

protodimension magazine



ISSUE 16 SUMMER 2013

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As a fan-based publication, **Protodimension Magazine** is always looking for contributions by the fan community. Please see the **Protodimension Magazine** website at <http://www.protodimension.org/zine>. Submissions can be sent via email to submissions@protodimension.com

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DITHERING IN THE DARK

Welcome, Loyalists to the Dark.

Welcome once again to the latest issue of Protodimension Magazine. This issue marks 4 years of production for us. 4 years of support for our core systems and others. 4 years of fiction, poetry, and art related to or inspired by the focus on the dark that PDM has. 4 years of support for the gaming industry. 4 years of loyal readers and contributors keeping us going.

So this marks the end of 4 years and with Issue 17 the start of our 5th year. As an editor here I look forward to each new issue, with new and fresh views and takes on our hobby. It is refreshing to see what others create, toiling and crafting, to support their fellow gamers, and using us here at PDM as the vector of their efforts.

So a sincere Thank You to all that have contributed over the past 4 years. Without your support we would not be as successful as we have been. So successful in fact, that we have been nominated for, and achieved the short-list of, the 2013 ENnie Awards in the Best Aid/Accessory category.

So onto our current issue, # 16. This time around we have the entrants and results from

our very first contest, plenty of fiction and poetry, along with game system support articles and adventure support.

Please enjoy all that is offered and as always,

Good Gaming,
Tad Kelson
Lead Editor
Protodimension Magazine



CREATIVITY CONTEST WINNERS

We Got Some Great Words

CONTEST WINNER:

DAVE SCHUEY

The results are in and the contest winner is Dave Schuey, a regular contributor to *Protodimension Magazine*! Note that most of the entries are from regular contributors, but there can only be one.

We hope you will enjoy his entry: *Submitted for Your Approval* on page 6.

There was a tie for second with the honors going to Tad Kelson and Captain Obvious!

Tad's entry, entitled *Welcome Home to the Chateau* is presented on page 10.

The Captain's entry entitled, *A Real Opportunity* is on page 39.

Dave Schuey will receive coupons for all three current **3Hombres Games** adventures and a copy of *Conspiracy Rules* at **DrivethruRPG**.

The Runners Up will receive coupons for a bundle of all three adventures OR a copy of *Conspiracy Rules*.

A new contest is located on page 56.

Congratulations Dave!

SUBMITTED FOR YOUR APPROVAL

The Kazanjian Art Contest WINNER

By Dave Schuey



Submitted for your approval:

A way station along the highway of dreams. The singular obsession of a wealthy railroad tycoon, whose journey into madness began long before his wealth and outlasted it as well.

A place of ghosts who seek blood as easily as escape. A labyrinthine fun house that is anything but fun. Beware the high tower, for there resides an evil from beyond time and space that seeks nothing less than to devour the souls of men. Don't be caught in the area still being built or you might find yourself not only a permanent resident, but quite literally a fixture.

Should you still become trapped, try to find the stream that runs through the cellar, it will lead you out, though the fall might test your mortality just as surely.

Take care on the rocky shores of this river, for it snakes its way inexorably through...

...The Twilight Zone.

DROP ZONE, INC.

Inspirational Fiction

by Herb Severson

A short story for game ideas set in a future world where the companies are the Government...

–I–

Kaylon was burning: as the pilot banked the dropship around the passengers could see the burning barriers in the roads leading to the capitol city. “Food riots,” Wilkes said, hanging on to the webbing and looking out the back of the dropship. The pilot had already lowered the rear ramp for a hot drop. Helm walked to the rear and looked out. “I never thought I’d see anything like that in the Inner Colonies.”

Wilkes looked out at the random destruction mingled among the concrete, steel, and mirrored windows of the city. “It started out as a corporate mining town. The whole thing was laid out and designed to keep all the money in the corporation. You worked for them, paid them rent, shopped at company run stores. You traveled on the company line, and your kids went to company run schools. It is an example still taught in business schools.”

Helm looked back to Wilkes “So what is happening now?” Looking a little distraught Wilkes replied “They had a monopoly: they started raising prices dramatically, People became trapped. Once here, the price of living exceeded their company pay, putting them further and further in debt with no way out. When a rival company filed for mineral rights and were refused they

started backing the Insurrectionists Movement.”

Helm just nodded and looked back at the city as the pilot started a fast decent into the warehouse district “I guess that is the reason I am here, to pick up the pieces, again”.

–II–

After being dropped off on a well-guarded roof top the two men were met by a middle aged woman in an immaculate suit, and accompanied by 4 armed guards.

“Welcome to Charon VI, we may be a backwater world, but we still stay current with the Tech and Comms. I am Carrie Hansen, 1st assistant to the President. Your transport awaits.”

When they arrived at the buildings exit there were company armored cars, as well as three large trucks pulling containers. Hansen had them get into the truck in the middle. It was full of stacked crates, with just a four-foot gap near the door. Or at least Helm thought so, until Hansen walked to the wall of crates and placed her palm against them.

The crates swung aside. Inside was a fully furnished mobile command center: screens hung on the walls and at the back company agents in black armor were watching every movement.

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In back of the unit, someone held up a hand. “We are getting reports of disturbances only four blocks away, can anyone get some live sat imagery up?”

At about the same time as the image came up there was a flash and trail of smoke heading straight for the first truck in the convoy.

As the lead truck burst into flames from the RPG’s impact, the command post driver tried to avoid another RPG heading in.

“Brace for incoming!” and they screeched to a halt dropping the back ramp, black armor clad company troops raced out to set a safety zone. Hansen, Wilkes, and Helm also exited the truck looking for cover, all of them armed with only their company issue sidearm. “Here we go again” thought Helm, as he spotted a large crowd of rioters watching the burning convoy.

–III–

Helm stared at the faces of the rioters, reading the rage and the desperation of the crowd’s mood.

“Behind us.” Hansen turned and fired at a form hiding behind a corner of the burning trailer.

“We need to get out of here” Wilkes said.

“Can’t we do anything?” Helm asked.

“It’s just the three of us; the others are either pinned down or dead.” Hansen stated. “Damn it.”

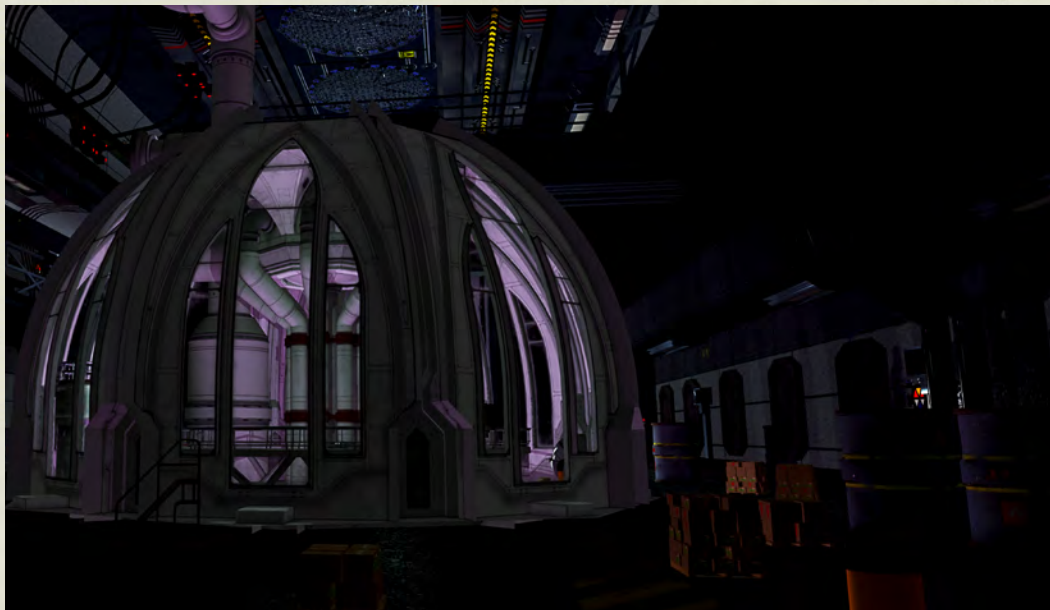
Helm turned so he could keep an eye on the mob and trailer as he pulled his comm out. “Alpha 099, this is Lieutenant Helm.” He pulled his side arm from the holster and kept it at his side. “Markus here, sir,” crackled in his earpiece.

“Get ready for a hot pickup, we are coming up to the roof at this location, watch out for RPGs.” As they headed up to the roof Helm gave another order to the dropship pilot that was then relayed to the main ship in orbit.

It was only three words “Dogs of War”, but it started a chain reaction this little backwater planet will not soon forget...

Upon reaching the rooftop, Helm pointed to the NW quadrant and said “This is the reason I was sent here.”

In the air there were about 30 black specks falling toward them on small jets of flame. What they were watching was an Orbital Drop Insertion of a Company Strike Team. Inside the pods were special troops outfitted with Power Battle Armor. Each trooper carried enough fire power equal to a full squad of regular troops. The time to take back control of the company’s interests was at hand, and woe to those that opposed them.



AUTHOR’S NOTE: This is just the beginning of a series of short stories that I am developing for a Corporate based RPG.

Thanks everyone!
Herb Severson

"Weather's been actin' pretty strange
in these parts. I think it's those Chinese
Corps that are at it."

*-Last words of Chuck Danforth
(Later found dead up in a tree after
the storm blew his trailer away)*



WELCOME HOME TO THE CHATEAU

A Kazanjian Art Contest Runner Up

by Tad Kelson



AN ARCHITECTURAL STROKE of genius, it was made for the 8 brothers of the Rocky Pointe Clan. Constructed by their extended family to ensure a place for the brothers, and any families they might have, for them to live. Work was started over 100 years ago and it continues to this day.

Located on a rocky promontory, windswept and water cut, with a treacherous road leading to the house structure. A water sluice comes out to aid in removal of debris from construction, as well as provide for the removal of other unwanted objects.

Each brother had intended to live in a separate tower like area. Ranging from 5 to 7 stories tall, each had an interior architecture to reflect the wants of each of the brothers. The exterior also was shaped to accommodate what they thought was a good place to live at.

This has created a chaotic perspective from the outside, and a near maze on the inside, where different styles overlap in the transition spaces from one part of the house to another part.

Outside stairways open up the possibilities for ingress or egress into the many conflicting aspects of the house. Scaffolding and construction materials dot the grounds, evidence of the ongoing work that has not ceased.

Power is supplied by water wheel run generators, with a small tributary of the surrounding waters having been diverted to run through the basement and out the front of the house, creating an unintended drooling mouth look to the whole place.

Time has been kindly, despite frequent storms and difficult terrain, The Chateau, as the locals call it, thrives and continues to support the family that started it a century ago.

AUDREY IN THE GRAVE NEW WORLD

Gameplay-based Fiction

by Becky Panovich

Note: This is based on a session of “*Fallen Times*”, a *Savage Worlds* campaign setting designed by the GM, who describes it as a “World War Z meets The Stand end-of-the-world game”.

PRELUDE

Audrey dreams she is gazing at the twilight skyline of Topeka. A low roar of chitinous clicking, like a tomb full of scarabs, drives her to step up on a nearby park bench. The noise recedes a little, and she notices an unsettling atmospheric phenomenon: brilliant shafts of light lance down from the sky like search lights, shining for several seconds before winking out. And the temperature is rising. She jumps down from the bench and runs toward the street, the sound of crunching under her feet. It’s full night now, and all the buildings and houses in view are dark; the only illumination comes from the beams of light still shooting down from the sky, striking nearby but always just out of sight.

A horrible rotten stench is filling the air, and the dread certainty that she is being pursued. Audrey risks a glance over her shoulder to see a hairless white horror with gore streaming from its lipless mouth. It is reaching for her—

PART 1

“TIM... TOM? TED, OR WHOEVER.”

She woke in the afternoon covered in sweat and her own filth. Clearly neither the bite nor the shot had killed her. She

had to console herself with a “birdbath” as there was almost no water pressure in her apartment. She drank a lot and ate a little, then began checking out the windows of her second-floor apartment...

It’s too quiet outside. The windows are grimed with soot, and when she opens them to see out, everything smells of smoke. There are a several cars and a fire truck parked or crashed at odd angles in view, and an ambulance has rear-ended her little car hard enough to knock it askew in its parking spot. She can see a few people standing around, almost perfectly still. Two of them, across the street, are standing over the mutilated remains of what was probably once a person. She decides it’s better not to get any of their attention.

In the living room, she can hear the sound of a very loud TV tuned to static in the apartment below. The view out her peephole shows the door to the apartment directly across standing wide open. No people move in sight. She’s going to have to go out there at some point, but not right this minute.

Audrey tries calling her parents. The phones are inoperative. Some websites are still functioning when she brings up her laptop, but the ones that do all seem to be showing the same general EMERGENCY WARNING message. She dashes off a quick “I’m alive, in case

you wondered,” e-mail to a couple of family members, then starts circling the apartment again, peering out each of the windows.

Something she’s done has attracted one of the standing figures outside, maybe the noise it makes when she slides open the window to get a look. It’s a cop... or was. He’s moving very slowly from the street toward her building. He has drifted close enough for Audrey to make out some details of his face— his shredded, one-eyed, mauled gray face. The sight takes her aback. There’s no way, she thinks, that someone that jacked up could still be walking around!

Audrey is hit with a wave of exhaustion and fear. She decides to have a little nap and try to shake off some of the sick, terrorized feeling looking at that ravaged face had left her with. And she’ll lay in her roommate’s bed, as her own is too foul to even consider. But first, she gets her gun.

She wakes a short time later, feeling a little better. A quick check of the TV in the roomie’s bedroom yields nothing of use: test patterns, static, EBS messages; even the local channels just play a repeating scroll of safety instructions and locations to avoid around town.

Dusk is beginning to fall. Suddenly leaving seems like the stupidest possible idea. A quick peek out another set of windows shows the two figures previously standing over the gory corpse are no longer in

sight. They could be anywhere! And it’s getting dark. Anything more Audrey does can wait until tomorrow. Besides, she’s still feeling weak and trippy from being in a fever sleep for two-and-a-half days; a little more rest would be wise. She lays down on the couch where she can see the front door.

Early the next morning, Audrey rises with something like a plan. While it is tempting to stay put, the water pressure in her apartment is down to a trickle. She’s determined to go out in search of a water source before dehydration becomes an issue. Plugging drains and opening taps wide to collect as much water as possible, she makes a circuit of the windows once more, ending at the peephole in her door. There is nobody visible. The apartment across still stands open.

Exiting her apartment quietly, Audrey can still hear the static-riddled TV below her own living room, as well as the sound of movement somewhere beneath her, out of her line of sight. She darts to the neighbors’ open door and pulls it shut tightly. The sound below gets louder, a sort of scratching and thumping noise. She slips back into her own place, snatches up a candle-holder from the nearby counter, and takes it back outside with her. Peering over the edge of the landing, she drops it to the sidewalk below with a clattering racket. The thumping-scratching sound gets faster and louder, but no figure appears to investigate the noise.

She pulls her apartment door closed and slowly goes down the stairs.

The open landing on the ground floor is empty. Behind one door is the hissing static drone of a useless television; behind the other is the source of the thumps and scratches she heard from above. Audrey checks the walk behind the building and finds it uninhabited. There is a police cruiser parked half on the sidewalk with both doors open and nobody in sight. She goes back to investigate the curious door.

She knocks, firmly but not too loudly. The scuffling-scratching-thumping intensifies, now punctuated with a sniffing-snuffing-chuffing sound. Audrey tries the knob. It turns freely, but the deadbolt must be shot, because it doesn’t open. It does cause the activity on the other side to rise to a nearly frantic level, and now she can hear a heavy thudding coming from deeper in the apartment, as well.

Hoping to get a peek inside, Audrey circles around to the sidewalk, peering at the exterior windows. It’s no good; although the sniffing-chuffing thing seems to pace with her around the walk, the windows are all curtained and she cannot get a glimpse of the interior.



Topeka, KS: Audrey’s apartment complex.



Topeka, KS: Audrey's apartment building.

A sudden realization strikes her as her brain switches focus from what's inside to how she can see inside— she remembers the good ol' bro down here has A DOG. She's been investigating a trapped dog, which has in turn been doing its best to investigate her.

Finally having a concrete objective— free that poor animal! — clears her head a little more. She checks around the doorframe, the mat, the surrounding area for anyplace a dude might've stashed a spare key. Nothing. She goes to the open cop car and pops the trunk. All manner of boy-scout gewgaws are strewn about the compartment, including— HUZAZH! — a prybar. She applies it to the apartment door and *CRACK-POP* the door swings open, freeing a small moose who immediately tackles her to the deck and snuffles every inch of her head.

At the same time, the thudding deeper in the apartment is interrupted by a loud bang and crash, the noise of an interior door being

broken down or smashed through. It's enough to get the dog off Audrey's head, and she's sitting up in time to see that the bro-master of the house is still at home.

In a manner of speaking...

The weirdly quiet dog is hunkering down in an offensive posture, and Audrey gets to her feet when she sees the dude aims to come right for her. She cannot close the apartment door anymore, so she rushes him and swings the prybar. She misses; he grabs her and leans in for a bite, which he lands but fails to break the skin. Audrey wrenches loose and swings again. The bludgeon glances off him, seemingly ineffectual. Her monstrous neighbor grapples her again, but he can't hold on long enough to get a bite.

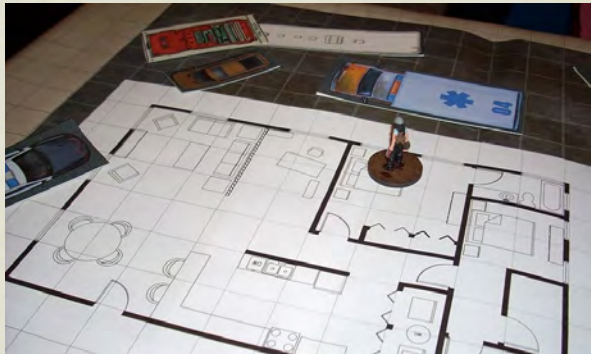
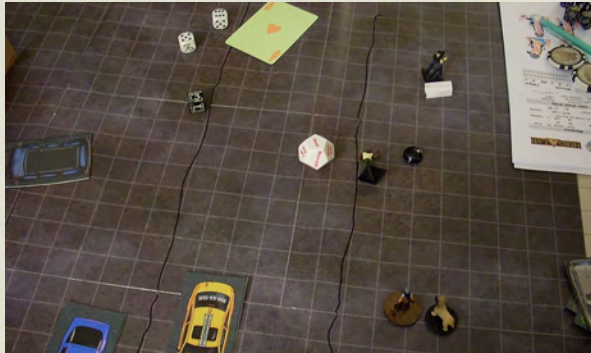
Chucking the iron aside, she draws her gun, and takes a shot at him. It grazes his arm and he grabs her a third time, but he can't seem to land a bite on her. She fires again from inside the clinch. The shot gets his attention, but doesn't seem to really damage him. He lets go of Audrey, shaking his blood-smeared head and gnashing his teeth.

The quiet dog menaces his former best-bro, distracting the thing further, and Audrey takes another shot. It hits again, but does nothing to slow him as he comes at her yet again. Grappling her once more, he snaps his teeth at her, making her miss her next shot. She struggles to break free of his grip and succeeds, barely evading his attempt to grasp her anew. She shoots at him and finally manages to peg him in the head, dropping him like a felled tree. He lays there and doesn't get up. She kicks his foot for good measure. He doesn't move again.

Suddenly aware of the riot of noise this had caused, Audrey rushes to the windows of dude's pad, looking out each quickly to see if she has attracted any curiosity-seekers. She doesn't see anyone. And Moosey the Mute Behemoth seems anxious to go. He is already pointed toward the open door.

Audrey heads for the door and immediately sees what has Furry Hulk's attention: the mangled cop from the other side of the building has followed the firefight and is now shambling toward Audrey and her new friend.

She can't take another fight like that last one. She takes a deep breath and takes aim, trying to choose her target. She squeezes the trigger. She puts one in his chest and he lunges for her. Maybe it's the one cloudy eye, or that the bullet spun him off his trajectory, or maybe it is just time for Audrey to catch a break, but the cop thing misses his first grab. With no time to take aim again, Audrey fires another shot. It goes wild. The cop thing gets hold of her, but it can't



sink a bite into her. She shoots him in his ruined face, and he drops.

