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protodimension magazine

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FROM THE SHADOWS

Managing Editor
Norm Fenlason
(starman)

www.protodimension.org/zine

Wow. I thought it would never get out, but here it is...**Protodimension Magazine™**. This is something I have been mulling over since *Demonground* faded away several years ago. Honestly? I and a few friends intend to publish **Protodimension Magazine** supporting modern conspiracy horror even if no one reads it. We just like to put our creative wares into the *aether*, so to speak. And we have a lot of creative wares, so do our contributors. You'll see, just keep reading.

For our first round of fan contributions, we got almost as much fiction as we did gaming material. In this issue, we have a short-story, *When Night Darkens*, by Lee Williams (AKA *morthrai* and a senior editor) that is totally Dark Conspiracy and has minions, empathy, and really big guns! For the other piece, we have a story from a relatively junior fan, Peyton Bisailon. It is always refreshing to see the young ones progressing, right? *Freedom* is ostensibly placed in the **Unknown Armies®** setting and describes your basic rescue adventure. I like both these stories very much and I think you will too.

For adventures, we have Linden Durham's *The Rat King*. This was a plot that evolved in the DC 3rd edition forums, which Linden took to extreme coolness. It is the lead adventure and the cover illustration is based on it. Wererats, comic books, and plots to take over the world – very DC-ish. The other is from Tim Bisailon, no relation to Peyton except she's his daughter. The *Jack That House Built* is an *otherworld* adventure built for the **Unknown Armies** setting. You seeing the trend here? Support materials are led by Linden Dunham's quartet of *Demonseeds* featuring plot ideas for **Call of Cthulhu®**. *Demonseeds* are just renamed and non-setting specific **Tales of Terror**,

which are for **Call of Cthulhu**. Also for CoC, we have from Christopher Smith Adair, *Billy and the World All Topsy-Turvy*, an horrific tome sure to send player-characters insane; and *Dark Fertility*, an evil ritual by Barrok of Barrok's Tower.

Always welcome in **Protodimension Magazine** are fan-developed *house rules*. PM is not a house organ and does not in any way establish canon in any setting, but tweaking things is what players do. We offer for DC: *Big Problems* by Dave Schuey, *Car Performance Tek* by Zvezda (his moniker from the forums), and *The Faire*, a Dark Race by Tad Kelson. Also for DC we have a particularly nasty Darkling and a "really big gun": *Whipflayers* and *Bigger Freakin' Guns* both by Lee Williams. Lee also drew up some floor plans for those triangle ET ships that everyone sees and denies (*Spacecraft Floor Plans*).

For the **World of Darkness®** setting Barrok also provided us with *The Great Dragon*, a *slasher*. And rounding out the issue, Lee has a regular column called *Under the Floorboards*. Hey. It's where all the stuff that falls through the cracks goes, right? (It's also scary if you have been stuck down there, but my therapist tells me I don't have to tell everyone everything.)



Norm Fenlason

THE RAT KING

A Comic Book Adventure

*by Linden Dunham
with additional material by Norm
Fenlason, Zvezda and Anthraxus
for **Dark Conspiracy**® 1/2 ed.*

The Rat King is designed as an introductory adventure for 3-5 UK based PCs, although it can be used with an experienced party. The year is assumed to be 2020 in a time line broadly in keeping with that presented in Dark Conspiracy, i.e. the Greater Depression and major world upheaval in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The main setting is the East End of London, the area selected to host the 2012 Olympic Games. Adaptation to other urban locales is possible but will require some work on the part of the referee. All Dark Conspiracy rulebook and supplement page numbers quoted refer to GDW first editions.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE EAST END

Agamemnon and Ulysses Baker are twin brothers. They are also Wererats. The brothers were born twenty years ago to Paul and Catherine Baker, both professors in Classics at Oxford University. The advent of the Greater Depression brought severe cuts in the education sector with only those courses deemed to be of “practical use” continuing to receive government and/or corporate

funding. The Bakers were made redundant by the University, and in a world where business and technical skills were regarded as paramount, found it well impossible to obtain new employment. They subsequently lost their home in Oxford and were moved to public housing in the Bromley-by-Bow district of east London (often simply referred to as Bromley, although not to be confused with the south London borough of the same name). Here they eked out a living on welfare benefits, supplemented by Paul’s cash-in-hand earnings teaching English to members of the East End’s various immigrant communities. The Bakers lived like this for the better part of a decade, a hand to mouth existence typical of that endured by millions of British people in the years following the Greater Depression.

Agamemnon and Ulysses both attended lack lustre local state schools where their unusual names and genteel background soon marked them out as a target for bullying. The bullying didn’t last long: although neither boy was physically imposing they both possessed a wiry strength, blindingly fast reflexes and fought viciously when provoked.

(Rat King from page 4)

After a few too many eye gougings and severely bitten extremities school bullies learned to leave the brothers alone. Other pupils were also quite happy to leave the twins to their own devices. There was something about them that didn't seem right and put people off making friends with them. For their own part the twins seemed content with their own company, spending break times in one corner of the playground whispering away to each other, sometimes breaking into bouts of high pitched laughter. This latter affectation led to them being known as "The Squeak Brothers", although they were never called that to their faces. Even their teachers regarded them with a certain wariness, showing a marked reluctance to discipline them over their frequent absences from school.

On the days the twins played truant, they would spend their time exploring the abandoned factories and warehouses on a patch of land which had once formed part of Stratford Marsh. Formerly a huge industrial area, Stratford Marsh was redeveloped after being selected as the site of the 2012 Olympic Stadium and Village. Only a few outlying areas retained their former industrial character and with the onset of the Greater Depression these soon became derelict. The twins found themselves drawn to one of these urban wastelands, a triangular spur lying east of the River Lee and south of the Olympic Village known as Sugar House Lane, comprised of factories, warehouses and the former Three Mills film studios. The twins didn't really understand their attraction to the area, they only knew they felt at home there. During their earliest visits to what they came to call "The Kingdom" the boys had numerous encounters with the brown rats that infested the area in large numbers. The rats living in Sugar House Lane were notoriously bold, not averse to at-

tacking humans who strayed into their territory and sometimes even venturing across the river into the anthills of the East End to scavenge for food. They didn't attack the Baker twins though, and in fact seemed to have an affinity for the boys. As they explored The Kingdom Agamemnon and Ulysses were constantly accompanied by a retinue of rats that guided them safely thorough the tunnels and walkways of the old industrial district. After a short time the twins found that they were able to communicate with the rats purely by the power of thought. They began to enjoy the company of rats more than that of humans and spent more and more time in The Kingdom, only returning home in the late evening.

With the onset of puberty the twins discovered they had more in common with their rodent friends than they could ever have imagined. One winter evening in 2013 a full moon rose over The Kingdom just as the twins were about to start for home. Caught in the moonlight Agamemnon and Ulysses found themselves undergoing the transformation into Wererats. Once the transformation was complete, and with all human reason gone, the twins led their horde of rat followers across the river in a night long rampage in which they swarmed into houses, supermarkets and convenience stores eating everything in sight. Anyone who got in their way was attacked and several people were killed. By the time the authorities responded to the outlandish reports of rat attacks in the East End the twins and their rodent army had retreated back to The Kingdom.

The tabloids didn't waste any time in reporting the "Bromley Rat Plague", splashing it all over the front pages complete with lurid accounts of man-sized rodents running amok in the East End. Catherine Baker saw the papers, and feared the

(Rat King from page 5)

worst. She knew her sons had been out of the house on the night of the plague. She also knew her family carried the Wererat taint. Her father had been a Were and although she had escaped the family curse it seemed to have skipped a generation. When her sons returned home after several days absence, dressed in rags and covered in scratches and bruises Catherine confronted them. The twins did not deny what they had done and openly laughed at their mother when she tried to remonstrate with them. Agamemnon told her that he and Ulysses no longer regarded her and their father as their family. In the future the brothers would live with their "true family" across the river. With that Agamemnon pushed his weeping mother aside and ordering Ulysses to follow him left the flat for good. Ulysses paused only momentarily before following his brother into the night. A distraught Catherine Baker hanged herself from a light fitting shortly afterwards. Her body was discovered by her husband when he returned from work in the evening. She had left only a brief note which read: "My father was a monster, so are our sons. I'm sorry."

Paul Baker never recovered from the double shock of his wife's death and his sons' disappearance. He suffered a mental breakdown and was confined to hospital for a year. When released he returned to the family home with the aim of drinking himself to death.

Agamemnon and Ulysses took up residence in the factory district. Agamemnon dreamt of ruling a rodent empire stretching across first London, then Britain, and ultimately the world. Rats would become the dominant species with humans either annihilated or reduced to the status of slaves or food. Agamemnon's plans for world domination

suffered a major set back when, ten days after the Bromley Rat Plague, the authorities launched "Operation Spring Clean". Exterminators, assisted by the police and army, were sent into The Kingdom with instructions to kill every rat they found. Vast numbers of rodents were dispatched with a mixture of poison, gun fire, explosives and flame-throwers. After five days of relentless pummelling The Kingdom was left looking like war zone, with many of its already derelict buildings reduced to rubble.

Agamemnon and Ulysses escaped the slaughter by retreating into a basement underneath a disused factory. Plenty of rats survived too, either hidden in the basement with the brothers or by being cunning or lucky enough to escape the attention of the authorities. When the brothers emerged from their hiding place it was to find their kingdom in



ruins. Agamemnon began to rant and rave, swearing revenge on the humans who had destroyed his realm. Ulysses' wiser counsel prevailed. He calmed his brother and made him see that any retaliation would just bring more human incursions into The Kingdom. Ulysses persuaded his brother to regroup and adopt a strategy of building up sufficient numbers to gradually infiltrate and occupy the districts around The Kingdom. Over the next five years this policy paid some dividends

(Rat King from page 6)

with rats taking control of territory on the western side of the River Lee. As well as the fast breeding survivors of Operation Spring Clean the brothers also found their retinue being swollen by rats from outside The Kingdom who came flocking to the area, attracted by the twins' empathic sense which acted as a beacon. Among these new arrivals were several colonies of Super Rats, creatures whose superiority to normal rats made them a particularly welcome addition to Agamemnon's rodent legions.

While Agamemnon was pleased with the incremental growth of his empire, Ulysses was less satisfied with life in The Kingdom. He found that he missed many aspects of human society and he also grew disenchanted with his brother's dreams of empire which he doubted would ever come to fruition. Even if they did Ulysses knew he would always have to play second fiddle to his more dominant twin. While careful not to show his dissatisfaction Ulysses persuaded Agamemnon that it would be in both their interests if he left The Kingdom and returned to the world of humans. Agamemnon opposed the idea at first, not wanting to lose his brother's advice and company, but was eventually won round. Ulysses persuaded him that having a pair of eyes in the world of humans would be an advantage. By adopting human guise Ulysses would be able to go places and learn things that for all their quickness and cunning even the Super Rats couldn't. He would return on nights of the full moon to be with his brother and share what he had learned.

Ulysses had hoarded a sizeable amount of money, taken from properties occupied by the rats. He used this stolen cash to rent a flat in nearby Bow Common. The money lasted long enough for Ulysses to establish himself as the author of "The Rat King"

comic. Originally a web-only publication the comic built up a cult following amongst young *Nomes* then became popular enough to secure national print distribution making it available to Mike and Prole youth groups. At turns violent, surreal and macabre "The Rat King" was a heavily fictionalised version of Ulysses and Agamemnon's adventures in The Kingdom. The eponymous Rat King was a composite character with traits borrowed from both brothers. A typical issue of the comic would see the King venturing into the world of men, getting one over on humankind then returning to his underground realm where he would receive a rapturous hero's welcome from his rodent subjects. The comic's success enabled Ulysses to move to a more comfortable residence in the former Olympic village. He didn't tell his brother about "The Rat King". This was for two reasons: He enjoyed having something that was his alone that he didn't have to share, and because he feared his brother would be angry at him for sharing family secrets, however well disguised, with the world at large.

Ulysses' full moon visits to The Kingdom left him increasingly disillusioned and he began to have second thoughts about his brother's rodent empire. Occupying London one derelict house at a time was never going to bring about world domination. In any event Ulysses wasn't sure he wanted to see the destruction of human civilization. He found that he preferred living in human society with all of its material comforts to the ruined squalor of The Kingdom. Ulysses kept these feelings to himself hoping that the impractical nature of his brother's ambitions would save him from ever having to choose between fraternal loyalty and his new life on the surface. Unfortunately for him recent events have conspired in such a way that he might just have to choose...



(Rat King from page 7)

STRANGERS IN THE KINGDOM

Andrew Kiersznowski and Calum O'Neil are two Mike teenagers (both aged 15) from Bromley-by-Bow. They have known each other all their lives and are close friends. They are also fans of "The Rat King" comic. In last week's issue there were several frames depicting the exterior of the Rat King's palace; a massive red brick rococo building standing near a canal. The boys were surprised to find that they recognised the palace from real life: The former Bryant and May match factory located less than a mile away from the estate where they live. Calum, always the more adventurous of the two, was keen to visit the factory wanting to see how much of the comic was real, and even hoping to meet its creator, the mysterious "Ulysses B", sketching locations in preparation for the next issue. Andrew was reluctant at first, worried that the derelict factory might be unsafe. A couple of days constant nagging by Calum eventually wore him down and the two boys agreed to go to the factory at the weekend.

The following Saturday Andrew and Calum met up and headed for the old match factory. When they arrived at the building they found all of the entrances securely boarded up. The boys looked for another way in and Calum discovered a broken window at ground level. He climbed through into the factory while Andrew kept watch outside. A few minutes later Andrew heard his friend call out from inside the factory. He hoisted himself up to the window, looked through the cracked glass and saw Calum being chased by a huge pack of rats. Several of the creatures were of abnormal size and behind them, standing in the shadows, urging them on with a series of ear splitting shrieks was something even larger: A rat that stood upright like a man: The Rat

King himself. Andrew almost fell from the window in shock but managed to maintain his hold and reach down to Calum who was now only a few feet away. Before Andrew could grab his friend's hand Calum was knocked flying by a big rat that hurled itself at his back. Andrew watched in horror, powerless to intervene as Calum was overwhelmed by the rat pack, screaming in terror and agony as the creatures began to eat him alive. Several of the rats tried to jump up to the window. Not wanting to be their next victim Andrew fled, running away from the factory as fast as he could, expecting at any second to feel the rats swarming all over him.

To his surprise, Andrew made it home, and once he had recovered enough to speak blurted out what he had seen to his family. At first they refused to believe him but when he continued to insist that Calum had been "eaten by rats" they decided to go to the police. Unfortunately the local police weren't inclined to believe a fantastic yarn about a boy being attacked by giant rats and tried to talk Andrew out of his story telling him it was a figment of his over active imagination. When Andrew refused to withdraw his account a pair of beat officers were detailed to make a search of the match factory. After a cursory investigation they found traces of blood on the factory floor and some rat droppings. When they reported back to the station the detectives interviewing Andrew started to treat him as a suspect in the murder of his friend. He was questioned for several hours in an attempt to make him confess to killing Calum. Suddenly the police abandoned the interrogation and released Andrew without charge, although they wouldn't tell him or his family why.

On returning home Andrew became quiet and withdrawn, spending hours alone in his bedroom.

(Rat King from page 8)

Seeing his friend die and then being interviewed by the police had exacted a heavy psychological toll. However, a week after Calum was killed Andrew emerged from his room and went to the local convenience store, returning with the latest issue of "The Rat King". He retreated to his bedroom and gingerly opened the front cover, fearing what he might find inside. The contents were even worse than he expected. Scanning the comic's pages he saw facsimiles of himself and Calum in a story depicting them as ignorant trespassers in the Rat King's domain. Calum's killing was shown in a series of panels in which the Rat King's loyal subjects stripped him to the bone. After Andrew has fled, the Rat King tells his followers that the other human must be tracked down and killed. Otherwise he will tell the authorities about what he has seen and bring the vengeance of the surface dwellers down on The Kingdom. The comic ends with a full page panel showing an army of rats pouring through a sewer tunnel on their way to do their monarch's bidding.

Convinced that the Rat King means to kill him Andrew gets in touch with one of the PCs to ask for help.

GETTING INVOLVED

The referee will need to determine the contacted PC's connection with Andrew. Some suggestions (based on the PC's profession) are listed below:

Athlete: Knows Andrew from the local basketball court, possibly from coaching a junior team.

Attorney (mostly likely a solicitor in the UK): May have represented Andrew when he was questioned by the police. This is most likely if the PC has a criminal practice, funded by legal aid, or what passes for it in the time of Dark Conspiracy.

Clergyman/woman: Knows Andrew and his mother from their attendance at their local church. This is only likely to apply if the PC has an inner city parish and is Roman Catholic.

Public Employee, Construction or Factory Worker: Knows Andrew from living in the same neighbourhood. May work at the same place as his father.

ANDREW KIERSZNOWSKI



Level: Novice

Skills: Climbing 3, Language (Polish) 5, Observation 4, Streetwise 4.

Physical Description: Andrew is fair haired with blue eyes. He is small for his age and of slight build.

Notes: Andrew is the son of Polish migrants who settled in UK in the early 21st Century. Although he speaks his parents' language reasonably well he is very much a London teenager complete with cockney accent. He affects the streetwise cool necessary to get by in his rough neighbourhood. Underneath all the bravado Andrew is an intelligent and imaginative boy. His parents hope that he'll do well at school and get the qualifications necessary for a professional career. They disapproved of his hanging around with Calum O'Neil whom they saw as a bad influence. This disapproval probably only served to strengthen the boys' friendship and Andrew has been left traumatised by Calum's death. He is convinced in his own mind that The Rat King was responsible and wants the monster killed, not just because he feels under threat, but also in revenge for Calum. He will assist the PCs in whatever way he can.

(Rat King from page 9)

Doctor or Psychiatrist: May have examined Andrew when he first returned from the Match Factory, or possibly when he was in police custody. The boy's story was bizarre but something about it seemed to ring true.

Police Officer: A local beat cop may know Andrew from the neighbourhood. A detective may have questioned Andrew and, alone of his or her colleagues, been convinced by his story, or is puzzled by the order from on high to release the boy. The officer may also be able to obtain access to information on Operation Spring Clean (see below) which supports Andrew's account of hyper-aggressive rats living in the area.

Andrew fills the PC in on the details of his encounter with the rats and tells them of his fear that the Rat King's minions are looking for him. He asks for the PC's help. If the PC agrees their first move should probably be to contact the other PCs to discuss what action they should take. This assumes the PCs already know each other having worked out their relationships (see the "Solid Contacts" section pages 21-22 Dark Conspiracy).

Andrew's fears about being hunted by the Rat King are well founded. Agamemnon has entrusted his brother with discovering the identity of the human who escaped from the Match Factory. Ulysses won't make a particularly good job of this, but will eventually find out Andrew's full name and address. If the PC refused to assist Andrew, then the boy and his

family are killed a week later in a macabre attack at their home which sees a horde of rats enter the building at night via the drainage system before swarming all over the sleeping occupants. The tabloids have a field day with "Eaten Alive!" style headlines, and one or two journalists draw connections with the rat plague of a few years ago and the secret operation in Stratford Marsh. One of the less reputable papers offers a sizeable reward for a "Pied Piper of London" to rid the East End of its killer rats. This may be sufficient to involve PCs who refused to help Andrew when he first asked for help, although some of the evidence will be harder to find, having been taken by the police and/or damaged by rats.

INVESTIGATION

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

PCs making enquiries in Bromley-by-Bow find that it is a culturally varied Miketown (see Map 1 for general topography), home to several different groupings including Africans, Asians and East Europeans. The various ethnic/cultural groups don't always get along but are united in their dislike of nosey outsiders, especially ones representing the authorities, or corporate interests. When dealing with local residents all communication based skill rolls should be made at Formidable level. If the PCs can demonstrate that they are working for the Kiersznowski family then task rolls become merely Difficult: The residents are cagey but not hostile.

The information the PCs are likely to receive is listed below, roughly in order of usefulness.

1. **Andrew and Calum:** General opinion is that they weren't bad lads. No angels, but

(Rat King from page 10)

not involved in a gang, or anything else likely to get them into serious trouble.

2. **The Baker Twins:** The business with Andrew and Calum in the factory is reminiscent of what happened to the Agamemnon and Ulysses Baker, twin brothers who went to school with the interviewee. They were always playing truant to go exploring the nearby derelict industrial estates. One day, seven years ago, they just disappeared. Their parents never got over it. Their mother killed herself and their father became an alcoholic. The interviewee's memory is playing them slightly false here. There was no lengthy interval between the twins' disappearance and the suicide of their mother as an examination of contemporary media reports will show.

If the subject of rats comes up in the conversation the interviewee adds, almost as an afterthought, that a lot of kids at school felt that there was something "ratty" about the Bakers, hence their being given the nickname of "The Squeak Brothers."

3. **Friend of Yours?:** The interviewee doesn't have any information but tells the PCs they're not the only ones interested in the events at the Match Factory. A couple of days ago a man was asking people about what happened to the two boys. He looked really shifty though so he didn't get very far. In the end he had to flee the area as a couple of local hard nuts had taken such a dislike to him they wanted to beat him up. He was last seen speeding away in a Yugo Contempo. The interviewee can give a good description of Ulysses Baker in his human form, but suggest that he might be a tabloid reporter.

4. **The Bromley Rat Plague:** The district was attacked by a horde of rats seven years ago. The creatures swarmed through the streets attacking people and causing several fatalities. In rare show of decisive action the authorities became involved. They determined that the rat plague originated from an old industrial estate on the other side of the River Lee. An operation involving police, armed forces and specialist corporate contractors led to the estates being cordoned off for two weeks. During that period gunfire and explosions could be heard from inside the cordon.

5. **Operation Spring Clean:** The response by Central Government to the Bow Rat plague of 2013. A concerted attempt to:

a) Exterminate the over aggressive rat population centred on Sugar House Lane.

b) Discover the reason or reasons for the rats' aberrant behaviour.

Spring Clean's success seems to have been only marginal. Although thousands of rats were shot, gassed, poisoned or simply blown up, the rodent population has shown recent signs of recovery. Numerous specimens, both live and dead, were collected but none provided any clue as to why the rats should be so aggressive (note this isn't strictly true – a number of Seeker and Super Rat specimens were obtained but

(Rat King from page 11)

the authorities are keeping quiet about these strange mutants).

The operation was not without casualties, half a dozen soldiers and police officers were killed although in each case their cause of death is listed as “accidental”. There are some eyewitness accounts of men being attacked by rats of unusual size. The more sensational of these refer to rodents using weapons (including firearms) and being able to walk upright on two legs.

[Note that this information is only available from an official source such as a ranking police officer, member of the armed forces or security services. It can be obtained illicitly e.g. by computer hacking, but there should be some risk attached to such a venture.]

6. The Professor: PCs can research local records to trace what’s left of the Baker family. Finding their old flat requires a certain amount of asking around. A Streetwise roll is needed to locate someone who knew the Bakers, then a Persuade or Charisma roll is needed to get them to furnish the address. Alternatively the address can be found in historic public records (referee’s discretion as to what skill rolls are required – Computer Operation would seem the most likely).

The Bakers’ home turns out to be an anonymous flat in a block owned by the local housing authority. The block is in poor repair with concrete spalling off its outer surfaces. Many of the flats are boarded up. Professor Paul Baker lives on a floor where all of the properties but his are derelict. He rarely ventures out except for to buy food and booze from the local

chain stores. He will be at home when the PCs call.

The Professor dislikes visitors and the PCs will have a hard time getting him to open his door. (Formidable: Persuade roll required, reduced to Difficult if the PCs mention his sons). If all else fails the PCs can force their way in. The front door isn’t particularly strong. This does run the slight risk of attracting attention. If the PCs get a little too heavy with the Professor after gaining entry the referee may care to have a couple of beat cops arrive on the scene.

