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Blackwater Diner

HAUNTED

1972

ONE SURVIVOR
CHRIS SCHUMER
AGE 18

SET FIRE TO
HOSPITAL AFTER
"GOING CRAZY"

POSSIBLE
PERNORMAL
ACTIVITY

SUPERNATURAL™

ROLE PLAYING GAME

ADVENTURES

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Featuring the talents of
Graeme Davis, Ralph Dula, Jess Hartley,
George Holochwost, and C.A. Suleiman
Edited by Cam Banks

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SUPERNATURAL™

ROLE PLAYING GAME

ADVENTURES

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In the spirit of *Supernatural*, this book is filled with pop-culture references, that are intended solely to capture the feel of the television series. No violation of copyright or trademark ownership is intended.



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Introduction: Raise a Little Hell

Let's get this straight up front. The *Supernatural* RPG's not a difficult game to run. Grab a monster, grab a location, throw in some weird, and drop the hunters right in the middle of the mess. If you've got a little while before you start the game, and a favorite urban legend or ghost story in mind, have at it, buster. You don't need much more than that.

But, things being what they are, you probably don't always have the stuff together to do that. It's been a long week, your kids or your dog are keeping you up at night, midterms are a bitch. It's okay. We've got you covered.

Supernatural Adventures is a collection of five scenarios to challenge any group of hunters. Any one of these can keep your players busy for one or two nights of demon-killing, ghost-hunting, monster-slaying thrills and chills. All you have to do is read them in advance and insert them into your ongoing *Supernatural* campaign. Heck, you might even use these to kick a campaign off. Works for us.

A Few Words of Advice

Before you dive in, here's a few helpful hints. It would also pay to read over Chapters 6 and 7 of the *Supernatural* RPG, too.

- This isn't a script and you shouldn't slavishly follow every word and detail written in these scenarios. It's your game. You can and should mix things up a little bit by adding your own ideas and improvising when inspiration strikes. If you're having fun, odds are the players will be, too.
- The players should make the choices. You set up the obstacles and problems and watch them figure out how to knock 'em down. We have no doubt your group is gonna react in unexpected ways, sometimes in ways that we haven't anticipated. *Don't panic*. Just figure out where the story's going and, if you have to, guide 'em back without letting them know they surprised you. Or 'fess up, let 'em know they're clever, and then soldier on.
- Keep the pace flowing. You don't have to describe every friggin' tree to let the players know it's a forest. If you don't know an exact rule, wing it using the basics and deal with it later. If the players get distracted or bogged

down in conversation or obsessive planning, throw a surprise at them to keep them on their toes, but don't punish them for not acting on your timeline. Give 'em a reason to move forward that's going to make things more fun for them.

- Don't be stingy with Plot Points! In addition to the suggestions provided in each scene's Rewards, keep an eye on the Complications for each hunter and be sure to throw one or more their way when that Trait comes into the story. Hand 'em out for doing well on story-important actions, creative solutions to problems, or anything that causes everyone to smile, laugh, or high-five each other.

A Quick Guide to Format

Each of the adventures in this book is structured in more or less the same way. There are three or four Acts, divided up into individual Scenes. For the most part, you're going to find that the Acts follow a linear sequence, with one or two Scenes that can be dropped in anywhere or played in any order. We give you a heads up in each adventure's introduction, so you can know what to expect.

Each Scene's got sections in common, as follows:

The Setup This lays out the scene and where the hunters are when it starts. There's often some exposition here.

The Problems This is where the action happens. The Problems are opportunities for the hunters to make choices and act appropriately. Or, you know, to screw up. That leads to . . .

The Results This is where things stand at the end of the Scene, more than likely.

The Rewards This covers suggested Plot Point rewards for the hunters. Don't feel limited to these, though. Plot Points should be going back and forth between you and the players at a pretty good clip.

It's also worth noting that throughout the text, Difficulties are all provided in upper case: HARD, FORMIDABLE, and so on. Often, we don't specify the Attribute + Skill pairing, so that you or the player can suggest an appropriate combo. Keep the Difficulty in mind and roll with it!