Having had quite enough of this outdoorsy shit for one morning, Audrey bolts upstairs. About to reenter her apartment (AND NEVER LEAVE AGAIN PLEASE PLEASEPLEASEPLEASE), she glances at the door across from hers... Those people seemed to have left in a hurry. .. It would be good to know for sure before closing herself up right across from a walking nightmare that may or may not know how to operate doorknobs.

Audrey steels herself and opens the door. Nobody in view. Clothes and boxes and stuff strewn about, food and valuables cleared out and taken when the neighbors fled. There is no obvious sign of violence, just all the evidence of a family splitting the scene in a big hurry.

Audrey turns the water faucet. Barely a trickle. A wild thought jumps to mind then, and before she leaves, she locates the apartment's water heater, and turns the temperature down as far as it will go. She smiles at her cleverness. She leaves the neighbor's place, closing the door again behind her, and enters her own with a magnificent Great Dane in step at her heel. She's eager to get to know her new friend.

In the process of twisting his collar around to where she could read his tags, Audrey feels the distinctive scars near the throat of a dog that has been surgically muted. A wave of angry annoyance comes and goes, and she reads his name tag. Then she shares some of her dwindling store of water and a few hot dogs from the refrigerator with her new best pal, Tapper.

INTERLUDE

Dreaming. Again. I'm in a lecture hall, the murmur of students behind me. The professor has drawn a symbol on the board; he drones on about something I can't quite make out. I turn to shush my nervously chattering classmates, but I am alone in the gallery. Looking again to the front of the room, the instructor has gone still as stone, his back to me.

I'm standing with my bag in my hand, and I back warily out of the class.

And into my apartment. The white noise of static from downstairs is deafening; blackness presses against the windows as if it has weight, as if it wants in.

PART 2

"JACK OF CLUBS, DEUCE OF MORONS?"

Day 3

I am a murderer.

I've already almost managed to justify it to myself, but it doesn't change the fact. Nobody left to hold me accountable, but that doesn't change it, either. I am a murderer.

I was going to try to keep an account of what's been happening since I woke up, and I did a pretty good job of the first two days, but I just don't think I have it in me to recount my day's activities after today. And the dreams! They're so vivid! I'd call them nightmares, but they actually seem less terrifying than my waking life right now. I wake up feeling like I'm living two lives, one asleep and one awake. I'm so tired. Tapper was dreaming, too. I hope his were less unnerving than mine.

I fed and watered my new buddy (he really IS a good boy) — that trick of draining the cooled-down water heater worked better than I'd hoped— and then I checked my laptop. I still have Wi-Fi, for some reason. The power's still on, too. It tried to brown out a couple of times, but it's still on. So... it can't be a complete disaster out there, right?

My e-mail to Mom and Aunt Tracy showed as received, but there was no reply. The major news sites that are still up just display the same emergency instructions from when I first looked, but the local TV station had a weird video posted, which I watched. There was no audio, but the images were clear enough: It was Heartland Park, and it had been repurposed as

a kind of mass funeral dump. There were giant earth-movers, and bodies piled in trenches, dusted with what most likely was lime. There were honest-to-God pyres, what had to be hundreds of cadavers charred and smoking in heaps like bonfires. The videographer was not the steadiest of hands when he or she panned over the stacks of filled body bags, but I can't quite convince myself that the twitching and jerking I saw among them was anything other than animated corpses trying to escape their black shrouds. Not after what I've already seen.

I had left two shambling wrecks in the stairwell when I came up the night before, and when I tried to go down, I found one of them was almost to the top and trying to stand. Just as it gained its feet, a less damaged, faster, seemingly more-focused one came up the stairs behind it. It didn't hesitate climbing, but this time, I'd brought my shotgun, and I had an idea. I tried to line up while the faster monster was still behind the unsteady one, and took my shot. The gun roared, striking the front thing in its upper body and knocking it backward into the one behind, tumbling both of them down the stairs. I spent

a couple more shells making sure they couldn't attack me as I went down the stairs.

I don't know what my objective was when I left my apartment; I wasn't looking for company, exactly, and I had no intention of trying to make a run for Alma, not just then. I guess I wanted to get some sense of just how bad things were, and maybe scope out some resources for food and supplies. I started with my neighbor below me, she of the loud, static-emitting TV.

Tapper at my heel, I used my handy new prybar on her locked door. What remained of Janice Hafenstein emerged from the hallway as I entered. I had enough time to take careful aim. She went down and didn't get back up. She had an interesting assortment of possessions to loot, too. I left her apartment with a .38 revolver, a dozen or so Xanax, a bottle of Bactine, and the not-quite-certain knowledge that Jan had been writing a sports book in her retirement. I noted the supply of bottled water, nutrition shakes, canned soups and a case of cigarettes, intending to move them to my place when I got back. She also had a small safe, but I couldn't think of anything valuable enough to lock in a safe that would have much worth in the current economy. Haha.

I snagged my prybar on the way out, and ended up using it to crush the skull of a crawling charcoal torso just off the back sidewalk. It must have come from the burned-out wreckage next door, though I can't imagine what drove it to drag itself even as far as it did.

I was starting to feel like I was getting a handle on how things operated in this nasty new Topeka. In retrospect, I may have been a little hasty. Heh.

I don't know why I followed when I heard, then saw, the loud, big, speeding pickup truck tear up the side street and through the neighboring parking lot. As much as I like keeping to myself, I guess I just wanted to see who else survived the sickness that seemed to have taken everybody else. I don't know. Human are supposedly social animals, but I've never been very good at meeting new people.

Not sure what I expected, rounding that corner, but I wasn't prepared for the foolishness I walked into. Two young men, both in high spirits and confident of their plan, were standing outside of the pickup, its motor revving wildly. Before I could get my head around that, they jumped back from the truck, and it bolted forward, peeling across the open pavement and slamming into the back wall of the night club that made up the corner of the strip mall. The dozens of propane tanks in the bed of the truck bonged



and clanged against each other. The driver cursed and drew a handgun, walking toward the pickup and aiming at the tanks. By the time I figured out what was happening, he had fired off a shot. I shouted at him, "Hey, dumbass!" He looked toward me and I said, "Yeah, you!" He was too far away for me to read his face, but his body language was clear enough, as were his words. He pointed his gun at me and yelled, "WHAT, bitch?!"

I don't know why I didn't back down at this point, what the hell was going through my head. I was still full of confidence from how I'd conducted myself so far, and I had a huge, obviously loyal dog at my hip; maybe I thought it would show enough to make him take me seriously, that my bravado would cow him into lowering his weapon. I was really wrong. "You heard me, DUMBASS!" I shouted.

His little friend was laughing now, and he growled, "Shut UP, Mikey."

"What were you trying to do? Why do you think propane is so popular? It's because it's so stable, dumbass!" I raved on.

And then he shot at me.

His shot went wild, just grazing my leg, and Mikey pulled a pistol, yelling "Come on, Dayshan!" Apparently he had not expected this kind of action. My shotgun boomed and Dayshan's head evaporated. And it was over. Mikey dropped his little gun and bolted.

I was alone once more, but not for long. All the ruckus had attracted the attention of another staggering horror show. I dispatched it without drama, leaving just one shell in my pump-action. I chucked the guys' guns. I didn't need more, and I didn't want theirs, anyway. In Dayshan's pocket was, among other things, a lighter, a glass stem, and a baggie of what had to be meth. I stuck the drugs in my pocket. When I checked the truck, I noticed a piece of paper under the windshield wiper. I snagged it— it was the final pay stub from the club I was standing behind, made out to the man on the ground.

In all the action, Tapper stayed by my side, and he preceded me back to the apartment block. I tried to skirt the building but still ran afoul of more infected things. One of them tried for Tapper, and I used my last shell on it, then bolted for my apartment. We're safe for the moment, well-armed behind a locked door. Unless someone is driven to do harm finds us. I was lucky today. I killed a man, but I keep telling myself he would have done as much or worse to me. It's all that I can do for now.

Now that I've put all this down, I think maybe I can sleep. If not, it's going to be a long night.



THE HAUNTED HEART

A Ghostly Adventure

by CW Kelson III (Tad)

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU & DARK CONSPIRACY

OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

This is an adventure focused on the ideas of love and ghosts. A young lady, in love, lost her betrothed when he perished far away while in the service. She had never found out what happened and always had the secret hope he would return to her. 50 years later, trapped in a self-created dream of his eventual return, she and her brother live a solitary life in the house they grew up in. Unknown to either of them, her one love had returned, after his death. His spirit trapped in the mortal world, endlessly watching her grow old, content in that way to be with her.

There are, however, complications.

ADVENTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Haunted Heart is an investigative adventure for a small party of characters. Physical combat is not as necessary as it might be in other adventures. A sense of investigation, mental skills, and strong will are more important than accuracy with small arms or deftness with a blade.

A group of experienced characters, with back stories and outside occupations, would work well for this. Those with mental powers or knowledge of parapsychology will also prove beneficial to determine what is going on and how to overcome the obstacles that face the characters.

The main portion is written system free, with specific notes at the end

corresponding to main systems it was written for in mind. Modern Call of Cthulhu is perhaps the best fit for it. Dark Conspiracy makes for an excellent choice as well; the contrasts between the setting and the house the siblings live in should heighten the sense of oddity in the entire thing. Unknown Armies is another excellent choice, where even if Eveline VanCliff is not an adept, her situation has provided for the potential for something similar to have occurred. If used for Unknown Armies, those running this adventure will have to formulate their own stats for the ghosts. Power level would be street in that case.

Any other modern or horror oriented setting or system would work as well. Keep in mind the entire adventure is a ghost hunt in a unique location and it should port over very well. Non-Player Character Write-ups for the two main intended systems are at the end of the adventure.

OPENING

A letter arrives in the mail. The postmark on it is from 50 years ago. The envelope is yellowed and cracked with age. The glue barely holding on sealing the envelope. There are obvious water stains on it and more than one set of dark smudged fingerprints. Still it is

intact and unopened and the intended delivery address is just a few blocks away. Really the address is for a house a few streets over; the postal worker has delivered it to the incorrect location.

So what does a Player Character, especially the one that received the letter, do?

It is presumed the player character will take the scant amount of time to just hand deliver the letter to the intended location. If they place it back into the post then the sequence of events must be changed to draw them into the Haunted Heart so they can heal the pain and hurt and allow two long lost loves to finally meet up.

So when the player character(s) takes the letter over the few blocks to the actual intended address, the following occurs.

The location is a quaint little street. Almost feels like a step into the past. For the four or five blocks around the address the houses date back 50 or more years in age. Every yard is manicured, no broken windows, no junk cars in sight. The air is just a touch cleaner than a few blocks away, along with the calm that comes from nostalgia.

The address corresponds to a small bungalow style home. A few small wooden steps lead up to the white painted front door. There is a quaint knocker on the door, no doorbell or ringer in sight. The paint is still in good shape, an off white color, with bright yellow trim and a whitewashed decorative fence along the front walk area. The grass is thick, weed free, and luxurious.

Once they knock the players can hear movement from inside the home. After a minute or so passes the door opens and an elderly gentleman is standing there. Trousers, white tee shirt showing in the collar region of the faded plaid shirt he has on.

Standing tall, an easy 6 foot still, getting to the very stretched look that some older people take on, he looks to be about 75 or so, with pure white hair and a touch of stubble on his chin. The scent of strong soap is in the air and with the door open the sounds of classical music is heard playing in the background.

He smiles at the people at his door and politely asks how can he help them?

If the characters present the letter and ask if the woman it is addressed to lives here, the man will look at it, lean sideways as if in fatigue into the door frame, and then invite them in. He gestures towards the sitting room in the front of the house furnished with several straight backed wooden chairs and a 2 person couch. The place is pretty sparse, there are some old photos in frames on the

walls, mostly of a man and a woman, with a strong family resemblance in them. The man does look like the gentleman who had opened the door.

The home is very cool, bordering on cold in fact. Enough for most people to notice it. They must have a superb cooling system as there is no noise what so ever from any machinery.

A few minutes later the host returns with a tray of glasses, water and what looks like lemonade in a glass pitcher.

He says if anyone wants any, to help themselves. His sister will be out shortly, she is getting dressed for company. The letter, he states, is addressed to her, and he asks them to stay and explain how they got it to her themselves. It should only be like 5 minutes or so, he states. Meanwhile, have a drink, it is rather warm today, and this should help cool them off.

Sitting there for about 5 minutes could get uncomfortable. Set a watch or timer for 5 actual minutes and see what the characters actually do in this time period. The following sections will aid in facilitating any small talk the PCs might engage in with their host. Do this in real time, reminding the players at the beginning that the next 5 minutes are all in character and real time.

ABOUT THE GENTLEMAN: BRADFORD VANCLIFF

Brother to Eveline VanCliff, he has been her caretaker for the past almost 50 years. He has devoted his entire life to tending to his heartbroken younger sister, and his strength and health are about to fail him. He senses his time is nearing but has no concrete information yet. Sitting here he is feeling the weight of the years he has spent. No wife of his own, the only family she had that supported and took care of her since the loss of Michael Loration.

During the years he worked at a local factory, supporting the two of them in the house they had grown up in. After he retired he kept up the work taking care of his sister, who has delusions of her lost betrothed coming back for her. Bradford VanCliff is convinced the young man had died, either at sea or in a distant port on the far side of the world. Now after 50 years of devotion he is feeling the loss of the years. He never left the city, never dated, never had a life other than the one tending to his younger sister. Now at age 75 he knows, without proof, that his time left on the world is narrowing down. He is correct. Advanced cancer will end his life within a few short years, leaving her alone in this house with no means of support.

ABOUT THE LADY: EVELINE VANCLIFF

55 some years ago her betrothed left and joined the military. He never came home. She has never gotten over her loss. He had written many letters to her, sometimes 3 or 4 a week, then one day, they stopped arriving. A few days later a government letter arrived that stating that he was lost and presumed dead. She never received confirmation of his death and so has waited her entire life for him to come back. By this time she is delusional and haunted, literally, by her lost love's spirit.

She has not had to take care of herself, as her brother has done the important stuff up until this point. She lives in a world that has him coming back, and she just needs to hold out a little longer and he will be there, they will get married and have children and live out their lives together. At this time she is 70 years old and has patiently waited for 50 years.

ENTER THE LADY THE LETTER WAS ADDRESSED TO

After about 5 minutes his sister, Eveline VanCliff enters the front sitting room. She is a slender woman about 70 years of age. Her hair is long (slightly past her shoulders), split ends, but clean and white as snow before it touches the ground. She has on a dress with a crocheted shawl on her shoulders, dress of a faded flower pattern in blues and yellows and the shawl made of faded pink yarn. She looks vibrant and also worn out at the same time. A glint of determination resides in her pale blue eyes, eyes that flicker with nervous energy at the same time. She was once a beauty, as the pictures on the walls illustrate, and now she is even stronger in her advanced age than the images on the walls might indicate.

She has on slippers on her feet. Her complexion is thin, pale with nearly translucent skin. There is an inner flame that burns, strength for two or more people coursing in her frame. Her brother has expended all his life to take care of this woman, and she has hoarded hers for a future that cannot come into existence.

Her brother introduces the player(s) and says they have a letter for her that was mis-delivered just this very day. A letter for her.

Her eyes light up and she smiles, perfect teeth still at her age, and one steady hand reaches out towards them all, reaching for the promised treat. Her nails are yellowed with age, almost a saffron shade than enamel, and she takes the letter. If it was unopened she slides on nail deftly along the top, slicing it open. If it had been opened then she looks at her brother, shrugs slightly like it is of no matter, and reverently opens the letter.

Either way she stands there and devours the multi-page letter, hand written front and back on much yellowed paper, close to archival parchment quality which must have aided in the preservation.

Once she is done reading it, at a very intense pace of comprehension, she turns to her brother and exclaims he still loves her and is going to be home within a few days. She has to get ready; he wants to marry her as soon as possible. She dashes from the room and her feet can be heard dashing in the back part of the small house.

At the exclamation her brother visible deflates. He realizes the age of the letter and this is proof, to him, that the young man perished. Over 50 years and he has not made it back yet. He sits there and starts sobbing, silently, while the characters look on.

At this point the PCs would either excuse themselves and leave, or remain and try to talk to him. If they leave, Bradford VanCliff will notice them as the door opens. He gets up and shakes each person's hand and thanks them individually for bring this news. While it is not the best, at least one of them knows that the missing man will not be returning any time soon. He asks for an address to send a thank you note too, and once it is said he will remember it long enough to jot it down once the front door closes.

If instead the players attempt to console or be supportive Bradford VanCliff will pull himself upright, shake his head a few times and with tear tracks down his face will thank the players and ask if they would like to move to the kitchen, Bradford VanCliff needs a strong tea right at that moment, and would any of them like an Earl Grey?

The kitchen is just back down the hall and to the left, against the back wall of the house. A door in the kitchen leads into a basement, with an outside door there as well. The furnishing are straight from the 60's, vinyl chairs, heavy metal table with the extensions folded in making it suitable for 4 people to sit around with ease, the edge made of Formica or something similar, matching pretty closely the kitchen countertops. The stove is gas, the refrigerator as old or older than the table and chairs.

Their host puts water on for boil takes enough cups for himself and anyone else that desires to have some tea as well. The brand is Tetley's and the box looks like it is almost empty. Once the water is boiled and the tea steeping their host leans on the counter and once again thanks the players for their kindness in this day and age for bringing the letter over. Even if it ends up being a disappointment, still it was a kindness, one he will cherish the rest of his days.

He then just starts relating their story; the synopsis is below for the GM to use to create this narrative.

Back when they were both children they and their parents lived in this house. Their father was an auto mechanic and their mother ended up doing ironing for people to make extra cash. They have lived their entire lives in this one home.

In High School Eveline fell in love with a classmate of hers named Michael Loration. He came from a good family and it was presumed he would actually go to college and becomes someone. Instead Michael chose to enter the Merchant Marine Service, to make money and see the world and save enough to buy a house once his hitch was up and he came home to marry his High School Sweetheart Eveline.

With less than 6 months left on his tour, Eveline received a letter from the Federal Government stating that Michael had been lost and was presumed dead. She did not believe the letter, emphatically stating that Michael said he was going to return and marry her and he always kept his word.

At that time she vowed to wait for him, no matter how long or at what cost. She never went onto any other education, never had a job. She would sit and sew, crochet, knit, embroider and like their mother would take on ironing and seamstress work while she waited for her betrothed to return.

Bradford took work at the local factory, manufacturing metal parts for use in a variety of vehicles and worked there for 45 years before finally retiring, with enough money saved to last the two of them 30 years or more. All of it in the bank and in some investments and retirement funds.

So they have lived in this house their entire lives, it was given to him when their parents died, as the oldest child and also as the male one.

The longer he talks the colder the kitchen area gets, but their host does not seem to notice it, even when a light coating of frost shows up on the kitchen window. He does not notice it at all, and if a character points it out, will act puzzled and literally not noticed the fact at all. After a few seconds of confusion he will continue as if nothing had been said or had happened.

It takes him maybe 30 minutes to relate the tale, along with drinking the tea and asking about the characters' lives and background as well. Once the tea is done, he will again thank the player(s) and show them to the front door.

As they leave the house the outside temperature seems to be higher than it was when they entered the house about 45 minutes before. Bradford VanCliff is standing in the doorway, from 10 feet away the PCs can feel cold air blowing out, can see goosebumps on their hosts arms and he is unaware of what is happening around him.

This ends the introductory portion of this adventure.

INTO THE FIRST PART

INITIAL EFFECTS OF THE VISIT

After the player(s) character leaves the VanCliff house they can head about their normal business. After a few days however the character that had actually gotten the letter starts to experience some odd phenomena.

Things are subtly moved around, small objects no longer where they were put down. Like keys, wallet, identification, small media, books being read, etc. Just the little items in life that someone would normally, on occasion, misplace.

The frequency of this happening has increased, to the point of either impending neurological damage or outside forces. If the character gets examined by a medical professional they will not be able to locate any physical reason for the incidents. They will refer to specialists and CAT scans and MRIs and other exotic testing, off of which will drain funds and leave the character more and more forgetful as the days pass.

Have the player of the character make rolls on a frequent basis, system appropriate, to recall when there left things like computers, car keys, their wallet, etc. All physical items. Their ability to recall knowledge and skills is not affected, only their short term memory for item placement. This should get to the point to where the Player should come up with interesting ways to make sure they know where their stuff is. Such as writing down on a sheet of paper where they left items, etc. Of course that piece of paper will end up not where they recall leaving it. It should get to the point to where they cannot trust where they put anything down or where something is located at. This should start to affect their livelihood in interesting ways, depending of course of exact career field.