Assuming the PCs gain entry to Baker’s home, by fair means or foul, they find themselves in a shabby two bedroom flat that looks as if it hasn’t been cleaned in years. The front room contains a well worn three piece suite, a cheap retro looking TV, plus numerous empty cans, bottles and discarded food wrappings. A large bookcase takes up one wall striking a slightly discordant note with the surrounding squalor. It contains an eclectic mix of books: Learned publications on ancient history and classical mythology rub shoulders with lurid paperbacks on the occult (the latter with an emphasis on lycanthropy). There are also a number of natural history volumes devoted to rodents and a cardboard folder which if examined is found to contain tabloid reports of the 2013 rat plague.

The Professor will talk frankly about his family history; his sons, their truanting, and fascination with rats, the boys’ disappearance and the suicide of their mother. Since being discharged from hospital the Professor has had plenty of time to think about the events that led to the destruction of his family as well as doing some research which has taken him in some esoteric directions. He tells the PCs of his belief that his sons are Wererats, lycanthropes who turn into rodent-like creatures

(Rat King from page 12)

at the full moon. He won't reveal the details of his wife's suicide note but will tell the PCs the theory that his wife was a carrier of the Wererat gene but not a lycanthrope herself. The Professor hasn't been able to track down any other members of his wife's family. Catherine Baker, nee Katarina Dohnanyi, was an ethnic Hungarian from the Transylvania region of Romania and told her husband that her family had all been killed in one of the numerous ethnic conflicts that bedevilled eastern and central Europe in the early part of the century. Baker suspects that while the rest of the Dohnanyi clan may be dead the cause might be the deliberate lynching of people believed to be monsters, rather than an act of ethnic cleansing. Transylvania has plenty of history when it comes to vampires and lycanthropes. As for his sons Baker believes they could be responsible for the Bromley Rat Plague and the death of Calum.

Baker finishes by making it plain that he has disowned his sons. He regards them as monsters, especially for driving their mother to suicide. If the PCs want to hunt the pair of them down that's fine by him.

There is nothing else to be learned at the flat. Baker cleared out his sons' room years ago and uses it as his own bedroom. The main bedroom has been left just as it was when his wife killed herself. Everything is covered in a thick layer of dust. A dresser drawer contains his wife's suicide note and can be found with an Easy: Observation roll. The Professor will strenuously object to any search of his home by the PCs.

THE RAT KING COMIC

Andrew has a complete set of back issues, two

years' worth, stored in a cupboard in his bedroom. PCs who examine the comics find that they are simply, but strikingly drawn. The writing is rather formulaic: The eponymous Rat King lives in a subterranean realm where he rules over a huge multitude of rodents. Most issues involve the Rat King suffering some slight from Toppersiders (humans), journeying to the surface to exact his revenge then returning triumphantly to his adoring subjects. The rats are presented in anthropomorphic fashion, walking upright, having spoken conversations and using complex tools and machines. Humans in contrast are shown as stupid, brutish and markedly inferior to rats. A recurring theme in the comic is that one day rats will overthrow humanity and the Rat King will rule the world. Some of the stories show him working towards this end, stealing guns or leading his rodent army against human soldiers. The comic's setting is a generic city with little in the way of distinguishing features to indicate nationality or locale. The two most recent issues are an exception. They both feature accurate representations of the match factory where Andrew says Calum was killed. The comics refer to the factory as the Rat King's palace.

Another potential line of enquiry can be found on the comics' inner covers. They all contain a credits block which lists the writer and artist as "Ulysses B". This isn't of immediate assistance but there is a name and address for the comic's publisher: Impact UK Ltd of 51-53 Southwark Street, South London.

THE MATCH FACTORY

A huge industrial building built of brown brick and dating from the mid-nineteenth century. When match production stopped it was derelict for a time before being redeveloped in the late 1980s

PAUL BAKER ("THE PROFESSOR")



Level: Experienced

Skills: History 7*, Instruction 4, Persuasion 3, Language (Greek) 4, Language (Ancient Greek) 4, Language (Hungarian/Magyar) 3.

Physical Description: The professor's appearance is unkempt. He has long straggly grey hair and a beard to match. His face is dirty and lined. His eyes remain bright and keen, possibly an indication that years of alcohol abuse haven't completely destroyed his intellectual faculties.

Notes: Paul Baker is a broken man. His sole object in life is drinking himself into an early grave, something he hasn't quite managed yet. He gets drunk every day on a combination of cheap wine and strong lager. He will be lucid if the PCs pay him a visit but will become restive if they stay too long. He wants to go out to the shops and buy his daily booze ration. The Professor is not above trying to tap the PCs for beer money in exchange for information on his sons.

(Rat King from page 13)

as an apartment complex. With the onset of the Greater Depression the majority of the residents found themselves unable to afford to continue living there and were either repossessed, or simply abandoned their homes and disappeared, hoping to leave their debts behind them. The factory soon became derelict again. It has recently been acquired by Cafer Concrete Construction Company (C4) the American building conglomerate, and Insectoid ET front. PCs who take the trouble to find out about C4's purchase (Average: Computer Operation or Education roll required) may suspect that the company are involved in Andrew's encounter with the Rat King and his minions. They're not, but the company is up to no good and plans to redevelop the factory as a prole housing complex, with an Insectoid nest underneath. If the PCs investigate C4 it will prove to be a blind alley, but a potentially dangerous one. The company doesn't care for its affairs being scrutinised, and may dispatch some of its security goons to harass the PCs, or worse.

If the PCs visit the factory they find all of the windows and entrances securely sealed by metal shutters embossed with the C4 logo. Removing a shutter requires a Difficult: Lock Pick roll (one per 5 minutes allowed). Alternatively it can be prised off with a Formidable: Strength roll (again one per 5 minutes allowed). Both methods risk the PCs attracting unwelcome attention. The referee can punish inept parties that take too long to gain entry with harassment from a street gang, a police patrol, or a squad of C4 security guards. If Andrew is with the PCs he will show them the window he and Calum used to get into the factory. Otherwise a Formidable: Observation roll is needed to spot the window (reduced to Routine if the PCs thought to get directions from Andrew).

Entering the ground floor of the factory the PCs find themselves in a large open area, the partitions that divided up individual apartments have long since gone. A small section near the open window has been marked off with crime scene tape but this has already been torn in several places. PCs who examine the "crime scene" find little of interest, only some dark staining of the concrete floor, which if analysed turns out to be human blood.

Exploring the factory proves to be an anti-climax. The building is eerily silent with the only sound coming from the PCs footfalls and/or conversation. The PCs may be on edge, expecting to be attacked by hordes of monstrous rats but encounter nothing larger than the occasional cockroach. They find a few scraps of bloodstained clothing but no other sign of Calum O'Neil. It eventually becomes apparent that the rats have left the match factory.

Underneath the factory is a warren of passages, drains and tunnels which ultimately give access to the local sewer system. The only items of interest here are rat droppings and a some clumps of brown rat fur, caught in a grating or snagged on a piece of rusting metal. If samples of the fur are taken and the DNA analysed the results will be anomalous in one of the following ways (Referee's choice, depending on how many samples the PCs took):

Sample 1 comes from a mutant strain of rat which is quite large in size (Seeker).

Sample 2 comes from a creature with mixed human-rat DNA (Super Rat).

Sample 3 also features mixed human-rat DNA but in a different proportion to sample 2. The human DNA is

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more prevalent (Moreau Were).

Sample 4 is from a creature of unknown type, but with many rat like characteristics (Wererat).

Any samples taken in excess of four are found to be from normal brown rats.

Once inside the sewer system there is no indication of where the Rat King and his cohorts may have gone. Several days worth of drainage flows have washed away any trace of their passing.

[Optional: If the referee wishes to develop the C4 red herring then, in the time since the attack on Calum and Andrew, the Insectoids have started to colonise the tunnels beneath the factory. Their nest is not well established but contains enough adults and grubs to provide combat happy PCs with a challenge.]

IMPACT MEDIA

If the PCs do any research into the publishers of “The Rat King” comic an Average: Computer Operation or Education roll reveals the following information:

Impact Media is a multi-national company that specialises in comic publishing. Much of its output is standard fare: Super heroes and escapist science fiction written and drawn by in-house corporate hacks. Impact UK, the company’s British division, has a reputation for publishing edgier material, often with a darkly satirical edge. It makes use of independent writers and artists who primarily come from the Mike social class. The use of outside talent has proved extremely successful for the company and given its

publications a certain amount of street cred. Many people who normally wouldn’t be seen dead reading a corporate comic are far more sanguine about Impact UK’s publications. Comic purists maintain that Impact UK is merely creaming off the best independent creators and emasculating them with lucrative contracts to ensure they’ll peddle the corporate line. These people are a small minority though.

VISITING IMPACT UK

Southwark Street is located just south of the Thames and the City of London. It is some distance from the East End and the referee may care to impede the PCs journey so as to emphasise the difficulties of urban life post Greater Depression: Flooded Tube tunnels, road rage attacks, and police road blocks are all possibilities, as are any of the “In the City” encounters described in pages 158-159 of the Dark Conspiracy rulebook.

Eventually the PCs arrive at Impact UK’s offices which are located in the highly ornate, four storey Menier building. Originally constructed as a chocolate factory in the 1870s, the Menier became an engineering works in World War 2, a theatre and fringe arts venue in the early 21st Century, before ultimately being acquired as Impact UK’s headquarters. On entering the building the PCs find that the interior has an air of understated luxury, and features a lot of highly polished dark wood. For all Impact UK’s edgy reputation their place of business is emphatically corporate and conservative.

The PCs are greeted by a blandly smiling receptionist bot. It politely refuses any requests to see management and editorial staff, or anyone else connected with The Rat King. Its standard response

(Rat King from page 15)

is to ask the PCs if they have an appointment, and on learning that they don't, inform them that nobody can be seen without one. PCs requesting an appointment will be asked the nature of their business before being told that the person they wish to see has a full diary for the next two weeks.

The PCs should find the bot's relentlessly cheerful demeanour, combined with its studied unhelpfulness, extremely aggravating. However, just as they are about to lose their collective temper the bot relents and agrees to put a call through to Miss Vale who may be able to meet with them. After a brief telephone conversation an attractive young woman with shoulder blonde hair enters the reception area and invites the PCs to accompany her into a conference room. The woman introduces herself as Karen Vale, editor of *The Rat King*. She asks the PCs their business and why they are so keen to meet the creator of "The Rat King". She makes it clear that her company is dedicated to preserving the privacy of its authors and artists and there is no way it will divulge such details as Ulysses' real name or address. A meeting with him is out of the question.

If the PCs are frank with Vale about their interest in Ulysses and "The Rat King" she appears sympathetic, but is ultimately dismissive of Andrew's story of comic characters come to life. She accepts that Andrew may have seen something horrible happen to his friend but suggests the experience has caused him to suffer a psychotic episode: He is confusing real events with the comic. Vale refuses to be persuaded by any arguments to the contrary. She declares the meeting over and formally bids the PCs goodbye, shaking hands with each one.

If there is an Empath in the PCs group then the moment they touch Vale's hand they receive

KAREN VALE



Level: Experienced

Skills: Business 7, Computer Empathy 2, Foreboding 6, Human Empathy 7, Language (English) 8, Observation 8, Project Emotion 5, Project Thought 6, Psychology 3, Streetwise 3, Willpower 7.

Physical Description: Vale is of slim build with shoulder length light blonde hair and intense blue eyes. She dresses smartly at all times appearing every inch the young professional. Even when not at work there is something about her demeanour that just seems to say "corporate".

Notes: Vale is an ambitious woman constantly seeking to climb the company ladder. Editing a cult comic about an overgrown rat-man doesn't strike her as the best way to accomplish this. She also finds "The Rat King" genuinely distasteful. Discovering that its creator isn't human has given her all the justification she needs to get rid of Ulysses and obtain a move to a more prestigious title. Vale has no desire to confront Baker directly, nor does she wish to involve the Cambridge Regulars and expose her fellow empaths to possible danger. She has far less qualms about getting "norms" to do her dirty work, especially if it looks as if they've done this sort of thing before.

(Rat King from page 16)

a mental communication from her (via Project Thought) consisting of a mobile phone number and the words “Call Me”. If none of the PCs are Empaths then Vale will select the character with the highest EMP rating. Vale is a fairly accomplished Empath and has spent the meeting using her Human Empathy powers to determine which PC would be the best person to give a psychic message to.

THE CAMBRIDGE

Phoning Vale during office hours elicits a sharp “Not now!” followed by her hanging up. Contacting her in the evening brings a friendlier response. Vale tells the PCs that she wants to meet them to discuss The Rat King. She suggests meeting at 9:00pm that evening in a pub called *The Cambridge* near Crystal Palace in South London. She refuses to attend any venue suggested by the PCs. If the PCs want to hear what Vale has to say they will have to agree to her choice of meeting place.

Crystal Palace and its environs are primarily Miketown with a few Anthill enclaves – public housing developments from the mid twentieth century that have gone to wrack and ruin. A notable feature is Crystal Palace Park, neglected for years but still popular with locals as an open air leisure space. There are spectacular views over the Central London Dreamlands from the park and surrounding streets.

Strictly speaking The Cambridge is within the district of Norwood, but is located close to Crystal Palace Park at a busy cross roads. The pub itself is essentially a brick built isosceles triangle, its unusual shape the result of being positioned where two roads merge at a steep angle. There are two entrance doors, one on each of the long sides of the triangle.

Apart from its unusual shape, The Cambridge appears to be very much a traditional London boozier. It seems an unlikely place that a young professional woman would choose to frequent. Unknown to the PCs the pub’s landlord Harry Douglas is an empath. He runs the Cambridge as a kind of sanctuary for other empaths, a place where they can meet and socialise freely. “Norms” are tolerated but rarely stay long, usually leaving with the feeling that they’ve stumbled into a “locals’ pub”, one that isn’t very interested in having them as regulars.

Essentially, The Cambridge’s patrons function as a loosely organised empathic cell (see *The Cambridge Regulars* for further details).

When the PCs enter The Cambridge they find Karen Vale sitting alone at a table by the far wall. The other occupants are Douglas who is standing behind the bar talking to a big Irishman, an old woman sitting near an open fire reading a tabloid, and a young punk couple sitting on the opposite side of the room to Vale. None of them pay the PCs much attention although anyone who makes a Formidable: Observe or Average: Human Empathy roll has a very definite feeling that they’re being watched.

Karen Vale starts by trying to ascertain the exact nature of the PCs’ interest in “The Rat King”. Depending on how forthcoming they were at the previous meeting this may take some time. Vale asks numerous questions and may resort to using her empathic powers to divine the PCs’ motives if she feels they are being cagey. PCs who are up front about what they want to know find her almost disarmingly frank. She admits to despising “The Rat King” as “fatuous, nihilistic bullshit”, says that

(Rat King continued on page 19)

(Rat King continued)

THE CAMBRIDGE REGULARS - EMPATHIC CELL

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Goals: | Survival and Mutual Assistance |
| Methods: | Any, although few members have access to firearms so the term "Gunslingers" is probably inapplicable here |
| Empathic Philosophy | Mixed |
| Organization | Dictatorial Unit |
| Assets: | Adequate |
| Size: | 30 members |
| Level of Activity: | Low |
| Relations with ETs: | None. Not aware of their existence |
| Relations with Other Cells: | None |
| Headquarters: | London |

Description: Founded two years ago by Harry Douglas, long time pub landlord, and Empath. Douglas first became aware of his abilities as a young barman. He found he often knew what people wanted to drink before they even asked for it. He could also anticipate which customers were likely to be difficult and thus take action to prevent them causing trouble. As time went on Douglas encountered other people with similar abilities and hit upon the idea of creating a sanctuary for them: A place where they could relax with others of their kind. Perhaps unsurprisingly given his profession a pub struck Douglas as the perfect venue.

The Cambridge Regulars are a loose collection of empaths from varied backgrounds. They have no formal hierarchy or command structure other than recognising Douglas's authority as founder of the group and landlord of The Cambridge. It's his pub and his rules. There is no strategy for fighting the Dark Minions as most regulars do not know the creatures exist. Some, like Vale, may have encountered individual Minions but the cell as a whole is unaware that the world is being secretly invaded. At present the Regulars function as a social group and mutual support network. They may be persuaded to adopt a more pro-active stance if shown proof of the Minion invasion.



*Gaffer! Another pint here.
I am getting bad vibes...*

(Rat King from page 17)

she has a “bad feeling” about its creator Ulysses, and finally tells the PCs that, “he’s not human, and he’s evil.” If asked how she can be certain of this she merely says, “I know.” She is certain that Ulysses is connected with what happened to Andrew and Calum at the Match Factory.

If the PCs want to go and give him a hard time she is more than happy to assist by giving them his full name and address: Ulysses Baker, 5 Sebastian Towers, Coe Street, Olympic Village, East London

Vale also tells the PCs that Baker mostly works from home. He sends his work to the publisher electronically, and is rarely seen at Impact UK’s offices.

If the PCs become aggressive with Vale she will send an empathic call for help to Harry Douglas. Both he and the customer at the bar will intervene on her behalf. Neither man is the type to back down from a fight (treat as Veteran NPCs). If a fight does break out the other patrons will assist by using Project Thought and/or Willpower Drain to demoralise and frighten the PCs.

RAT CATCHING

THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE

The Village was built to house the athletes competing in the 2012 games. After the games finished the intention was for the residential properties in the village to be sold on to well heeled professionals creating a prosperous new community and a prime example of urban regeneration. The Greater Depression put paid to that idea. The decimation of the professional and middle classes meant that few people could afford to buy in the village even with

crashing property prices, while the newly emergent Nome class had no interest whatsoever in living in “shoebox flats”. The properties were instead acquired in blocs by several different corporations and used to house skilled manual workers and mid-level white collar staff. Moving to “The Village” is a sure sign that a person has gone up a rung or two on the corporate ladder and being rehoused there is an active goal for many employees. The Village is regarded as better than standard quality middle income housing. In recent years some properties have been bought or leased by successful Mikes attracted to The Village by its relatively pleasant surroundings and low crime rate. Although not walled off like The Dreamlands the village is policed by Marseg Security Services Ltd (see the sidebar), a company contracted by the owning corporations to provide street patrols and any necessary law enforcement.

The PCs first impression on entering the village should be of a well ordered community with plenty of greenery and open spaces. The place is pleasant if a little bland. The inhabitants are polite and neatly dressed. No homeless proles begging on street corners here. PCs whose appearance tends towards the rough and ready will stick out like a sore thumb. Biker types in leathers, ex-military veterans in combat jackets and anyone even vaguely bohemian looking will attract plenty of disapproving glances from village residents. Such PCs must make a Difficult: Streetwise roll every fifteen minutes to avoid attracting the attention of the Marseg security guards who patrol the village in Range Rovers. The guards will stop and question the PCs and if not satisfied with their reasons for being in the village encourage them to move on in the interests of “community stability”. PCs failing to take the hint or

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MARSEG SECURITY SERVICES LTD

Country of Incorporation: UK

Nature of Business: Conflict resolution and security services of all types.

Background: Founded ten years ago by former SAS captain James Marseg. Originally specialising in “conflict resolution” (a euphemism for the provision of mercenary forces) the company has successfully expanded into the security sector. It provides services such as individual close protection, secure transport and strategic site security. Typical customers are high net worth individuals and companies that don’t maintain their own dedicated security divisions. Marseg also has a contract with the UK coalition government to guard those strategic infrastructure sites remaining in state ownership. Company employees tend to come from ex-military or former police backgrounds. Many of them are licensed to carry firearms under the corporation friendly legislation passed by the coalition government shortly after it came to power.

(Rat King continued)

Map #1: Bromley-by-Bow



(Rat King from page 19)

cutting up rough will be subdued with stunsticks and tasers then carted off and dumped unceremoniously on waste ground outside the village. If the PCs prove to be too much of a handful for the guards they will call for backup from their own dedicated armed response team which arrives on scene in 1D6+6 combat rounds. The armed response personnel won't have any compunction about shooting the PCs especially if they've been waving their own guns around. The PCs will need to be discrete if they're to navigate their way around the village successfully.

MEETING ULYSSES

Baker's home is in an apartment block that was probably stylish in 2012 but hasn't aged well: The brickwork is worn and the large panes of glass used liberally throughout the building are suffering with condensation and rusting frames. It's still vastly better than what most of London's population have to put up with though.

How the PCs approach Ulysses is up to them. Two of the most likely options are discussed below. The referee should be prepared to accommodate variations to these, or allow the PCs to try something completely of their own devising. The objectives should be to uncover Ulysses' relationship with the Rat King and then discover where his brother can be found.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

The PCs decide to confront Ulysses face to face and coerce him to reveal all he knows. PCs trying to gain entry to his apartment find that the building is protected by a card operated MaxiGard Multilock (see Dark Tek p34) and intercom system. A person

without a key card usually has to rely on being let in by a resident. Trying to convince a random resident to allow entry by posing as a delivery or postal worker etc requires a Difficult: Act/Bluff roll (Formidable if the PCs decide to try it with Ulysses).

Trying to override the Multilock requires a Difficult: Electronics or Formidable: Lock pick roll (one per 30 seconds allowed). PCs who linger too long outside the door and excite the residents' suspicions can expect a Marseg patrol to arrive in short order.

Once inside the building the PCs need to gain entry to Ulysses' apartment, located on the second floor. He is suspicious of strangers and examines any callers through a spyhole in his front door. Again, a Formidable: Act/Bluff roll is needed to persuade him to open up. Even then he is reluctant to grant entry and tries to keep his visitors talking in the corridor. PCs can try to inveigle their way inside with another Act/Bluff or Persuade roll, this time at the level of Difficult. Alternatively they can just push past, possibly at the same time bundling Ulysses back into the apartment. If they adopt the latter option they will need to be quick. A lengthy melee in the corridor outside the apartment is sure to result in a building resident phoning the corporate cops.

In the event that the PCs do get inside Ulysses' home they are likely to want to question him and also search the apartment. Ulysses acts the part of the outraged householder demanding that the PCs leave, threatening to call security, and will probably need to be subdued. If rendered unconscious his empathic mask slips and his true Wererat nature is revealed. Otherwise he maintains his human appearance and when questioned denies all knowledge of Calum O'Neil and Andrew Kiersznowski, a real life Rat King or the events in the match factory. He

(Rat King from page 21)

mocks the PCs for believing what is plainly a work of fiction. It soon becomes plain that Ulysses will not volunteer any information unless pressured.

Physical violence will persuade Ulysses to talk in fairly short order. He offers information grudgingly always seeking to give away the bare minimum. He will lie if he thinks he can get away with it. Empathic powers may be of use in finding out what Ulysses knows and/or coercing him into telling it. As Ulysses is not human the successful employment of empathic powers largely depends on a PC having the rare (and undesirable) skill of Darkling Empathy. Even Empaths without this skill should at least be able to deduce that Ulysses isn't human by their inability to form any kind of link with him.

Skills such as Act/Bluff, Persuade, Interrogation and Psychology may also be of use when questioning Ulysses, although given his inhuman nature all Psychology skill rolls should be at least one level more difficult than normal.

If the PCs search the apartment they find nothing of interest apart from the second bedroom. This is done out as an artist's studio and there are numerous sketches on the wall of anthropomorphic rat creatures doing most banal everyday human things such as shopping, driving cars, waiting for a bus, working at office jobs, drinking in pubs and so on. There are quite a few sketches depicting male and female rats as romantic couples. The sketches are an attempt by Ulysses to reconcile his were-rat nature with his liking for human society. To him they represent an idealised vision of the rodent and the human.

The studio also contains a top of the range computer with state of the art drawing software.

The hard disk contains a full collection of original Rat King comics. Ulysses has just finished the latest issue which depicts the gruesomely imagined death of Andrew Kierznowski and his immediate family.

The computer is password protected (by the name "Agamemnon") and requires an Impossible: Computer Use roll or some nifty guesswork to access.