So crank up the classic rock soundtrack, grab those dice, and call your buddies over. You've got work to do!

Red Ghost

By Jess Hartley



A HORSE OF ANOTHER COLOR

While the Red Ghost is a specifically Southwestern United States legend and plays historically into Southwest US history, with a little tweaking this adventure works for anywhere in the world. Another species of pack/riding animal could represent the Red Ghost, rather than a camel. Horses, donkeys or mules are appropriate almost anywhere, especially for locations related to the Gold Rush or mining exploration. Or, if you want to bring in a less historic but more exotic option, make it an elephant. That will really throw the players off. Appropriate location tie-ins include: the site of a travelling circus' disaster; a carnival-train wreck location; or the home of a now-defunct amusement park/petting zoo. The premise behind this adventure remains the same, even if the trappings change—An animal and its rider/keeper are bound together in some way, both physically and spiritually. The animal spirit is driven insane by the ghost of the rider, and until both are set to rest, havoc will ensue.

Something bad is going on out in the desert, and—of course—it's up to the hunters to determine what's up and how to deal with it. This is a predominantly investigative adventure, and as such can be used for any number of players and for hunters of any experience. While the simple draw of "bad stuff needs dealt with" may be plenty of motivation for many hunters, the added temptation of a hefty reward from John Burlington is likely enough to tip the scales and attract the characters' attention, even if the hunters are nowhere near the Southwest.

Adventure Summary

GROUNDBREAKING ON A NEW CASINO JUST OUTSIDE OF CAMP VERDE, ARIZONA WAS HALTED TODAY, AFTER TWO WORKERS WERE KILLED IN A MYSTERIOUS ATTACK ON THE CONSTRUCTION SITE. BOTH VICTIMS WERE EMPLOYEES OF DESERT OASIS CONSTRUCTION, ALTHOUGH THEIR IDENTITIES ARE BEING WITHHELD PENDING NOTIFICATION OF THEIR

NEXT OF KIN. POLICE SUSPECT THAT THE VANDALS, WHO APPARENTLY TIPPED OVER THE PORTABLE BUILDING THE WORKERS WERE USING AS AN ON-SITE OFFICE SPACE, MAY HAVE BEEN A PART OF A RECENT INFLUX OF GANG ACTIVITY FROM THE LOS ANGELES AREA, BUT SAY THEY HAVE NO DIRECT LEADS AT THIS TIME.

EXTENSIVE DAMAGE WAS DONE TO THE SITE'S CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING BROKEN GLASS AND HUNDREDS OF STRANGE SEMI-CIRCULAR DENTS MADE WITH AN UNKNOWN INSTRUMENT. JOHN BURLINGTON, OWNER OF DESERT OASIS HAS OFFERED A TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST OF THE CULPRITS."

Like many hunting jobs, this one begins with a normal-sounding news report. The excerpt above was taken from one of the many websites or newspapers that the hunters are likely to monitor, or perhaps it's fed to them by a contact somewhere in the Southwest who has circled the phrases "mysterious attack," "strange semi-circular dents," and "unknown instrument" in red.

Either way, the hunters make their way to the small town of Camp Verde, Arizona, which is located on Highway 17 between Flagstaff and Phoenix. It's a small town, with just over ten thousand residents, the majority of which are involved in the service industry in some fashion. Many work at gas stations, restaurants, hotels, or the local casino.

While the town's in the Sonoran Desert, the Verde River makes a large curve nearby, surrounding the town itself on two sides and adding diversity to the arid climate. Just on the north side of town, on the other side of the Verde, construction has begun on a new casino. The town, which made a lot of money from the tourism the original casino brought in, is anxiously awaiting groundbreaking on the second gambling establishment. However, construction has been halted due to the mysterious attack on the building site and the deaths of two workers.