Please feel free to make the entire circumstance rather surreal in nature. It should feel like an episode of those TV Shows, which shows

a person suffering from inexplicable symptoms until finally after years one medical person either recognizes it or stumbles across the cause of the ailment.

In this case the answer is not at all obvious. When all those decades ago Michael Loration died, his spirit did not go anywhere. Instead he became a ghost. After years of searching he made his way to the house that the Van Cliffs live in. Seeing the devotion his intended had and patience in waiting agreed with the spiritual need for attachment and he settled into residence with the two siblings.

The presence of the ghost is the cause for the temperature changes, the occasional forgetfulness of Bradford and the complete inability to get over the loss that has held Eveline in thrall to a dead man all of these decades.

However the situation is not that simple. Instead of just a single ghost, there are in fact 4 separate ghosts that have been attracted to the psychic energies of the situation, and the other three besides Michael are not so understanding. One of the others is in fact a spurned, would be suitor, of Eveline and that is the one, jealous of the letter arriving, who has been affecting the player character, clouding short term memory and with poltergeist like powers actually move items to make their life more difficult.

The haunting of the character will not stop until the spirit is removed from both lives now, the PC and Eveline. Only with that removal will the difficulties cease for the character.

Do not telegraph this to the players. Let them sweat it out. Hint that perhaps there is some unknown or brand new microorganism that is affecting the memory. Perhaps something more insidious such as Government Mind Control Experiments or other more esoteric (X-Files like, Aliens, or Other Dimensional) causes are at play. Do not really let on that it is a poltergeist.

There should be some clues. It is always cold around the character now. They do not feel the temperature change; however it is always 5 to 10 degrees colder than the outside ambient temperature. This will end up affecting their entire house.

Now if more than one PC rooms/lives together, the spirit will after a few weeks, having gained enough traction, will start to affect the memory and senses of the other roommates. It takes about 3 to 4 weeks for the full effects to come into play. So depending on how long or how many characters live together, will determine the exact time frame.

Of course the players should have other adventures. Deal with real life issues, all the while have this health threat overshadow all

that they do, as well as make the players wonder. Draw this out over several game sessions, make it as many as possible, to lend an air of dread and increasing unease in the minds of all involved as to what is actually happening in this situation.

Of course if the affected one is away from their home for an extended, (twice as long as present and under the ghostly influence) then their mind will start to sharpen again and things just seem to be where they were left at. However within hours of returning they will be right back to where they had been at before leaving.

This is the best clue that it is something tied to their home, not necessarily to the health and existence of the Player Character.

At this point, where and what happens lies with the PCs. If they have had enough clues to determine the haunting and have taken steps (Ghost Hunters, Used their own gear, engaged a psychic, etc.) then they can find out that the Character is being haunted and start to take steps to remove the presence.

TRACKING DOWN THE HAUNTING

At this time the Player Character that had received the letter should be in a state of disarray. Forgetting where anything is at, constantly losing small and important items, it should be difficult for them in their day to day lives as well as almost impossible for them to be effective in an adventuring sense. Hopefully the players have made the connection between a dead love, poltergeist like activities, the coldness of the VanCliff household as well as in the characters home to draw the correct conclusion that there are ghosts involved.

However they go about it, the Van Cliffs have no conscious knowledge of what is going on. Bradford VanCliff has been influenced by the spirits that are haunting his sister, and now are haunting the player character. He does not believe in ghosts and any evidence presented to him will be moved from his mind by the long term influences he has been under.

So the Characters will need to investigate other options. Consulting with Ghost Hunters and Parapsychologists will yield some ideas on how to detect the presence of spirits. If advice like that is taken they yes, the VanCliff home and where the Player Character lives are both haunted, and there are more than one spirits involved in the haunting. The epicenter, if determined, for the VanCliff residence is Eveline VanCliff herself. Odd readings, off the chart, are in her immediate presence and they fall sharply off once a few feet away from her.

Of course convincing the Van Cliff's to allow for such detections would require gaining their trust, spending time convincing of sincerity, as well as getting the skeptic that Bradford VanCliff is to allow such activities. His sister is oblivious to the efforts, as she combs her hair, plans her wedding, discusses how her life with Michael Loration will be once they are married and generally living in her own fantasy world.

ENTERING THE LANDSCAPE FOR THE FIRST TIME

The Landscape is the term that Reed Chastain dubbed for where the spirits exist at when they are not manifested in The World. Of course the player characters will not know this term. This is a featureless place more like a Dreamscape than where they had come from. It does connect all points of the world and universe with each other, making it possible for the spirits to be where ever they wished to be. The main limiting factor is the nature of spirits. Most are obsessed with their own passing or with the concerns of their life and so they are not, fundamentally, able to utilize The Landscape to any great fashion, instead haunting locations and people and when not manifested residing here in their own constructs made of their memories and imaginings.

In Call of Cthulhu this would most closely correspond to The Dreamlands. Keepers can simply rule it sits adjacent and allow for Lucid Dreaming and Dream Skills to apply in the conflicts that take place within The Landscape in the course of this adventure.

For Dark Conspiracy, The Landscape would correlate to a splinterland that lies underneath, or over, the other dimensions. It could be the source of dreams and nightmares, or just a splinterland that is primarily accessed by spirits.

For Unknown Armies think closer in terms to the Call of Cthulhu with The Landscape being another facet of reality normally only accessed in sleep, madness, or death.

In any event the characters need to determine what is going on, and devise a way to travel to where the spirit(s) haunting them are apt to confront them. No actions in the material world will impact on the spirits. For those games with spells, empathic powers, or other abilities, then divination will give clues that the battle must be taken to the ones doing the haunting, instead of trying to confront directly.

A salient point for GMs/Keepers is that there are 4 ghosts total, all are inhabiting the same area, and are in fact haunting an actual body. When Michael Loration made his way back years after his death, he

saw the devotion that Eveline had and took up residence, haunting, her actual physical heart. His presence there has helped keep her fit for her age as well as letting him be with his only love for as long as she lives.

So any efforts to dispel the ghost(s) from the home will prove futile. The ghosts are in her flesh in a matter of speaking.

For Reed Chastain, the main opposition for the characters and the one performing the acts against the player character, he has also taken up residence inside her, along with Michael and the other two spirits that Reed has connived and convinced to assist him, in The Landscape that resides / exists in her heart. So an actual voyage into that realm is necessary to confront the four and to free her from the obsession that has lain in her heart, literally, for over 45 years.

So at this point any reasonable method the players might devise to ascertain where they need to go and how to get there should be considered and if they devote what seems a reasonable effort to get to where they need to go, then by all means it should be allowed.

Expenditures of energy, research into similar phenomena as well as meditation and talking with more spiritual or occult specialists should lend clues. Methods to speak with spirits will give some information depending on which spirit is reached. Since the players will naturally presume there is only a single ghost, if they make contact more than once then each time it will be a different spirit which should make them wonder what is actually going on in this situation.

CONTACTING THE OTHER SIDE

Now that sufficient time and energy has been devoted to determining the problem, it comes time to come up with a solution. If the players had their characters take efforts to exorcise or contact the spirits already then they know those efforts, in this case, are not bearing results. So a more direct approach is needed to resolve the issue.

The exact details are left up to the imagination as to how to get there. Once there the details of The Landscape are included below to aid in guidance.

OVERALL VIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE

Once the characters have contrived their way to The Landscape this is what they are able to observe.

This is a location of pure energy, primarily spiritual with mental energy being the guiding principle. This facet is what makes this a location for ghosts. The energy they have is attuned to this location,

while their fixations and unmet desires and wants are what prevent them from fully utilizing or dominating the location. There are some entities that dwell there that are more free willed, and they could, if necessary, be brought in if players and their characters get a bit big for their britches in a manner of speaking. Any sufficiently advanced entity that is inimical to the existence to humans could be a great foil in a later series of sessions, if the players desire to explore

THE LANDSCAPE IN FURTHER DETAIL

The first thing that travelers notice about The Landscape is the utter featureless nature of the place. It sits above and to the side of what most would consider reality, the realm of material and touch that humans normally associate with what is real and what is not.

The Landscape has no up, no down, no left, or a right to move in. Movement is determined by desire and will. If a ghost or other similar energetic being makes it to this place they will find they are drawn in the direction of what or where they most craved in the world before. This feature is what allowed Michael Loration to make it back to Eveline VanCliff. Once he was there he reached out to what he wanted and made contact with what he was most desirous of, her heart. At this level of existence that was taken literally and so he took up residence in her physical form. In this place he has created a home that is in the contiguous space to that. Time and Distance are not factors on The Landscape; instead intent and will are key components. Similar to Lucid Dreaming or Traveling between dimensions, it is the strength of character that is of most use here.

No mechanics for this are included here. Instead Keepers and GMs are encouraged to have the PCs role-play and brainstorm for methods to actually access and move once in The Landscape.

As one approaches the location that is desired faint images will appear in the colorless landscape. They approximate the location in Reality, the weight of energy there coming across and imprinting, essentially bleeding through.

As the players move towards their destination, either the PC home or the VanCliff residence, faint images of those spaces will show up. Think in terms of a white wall of rubber and other objects are pushed against it, yielding an outline. This is a similar view, except it is a negative of the energy pushing into this space, drawn in effect.

At the Players Home there in The Landscape, there is a doorway that sits there. It appears to be more solid than ethereal. If the characters go to it and open it, it will lead to the Dwelling of The Forgotten

One. That is the gate keeper and the one that has been influencing the character to forget things. Under the direction of Reed Chastain the Forgotten One has also been moving and misleading the physical world to further confuse and confound the character.

Passing through the door will take them into the Dwelling of The Forgotten One. The other way to get there is to travel through The Landscape to the physical location of where the haunting is at and locate it and enter it via the front door.

THE DWELLING OF THE FORGOTTEN ONE

The Forgotten One is the first of the two minions of Reed Chastain. It is a poor thing, misguided and misled and so lonely it has forgotten anything except being lonely. The scant attention that Reed Chastain gives it keeps it going, sustains, and is actually strengthening the spirit that is there.

The sad aspect is that the Forgotten One is so far gone, that no amount of work or attention will restore any sense of identity to the ghost. It has even forgotten what drove it in life and has nothing that could be used as a tie or a shred of hope to aid it in moving to another space other than The Landscape. It is trapped here for eternity.

The dwelling that this spirit has constructed is a dismal place. It has an endless quantity of rooms filled with the cast off things from life and existence. The rooms range in size, filled with things strewn in corners, never more than a single place to sit, or in some rooms on enough space for one person to stand.

Either method of getting there takes the characters to the front door. Walking through the door at the PC's home opens the front door of the Dwelling, or moving there in The Landscape and opening the door sitting there will take them directly into the entranceway the same.

The layout of the house is a twisting morass of small rooms filled with clutter and barely enough space for any single person to move through. Most players will attempt to map it out, which should lead to nowhere. It is a representation of the lonely and forgotten aspect of a ghost. It changes as outside events impact, with every statement made to The Forgotten One, along with every action it takes. Eventually the haunted Character should see hints and items from their own life, along with representations of things that would have been visible in the VanCliff house along with ordinary items from a normal life. All the cast off things from a long life are accumulated in this spatial representation.

Make it seem like it has been hours, days, weeks, years, of searching. Every room is different but the same. Have the players make rolls to climb around and across the accumulated stuff. There are chairs, couches, desks, books, bottles, milk cartons, pictures that are so faded they are only broad swathes of muddy colors. Anything that can be seen and experienced and held in the last 100 some years could be in here.

Let the players continue to search for as long as their patience will last. When they players themselves are getting frustrated, and they are seeming to be at the ends of their ideas or tolerance then the next opening or door leads into a long hallway. It is festooned with posters from the 1900s to 1930s, mostly Art Deco in style, all showing buildings, offices, structures, doors, arches, etc. The hallway would be a mile in length did it truly exist so tell them it takes a good 20 to 25 minutes to walk the length. The juxtaposition and overlap of the posters making for a dizzying perspective.

At the end, visible from about 50 foot away or so, it a single door. It is a ramshackle thing, crudely hewn planks held together with bailing and barbed wire. This is the internal representation of the door into the past and present for The Forgotten One. This is a symbol of the only memory it has, as a small child this is what it recalls of the front door to the home he had lived in. The wire represents his parents telling him to stay in, so now it keeps him from escaping from his own sadness.

The door will yield with a good hard tug, not a gentle pull, and then it opens into the center of the dwelling space. This is where The Forgotten One can always be found while in his space.

The room is a crude circle, obvious it is not a perfect circle, about 100 feet in diameter with a small wooden table in the center and a single matching chair. The wood of both matches the door that was just walked through.

There is a hurricane lamp in the middle and the walls and floor are dirty whitewashed in color. There illumination is like that just before the sun actually sets, a deep twilight that can still be seen through.

The Forgotten One will be sitting at the table, muttering to himself. In appearance an average sized male shape, dirty denim overalls, bare feet, no shirt, and unkempt hair. As the characters close in more features will be noticeable. His hair is greasy, black, shoulder length and hanging straight down. Once they are about five to ten feet away he will look over at the intruders and now the characters can see that he has no face at all. There are no features to his face His hands come

up, held out towards the characters and there are no fingers. If anyone looks down there are no toes as well. The hair moves back and there are no ears as well. The facial features that are the human norm are absent in this instance. The complexion is that of someone that lived and spent their entire time outside, dark tanned and turning leathery, almost a cured leather in look.

The muttering gets louder as the Forgotten One realizes that there are intruders into his inner place. At no time will the sounds be legible or understandable, as there is not a mouth to be understood with. He stands up and holds his hands outward as if he is going to push the intruders out of the room. As he takes a slow step towards them a bright light springs up behind them. If anyone turns around and looks they will see a doorway that opened up, that had not been there before, and brilliant white light, like incandescents or spotlights were all trained on the space, and a searing heat is felt as well.

At this time, the players can chose what they are going to do. Depending on the system used is what actually happens in the conflict. In Call of Cthulhu this would be a series of opposed POW rolls, the winner being the one to dictate in what direction the characters are moved, If The Forgotten One wins then the characters are forced towards the heat and light. If the players win then the spirit here will be forced a step back. It will take at least ten successes on either side to effect a 'victory'.

If the players are forced out of the space they are ejected into the landscape of the sun where they will then fall towards the earth to end up back in their bodies. For Call of Cthulhu this is 1d10/1 SAN loss. If someone has something that might attract the attention of Azathoth, cruel Keepers could use this as an opportunity to pull in outside unintended forces. For Dark Conspiracy, this is more akin to dropping from one highly energetic protodimension back to Earth, causing mental scarring and damage, especially to Empathic Characters. A Difficult Empathic Roll to avoid taking 1d3 of Mental Characteristic Damage from the experience. Use of Dimension Walking Skills would speed up the return to a safer dimension and avoidance of any damage for those using such a skill. Adjust the difficulty to Very hard in this circumstance. For Unknown Armies burning of charges to speed up the return would be appropriate, a Major or 3 Minors should suffice.

IF this happens the characters will need to venture forth a second time. However they should be smarting from their initial defeat and will likely take steps to ensure their success. From more research, to

meditation, or finding esoteric devices, let them expend energy and resources to hedge their chances. It hurts nothing to allow this.

Play out the journey and travel through the Dwelling the same as the first time, emphasizing it takes even longer this time to get there. Days in the real world should pass and by the time they get there the GM/Keeper should inform the players that their characters are feeling weaker, perhaps their link to their bodies is lessening. Impose suitable additional negative modifiers to their rolls to let them know it is taking a toll on their physical forms.

If the characters should succeed in forcing him back ten steps, at least, then he will slump to the dirty whitewashed floor which will immediately shift to become hard packed dirt with insects and rats skittering across it in all directions. This is another manifestation of the childhood that still exists beyond conscious recall but still an influence long after death had claimed the flesh. At this point the players would be able to communicate with The Forgotten One, the mutterings now understandable.

So use the following guidelines as to what can be obtained knowledge wise.

- He is The Forgotten One, he knows nothing about himself other than that.
- This is his home
- The Other comes, tells him to do things, take memories, move memories and things for The Other
- The Other just is
- The Other has his own space, out there (a vague wave of the hands indicates the location)
- There is the angry one besides The Other, he lives in his place out there (another vague hand wave for directions to that place)
- He was told to help out to keep The Other close to his loved one
- The Other has him working on keeping another breather away from his loved one
- The breather is right there (Points to the Haunted Character. Should this happen all of the effects will disappear on leaving The Landscape. The haunting is over for the moment due to this confrontation)

Any other questions that would require a different answer will lead to incoherent mumbling. The Forgotten One is broken in this simple act of facing him down and will result in his remaining in his Dwelling from this point forward. When next Reed Chastain arrives he will find his helper to no longer be of service and will abandon the lonely ghost, sealing the fate of The Forgotten One as truly forgotten. Eventually it will fade away into the space it has in here and not have any influence on the world again.

ONTO THE SECOND PART

Once the first ghost has been overcome the players should realize there are more of them out there that will need to be dealt with as well. In the Second Part two more ghosts are confronted in a similar fashion to the first one.

All of the spaces for the ghosts are within the same fist sized space in the world, still they are separated by the distance from one set of wants and desires to another. However the physical location does provide a clue to where to find the other ones.

The first spot corresponded to the first heart chamber, the Right Atrium. So next is downwards, to where the Right Ventricle would reside. After that blood normally flows outward and so the characters must make the conceptual leap to leave and come back in, simulating entering the Left Atrium, where Reed Chastain is at, and then lastly to the Left Ventricle, where Michael Loration has been since his return to his love.

Before reaching that space however, the second ghost, The Angry One, must be overcome by sheer force of will, a contest of violence in this circumstance.

Once The Forgotten One is defeated the players will need to find the other spirits hinted at in speaking with the first one. With the haunting over for the player character, some will decide that nothing else needs to happen. Feel free to let them do so, nothing requires them to free an old lady from being haunted. Have a newspaper article or local news spot illustrate how a pair of siblings, months later, has lived their entire life in one house. Unfortunately the older brother has died and now the sister is being sent to a rest home to live out the remainder of her days. Photos of her show her looking younger and more vibrant than being over 70 years of age would suggest. The effects of the three ghosts in her heart have kept her alive and healthy past the time they should have. It will be at least fifty years more before she will die and come to haunt her own

dead body finally united with the man she loved and waited for over 100 years.

If instead the characters chose to pursue the other ghosts that should have been hinted at in questioning the first one, then query them as to their course of action. If they had exited the dwelling in the first part with the intent of seeing where they were at then they would have come out into a space that while white and ghostly, has the psychic imprint of the VanCliff house. This would be the strongest clue that the haunting(s) have something to do with the place. Still prior investigations should have ruled out the house.

Most ghost stories deal with ghosts that haunt a place. This is true in Haunted Heart. It is just that the location is not immediately visible, being her heart pumping away in her chest. So now the players need to come up with a game plan to find the other ghosts.

Heading back into The Landscape would be the simplest and most direct move. Since intent and will drive the location with good rolls and good roleplaying ideas a GM/Keeper could allow them to move in the direction of the next ghost that can be encountered, The Angry One. This is another ghost that has been manipulated by Reed Chastain and will present a greater threat to the players due to the internal violence and anger it has towards its self, expressed as hatred and anger towards life and reality.

Heading into The Landscape at the Player Characters house will find the original door there altered. It will not open and looks almost overgrown with dust and cobwebs. If anyone walks around it in the space the other side will show a different view. That side has a steel door, red as a hot iron and radiating heat like a furnace. This leads directly to The Lair of The Angry One and the next stop in this exploration.

Otherwise entering The Landscape in the vicinity of the VanCliff house will allow for sighting of several shadowy structures, all seeming to be superimposed on one and another. There is a huge representation of the VanCliff home, of another older two story Victorian style home, a smaller shack, along with the more visible, a dreary house ranch style that exudes a sense of menace and distrust. This is the Lair of The Angry One, and it will need to be passed through before reaching the other places. The shack is the left over elements of The Forgotten One and as time passes it will fade more and more.

As the characters draw closer to the superimposed images the next to last one noted, the dreary ranch house, comes more into focus. As they are all within the same space, a human heart, to get to

the successive location requires that the characters pass in a specific order, much as blood flows through the heart. So the next location is the same as the lower right ventricle, which is where The Angry One is located at.