WATCHING AND WAITING

The PCs may adopt the softly-softly approach, watching Ulysses to see if he gives anything away. His daily routine proves frustratingly low key. After his abortive visit to Bromley-by-Bow he has no desire to make any further personal enquiries about the boys in the match factory, preferring to do the necessary research via computer from the safety of his home. It will take him nearly three days to track Andrew down: He gets lucky when a tabloid website publishes a leaked account of the boy's ordeal. In the meantime he remains closeted in his apartment, receiving no visitors other than a delivery man from a supermarket chain. If the PCs accost the deliveryman a Difficult: Persuade roll is needed to make him stop long enough to talk. Even then he has little useful information to impart: He makes deliveries of food every two days: Fresh fruit, vegetables and meat. No processed stuff. He finds Ulysses sullen and abrupt to the point of rudeness, but believes he may suffer from some sort of mental problem like agoraphobia. The deliveryman is unwilling to allow the PCs to accompany him inside the apartment block. If the PCs wish to do this, possibly as a prelude to barging their way into Ulysses' home, they will need to make a Formidable: Persuade roll.

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THE CHASE

If the PCs continue to wait, then in the late afternoon on the third day of their vigil they see Ulysses leave the apartment building. He gets into a Yugo Contempo parked outside the building and heads out of the village and towards the waste ground at Sugar House Lane. He drives cautiously and PCs who follow should make an Average: Vehicle Use roll to avoid being spotted. Failure results in Ulysses trying to lose the following vehicle(s) in a maze of crumbling side streets. Even if the PCs remain on Ulysses' tail he is now wise to them. He makes empathic contact with his brother and tells him to expect trouble. Unless stopped he drives on into Sugar House Lane with the intention of leading them into an ambush set up by his brother's minions: He drives his car down a narrow roadway between two derelict warehouses. If the PCs follow half-a-dozen Super Rats appear at the first floor windows and open fire at the PCs vehicle with a motley assortment of pistols. The Super Rats' task is to hinder the PCs long enough for Ulysses to get away. Injuring or killing any of the pursuing humans is a bonus. The rodents have little appetite for a protracted gun battle and withdraw once Ulysses is safely away, or if they take fifty per cent or more casualties.

Picking up Ulysses' trail after the ambush requires a Formidable: Stalking roll (or Impossible: Tracking at the referee's discretion). Success results in the discovery of Ulysses' Contempo parked inside a disused factory. Failure means the PCs are faced with the lengthy, and dangerous, task of searching the surrounding area (see "The Kingdom" below for the sort of encounters they are likely to have).

When the PCs get to Ulysses' car they find its owner gone, the driver's door left open, and the

key still in the ignition. The full moon can be seen clearly through a broken window at the front of the factory. Ulysses has dropped his empathic disguise and gone to ground. A Difficult: Stalking or Formidable: Tracking) roll is needed to follow his trail across the rubble strewn factory floor to a manhole cover. Persons with lacklustre Stalking or Tracking skills can notice the slightly raised cover if they succeed in a Formidable: Observation roll with each PC being allowed one roll per ten minutes. Once the PCs succeed the referee should refer to "Exploring The Kingdom – The Royal Court" below.

EXPLORING THE KINGDOM

At some point the PCs are likely to visit the Kingdom. This may be the result of questioning and or following Ulysses (see *Rat Catching* above) or having researched the area as part of their enquiries. The following information, and reference to Maps 1 and 2, should assist the referee in determining the outcome of any excursion into The Rat King's domain.

ENCOUNTERS

These are at the referee's discretion, but should be tailored to the strength and capabilities of the party. In any event the Kingdom's inhabitants won't let the PCs pass unhindered.

Rats: These are found all over the outer and inner regions of The Kingdom. When first encountered they will attack the PCs on sight, but become cautious if beaten back. Thereafter they will only attack if directed to do so by Agamemnon or if the PCs party becomes weakened by death or injury.

(Rat King from page 23)

Seekers: Initially there will be two of these creatures. They shadow the PCs for a time, all the while keeping in cover and moving stealthily (Formidable: Observation roll required to spot). After about ten minutes one of them breaks off and goes to fetch a party of Super Rats or goes directly to Agamemnon who dispatches his Royal Guard to deal with the interlopers. Meanwhile the other Seeker keeps a watch on the PCs.

Super Rats: These may be summoned by a Seeker or are trailing the PCs on their own initiative. They will behave according to type, attempting to catch the PCs in an ambush and attacking with small crossbows firing dirt encrusted quarrels (see Dark Races p93).

Outer Regions: The areas Agamemnon has taken over since the 2013 Rat Plague. These are mostly abandoned residential districts on the west side of the River Lee, the areas that weren't redeveloped for the Olympic games and which failed to benefit from the projected post games "bounce". Formerly public housing with a few private apartment blocks, they are the London equivalent of 'Burbs, as defined in Dark Conspiracy (p143) but without the usual residents of such places. Even the destitute and mad know well enough to keep away. The rats have taken over, spreading from house to house and driving the occupants out or killing them. The rodents are prepared to defend their territory aggressively. Human interlopers will be attacked.

Inner Region: Formerly an industrial estate

centred on Sugar House Lane. It bore the brunt of Operation Spring Clean and is now mostly a rubble strewn wilderness. A few buildings still stand (including the factory where Agamemnon has his headquarters). These have been colonised by the rats.

Workshop: A light engineering unit which the Super Rats have adapted to turning out weapons, and ammunition. Twelve Super Rats can be found here building crossbows, zip guns, or repairing sundry assorted firearms recovered from obscure places like drains or canal beds. Most of these weapons are pistols, and are likely to have some criminal history attached to them as they've usually been dumped by their previous owners subsequent to some nefarious activity or other. The Super Rats in the workshop aren't the most aggressive members of their race, being artisans rather than warriors. If disturbed by the PCs they will fight with whatever weapons are to hand but will try to retreat once they've sustained 25% casualties.

The workshop contains numerous machines, lathes, presses and the like, all ingeniously adapted to accommodate the Super Rats' short stature.

Storage: A large warehouse near the workshop contains what seems to be piles and piles of random junk; wood, scrap metal, clothing (including costumes taken from the old Three Mills Studios) and household effects. This is where the rats bring all the items they scavenge from the surrounding area. Much of the scrap metal and wood

(Rat King from page 24)

is used in the workshop by the Super Rats. The rest is just left in storage in the expectation that it will come in useful one day.

There is a 25% chance of encountering 1D6 Super Rats sorting through materials here. Otherwise the place is devoid of life.

Nursery: Another former warehouse, this one guarded by 4 Super Rats armed with pistols. If the PCs get past the guards they find the building occupied by 5 more Super Rats. These are females and 4 of them are nursing litters of 1D6 infants each in nests made from old clothing and other cast off fibres. The fifth female has only one infant, a male which possesses rat-like features and fur, but resembles a human toddler in size and proportion. This bizarre creature is a Super/Wererat hybrid, conceived during one of the Baker brothers' full moon rutting phases. Agamemnon is assumed to be the father and he has named his putative offspring Orestes. Agamemnon visits the nursery from time to time to look in on the hybrid's progress but is hardly a doting parent. While he thinks it entirely proper that he should have a son and heir this is tempered by his fear that Orestes may grow up to usurp him, and the suspicion that Ulysses may be the hybrid's actual father.

The mother Super Rats are unarmed but will fight to the death to defend their offspring. Killing Orestes will trigger a full on revenge assault from The Kingdom's rodent legions once news of his death becomes known.

The Royal Court: Agamemnon's lair is

beneath a large factory building in the centre of The Kingdom. The PCs may be led to the factory by Ulysses or come upon it while carrying out a search of area. Entry to the underground level is a covered manhole in the floor located in an out of the way corner of the building. Lifting the manhole cover reveals a concrete lined shaft. Steel rungs set into the concrete lead straight down into the darkness from which emanates a strong stench of urine, damp, and rotting vegetables. If the PCs have a torch with them they can rapidly ascertain that the shaft is around ten metres deep and leads to a disused sewage tunnel. The steel rung ladder is rusty in places but basically sound. An Easy: Climbing roll is sufficient to safely descend the shaft.

Once in the tunnel the PCs are close to the heart of Agamemnon's kingdom. They won't necessarily be aware of this and may be bracing themselves for a prolonged bout of subterranean exploration. Suddenly coming upon the Rat King's inner sanctum may be an unpleasant surprise to them. Agamemnon and his cohorts will know that the PCs are coming unless the PCs made a Formidable: Stealth roll as they descended the ladder. If Ulysses has gone ahead of them the roll is academic as he will have given his brother warning of the humans' approach. Refer to Map 2 for the layout of the small underground complex occupied by Agamemnon and his retinue.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs kill or capture Agamemnon the rats of The Kingdom suffer a catastrophic loss of morale

(Rat King from page 25)

and leadership. They revert to natural hierarchical pack behaviour, often fighting amongst themselves. Many of the Super Rats leave the area and renew their ties with the humanoid ETs. If Ulysses, Orestes, or possibly one of the Moreau Werens, survived they may take on Agamemnon's mantle and become monarch of a much weakened rodent kingdom. If Agamemnon escapes it won't be long before he reasserts control over his subjects. He will also have a personal grudge against the PCs and may decide to try and take revenge. The Kingdom could be a thorn in the PCs side for quite some time to come.

The following experience point awards are suggested:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Capturing/Killing Agamemnon | 2 |
| Exposing Ulysses | 1 |
| Getting out of The Kingdom alive | 1 |

VARIATIONS

The PCs may not be the only people interested in the Kingdom:

Extraterrestrial Intervention: The humanoid ETs are puzzled that their Super Rat allies seem to have deserted them. The creatures have completely vanished from their usual haunts and are nowhere to be found. The ETs decide to look into the matter and dispatch a group of *Igors* to investigate. When encountered the *Igors* may pose as a band of minion hunters drawn to the East End by some strange news reports and suggest joining up with the

PCs to pool information and resources . They will of course try to dispose of the PCs once they feel the time is right, e.g. after Ulysses has been captured or Agamemnon killed. If the referee feels *Igors* are too stupid to carry out what is a fairly complex task they can be substituted by an ET controlled empathic cell, Type II Changelings, or Men in Black .

Government Action: The events in the Match Factory have come to the government's attention. Fearing a repeat of the Bromley Rat Plague the powers-that-be have ordered a government department to look into the matter. A small team of intelligence officers (treat as Government Agents, as per Dark Conspiracy p 175) is sent to the East End and begins making much the same sort of enquiries as the PCs. The chances of them running into the PCs are fairly high. The government team will try and pump the PCs for any useful information before warning them off.

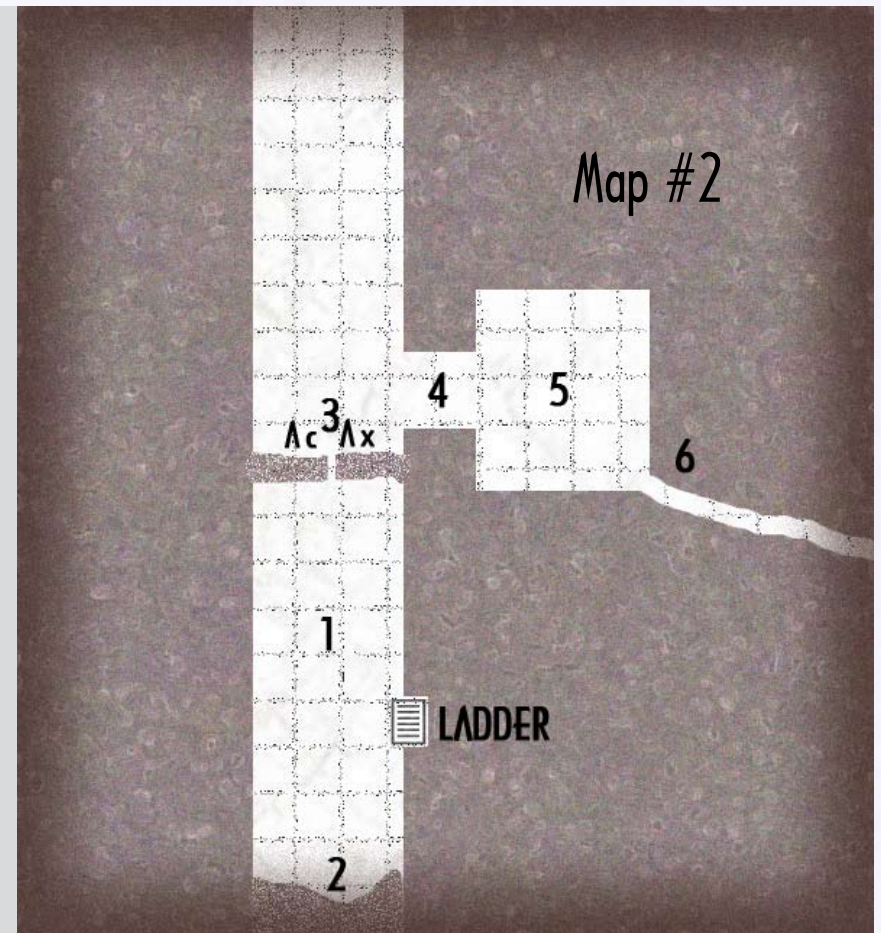


- 1. Sewage Tunnel:** Constructed of brick, formerly the factory's main waste water conduit. It has been disused for well over a decade and is mostly dry although there are sizeable damp patches on the walls.
- 2. Large Rubble Heap:** The sewer's roof has fallen in here, blocking the tunnel to all creatures except normal sized rats, several of which scurry away if the PCs approach.
- 3. Small Rubble Heap:** A waist high wall, made of earth, loose bricks, chunks of concrete and bits of scrap metal. A channel, wide enough to allow one person through at a time has been dug through the middle. Unless the PCs have been very stealthy Agamemnon's personal bodyguards Achilles and Ajax are waiting on the other side (at points marked "Ac" and "Ax"). They will hold their fire until the PCs are halfway between the shaft and the wall before opening up with their machine pistols. The wall protects their legs and abdomens with an armour value of 3.
- 4. Antechamber:** A roughly square room dug out of the side of the tunnel. The walls and floor are of hard packed dirt. Achilles and Ajax will be lounging around here in the event that they are unaware of the PCs' approach. Quick PCs might be able to get the drop on them.
- 5. Throne Room:** This is where Agamemnon spends a lot of his time dreaming of world domination. It is of similar construction to the antechamber but much larger in size. The floor is strewn with rubbish: Rotting fruit and

vegetable husks, animal bones and rat droppings. At the far end is the Rat King's throne. An old wooden boardroom chair taken from the factory's top floor offices. A rickety book case holds an assortment of dusty, worm eaten volumes: Biographies of world leaders (especially dictators), military history and politics. Like his father Agamemnon is a keen reader.

When the PCs enter the throne room after dealing with Achilles and Ajax there is no sign of the two brothers. An Average: Observation roll is needed (one per combat turn allowed) to spot a narrow tunnel dug into the earth floor in a far corner of the room. Agamemnon (and Ulysses if he's with his brother) will retreat down this tunnel and make for the surface. The hope is to lose the PCs then regroup for a counter attack. A successful escape means that the PCs will soon be assaulted by massed ranks of rats, Super Rats and seekers. The chances of surviving this onslaught are slim. Ideally the PCs should catch up with the Rat King and deal with him before he can summon his army.

- 6. Escape Tunnel:** A narrow passageway dug



into the earth with an average diameter of one metre. Humans can only crawl here, putting them at a disadvantage versus rat-forms which can scamper along at a fair speed. The tunnel emerges in a factory cellar one hundred metres away. A brick stair case leads up to the surface.

(Rat King continued)

MINIONS AND BEASTIES

ULYSSES BAKER – CREATIVE WERERAT

| | | | | | |
|--|---|------------|----|-------------|-----------|
| Strength | 5 | Education | 6 | Move | 3/9/17/32 |
| Constitution | 2 | Charisma | 7 | Skill/Dam. | 7/1D6+1 |
| Agility | 7 | Empathy | 10 | Hits | 8/15 |
| Intelligence | 9 | Initiative | 5 | # Appearing | 1 |
| Special: Empathic human image projection (see Dark Conspiracy p229), Animal Empathy 6 (rodents only) | | | | | |
| Skills: Act/Bluff 6, Bargain 8, Business 5, Computer Operation 5, Stalking 6, Stealth 6, Tracking 5, Vehicle Use (Wheeled) 4, Willpower 6 | | | | | |

Description/Notes: The more human, and intelligent, of the brothers. He has ambivalent feelings about his twin: Love, and admiration for his empathic abilities, mixed with a certain amount of contempt for Agamemnon's dreamy nature and general lassitude. "The Rat King" is a product of this ambivalence. The comic exaggerates and glorifies the brother's exploits but at the same time contains enough clues for an informed reader (e.g. Andrew and Calum) to locate Agamemnon's kingdom with potentially disastrous consequences, such as a re-run of Operation Spring Clean. Part of Ulysses would like to see this happen so that he could lead a relatively normal life amongst humanity. At the same time he needs Agamemnon and the underground realm beneath The Kingdom. Where else would Ulysses go when it's full moon?

Ulysses' uncertain loyalties means that PCs who have dealings with him find him sly and treacherous. He constantly changes his attitude, sometimes appearing to genuinely aid the PCs only to stab them in the back as soon as the opportunity arises. If the PCs regain the upper hand he will be on their side again trying to explain his previous actions as a diversion, or a necessary piece of subterfuge.



(Rat King continued)

AGAMEMNON BAKER – THE RAT KING

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|------------|----|-------------|-----------|
| Strength | 5 | Education | 6 | Move | 3/9/17/32 |
| Constitution | 2 | Charisma | 7 | Skill/Dam. | 7/1D6+1 |
| Agility | 7 | Empathy | 10 | Hits | 8/15 |
| Intelligence | 8 | Initiative | 5 | # Appearing | 1 |

Special: Empathic human image projection (see Dark Conspiracy p229), Animal Empathy 10 (rodents only*), Project Thought 10

Skills: Leadership 8, Small Arms: Pistol 3, Stalking 9, Stealth 8, Tracking 9, Willpower 6

*Agamemnon has a specialised form of animal empathy which is similar to that possessed by Insectoid ETs, but only affects rodents. By use of Project Thought Agamemnon can command any rodents he is in empathic contact with.

Description/Notes: The dominant twin and the more bestial of the two. He rarely bothers to adopt human guise, much preferring to stay in his true form. Perversely he still affects human dress and is usually clothed in an assortment of military uniforms complete with medals, taken from the costume department of Three Mills studio, or stolen from army surplus stores and second hand shops. Agamemnon considers this attire completely appropriate. He is after all the leader of a great army which will one day expunge humanity from the face of the planet. Agamemnon also sports a pistol holster in which he keeps a Browning HP35 pistol. He only has one magazine for it, and regards the weapon as largely ornamental. That won't stop him using it in a fight though.

Agamemnon's pretensions to world domination are complete fantasy. Although char-

ismatic and empathically gifted enough to maintain control over his kingdom he is lazy, and lacks the willpower to make his dreams of conquest a reality. He spends much of his time lolling around on his throne, half asleep, indulging himself in ever more elaborate fantasies of empire. If he is feeling energetic he organises a rally where he harangues massed gatherings of his subjects about their shared destiny and the rodent utopia they will create once the Topsiders have been defeated. Andrew and Calum had the misfortune of stumbling upon one of these events.

Agamemnon is reliant on his brother for advice on strategy and Ulysses has his own reasons for not wanting Agamemnon to be too successful.



(Rat King continued)

ACHILLES AND AJAX – THE ROYAL GUARD

| | | | | | |
|--|---|------------|---|-------------|-----------|
| Strength | 4 | Education | 4 | Move | 4/8/16/32 |
| Constitution | 5 | Charisma | 3 | Skill/Dam. | 5/2 |
| Agility | 6 | Empathy | 3 | Hits | 9/18 |
| Intelligence | 5 | Initiative | 4 | # Appearing | 2 |
| Skills: Small Arms (Rifle) 5, Small Arms (Pistol) 7 | | | | | |

Description/Notes: These two are Moreau Weres, former gang members kidnapped and experimented on by a bio-science corp. They have been extensively “augmented” with rodent DNA in similar experiments to those that created the Super Rats. The outcome in their case was slightly different though: They are far more humanoid in appearance, their features are rat like but they stand upright (both are just over six feet tall) and lack tails. They were freed from the lab in a Super Rat raid and agreed to accompany their liberators back to the Kingdom. Impressed by their fearsome appearance and skill with firearms Agamemnon appointed them as his personal bodyguards. He also gave them their classical nicknames. The two gangers were initially bemused by this but found that the hierarchy in the Kingdom wasn’t that much different to that of their old gang and they were happy to be near the top of the tree for once. They have grown bored with the lack of action though and will relish taking the PCs on in a fight. Both are armed with Skorpion machine pistols. Like their master Achilles and Ajax still affect human dress, they are clad in typical street gang clothing (leather jackets and jeans/combat trousers, or as appropriate to the referee’s campaign).

SUPER RATS

| | | | | | |
|---|---|------------|---|------------|------------|
| Strength | 2 | Education | 2 | Move | 5/10/20/40 |
| Constitution | 5 | Charisma | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 3/2 |
| Agility | 7 | Empathy | 3 | Hits | 4/6 |
| Intelligence | 4 | Initiative | 5 | # App. | 1D6 |
| Skills: Small Arms (Pistol) 4, Thrown Weapon 6 | | | | | |

Description/Notes: The unholy product of experiments with combining rat and human DNA. Further information on their origin, habits and capabilities can be found in Dark Races (p93).

The Super Rats of The Kingdom have abandoned their ET allies to follow Agamemnon. They believe in his vision of a rodent empire spanning the globe and are intent on occupying a pre-eminent place in the coming new order. Being more intelligent and capable than the Seekers and brown rats they feel that this is their right. The appointment of Achilles and Ajax as royal bodyguards has irritated them but not sufficiently to test their loyalty to Agamemnon. There are only two of the Moreau Weres and the Super Rats do not consider the two ex-gangers a threat to their status.

The Super Rats will take the most active part in attempting to repel any PC incursion into The Kingdom. They will harass the PCs, sniping at them from cover with pistols, zip guns and crossbows, or mounting carefully staged ambushes as detailed in “Exploring the Kingdom” above.

(Rat King continued)

SEEKERS

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1D3 | Initiative | 5 | Agility | 8 |
| Attack | 85% | Strength | 2 | Skill/Dam. | 4/1D6 |
| Move | 12/24/48 | Constitution | 2 | Hits | 6/12 |

Description/Notes: Specially bred large rats originally used by Morlocks and Dark Elves as tracking animals. They are the size of a greyhound and more intelligent than normal rats. Typically they will shadow the PCs and report their movements back to the Super Rats or direct to Agamemnon. They may also accompany Super Rat search parties looking for the PCs. They won't usually attack unless the PCs make hostile moves towards them in which case roll attack chance as per normal.

Seekers!
Check out
Challenge Magazine
issue 52
Thanks Lester!
-ed.



RATS

| | | | | | |
|-------------|--------|--------------|---|------------|-----|
| # Appearing | 5D10 | Initiative | 6 | Agility | 7 |
| Attack | 45% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 3/2 |
| Move | 4/8/15 | Constitution | 1 | Hits | 1/2 |

Description/Notes: The most numerous of The Kingdom's inhabitants. These are common brown rats and operate in packs as detailed in Dark Conspiracy (p195). Their presence is all pervasive in The Kingdom. PCs exploring the area will hear them scratching around in the walls or occasionally catch sight of one out of the corner of their eye before it disappears into a handy bolt hole. The rats will be reluctant to fight with the PCs unless their party seems particularly weak. They may be directed to attack by Agamemnon in which case wave after wave of rats assault the PCs and keep on coming regardless of casualties. Brown rats occupy the lowest level of The Kingdom's hierarchy and there are plenty of them. Agamemnon regards them as expendable, particularly in cases where his own neck might be at risk.

(Rat King continued)

SOURCES/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The inspiration for this scenario came from a discussion on the darkconspiracy.info forum, and also from a walk I did with my brother around the East End Canal network in July 2007. The route can be found in the AA's "1001 Walks in Britain" (ISBN 10: 0749542624 or 13: 978-0-7495-4262-7): Walk 273 - "Three Mills and the Canals").

I'm grateful to Zvezda for his numerous helpful suggestions and comments regarding the first draft.

