agents are operating under the radar and they're found on the property, they could be in *big* trouble.

Ignis' Lawyers

The Cincinnati firm of Richard A. Goldfarb and Associates serves several clients, but the lion's share of its attention goes to the New Star Crusade, or more specifically, Danen Ignis. Goldfarb is down to earth and has no belief in the supernatural. He thinks, though he would never admit it out loud, that Ignis is a fraud. Not that this keeps him from cashing the checks.

Goldfarb spent 13 years as a public defender in Cincinnati and made quite a reputation for himself. He quit his position and opened his own firm when long-time client Michael Brown began asking more and more of his time, first handling estate transfers and later dealing with the Meigs County Sheriff's Office.

Finally, the work became overwhelming for one person, and Goldfarb hired three lawyers whose full-time job was dealing with the intricacies of tax law for the cult (which he calls a “church”). He also hired an expert on constitutional law. Goldfarb is the cult's direct contact, but he does very little of the work. He prefers to be the threatening voice on the telephone.

His firm has cut a swath through state courts and is greatly feared. Even the vaguest hint of a “Goldfarb Case” is enough to make the state counsel of Ohio switch to public relations mode very quickly. Goldfarb enjoys the power his connections have given him. He takes any slight from state or federal government to the limit, suing for slander and libel at the drop of a hat.

Agents unfortunate enough to cross paths with the tiny, elderly man are immediately be struck by two things: his precision in speech, and his constant allusions to possible suits and cases against and transgressions committed by the Agents. Goldfarb does not wait for his quarry to make a mistake. He suggests what mistakes they might make, robbing them of maneuverability. He's friendly, but when he speaks he projects the image of a man who understands the whole of the law.

Once Goldfarb's hackles are up, Agents are in deep trouble. The man has access to a vast fortune. He will track down any lead, real or imagined, which might give him leverage against a troublesome Agent. He'll call supervisors and directors, and even publish news stories about “harassment” in the Cincinnati papers.

If the Agents are wise, and they do some homework, the closest they should come to Goldfarb is the Internet.

The Chester Mounds

These ancient earthworks are a mystery. Though scientists believe the Adena mound culture constructed them 3,000 years ago, there is no clear evidence of this culture at the mounds. They remain a question mark in North American history.

The Chester Mounds are larger and more intricate than many smaller earthworks of a similar design. The Chester serpents are smaller than the Great Serpent Mound along the Ohio Brush Creek (they are approximately half the size, when laid end-to-end), but they represent the most intricate design attributed to the Adena culture.

The site is composed of three large mounds, each about 60 meters in length in the shape of an undulating serpent. The serpents are so intricate, they even have tongues. These serpents face inward, tongues touching.

These mounds are four to five meters high and are easily mistaken for simple man-made hills. Only someone walking the grounds and thinking carefully (or observing it from the air) can get a clear idea of the intricacy of the layout.

Data on the Mounds

A surveyor named Clinton Cowan surveyed the mounds in 1901, at the behest of the Ohio Historical Society. This surveyor did little but take exacting measurements and generate the definitive map of the Chester Mounds (just as he had of the Great Serpent Mound). This map is the best information available on the Chester Mounds.

Though the Ohio Historical Society opened the site as a park in 1967 along with the Great Serpent Mound, their much larger cousin quickly overshadowed the Chester Mounds. Attendance to the Chester park was a mere fraction of the huge number of visitors the Great Serpent Mound drew every year.

Finally, in 1971, with a plummeting attendance to the Chester Mounds, the Ohio Historical Society “closed” the park (meaning they no longer paid for tour guides, a small visitors toilet, and a security guard). The mounds remained protected property under the ownership of the Ohio Historical Society, but no one but locals showed up.

For a decade, it was a location where locals went to drink and make out. It became a common stop for the town’s law enforcement personnel. Occasionally, there were fights there, as well as reports of vandalism.

The mounds remained this way until they became the focus of worship for the secretive New Star Crusade in the 2000s.