THE LAIR OF THE ANGRY ONE

Approaching the front door, it is a faded red, more like washed out dried blood red in hue, or a muddy river red. The door knob is a dull corroded brass in color, turning green. This is a different appearance than what the same door looks like compared to the steel door image if the characters are approaching this from the vicinity of the formerly haunted Player Characters home.

The interior is naturally larger than the exterior would suggest. Comprised of nothing but small tight rooms, with narrow hallways, prevent full expression of rage as well as preventing escape from it as well. This is where a ghost, full of pain and hatred, stomps around venting anger in a situation that does not allow for the anger to fade and dissipate. Being dead in this case means never being able to let go, to move on, in his anger. He is trapped in his situation for as long as his rage holds out, which could be centuries.

Entering the house leads into a mud room like area. There are splatters of mud, or what might be dried blood, on all four walls, floor and ceiling in this space. There is a single exit directly ahead. Each open door or entryway inside this place is cold, like stepping into a blast chill freezer, or into a deep winter storm up in the upper plains of North America. The temperatures are the spiritual equivalent of like Negative 50 or more Fahrenheit. Emphasize to the players the bitter cold, how their forms here shake and shiver for what seems like an hour or more each time they pass through one of these spaces.

So once past this first room, there is the empty space just in front, this leads into what would have been the living room area. Instead it is a closet like space, expanding to just barely hold everyone that enters it together. There is a single door on the other side that leads on to the dining room space, where a violent scene is on replay mode, projected on the walls all around, in five or more times larger than life gore splattered size.

The scene depicts an older man, balding, massive beer gut hanging out of a dirty white tee shirt, dark green work pants with obvious oil or grease stains on them, wielding a wide leather belt strap on a succession of people, those he has as his victimizes are never truly in focus. The only one in focus is the abuser, never the victims. However

it is evident that time passes, more than one is struck, there are slight changes in appearance, times when it seems the victims are taller or shorter, etc. Still it is so intense, with no sound, just the never ending cycle of violence that for Call of Cthulhu characters it is a SAN Roll 1d6/1 when first they enter this space. Part of the SAN loss is due to being inside a memory of violence. Dark Conspiracy Empathic Characters will feel the pain and will need to make Very Difficult Empathy Rolls to not be shaken by the violence, with GM ruled appropriate negatives if the rolls fail.

Past this scene there is another opening hiding in the scene behind the visible adult. To get to it the characters must walk into the huge image making it seem as if they are about to be struck themselves. Once past this then they are in the living room area of the Lair.

There are five more black spaces that would be entrances to another part of this place. The interior of the living room reeks of cigarette smoke, stale beer, unwashed bodies, and mold. The space has a claustrophobic feel to it. Any characters with Claustrophobia will have to deal and confront with their phobia. Those that do not need to either make a SAN Roll (Call of Cthulhu) or a Very Difficult Mental Test (Dark Conspiracy), or expend a Minor Charge (Unknown Armies) to not develop the phobia. At which point they will then have to roll to avoid being paralyzed or to manically attempting to escape the situation.

All of the black areas lead to other parts of the space. There is not a defined destination for each one. The following are the other spaces in this location that will have different effects on the characters if they enter into them. Randomly determine where someone ends up at if they flee or go on their own. It can change each time. There are a finite series of locations so a group can get back together even if they all split up and go in a different direction. Additionally each space will reset after being passed through one time. So unless they all intend to enter the same black section as a group, they will all end up elsewhere, potentially, from each other.

TOTAL LOCATIONS IN THE DWELLING

- ☠ Mudroom Area
- ☠ Dining Room
- ☠ Living Room
- ☠ Kitchen
- ☠ Basement

- ☠ Backyard Shed
- ☠ Master Bedroom
- ☠ Bedroom Number 2
- ☠ Bedroom Number 3
- ☠ Storage Closet
- ☠ Backroom
- ☠ Front Yard
- ☠ Back Yard

RANDOM LOCATIONS TO END UP AT

1. Kitchen
2. Basement
3. Backyard Shed
4. Master Bedroom
5. Bedroom Number 2
6. Bedroom Number 3
7. Storage Closet
8. Backroom
9. Front Yard
10. Back Yard

Roll 2d6-2 (minimum of a 1) or 1d10 depending on what system is in use. If the characters flee or split up then each one is a different roll. If they stay or stayed together then a single roll will take them with each other.

DETAILS FOR EACH SPACE IN THE ANGRY ONE'S LAIR

Mudroom Area: Where the door opens up into (described already)

Dining Room: Violence Space (described already)

Living Room: Claustrophobic Space (described already)

Kitchen: The smell of Blood permeates the entire space. Inside is a stout wooden table with odd stains, ones that seem to writhe like worms or the movement of blood pumping in the veins and arteries of the body. There is a large industrial styled freezer door taking up one entire wall, with a large gas stove, flames on and

roaring on all six burners, a face in the oven with flames roaring behind it, mouth wide open and unheard shrieks coming from it. The floor is hard packed dirt, like a hole was dug, or a grave, and the dirt shoveled back over and stamped down on. This is a place to hide away terrible deeds. The walls are cracked plaster, their color the yellow of decades of cigarette smoke accumulation. The cupboards are all empty save for rat and insect droppings and the entire ceiling is nothing but a mass of cobwebs, with no spiders visible.

Basement: Rats, rats, and more rats, a floor made of rat bodies, all crushed flat and still living and moving. It is an un-nerving experience and those with a fear of rodents will not fare well. There is a single overhead bulb, hanging from a black electrical cord, that old thick round type. The walls are unfinished concrete with rough framing started all around, as if it was to be partitioned. The corners are just shadows and they whisper in low tones, nothing distinct enough to make out, just enough to know that the place is talking about you, finding all your physical shortcomings as well as the dirty little secrets we all hide in the basement, when we know we can do what we want and be able to get away with it, even if we should not be doing such things because Mother said it would make us blind.

Backyard Shed : Gore Splattered Tools and A Baseball Bat are the first things. This space is well defined in size, being a scant ten foot by ten foot in total size. There is a crude workbench on one wall; the only way in and out is the same black space taking up one entire ten foot wall. There is some fishing gear on the ceiling, placed up in the cross beams where it is convenient and easy to reach. There is one old rusted shotgun in a corner, no shells, and the rust, if it is picked up, tells tales in the mind of the holder of shooting rabbits, slaughtering squirrels, blowing apart small rodents, and how nice might it be to see what happens to a human skull perhaps. The voices stop when the weapon is put down. The voices are only in the mind/head of whoever picks it up.

Master Bedroom: There is a feeling of you do not belong in there, that things happen that are best unknown to a child. There is that same smell as in the living room, mixed with fear and sweat and

the essence of pain. Up here is where a kid was not welcomed, and it boded ill to be brought up here. A large four posted bed, white stained sheets on the bed with no cover or comforter in sight. Clothing, work ones and feminine ones, are strewn in one corner of the room, with pitch black oozing out from under the bed. The strobe of neon lights (red and white) come in from the window on the far wall, and another door leads to a bathroom with whiskers and other hairs in the sink, and a lifetime of effluvium in odor in the toilet as well. Insects sit on all exposed surfaces in the bathroom, not moving, just sitting there, the ugly roach kind of course. There is, in the middle of the bed, a body imprint, a smaller frame one, not a large adult male at all. The walls are an off white color, with the paint or plaster, or whatever it is, flaking off at the slightest touch. There is a salty residue, like at a beach, but a beach located on the shores of an oil slick adding in an oily taste as well to the air in here.

Bedroom Number 2: Endless tears, washing like rain or a waterfall, along all four walls. The walls are a faded pink with elephants and giraffes under constant assault. There is a crib that is empty, endlessly rocking back and forth to unheard sounds, along with a pile of molded stuffed animals heaped in a corner that seems to lightly undulate almost in time with the rocking. No sounds can be heard in here, if characters talk to one another there is no sound at all. (If the confrontation with The Angry One takes place here, once he is defeated then sounds can be heard, however the crying of an infant, as if forgotten, overlays everything, almost deafening, but The Angry One can be heard clearly even when another characters is shouting in the ear of someone, they are barely able to be heard). The closet door is sealed, either a fake one, or there is not enough to make it open.

Bedroom Number 3: Just cold in here, like the center of a blizzard cold (The Angry One's Bedroom). There is a single bed, no sheets just a yellow stained mattress on top of box springs. A toy wooden rubber band gun sits on the dresser, filled with corduroy pants and white sleeveless tee shirts and dirty white underwear, with the remnants of stains as well. The walls are lined with cut outs from magazines of female faces, each one defaced with markers giving them mustaches, uni-brows, etc. The carpet in here is threadbare, as if a caged animal paced constantly in here

scuffling his feet in old shoes. There are a dozen pairs of cheap shoddy sneakers in the bottom of the open closet area, all with the sides ripped out and holes in the bottom. No clothing hanging up and no toys at all, just the rubber band gun. The room is average in size, but it feels like a prison cell, like solitary confinement must feel, years locked away from all others, food sent in and no contact with humans allowed. A place to become very angry and to take it out on your own self.

Storage Closet: Crying, Sobbing, Darkness, by touch only. It is the size of a standard closet, if more than one person enters then all are crushed inside. Only by feeling around for the coldest spot will they find the exit. It is impossible to be polite and decorous in here, hands will touch in inappropriate places, whether the characters are trying to or not. Or perhaps other hands are doing the touching. (If the confrontation takes place in here when The Angry One arrives a sort of black light will shine and show four walls on top of the characters and still stretching away, allowing them room to maneuver, but still the feeling of hands touching their private places continues as well as the impression of walls closed in and somehow stretched out. Claustrophobia, fear of the dark, fear of intimacy, decorum are all tested sorely in this space.)

Backroom: Washing Machine, it is a malevolent device, along with a drying Rack, dead pet corpse, a desiccated tabby cat, all skin and bones, is endlessly pacing around the food bowl and empty water dish back there. The washing machine is at least fifty years old and has brown stains in the washer tub, as well as a layer of dust on the upper portion. There is a clothes rack to hang stuff on to dry, It is very long and narrow, with a screen door leading to the backyard (it will open into a black space that may or may not lead there), along with several windows where the backyard is visible. If there are characters in both spaces at once, they will see each other, however what they see are distortions. Each will appear as a skeletal figure, tattered and ragged clothing, as if pulled from a grave. This applies both looking out towards the backyard, or if in the backyard, looking into the backroom.

Front Yard: Stepping though lands the character standing on the sidewalk in front of the house. The sidewalk in front leads up and down to either side. There is no street behind the characters, just

a solid wall of howling shrieks that is solid to the touch like glass, but made of coherent sounds. A whisper of the shrieks is audible within a few feet of the edge of the sidewalk. Walking to either side, along the sidewalk loops back around so it is an endless circle in front of the place. An air of isolation, it is a creepy house sits there. Think of all the haunted houses, the old forgotten ones, the ones where you just know the parents beat the kids, or worse. The weeds are all the prickly kind, the sidewalk cracked, the garage door always shut and the front door just has brown ugly paint peeling away. It looks like it is about to fall down if any one were to look at it the wrong way. The front door is the way in, taking them to a random location within the home, not into the front entryway as they will likely surmise.

Back Yard: This is where bullies live. Outside is like being locked away, unwanted and kicked out of the house. The grass is all dead and brown, with the high wooden fence keeping the outside world, outside. The windows on the back of the house show the backroom as well as the kitchen, with a rusted padlock on the gate portion of the fence. There really is nothing back here, just wan sunlight and nothing to do, nothing at all. The garden hose is all corroded and the water that would come from the outside faucet is rust filled and smells more than a little like gray water. See the backroom entry for information if characters are located in both spaces at once.

Once a total of 8 different rooms are visited, the overall disturbance will get the attention of The Angry One; who will come to find out what is going on in his space.

TRACKER LIST FOR ROOMS VISITED

Count trips to the same room as multiple visits. This is quantity based. Use this space to record where the player characters go to find out when and where The Angry One arrives at.

1. Mudroom
2. Dining Room
3. Living Room
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

A VERY ANGRY CONFRONTATION

He will arrive in the last room that is entered, taking on whoever it is that has invaded his space. Since it is his lair it is almost instantaneous. Within a minute of the eighth room being reached The Angry One will arrive. Of course this means that one or more characters could be at a disadvantage. There is not a way to communicate between the rooms so a canny GM/Keeper will segregate the affected players to heighten tension or anxiety.

The Angry One is the most dangerous of all four ghosts. His rage has crossed over from life into unceasing death and it powers his will, or perhaps is all that is left of his scant personality from his time spent alive.

In appearance his is gaunt, almost skeletal, malnourished looking in physique. His face is reminiscent of the obese man in the violence scenes, with a hairless take to the looks. The cheekbones and ribs are visible through the almost transparent white tee shirt (filthy dirty and sweat-stained), along with a pasty slug white complexion. When he attacks the muscles are visible working under the skin, writhing like snakes or wires, with a spasmodic jumping quality as well. His height adjusts to fit inside whatever space or room he is in, tending to grow when confronting someone.

While as a ghost he is attacking with will and poltergeist powers (while in the more material world) it manifests here in his lair on The Landscape as raking with his fingernails. The more times he does it the more they take on the appearance of old rusty nails, pulled from rotten wooden boards.

This is again a contest of will and strength of determination, however expressed in more violence. The characters will have to attack using their POW (Call of Cthulhu), Empathic Skills (Dark Conspiracy), or Abilities (Unknown Armies), expressed in hand to hand combat terms. The Angry One scratches and claws at his opponents, shrieking and howling in frustration the entire time. No additional mods are given for that; however keep emphasizing to the players the maniac nature of their opponent. There is not any additional SAN loss for battling The Angry One.

If the Angry defeats a character then they are ejected from his dwelling, coming to land back in their own body, mentally damaged and physically shaken. Impose a characteristic damage on any character that is ejected this way. 10% of a relevant stat would be an appropriate imposition. This should be healed once the

ghost is overcome, meaning it is tied to the ghost. A cruel Keeper could rule this from POW and also add it onto The Angry One's POW making it even more challenging in subsequent attempts. This option could after a few defeats make The Angry One almost impossible to defeat, which could prompt the Players to come up with another strategy in their attempts to defeat it.

Once a single, or group, of characters defeats The Angry One, then it collapses in place, muttering curses and vile obscenities. It will not directly answer any questions, instead talking in the 3rd person, swearing at life, breathers, anyone or anything not like it, the (insert appropriate swear word) that convinced him that helping would help him out, this place he is at is wretched, why did life have to treat him so poorly, he never had a chance, etc. All this statements that shows someone has taken no responsibility for themselves or their lives is what comes out of this ghost's mouth.

There is not a lot of really useful data to be found here. However defeating him will, if the characters listen close enough, let them know there this is not the one in charge, there is one other one at least. Of course there are really two more ghosts haunting Eveline VanCliff, but they will not know that until after encountering Reed Chastain.

With the defeat of The Angry One, his lair will start to lose coherency. It will take years of time before it fades away into almost nothing, but once he is down he has no more power, it has been taken away from him. The rooms will all solidify, no longer the movement, the special effects, the sense of being closed in and trapped. Now instead it is a run-down, falling down, version of the same location. The black spaces will still move between the rooms, but it is more like stepping through a black curtain than crossing from one place to another.

The Angry One will, over time, lose all remembrance of what life was like and will, in a few decades, end up a shadow of a spirit, lurking in the neighborhood it was raised in, doomed to never fully escape the past.

THE THIRD PART (THE ONES BEHIND IT ALL)

Here is the culmination of the adventure. This is where the two final ghosts are revealed and the main opposition dealt with. Having gotten past the others, now it comes down to the main opposition and then the start of the entire situation and the choice of what to do in the end.

The path should be clearer now. The characters know there was another ghost that was manipulating the first two into aiding it in some enterprise. So by now they should either look for another facet to the doorway at the formerly haunted characters residence or look at the superimposed images at the VanCliff residence to find the next location to move to.

At this point two of the four images are much fainter than at the beginning. An observant character could detect similarities to the VanCliff house in some of the architectural features that are more prominent at this time.

There is now a single front door, with two separate sets of details. The analogy would be that one door is an overlay of the other one, so that both sets of features are showing. So it will come down to intention to find the correct one. This can be as simple as a character stating they wish to find the next location, something like that, then when they enter the conjoined appearing doorway will they enter The House of Reed Chastain. If they just open it, if not one says what they are seeking, then the door will open and when they step through, they will be stepping directly out of the doorway, getting nowhere. They step in and as they pass through they are stepping right out of the same doorway.

Only until they express a direct intent to get to the next location, to whoever is behind this, etc. Only then will the door open up to the Reed Chastain area.

THE HOUSE OF REED CHASTAIN

Welcome to The House of Reed Chastain. This is the villain of the adventure. Defeating him will not be the end of the adventure, but it will mark the end of direct confrontations. Power wise, he is stronger than The Forgotten One and not near as dangerous as The Angry One.

Entering his house will immediately alert him to company. Opening the door will sound an old fashioned buzzer, the kind that operated by twisting a knob outside of the door. It will continue to sound as long as the door is open. As the characters enter they will also hear this buzzer, which should give them an idea that they are not going to do as they wish without being discovered.

Inside is a large open foyer, reminiscent of an opulent hotel lobby. There are large overstuffed chairs in floral patterns, with a glass chandelier in the middle of the large space. Along one wall (it can change from visit to visit) is a large brick fireplace with a roaring flame in it

(no heat, cannot do any damage, purely for show). There are a number of paintings on the walls, all of the same young man in different attire and against different city backdrops. The floor is covered with a deep shag carpet, pure white like freshly falling snow in the middle of a blizzard.

The man in the paintings is young, mid 20s, with short cropped black hair, wide set eyes, a wide nose, and a thin mustache. He would be of average appearance, if a little on the needy side based on the longing visible in the very feminine eyes he has. The attire in each painting in a suit and vest, different colors and fabrics each time. They all look like he was posing for them in the city streets, all alone in each picture. The weather and sky a perfect blue and each building looking as if it had just be finished being landscaped and painted. If the characters in the course of this segment return to the lobby area the paintings will have changed locations, appearance, fabrics, scenes, etc. The only constant is the same man in each one of them. This is, naturally, Reed Chastain as he sees himself, dapper and handsome, a world traveler. Even though he had never left this city prior to his death.

There is a large open archway directly ahead and it leads into a formal Dining Room, with a table long enough to have ten chairs on each side. Each of those chairs is wooden, straight backed, and if a character got close enough, within a few inches, and inspected the wood, they would see insects moving in the wood. Like the chairs are semi-transparent and the insects are trapped just inside. Some of them are obviously in poor shape, as if a boot had stepped on them or worse, with some constantly twitching. From more than a few inches away the chairs are dark, almost black, wood grained pieces of furniture. The table is the same, except when a character examines it they will see writhing skeletal faces in the tabletop, constantly moving and distorting. The walls are a dark panel board motif, no paintings in here. The floor is a solid off white linoleum, at odds with the table or the entryway. Three doors, one per wall, make up the only other visible accessories. These doors are steel looking, crudely welding pieces, like a beginner in welding would create if they were making steel doors for a home.

Starting to the left of the archway, the first door leads to the library study. The door directly across from the archway leads to a kitchen, and the door to the right of the archway leads to his personal space. Each is an option, but none are where Reed Chastain is hiding at, watching and deciding. Each of these three doors has a small sign

over the top, in Red Neon, proclaiming what is through them. If any character looks up at the archway the word above it says Sitting Room.

The library study, off to the left of the archway, sounds more elegant than it is. Inside it has more of an appearance of a sleazy adult store than an actual library. There are cheap looking book-cases, some filled with library books (identified by the spines as well as checkout card pouch on the inside front covers) and some filled with gibberish. The gibberish filled ones have ornate jeweled or leather covers or bindings. These are faux and just there to lend a sense of importance of elegance. In execution they create a sense of gaudy and gauche. The magazines are either outdoor oriented, sports, hunting, fishing, or are girly ones. The girly ones are more burlesque than adult, more pinup than pornographic. This is another clue that the ghost being dealt with is older, not a recent addition to the ranks of spirits. If any characters thumbs through them they will see a variety of female figures, but they all have the same face, that of Eveline VanCliff. The timeframe of her features would be in her 20s an astute character might surmise (skills in forensics, photography, genealogy would all allow for accurate dating. Others would be a guess of like teens to thirties). A single chair with a nightstand are the sole furniture pieces. The chair is another overstuffed one and the nightstand a seeming antique of cedar, with grain on the top that looks like fitted boards. This is a construct to represent what would have been Eveline Van Cliff's Cedar Hope Chest. The door in here is also reminiscent of a cedar chest with the word Exit in Red Neon over this door.