Many of the locations mentioned in this scenario are real places. Information on some of them can be found at the following websites:

Bromley-by-Bow

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromley-by-Bow>
<http://www.kingsleyhall.freeuk.com/bromleybybow.htm>
<http://www.kingsleyhall.freeuk.com/bromleybybow.htm>

The Bryant and May Match Factory

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryant_and_May_Factory%2C_Bow
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryant_and_May_Factory%2C_Bow
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bow_Quarter
<http://www.thebowquarter.co.uk/pages/bowquarter.htm>

The Menier Chocolate Factory

<http://www.menierchocolatefactory.com/index.php>
<http://www.menierchocolatefactory.com/index.php>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menier_Chocolate_Factory

The Cambridge

<http://www.beerintheevening.com/pubs/s/26/26485/Cambridge/Norwood>
<http://www.beerintheevening.com/pubs/>

[s/26/26485/Cambridge/Norwood](http://www.beerintheevening.com/pubs/s/26/26485/Cambridge/Norwood)
<http://www.virtualnorwood.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=1413&st=0>

Formerly a favourite stop of the author's when visiting Crystal Palace. Used to be a real old school drinking den, now apparently a gay pub. Assuming the Cambridge survives in Dark Conspiracy's world it seems appropriate for it to cater for another minority group, while retaining some of its former grittiness.

The Kingdom

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bow_Back_Rivers

The Olympic Village Development

<http://www.derelictlondon.com/id1434.htm>
http://www.lprconsortium.co.uk/contact_us.html

Other Sources

Rats:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Rat

The C4 corporation originally appears in "The Enemy of My Enemy" by Craig Sheeley, a Dark Conspiracy adventure from Challenge Magazine issue 63.

Seekers were created by Dark Conspiracy's author Lester W. Smith and originally appeared in Challenge Magazine issue 52.

"The Red Riding Quartet" (particularly "1974" and "1983") by David Peace

"Graveyard Shift" by Stephen King

"The Rats" by James Herbert

BILLY AND THE WORLD ALL TOPSY-TURVY

An Infernal Tome

by Christopher Smith Adair
for *Call of Cthulhu*®

“But where do you come from?” asked young Billy.

“We come from the spaces in between, Billy, do we!” they sang.

“But we may not stay. We must away!”

But we’d love to come and play another day!

*May we show you the Way?
Say you’ll learn the Way!”*

William Mayweather is a little remembered author of the Victorian period. He began his career as a poet, but found little success until he published his first children’s novel, *Billy, The Boy Who Fell Off the Edge of the World* in 1878. It was regarded by adults as too derivative of Lewis Carroll’s writing (including its lack of “moral character”), but many children responded to the fanciful writing and Mayweather’s engravings of the peculiar characters, such as the Limpid Mr. Starfall. Mayweather developed enough of an audience to write two more books, *Billy and the Five Red Masks* (in which Billy must decide which of five identical masks he should wear) in 1881, and *Billy’s Several Misadventures* (such misadventures include Billy trading places with his favorite toy, becoming a wooden puppet while the toy becomes a little boy; Billy receiving a giant egg from a distant relation, which will not hatch regardless of what he does; Billy getting lost in his own house; and others) in 1883.

Tragedy struck in 1884 while Mayweather and his wife Cynthia were visiting Germany. They often traveled throughout Europe together, but during

this trip, Cynthia Mayweather disappeared, and was never seen again. William claimed that she had gone off alone for a moment during their visit to the Black Forest; when she did not return after a few minutes, he searched for her to no avail. Returning to Sussex, England, Mayweather began his relative isolation from society.

Rumors persisted that there was more to the story, and Oscar Wilde was once heard to remark that he had visited the haunted writer in 1885, and that a drunken Mayweather told him, “Oscar, sometimes the walls break down. Sometimes love is lost in the embrace of uncaring gods. Dear Cynthia has found another world. Or rather, another world has found her.” Since Wilde never wrote down this incident with his old friend, the story remains apocryphal.

On May 14th, 1887, the constable of Sussex and some local friends of Mayweather’s entered the writer’s estate. He had not been seen for over a month, which was strange even for the reclusive writer. Mayweather was found in his study. He had slashed his throat open with a letter opener



(Topsy-Turvy from page 33)

and bled to death over a manuscript he had been working on. Mayweather was buried on his estate next to the lovingly tended, yet empty, grave of his wife. The grisly manuscript was said to have been destroyed, but such apparently is not the case.

In recent years, a handwritten manuscript entitled *Billy and the World All Topsy-Turvy* by William Mayweather, 1887 has surfaced. Discovered in the private library of rare book collector Cesar Mireles upon his untimely death, the manuscript immediately caused a stir in the world of bibliophiles. At first dismissed as a tasteless hoax, the manuscript, after analysis of the handwriting and drawing style, is now considered authentic. Blood has soaked through much of the manuscript, but the story that can be made out involves Billy being visited by Twilley and Dooley, brothers (or cousins; the manuscript refers to them as both in separate passages) who only appear when Billy closes his eyes. Twilley and Dooley tell Billy that the world he sees around him is false. The real world is hidden, but if Billy helps them, they can reveal the true world, and Billy will be crowned its king, “until the sun falls like a rotten



apple and bursts all maggots on the little sons of Man.” Many of the characters from the other books return and begin to teach Billy the words to sing and the pattern to dance. The incidents in the story, along with the drawings, fully embrace the macabre potential of Billy’s earlier adventures. The writing becomes more disjointed and rambling as it progresses, until it reaches this point: “Billy, we have watched you oh-so-long. Now is the final lesson no more,” with the “no more” scrawled frantically across the page. The last page of the manuscript is a portrait of Billy, the gangly, grinning boy. Two bloody thumbprints obscure his eyes.

The manuscript contains much arcane knowledge, but the final revelation to bring about the “real world” is not here, thankfully. But those who think to closely examine the previous books along with the manuscript may learn just enough to put them on a path that will mean the end of all we know and cherish.



Mythos Library

BILLY AND THE WORLD ALL TOSPY-TURVY – in English, by William Mayweather, 1887.

Sanity loss 1D4/1D8; Cthulhu Mythos +6; average one month to read and comprehend. Spells: Call/Dismiss Dooley (Daoloth), Call/Dismiss Twilley (Yog-Sothoth), Step Through the Door That is Not There (Create Gate), Call the Limpid Mr. Starfall (Summon/Bind Servitor of the Outer Gods), Call Susie, the Girl with the Scrambled Face (Summon/Bind Dimensional Shambler).

Notes on these versions of Call/Dismiss Daoloth and Yog-Sothoth:

The manuscript gives instructions on the song and dance that will bring Twilley and Dooley. The caster is told to close his eyes; those not following the manuscript’s advice and keeping their eyes open will still bring the gods, but the sight of them will surely damage the mind of the viewer. A tower is not required to bring Yog-Sothoth, although it helps (the manuscript doesn’t mention one). The various devices usually used to Call Daoloth are also not required, and are not detailed. Daoloth may choose to use the primary caster as its host (although it may also choose to manifest without doing so).

WHEN NIGHT DARKENS

Fiction

by Lee Williams

*“...And when night
Darkens the streets, then
wander forth the sons
Of Belial, flown with in-
solence and wine”*

-John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Grainger was awoken by the sound of gunfire. Trying hard to concentrate his still sleepy mind, he realised it was actually a vehicle out in the street. “Must be using home-brewed gasohol,” he thought. Taking a few deep breaths, he swung himself out of bed and headed for the bathroom. When he was done, he got dressed and started up the coffee pot in the tiny kitchen, then turned on the radio. A jokey commercial for Sumitomo-Dial’s new cheap rate calls came on, as Grainger toasted the now slightly stale bread he had managed to get fresh-baked two days previously. Just because he had managed to move upwards from the Zone into a reasonably decent area didn’t mean his scavenging skills had lessened.

With coffee mug in one hand and hot buttered toast in the other, Grainger surveyed the view from his second-floor window. Across the street was the building that had been a homeless shelter, way back when the homeless were still in the minority and people actually cared about them. It was now the area police station, complete with shuttered windows, security cameras and gated access. Behind the building stood a five metre tall

earth bank, originally built to block out noise from the highway access road but which also came in handy for blocking rocket and bomb-throwing attacks on the station car park. Even in what now passed for respectable suburbs, officers of law enforcement didn’t take too many chances.

“Nor do the rest of us” he mused to himself.

Draining the last dregs of coffee, Grainger started a pot of porridge on the aging stove and returned to the bedroom while it began the long process of warming up. Opening the combination lock on the cupboard at the back of the wardrobe, he carefully selected the items that would accompany him on this early spring evening. The sound of engines came from outside as the evening shift of police rolled out ready to protect and serve, especially the people who could afford them. As he loaded up his rucksack, it occurred to Grainger that if the cops knew what he knew, crime would come way down their list of priorities. “It’s not their problem,” he thought to himself, “it’s up to me and the others to do some damn thing about *Them*.” For a moment

(When Night Darkens from page 35)

he felt an echo of the terror that he had felt on that November night, when those things had burst from the drains and he saw what passed for their faces, then he caught himself and let it subside.

“That’s just enough,” he said to himself, “just enough to sharpen the edge.”

Now fully awake, and with a determined look in his eye as he caught his reflection in the mirror, he finished equipping himself. Back into the kitchen, where the stove’s feeble heat had just about managed to warm the pot through, he threw a small handful of sugar over the porridge before guzzling it down. Throwing the empty pot into the sink, he checked himself over one last time, then grabbed his leather jacket and his hat from the hook by the door and exited. The door locked itself behind him as he headed down the hall and out into the street. The last rays of sunshine dwindled away as Grainger rounded the corner and started the walk downtown.

It was only a couple of blocks from the edge of the *miketown* where Grainger lived to the closest *anthill* area. Beyond that lay the stinking ooze that was once a river, and on the other side of that was the Zone. All those months ago he had been running from the Blackbird gangers through that same Zone, fearing for his life. He had run into one dark corner of that wretched place, and there he had seen the things with hideous faces. Yet, they left him alone to scabble away and watch in terror as they effortlessly massacred the half-dozen gang members. The idea had later occurred to him, when he was able to think about it, that quite apart from the rending of flesh and the cracking of bones those things seemed to somehow draw strength from the horror that their victims endured. Since then, he had resolved to never let himself be too scared. There was no way

he was going to let himself be useful to Them.

Grainger had also been surprised, but relieved, to find that other people had seen things. The note that had been slipped to him when the stranger jostled him in the busy crowd on Wells Street had led to him meeting a few who had experienced similar things. The woman who seemed to be in charge obviously had friends in useful places, and it was less than a month after the first meeting that Grainger had moved to the *miketown* apartment.

As he moved among the packed streets and pavements of the *anthill*, he stopped reminiscing about the last few months and concentrated on tonight’s task. Taking his bearings at the southern fried pigeon stand, he realised it was only another couple of hundred metres to where he was to meet his partner. Up above, the smog was thinning. Grainger kind of liked the smog, the smoky blackness made everyone more or less equal. Some of Them could see through it, and others didn’t even need eyes anyway, but he still felt more secure in the dark. He had been told that nighttime was when They were usually more active, though many of Them weren’t actually nocturnal beings.

“The one thing we have in common,” he thought.

As Grainger reached the street running parallel to the river, he caught sight of a figure wearing a full-length brown stockman’s coat and matching wide-brimmed hat, and carrying a large grey rucksack. He crossed over to the doorway where the man stood and gave the pass phrase. “Do you have the time?” said Grainger.

“Just a minute,” replied the other, “I’ve got it written on a piece of paper.” The two shook



(When Night Darkens from page 36)

hands. "So how have you been these past couple of weeks?" asked the brown-coated man.

"Been just fine," answered Grainger. "How about yourself Mort? Still plotting to bring down the evil media baron's empire from within?"

Mort chuckled. "That's a bit too ambitious for a mere customer database clerk like me I'm afraid, but as long as he pays me I can afford some gadgets to put into our little 'hobby fund'." His face grew serious. "So, which way are we crossing tonight? Over the bridge and risk a possible gang toll, or under the bridge and risk falling into that crap they call a river?"

"Tonight I'm in the mood for a stroll under the stars", Grainger replied, "plus, it's still a bit early yet for the gangs to be bothering mere tourists such as ourselves."

Mort made a face. "I knew you were gonna say that, but if they do bother us you will have to deal with it. I have to look after my bag of tricks."

Grainger smiled. "Understood."

Sure enough the bridge was deserted, though the pair had no doubt that someone in the Zone would have taken notice of their arrival. A short walk through the broken barriers and warning signs that littered the bridge's roadway and they were able to slip back into the shadows of the derelict warehouses and old factories that lined that bank of the river. Graffiti was everywhere, covering every single inch of wall. Here and there in the distance, they could see bonfires. Apart from the slight noise caused by their own movement, the only sounds were far-off shouts and the much closer scurry-

ing of rats. Grainger chose to believe they were rats anyway; as far as he was concerned it was much too soon to be dealing with any of Them.

As they left the warehouses of Bank Street behind and made their way deeper into the Zone, Grainger felt the unmistakable sensation of being watched. Concentrating, he reached out with his mind to determine the location of any unseen observers. Almost automatically his right hand unzipped his jacket and rested lightly on the butt of his holstered pistol. Mort saw this, and realising what Grainger was doing, placed a set of goggles over his eyes and started scanning the darker corners and shadows surrounding them.

"Whoever it is, they know I felt them and they are blocking me," whispered Grainger. "Do you see anything?"

"Nothing" Mort replied. "This place is full of hidey-holes though."

Grainger slung his rucksack over his left shoulder and drew the black P16-40 from his holster. From somewhere inside of his duster, Mort pulled a large chrome-plated revolver. Grainger raised an eyebrow. "Jeez! Where the Hell did you get that thing?"

"You know that Brazilian guy over on Archer Street who gets ammo for us?" asked Mort. "I was over there last week settling up our account, and he showed me this. One of his relatives from Goiania brought this along last time he came to visit, and he said he wanted to sell it. I just happened to have the money."

"That figures," said Grainger. "OK, proceed with extra caution from here on in."



Way up above the Zone, the smog had begun to merge with rain clouds coming in from the north. Soon a drizzle of rain began to fall, bringing with it all the pollutants that had caused the smog in the first place. Grainger and Mort pulled up their collars to avoid getting the stuff down their necks. Carefully, they pressed on through the rubble and junk that clustered together along the side streets, avoiding anywhere that looked like it might be a tramp's nest or a ganger's hideaway. At the next junction they heard a motorbike engine approaching, and ducked back into cover as a trail bike zoomed past less than 3 metres away. The rider was more intent on avoiding the garbage heaps that lay scattered about the roadway, and didn't even see the two of them. Mort leaned forward and whispered in Grainger's ear.

"Is it just me, or are there even less people around than usual?" he asked.

"I had the same thought," Grainger whispered back. "There's supposed to be a couple of thousand still living in the area, and those

Blackbirds I saw getting cut up shouldn't have made the place this much quieter."

"You reckon it could be something to do with Them?"

"Well, if it is Them then they must be up to something pretty big or they wouldn't need so many people," Grainger replied. "Either that or everyone's stayed in tonight, which I doubt."

Mort scanned the area through his goggles again. "I think this is a good place for a sensor," he said, "right by an intersection and near the centre."

"Okay, do your thing," said Grainger, reaching out once again for the mental vibrations that would betray the presence of watchers. Mort set to work, planting the first of what would eventually be a network of bugs that would allow them to monitor activity during future missions in this area.

Presence was awakened by a vague empathic sensation. It took a moment to recognise what

(When Night Darkens from page 38)

it meant. Once again, some of the prey-humans had strayed into its feeding ground, but this time there was something more. There was one that could see with its mind. This was not unheard of to the Presence, but when it had visited this world before the ones who could see were few. This time there were many more, though it still was not the norm. There were still plenty of places in this world where the Presence could feed, or hide, or merely plan its next grand scheme. It felt pleased when it remembered what it had done centuries before, when the last grand scheme had played out and thousands of humans perished at each other's hands across Asia and Europe...

Something else came from the Presence's more recent memory; this intruder had been here when last the Presence and its lesser brethren had needed to feed hurriedly without recourse to stealth or disguise. Six of the Prey had fallen to them that night, and as they were fully satiated they had slipped back to their subterranean abode and allowed this one to escape. There was no point in wasting food after all, even though the many other rotting corpses they kept in their lair would serve as emergency food

This one had come back, and from its behaviour and demeanour the Presence understood that it had come to seek and destroy either the Presence itself, or the lesser ones like it. The Presence decided that its destruction was beyond the prey-human's capabilities, and so it summoned the other lesser ones to deal with the intruders.

'Go out to the surface and deal with these prey-humans who would attempt to end our existence', it told them. The lesser ones made for the exit, and the Presence meshed its mind with one of theirs

so it could watch the deaths of the intruders.

Mort had just finished testing the sensor when Grainger suddenly jumped a little and started looking around, wide-eyed. His mind was suddenly full of other, darker presences.

"What is it?" asked Mort.

"I just got a flash of something pretty powerful," Grainger said, shaking his head. "Dunno what it is, but it kind of felt like one mind in several places."

"Forewarned, or in this case foreboded, is fore-armed," said Mort, reaching into his backpack once again. This time, he took out the unmistakable shape of an MP-7K before sealing his pack and strapping it firmly to his back. Grainger, still slightly dazed from the split-second exposure to such a powerful mind, holstered his P16-40 and dropped his rucksack to the ground. From within, he drew his shotgun and a bag of 12-gauge cartridges before he too secured his pack. Still scanning with his mind, he began to lead the way back over towards Bank Street. Behind him, Mort kept his eyes out to their rear and to the street side. Mort's vision was enhanced by the infra-red goggles he wore, but he always felt a little creeped-out by the way they made everything look as though it was swimming in blood. Even very hot things that showed white had a halo of bright crimson. Grainger had told him once that when reaching out mentally in a crowd, there was a similar effect. Different people's empathic auras showed up in differing shades, while non-living things just tended to show a plain outline.

As they reached about halfway back, a shadowy something about twenty metres behind caught Mort's eye. Tapping Grainger on the shoulder



and then pointing to the area, he looked again but saw nothing. Mort pulled the goggles down around his neck. Blinking a few times, he looked again with his own eyes but still could see nothing except rubble. Beside him, Grainger was concentrating hard but he also drew a blank.

“What was it?” he hissed.

“There was definitely movement,” whispered Mort, “but the IR only showed background

temperatures. You getting anything?”

Grainger shook his head. “Still nothing, I reckon I’m being blocked again. More I think about it though, I believe that the two impressions I had so far are from different minds.

First one just seemed to be watching out of interest, but that other one just now was on a totally different level, way more powerful.”

“Think it’s time to step up the pace a bit?” asked Mort.

“I seriously doubt that would make any difference,” replied Grainger.

The Presence sent a reprimand to the lesser one that had almost let itself be known to the intruders. Though it was difficult to direct the lesser ones whilst keeping the area blanketed, the Presence thought it was better to remove the one human’s



(When Nght Darkens from page 40)

ability to see with its mind. Keep him in the dark, as the Presence had once heard another prey-human say. The Presence knew that these two were getting close to the edge of his influence, and it was just the right time to take them. The circle of lesser ones around them was now completed.

'Now' commanded the Presence...

Right behind Mort, a manhole cover suddenly flew up into the air and clanged back to earth. As he levelled his weapon, a bony hand thrust itself through the wall beside him and tried to grab the folds of his coat. As Grainger spun to assist him, the cracked concrete slabs of the sidewalk under Grainger's feet swelled upwards and he almost lost his footing. More of the hands erupted out from below, prompting him to begin stamping down with his booted feet as hard as he could. Hitting a couple of the hands squarely, Grainger was gratified to see them momentarily withdraw back into the concrete and bricks. Taking advantage of the short respite, he levelled his shotgun at the arm that was holding Mort flat against the wall, unable to fire his submachine-gun.

The semi-automatic Remington barked once, and the elbow of the arm vanished in a haze of grey flesh and putrid green blood. Mort pulled himself upright and let loose a burst at the other hands that were emerging once again from the ground. A head and upper torso began to push upwards from the broken ground.

"Time to run!" yelled Grainger. Mort nodded, and with much stamping of feet onto bony grey hands the pair managed to get out from the loose circle. Just as they rounded the next corner, Grainger felt the powerful emanation once again. It was furious; its anger was almost a physical thing. He stumbled

slightly, but Mort grabbed him by the arm and looked back once again. "Okay bro' I got you," Mort said "let's haul our sorry ass out of here."

As they began to move once more, the entire centre of the street began to well upward and the asphalt cracked away in great chunks. Rising up from the old sewer, a tall shape began to take form. Through the dust and debris Mort and Grainger could make out a hideous shape, vaguely humanoid but certainly not in any way human. An unbelievable stench hit their nostrils, not just old sewage but also the smell of dead and dying things. As they peered up towards the thing, scattered footsteps came from behind them, and as Grainger turned and saw them clearly an expression of weary recognition crossed his face.

"Oh shit," he muttered to Mort. "These are the ones I saw before. The big fella over there I don't know, but he looks enough like them to make me worry."

"Tactics?" asked Mort, as the figures approached them and the larger being stretched lazily and regarded the two of them with what seemed to be an air of distaste.

"Do what you can to stop that lot," said Grainger, "and I guess I'll have to try the big guy. He's stopped blocking me now, which might just help me. Let's do it!"

Grainger focused his mind and shot out a probe to try and test the bigger thing's abilities. Without any apparent reaction it bounced his probe straight back, twice as strong. The sudden influx of alien empathic energy made him feel nauseous, but he steeled himself and started to form another

(When Nght Darkens from page 41)

pattern in his mind. Beside him, Mort's gun began to chatter as it released burst after burst into the group of smaller creatures. One of them went down, making an unearthly gurgling sound as the bullets smashed into its neck. The others spread out and began a pattern of leaping forward and trying to swipe Mort, sometimes in pairs and sometimes singly. As he let loose his last three-round burst, one of the things managed to grab his left arm and tear right through his coat sleeve and score his flesh. Gasping with the sudden pain, Mort swung the empty MP-7 with all the strength of his right arm. The butt end smacked straight into the creature's eye socket and it dropped to the ground, unmoving. Dodging half a step backwards to try and maintain what little distance remained between him and the other three things, Mort pulled out the big shiny revolver that Grainger had commented on earlier that evening. The dim light reflected from the maker's markings etched along the barrel, and an observer might have been able to read the words 'Raging Bull .454'. He levelled it at the next nearest creature and squeezed against the trigger.

Occupied quite literally with fighting for his life, Mort had not noticed that neither his companion nor the larger creature had moved at all during those past few seconds. Their battle was of another kind entirely, and currently neither Grainger nor the thing had made any headway. From Grainger's perspective it seemed that although the thing was more powerful than he, its mind was just too alien to fully exploit that potential. The thing seemed to be of the opinion that it would win simply because it was more powerful, and it used its empathy like a bludgeon. Grainger's emotions changed from second to second, the result of the thing trying to make him feel hopeless and scared. He wasn't

having any of it however, and he smiled grimly as he recalled happy moments from his life. The thing tried to twist his memories around, but as the minds-eye faces started to melt into grotesque shapes Grainger easily switched to other memories.

Mort was very happy to discover that the first shot from the .454 had put another of the creatures down. As it twitched on the rubble-strewn ground, he lined up another of the things and let another shot off. Once again the sound was deafening in the semi-enclosed space between the buildings. The bullet hit the creature squarely in the torso, sending it flying backwards. Unlike the previous target, this one did not twitch. Mort turned to draw a bead on the single remaining creature, only to see it hurriedly vanish back beneath the ground. He delivered a *coup de grace* to the injured thing, and looked over at Grainger. Grainger was standing very still, staring at the larger thing which itself stared back, unmoving.

In a deep corner of its mind, the Presence considered its position. The lesser ones had succumbed to the weapons of these intruders, except for one. Even the actual appearance of the Presence itself, in person so to speak, had not driven these two humans away. Even now, the rest of the Presence's mind was still engaged with the human who could see. The Presence could make no headway, even though it knew that the human's entire mind was occupied and it could not strike at him with any extra force. While it thought about its next move, it reached out to find the remaining lesser one.