Because this is an investigation-based adventure, the hunters can explore the Scenes within any given Act in any order, and they don't even need to go through the Acts in the given order, either. For example, they could start with off-site research (**Act III**) rather than physical investigation (**Act I**). Some of the conflict scenes from **Act IV** could work into the middle of ongoing scenes from other acts. Because of this, it's important for you to read through the adventure in its entirety before beginning play. You'll learn which Act to queue up based on the choices of

the players. They're presented in what's probably the most common investigation path for hunters but—as all Game Masters know—players have a way of choosing the path that's least expected. Some improv may be required if players leap forward on the investigation trail before gathering the information for each Act, but don't penalize them if they have some brainstorm that takes them forward faster than anticipated. The information's still there waiting for them if they have to come back for a second look at earlier sites or arrange a second meeting with various individuals. Notes have been made where a second visit changes the setting or reaction.

Breakdown of the Acts

Here's how the four Acts shake out.

Act I: On-Site Investigation The hunters poke around at the dig site in response to the news report.

Act II: Crash Course There's a car crash, and an incident at a local store, either of which reveals more.

Act III: Digging Deeper Hitting the books and snooping about.

Act IV: Close Encounters Conflict scenes to drop into the above Acts.

Here's the Story

In the mid-eighteen hundreds, three dozen camels were transported from Northern Africa and the Middle East to Camp Verde, Arizona as part of a US Army experiment. The animals were to be used instead of horses or mules for military efforts, and were stationed at various military outposts between Camp Verde and Los Angeles.

Initial results of the project were positive—the camels were strong, well-suited for the Southwestern climate, and could eat much of the local scrub fauna, which other pack animals turned their noses up at. However, in time, the animals proved difficult to train, surly by nature, and disagreeable both to their military handlers and to the fort's other pack animals. After the advent of the Civil War, the project was officially abandoned, and the US Camel Corps disbanded over the next few years. Some of the animals were sold to miners and farmers who were unaware of the animal's poor track record in service. Others were simply "lost"—turned out into the desert either by the military or their new owners when they became aware of the difficulty in dealing with them.

During the final leg of this experiment, Jacob Tanner, a soldier at Fort Verde, deserted. He might have escaped, had he simply left the area, but he was arrested by a local sheriff in the nearby mining town, after getting rough with one of the saloon girls. The woman cursed him before dying of the injuries he inflicted.

Discipline at the Fort (which would be abandoned entirely a few years later) was wild. Tanner, who'd been a constant troublemaker since arriving at the Fort, was whipped, and then tied with rawhide laces to the back of one of the few remaining camels (which itself had a horrible reputation for mean-spiritedness). The pair was sent out into the desert to die, ridding the fort of both the criminal and the cantankerous camel.

Unable to free himself, Tanner died a few days later, still fastened to the camel's back. His corpse, and the curse that had been forced upon him, drove the camel mad. Reports of the beast—matched in ferocity only by its massive stature—began surfacing throughout the area. It was accused of attacking and killing settlers, farmers, miners and soldiers in the surrounding area for years. Eventually the tales dropped off, although occasionally stories of campers, travelers or homesteaders being killed by severe injuries as if they'd been trampled have arisen.

The recent excavation of the casino construction site has disturbed the bones of the camel, which had earned itself the name of the Red Ghost. Now the hunters have to lay this mad animal spirit—and the ghost that's plaguing it—to rest.

Act 1: On-site Investigations

Scene 1: Investigating the Construction Site

The Setup

The construction site is located just north of Camp Verde, off of a minor highway that runs between town and Highway 17. The Verde River lies between the site, which was formerly farmland, and the town itself. No actual building has begun on location, but rough dirt roads ring the hundred plus acre site, and several excavations have begun in various locations. Large construction vehicles—bulldozers, excavators and other earthmovers—are

scattered around the property, and a group of a dozen or more are gathered around a temporary office trailer. The trailer's severely damaged, its thin metal siding showing dozens, if not hundreds of circular indentations about the size of a large dinner plate. Each indentation has a wedge out of the top edge. Many of the nearby vehicles have similar damage.

The Problems

The hunters can choose to investigate the site either during daylight hours or during the nighttime. Either option presents its own challenges.