The kitchen lies across the archway entering into the Formal Dining Room. Passing into here is like stepping into the kitchen portion of a 50s or 60s family show set. It has the white walls, linoleum countertops, plywood cabinets with contact paper coverings (faux finishes) of what someone with no clue would think a set was made of. The table is plywood with a top of like sheet metal to maybe make it look like it was a kitchen table of the time. The legs are wood as well, with tinfoil wrapped around them to make them shiny. The insides of any cupboards are bare, showing just the plywood look on the inside. There is a refrigerator that is a large box painted to look like one, the door does not work. The stove is of the same construction, the sink nothing more than perhaps paper mache with more tinfoil wrapped around tubes to represent the faucet portion. This is the least realistic element, and it is totally fake.

His personal space is the least decorated of all of his rooms in his house. The motif for here is Wild West. There is sawdust on the floor, a large Four Posted bed with white linen sheets and two end tables with generic doilies on them. The walls are like a log cabin, looks like planed tree trunks and the ceiling is more like the night sky than a ceiling, with the Big and Small Dippers visible and all the stars slowly rotating counterclockwise, as if they are projected on there. The light is like from a campfire or a fireplace, without one being visible. Nothing else is in here.

By this time Reed Chastain is watching over what the characters are doing. This observation is conducted from spy holes in the wood grain, or through the eyes of the many paintings. If any of the characters are able to sense being observed (heightened awareness, combat training etc.) allow for a difficult skill test (system dependent) to make such a determination. They will not know where it is coming from, just a general sense of being watched. Reed Chastain is secreted in his own hiding space within his own house in The Landscape, which is normally only accessible to him. This is where he goes to indulge in the fantasies that make up a large portion of his time, along with spying on Eveline VanCliff, tormenting The Forgotten One, manipulating The Angry One, and searching for other spirits he could bend to his will to add to his sense of 'self-worth'.

The crawl space is not naturally accessible. To characters, if they determine it exists, with abilities to travel, Dream Travel or Dimension Walking, then it is one of the most difficult tests to make to get to it. Essentially the die roll has to be the highest it can be to make it there. This is a location keyed to his personality and so it is secreted away in a precise manner suited to his entire life, both when alive and since becoming a spirit.

During the time they have explored here Reed Chastain has watched over them. Horrified that his house has been invaded, curious as to how they got there. He will recognize, if present, the character he has had The Forgotten One haunt and he is puzzled over how they are functioning so well. As they enter the second of the three rooms off the Formal Dining Room, he will leave and go visit The Forgotten One. At that time he will find out, in about 5 minutes of conversation, that others came and broke The Forgotten One. He will then also visit The Angry One, having an idea that something happened but not really concerned or caring about that ghost, and will take about 3 minutes of conversation in that location. The travel time is near instantaneous so 9 minutes after the

characters had entered the second room he will be back and upset that his long laid plans are being interfered with. At 11 minutes of elapsed time, he will confront the characters demanding they leave or die and become ghosts to replace what they stole (The Forgotten One and Angry One) from him as well.

Whatever room or space he is in Reed Chastain will just pop in, suddenly appearing. The room will become arctic cold, ice forming on the walls and frost on any horizontal surfaces. This occurs in an eye-blink. In appearance he is average height, weight proportionate male, crew cut black hair with decent features. He has on a dark wool double breasted suit with a Hawaiian Shirt on underneath with a tie that is not visible, but it can be seen moving or writhing under the front of the suit and vest. His face grows darker and redder the longer he is in the presence of the characters, visible getting more and more frustrated. His poltergeist powers are fairly strong, with little self-control, but since this is his own House he will not hesitate to use any item in it, knowing he can bring it all back perfect once this encounter is over.

His tirade can include the following dialogue as well as tips and points from the list that follows it. To the Keeper/GM if you are reading this in character do your best to be in a prissy, deserving, holier than thou, tirade voice.

“How dare you pissants come into my home, wreck my stuff, steal my ghosts, and get in the way of me and my love. YOU are nothing to me, no more than that cow bitch that caused that accident; lower than the idiot brother too dumb to know anything. You are all just insignificant insects that are only fit to be GROUND beneath my feet. Go away, you are not wanted here, JUST GO AWAY (the end part delivered in a screaming tantrum like voice and inflection).”

List of other information to pull into any conversation with Reed Chastain (use to intersperse with dialogue during the battle or afterwards):

- ☛ He was an only child and must be the center of attention
- ☛ He is shallow, only cares about himself
- ☛ He has a very deep jealous streak, which ties into his current situation
- ☛ He is never at fault, no matter what happens or had happened. It is always someone else's fault
- ☛ He has a drinking problem, but it is not his fault.

- ☛ He died in an automobile accident, due to drunk driving, but it was the other driver's fault he died.
- ☛ No one ever gave him a chance, no one ever listened to what he told them to do
- ☛ She spurned him, now she will never get away from him, she is his and his alone
- ☛ Now he has the last laugh, he is the one calling all the shots, he is the one running the show
- ☛ He pants, even as a spirit he is tied to his own past at this point, and the tirade has made him feel as if he is out of breath. This lasts only for a few moments, 30 seconds or so, which is how long the players would get to go on the offensive if they chose to.

If not then Reed Chastain, once that is past, will demand they leave at once or he shall throw them out of his home. He gives them about 15 seconds then attacks.

He has a couple of different strategies.

He starts off the combat with a Scream. This affects all of the characters.

He will then attempt to Intimidate one of the characters, whichever one is the youngest looking or any female that is in the party

After that he will throw whatever objects (using his poltergeist like movement power) to do so. If at any time someone strikes him his next move will be to disappear and then reappear directly behind them, to Shriek at them from behind.

Once he starts to lose the fight he will be able to both Scream and Throw Objects at the same time. The objects are thrown at the last person to have struck him. This will keep changing based on who attacks him.

He has no concept of being capable of losing and once it happens then he will utter one final Scream at all of the characters and then he will disincorporate.

At this point, the house will also fade into The Landscape. Reed Chastain had invested so much of his own self into the location that once he lost, the impossible (to him) happened, nothing was left and his spirit was exorcised from The Landscape. Now all around the characters is the monotone view with now a single in focus home and the faded overlays of two others. One of the four in the prior views is gone utterly.

If the player character that had been haunted still has any lingering effects, once Reed Chastain is gone all of the effects will immediately disappear. As the architect of the hauntings once he is gone, their effects will also be gone as well.

If characters had picked up mental conditions based on the other ghost encounters, these will also immediately disappear.

THE HOME OF MICHAEL LORATION

Welcome to the final portion of The Haunted Heart. Here is The Home of Michael Loration. Inside will be the motivation for the entire adventure. This is the last part of the adventure. The climax of the adventure was the battle with Reed Chastain, and now it is time for some answers.

When the characters exit The House of Reed Chastain they will be standing in front of an identical replica of The VanCliff home. It seems like that home has been transported to The Landscape and it is complete with grass, faux sunshine, and the sounds of distant children playing.

It will be simple to walk up and knock or ring the bell to gain entrance. The door will not open, nor will windows, without Michael Loration's permission. So the only way to gain admittance is to be polite and ask.

A few moments after the knock, the door will open and a young man will be standing there. Dressed in a wool suit of brown with matching leather shoes and a stark white starched shirt under the suit and tie, he has short dark brown hair, well-manicured nails, and a pleasant countenance and demeanor.

He introduces himself as Michael Loration and thanks the characters to tending to the unruly neighbor that has been in residence for the past 40 some years.

Below are some pertinent facts that Keepers / GMs can use as a part of conversations with Michael Loration.

1. He is the young man that had promised to go back to Eve VanCliff, a promise he meant to keep until an untimely death made it a little more difficult.
2. He does not know how he died, just that there was no pain, nor suffering, and then he found himself stuck as an invisible spirit wandering the Earth.
3. He was unable to make it back to her home, and then as he was giving up he found the way to The Landscape.

4. Once there he was able to move back to where his true love was at, but they were, of course, unable to be together.
5. Instead he chose to just remain close to her, allowing her to live her life and to be patient and wait for her to see when they would be together in the next life.
6. During those years she stayed faithful, waiting for him to return, even after receiving the letter stating he was lost and would not return.
7. Also during this time another young man, Reed Chastain, became infatuated with her. She would have nothing to do with him, but he would not hear of it.
8. He died in a tragic auto accident, Michael Loration emphatically will deny having anything to do with the accident, and once he died he also became a spirit, a ghost. But a more jealous and vengeful one.
9. For the four ghosts here their dominant focus was intensified and became the sole driving factor. So for The Forgotten One, loneliness became paramount, The Angry One anger, and for Reed Chastain jealousy took preeminence. For Michael Loration, his love for Eve VanCliff became his defining characteristic.
10. On the death of Reed Chastain he also came to The Landscape, and took to haunting the home of Eve VanCliff, which would not do at all. So Michael Loration took up residence in her actual heart, to safeguard and protect her and her brother. This has worked for the most part, even after Reed Chastain followed him in there and brought along the other two ghosts.
11. Now with the other ones gone, he is the only resident in her heart and plans to stay there for the remainder of her days, helping to keep it as whole as possible and let her be as free of attachments to the past as he can be.

At some point a character will likely think that this fourth ghost should be also removed. Michael Loration will not dispute this and if pressed, and convinced, he will agree for her sake, and her sake alone.

He would bid the characters Good Bye and once they are outside of his home, he will fade away, in this case, and the replica of the VanCliff house will also fade away. This is him giving up his spirit form and being drawn into The Landscape.

That is the end of the adventure.

If Michael Loration remains in her heart, she will outlive her brother by twenty years, always singing and smiling to herself, finally united with the only man, besides her brother, she ever truly loved.

If he is persuaded to leave, then she will die of a broken heart a few days before her brother succumbs to the disease and age that is taking him too early. In this case a dual obituary will be run, stating two siblings both died within days of each other leaving no surviving relatives.

WRAP UP AND CONCLUSION

Now that the characters have overcome the haunting of The Van Cliffs it is time for experience and skill enhancements. Look to their actions, how they applied skills and worked to come up with innovative solutions to the tasks in front of them.

Normal experience for the three battles that took place as well. There is no treasure here, but access to a new location could prove treasure enough.

SOURCES TO LOOK FOR IDEAS TO AID IN RUNNING THE HAUNTED HEART

Being at the base of it a love story as well as a ghost story, any similar books or stories will aid.

The features of The Landscape are drawn from ideas about reality and energy. The description is a spin on typical gaming astral landscapes, with input from the ideas of dreams and lucid dreaming.

Several Movies that might give inspiration include:

- ☠ The Ring (English Version)
- ☠ White Noise
- ☠ Inception
- ☠ Pulse (Original Japanese Version)

THE LANDSCAPE FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

The closest representation in Call of Cthulhu is The Dreamlands. It would work to treat The Landscape as a sort of Ghost Dreamlands, where they have their own residences, places to escape from the world they are effectively trapped in, as well as a mechanism for a ghost to manifest in a multitude of different locations at once. This can easily be explained as their residence on The Landscape encompasses the entire location they are haunting.

This also still allows for the rules of battling a ghost to involve a POW vs. POW opposed roll, along with an in setting justification for the different effects outlined in this adventure. Use the Dreaming Skill to facilitate intuition, knowledge, movement, as well as for Combat while in The Landscape. Then the POW rolls will essentially determine damage in the process of overcoming various ghosts.

This also opens up another avenue for Cultist and Mythos Activity, as well as a new place to explore for Investigators so minded.

If the characters take to spending extensive time on The Landscape, feel free to allow them to start cultivating the Landscape Use skill. Base 0%, useful for movement, detection, travel, and information gathering while on The Landscape. Treat it similar to the Dreaming Skill for Dreamers while on The Dreamlands.

Other potential encounters could include: (From the Call of Cthulhu 5.5 Rulebook)

- ☠ Colors Out of Space
- ☠ Dimensional Shamblers
- ☠ Ghosts
- ☠ Lloigor
- ☠ Moon-Beasts
- ☠ Nightgaunts
- ☠ Wraiths

(From The Creature Companion Core Game Book)

- ☠ Adumbrali
- ☠ Fractal Creatures
- ☠ Million Favored Ones
- ☠ Space Eaters

An encounter with an Avatar of Azathoth, Chorazin (Cthulhu), Iod, Nyarlathotep, Tru'Nembra, Yog-Sothoth

THE LANDSCAPE FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

Name: The Landscape

Type: Splinterland

Discontinuity: 0

Assimilation: 0

Details: The Landscape is a splinterland of Earth, encompassing the entire physical reality. In appearance it is a flat featureless plain. The Landscape is only accessible to empathic, energetic, or

spiritual based entities. It has no concrete physical aspect to it, limiting what and who might be found in this splinterland.

When someone enters The Landscape, the primary feature is the essentially featureless nature of the place. It has no up, no down, no left, or a right to move in. Movement is determined by desire and will. If an Empath or other similar or energetic Dimension Walk or otherwise travel here, they will find they are drawn in the direction of what or where they most craved or desire's equivalent location here.

Time and Distance are not factors on The Landscape; instead intent and will are key components. As one approaches the location that is desired faint images will appear in the colorless landscape. They approximate the location in Reality, the weight of energy there coming across and imprinting, essentially bleeding through.

Healing rates do not apply in The Landscape, as it is composed of Empathic or pure energy, where physical entities do not have access to it. Instead access is by way of Dimension Walk, while leaving the physical body behind. This does add one level of difficulty in accessing the protodimension.

OTHER POTENTIAL ENCOUNTERS:

- ☠ Bleaks
- ☠ Daemons
- ☠ Electrogeist
- ☠ Energy ETs
- ☠ Ghosts (Haunts, Poltergeists)
- ☠ Hellfire
- ☠ Reaver
- ☠ Spectrals (all)

CHARACTERS

The extent Non-Player Characters are as follows:

BRADFORD VANCLIFF

Brother to Eveline VanCliff, her caretaker for the past almost 50 years. He has devoted his entire life to tending to his heartbroken younger sister, and his strength and health are about to fail him. He senses his time is nearing but has no concrete information yet.

EVELINE VANCLIFF

55 some years ago her betrothed left and joined the military. He never came home. She has never gotten over her loss. He had written many letters but then one day, they stopped. A government letter arrived after that stating that he was lost and presumed dead. She never got confirmation of his death and has waited her entire life for him to come back. By this time she is delusional and haunted, literally, by her lost love's spirit.

MICHAEL LORATION

The lost love of Eveline VanCliff. A few years, at the end of his enlistment in the military, he was killed in an accident. Unable to move on he incorporated as a ghostly entity and made his way back to the love of his life. However as a ghost he was unable to actually interact with her. Eventually he came to haunt her heart, residing inside her body and so with her, in some part. This attachment has tied him to the physical world. His presence has also attracted several other spirits; one frustrated would be love of Eveline VanCliff and several other ones that are being manipulated.

REED CHASTAIN

A young man who had been infatuated with Eveline VanCliff and when her heart was taken with Michael Loration his jealous nature erupted and he vowed that she was the only one for him. After his death in an accident he came to also haunt the house she lived in. When Michael Loration arrived he followed him into her heart and set up his own location where he endlessly relives what should have been interspersed with his own death at the wheel of an automobile; the result of alcohol and driving.

THE FORGOTTEN ONE

This young man died sometime in the late 19th Century to early 20th Century. His death was so sudden and tragic that in his passing from mortal life he forgot all of his previous existence. Now he is trapped in a state of fugue, forgotten by the living as well as having forgotten who or what he once was. This has made him an easy mark for Reed Chastain to manipulate and use for his own agenda. He has no name, no identity, just knows that Reed Chastain says he is the only friend this poor soul has and it believes the lie.

THE ANGRY ONE

This spirit no longer has an idea if they were male or female in their previous existence. Instead this spirit rails at all existence. It has taken on different aspects of humanity and beings in a vain attempt to reclaim all it had lost in transitioning from life to becoming a spirit. In life this entity had no friends, hatred directed outward towards all of life and since becoming a ghost this hatred has extended to all of creation. It rails and screams incoherent anger and has nothing left to be reasoned with.

NPC STATS FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

BRADFORD VANCLIFF

STR: 9

DEX: 8

CON: 7

APP: 9

SIZ: 9

EDU: 13

INT: 10

SAN: 50

POW: 5

HP: 8

Dam Bonus: +0

Weapons: None

Skills: Accounting 25%, Bargain 25%, First Aid 35%, Mechanical Repair 40% English (Native) 65%, Persuade 55%, Spot Hidden 55%

Other: N/A

EVELINE VANCLIFF

STR: 5

DEX: 7

CON: 14

APP: 15

SIZ: 7

EDU: 11

INT: 14

SAN: 50

POW: 10

HP: 10

Dam Bonus: -1d6

Weapons: None

Skills: Art 20%, Craft (Sewing, Embroidery) 65%, English (Native) 70%, Fast Talk 40%, Hide 65%, Listen 55%, Sneak 65%, Spot Hidden 50%

Other: N/A

MICHAEL LORATION

INT: 12

POW: 9

Attacks: None

He can move small (up to 5 pounds) objects as a poltergeist if desired.

REED CHASTAIN

INT: 13

POW: 15

Attacks

Scream: This is a POW vs. POW Attack that affects all characters in the same room / space as Reed Chastain inhabits. If successful causes 1d3 POW loss to all characters the roll overcomes.

Intimidate: This is a POW vs. POW Attack that can affect a single character or a group within sight. For a single character it is a straight POW vs. POW. For a group it is a .75 POW vs. each individual character POW. If successful causes a 1d3 POW loss and a POW check. If that check fails then the character will cower for a round of combat

Throw Objects: This is a manifestation of his Poltergeist like powers. It is available both in the regular world and on The Landscape. A successful POW vs. POW causes 1d3 POW (The Landscape) and in the normal world is a 25% chance to hit and normal small

thrown objects (plates, etc.) would be 1d4 damage. Nothing larger than a small wooden chair could be moved or thrown.

Shriek: This is a POW vs. POW Attack that can only affect a single character directly in front of him causing 1d6 POW loss. It appears like Reed Chastain's mouth distends wide open and a hideous shriek pours forth.

THE FORGOTTEN ONE

INT: 8

POW: 12

Attacks

Force Back: This is a POW vs. POW attack that on each success causes the affected character to move backwards away from The Forgotten One. It is only usable in The Landscape. If the Forgotten One can force someone to take 10 steps backwards they will be ejected from its location on The Landscape.

Memory Loss: This is a poltergeist like affect. On a successful POW vs. POW check then 1 memory of something can be moved, replaced, erased, forgotten. It has no in combat affects. This is how it causes memory loss in targets over time.

THE ANGRY ONE

INT: 8

POW: 18

Attacks

Clawing: This is a POW vs. POW attack only versus a single character that does 1d6 POW damage.

NPC STATS FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

BRADFORD VANCLIFF

Experienced NPC, Ace of Diamonds (Generous)

EVELINE VANCLIFF

Novice NPC, King of Diamonds (Selfish)

MICHAEL LORATION

Ghost (Combination Haunt/Poltergeist)

Empathy 16

Initiative 6

Willpower Drain 3

Telekinesis 3

Dimension Walk (The Landscape Only) 6

REED CHASTAIN

Ghost (Combination Haunt/Poltergeist)

Empathy 16

Initiative 6

Human Empathy 3

Project Emotion 4

Project Thought 4

Willpower Drain 5

Telekinesis 3

Dimension Walk (The Landscape Only) 6

THE FORGOTTEN ONE

Ghost (Combination Haunt/Poltergeist)

Empathy 12

Initiative 4

Willpower Drain 3

Project Emotion 3

Dimension Walk (The Landscape Only) 6

THE ANGRY ONE

Ghost (Combination Haunt/Poltergeist)

Empathy 16

Initiative 8

Project Emotion 5

Telekinesis 5

Dimension Walk (The Landscape Only) 6



A REAL OPPORTUNITY

A Kazanjian Art Contest Runner Up

by Captain Obvious

Status: Active
LRE #: 1807081
Type: Sale
Beds: 12
Full Baths: 8
Partial Baths: 2
Living Area: 3800 sq ft (est)

Probably the most unique Victorian house ever built in the Pacific Northwest and certainly the last to be renovated, a total Alice in Wonderland-type gem. With such amazing vistas of the ocean, the truly discriminating buyer couldn't ask for anything more distinct – but no other offering can boast its own waterfall and the only thriving palm tree on the coast!