Having made certain that the last of the smaller things was out of the immediate vicinity, Mort holstered his revolver. Looking once again at the large creature, he came to a decision. Carefully, so



Big Gun!!!
I know a bigger one!

(When Night Darkens from page 42)

as not to disturb his friends' concentration, Mort reached out and gently took the now-forgotten Remington 1100 from Grainger's hands. Walking carefully in a wide arc around the creature, Mort managed to get immediately behind it. Taking a deep breath, he grasped the handgrip and fore grip tightly and rested the muzzle against what he hoped was the base of the thing's spine. Gritting his teeth, he squeezed the trigger.

The mind-to-mind contact between Grainger and the larger creature was suddenly severed. Grainger dropped to the ground, exhausted. His ears barely registered the sounds of shotgun blasts and the unearthly screaming that accompanied them as Mort emptied the Remington. The creature, also released from the empathic struggle, made an attempt to turn as it realised the danger from behind. As it swung its shoulders around to swipe at Mort with one mighty fist, something happened that none of them had foreseen. The thing's entire upper torso continued to turn, until after rotating through a three-quarter circle its spine gave way. With a horrendous cracking sound the top half of the creature broke off from the pelvis and slammed into the ruined concrete. Grainger and Mort were both sprayed with flecks of foul-smelling green goo from the thing's ruptured internal organs. The repeated 12-gauge blasts had obviously damaged the thing more seriously than even it had realised, and with what seemed a vaguely bemused expression it shuddered once and was still.

"Come on man," said Mort, helping Grainger up from the ground. "Past time we were here I think." Collecting up their weapons and packs, the two stumbled away down the deserted street and back to the bridge. Two minor gang punks

saw them coming, and one went to bar their path. Grainger, still silent, just pulled his P16-40 and shook his head. Taking stock of the situation for a second, the punks both just moved aside back into the empty storehouse they were using as shelter from the acid rain. Across the bridge went the two weary hunters, making their way through the thinning crowds of the anthill to the safe house for first aid and to report the evening's events.

The sole remaining lesser one was once again down in the subterranean maze of old sewers. It lay curled into a foetal position, as spasms of pain wracked its body. It screeched as its skin began to split, and a larger form began to emerge from within it like an insect leaving a cocoon.

The Presence did not think in terms of luck. As far as it was concerned it had just happened to open a channel to the lesser one's mind at what turned out to be the right moment. Right now though, it needed to feed. Transformations were always draining, and there were two other prey-humans just on the edge of its territory. The Presence moved slowly toward the storehouse by the bridge. After this, it decided, it was going to search once again for the other mind that both it and the intruder had sensed earlier. Ally or enemy, it was important to find out...



"...spasms of pain wracked its body. It screeched as its skin began to split..."



THE POLITICIAN'S WIFE'S FRIEND

A Demonseed
by Linden Dunham

Colin Roxburgh, the MP for Redgrove, is regarded as a rising star of the present government. Although only in his early thirties he holds the post of junior minister of the environment. His wife Helen is a highly accomplished solicitor, running her own successful legal practice, specialising in human rights law. Unfortunately, she also has some dubious friends: Mrs Roxburgh employs a "lifestyle consultant" named Sarah Ford to advise her on fitness and personal presentation as well as spiritual matters like crystal healing and *feng shui*. The media haven't been slow in remarking that Mrs Roxburgh's appearance has become considerably more glamorous since she employed Miss Ford.

The two women are often seen together in public and it is apparent that they are good friends rather than just employer and employee. More recently Miss Ford has provided Colin Roxburgh with "lifestyle advice" causing some commentators to wonder if the relationship between the Roxburghs and their consultant isn't a little too close. Party officials and

editorials in the more conservative newspapers have expressed the view that it's undesirable for a person with Miss Ford's "new-age" beliefs to be in a position where they could possibly affect government policy.

A scandal has blown up around the Roxburghs after a tabloid newspaper alleged that Mrs Roxburgh persuaded her husband to intervene in a planning enquiry relating to the building of a new housing estate on a greenfield site. Mr Roxburgh is supposed to have exerted improper pressure on the inspector conducting the enquiry to ensure that the development was refused. The story goes on to suggest that Sarah Ford was the prime instigator of the enquiry's collapse, presumably because she has her own interest in the development site.

1. The Black Goat with a Thousand Young

Sarah Ford is a priestess of Shub-Niggurath. She has been gradually insinuating herself into the Roxburghs' confidence with a view to increasing her Goddess's influence within the British government. The proposed housing development was to be built on the site of woodland which contains a temple to the Black Goat. Ford used her influence with the Roxburghs to have the development scheme thrown out.

If harassed by investigators Ford will retaliate by asking Colin Roxburgh to take some kind of official action against them. If this fails she will dispatch members of her cult to kill the investigators. She may also attack them personally using her magic powers.

2. Worms

Sarah Ford is a five hundred year old agent of the Chthonians. As a child she found a young Chthonian that had blundered to the surface after becoming

lost. She cared for the creature allowing it to reach maturity. The Chthonians rewarded her by extending her lifespan so that she could continue to serve their interests. Ford acts on their behalf on those occasions when they do not wish to reveal themselves, or when a more subtle approach than an off-the-Richter-scale earthquake is required. Ingratiating herself with the junior minister for the environment enables her to keep abreast of projects that might harm her masters. The proposed development was on top of a Chthonian spawning ground which could have been disturbed by any building works.

As in option 1 above Ford will try to neutralise the investigators using official means. If these fail she will deal with them personally, but may call on her Chthonian masters for assistance e.g. fixing the investigators in place with telepathy to prevent them escaping.

3. Dodgy Builder

Karl Jarvis is Sarah Ford's partner and runs a rival firm of developers. Jarvis wanted to scupper the building project and replace it with his own scheme. To this end he asked Sarah to use her influence on the Roxburghs to ensure that the enquiry rejected the original proposal. Sarah accomplished this but the papers have got wind of it and Jarvis is none too pleased. He has an extensive criminal record encompassing armed robbery, GBH, and attempted murder and won't have any qualms about taking the investigators on. He has a number of violently inclined associates he can call upon if he requires any help.



THE FAIRE

A Dark Race

by CW Kelson III (Tad)
for **Dark Conspiracy**® 1/2 ed.

What name your horror?

The Fair
Circus of Flesh
Dark Dancers
The Pale Contest
Pale Hungers
Travelling Stomachs
The Eaters of the Unwary
Bone Teeth

The Faire, pronounced *fare*, are a splinter race. In personality they are very similar to the *Dark Elves*. They are very similar to Humans as far as their base biology is concerned. Personality wise, they are hungry killers with a taste for ornate fabrics and complex games, cat like, with their intended prey.

In appearance there are many similarities within their species. They do not exhibit the range of difference that is endemic to Humanity. Such that all of their race possess the same sorts of physical features. All Faire have light thin skin, very pale complexions, and all are fair haired. Build-wise they resemble human fairy tale elves, with waif forms and clear distinctions in secondary characteristics from males to females. Males have shorter hair and no body or facial hair, while females have longer, corn silk fine hair commonly shoulder or longer in length. Thin and delicate facial features with thin lips and bone white teeth. The Faire have three canine teeth per side vice the human one canine tooth per side top and bottom.

They do prefer to have and wear very bright

clothes that are loose fitting and often frilly, or with ruffles and fringes or frills to the hems, edges, necklines, etc. High leather looking or leather boots are the normal footwear with gloves of leather as well seen more times than not. All of their outfits, worn by either males or females would be considered very pretty by almost all human standards.

In the Faire their personalities generally exhibit the following traits to one degree or another:

Grace
Delicate Sensibilities
Voracious appetites
Sensual
The love of all manner of trials
Tricks and traps and complex schemes
Hunger
Languid
Possessive of all things
Tactile

The Faire are at their basic core, manipulators,

(The Faire from page 45)

carnivores, connoisseurs, frivolous, and casually cruel beings. They have no human concept of propriety. Also the idea of modesty or shame at nudity is foreign to them. They are very comfortable with using their appearance to trap someone they intend to feast upon using physical wiles.

They consider all creatures as food for their bellies. Since they are immune to all toxins, pathogens, and poisons these are considered akin to spices in their diet. Additionally they can metabolize all manner of proteins, enabling unlimited feasting opportunities. With these biological advantages the Faire never age, sicken, or grow fatigued.

Like terrestrial cats, they will and do enjoy playing with their food. This is such that often a Faire or small group will lure humanoid creatures into carnal delights. Then eat at an opportune moment. Fresh food is preferred, and cooking is not always necessary in their world view.

Their home dimension is still rich in minerals and organic materials. They avoided pollution to a large degree. Since they appreciate bright colors, they have no desire to cheapen or degrade their own dimension. Other dimensions that fall under their sway are not so fortunate. There, the rapine of the lands and contents are total, often all consuming. This is how they sustain their drive and culture, by the plunder and harvesting of others.

The Faire are not a very technologically advanced race. Humanity and the other Dark Races are generally superior to the Faire, with their technology roughly akin to the 1890's to 1920's Earth. They are masters of toxins and poisons, utilizing them as spices, cologne, drinks, and on all weapons where possible. Steam power is the driving force

in their industries, along with slave labor. They are beginning to gain knowledge of Dark Elf biotech, and DarkTek. Any DarkTek devices would be utilized by the Faire, while any actual warping biotech or modifications would be incorporated into one of the many hunting beasts of their home dimension.

DARKTEK

As stated above the Faire are not a technologically advanced race. They are however learning about the science of eugenics, and some biotech skills from their meals, before eating of course.

The vehicles found in their home dimension, or brought over with them to another dimension, are steam powered, large, ornate affairs. They have discovered how to Dimension Travel using resonating crystals. These crystals are installed in all of their vehicles. So the terms large, ornate, carpeted, furred, posh and plush all describe the Faire dwelling or traveling quarters. Mirrors abound and they are discovering some of the ancient mystical purposes of such reflecting surfaces as well.

They have some robotic style devices, powered by steam with clockwork brains and very baroque in appearance. Use statistics for which robot seems appropriate dropping the movement in half to reflect the lower technology, removing any projectile weapons, and allowing for claws and grasping implements instead.

Some DarkTek that can be appropriate from the *DarkTek Sourcebook* is:

Body Bag found on page 10
Sniffer found on page 21

DARK CONSPIRACY™

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(The Faire from page 46)

In general always think clunky, and baroque in creating anything technological for the Faire. A lot of the inspiration for the appearance of The Faire is a stylized Gypsy look, over the top and overblown as aliens from another dimension would be.

Overall Use

The Faire are suitable to use as one might the Dark Elves or The Pale. One idea is to have them take over a small town, or possibly just carry Player Characters back to their home dimension.

The home of The Faire is a dimension that is a tropical hell. It is full of riotous colors, carnivorous plants, and almost everything exudes poisons of various degrees. There is one sun that is bright and deadly that seems to just hang in the sky. This is while the plants all live and die around the Player Characters. When the scant night falls, it is never totally dark there; there is a reflection off the sky of the one sun that makes for a pallid semi-dusk like appearance the entire night time. So it is difficult for humans to rest comfortably while there.

As far as the protodimension goes there is no assimilation associated with the home of The Faire. It is close enough to cause no changes, cause no assimilation damage to humans; with no added difficulty to travel to or from the protodimension and no time dilation either. This makes it a simple enough stop if being pursued, with no helpful aspects in general.

Another way to introduce The Faire to the players is to show them examples of the feeding habits after a night of frolic, to enhance the terror of their company. Or possibly use the Faire to illustrate the dangers of associating with strangers,

either to the characters, or easier to show it with other friends, common associates, a murder spree type story in legends or tales they follow up on.



Hunting Beasts

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1D3 | Initiative | 6 | Agility | 8 |
| Attack | 100% | Strength | 4 | Skill/Dam. | 7/3x3 |
| Move | 18/32/70 | Constitution | 4 | Hits | 5/10 |

The Hunting Beasts appear as small, miniature poodle sized, reptilian beasts, four-legged and lean. A toxin constantly drips from their fangs; the damage of the toxin is 3D per phase. Think of them like reptilian hounds used to run the prey to ground to then perish in pain and anguish.

Projectile Tube

| | ROF | DAM | PEN | BLK | MAG | SS | BRST | RNG |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Poisoned dart | 1 | -1 | Nil | 2 | 50 | --- | --- | 10 |

The projectile tube is a complicated mechanical device that shoots darts using a series of springs and gears. Being gear operated, the projectile tube must be wound up to fire. Each turn of the wind-up key on the side of the device cocks the weapon to fire one round. Up to five rounds can be wound up. The winding makes a distinctive clicking sound. After all rounds are fired, the projectile tube must be re-wound, taking the shooter's full action. Refilling the magazine takes one combat round per 10 darts loaded. No two projectile tubes look the same as all are specially built by enslaved master craftsmen. A projectile tube can take the appearance of a cane, a baton, or otherwise innocuous object. Some of the Faire that prefer to duel have a combo device that looks like a cane and contains both a sword and a projectile tube.

Melee Weapons

Stiletto - As Bayonet with toxin effect. DAM = 1D6 + Poison

Sword - As per Sword with toxin effect. DAM = 1D6 + STR + Poison

(The Faire continued)



*Crap!
They look like us!*

THE FAIRE

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|------------|---|-------------|------------|
| Strength | 5 | Education | 3 | Move | 4/10/22/38 |
| Constitution | 4 | Charisma | 9 | Skill/Dam. | 6/3 |
| Agility | 9 | Empathy | 9 | Hits | 10/20 |
| Intelligence | 4 | Initiative | 6 | # Appearing | 1D6 |

Special: Immune to Poison, Toxins, Pathogens, Fatigue, and Aging, Total digestive system.

Skills: Melee (Armed) 5, Small Arms (Faire Weapons) 6, Vehicle Use (Faire) 5, Language (Faire) 9, Language (English) 4, Chemistry 6, Biology 6, Disguise 7, Interrogation 6, Foreboding 3, Animal Empathy (Faire created animals only)

They do not know Computer Ops or Physics at all from a science perspective.

Note: All of their weapons are coated with extreme toxins; it is the GM's call on how deadly they are. Halve the toxin's effect if any damage is taken, also no blunt trauma is done. They do not wear armor as a normal rule, relying instead on stealth and trickery.



Escaped Faire Slaves



TRIAL BY FIRE

A Demonseed

by Linden Dunham



Darren Betts, aged 20, has been burnt to death in his first floor flat on the Matford Estate in Redgrove new town. The police and fire brigade have been unable to pinpoint the source of the fire and are baffled by the case. One or two people are beginning to mutter about spontaneous human combustion but most of those involved in the investigation believe something in Betts's background holds the key to his death.

Betts was associated with the Matford Massive, a gang of young men from the estate with a reputation for petty criminality and antisocial behaviour. This hasn't endeared them to their neighbours. There is speculation in the local media that Betts was killed by a local resident whom he'd provoked in some way:

There are three possible explanations for Betts' death:

1. **Redgrove Council** were taking legal proceedings against Betts to evict him from his flat following allegations of drug dealing and noise nuisance. Such proceedings usually take a long time. Rather than wait for the law to run its course,

Fred Owen, Betts's downstairs neighbour, decided to take matters into his own hands.

Owen is a World War 2 veteran and former PISCES agent. He was recruited in 1940 from Brichester University where he had been studying Ancient Greek. Owen participated in several operations in Greece and the Balkans, seizing occult works before they could be captured by the Germans. After the war he worked at Kilmaur Manor translating many of the books he had helped to acquire. Prolonged exposure to Cthulhoid texts led to a nervous breakdown and Owen was granted early retirement on health grounds in 1970. He has lived a relatively tranquil life on the Matford estate since then, and, with treatment, has made a reasonable recovery. The advent of Darren Betts with his love of playing loud music into the small hours upset Owen's hard won equilibrium,. Lack of sleep plus harrassment from Betts and his various associates caused Owen to relapse.

Owen picked up a sizeable amount of Mythos knowledge during his time in PISCES, including the ability to cast several spells. Reduced to a precarious mental state, and unable to put up with

(Trial by Fire from page 49)

his neighbour any longer, Owen used one of the “formulae” he had learned during his former career: He lit a bonfire at his allotment in the evening and summoned a Fire Vampire which he ordered to kill Betts. The creature entered the dealer’s flat via the front room window and, after completing its allotted task, left the same way. There are a few eyewitnesses who claim to have seen an explosion in Betts’s flat at the time of his death and one person swears that a slow moving fireball passed out of the flat’s front room window and floated up into the sky. Examination of the window reveals a large roughly circular shaped hole in the glass.

PISCES may take an interest in the case due to its unusual nature and the possible involvement of an ex-agent. If PISCES find evidence linking Owen with the killing the decision will be made to eliminate him. If the investigators are PISCES agents they may well be given the job. Owen won’t go quietly though and will readily resort to magic again to defend himself.

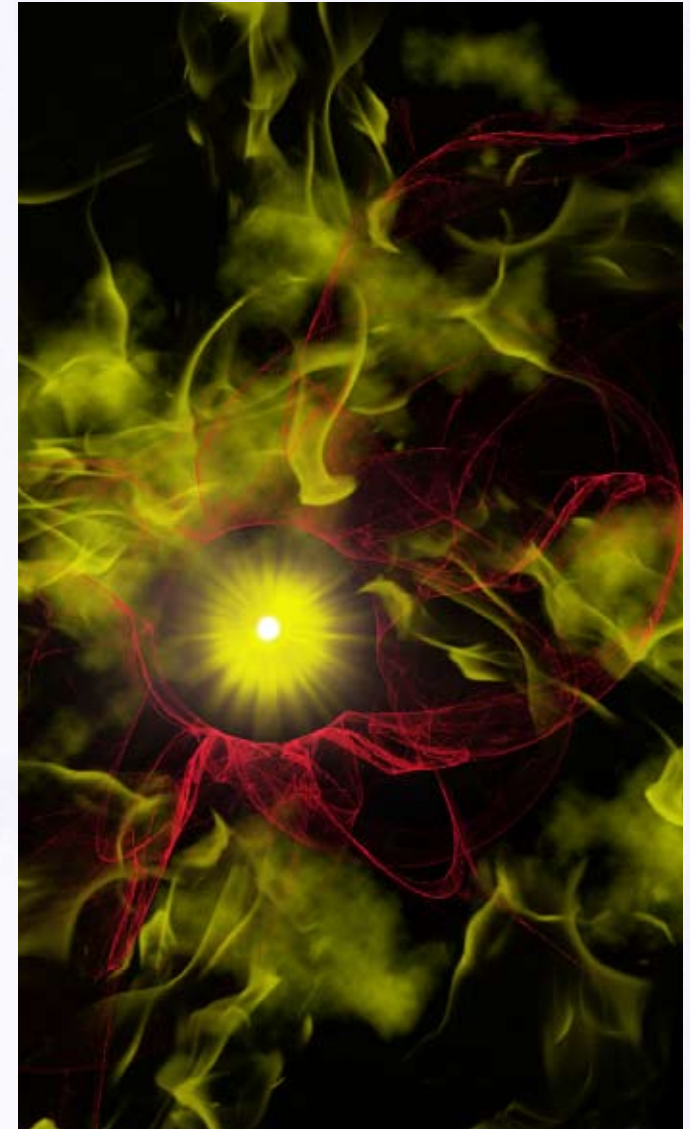
2. Fred Owen’s biography is as 1. above except that he never met Darren Betts or lived on the Matford Estate. Owen kept a diary in which he privately recorded many of the findings from his post-war research. He managed to keep the diary secret from his PISCES masters even during his breakdown. Owen bequeathed the diary to his granddaughter Elizabeth in his will together with a cryptic note saying, “you’ll find what you need in here.”

Elizabeth’s boyfriend was murdered just over a year ago, stabbed one night while walking home through the estate. The killing was put down to an ongoing feud between the Matford Massive and “grungers” (a catch all term for goths, punks, heavy metal fans or possibly just any young person

whose wardrobe doesn’t mostly consist of casual sportswear). Betts and two friends were arrested and charged with murder but when the case reached the crown court it was thrown out by the judge for lack of evidence. Elizabeth Owen has used her grandfather’s diary to learn how to summon and bind fire vampires and is directing the creatures to hunt down and kill those she considers responsible for her boyfriend’s death. Betts’s co-accused are next on her list followed by the judge who presided over the abortive trial. If the investigators get too close to her she won’t have any qualms about sending a fire vampire to pay them a visit as well.

3. Elizabeth Owen’s motivations are as 2. above but she possesses a pyrokinetic ability and used this to kill Betts rather than magic. Witnesses interviewed at the scene of Betts’s death and any subsequent murders will recall seeing a young goth woman in the area shortly before the fires. Investigators should eventually be able to connect these sightings to the description of a woman who attended every day of Betts’s trial as a member of the victim’s family group. Newspaper reports on the trial note that she was removed from the public gallery after hurling abuse at the judge when he ordered the defendants’ acquittal.

Complications may arise from PISCES wanting to recruit Elizabeth Owen as a talent. Once properly trained she could be used to complement or even replace Sarah Moore (see Delta Green: Countdown pages 37-39). If the investigators are PISCES agents they could be involved in assessing Owen’s suitability (or otherwise) once she is apprehended.



Fire Vampire



★ very nice piece of vignette fiction
from our youngest contributor.

FREEDOM

Fiction

by Peyton Bisailon

"We're not wanted here...we're not needed here anymore. They found out who we are and want us dead. They call us monsters, freaks of nature. All we wanted was to live among them and have a normal life...but our dreams faded into the shadows... Our lives broken into pieces..."

He sat there chained to the chair and blindfolded, he could hear the people around him whispering among themselves. He could even hear a few of them laugh at him. He couldn't move and he couldn't see. He could feel the blood that rushed down his face and his arms. He was wounded by them, they were hurting him. His soft fuzzy fox ears twitched as he heard the sudden movement of them walking towards him.

"Take him back to his cell...he's done for now," a voice said.

They undid his chains and dragged him back to his room on the third floor.

"Now stay put!" one of the voices yelled as they threw the poor boy in his cell.

"You won't need to worry about him..." the other voice said with a laugh. The two of them walked down the halls laughing away.

He curled into a ball pressing his knees up against his chin. He still couldn't see because they

still had him blindfolded. The poor boy felt so helpless. He wished that he could do something about it. The poor boy remained in that position with his back up against the wall. He shivered because he was cold and was about to cry until...

"Dean! Dean!" a voice said, "It's going to be okay."

"Who's there?" he asked out loud.

"I'm outside your cell..." The voice answered back.

"What?" he asked again.

"That's right Dean! I'm outside your cell...now take off your blind fold to see!" the voice demanded.

"I can't..." Dean replied back "It won't come off..."

He could hear the voice take a sigh before speaking again. "Just hang on!" it said before it went quiet again.

Dean rested his head back onto his knees, wondering what was going to happen next. He also wondered who that voice was and how

(Freedom from page 51)

did they know who Dean was. The boy just sat there resting his head waiting and waiting.

“He’s right here Jayson! Hurry up!”
The voice said in a panicked tone.

“Yeah, yeah...” the other voice replied back.

All Dean could hear was the sound of bars breaking and soon enough he felt someone tug at his blindfold. Suddenly Dean could see, his eyes were very sensitive to the light because of being blindfolded for so long. He looked in front of him to see two males and one female. The female walked close to him and held out her hand to help him up.

“My name is Vivian,” she said as she pulled Dean up. He could see that she had small dragon type wings, a long dragon tail as well as little tiny horns coming out from her head. She then turned over to the two boys. “These guys are Jayson and Felix-Dane,” she said with a smile.

Dean looked at the two boys in front of him. Jayson was just like he was a fox demon. Dean couldn’t figure out quite what Felix-Dane was but he had different features from different demons.

As Dean was still in a daze, he didn’t hear the alarm go off in the lab.

“Come on! We have to hurry!” Vivian said in a quick voice taking a hold of Dean’s hand and dragging him off down the hall. Dean turned his head to look behind him to see the other two running behind them.