Crime at the Mounds

Agents who are law-enforcement officials can talk to the sheriff’s office about crime at the Chester Mounds. Other Agents can sift through crime reports in the newspaper archives at the local library (requiring a **History** skill of 50% or higher, or a successful **History** roll) or else talk reporter Nicole Henninger at the Pomeroy Daily Sentinel into answering questions over drinks.

If Henninger suspects the Agents are on an official investigation, making that appointment requires no roll—but she will do her best to get more information out of

the Agents than they get from her. Even cursory details of what the Agents are really up to could make the story of her career.

Looking into local crime reports reveals a large number of fights, violence, drinking and sex at the mounds, as well as several cases of vandalism. These cases date back decades, some even to before World War I. The most interesting cases involve Douglas Yale, the Ohio River Killer, and Arthur Hunt, the town’s most famous son. Both were caught, at one time or another, attempting to dig up the mounds.

Yale was caught vandalizing the mounds in 2012—having dug more than a meter and a half into one of the snakes’ heads—and was interrupted by a sheriff’s deputy. See **THE OHIO RIVER KILLER** on page 5 for details.

Hunt was a ne’er-do-well who was obsessed with the mounds, and often was caught there puttering about. In the summer of 1922, he was caught digging with a pickaxe and shovel (and a pint of bourbon). Hunt was incarcerated for a day while he sobered up. A fading police report in the county archives says Hunt babbled about “gold” being buried in the mounds.

Fights have also been common at the mounds. Most were no more than a scuffle, ending with a busted nose, or lost tooth or two, but one in particular, was serious. In the summer of 1992, teenager Scott S. Cogan beat another boy, Lucas Jeffries, to death at a drinking party at the mounds. Cogan, now in his forties, is still serving a 50-year sentence at the Ohio State Penitentiary.

Talking to Scott Cogan

Cogan is easy man to reach; he’s not going anywhere for a long time. He was convicted quickly of murder in the second degree, and offered up no significant defense. An Agent who digs up the trial records and has **Law** at 30% or higher, or who makes a **Law** roll, can tell Cogan’s court-appointed defender did a slapdash job. Cogan is in the Ohio State Penitentiary as prisoner 00067171, and is known by the guards as a forgettable and quiet ward.

Cogan agrees to meet anyone who shows up to see him, whether he knows them or not. His family turned their backs on him when he was convicted and he hasn’t had a visitor in nearly six years.

Cogan is forthcoming about his crime. He admits doing it—he remembers it all—but *why* he did it still remains a mystery. He speaks very plainly of “the feeling.” He claims he was “overwhelmed” by a sense that the people around him at the party were a danger to him, and that one, in particular—Lucas Jeffries—was the most significant threat.

Cogan cannot explain it any better than that. He simply (and sadly) says that he has no idea why he did it, but at the time, it seemed vital. If asked specifically about voices at the mounds, Cogan breaks down and begins weeping, drawing the guards in to cut the visit short.

As he’s removed, he says, “You heard them too?”

After that, he refuses to see the Agents or answer further questions.

Testing the Mounds

Geographical information on the mounds is relatively easy to come by. The earth around the mounds has been surveyed several times, and accurate topographical and soil maps exist at the Meigs County seat in nearby Pomeroy, Ohio.

Giving these maps to someone with the **Navigate** or **Science (Geology)** skill at 40% or higher reveals that the Chester Mounds are on a cryptoexplosion structure—a place on the Earth that has been struck by a meteorite. This is clear both by the bowl-shaped “extrusion” that surrounds the entire mound area, as well as the convergence of three disparate soil types in one area.

An Agent with **Archeology** at 50% or higher could attempt a **Bureaucracy** or **Persuade** roll to borrow a ground-penetrating radar system from Ohio University,

perhaps by offering to share findings in a joint academic paper that will never be written. Insurance and transportation would be an Unusual expense. Buying a system outright is a Major expense. Either option takes about a week to arrange.