DAYLIGHT

During daylight hours, the site is being occasionally watched via drive-by from the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office. The allegations that it may be gang activity are enough to warrant a slow roll-through a couple of times a day, although hunters should find it pretty EASY to avoid them.

If they do have a run-in with the local authorities at this point, the hunters may be able to convince **Deputy Frank Robbins** (Use the Sheriff's Deputy—*Supernatural RPG*, page 161) that they have some right to be there as employees of Desert Oasis, or the like. This is only an AVERAGE task, unless they're doing something blatantly suspicious, such as carrying obvious weapons or attempting to hotwire construction equipment. If they fail, he just politely encourages them to move along the first time he encounters them near the site, unless they give him reason to react more strongly. However, after their first warning (or if they're causing problems rather than moving along) he attempts to bring them in for questioning on suspicion of being involved in the vandalism—or even the murders.

NIGHTTIME

Should the hunters visit during the evening hours, they are unlikely to encounter the Sheriff's Office. Instead, the construction site owner has hired an amateur security guard to patrol the site. **Mike Lazlo** is more accustomed to serving as a bouncer at one of Camp Verde's bars or strip clubs than he is doing outdoor security, but it's a FORMIDABLE task to avoid him unless the hunters somehow learn of his presence. Even then, staying out of his way is HARD to accomplish.

While Lazlo is pretty tough in a brawl, he's also got a soft spot—cash. He's not a long-term employee of the construction company, just some schmuck that Burlington hired to watch the place at night. And, technically, he was told to make sure that gangs didn't cause any more trouble. So, as long as the hunters don't appear to be a gang, and they can convince him that they just want to look around (an AVERAGE task, made EASY if they offer him a bribe) he probably won't give them any trouble. If, however, they play it tough or start a physical brawl, he does his best to put some serious hurt on them. The one thing he won't do, however, is call the cops. He's used to being the authority figure, and considers it "wimping out" to call in the Sheriff. If he gets beat-up (that is, his total damage is 8 or more points) he attempts to make a strategic withdrawal: retreat to a local bar, tend his wounds, and have a drink.

Mike Lazlo - Construction Security

Description Hired to keep gangs out of the construction site, he's muscle-bound but not overly loyal.

Agi d6 **Str** d10 **Vit** d10 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6
Init d6 + d6; **LP** 16

Traits Brawler d2, Greedy d4, Tough d4

Skills Athletics d4, Perception d4, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d8

Gear Flashlight, Baseball Bat (d6 B)

The Results

If the hunters get enough time at the construction site to poke around, move on to **Scene 2: Digging Around**. If not, they may decide to come back later (and risk encountering the Deputy or Mike Lazlo) or to investigate in town by speaking with John Burlington, the owner of Desert Oasis Construction, which will take them to **Scene 3: John Burlington**.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for successfully avoiding the Deputy or Mike Lazlo (who ever is on duty at the time.) Award one Plot Point to the hunters if they encounter the Deputy and manage to convince him they should be allowed to search the construction site. Award one Plot Point for beating Mike Lazlo in combat, or bribing him into allowing them to search the site.

Scene 2: Digging Around

Run this scene when the hunters have scored an opportunity to search the construction site.

The Setup

With over a hundred acres of land involved, the hunters need to pick a place to start poking around. There's a handful of good choices on-site. Near the road is the central operations center where the formerly overturned office trailer and a collection of construction equipment can be found. Several hundred yards away, a group of portable shipping containers acts as a storage facility for smaller equipment and tools. And finally, an excavation site as large as a city block lies just beyond the storage sheds, intended to serve as the casino's underground levels. The big excavation is surrounded by a number of smaller ones, all meant to hold the foundations for executive buildings.

The Problems

The action in this scene pretty much revolves around what happens when the hunters go to specific parts of the site. Don't forget that the Sheriff's Department (during the day) and Mike Lazlo (at night) act as security, so unless they've taken care of this element then some of their actions onsite will be discovered.