“Why did you guys save me?” Dean asked Vivian.

“Because it isn’t right to treat us differ-

ently,” she replied back. “Plus you’re the only one they held captive so we’re lucky.”

It went quiet after that between the two of them. The sound of the alarms went off shining a bright red light down the hall. As they all ran down the hall, they stopped on the top of the staircase to see guards running up the stairs with guns.

“I got it!” Felix-Dane said stepping in front, the boy glared down at the guards before lifting his hand up. It glowed a yellowish color and before they knew what was happening all the guards hit the floor.

“Show off...” Jayson said walking down the stairs first.

“Better than you are,” Felix-Dane said back to Jayson following behind him.

“Alright let’s go,” Vivian said as she walked still keeping a hold of Dean’s hand.

The poor boy was confused with all that was going on and didn’t know what to do anymore. He was happy about one thing...he was going to escape from the laboratory and the people hurting him. He still followed Vivian holding her hand tightly.

“Viv...” Jayson said stopping at the exit door.

“What?” she asked stopping and let go of Dean’s hand.

“We have one problem,” Jayson replied back.

“What is it?” Vivian asked.

“That.” Felix-Dane answered as he pointed out the door. “We can’t take them all on at once, there’s too many.”



(Freedom from page 52)

There were over one hundred guards with guns and so many other weapons that they lost count. They were surrounded and had only one way to escape which was guarded.

"We're going to have to fight them all at once..." Vivian said.

"I guess you're right," Jayson said as he tore the door off the wall and threw it.

Felix-Dane just sighed as his hand began to glow again, an icy blue color, and this time he shot icy daggers at the guards.

"My turn," Vivian said smiling at Dean before facing the guards. Her eyes went red and she blew a kiss which made a huge fire come out.

Dean took a step back from the three and tripped over a piece of metal forcing him to fall hard on his back. He wasn't sure what they were doing but he heard screams of people in pain. They were fighting back and hurting these people.

"What should I do?" Dean asked himself, "Do I help them?...but how..."

Dean didn't know what to do, should he help them or just stay there and do nothing. The three of them were fighting for freedom and they were fighting the ones who had been hurting him.

Jayson stood back to back with Felix-Dane surrounded by guards. They had guns pointed at them from all directions.

"What now?" Jayson asked with a smile waiting for Felix's response.

"Do what we always do...." Felix-

Dane replied with a smirk as he looked at Jayson who nodded his head.

Jayson ran towards one of the guards, picked him up and threw him in Felix's direction. Felix-Dane shot a fire blast at the guard causing him to set on fire. Felix then threw him in front of him, landing on top of the other guards causing them to set on fire as well. The two just kept doing that same routine over and over.

Vivian was fighting them off as best as she could as well as trying to protect Dean. She kicked one guard making him fall back into the other guards. She looked over at Dean who was on the ground and looked like he was going to cry.

"Dean, you have to help me!" she said punching a guard in the face.

"How?" he asked sitting up looking at her.

"Use your power..." she answered back.

"What power?" Dean asked again confused, he didn't know what power he had or if he was even sure he had a power.

"The power you were born with stupid!" Vivian said as she blew another fire attack. She wasn't looking to her left side: there was a guard hidden underneath the dead bodies of his comrades and he shot at her.

"Vivian!" Dean cried as he ran to her, she was falling and he caught her.

"I'll be fine...." she said with a reassuring smile.

"Are you sure?" Dean asked.

"Yes I'm sure, just go help Felix and Jayson

"What power?" ...

"The power you were born with stupid!"

(Freedom from page 53)

please,” Vivian said as she forced herself up.

“Alright I’ll try,” Dean said as moved towards Jayson and Felix-Dane.

The two of them were still fighting off the guards, still using the same strategy they were using earlier in the battle. Dean continued moving towards them but was stopped by three guards who were standing in front of him.

“You’re not going anywhere!” The guard said as he grabbed Dean’s wrist.

“Let go!” Dean yelled as he tried to kick the guard but failed. “Let go!” he yelled again but still had no luck. Dean looked at the ground and saw that a dragon type monster came out of the guard’s shadow.

“Well I’ll be....he has a Shadow Guardian!” Vivian said holding her side leaning up against the wall.

Soon, every single guard had the same creature coming out of their shadows. As soon as the guards noticed them they all started to freak out. The one guard dropped Dean and tried to run for it but couldn’t get away in time. The Shadows took hold of every one of the guards and dragged them away into the Unknown of their own shadows...

“Nice work,” Jayson said as walked over to Vivian and picked her up on his back.

“Let’s go,” Felix-Dane said as he walked towards the exit door.

They all crossed the room and opened the door, and they were now in the main lobby.

“How many doors do we have to go through

until we reach outside?” Jayson whined.

“Would you stop?” Felix-Dane said
“There’s only one door left...”

The four of them walked towards the door until:

“Dean! Wait!” a voice yelled.

Dean turned around to see Dr. Ivory standing there in the center of the hall.

“Dean! Don’t go!” she cried.

“I’m sorry Doctor,” Dean said turning away and he followed Vivian, Jayson and Felix-Dane. He left Dr. Ivory there standing in the hall alone. How could he ever go back to the person who was the one that hurt him daily? He couldn’t, that’s why he left with the three that saved him, so he could start a new life in the world of Freedom.

They all stepped outside onto the streets of the city. It was night-time and the moon shone down upon their faces. The city was quiet at night and that was perfect for them to leave the city.

“Wow!” Dean said amazed, and he stepped in front of all them feeling the night breeze blow across his face.

“Well we should get going,” Jayson said.

“We’re not staying here?” Dean asked turning back to them.

“We’re not staying here because it’s not safe, the lab will for sure send some assistance to come help them recapture you,” Vivian said.
“Where we’re going is a better, better place.”

“Plus it’s way more prettier,” Felix-Dane added.

“Alright,” Dean said with a smile.

They began walking down the streets and through dark alleys where they wouldn’t be noticed as much.

“I’m finally free...” Dean thought as he looked up at Vivian who was still on Jayson’s back.

“Where are we going?” he asked.

Vivian smiled before she answered
“You’ll see when we get there.”

“Oh...okay,” Dean said again, enjoying the fresh air he had never felt before.





Investigators who check back to when the site was a quarry also find that a sizeable number of workers were killed there in unexplained accidents. These men were also victims of the Wraith.

3. Unfriendly Locals

The common bordering Quarry Pool was the site of an illegal rave in the early 1990s. The event resulted in a lot of damage to properties in the area and left local people hostile to new age travellers, gypsies, hippies and anyone else with an itinerant or unconventional lifestyle. The three teenagers were murdered by overzealous members of the neighbourhood watch and their bodies thrown into the pool in a clumsy attempt to make it look as if they had drowned while night swimming. The other drownings at the pool all have natural explanations: Swimmers getting cramps, becoming entangled in weeds or injuring themselves on the debris that litters the pool floor.



years ago following a series of drownings. Despite the warnings the pool has seen a further three deaths in the last decade. It's as if some people can't stop themselves from going in the water.

The investigators become involved after a particularly tragic incident: Three teenagers spending the night illegally camped by the pool are all found dead in the water the next morning.

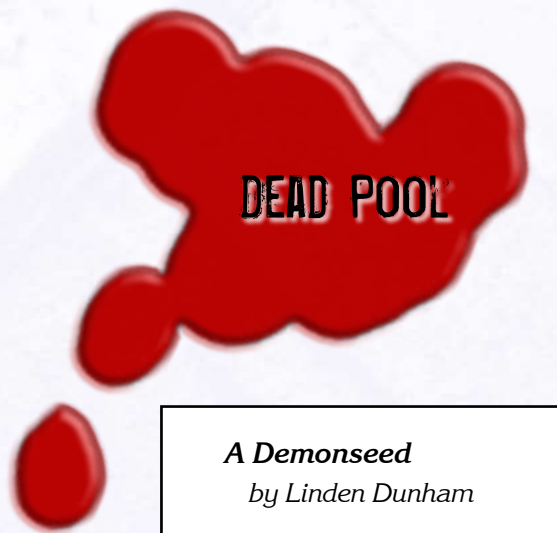
1. Lloigor

Quarry Pool is home to a Lloigor which feeds off the energy of local people as they sleep. The drownings are a side effect of this process: Mental contact with the Lloigor often results in depression and suicide. The Lloigor's victims are drawn to the pool where they kill themselves by jumping into the water. Investigators will find that the vast majority of drowning victims come from the scattered farms and cottages on the common surrounding Quarry Pool. They also find higher than average incidences of sleep disorders, mental illness and birth defects in the area, all of which can be attributed to the presence of the Lloigor.

Having recently drained the life force of the three campers the Lloigor is feeling particularly energetic. It will be able to deploy the full gamut of vortex, psychokinetic and reptile form attacks.

2. Vengeful Spirit

The Gut was once used for executions. Cattle thieves, highwaymen and other criminals were hanged in chains from its trees. The spirit of one of these executed men has remained in the area as a Wraith. It uses its POW attack to sap its victims INT and once it overcomes their will it gives them a psychic push into the pool where they drown.



A Demonseed
by Linden Dunham

The Gut is a narrow wooded pass that cuts through a range of hills on the Worcestershire/Herefordshire border. On the Worcestershire side of the Gut lies the eponymously named Quarry Pool: A small artificial lake created from a former granite quarry. The pool is a popular beauty spot, bounded on its western side by the hills and on the other three sides by an open expanse of common land. On summer weekends it is frequented by picnickers and sunbathers, as well as walkers, horse riders and mountain bike enthusiasts accessing the hills via the Gut. Most visitors find the Pool to be a calm rural oasis where they can take a welcome rest from their busy urban lives. However, the pleasant atmosphere is spoiled slightly by several forbidding signs at the water's edge warning visitors not to swim in the Quarry Pool. The signs were erected ten

THE JACK THAT HOUSE BUILT

A Quick & Dirty Adventure

by Tim Bisailon, assisted
by Bailey Boo
for **Unknown Armies®** 1st ed.

They say when you take a picture you capture someone's soul...though what if that wasn't the case?

I would like to thank Greg Stolze and John Tynes for creating a wonderfully wicked modern game.

--Tim

The Jack that House Built:

Jack meaning an outlet, an otherspace outlet, which was created or perhaps opened by the **House** being built so many years ago and come to roost for a while.

SOME BACKSTORY

This adventure is suitable for any group of street level player characters. The PC's are hired by a family to find their missing daughter. The mother of the missing child, Gabriella Winston, once had a fling with one of the PC's and based on that past physical experience she had called that character. She felt the PC might be able to help since the PC was into something weird. This was one of the reasons for their split up.

The local police and federal agents have come up with nothing. With the lack of a ransom note or any contact with kidnapers the authorities have deemed the child a runaway. They have put out an alert for the young child and other

law enforcement agencies have been notified.

At this point the mother, Gabriella, felt it was time to go outside the usual channels. Her next step was to call the PC with whom she had the past relationship with.

STARTING IT ALL OFF

You can have the PC started off in a bar sipping a beer and waiting for the next thing to happen, when they get a call from someone they had not thought about in quite a while. In this first phone call Gabriella explains the main details of what has gone on. Her child, Majorie, has been missing for seven days now and the last time she was seen was in an abandoned lot located on Tempest Avenue right there in the city. The child was playing there with one of her friends, named Abigail, when she disappeared. Gabriella will also tell the PC's that a lot of strange things have happened in that lot over the past several years. This intrigue is one of the reasons the children have gravitated to the spot. There have been mysterious disappearances, several murders,

(House's Jack from page 56)

and in the distant, to the minds of a child, gangland wars that have all happened in that same lot.

Presuming the PC or PCs take on the tasking, if they do some investigations this is what they might be able to come up with.

1. There was a house that was built there but it burnt down 75 years ago, and has never been rebuilt. There's no other history on the building or lack thereof.
2. There have been a number of odd circumstances on the lot. Rarely outside the confines of the property, and if desired the GM can fill in the blanks of the incidents. Refer to the short listing above or pull from the separate encounters below to provide inspiration.
3. Depending on the exact temperament of the players involved, use the street name, Tempest, as inspiration for what happens on the property. Storms, conflicts, disagreements, all fall within the overall feeling for the word Tempest.

THE LOT

The abandoned lot is on Tempest Avenue nestled between two buildings with about 80 feet deep and 70 feet wide. There is tall grass growing all around the edges and sparse in places. There are trampled down spots where the kids play and the odd assorted garbage lies scattered about: an old couch, a kitchen chair or two and other random items not important to the scenario.

When the PC's begin investigating the area they will not feel anything out of the ordinary, but it will be the evening when things begin to get a little weird. It's late in the evening when the PC's will discover a female child in a spotless white summer dress in the field. She seems to be tearing up magazines and laying them on the ground in some sort of pattern. This is not Majorie the child being searched for. This is Abigail. She is Majorie's friend. This information can be obtained from her simply by asking.

As the PCs stand there watching her tearing up the magazines, they can make out some sort of a nursery rhyme that the young girl is singing low and softly. It sounds more like a spell ritual or something more intoned than just singing a regular rhyme. As she pulls apart the last bits of the magazine in her hand, a house will suddenly appear on the lot. In appearance the construction looks like torn pieces of paper all fitting together like a mad jigsaw puzzle. Seeing the house materialize like a giant unfolding doll house is a little unnerving. So much so that each PC will have to make a Level 5 Unnatural check at this occurrence. The young girl seems to not be affected at all by the sight of it appearing.

At this point Abigail turns to the players and asks "Do you want to come in and visit?". Then she walks up the front porch and into the house. "I've been looking for someone to play with me," is the last thing the PCs hear from her before the door closes behind her, sounding just like a normal wooden door would allowed to close on its own.

"Seeing the house materialize like a giant unfolding doll house is a little unnerving."

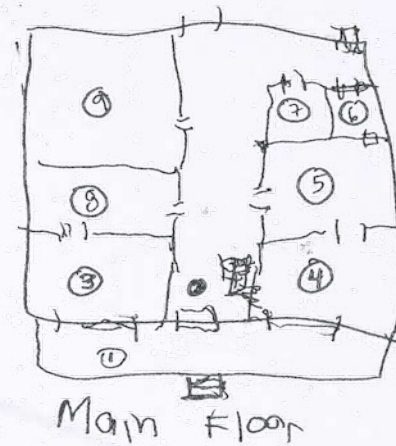
(House's Jack from page 57)

THE PATCHWORK HOUSE

The house is exactly made up from pieces of torn paper and have that look about them, pictures torn from various magazines, how-to-books, etc. Once the PC's approach the house will look real and shift like a television set that is getting bad reception. The one rule of the house is that it's made up from different photographs so the interior dimensions will be what the GM wants them to be, since they are in and Otherspace.

All actions take place in the rooms provided. If the PCs see something coming from another room and go to investigate; they will go to that Otherspace and cannot see what the others are seeing in the adjacent room. Each room is separate and distinct.

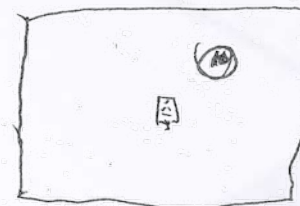
The rooms are detailed below along with encounter details and suggestions on how to run each one.



Main Floor



The Loft



Basement

Patchwork House

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(House's Jack from page 58)

1. Porch: Farmer Jansen & The Men From B.A.N.K

The steps lead up into a porch. Where there is a swing several chairs and a bucket of ice with several cool drinks on chill. There is a small table there with a cigarette smouldering in the ashtray but no signs of anyone else. There are some straws and bits of cloth scattered about on the porch.

The sound of a television set comes through an open window and it's from a living room. An old TV set is in there playing a western. The decor in the living room seems to be from mid 50's.

The screen door will open and a middle age man will step out with a shotgun with a small pitchfork on it to serve like a bayonet. His facial expression seems to be apprehensive, he says: "You better not be not be from the Bank".

What happens depends on what the PC's do here and the situation. Farmer Jansen has been waiting for the men from the bank to arrive and take his property. As if on cue, the sound of cars pulling down a dirt road and PC's will be able to see that they are not in a lot in a town but somewhere out in the country.

Jansen will pump the shotgun and proceed to fire at the approaching car. Jansen will step out off the porch while cocking round after round into the shotgun. If the PC's wish to help or follow Jansen they will step into the lot standing before the Patchwork house. There will be no sign of Jansen or the Men from the bank. If the PC's are on the porch and witness Jansen battle the Men from the Bank... have them roll dodge checks for stray bul-

lets. They can return fire if they are armed, not the most likely of circumstances. Depending on what the PCs do several different paths can be taken.

Once the PCs make a decision what to do refer to below:

If they go through the door read them 2.

If they go through the window read them 3 or 4 depending on where they are standing on the porch. To the left of the door as if facing it leads to 3 and to the right leads to 4.

2. The Foyer: The Homecoming

Through the front door is a foyer area with an archway leading off to a living room and dining room and a huge stair case leading up to the second floor. Shoes and boots litter the front door area and several jackets are hanging on hooks here, with the smell of turkey wafting through the area. The foyer will look different from the farmhouse.

Looking in the living room the PCs can see a huge TV screen and a football game on and the sound of men shouting at the television. They seem to be enjoying some beers and making comments.

As the PCs peer into the dining room they can see a huge table already set and ready for a meal. A little girl walks in the dining room and peers out into the foyer. She doesn't seem to notice or see the PC's and she then steps into the foyer and disappears.

NOTE: This should give the PC's a clue that each room is a separate Otherspace.

Mr. Jansen, Pitchfork Shotgun

Mr. Jansen is a true and blue red-blooded farmer. He's a fourth generation farmer who's living on the land that his great-grandfather tilled and has been handed down throughout the generations. Now all that is about to change since the bank is trying to foreclose on the farm. And if that wasn't enough he's got to put up with that scarecrow.

Personality: "Get off my land"

Obsession: His farm.

Wound Points: 44

Stats:

Body: 44 (string bean)

Speed: 55 (quick on the draw)

Mind: 40 (Grade 7 education)

Soul: 22 (Stubborn)

Skills That Matter:

Get Off My Land 66%

(House's Jack from page 59)

3. The Living Room: Darkness & Teeth

Once this room is entered the players will emerge in an abandoned room with layered and boarded up windows. Any 'mancers in the group can make a Soul check. Succeeding will provide a feeling of loneliness and despair from a vagrant that wandered in and died from illness. There is a couch and chair and a smashed TV set. It's late at night or early morning and there is only a streetlight filtering through the boards to light up the room.

There is a corpse in the room in the corner, face down. Two *Tenebrae* are feeding on it and they will not take kindly to the interruption. There is no place for the tenebrae to retreat to so they will continue to fight on. See the tenebrae sidebar.

4. The Dining Room: Lord Byron's End

This room was apparently gutted by fire, the windows are open with wind and rain coming through. There are scorch marks here as if a gas line had ignited. There is a dead body of a man who apparently

Tenebrae (Minor) (2 of them)

The Darkness With Teeth

Points: 1-100

Body: 20-30 / 30-40

Speed: 70-80 / 70-90

Mind: 10

Soul: 10

These spider-like beings live in the shadows and attack anyone that crosses into their domain.

had his eyes gouged out. There is a revolver sitting on the table with 5 bullets left in the chambers.

5. Kitchen: The Animated

An old black woman, in a faded house dress with an *afro*, is in the kitchen. She is leaning against the counter and smoking a cigarette. There is an old radio on the top of the fridge and it is playing some funky groove. She points her thumb behind her saying;

"There are little creatures running amok amongst the can goods and I don't think they are cockroaches."

She tells the PC's that there is also some beer in the fridge and to just help themselves. After that she turns, walks out the door in the back of the kitchen, and disappears.

6. Pantry

Inside is a dead body hanging amongst the rotted food in this pantry. A tenebrae is in here guarding the potential meal hanging there. See the sidebar.

7. Bathroom

The door opens up into a bathroom, not an ordinary household bathroom but instead into a high school type bathroom complete with stalls and urinals. The smell of urine and the odour of feces is strong. One of the mirrors in this room is cracked and there are a total of five stalls.

If the PC's enter and search the door will open and a group of gang-bangers will come in. They will demand to know what the PC's are doing in their

Ganbangers (Minor) (1.5 per PC rounded up)

Take 'Em Down One Way or Another

Body: 40-60

Speed: 40

Mind: 20

Soul: 45

Skills That Matter:

Baseball Bat 47%

Switchblade 33%

Poppin' Caps 38%

territory. The gang bangers will demand a toll or something valuable in order for the PCs to leave.

8. Den

This is a room laden with a desk, several tables and chairs and rows of shelves. Inside an elderly man is sitting at the desk where he is putting together an Automata. He tells the PC's to put the pizza on the table and that there is money there to pay for it. His name is Alwin Schnute and he doesn't know anything about Otherspace and Otherwhens when questioned by the PC's. He just wants them to leave so he can finish up on Gertrude Nine.

NOTE: Alwin Schnute has just completed using his Major Charges in an attempt to bring Gertrude Nine to life. If desired Gertrude Nine can come to life at this point, see the Ganbangers Sidebar for her statistics. Alwin and Gertrude have no desire to leave or to fight. Instead they are content here, and should be portrayed as feeling that way.

(House's Jack from page 60)

9. Bedroom

This room is decorated in early Victorian style, with a huge canopy over the bed. There is a music box playing a song that sounds like a hip hop tune done to the style. A woman is sitting in front of a dresser with broken mirrors and she is combing her hair. She has her back turned to the PC's. She has on a wedding dress, very Victorian with many beads and lace decorating it. There is a veil on another chair, a large overstuffed wingback chair, in the room as well.

The bride is dead and has been for a little while. The demon inside her is tied to the body due to a binding spell. All the demon wants is for the body to be destroyed. The demon will provoke the PC's to attack then will hold its attacks or miss on purpose. Have PCs make a Mind check to see that the Bride misses its attacks. She will explain her situation and wants to be free from her prison. What happens next depends on what the PCs do to remove the possessing being. If it survives than the demon will thank the PC's. If the host body is destroyed the demon will be freed from it's prison.

10. Basement

As soon as the door to the basement is open the PCs can smell a foul taint in the air. There are old boxes and crates along the wall as well as several other items. Down in the basement a fleshy beast waits for those who enter it's domain so it can feast and rend as it desires.

A Carnal resides in the basement. It has been here for years, ever since this place was the home of a violent criminal 75 years ago. During that time the neighbourhood had risen up like villagers of old and collectively killed the occupant

The Bride (Minor)

Dearly Departed

Body: 33*

Speed: 33*

Mind: 60

Soul: 66

Skills That Matter:

Lorena Bobbit with Scissors 47%

* The demon is bound to a host body. It has the host's Body and Speed scores, but uses it's own Mind and Soul.

Carnal (Minor)

Sins of the Flesh

Points: 50+ a percentile roll

Body: 50

Speed: 60

Mind: 10

Soul: 20

Damage from a Carnal's attack is equal to the sum of its Body roll +3. All Carnals possess the stealth skill at 60%.

THE ANTAGONIST

Abigail

Little Girl Lost

Personality: A lonely little girl

Obsession: Finding a new friend to play with.

Passions:

Rage Stimulus: Those who don't like to play with her.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Being left alone.

Noble Stimulus: To befriend any other children that is troubled and also has a deep dark secret.

Body: 60
Speed: 55
Mind: 30
Soul: 30

Skills That Matter:

Struggle 70%
Dodge 25%
Notice 55%
Flinging Dollheads 77%

Madness Meter (Hardened/ Failed):

Violence: 5/0
Unnatural: 5/0
Helplessness: 0/5
Isolation: 5/0
Self: 3/0

Possessions: Dollheads +6

(House's Jack from page 61)

that resided in the home and then burnt it down to the ground. After that a carnal manifested on the grounds and has resided in the basement of this place since it entered the world.

11. The Loft

The stairs lead to a studio loft, with huge windows overlooking a city and the sea. The lights are low and the sound of music plays softly in the background. The loft is a dance studio and you can hear the rumble of elevated subway cars going by.