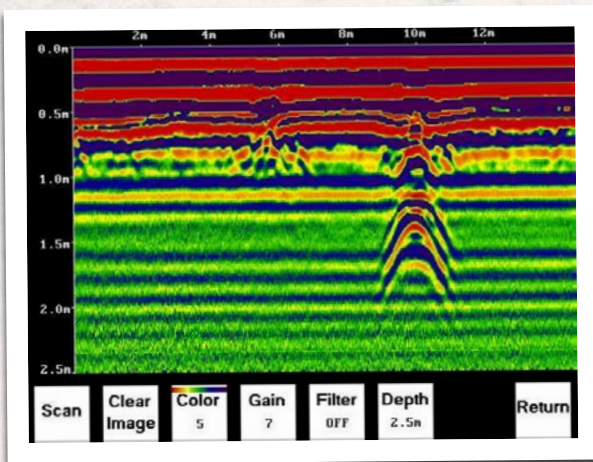
A ground-penetrating radar system is about the size and shape of a push lawnmower, and is moved slowly across the ground as it scans the earth in slices that can be assembled for a (very rough) three-dimensional view of what’s underneath. Using it at the Chester Mounds, an Agent with **Archeology** 60% or higher, or who succeeds at an **Archeology** roll, identifies 26 gaps in the mounds that appear to contain artifacts or other remains. A successful roll by an Agent with **Archeology** at 60% or higher, or a critical success in any event, identifies what look like mummified human remains.

Actually removing core samples from the interior of the mounds (one meter or deeper) is risky and illegal. Any Agent attempting it must attempt a Luck roll or be observed and reported by New Star Crusade cultists or other neighbors who care about the mounds. If the Agents are acting under the color of federal law enforcement, a complaint will be filed with their agency. Otherwise, Meigs County deputies will charge them with criminal mischief and vandalism. That’s not enough to get them jail time, but it requires court appearances and fines that add up to an Unusual expense. If the Agents resist arrest, of course, they can quickly rack up felonies and risk years in prison.

If they remove a sample safely, testing at a lab reveals nothing out of the ordinary, and dating the mounds proves inconclusive.

Digging up the Mounds

Agents foolish enough to attempt a full-bore excavation of the Chester Mounds face several obstacles. Accomplishing even a small excavation is a daunting task. Excavation is possible only at night, for one thing. Attempting it during the day immediately fails, as either a New Star Crusade member or a deputy notices and disrupts the work. Agents arrested for defacing the mounds are in deep trouble. The Ohio Historical Society pushes the district attorney to prosecute mercilessly, demanding the maximum sentence of five years. The Agents could easily face firing at their jobs.



Those venturing out at night in an attempt to uncover what's in the mounds must make two consecutive **Luck** rolls to avoid being detected. If both succeed, they uncover one of the interred serpent folk after a full night of digging. Digging machinery is out of the question; it would obviously draw attention from the cult farmhouse.

The defacement of the mounds will be discovered the next day. That leads to a police detail staking out the area for weeks.

It's highly likely the Agents will only get one chance to cut into the mounds.



Destroying the Mounds

Demolishing the mounds requires vast amounts of time, money, and access to explosives or earth-moving machinery.

Such a task requires a successful **Science (Geology)** roll and either a **Demolitions** or **Heavy Machinery** roll, in addition to 2D10+2 hours uninterrupted at the site. This time will be *very* hard to come by, since many people frequent the mound site.

Bulldozing the mounds is another option, but it is a bad one. In addition to drawing people from the cult farmhouse, it wakes the degenerate serpent folk interred there.

The Hibernating Killers

In their hibernating state, the degenerate serpent folk appear as odd, deformed, fetus-like stone statues, about 1.5 m tall. If one is exhumed, an Agent with at least 20% in **Medicine** or **Science (Biology)** recognizes that they are not statues, but petrified remains of a biological creature.

The “remains” are somewhat brittle to brute force attacks, and shatter like stone under very heavy blows. The creatures are easily destroyed in this state. But they do not have the fragility found in mummified remains. Their flesh and organs show no deterioration.