Thought to house one of the first individual hydro-electric plants ever installed in a residence, amazingly this treasure can still be powered by robust machinery at least 100 years old! But wait, there's more! The house includes thermal heating fed by nearby hot spring reservoirs.

Situated on 45 acres and owned by the same family until 2010, when it was mothballed. The original builder (the son of a well-known Northwest railroad baron) was a wealthy inventor and scientist who spent 20 years finishing it to his specifications (est. 1919 and 1920).

Located on the coast 1.5 hours drive time (or 20 minutes by air) from Seattle-Tacoma, this eclectic palace is actually three homes in one! The original structure was decommissioned by the United States Lighthouse Service in 1889. The 'Great Keep' was purchased in Europe, disassembled and brought to America to be rebuilt around 1900. The 1895 Townhouse was also moved up from San Francisco in the summer of 1910 and added over what was

known as the 'turbine room'. Both structures were of such extreme emotional significance to the builder that cost was no option in moving them to such a remote location.

All floors, paneling, doors, woodwork are all of Oak. Astonishing richness! Improvements have been made in recent years; slate roof tiling refurbished in 2000, some brick joints repointed in 2001, new kitchen in 2002 and new oil tank in 2003. The joints of the wall at the rear of the Townhouse and chimney (15 feet) completely redone in 2001. New concrete ring cap at the top of the chimney, also two new lintels have been installed replacing the most damaged ones.

As mentioned in the remarks and as you can see by the interior pictures there are many things to be done... plumbing, electricity, walls and ceilings ... But this house has incredible potential! Interior features; solid oak floors that have never been sanded or varnished (only beeswax was applied!), all of the radiators are cast iron, all of the handles of doors are crystal. All hinges, door handles, internal movement are copper. All the mirrors are beveled. There are two decorative fireplace mantels in the living room and dining room.

The walls of the hall, the boudoir, the dining room, the corridor at the second level are covered with paneling called the "lincrusta." (Unfortunately, this paneling in the staircase was destroyed). The rest of this paneling is still in good shape. The chandeliers, the lighting wall units (all crystal) and a globe above staircase are included in the sale price. Ten year state tax abatement.

Additional Information:

Heating system: Hot water
Water supply: Ground/well
Heating energy: Heating oil/thermal/solar
Garage: Detached, Double width or more, Tandem
Siding: Brick/brownstone/fieldstone
Proximity: Remote
Basement: Finished workroom/shop/dark room
Sub-Basement: Unfinished, Low (less than 6 feet)
Parking: Detached (carriage house) Garage (4)
Sewage system: Septic tank
Zoning: Rural

Patricia pushed back from her desk, turned and stared out the window at a wet Seattle. The local news was calling for a big storm this weekend, maybe even a typhoon. That was bad for sales, very bad.

She'd written some doozies in the last thirty years of pushing real estate, but massaging this one listing took the cake. How her firm had ever wound up taking this white elephant on the coast was beyond her – the place was really out in the boonies, probably five miles from the closest yokels. To be licensed as a B&B, the place would need a total overhaul and talk about stigmatized properties - this place had a beyond-bad reputation, something she preferred not to divulge unless the buyers really dug hard. You'd have to be an archivist to even locate half the news articles about the place, and from what her local agents told her those didn't even scratch the surface of what really happened. Then again, the sort of folks who bought places like this usually had more money than brains, which was why they were re-listing it. The bank had dropped their asking price, again – considerably so.

Speaking of which.... putting her feet up on the window sill, Patricia reached back for her phone and hit a number with her thumbnail.

"Laurie, honey, how are you?! Two minutes... that white elephant on the coast? Yup. There's a news team that wants to do another 'insider' walk around, would you be a doll and handle them? Friday afternoon. Take your intern; talk it up, the usual. I know, short notice but who gets the lion's share of the commission? Great! Thanks! Bye!"

Dumping that in Laurie's lap with such short notice was a crappy thing to do, but sales are sales and the over-enthusiastic reporter's story idea was free advertising for the place. Now all she had to do was fight traffic going home.



CASTAWAY

Socotran Fiction

by Norm Fenlason

*This fiction will appear in the upcoming supplement, **Socotra!**, an expansion on a **Protodimension Magazine** article by Captain Obvious.*

I am still not sure what happened.

Last thing I remember was being on the bridge when suddenly the lights went out. Now, held at gunpoint on the bridge with Rake and Akmed, the Somali pirates who had captured us started yelling and poking us with their guns. Looking where they were looking I saw why they were concerned. Just off the starboard side, amidships, and maybe 3 km away was a military boat closing fast—looked like a fast patrol boat. Our ship was dead in the water, and there was no way the pirates were going to make it to their Zodiac in time to outrun that thing.

As we watched, little flashes of light flickered from the deck of the patrol boat followed very shortly by heavy rounds hitting the con sending bits of wood, metal, and glass flying. One of the pirates, Ali, I think, literally exploded as a heavy round tore through his chest. Rake, Akmed, and I threw ourselves flat, as the pirates returned fire.

Under the hail of wooden debris, spalled metal, and blood spatter, I crawled to where Ali had fallen and flipped what was left of him over. There it was, his huge machete. I grabbed it from his belt and started scraping the rope that held my hands together over its sharpened edge. The other pirates were too preoccupied to notice.

Breaking free I passed the machete to Rake, and he went to work on his own bonds. When he and Akmed were free I leaned close and whispered above

the intermittent staccato of the rusty AK-47s the Somali's were shooting.

“Their Zodiac in on the port side. Let's make our break before those guys kill us with the pirates.”

We stayed low and scrambled out of the bridge and down the stairs to the port gangway. We made it to the rope ladder undetected by the pirates, and Akmed started down. Rake paused, pulled my sleeve and pointed out to sea.

A wall of clouds and rain covered the horizon to the south. We were in sunshine with a light breeze, but the huge thunderheads above the nearly black rain wall spoke of rough weather bearing down on us, fast. I looked at Rake.

“We won't make it in the Zodiac.” I whispered not sure why I was whispering.

Rake was about to reply when shots from above and behind ricocheted around us, one catching Rake in the thigh. Rake fell off the ladder into the sea and I scrambled down the ladder after him.

Akmed had made it to the Zodiac and was already hooking Rake in when I made it onboard. With Rake hanging over the dinghy's gunwale, Akmed left him to pull himself in and scrambled aft to get the motor started. I cast off the lines holding us to our former home, hacking at them with the captured machete. Once free I pushed the boat away from our contract ship, the *Minnesota Maru*. Akmed then gave the motor a goose to whip it around, and opened the throttle. I fell back onto Rake who howled and pushed me off.

Scrambling up, I yelled at Akmed, “Aim for the island!”

“No! NO!” Rake countered. “It's death. That's SOCOTRA!” The word caused me to pause. Socotra was a devil's land from where no one came back. But we really had no choice. That storm might kill us on the island, but it was sure death in this rubber boat, and a sure death was following us. As the range from the ship widened, a sharp staccato of shots announced the lead that splashed all around us.

“Get down!” I screamed too late.

My warning did not help Akmed. He took two rounds to the chest as bullets ripped through the boat's heavy rubber fabric around him. The Zodiac immediately started losing buoyancy, but fortunately the burst had missed the engine; it was still running. I climbed over Rake to get to the back and take the controls, when the sky lit up with the explosion and fire that launched our shooters into the sea, well their parts anyway. I turned to concentrate on getting ashore as the winds kicked up and the rain caught up to us.

The next part is still a little vague with the howling of the wind and the driving rains. I remember seeing in a lightning flash that was really close, that there was surf cresting over a barely submerged coral reef. That warning came too late, so we hit the reef at over 40 knots. The bottom of the boat was torn out and the three of us were tossed into the sea. After that I was fighting the winds, rain, and current to make it to land.

I never saw Rake or Akmed again.

The shallow cave that surrounded me when I woke was good protection against the violent storm raging outside. I must have made it to the beach and crawled up here, because I don't remember doing it. Maybe the storm surge carried me up here.

How long I was in the cave I could not tell. The constant dark caused by the howling storm outside kept me from knowing night from day. But after a while the winds abated enough for me to step outside and look around without being blown away.

The shore to the left led me to a huge dune that climbed 100 meters up the cliffs. Despite its huge size, I could climb easily in the waning winds. The wet sand gave me passing traction, while the lightning above played across the sky from horizon to horizon, its flashes giving me enough light to climb.

At the crest of the dune I could see that annual floods had carved a shallow canyon into the cliffs. Water was running into a wadi that drained to the far side of the dune. I could see that now that I had reached the top. Water was rushing through the channel it had previously carved taking its measure as it went. Standing there measuring my chances with it was when I first heard the strange piping. At least it sounded like piping with a strange chuffing sound. It was no instrument I had ever heard and it was no animal I knew, but it completely filled me with dread. Staring around in the gloom, I could not find a source, and with the wind moving the sparse underbrush, I started, heart pounding, every time there was a gust. So up the little canyon I went, inland.

The piping got worse and in the canyon, it seemed to come from everywhere. Then, there they were emerging from the bushes, about the size of a dog. Each accompanied by a chuff-chuff-chuff then a trill of piping that rose above my hearing. They were huge land crabs with two claws at least the size of their bodies that were snapping open and closed with a click. With the dozen or so that emerged, the clattering was

nearly deafening, fitfully starting towards me and then stopping.

I was their food. They were going to eat me. As I looked around, their piping continued rising and falling, and I realized it was a call to others of their kind. More were emerging from the undergrowth. I had to get out of here.

Frantically searching the canyon walls, I spotted a water-drained arroyo feeding the canyon that looked more like a stair than drainage. The water running in it was not too fierce. As the piping rose to a climax, my fear waned for an instant and freed my feet and legs. So I leapt and hopped up the eroded waterway to get up and away, away from those monstrous crabs and their weird clattering and piping noises.

The little arroyo led to a hole in the canyon face where a trickle of water had carved its way free. The piping seemed to be following me, so I crawled into the waist-high opening and the narrow passage beyond. Shuddering against the tight confines, I squeezed my eyes closed as my breathing and heart-rate increased. It had to be so tight. But I would die squatting here, so opening my eyes I could make out a light ahead coming from a larger chamber. Fearing then I would be caught by the crabs in the confined narrow passage and dragged out by my feet, I pushed ahead for the chamber. To my relief, the din of the hunting crabs seemed to stay outside; the crabs did not want to come into the cave.

The chamber's light was gloomy and yellow, and flickered as from a fire. The flickering showed a large grotto with a dark ceiling to which the illumination did not reach. In the center of the grotto was the real source of the pale orange glow filling the chamber, a strange crystal formation. Standing a little over a meter high, a small rise of stone like a stalagmite had an egg-shaped crystal set in it like it was concrete. Had water dripped onto the egg and formed the stalagmite around it? How long had the crystal egg sat there?

The egg's finish was smooth on the outside, smooth and organic, but a light flickered in the center. The flickering was pretty rapid, and internal facets to the crystal made it hard to tell the color of the light. But the illumination from its pale glow allowed me to make it across the uneven cavern floor so I could get a better look.

But as I moved closer, a sudden loud voice filled my head, so loud that the pain from hearing it caused my legs to give away, and I fell to the sand covering my ears. At my reaction, the voice softened and I could then make out the words. With eyes watering and head swimming, I realized that the voice was not a physical voice, covering my ears did not help, but it was only in my head. So still clutching my ears from the pain, I listened to what the voice was saying.

"...long have I been alone. Now, here is someone to talk to me!" the voice giggled, actually giggled. "Amazing what you bring me. Things have changed in the world! Your memories are a spice, a mélange!"

Regaining my feet, I staggered back away from the crystal, noticing that its glow was brighter and flickered with the voice.

"NO! DO NOT LEAVE ME!" the intensity of those words nearly caused me to lose consciousness. The voice softened as I stopped.

"My name is *Salai*, and I am what you call a *jinn*."

STASIS

A Calm Proto-Dimension

by Norm Fenlason

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY III

*This proto-dimension will also appear in the upcoming supplement, **Socotra!**, an expansion on a **Protodimension Magazine** article by Captain Obvious.*

THE STASIS PROTO-DIMENSION is located on the other end of the portal linked to the *Gate Stone of the Gods*. Ancient mystics touted the Gate Stone as a gateway to everlasting afterlife. To their limited understanding of the nature of time and extra-dimensional physics, their perceptions are true.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Stasis is a flattened-spherical dimension with a horizontal radius of approximately 100 km and a vertical radius at the center of 20 km. The proto-dimension has the form of rolling hardwood tree-topped hills with shallow streams running between them. What looks like a sun stands at high noon above the center of the dimension; it does not move with the passage of time, not that time really passes.

The boundaries of Stasis appear to be a hardened clear or invisible wall that yields slightly if pressed. Nothing can physically pass through this boundary, and in appearance it looks like a continuation of the proto-dimension on the other side. This boundary extends into the ground as it does into the sky. The sky is blue like the Prime Earth Dimension, but the boundary extends completely around and over

Proto-Dimension: Stasis
Type: Halfland
Discontinuity: 1
Assimilation: Special

the dimension. Physically bypassing the boundary is not possible.

TEMPORAL DISCONTINUITY

There is a 100 to 1 time dilation effect between the Prime Earth Dimension and Stasis, meaning that time passes 100 minutes in the Earth dimension for each minute spent in Stasis.

EVERLASTING LIFE

The genetic code that causes aging and disease is *corrected* causing all maladies to disappear as the body regenerates itself. Body parts and organs that are damaged or missing are repaired. Even the dead are restored to life through this regeneration, of sorts. How the dimension causes viral or bacterial invaders to die off is unclear, but all assimilated organisms in Stasis are returned to perfect health: gray hair returns to its correct color, wrinkles disappear,

discolorations due to aging or weathering vanish, and missing limbs regrow with no limits on usage.

This process is continuous so that the body effectively ceases to age or grow decrepit. So denizens and visitors move around Stasis in perfect health. Should a denizen fall and break something, it immediately starts healing leaving no sign that a break ever occurred. Indeed, visitors who have stayed long enough in Stasis that make it back to the Earth Dimension will have no signs of previous injury. Metal pins and other prosthetics, including cyberware, are gently forced out of the body by regenerative growth.

VOLUTION

Stasis as a proto-dimension seems timeless, and because assimilation effects appear to remove individual volition and desires, denizens do not feel the passage of time. While it is not clear specifically how volition vanishes, some researchers believe that the assimilation affects neural paths in the brain where volition and desire (or aversion) originate. Individual volition is so suppressed that people and creatures that find themselves in Stasis are perfectly content to just sit around and contemplate their navels. But it gets worse. The mechanism that affects neural paths governing denizen volition also impacts denizen memories, the conscious memories of temporal experiences. The longer one stays in Stasis, the greater the loss of long-term memory, starting with the oldest. After a period of time all memories are completely gone, see *Assimilation*, below.

SUSTENANCE

Constant repair at the cellular level precludes the need for food and water. Where the fuel for metabolism comes from is not clear—no one has yet studied it. Hunger is no longer felt and while metabolic processes that digest food will continue, they are not

needed. Since stasis has water, but no food sources, this is a good thing.

ASSIMILATION

The denizens of Stasis are not indigenous, but instead are all visitors that have gone willingly or been sent there. Stasis' assimilation effects are not destructive, but are actually beneficial—to a point. Characters entering Stasis heal at twice the rate for their wounds, and characters that have lost (or gained) Attribute points due to *Aging* (see *Conspiracy Rules*) have those points restored (or lost). The effects are related to the length of time spent in Stasis according to the table to the right.

ESCAPING STASIS

Stasis is not sticky nor a trap-door dimension. Dimension Walking to and from Stasis suffers the normal difficulty levels. If a character should make it clear of Stasis and return to the Prime Earth Dimension, their memories may return (specifically their skills). The escapee must pass a Difficult [Willpower] test for each skill point lost. (Alternatively, the referee can require one test for all the skill points.)

HOOKS

- ☠ Darklings are using Stasis to wipe a mind clean and restore the body to health in order to possess it. The usual method is to kill the target and leave them in Stasis for a while (6.6 months). Some less violent types will drug or otherwise stun the target and leave them in Stasis for a longer while (8.2 years).
- ☠ Tentacled ETs are using the proto-dimension to wipe human minds clean prior to working them into cyborgs.

- ☠ Greedy corporation (all corporations are greedy) does the same thing for a fee as a service to wealthy, not-so-moral nomes.

Duration in Stasis	Time Passage on Earth	Assimilation Effect
1 hour	100 hours (4.2 days)	Memory loss begins. Pass an Average [Willpower] test or lose one skill point from the skills the character first acquired (refer to the character generation worksheet. If it is not available, randomly pick a skill). Check for one point for each hour spent in Stasis. All decisions to act require an Average [Willpower] success.
1 day	100 days (3.3 months)	Organs and body parts are completely regenerated. All decisions to act require a Formidable [Willpower] success.
2 days	200 days (6.6 months)	Life is returned to a dead creature, but all its memories are gone. All decisions to act require an Impossible [Willpower] success.
30 days	3,000 days (8.2 years)	All personality memories are completely gone (such as language), as is all volition. The new denizen is a walking mindless perfectly healthy body.

BRESHINGRIDGE CENTER

A Location and Organization

by Ron McClung

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

BOSTON, MA. (NEW BOSWASH METROPLEX)

The Breshingridge Center is many things to many people. Publically the **Breshingridge Center** is a private mental health hospital - an asylum - for the Dreamlands of Boston. It is a place where the really wealthy can house their mentally ill relatives and know that they are safe and in good hands. Completely private, the Center charges considerable fees for the services but with the level of mental illness across America skyrocketing, places like this are more commonplace.

However, few know that since the collapse of society around it, the Breshingridge Center has expanded its operations outside routine mental health care. Secretly, it has started to investigate the strangeness that goes on around them. Investigations into the causes of some of the mental illnesses that come to them have led to deeper and darker discoveries. Now, in the time of Dark America, the Center has several teams of agents out in the field, investigating these mysteries, preventing further trauma that might lead to the mental illness they see and hunting the sources of these traumas. Through the mad ravings of the mentally insane, the agents of the Center have found themselves deeply involved in fighting the conspiracies of the coming Darkness.

HISTORY

In the latter half of the 1800s, the state of mental health care in America was entering a sort of renaissance. The US government had funded the building of dozens of mental hospitals and asylums per year. Research into mental illness was growing and treatment methods were developing. It was during this time that Lord Granger Breshingridge, inspired by the works of Dorothea Lynda Dix, funded the building of a private asylum called the Breshingridge Mental Hospital.

Lord Breshingridge, a philanthropic British noble with relatives in America, was personally touched by the heartbreak of mental illness as his sister, while in America, fell ill with multiple disorders. Her husband, writing to Lord Breshingridge weekly, relayed the horrors that he experienced while his wife slowly went mad. Lord Breshingridge soon set sail for the Americas to help his sister in any way he could.

From this desperate situation, over a long period of tragedy and despair, was born the Breshingridge Mental Hospital. North of Boston in a remote (at the time)

rural area, the facility was build – a massive redbrick structure ominously perched on a grassy hill. Based on floor plans of the Kirkbride Plan style, it was originally built with three massive wings and a central administration wing, three stories high, each with a level beneath the ground. It sprawled out across the hill like a giant bird, the East and West wings of the building appearing like wings of a giant bird. It was built on a hill once called Crow's Landing by the local Native American tribes. It is said that an inordinate number of crows were commonly seen there and the hill was a meeting place for the spirits.

Through the late 19th century and most of the 20th century, the Hospital treated thousands, some successfully while others not. Lord Breshingridge passed on before the turn of the century, passing on his legacy to his extensive family. The facility grew, erecting various other buildings throughout the campus, including a church, children's hospital, and other important utility buildings. A cemetery eventually was formed at the bottom of the hill for the inmates that passed while in treatment, who had no other place to go. That cemetery remains even to this day and it is said to be one of the more haunting places to go.

During the 1920s, a prominent doctor and researcher, Dr. Gunther Remberg, developed a theory that had a major effect on the Hospitals future. Inspired by the theory that blindness enhances other senses, Remberg theorized mental illness enhances other portions - perhaps unused portions - of the brain. Expecting to find various heightened cognitive abilities hidden in otherwise impaired brains, Remberg was surprised to find much more. Some remarkable cases showed signs latent empathic and psychic ability. The Breshingridge family, known for their forward thinking, gave the funding Remberg needed to further his research. Extensive experiments were done on specific subjects, done in secret due to their unorthodox and controversial nature.