Abigail is in here and she is dancing to the music coming from an old jukebox in the corner: Santos & Johnny's *Sleepwalk*. Amongst the music you can hear the sobbing of young girls, now noticeable about the room. There are a few of them here and Majorie is among them.

See The Antagonist sidebar for Abigail's statistics.

Once Abigail is defeated the house will disappear and the PC's will be standing in the empty lot with Majorie and five other children who have been abducted by Abigail. Strips of paper are kicked up in the wind and swirl off into the night.

At this point the PCs can relay what they wish to the distraught mother of the missing child. Even with her daughter in tow, it might be hard to explain what the child has been doing, where she was at: those sorts of questions a parent might ask.

There is also the matter of finding the identities of the other five children and explaining to their parents how they came across them without seeming to be the culprits themselves. This can lead to other complications depending on how difficult the person run-

ning the game wishes to make it: from simple folk that are grateful, to potentially more difficult families, ones with money, influence and power perhaps.

The last item to consider, for future adventures, is what the experience in the Patchwork House did to the other children and how they might react to having been exposed to such magical situations.



"I've been looking for someone...?"
How creepy is that!



WHEN BADGERS ATTACK

A Demonseed

by Linden Dunham

Residents of the Matford housing estate in the town of Redgrove are being terrorised by an aggressive badger. For the last few weeks the local paper has carried reports of gardens being ripped up, fences and outhouses damaged and pets being attacked, some fatally. In the last attack a six year old girl had to have stitches to her legs after being mauled by the beast. Local residents now want something done to end the badger's reign of terror.

Rat Thing: There is a small cult on the estate. The "badger" is a rat thing created by the cult's priest from the corpse of a recently deceased member which the priest had intended to use as his familiar. However, the shock of being reincarnated as a semi-rodent has driven the former cultist insane. The rat thing roams the Matford area seeking revenge on those it blames for its plight: All the incidents of damage occurred at the homes of cult members. The girl who was attacked has the misfortune to be the daughter of the cult's priest but, along with the remainder of her family, is unaware of her father's beliefs. The rat thing has become emboldened after tasting human blood and will step up its attacks on cultists and their relatives. The cult will respond by trying to hunt the creature down. Investigators conducting their own search for the rat thing are certain to encounter cult members who are also looking for the creature.

Mindless Spawn: One of Abthoth's spawn has escaped its father's cavern and seeped up from the underworld. It prowls the Matford estate at night looking for food: rubbish, domestic pets and small humans are all fair game. During the day it retreats to a darkened lair in a boarded up house on a condemned terrace. If the investigators interview the girl who was attacked she will tell them her assailant was "a grey blob about the size of a football." As the spawn feeds it gets bigger and more dangerous. The investigators need to kill the spawn before it matures. Fortunately, it's trail of devastation makes it easy to track and find. Unfortunately, it's inherited it's father's invulnerability to weapons.

Ok, It's a Badger: Matford is being terrorised by a particularly bad tempered badger. The animal has a *sett* in woodland that borders the estate. It ventures into the estate after dark to scavenge for food. Investigators may be tempted to play this option for laughs but the Keeper should bear in mind that badgers can deliver a nasty bite. They're also small, fast moving targets so guns aren't going to be much help, assuming it's a good idea to use firearms in a residential area anyway, which it isn't.





Totally Clive Barker-ish!

THE DARK FERTILITY

An Unholy Ritual

by Barrok of Barrok's Tower
for *Call of Cthulhu*®

This spell must be cast during the New Moon by a female. It costs 1D10 SAN points and 10 Magic Points. The female also permanently loses 1D3 CON. If cast by a male or other than during a new moon, the spell automatically fails and the person attempting to cast is drained of all Magic Points and loses 1D100 SAN. The ritual takes one hour to perform and a blood sacrifice to Shub-Niggurath must be made. After the ritual is complete the caster is blessed with a *dark fertility* where any sexual congress in the next 24 hours will result in pregnancy. The pregnancy itself will be accelerated with gestation lasting seven days and culminating with the birth of a perfectly healthy human baby. Upon the child's 5th birthday, at midnight, it will undergo a horrific transformation into a *Dark Young* completely under the mother's control.

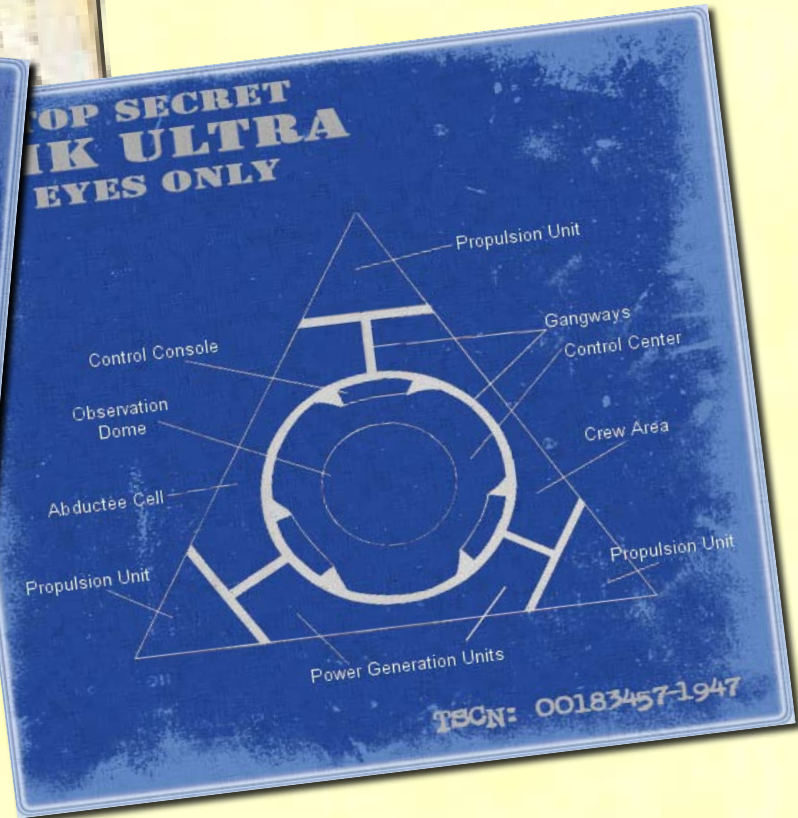
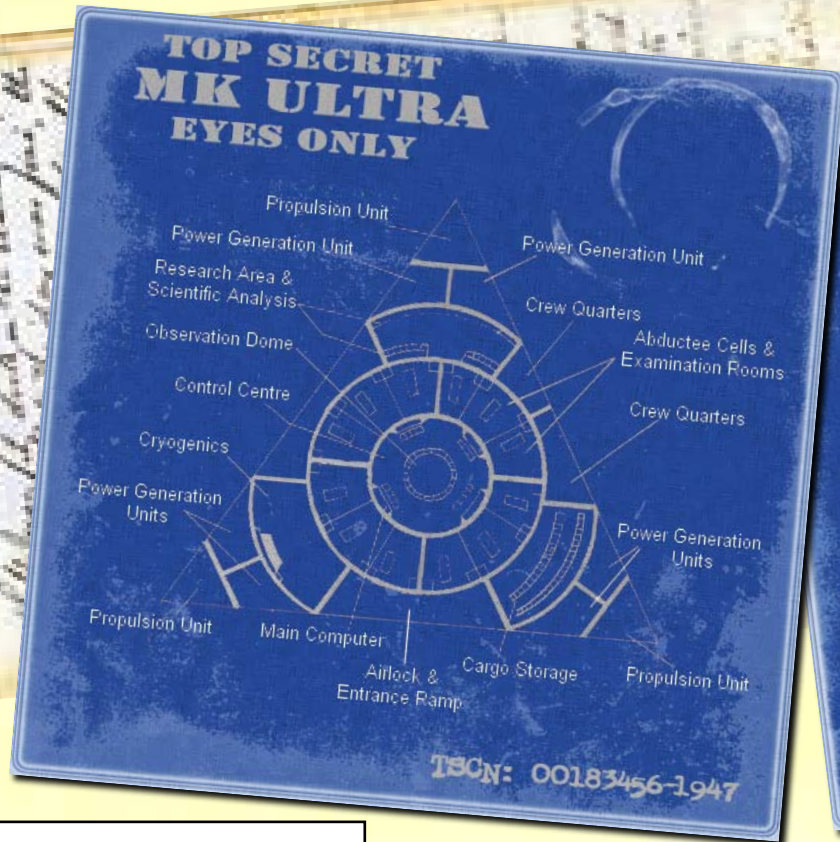
If during the casting of this spell the female's CON becomes 0 or less they are immediately torn apart by the dark eldritch powers of the spell.



fin



TRIANGLE SPACECRAFT
TSCN: 00183456-1947



Spacecraft Floorplans
by Lee Williams
for *All Systems*

BIG PROBLEMS

Really Big House Rules

by Dave Schuey

*for **Dark Conspiracy**® 1/2 ed.*

Harry stepped out of the hatch...I could see the enormous trees about 50 yards away. Then Harry screamed and...and, he was flying! I looked out the hatch and tried to grab his ankle but it was too late! There was a bird...twice as big as a man! It had Harry by the torso and it was gliding higher! Harry was hitting it... trying to get free, but the bird was just getting kept climbing. Then I saw the nest. I could hear the sound of young birds and knew what was in store for Harry...

A SHORT INTRODUCTION

In a host of movies from the 1950's forward, size has been made an issue. Sometimes comically, but usually with terror and horror, giant creatures and people have caused destruction on our world. In like fashion, the nightmare of finding oneself small enough to be at the mercy of a housecat has also been portrayed. Both of these situations provide excellent material for adventure, and fit nicely within the scope of Dark Conspiracy.

A TALE LARGER THAN LIFE

In films such as "Attack of the 50 Foot Woman" and "The Amazing Colossal Man", we have seen the danger inherent in a human being of extreme size. Setting aside the scientific arguments against such a thing, this kind of mutation makes for a challenging foe. In "The Incredible Shrinking Man" we see the horror from the opposite perspective, as household spiders become a deadly threat.

From 1968 to 1970 Irwin Allen treated the world

to a tale of tiny humans surviving in a world twelve times their size. The explanation provided in "Land of the Giants" is a space warp, dimensional rift or wormhole. This could, however, fall into the category of Protodimensional doorways. We will primarily examine this show for Dark Conspiracy adventure possibilities, but it will become evident how this system could be used for giant enemies.

The first thing to determine for your giant adventure is the nature of the oversized world. Determine if the player characters have actually come to be on a world larger than their own. On the other hand, as presented humorously in the "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" films, the player characters themselves may have changed in size. Functionally, there will be little difference, but the decision leads to another choice.

Is the giant world, in fact, our world (Honey films or Shrinking Man)? Is it like our world, but obviously not (Land series)? Or is it totally alien and oversized? The answer to this question will shape the adventure, and, should you decide to go further, the campaign.

(Big Problems from page 66)



Drawing by Dave Schuey

The next choice concerns the mechanism of arrival. In “Land of the Giants”, a suborbital space shuttle travels through some kind of spatial anomaly. This fits very well with Dark Conspiracy, if you have allowed such technology to still be financially viable. Otherwise, a traditional terrestrial gateway, be it empathically based or technological, is just as good. Should you decide to simply shrink your player characters, you can still use the gateway, explaining it by way of some fault in the empathic portal or device. Otherwise, the more ubiquitous “shrink ray” could be used. In this case, if the ray is of extraterrestrial origin, some thought should be given to the alien’s motive for shrinking people (food, cargo space, psychological testing/torture).

TO FLEE OR NOT TO FLEE?

Obviously, physical conflict between small characters and giant humans is almost useless. Automatic weapons fire will seem like bee stings,

at best, to the giants. Consider what it takes to seriously damage an elephant! At twelve times their size, the giants would be 72’ tall. A giant’s foot will essentially be twice as long as a PC, perhaps a bit smaller than an automobile. Explosives may fare better, but even a powerful charge by little person standards may do only the damage of a single gunshot. Well placed, there might be a chance of a killing wound, but this would require the giant to be still long enough for the charge to be planted. Unless you are in the habit of handing out rocket launchers, or your PC’s tend to carry artillery guns with them, this possibility is slim.

On the other hand, if your situation involves but a single or small group of giants, the military may be able to deal with them, if they get the chance. If this is your planned adventure, the giants should be encountered well away from civilization, or at least ready military aid. For reference on this type of encounter, consider any giant rubber-suited Japanese monster movie.

However, the primary antagonists for miniature PC’s will be Insects, Rodents, Birds, Dogs and Cats. When upsizing creatures for this type of conflict, it will be easy enough to apply my system to those things for which you already have statistics. Your difficulty will come when trying to find the base values for things that one would never actually fight one-on-one, such as insects.

How many cockroaches does it take to do the work of an average man?

In these instances, use your best judgment. Pose a question as above and then work backwards to a base value, then apply my system to those base

DARK CONSPIRACY™

values. For example, if you decide that 25,000 gnats could exert the force of an average man, then divide 5 Strength by 25,000. This gives you the strength of a single gnat (Constitution will likely be in the same range). Then apply the modifiers to upsize it by whatever multiple you’re using, and you have the stats for a giant gnat. Common sense tweaks may be necessary. Most insectoid life will end up with a Strength of 1 for practical purposes. The vaunted proportional strength of spiders should perhaps result in a slight bonus.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Survival is obviously the primary goal in this type of situation. Depending on where the PCs end up, they may have time to prepare a settlement, or be constantly on the run. They may have to deal with curious giant humans, or only nature’s predators. Ultimately, though, they must try to return home. This goal will depend on how they arrived.

If they understand the process that led to their situation, they may need to recreate those circumstances. Arriving in a space ship as in “Land of the Giants” could mean that they have a way home, if they can get into orbit. If the ship is damaged, as in the television series, some repairs may be necessary. If undamaged, then a method of launch to orbit and a replenishment of fuel will be required. This will entirely depend on the level of space technology you have introduced to your world. In the aforementioned television series, the giant’s level

(Big Problems from page 67)

of space technology was decades behind the tiny humans. That being said, getting the ship onboard a giant rocket may be the easiest part of this plan.

If the ship is irreparable, or no ship was used for the journey, then recreating the gateway on the giant world will be the plan. Do the PCs have any idea how to do this? Perhaps they will need the help of a giant mystic or scientist. If the gateway was made through science and the PCs know the method, do the giants possess the technology to build such a device?

Which brings us to one of the critical issues that faced the commander of the protagonists in "Land of the Giants". Should the giants find a way to journey to Earth, the damage they could wreak is untold. What is more important, returning home, or protecting that home? On a number of occasions, the commander had to sabotage his people's chances of going home in order to ensure that the giants could not follow. This is an extremely juicy bit of role-playing for the group's leaders to have to shoulder.

ADVENTURE SEED #1: GIVING YOU A GIANT BIRD

Act One

While scouting or scavenging, the party comes under attack by a giant bird or birds. If you feel your PCs have the ability to defend against one bird, you may need to add more. Alternatively, if you can isolate one of the characters from the others in a place where a bird could swoop in, you have your victim. In any event, someone must be captured by the bird and taken back to its nest.

Act Two

At this point, the other PC's may opt to let the victim perish. Pretty harsh. Let them hear his terrified screams from above as he tries to fend off

the chicks in the nest. Lay the guilt on as thick as you need to in order to get them to mount a rescue. If they seem dead set on not rescuing the captured teammate, it may be time to allow an escape attempt. You should keep the other players at the table to witness the dire fate they have left their friend to. If the escape succeeds the victim will no doubt be very resentful. Play this up. If not, well, let the others hear the tortured screams as the unfortunate soul is torn to pieces by the chicks, or let them see his fall from what would seem like a thirty or forty story high tree.

If they do decide to rescue the captive, there will be scaling of trees to be done. If they are experienced free climbers, the bark of the tree should provide ample handholds. If they opt for the likely mountain climbing model, they will need equipment, particularly rope, or in their case, string. Time will be of the essence, as the captive will be fighting off the chicks. Don't let them think too much. After all, this is an action sequence.

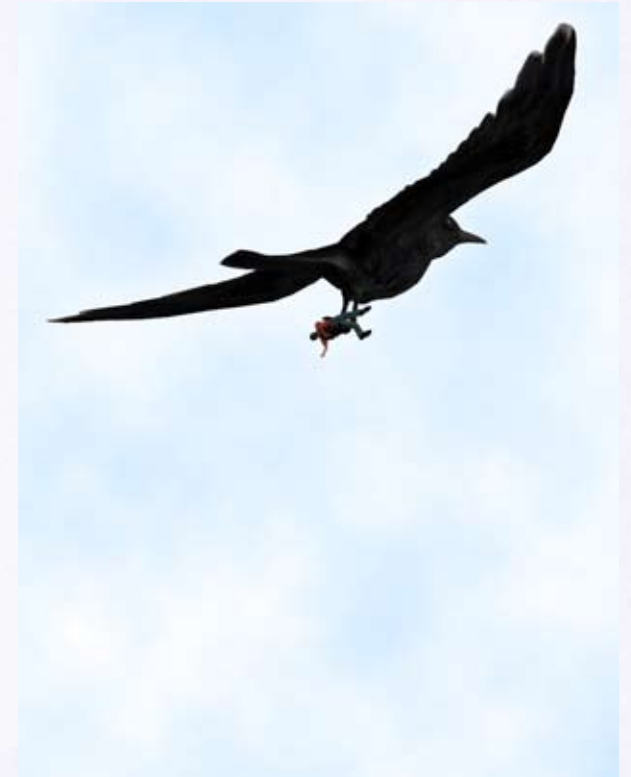
Act Three

Hopefully, they will reach the nest intact. Some groups may just kill the chicks, others might have a problem with this. In any event, as they try to descend the tree, the mother bird returns. Her attitude will depend greatly on how the chicks were dealt with. She will certainly attack, but adjust the ferocity of the attack based on the fate of her chicks. Fighting off the bird while descending the tree should increase the level of difficulty by at least one.

ADVENTURE SEED #2: FOLLOW THE WHITE RABBIT

Act One

On a relatively peaceful day, one or more of the PCs, preferably a scientist, sees a white rabbit



(Big Problems from page 68)

in the forest. It is the type used by researchers the world over for testing; in fact it has a blue tag stapled to one ear. A successful Difficult (Medical, Chemistry, Psychology or any science) roll will reveal that such a creature must have recently escaped from a lab. Which means the lab is nearby. This could mean a source of scientific knowledge or supplies that might mean a return home. Some amount of tracking will be required to find and follow the rabbit. Doing so, the rabbit will enter what would seem to be a drainage pipe.

Act Two

With any luck, the scientist will convince the others to explore the pipe in hopes of finding the lab. When the expedition is mounted, the pipe turns into a warren. With little warning, this has become a Dungeon Crawl! The warren will contain numerous insects, spiders, and possibly rats. Several combats later, and possibly after dealing with a collapse in the tunnel, the pipe will be found again, leading to a basement laboratory.

ADVENTURE SEED #3: EXCUSE ME DOCTOR, I HAVE A HUGE HEADACHE

Act One

Inside the laboratory, you can place equipment appropriate to whatever level of technology your giants have. Give some thought to what the owner of the basement is studying or trying to accomplish. Map out the basement and don't forget to include the heights of all furniture and equipment. Note: Chemical terms, drugs, processes and scientific language in general need not be the same in the giant civilization as on Earth. Make it a challenge for the PCs to figure out what's being studied. I suggest a Difficult (any science skill) for any interpretation of the giant

science. This Act should largely be exploration.

Act Two

While engaged in a thorough search of the laboratory, the scientist's cat returns. This should be a battle that ranges all over the lab, possibly activating or damaging equipment in the process.

Act Three

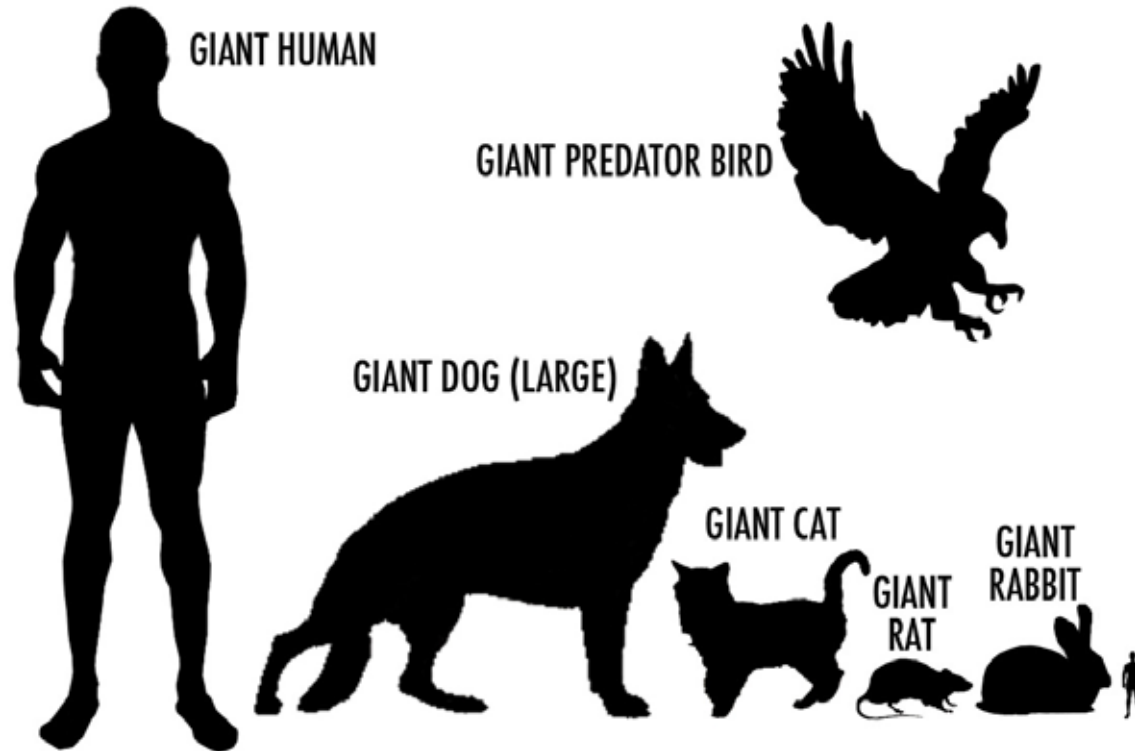
When the ruckus from the cat becomes loudest, your scientist should arrive. Kicking the cat out and cleaning up the mess will give the scientist a good chance of either seeing one of the PCs, or finding a piece of their equipment lost during the fight with the cat. Decide if the scientist knows of the existence of little people. Or not, he will puzzle over the knotted pieces of string and toy guns he finds, but probably think nothing more of it. Perhaps some kids have found a way into his lab. On the other hand, if he knows of little people, he will likely want to capture them for scientific purposes. If the giant government has put a bounty on their heads, that may be the only motivation needed.

It is also possible that this scientist is good hearted and kind. Perhaps this becomes apparent in the reaction to the cat's mess. Suggest to the PCs that this may be a valuable contact if handled diplomatically.

If the scientist can help return them home new adventures may be needed. If, on the other hand, an escape or rescue becomes necessary, continue as the situation warrants.



SIZE COMPARISON CHART



SUPERSIZE ME!

Use this system to develop your own giant creatures:

1. Choose your size modifier.
2. When adjusting Strength simply apply the size modifier.
3. When adjusting Constitution double for every three full levels of size increase.
4. Agility will be reduced, so subtract .5 (D10 system), or 1 (GDW D20 system) for each level of size increase.
5. When figuring Hits, add modified Strength and Constitution for Total Hits (second number), and then halve that for the Slight Wound Hits (first number).
6. When adjusting Move and Damage, multiply the existing numbers by the size multiplier.

Use common sense and the examples presented to determine "armor". For giant humans, assume them to have a level of "armor" for every three full levels of size increase. This system, however does not necessarily apply to all creatures. Most giant creatures will have at least one level of "armor", but use your best judgment.

(Big Problems continued)

STOMPZILLA

A 300' tall lizard that breathes a radiation like death-ray and exists on electricity? Sure, we got one of those!