An expert in the field of mummification (such as an Agent with **Archeology** at 60% or higher, or a combination of **Archeology**, **Forensics**, and **Medicine** adding up to 80% or more) recognizes that some sort of non-standard mummification process was used to create them. It had to be something advanced, such as freeze-drying or another method of water replacement. That means they must have been interred in the recent past, since such methods did not exist before the 20th century. The Agents, of course, may know otherwise.

Tests performed on the remains find that no known chemical was used for the “preservation” process. DNA samples from the remains confirm that the creatures are not human. In fact, their genetic structure does not fall into an easily classifiable category.

These creatures represent much more than the shadow of a threat. They are not actually dead.

Left uninterred for a day (one sun/moon cycle), an exhumed serpent awakens, weakened but still quite deadly. However, this is by no means an instant process.

After two or three hours above ground, the remains begin to change coloring. After four more hours, water begins to bead on the body, even in a humidity-controlled environment. After 12 or 13 more hours, the faintest signs of biological processes can be heard within the body.

The last hour shows movement in the extremities, culminating with the creature waking. Each living being within clear view of the serpent feels suddenly overcome by fatigue, losing 1 **WP**. The creature begins hunting in the same way as Xa, its cousin that was previously freed.

Xa

Before being released by Douglas Yale in 2012, this creature had been mentally preying on people near the Chester Mounds for a long time. Since 1923, with the disturbance of its grave when its master was freed, this creature was conscious but trapped. The other 25 serpent folk still hibernate within the mounds.

Over the decades, Xa slowly “fed” on the power exuded by the minds of those who visited the mounds. At first, it could only do so on solitary individuals, and could exhibit control only over those with a natural mental instability. It could do little but wait and slowly siphon power from lone visitors. But by the late 1970s, it had gained enough power to “touch” people.

It corrupted Chip Brown during his lonely walks to the mounds in the 1980s, and later his son during his similar walks in the 1990s. Xa’s manipulations gave birth to the New Star Crusade.

It moved Scott Cogan to kill Lucas Jefferies in 1992. Later, it inspired Douglas Yale to become even more violent, antisocial and crazed than before. Finally, it drew Yale in and sparked a fit of crazed digging, forcing the madman to free it.

It consumed and became Yale, kicking off a series of brutal, cannibalistic murders from 2012 to 2014. It still haunts the county. It has learned to bury its kills with great care in the wild. But now that Yale is believed dead, and the Ohio River killer case is closed, it kills with impunity.

Appearance

Xa can appear as any of its 16 victims, ranging in appearance from a six-year-old girl to Deputy Arthur Falstaf. It can cycle through these forms in seconds.

Without a disguise, Xa is a squat, pale creature approximately 1.5 m tall. It stands upright like a man, but has long, muscular arms tipped by crude hands with basic, prehensile thumbs.

Its skin is the texture of a tire, white and pearlescent but shot through with crimson splotches. Its face is dominated by two huge, vulpine eyes, a slit for a nose, and a jaw that can drop and open to accommodate a vast amount of meat.



It does not appear even vaguely human, and anyone seeing it loses 1/1D6 SAN.

Behavior

Xa’s hunting style has developed over the years. It realizes that humans have overrun the world, and they are more advanced and dangerous than the humans it last knew from the Adena culture. They have weapons and abilities that it does not fully understand. It knows they can cause serious injury at a distance, but it does not comprehend how any human technology works.

Xa hunts by walking on backroads at night in its more vulnerable-looking disguises—a little girl, a young woman, an old woman—waiting for a human to approach it. Due to the crude nature of its disguises, such illusions appear unclothed, and are often startling for those who come across them. It has learned that humans are social to the point where they will ignore signs of danger until it is far too late.