Named the Project Delta after the floor the experiments took place (bottom floor, East Wing), Remberg made significant advancements in not only empathic abilities but also mental health treatment. Many of the cases were people who did not know they had certain abilities and did not know how to handle them. Despite its secret nature, his research did draw some attention from other covert sources, in particular in the intelligence arena. As war loomed, Remberg's research became very popular within the US government.

Some say this popularity lead to the fire of 1944. Others say it was old construction finally giving into age. No one really knows.

The fire destroyed the East wing of the Hospital, killing hundreds of patients and staff, including Dr. Remberg himself. It was assumed his research was destroyed with him. The fire devastated the Breshingridge family as well. Dissent within the family for the hospital grew as some saw it as a money pit. The family patriarch at time, Lord Graham Hammonds Breshingridge, mandated the hospital be rebuilt and its work continued.

The East wing was rebuilt while at the same time, the surviving wings were renovated and updated. Ironically, the fire gave the hospital new life heading into the latter half of the 20th century. The East wing was named the Remberg wing and the West wing was named the Shelly wing (after his assistant, Alexis Shelly). By the 1950s, the hospital was in full swing again. Although there was some attempts to resurrect Remberg's research, Project Delta was never fully reinstated at Breshingridge Hospital.

By the 1970s, the Breshingridge estate hit on hard times and operations at the hospital were reduced considerably. By the mid-1980s, the hospital was all but abandoned, and being cared for by a handful of caretakers. The patients had long been transferred to state run hospitals. The Remberg and Shelly wings fell into disrepair and eventually demolished. By the late 1990s, all that remained was the central wing and the administrative building as well as a few utility buildings. During that time, it was used as a secondary manor when needed. But few really wanted to stay there for rumors of haunting and ghosts. For many years, it remained the empty haunted asylum on the Crow's Landing.

The tide of the Dark Times was slow one. In that time, the Breshingridge family lead by matriarch Calla Breshingridge Hildred, regained some of its stature within the elite. It was able to take advantage of many opportunities ignored by others and gain back its wealth. "Lady" Calla is highly regarded in the family for these efforts. Her vision seemed almost supernatural in predicting these opportunities. Her focus eventually turned to the hospital and her goals to reopen it as a center for the hope that Lord Breshingridge originally foresaw. The Breshingridge Center was opened a few years after the initiative was started, as a private hospital for a variety of mental disorders, addictions and psychosis.

The Greater Depression and the Dark Times beset the world. Wars overt and covert shatter civilizations throughout. Metroplex sprawls spread in the US and across the world, as countryside was taken over by outlaws and worse. It was as if a shadow befell the

world and the Divine Creator turned its back on the Earth. The hopeless and despair of humanity was more than many could handle. The elite gnomes of the Dreamlands were no immune to it. Despite all the privilege and luxury, many gnomes were breaking under the pressures of the new dark world. New and more severe psychoses were arising from the dark shadows of the Dreamlands and few were willing to talk about them. Something was driving the elite insane and it was more than just the trials of life.

Families of these mentally ill gnomes turned to the Breshingridge Center for help. Some honestly wanted their loved ones treated while others simply wanted to avoid the public embarrassment of having an unstable relative. For whatever reason, the elite were willing to pay whatever price the Breshingridge Center asked. Before Lady Calla passed, the Center expanded to a modern mental health facility like no other. Childless, Calla passed the torch on to her nephew, Gallagher Callan "Cal" Breshingridge-Ford. As the Dark Times grew, Cal took the Center to a new level – the level that it is today.

The psychosis and mental disorders the Center was seeing were requiring deeper investigation beyond simple therapy and drugs. The ravings of many of the inmates gave further clues that there was something darker behind the Dark Times. Freelance investigators were hired to dig deeper into the causes of some of these disorders. Sometimes, these lead to dead ends. Others lead to darker and more sinister discoveries. This only drove Cal's curiosity. Freelance agents became full time Center agents. These agents formed teams. Their missions evolved from simple investigation to prevention – preventing the evils that caused the disorders in the first place, so that no one else will suffer the same fate.

The Breshingridge Center had entered the realm of minion hunting.

Eventually, the Center's efforts drew attention, both bad and good. The Center's efforts found resistance, as their new enemies pushed back. Agents went missing or died horrible deaths. Others were admitted with incurable psychoses. They had annoyed whatever dark masters were behind these dark times and now the Center new they had an enemy. The question then was – were there any allies.

A team of friendly Gray ETs contacted a field agent team about 10 years ago. These aliens were eventually brought into the Center and agreed to work with them. They helped empathically hide and protect from malevolent forces. In exchange, they helped with the Center's operations, internally and externally. With their help, Project Delta

was resurrected. Deep under Crow's Landing, the Remberg Research Wing was secretly reopened as an underground facility.

Secrecy is the utmost importance to the Center. Only a few at the Center know the true nature of the enemies they face, and not even they think they know the whole truth. Corruption within the ranks is their greatest fear, which is why unprecedented levels of security surround Cal and his board of directors.

THE AGENTS

The Center now has a few dozen teams that go out and solve mysteries, fight the Darkness and kill minions. They are of varied skills and obtained from varied walks of life. Most potential agents come up on the Center's radar through networking with through existing agents contacts. Eventually, these contacts encounter the Darkness in some way or another. With the help of the Grays, their recruitment division watches these individuals for a time until it is determined they would be a good candidate.

Some agents may require help from the Center's mental health facilities first. If so, they are brought in to the Center without actually knowing the underlying nature of the facility. The hospital is just an extension of the Center's facilities and the agent never knows they are sitting right on top of the command center of the group they are about to join.

Within these agent groups, the Center is very secretive. Only the leaders and special agents know the true nature of the Center and only these few have actually visited the Center site. Training occurs in the field, simply because the Darkness continuously throws new and evil challenges that the Center simply cannot train for. Agents are paid in various ways. Lead agents are salaried but paid through a secret network. Field agents are paid based on contract and cultivated over time to be lead agents.



SLICES

Minion Hunting Fiction

by Eric Fabiashi

THE MORLOCK'S CORPSE collapsed into the fetid hole that it had carefully eased itself out of. The tribe was after Rickie or more specifically after the object he had stolen. The boy had worked his way through the Detroit tunnel networks and sewers that joined with the Morlock's caverns. Even for a thief the tunnels were tight going for the double jointed kid. Through air so thick with moisture that it clung to the white fur of the things he crawled through until he reached the temple space they called the 'Grove'.

Rickie heard his uncle talk about it often. The glow of the fungus, the smells of meat, blood, and the remains of folks so thick that your ankles brushed through the bones. He sat rabid right by his uncle's knees along with his brothers. They were a family of thieves locked in the throes of the Greater Depression working for the Mob, the corporates, or anyone else who could pay their prices. It wasn't always so. The Menendez family were acrobats, tumblers, performers, and mimes going all the way back to 'The Amazing Tim' during the forties. That all changed when they came for his uncle and his brothers one night. The floor boards of their home split and in crawled the white hallowed skinned monsters. Without a sound they took Jimmy, John, and Mathew as pretty as you please with hooks, knives, and worse. Took 'em down into the tunnels to the waiting tentacles of that thing. Rickie

tried not to think about his brothers too much, it slowed him down. Their screams still haunted his nightmares.

They came for his uncle last. Came for him because of that damned glowing crystal that he had in his office. The thing glowed with an unhealthy and unearthly life of its own. That's when he heard the shotgun go off twice and the piggish squeals of the Morlocks as they died under the weapon's report. He heard the screams of his uncle right after he told Rickie to leave while he could just as the house filled with the white things from below the Earth.

That was when the house blew. His uncle had a special surprise for some of the uninvited guests that his family entertained. These weren't the guests they had expected.

Rickie had two broken ribs, a fractured skull, and two busted fingers. But his spirit was broken because of the loss of his family. The loss of his mother and father during the Greater Depression's worst chaos was bad enough but now with the rest of the only family he'd known gone. Things couldn't get any worse.

He wandered the streets of New Detroit for three months after the Morlock attack. He traced their movements. Watched as the signs of their twisted technologies appeared on the street. And watched them take strangers at will for food and worse. He planned revenge while living in alleyways, corporate shelters, and place that

would have the skinny teen for work. It took seven days to gather the chemicals for the bomb to plant in the Morlock nest. He was ready to plant it right at sunup!. He set the timer, adjusted the wires, and triple checked the explosives.

That's when the cell found the young thief. Mary the young empath was waiting and watching, just as the thing came out of a sink hole below the young teens. The tentacles were the same type he saw take his brothers. The young member of the 'Diabolicals' cell nearly bought it as the sidewalk collapsed below their feet. It took the combined fire power of Doc Escheback and Rudy Walker to drive back that thing! Two antique machine guns and a grenade finally drove it back into the weird darkness. The thing's screams woke the entire neighborhood. Then it took weeks moving from abandoned building to ruins to shake the corporate cops and their goons.

Weeks turned into months and the 'Diabolicals' healed more than his bones. They gave Rickie purpose and a burning desire for revenge. Mary taught Rickie the true nature of their enemies and their alien masters. She sliced his mind open with her empathic gifts and healed his spirit in ways that no one else could. They shared bonds that no one else could and the young teens became an item in no time.

Rickie took up his training once again. He seemed like a man possessed and redoubled his efforts to become a professional again. With the cell's help he became even more skilled in electronics and the ways of locks. Nothing seemed out of reach to his fingers as they danced across tumbler and wire. Yet he became aware that the Morlocks were up to something big. He saw their shallow eyed, slack jawed daylight cultist/ helpers moving cargo and contraband. The hate he felt gave him purpose and determination.

It took the cell the better part of a month to make their largest nest location in the heart of old Detroit. With a few well-placed bribes they were able to secure the plans for the location. A few friends died retrieving those plans from the city hall records.

Then came the 2:00 raid on a neighboring 'Zipper drug' house. The electronic drug that simulated the pleasure centers of the mind while the thing killed critical parts of the thinking centers infected the city like a plague of nightmare. Doc had been killed making Rickie an opening into the sewers and the tunnels.

The things he saw down there would haunt the young man till his end of days. The tricks, traps, guards, and more all waited for him as he made his way down. Down into what seemed like the bowls of some Hell from the pen of Dante. Slaves locked in cages, others used for ungodly alien medical experiments, and more sights waited for him. He saw what happened to those who fell into the claws of the Morlock's gods or creatures. Between the thing's massive beak and the slime that seemed to absorb their skulls. The process didn't leave much to the imagination.

Three hours later he made his way into the 'Grove' and the Morlocks gathered around the altar. They were gathered around the so called 'Object of Many Sides'. They were making sounds to the thing ultrasonically. An almost obscene caress in sound waves too high for the human ear to register. The device Rickie wore converted the sounds into a form he could understand. He made his way to a next work of pipes twenty feet above the heads of the vile bastards.

Rickie lowered himself spider like from the piping on monofilament spun wire on his favorite rig. When he was five feet from the object whose form hurt his eyes he lowered the claw. That's when the Morlock closest to him spoke in his uncle's voice. "Ahh little Rickie I was wondering when you would find your way back to us? We thought you had wandered off? Are you teasing us Rickie?" The shot rang out from the FNX-45 pistol that Rickie had. The bullet tore through the Morlock's skull like wet, thick lettuce, sending the thing careening down the stone stairs. It's vividly human like blood and brain matter leaking down its matted fur. The ruined skull hit the stone floor with a vile solid sound.

That's when the explosives went off. Panic seemed to grip the Morlocks as one and the echoing explosions confused their highly pitched senses creating chaos and mayhem among them. He took full advantage of diversion to make his way to the tunnels.

It took Rickie the better part of two hours to make his way to the surface through piping, drains, and the ruins of an underground car park. That's when the first of the Morlocks found him. The pistol barked twice more and another of their warriors fell. He didn't have enough in the clip to take down too many more. He had to get to the drop and the cell's weapon cache. He consulted the minicomputer around his waist for the best route. Rickie doubled back on his pursuers and lead them on a marry chase through the underground world of Detroit.

Finally he was in sight of the basement tunnel of the safe house. He was almost out of breath and bullets. Rickie walked up to the heavy metal safety door and slotting in the old metal key opened the door. He made his way inside and threw the door behind him. Rickie locked it and grabbed the canteen of water he'd left in the mini frigid. That's when he noticed the cement floor or what was left of part of it. And then he heard his Uncle's voice behind him. "Ahh Rickie we'd thought we'd lost you boy. So nice of you to join us"

The FNX-45 barked three more times and then the five other shadows closed in on Rickie. That's when the screaming started and the slicing of claws began.

"Oh Rickie, you've been a very naughty boy".



SMALL TOWN DARK USA

Small Towns in the Greater Depression

by Ron McClung

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

IN DARK AMERICA, some humans find ways to survive and maintain a life despite the chaos and corruption around them. Small Town USA is not thought of in the same way as it was in the past. Small towns are far more different than they were before the collapse of the Greater Depression. Small towns in the Greater Depression represent pockets of humanity that have found a way to survive and live in peace. They may be remote towns surrounded by fences and abandoned cars for walls or they may be corporate sponsored zones that have sold their soul for somebody else's profit. However, one thing rings true when you enter a small town in Dark America – humans find a way.

There are 5 possibilities for what would be called a small town in the new Dark America - corporate-sponsored suburbs, independent townships, fortified enclaves, corporate hamlets, and outlaw towns (each explained below). Key things for these towns to survive are food, water, medical supplies, energy, and security. How they get the resources is one of the primary differentiators. Other items that make them different are proximity to a megaplex and/or other towns, proximity to outlaw lands and demogrounds, and general resilience of people.

Environmental factors affect the survival of small towns. Is acid rain a factor in the town? How do they deal with it? Are the Agricorps a factor? Have the Agricorps drained all local land of viable soil? Has climate change affected

the wildlife in the area? Is there more than just your standard wild life to contend with? Modern science has found ways to deal with many environmental issues in the megaplex, but in small towns, humans have to find their own ways if they do not have access to the corporate science.

CORPORATE-SPONSORED SUBURBS

In the core rulebook, it mentions that "... the suburbs [were left] for the unemployed and rural refugees of the Farm Family Relocations Camps." This does account for probably 75 to 80% of the outskirts of the megaplexes. These suburbs are nothing short of chaotic zones of the unemployed and gang violence. Nothing short of outlaw lands with more buildings, these areas are rarely patrolled by law enforcement and completely left alone by corporate security. Gangs, organized crime and the black market rule the shadows of these suburbs. Those that live here survive however they can or die.

However there are areas that the corporations have renovated, cordoned off and created a certain level of normalcy for those fortunate enough to be able to afford to live there. Usually only the corporate privileged get to enjoy the luxuries of a peaceful life within these corporate-sponsored suburbs. Also known as demesne, these suburbs are directly overseen by the powers of the megaplex and used for the benefit of the

sponsoring mega-corporations. These are generally densely populated with mikes. These are a step above Mike-towns where some peace and order is established for the upper echelons of the mike community.

Many corporate execs see corporate suburb projects as a means of taking back the suburbs and restoring America to what it once was. While they may not return all of America back to the glory days, these executives have been able to convince their colleagues that there is a profit in creating new suburbs for their people to live. Once convinced, the corporations move in their huge construction robots and level entire towns to build their own, regardless of who may or may not be squatting there.

In most cases, corporate suburbs are built around something scenic or something that would bring them value. A lake is a very common feature for a corporate suburb. Manmade or natural, the corporation usually wants bring a certain level of beauty to its towns.

Passing outside the megaplex's boundaries, one sees miles and miles of abandoned and decaying suburbs until out of nowhere, it seems, is a "white castle on a hill." Arriving at a corporate sponsored suburb, it appears like a glorified gated community. Corporate security checks anyone entering at the security gates, and some even have guard towers along the fences or walls. Depending on the threat level they are surrounded by, the towns may have 10-foot fences with barbed wire while some may have 15-foot solid walls. Some might even have both, depending on what the corporation wants to protect. Anything built or placed in a corporate suburb has a cost-benefit analysis attached to it which means if they built it they saw more of a benefit than cost in doing so.

Cultures in these towns are rather idealistic and naive, especially as you get further away from the wall. Traditionally, security personnel get allotted the homes near the border so that the mikes that are moved to these suburbs can live under a veil of security, somewhat blind to the realities of the world outside. Outsiders, if they can get past the security gates, are

treated with wonder and fear. People living in these communities are fed only the information that the corporations wish them to have. So anything new is both curious and frightening to them.

Food, Water & Medicine: All the products (food and medical) available to the population in a corporate-sponsored suburb are sponsoring megacorporation products or products of known allies. If they cannot supply it, it is contracted out to smaller firms. Some small vendors are allowed to operate for a small commission. As a result prices are very high for some things within the corporate suburbs.

All utility services are also provided by sponsoring megacorporations. Water, sanitation and all other utilities are corporate-built facilities built within walls or nearby behind its own walls.

The town is also usually tied into the megaplex network. Most homes have computer access to the network through their home multi-media systems, but there are rumors that some corporations use the network to monitor its citizens.

Energy: Corporate-sponsored suburbs obtain energy from the sponsoring megacorporations. Many are close enough to tie into the megaplex power grid, but if not the corporation builds independent power plants to power these suburbs.

Security: Corporate security runs the police departments and controls the perimeters of these suburbs. Because a majority of the corporate-sponsored suburbs are surrounded by the chaos of old abandoned suburbs, many of these towns are fenced or walled in. Along the border of the town, corporate armored vehicles patrol, establishing a safe zone around the town.

On occasion, gangs of outlaws have made an attempt to break through the security of the suburbs, only to eventually regret that decision. Security is usually tight and those outside eventually learn that they are better off leaving the corporate suburbs alone.

INDEPENDENT TOWNSHIPS

Independent townships are small towns that lay further out from the megaplexes but not in what is considered outlaw lands. They seem to exist in pockets of peace and tranquility. These pockets of order surrounded by chaos are unexplainable but can be found. They may be located in valleys that have fresh water streams flowing down from the mountains, hilltops that are surrounded by thick forests, or peninsulas that have limited access on land. People have found ways to build a life here. They have found ways to overcome environmental challenges like acid rain and climate change. They have a stable and resilient enough population that they have little to no need for outside or corporate help.

Independent towns, as the name implies, are self sufficient, live off the land, barter with other towns for supplies, and have their own law enforcement, medical facilities and school systems. They have access to their own water, power and sanitation. Much of their energy is produced by local means. Cars and other vehicles have been retooled to ethanol or other reproducible fuel or other means of transportation is used. It is not uncommon to find more remote towns resorting to 18th or 19th century means.

Some towns may seem independent but may pay tribute to other powers (corporate or otherwise) for some essential service. It is not uncommon to find a town that pays a local outlaw gang for its diesel or a corporation for its water filtration service. Payment can be in the form of services, product or people.

On the surface, these seem like classic small towns but may only be surviving by their skin of their teeth.

One cataclysmic thing could bring the whole place down. They may not have enough security to take on an outlaw army or they may be living week to week on food, but in general, these towns struggle for something.

These towns seem to come out of nowhere. One may be traveling cross country between megaplexes, expecting only to see dead and desolate outlaw land, only to discover a small town thriving. Upon entering the town, people will steer away from newcomers until the local enforcers pay a visit to assess the threat.

Culturally, these towns are very xenophobic as well as practical. Realism and pessimism rule the day. Indies are hard and strong-willed people and they stick together when it comes down to it. It takes a lot to become "one of them" but once you do, you are a member of a large family.

Food, Water & Medicine: Most independent towns grow their own food or barter for it from other local towns. They have found fertile land unspoiled by acid rain or the agricorps and cultivated it. Fresh vegetables and fruits can be found in these towns, something most of the megaplexes are not familiar with. Food is simple in these towns. One would be hard-pressed to find a gourmet meal. They are more likely to find a simple country meal with all the fixin's.

Their water may come from mountain streams or from refurbished water treatment plants. The one challenge many indie towns have is water purification. Some are lucky and have found sources of relatively clean water, while most have to boil out the pollution that permeates Dark America's landscape.

Disease is a major issue in Dark America, especially in the outskirts where indie towns are found. Most have town doctors and some medical staff that serve the town for tribute and trade. They are usually treated like royalty by the townsfolk. Doctors get their supplies however they can. Many home remedies are commonly used. Strict quarantine procedures are followed when a disease is detected in town that might spread. Living in Dark America has made most people very diligent about germs and bacteria.