GIANT JAPANESE MONSTER

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|------|------------|-----------|
| # Appearing | 1 | Initiative | 1 | Agility | 1 |
| Attack | 90% | Strength | 750 | Skill/Dam. | 2/50D6* |
| Move | 500/1000 | Constitution | 1250 | Hits | 1000/2000 |

Note: These are approximate values only, particularly Constitution and Hits. They are presented here only to show the futility of combat with a creature of this type.



*You can make things really BIG
Or you can make the people
really SMALL.*

*Remember the Attack of
the Puppet People?*

BREATH WEAPON

| | ROF | DAM | PEN | BLK | MAG | SS | BRST | RNG |
|----------------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| *Breath Weapon | 1 | 5D6 x 100 | 1-2-3 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1000 |

(Big Problems continued)

INSECTS/ARACHNIDS

All creatures in this category should be considered to have an Armor value of 1 for their chitinous exoskeleton.

Cockroach

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 2D6 | Initiative | 5 | Agility | 2 |
| Attack | 75% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 4/1D6 |
| Move | 5/10/20 | Constitution | 1 | Hits | 1/2 |

Mosquito

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 4D6 | Initiative | 2 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 75% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 2/1D6 |
| Move | 10/20/40 | Constitution | 1 | Hits | 1/2 |

Army Ants

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------|---|------------|-----|
| # Appearing | 3D10 | Initiative | 6 | Agility | 1 |
| Attack | 90% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 8/1 |
| Move | 12/24 | Constitution | 8 | Hits | 4/8 |

Notes:

As per their entry in the Dark Conspiracy rulebook, roll for # Appearing each consecutive round.

Spider

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|---|------------|---------|
| # Appearing | 1 | Initiative | 5 | Agility | 2 |
| Attack | 99%*/ 10% | Strength | 2 | Skill/Dam. | 6/1D6** |
| Move | 12/24 | Constitution | 8 | Hits | 5/10 |

Notes:

* If caught in web.

** A neurotoxic poison inducing paralysis in 1D6 rounds.

This is a large species, normally about 1" in diameter, but enlarged to 12" across!

Bee

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|--------|
| # Appearing | 1D6 | Initiative | 1 | Agility | 1 |
| Attack | 5% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 2/1D6* |
| Move | 10/20/40 | Constitution | 1 | Hits | 1/2 |

Notes:

* The bee's attack is its stinger, and its use results in the bee's death.

Hornet

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1D6 | Initiative | 2 | Agility | 2 |
| Attack | 30% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 3/1D6 |
| Move | 5/10/20 | Constitution | 2 | Hits | 2/4 |

Notes:

As per their entry in the Dark Conspiracy rulebook, roll for # Appearing each consecutive round.

((Big Problems continued))

RODENTS

Rodents do not possess a ballistic armor value, but the thickness of their fur will make slashing melee attacks with bladed weapons more difficult. Reduce all damage inflicted by such an attack by 50%.

Mouse

| | | | | | |
|-------------|------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 2D6 | Initiative | 1 | Agility | 2 |
| Attack | 1% | Strength | 3 | Skill/Dam. | 2/1D6 |
| Move | 5/10 | Constitution | 3 | Hits | 3/6 |

Rat

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1D6 | Initiative | 2 | Agility | 1 |
| Attack | 20% | Strength | 6 | Skill/Dam. | 3/2D6 |
| Move | 15/30 | Constitution | 7 | Hits | 7/13 |

Squirrel

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1D6 | Initiative | 3 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 5% | Strength | 2 | Skill/Dam. | 2/1D6 |
| Move | 20/40 | Constitution | 4 | Hits | 3/5 |

Rabbit

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 2D6-1 | Initiative | 4 | Agility | 4 |
| Attack | 1% | Strength | 5 | Skill/Dam. | 2/1D6 |
| Move | 20/40 | Constitution | 3 | Hits | 4/8 |

BIRDS

Bird feathers, like rodent fur, will protect from slashing melee attacks. However, the relative fragility of avian bones means an increased chance of damage to the skeleton. Reduce damage to birds from these types of attacks by only 25%. All birds (except the Song Bird) have the ability to seize a target and take to the air. Should the bird be moved to drop the PC, falling damage should be calculated using the falling character's size as reference. Gravity is a constant, after all. In a 12:1 world, falling 1 giant foot would be like falling 12 normal feet, or roughly one story.

Hoarding Bird

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1-2 | Initiative | 2 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 15% | Strength | 2 | Skill/Dam. | 3/1D6 |
| Move | 10/20/40 | Constitution | 2 | Hits | 2/4 |

Predator Bird

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1 | Initiative | 4 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 60% | Strength | 6 | Skill/Dam. | 3/3D6 |
| Move | 10/20/40 | Constitution | 5 | Hits | 6/11 |

Song Bird

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|------------|---------|
| # Appearing | 1D6 | Initiative | 1 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 5% | Strength | 1 | Skill/Dam. | 2/1D6-2 |
| Move | 15/30/60 | Constitution | 3 | Hits | 2/4 |

Dogs

Like rodents, dog fur will deflect slashing attacks for 50% damage. Like giants themselves, the relative thickness of skin and flesh with the needle-like size of most small arms fire will give all dogs except the Small dog an armor value of 1. Dogs will claw and bite, but it should be noted that not all dogs will be hostile. Dogs will, however, very likely bark at a 1/12th scale human, especially if they do not know them. This bark will have the effect of a Sonic Attack (ROF 5 Dam 1 Pen *). A Sonic Attack from a giant dog initiates an automatic Stun Check. *The only "armor" of any use in defending against this type of attack is some sort of industrial hearing protection, or deafness. While there are many grades of hearing protection, for simplicities sake, assume any such protection to be adequate.

Large Dog

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|----|------------|--------|
| # Appearing | 1D6 | Initiative | 4 | Agility | 1 |
| Attack | 60% | Strength | 36 | Skill/Dam. | 6/12D6 |
| Move | 180/360/720 | Constitution | 16 | Hits | 26/52 |

Medium Dog

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|----|------------|--------|
| # Appearing | 1D6-1 | Initiative | 4 | Agility | 2 |
| Attack | 50% | Strength | 28 | Skill/Dam. | 6/10D6 |
| Move | 140/280/560 | Constitution | 14 | Hits | 21/42 |

Small Dog

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|----|------------|-------|
| # Appearing | 1-2 | Initiative | 5 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 45% | Strength | 20 | Skill/Dam. | 6/7D6 |
| Move | 100/200/400 | Constitution | 10 | Hits | 15/30 |



CATS

Cats, like other fur bearing opponents will reduce damage from slashing blades by 50%. Cats have extremely sharp teeth and claws, and will likely have only two responses to a 1/12th scale human: food or plaything. Neither attitude will be very healthy for the human.

Cat

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|----|------------|--------|
| # Appearing | 2D6 | Initiative | 5 | Agility | 3 |
| Attack | 50% | Strength | 20 | Skill/Dam. | 6/10D6 |
| Move | 130/260/520 | Constitution | 20 | Hits | 20/40 |

Happy shooting!

BIGGER FREAKIN' GUNS!

Armament

by Lee Williams
for *Dark Conspiracy*® 1/2 ed.

Referee's Note: if a character is using one of these you may want to introduce a penalty when firing, as it is extremely difficult to hold the weapon on target. Remember, this is a giant revolver and all the weight is in front of the pistol grip. Whoever said the Germanic peoples have no sense of humour was definitely wrong.

ZELISKA .600 NITRO EXPRESS REVOLVER



Zekiska (Revolver)

| | ROF | DAM | PEN | BLK | MAG | SS | BRST | RNG |
|------------------------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|----|------|-----|
| .600 Nitro Express | SAR | 7 | 2-3-4 | 4 | 5R | 5 | --- | 20 |
| .458 Winchester Magnum | SAR | 5 | 2-3-Nil | 4 | 5R | 4 | --- | 20 |

Unloaded Weight: 6.5kg
Price: 12,000 Euro
Availability: (-/-) (Custom made)

This truly colossal revolver is hand-made to order at the Austrian workshops of Pfeifer Waffen, who also build a similar revolver in .458 Winchester Magnum calibre. Details for both are given above.

Designed by Otto Ziler, the Zeliska uses the .600 Nitro Express round usually found in old-fashioned big game rifles. The factors involved in the making of such a unique weapon have resulted in the revolver being larger than most submachine guns, and weighing in at almost twice the empty mass of a modern assault rifle. Although very much a "gun bunny" exercise, the Zeliska might possibly be found in the hands of a very high-status, very large Nome minion hunter. Compared to this monster, even the Smith and Wesson .500 Magnum would take a lowly second place!



CAR PERFORMANCE TEK

Car Performance House Rules

by Zvezda

for **Dark Conspiracy**® 1/2 ed.

The following are House Rules used to boost the performance and other characteristics of cars and trucks. Use an Availability Code suitable to your campaign.

Price:

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Level 1 | \$1200 |
| Level 2 | \$3900 |
| Level 3 | \$7500 |

PERFORMANCE

NITRO INJECTOR

With the nitro-booster installed the acceleration speed will be increased by +1 per level.

Price:

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Level 1 | \$1500 |
| Level 2 | \$3700 |
| Level 3 | \$7000 |

ADVANCED BRAKES

These advanced brakes work similarly to the Nitro Injectors, except that it works in the opposite direction. For every level of advanced brakes, add + 5 to the basic deceleration speed.

HIGH PERFORMANCE ENGINE

This option represents a lot of serious modifications to the car's basic engine. The effects come close to a complete new engine block for the chosen vehicle. The High Performance Engine increases the speed, but also the fuel consumption of the car.

Fuel Cons: +25%

Speed: + 25%

Price: +25% of vehicle's list price

FLAME PAINT

Cars with flames painted on them can add +1 to the Com Move.

Price: \$100

(Performance Tek from page 76)

ULTRA SPEED TIRES

These are very light tires made for high speed. They only work well on paved roads. A vehicle equipped with these tires can add +5 to the Com Move on-road, but must halve the off road speed.

Price:\$250 per tire

EXTRA CAPACITY FUEL TANK

Extra capacity is gained by removing one kilogram of the cars load capacity for every litre of additional fuel. For an additional \$1000 these tanks can be separated from the standard tank. Each extra tank is a separate hit location and should be tracked separately when allocating damage.

Price: \$100/10 litres

PROTECTION

ARMOR

Ultra-light armor, developed for the private market can be added. The shielding includes everything except bullet proof tires. The more armor is added the heavier the shielding becomes. At higher armor level, additional or special motors are needed, for example to open the doors and windows. For this reason the armor gets more expensive when a level above AV8 is reached.

Unarmored vehicles are the only vehicles which can be equipped with additional armor points. Armor can be freely distributed over the hull front, hull side, and hull rear. Just subtract one point (two for HS Armour) of Com Move for every 3 points of additional armour.



(Performance Tek from page 77)

Price: \$5,000 per Point of Armor up to 8 per location. \$10,000 per point above eight.

PUNCTURE PROOF TIRES

Just as it says: puncture proof tires. Level 1 adds +2 to the Susp(w) value of the chosen vehicle, level 2 adds + 4. Puncture proof tires also bring a -2 Penalty to Com Move.

Price: \$500 per tire (Level1),
\$1000 per tire (Level2)

AUTO REFILL TIRES

An air compressor can be connected with the vehicles tires. In case of puncture damage to the tires it will automatically refill them. This means you can just ignore every minor suspension damage, and treat an immobilized result just like a minor one. The vehicle will only stop if it gets 1.5 times its allowed suspension hits (in case of Susp (W)2; 1 will be ignored, 2 will be minor and 3 hits will immobilize the car.) The ART works best in combination with bullet proof tires.

Price: \$5000 and 50 kg of cargo space

OTHER OPTIONS

FOG/TEARGAS RELEASE SLOTS

Hidden jets can be installed which can release either a fog-screen or teargas. They need 10 kg of storage space and can be loaded with standard chemical grenades. A maximum of four gas jets can be installed. The price for a reload of the jets are the same as the appropriate gas grenade. For



(Performance Tek from page 78)

the passenger's safety the car should be equipped with an NBC Seal before teargas jets are installed.

Price: \$1000 per Jets

NBC SEAL

This will seal the car against chemical or biological attacks. It does not provide ventilation.

Price: \$10,000

LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

A life-support system can foil flame-thrower and poison gas attacks. It supports up to 4 persons for one hour, and needs 100 kg of storage space.

Price: \$7500

RUN FLAT TIRES

From the outside they look like normal tires. Normally if air is suddenly lost from a tire, the beads will be drawn into the well of the wheel resulting in a dramatic loss of control. Run Flat Tires are equipped with a special band which prevents the tire from entering the well. If a vehicle with Run Flat Tires suffers a minor damage from a suspension hit it can carry on with 2/3 of it's listed Com Move. From then on the vehicle is treated as if it has T(3) for Cars or Motorcycles, T(4) for Trucks or Vans. If the Vehicle receives an additional hit the speed is again halved, the next hit finally immobilizes the vehicle.

Price: \$500 Per Tire

BATTERING RAM

Level 1 (Reinforced ram bumper) adds + 5

points to HF in the case of a frontal collision. Level 2 (Battering Ram) adds +10 to HF for collision damage only. Level 3 (looks like a snow remover) can only be installed on Trucks, vans etc. The Level 3 ram is designed to remove barricades and the like. It adds + 20 to the HF value for collision damage and has an AV of 2 for people seeking cover behind it during fire fights.

The Level 1 ram can be installed at the front and at the rear of any car. Doing so requires the purchase of two rams.

Price:

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Level 1 | \$1000 |
| Level 2 | \$3000 |
| Level 3 | \$7000 |

AIR BAGS

Ignore the first crewmember hit inflicted by collision damage.

Price \$1000

ARMORED PASSENGER CELL

Just like the armored cockpit in the air combat rules. Ignore every Passenger or Crewmember hit resulting from small arms fire.

Price: Crewmembers only \$2000
Passengers and Crewmembers \$4000



WHIPFLAYERS

A Dark Race

by Lee Williams
for **Dark Conspiracy**® 1/2 ed.

Original idea posted to the Dark Conspiracy Group mailing list and DCtRPG online forum, January 2008. Revised and updated May 2008 with thanks to all who contributed ideas and advice, or even just paid attention!

Whipflayers look at first to be nothing more than bundles of torn and bloody rags bound around with old rusted barbed wire. It is when they make their attack that their true nature is revealed; the “bundles” roll towards their chosen victim at speed. As they reach melee range the barbed wire rears up into the form of a human skeleton, with the tattered rags covering the chest and abdomen in a semblance of strips of torn skin.

They may also simply lie in wait, motionless, and snag a passing victim’s ankle or wrist before revealing their true form and attacking. If making a surprise snag attack, they can reach as far as five metres. However, they have to reduce the distance to use full Melee attack; think of this as the creature rolling itself into a more solid form.

It is their mode of attack that gives Whipflayers their name: they simply use their “hands” as whips, raking the target with strands of razor-sharp barbed wire covered with a red substance that resembles fresh human blood. This red gloop is actually the animating substance that gives them

a semblance of life. If they are attacked with fire they take double damage, as the gloop dries out quickly when exposed to high levels of heat. Also, due to their physical form not being completely solid it is one Difficulty level higher to hit them with firearms. Melee weapons work as normal, but Whipflayers are immune to electric stun weapons.

It is believed that these creatures first came into existence during the late 1990s when a chemical lab in northeastern France suffered a serious leak, and an experimental compound leached into the soil. After several months percolating through the ground it mixed with the residue left over from the fierce fighting that had raged through the area during World War One. Thus, they were born. Nobody knows for certain exactly how the process worked, or if Darklings were involved in the process. What is certain is that these things exist and are spreading slowly across Europe.

If the majority of a group of Whipflayers are destroyed, those remaining will attempt to capture and kidnap any living humanoids. Taking the

WHIPFLAYERS

| | | | | | |
|--|---|------------|---|-------------|--------|
| Strength | 5 | Education | 1 | Move | 20/40 |
| Constitution | 3 | Charisma | 4 | Skill/Dam. | 3/2D6 |
| Agility | 5 | Empathy | 1 | Hits | 10/20* |
| Intelligence | 2 | Initiative | 4 | # Appearing | 1D6 |
| Special: *Double damage from fire, see below. | | | | | |



(Whipflayers from page 80)

captives back to their subterranean lair, the creatures will plunge the living into a pool of the red gloop whilst flaying them with their wiry talons. The fresh blood and other fluids rejuvenate the animating substance, and when the victims are finally (and mercifully) dead, their flensed skeletons are co-cooned in strips of rags. These cocoons are then left submerged in the pool, and will eventually rise up to become replacements for the fallen Whipflayers.

So far as is known the Whipflayers operate collectively. They do not appear to have any ties with any other Minions, nor does there seem to be a leader. This cannot be confirmed but so far there has been no evidence to suggest otherwise.

Some sources in the empathic underground are of the opinion that the unbelievable amount of human suffering that occurred in the area during wartime has left an indelible empathic scar in the very Earth. To put it another way, the residue mentioned previously is not just chemical in origin. These sources believe that these monsters are motivated by the vengeful spirits of those who were “shot at dawn” (the term used by the British military for the execution of soldiers found guilty of cowardice).

Whatever the case, the chemical leak is a matter of record. This being Dark Conspiracy however, there’s always the chance that the restless spirits of the dead might be part of it.

DARK CONSPIRACY™



THE GREAT DRAGON

An Adversary NPC

*by Barrok of Barrok's Tower
for World of Darkness®*

Sean Williams grew up in the midst of the bible belt in 1960's America in a wholesome church-going family. Everything was idyllic to Sean until his teens when his whole world and beliefs would be shaken into ruins. Coming home one day from after-school bible study, he saw that the Reverend Johnson's car was in the driveway whilst his father was at work. Creeping into the house he spied the reverend and his mother intimately involved in bed and overhearing from them that it had been happening for years.

Darkness and hatred rampaged through his mind. The church had all been a lie. The reverend, with his talks about the evils of promiscuity and affairs, were all a lie. His mother's kind words to his father too had been a lie. In his blind fury, Sean realized he had gone to the kitchen, picked up several carving knives, and interrupting their unholy coitus, pinned the Reverend Johnson and his mother to the bed.

Sean stabbed them in the back, through each of their hands and through their feet. Sean slowly watched them die, and then fled the house never to return.

Over the next few years Sean turned to Satanism to fill the void in his life where his religion had been. Every group he encountered though seemed full of disenchanted youths acting out in teen angst-driven rebellion. Sean though, was on a darker path. He saw every church as a corruption, and every church leader as a tempter who should be put to death.

He made himself a mask with the frightful countenance of a demon, hand carved from oak and enchanted through many rituals. It was his new persona, one with a dreadful purpose. For 10 years he preyed upon the Bible Belt, going from town to town killing church leaders in his own, gruesome style of execution: inverted crucifixion; hands and feet pinned to a cross with gigantic iron nails; and castration so the guilty slowly bled to death.

The police finally cornered Sean in the middle of a crucifixion and shot him dead, seven times over. What was unknown to the police was that Sean had a partner, an acolyte who managed to get Sean's body out of the morgue. The acolyte transported Sean's body to a crossroads where

*Adversary? Could be a friend.
Ya' never know in WoD!*

(Great Dragon from page 82)

the heart was removed, placed in an urn, and buried. Sean's body was then buried under the ruins of a church.

Over the next 10 years living sacrifices were made over his remains, calling on every demon's name until a fateful night when a fresh bloody hand burst through the ground where the large menacing figure of the Great Dragon emerged.

All hateful and imbued with dark vengeance, the Great Dragon now travels the roads and byways looking for churches to level and church leaders to crucify.

MODUS OPERANDI

The Great Dragon strikes at churches indiscriminately with the fury of killing the person who is in charge of it. Anyone getting in his way is quickly dispatched with only a torturous end being used for the leader. He is armed with 13 one foot long iron spikes and a huge sledgehammer, which he carries under his full length leather coat.

WEAKNESS

The only way to fully destroy The Great Dragon is to cause him enough damage that he "dies" then destroy his heart in the container. If the heart is not destroyed The Great Dragon will rise up from the dead again at the next new moon. The Great Dragon will leave any church alone where the leader is a woman.



THE GREAT DRAGON

Intelligence 2
Wits 2
Resolve 3
Strength 4
Dexterity 1
Stamina 5
Presence 3
Manipulation 1
Composure 2

Health 10
Willpower 5
Morality 0
Size 5
Speed 10
Initiative mod 3
Defence 1

Crafts 1
Occult 5 (Satanism)
Athletics 2
Brawl 4
Stealth 2
Survival 1
Weaponry (hammer) 3
Intimidation 4

Fighting Style 5 - Frenzied Assault (slasher)
Fame 1

He has all the talents and frailties of Masks explained in **WoD Slashers®**.



From Under The Floorboards

Well now, not only do I get an editorial position on this publication but also my own little page, to do with as I wish...think I'll stick to my usual vague stream of consciousness style!

For this premier issue I will start by addressing a topic I tried to cover in the past, namely sources of inspiration for horror and conspiracy gaming. Yes I know it's been done before, and by cleverer people than I, but games come and go and some get either overlooked or completely forgotten. What I am talking about here are mainly games and sourcebooks that can easily be converted from one system to another. Sometimes just the description of a monster from another system can be different enough to capture your players' attention.

There may not be any surprises in this list, but these are the games that I think have the most to offer from being swapped around with each other.

Eden Studios: Conspiracy X

Alien species, psychics, magic and secret organisations... oh my! Utilising the Unisystem rules which make it compatible with All Flesh Must Be Eaten (and the Buffy game!).

GDW: Dark Conspiracy

Inter-dimensional Darklings prey on humanity in a world going to Hell in a breadbasket. I love this game. At the time of writing a CD-ROM is being prepared which will contain all of the previously published official material plus the Demonground magazine archives!

Iron Crown Enterprises: Nightmares Of Mine by Ken Hite.

What more can any GM need than a book that gives advice on how to run different types of horror campaigns, written by possibly the most Cthulhoid author alive? Highly recommended.

Mayfair Games: CHILL

Members of a secret society battle ghosts, undead etc. Some truly superb sourcebooks to lift ideas from, in any edition. A third edition is mooted but they may not be able to raise the money to publish it, sadly.

Pagan Publishing: Delta Green

Conspiratorial modern-day re-think of Call of Cthulhu, great great stuff. It's got undead Nazis, ghouls under New York and other nastiness. Long overdue second edition on its way at the moment.

Palladium: Beyond The Supernatural

Guess what? Another secret organisation battling weirdness from Beyond. Currently on release in its third edition, and definitely one of the best things Palladium have ever done IMHO.

Postmortem Studios: @ctiv8

A more up-to-date internet age game. Disparate groups of activists meet via a 'social network' program to Fight The Power. A typical James 'Grim' Desborough game: strong themes, decent content and simple to play.

SJG: GURPS

Obviously there are a great many GURPS books around. I have just tried here to whittle them down to those which particularly fit the horror/conspiracy genre.

GURPS Creatures Of The Night

A collection of weirdies and beasts that can easily be shifted between different games.

GURPS Horror

Self-explanatory title, but very neatly done.

GURPS Suppressed Transmissions 1 & 2

Fortean and conspiracy material given a GURPS slant by Ken Hite. Very useful as a grab-bag of ideas.

GURPS Warehouse 23

A wonderful collection of gizmos and supernatural items, all kept in a huge building reminiscent of the final scene of 'Raiders Of The Lost Ark'.

TSR: Tabloid!

This is a cracking little game. One of TSR's 'Amazing Engine' RPG line, the characters are reporters for papers that make the Weekly World News look like the Times of London. The spirit of Kolchak in a game written by none other than Lester Smith, who also created Dark Conspiracy.

TSR: Dark*Matter

Alternity setting with some very good ideas, some of which were revisited in the D20 Modern game. Yet another secret organisation theme and none the worse for it!

Okay I think that will do for this issue. Next time, I might actually have something planned for this column...Be Seeing You!



Lee Williams
(Morthrai)



protodimension magazine

<http://www.protodimension.org/zine>