The creature’s main weakness is blood. While gorging, the creature enters a torporous state, akin to a heroin high, when it is eminently vulnerable and unable to protect itself. This occurs only after the killing is done and the victim is to be digested. Such digestions often take more than two weeks, during which time the creature is completely immobile. It usually drags off its prey to one of several “dens” in the woods where it can digest it unmolested.

Xa is quite content to hunt like this indefinitely. It quite likes the quality of prey it has found in the modern era. But if hunted incessantly, or injured on more than one occasion by Agents who seem to understand its abilities and limitations, the creature retreats to the mounds to unearth others of its kind. They descend upon Chester in a killing frenzy, hoping to drive the humans off. Such tactics worked for its kind in the distant past, before the humans became so numerous and powerful. As a last-ditch plan, it can muster up little else.

Characters

Special Agent Rigoberto R. Young, DEA

A Delta Green veteran with a liquid crutch. Hispanic male, age 39.

Special Agent Young

STR 12 CON 15 DEX 11 INT 11 POW 8 CHA 9

HP 14 WP 8 SAN 30 BREAKING POINT 24

ARMOR: Reinforced Kevlar vest if expecting trouble (Armor 5).

DISORDER: Addicted to alcohol. If involved in a violent situation without some alcohol to "give him a leg up," Young is likely to shoot a fellow agent by accident. If there's gunplay, he must make a **Luck** roll or target a random companion instead of the target.

SKILLS: Alertness 34%, Athletics 60%, Bureaucracy 30%, Computer Science 61%, Driving 45%, Firearms 44%, Foreign Language (Spanish) 45%, Law 52%, Science (Biology) 19%, Science (Chemistry) 45%, Search 45%, Stealth 31%, Unarmed Combat 50%, Unnatural 9%.

ATTACKS: Glock 17 pistol 44%, damage 1D10.
Unarmed 50%, damage 1D4-1.

Cincinnati Police Sergeant Stephen Moreno

A Delta Green agent who has seen far too much. White male, age 41.

Sergeant Moreno

STR 13 CON 15 DEX 15 INT 10 POW 12 CHA 14

HP 14 WP 12 SAN 45 BREAKING POINT 36

ARMOR: Reinforced kevlar vest while on duty (Armor 5).

DISORDER: Especially acute post-traumatic stress disorder. Any significant supernatural threat that costs Moreno 5 or more **SAN** transforms him into an animal. He unloads his weapon at the source of his fear and fights or shoots anyone who tries to restrain him, and then lapses into a catatonic state from which he never recovers.

SKILLS: Bureaucracy 31%, Driving 49%, Firearms 60%, HUMINT 35%, Law 20%, Melee Weapons 50%, Persuasion 51%, Search 53%, Swim 29%, Unarmed Combat 51%.

ATTACKS: Smith & Wesson M&P9 pistol 60%, damage 1D10.
Colt Detective Special .38 revolver 60%, damage 1D8.
Collapsible baton 50%, damage 1D6.
Unarmed 51%, damage 1D4-1.

John Maskenogi

Two-faced Shawnee author. Native American male, age 45.

John Maskenogi

STR 15 CON 16 DEX 8 INT 15 POW 6 CHA 6

HP 16 WP 3 SAN 30 BREAKING POINT 24

SKILLS: Accounting 21%, Anthropology 31%, Art (Writing 51%), Computer Science 42%, Driving 37%, Persuasion 50%.

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4.

Danen Ignis

Leader of the New Star Crusade, aka Michael Brown. White male, age 60.

Danen Ignis

STR 12 CON 13 DEX 12 INT 18 POW 10 CHA 18

HP 13 WP 10 SAN 40 BREAKING POINT 30

ARMOR: Reinforced Kevlar vest if expecting trouble (Armor 5).

DISORDER: Obsession with the Chester Mounds.

SKILLS: Art (Writing) 39%, Computer Science 29%, Driving 36%, Firearms 65%, Foreign Language (French) 29%, Foreign Language (Latin) 25%, Heavy Weapons 60%, History 27%, HUMINT 50%, Law 35%, Navigation 40%, Occult 51%, Persuade 75%, Science (Geology) 19%, Survival 40%.