Most of these towns establish a strong trade network to get what they do not have. These networks establish a close knit group of towns that work together for their common interests. One town may be the primary source of corn while another may be the primary source of apples. This also serves to help with security as well. If one town is threatened, another town may come to aid the threatened town. Also it is not uncommon to include fortified enclaves in these trade networks.

In some cases, the local physiologies have grown accustomed to certain impurities in the food or water. This can create interesting situations for newcomers wanting to stop in for a bite. Like Americans are told not to drink the water in Mexico, there may be surprising results if you eat the peaches in Fort Rock, SC.

Energy: Obtaining fuel varies from town to town. Some towns have access to reservoirs of diesel fuel or the like. Others produce their own ethanol from corn they grow. Some have been known to resort to steam power. It all depends on the resourcefulness of the townsfolk.

Some coal power plants still exist and maintain a group of small towns around it, but these cases are rare. It is more likely that the indies have found a way to produce their own energy. It is usually rationed and conserved considerably unless the supply is fairly large.

Necessity is the mother of invention and many towns have been very inventive. Steam power in many forms has arisen in some places. Steam engine trains may connect town networks. Coal is about as valuable as diesel or gasoline in some towns.

Security: Security also varies from town to town but most are local militia and law enforcement professionals paid by local tribute and taxes. These townships have patrols and outposts at their borders in certain more dangerous zones. Although not as heavily armed as the fortified enclaves (see below), the citizens can form a formidable militia when called upon. As mentioned, if the town is part of a trade network, other towns may come to the aid of another town if threatened, which makes their security force even more formidable.

FORTIFIED ENCLAVES

These are towns formed by survivalists, rural citizens and generally strong-willed people who refuse to give up their land to chaos and lawlessness. Like the independent towns, they have their own resources, law enforcement and other services. If they do not, they find ways to acquire them. Some enclaves work deals with certain outlaws to survive. Others have heavily armed scavenger teams that go out to get supplies.

Most of these enclaves heavily fortify their borders with various barriers and check points. There are regularly scheduled heavily armed patrols, and they have an active militia working all the time. They may be located in abandoned Army bases or abandoned corporate facilities. They are usually in strategic, advantageous locations that are easily defended and fortified.

Getting into a fortified enclave is generally very difficult. You usually have to have a reason and know someone that can vouch for you. They are normally a very closed society, guarded against strangers of any kind. Newcomers go through a strict security check that may include a scan for a local empathy.

The culture in a fortified town is what one would expect – very strict, militaristic and xenophobic. They all have a strict command structure and all are expected to serve in their roles to keep the town safe. Dissension will not be tolerated and rebellion is dealt with swiftly by either banishment into the surrounding wilderness with minimal supplies or execution. Survival of the fittest rules in these towns and any sign of weakness is weeded out through training, harsh treatment or removal from the community.

Food, Water & Medicine: Like independent towns, most enclaves grow their own food, obtain water for local sources or barter for it from other local towns. The chosen locations had some supplies already in place but some run out fairly quickly. Strict rationing is usually in place for essential supplies. Medical staff are recruited or sometimes conscripted. Diseases are stomped out swiftly via harsh quarantine or even harsher measures, such as execution and burning.

When there is something an enclave needs or is short of, it must be obtained through whatever means necessary. Most enclaves have teams of scavengers that are sent out on regular missions to obtain whatever they need that month or that week. Sometimes,

in extreme cases, they turn to raiding other towns to obtain what they need. It is not uncommon to have small local conflicts over supplies.

Energy: Like independent townships, the enclaves obtain energy supplies however they can. Some enclaves have access to reservoirs of diesel fuel or the like while others produce their own fuels. Some steal it from other towns. Others have taken over old coal or nuclear plants and continue to maintain them. However, when the need arises, scavenger parties can be sent out.

Security: Security in an enclave is priority one. The local militia is usually heavily armed and weapons supplies are usually the top priority for any scavenger raid. Their borders are usually heavily fortified with whatever they can find, from junked 18-wheelers to rock walls. To keep these barriers practical, the fortified towns are usually fairly small and compact.

CORPORATE HAMLETS

Corporate Hamlets are much like the corporate suburbs but are usually found in remote locations and heavily guarded. They are usually kept very secret to avoid floods of refugees at the gates. Transportation in and out is usually done by air or by armored convoy. Supplies are usually brought in regularly via those two routes in unmarked vehicles.

There are various reasons why a corporate hamlet would exist but only the corporation truly knows why they would spend money to maintain remote towns. Some corporate hamlets are in fact sitting on top of secret underground corporate facilities and the people are either employees of this facility or actual test subjects for certain products. In some cases, the underground facility may be kept secret to some or all of the inhabitants of the hamlet. Regardless of the reasoning, the corporations protect these locations rather intensely with corporate security and robotic sentries.

The corporations have also been known to completely abandon hamlets from time to time. These towns may have outlasted their usefulness, and then overnight the corporate security up and left, leaving the townspeople to the wolves, be it the outlaws or the encroaching demonground. It is not uncommon for these facilities

to then be converted to fortified enclaves depending on the resiliency of the inhabitants.

It is very difficult to find corporate hamlets, let alone get inside one. They are super secret and hidden in areas that are hard to get to by land. If you somehow obtain access to a hamlet, either by being hired by the owning corporation or somehow sneaking into one, you would find an environment very similar to corporate-sponsored suburbs, except more remote. It would be like an oasis in a desert, people living peacefully in an otherwise chaotic and dangerous part of America. The people are naive about the goings on beyond their walls, happy to be contained and controlled by the corporation like sheep.

Food, Water & Medicine: All the products available to the population of a hamlet are sponsoring megacorporation products or products of known allies. It has been known for these facilities to allow approved outside vendors to enter but they have to go through a rigorous security screening.

All utility services are also provided by the sponsoring megacorporation. Water treatment plants, sanitation plants and medical facilities are built locally and serviced by corporate employees. Security around the facilities is heavy.

The hamlet is also usually tied into the megacorporation network via a satellite uplink. Of course, the population is only fed what information the corporation deems necessary.

Energy: Like other utilities, energy is supplied via a corporate-built facility. These are heavily guarded and well maintained.

Security: Corporate security runs the police departments and controls the perimeters of these towns. Many of these towns are fenced or walled in to keep out outlaws or other threats.

OUTLAW TOWNS

Outlaw towns are towns that are purely ruled by outlaws, usually inside or on the outskirts of outlaw zones. A citizen is either an outlaw, a conscript surviving at the service of the outlaws, or a prisoner.

Some outlaw towns are nomadic, taking over abandoned town after abandoned town, moving only after the outlaw band has consumed all that

is useful to them in the town. These types of towns sprout up randomly and are a threat to the roaming homeless that can be found all around the countryside.

Other outlaws are stationary villages resembling fortified enclaves. The major difference is that chaos rules in these towns and unless you are a member of the "pack," you would not want to be inside the walls of one of these outlaw towns.

One does not enter an outlaw town unless invited or heavily armed. An "invitation" may be an unwanted one as they commonly capture homeless roamers and abuse them for their own entertainment. Outlaw towns are barbaric and savage. They illustrate the worst in humanity's vices and unfettered impulses, without restriction or laws. They are not for the light at heart.

Outlaw towns are usually formed by a single gang or pack. These gangs travel in vehicles they maintain and modify. You can always spot an outlaw town by the vehicles patrolling the city. They look scavenged, armed with a variety of savage weapons and heavily armored with whatever plate metal they could find.

Food, Water & Medicine/Energy: All resources the outlaws need are obtained through whatever means necessary. If the town they are in runs out of what they need, the outlaws either raid a nearby source to obtain what they need or pack up and move to another town. Like fortified enclaves, they have scavenger parties make regular patrols for supplies, but many times they all head out in one big raid.

Fuel for the vehicles and ammo for their weapons are priorities. Raids on corporate convoys or fortified enclaves are not uncommon. Corporate drone strikes against these towns to clear the way for convoys are also not uncommon.

Security: Outlaws provide their own version of security. Like a pack of wolves, their security is strength in numbers. There are no laws, only the wrath of their pack leaders. It is survival of the fittest in outlaw lands and very few are fit. There are no second chances and there is no mercy. Arena fighting between offenders is a common practice. Old football fields in outlaw lands can be a place of savagery if the wrong people stumble into one of their towns.



PRANCING PONIES

A Closer Look at Colt Pistols

by Jason D McEwan

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY



Creighton heard a noise from his right, the soft scuff of a shoe on concrete. Sweeping his jacket back, he quickly drew his Colt GSP and confronted his stalker. “Stop!” It was a large young man with blood on his mouth, his smile seemed wrong. “Are you on something?” Creighton quickly assumed the Weaver stance and shot the attacker in the heart.

HERE ARE SOME Colt pistols I use in my games formatted in DC/T2K2 stats. These pistols are not covered by any source and/or lumped into the generic stats. **Protodimension** #4 p.32 “Firearm Accessories” and #8 p.59 “Ammunition” will be helpful. Paul Mulcahy’s website is amazing and any pistols not stated here can be found there.

Colt MKIV Series 70: There are two versions of this civilian model. The first in 1970 was an attempt to improve accuracy with a collet bushing and a reverse tapered barrel. The pistol still had the tiny

GI sights and standard trigger to improve. It was common for users to replace the bushing with a GI part, to avoid the risk of breaking one of the three fingers on the collet bushing. The collet was dropped in 1983, before the adoption of the MKIV Series 80 variation with its firing pin safety. In 2001, Colt reintroduced the original M1911 Government action under the designation “MKIV Series 70” for a limited run of WWI and WWII commemorative pistols. Colt began offering MKIV Series 70 .45 Government from their custom shop. The “new” Series 70’s are slightly lighter due to improved metal, manufacturing processes (1.36 kg versus 1.4 kg), Commemoratives have tiny GI sights, and the Series 70 uses the larger sights of the M1991A1. All use the internal parts of the Series 80(except the internal safety), but GI parts will fit, both blued and stainless steel Series 70’s are made,

Colt MKIV Series 70

Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	Recoil		
						SS	Brst	Range
.45ACP	SA	2	Nil	1	7	3	—	12

These stats include the retro commemorative release version
 Weight: 1.36 kg
 Price: \$390

the commemoratives have black(WWI) or parkerized(WWII) finish, all have wood grips. "Old" Series 70's cost \$375, \$450 if original due to collector interest. Original Series 70 pistols might require spring replacement (\$35, and complete disassembly required).

Colt Gunsafe Pistol (GSP): Gunsafe decided that they would repair, not manufacture pistols. This is the custom Government model made by Colt for sale in Gunsafe's Pro Shop. Colt starts with a MKIV Series 70, adds improved sights, an accuracy job, trigger job, slim wood grips, magazine funnel and is "dehorned" (dehorning is when all sharp edges are rounded off to give a snag free draw), it is the only Colt pistol with dehorning as a factory option. Two eight round mags are included with the pistol. Both blued and stainless steel versions exist.

Colt Gunsafe Pistol						Recoil		
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Brst	Range
.45ACP	SA	2	Nil	1	8	3	—	12
Weight: 1.36 kg								
Price: \$390								

Colt Rail Gun/M45CQB: The Colt Rail Gun is a MKIV Series 80 stainless steel pistol with a Picatinny rail on the dust cover in front of the trigger guard. The USMC MARSOC adopted a custom variant to replace the MEU pistol, designating it the M45 CQB. MARSOC specified for it to have an accuracy job, improved sights, beveled mag well, lanyard loop, and a tan corrosion resistant finish.

Colt Rail Gun/M45 CQB						Recoil		
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Brst	Range
.45ACP	SA	2	Nil	1	8	3	—	12
Weight: 1.36 kg								
Price: \$390								

HOLSTERS AND ACCESSORIES

Holsters and mag pouches come in a huge variety of materials and mounting systems, belt slide, belt clip, or paddle mount, leather, nylon, carbon fiber.

Here are some generic types and some specific models. Pistols with empty rails and accessories mounted need holsters made to accommodate these.

Inside the Waistband: These are concealed inside the pants and mount using clips or belt slide. 0.5 kg, \$55

Thumb Break Holster: This is the most common duty holster, uses a belt slide or clip mount and secures the weapon by a snap. 0.5 kg, \$50

Paddle Holster: These hip holsters use a paddle tucked inside the pants to secure the holster. 0.5 kg, \$55

Double Mag Pouch: Holds two mags, comes in belt, inside the waistband, and shoulder holster mounts. 0.16 kg, \$20

Single mags Pouch: Holds one mag, comes in waist, ankle, or wrist mounts. 0.12 kg, \$9

Bianchi M12: This is an ambidextrous nylon flap holster that replaced the M1916 holster, has conversion kits available for thumb break, chest, shoulder holster, tactical thigh mount. The conversion kits have negligible weight and cost \$10-\$24. 0.2 kg, \$25

M1916 Hip Holster: Used by the U.S. military up to the late 90's. These leather holsters were brown until 1947, black after that. Copies of varying quality are made today, even left hand versions. 0.23 kg, \$45 (copy), \$450 original

SERPA CQC: This carbon fiber holster uses a locking mechanism that must be released by the trigger finger when drawing. SERPA has a large amount of accessories, including adjustable paddle and belt slide mounts, tactical thigh mounts. 0.113 kg, \$25

DeSantis Yaqui Slide: This is a minimalist holster that uses the belt slide mount and can accommodate any Government, from Officer's Model to Longslides. 0.085 kg, \$65

Higher Pressure Ammunition: This is the commercial version of ammo enhancement that is a step below Overpressure Ammunition (*Protodimension* 8, p.62) As with Overpressure Ammunition, a lighter bullet and more powder kept within industry standards and chamber pressure. Damage is increased by 1d6/2; penetration is not enhanced, except that Hollow Points have range reduced by 5%. Hollow Points make up most of this ammunition variation, but one company makes some FMJ that is for cheaper practice. Add 50% to cost after any modifiers.





THE NEXT CREATIVITY CONTEST

You may have noticed that the cover is a change for us. We talked an actual artist into letting us use one of his images. This cover is from a talented artist from the Netherlands, Eric Snelleman. Please visit his web site and DeviantArt page, and maybe toss some business his way (see the Credits on page 2).

This issue we are challenging you creature designers to “write this Beastie up.”

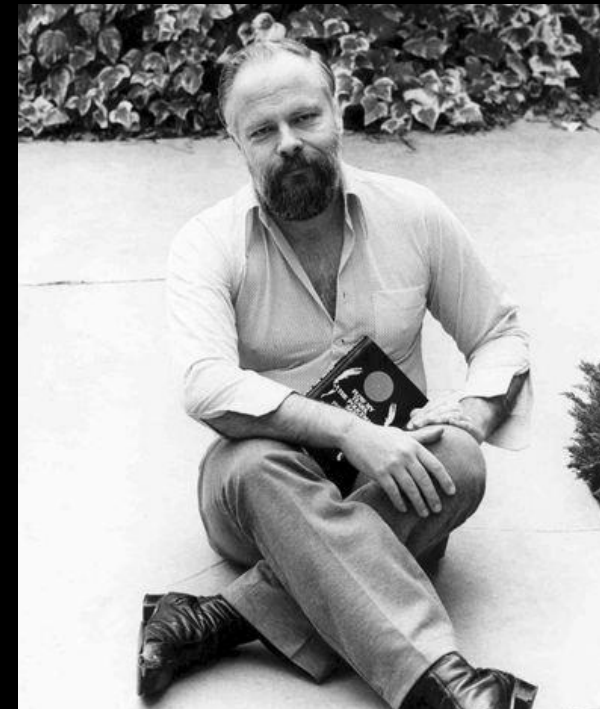
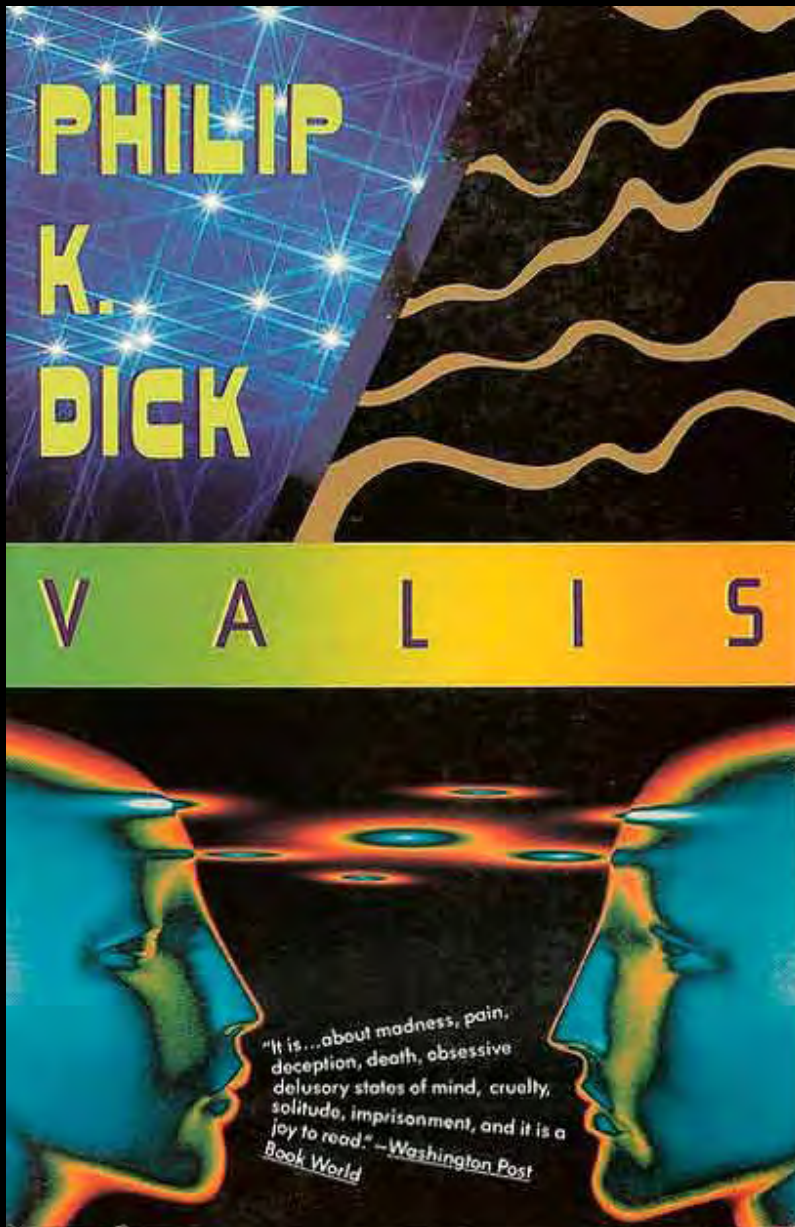
Using Eric’s monster image as inspiration and the stat block for a beastie or Dark Race from one of the *Dark Conspiracy* systems, send in stats, a description, a background (usually myth versus truth), and whatever else the beastie needs to pop onto foolhardy Minion Hunters.

The entry can really be any length, but a good target is less than 1,000 words. The winner’s entry will be included in the upcoming *Dark Conspiracy* setting book, *Conspiracy Lives*, and you, the winner, will get your name as a contributing author on the credits page, and please know that all contributors get a free copy from **DriveThruRPG** (and a print-on-demand version if we produce one and we intend to do so).

“Now hold on there!” some of you may be saying or yelling. I do not do *Dark Conspiracy*. Well there is an answer for that, send in stats for another system. We cannot put it into *Conspiracy Lives*, but we will be happy to publish it here and offer you a \$20 credit at **DriveThruRPG/RPGNow**, if you win, so you can get something in the other system. How’s that?

protodimension magazine

PHILIP K. DICK



<i>Born</i>	Philip Kindred Dick December 16, 1928 Chicago, Illinois, U.S.
<i>Died</i>	March 2, 1982 (aged 53) Santa Ana, California, U.S.
<i>Occupation</i>	Novelist, short story writer and essayist
<i>Genres</i>	Science fiction, paranoid fiction
<i>Literary Movement</i>	Postmodernism
<i>Pen Names</i>	Richard Phillipps Jack Dowland
<i>Notable Works</i>	Ubik, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, The Man in the High Castle, A Scanner Darkly, Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said, VALIS trilogy, Second Variety

"It is sometimes an appropriate response to reality to go insane."

—Philip K. Dick, *VALIS*

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_K._Dick