SPECIAL TRAINING: Cult Teachings (INT).

ATTACKS: SKS semi-automatic rifle 65%, damage 1D12+2, Armor Piercing 3.

Glock 40 pistol 65%, damage 1D12.
Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4-1.

Average Member of the New Star Crusade

Forty-six fanatics, ages 18 to 57. The most attractive women are Danen Ignis' lovers and constant companions. Individual members' stats vary by $\pm 1D4$.

New Star Crusade Cultist

STR 10 **CON** 10 **DEX** 10 **INT** 9 **POW** 7 **CHA** 7

HP 10 **WP** 7 **SAN** 30 **BREAKING POINT** 28

ARMOR: Reinforced Kevlar vest if expecting trouble (Armor 5).

SKILLS: Alertness 30%, Firearms 50%, Heavy Weapons 40%, Occult 30%, Navigation 30%, Persuade 40%, Search 30%, Stealth 30%, Survival 40%.

SPECIAL TRAINING: Cult Teachings (INT).

ATTACKS: Colt AR-15 carbine 50%, damage 1D12, Armor Piercing 3.

Barrett M82A1 heavy sniper rifle 50%, Lethality 20%, Armor Piercing 5, with advanced combat optical gunsight (double base range, double bonus for aiming).

Glock 17 pistol 50%, damage 1D10.

Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4-1.

Xa

The inhuman Ohio River Killer, a degenerate survival of the serpent-folk.

Xa

STR 17 **CON** 19 **DEX** 18 **INT** 13 **POW** 18

HP 18 **WP** 18

ARMOR: 2 points of thick, scaly skin

SKILLS: Alertness 68%, Scent 55%, Search 70%, Stealth 61%, Survival 90%.

ATTACKS: Grapple 49%, damage special (and see **BLOOD FRENZY**).

Bite 25%, damage 1D10+2, Armor Piercing 3 (and see **VENOM**).

BLOOD FRENZY: A target that is bleeding causes Xa to enter a blood frenzy. It attempts to grapple and pin the victim. If it succeeds, it drains 1 HP per turn in blood loss until the victim dies. Only a **Dodge** roll allows the target to escape. A seized victim can attempt an opposed **STR** roll to struggle free, suffering 1D4 damage from tearing flesh. Any successful attack on Xa during the blood frenzy causes this attack to cease. During the blood frenzy, Xa cannot perform any other action until the target is dead or escapes.

CHANGELING FEAST: Xa can instantly take on the appearance of any human it has consumed. This illusion is a perfect magical disguise based on ancient serpent-folk rituals, but it has limitations. First, it does not imitate clothing. Second, Xa has not learned human languages, and even in disguise, its body language and demeanor are disturbingly alien. Finally, Xa always casts its natural shadow. In any light source more significant than a candle, an **Alertness** roll at -40% recognizes its terrifying shadow, at a cost of 0/1 **SAN**.

IMMORTALITY: Xa never grows old, starves to death, or perishes of natural causes. If it fails to feed on fresh meat or blood, after a period of time, it enters a torporous state which can last hundreds, perhaps millions, of years.

INHUMAN DODGE: Xa has preternatural senses and reaction speed, allowing it to Dodge even firearm attacks. This includes Lethality attacks from machine guns, but not explosives or hypergeometry.

UNNATURAL BIOLOGY: Xa's physiology would baffle any biologist. Making a called shot for "vitals" or another apparently vulnerable area inflicts normal damage, with no special game effect.

VENOM: If Xa's bite inflicts damage past a victim's armor, then the victim also suffers poisoning. The venom has a Speed of 1D6 turns and Lethality of 15%. An antidote that treats snake venom is effective if the victim makes a Luck roll.

SAN LOSS: 1/1D6

Xa's Brethren

The other 25 degenerate serpent-folk in the Chester Mounds have the same skills and abilities as Xa, though their stats are each 1D4 points lower.

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