CENTRAL OPERATIONS CENTER

The primary point of interest in this area is the ravaged temporary office trailer. It's clear to see where the trailer was overturned—the side opposite of the main entrance has been crumpled, and holds bits of scrub and stone from where it was pushed over onto that side. It's been righted, though it still lists a bit off of level. Disturbingly, it's pitted all over the front side with dinner-plate sized dents. It's EASY to notice that these markings are circular, except for a strange wedge shape in each—It's a bit HARDER to come to the conclusion that they're huge round two-toed footprints.

Yellow plastic police warning tape crisscrosses the front door, which lolls partway off of its hinges. The front door no longer closes all the way on account of the big dents matching the ones along the side. Some boards have been placed across the door, on the inside of the trailer, to keep it shut, but it only requires AVERAGE effort to push them out

of the way and enter. Alternately, there's a side door on the left end of the trailer that's locked with an AVERAGE complexity key-knob. Just outside the side door, there's a spill of sand and extinguished cigarettes, most marked with lipstick stains. An AVERAGE search uncovers not only dust-covered bloodstains on the ground in this area, but also a gallon-sized coffee can with numerous burn marks (as if it had been used to snub cigarettes). The can's been trampled nearly flat, but contains a bit of the same sand and butts that are spilled outside the door. As well, there's a smear of blood on the side door and handle. Even an AVERAGE intellect might put together that someone was outside smoking when they were attacked and rushed back into the trailer.

Inside the trailer, things are a mess. It appears that the space was formerly used as two cubicles worth of office space, with a small lobby just inside the front door. Papers and office supplies are piled on every surface, as if picked up in a hurry after the trailer was righted. It's fairly EASY to discover a bit about the desks' former owners. One contains business cards and a brass nameplate that reads "Lee Martinez" and the other "Charlie Monroe."

A bit more EASY digging reveals that Lee Martinez was a monster truck fan (an envelope with two tickets for a show in Phoenix the next weekend), dabbled in fishing (a photo of him in fishing gear with a large salmon), and had digestion problems (over-the-counter antacids and heartburn medication). Another EASY round of searching reveals some basic information about Charlie. She was married (framed wedding photo), smoked (opened cigarette package) and collected frogs (a plethora of frog-related nick-knacks).

An AVERAGE search of the rest of the trailer turns up a lot of complicated blueprints and construction paperwork, along with the following:

- sets of keys for all the construction equipment (including the truck in the storage facility) labeled with a shorthand code that requires a HARD effort to decipher
- a ring of keys to the padlocks on the storage facilities' shipping containers
- a nice set of walkie-talkies
- a digital camera in a padded case
- a well-equipped first aid kit
- a broken laptop computer

Repairing the laptop is a HEROIC task, but if the hunters manage this it allows them to read through Charlie's email—which includes a letter to John Burlington detailing a "horse skeleton" uncovered during the excavation. The date on the email is the same as the date the construction company employees were killed. There's been no reply.

THE STORAGE FACILITIES

Two large metal shipping containers, each approximately 8 feet tall, 10 feet wide and 20 feet long, stand several hundred yards from the Central Operations Center. The far end of one is about fifty feet from the lip of the largest pit. Made of heavy corrugated metal, it would be IMPOSSIBLE to break through the walls or door without the use of some sort of heavy equipment. However, each is locked with a sturdy padlock, and picking or breaking the lock, while still HARD is certainly a more feasible option. If the office trailer was searched first (and the keys discovered), it's EASY to open the locks.

Inside the shipping containers, the hunters discover a plethora of useful equipment. While the actual contents are left up to the your discretion, potential contents might include a wide

BIG BANG THEORIES

Should it suit the individual storyline, it's possible that the shipping containers also include a small demolition kit (such as would be used for removing stumps or breaking up boulders). While it's not unreasonable that such an item would be found (under INCREDIBLE levels of security) you're cautioned to think carefully before including such objects in the game. Once explosives have been given to the characters, there's no controlling how or when they are used, so be prepared for the consequences. Also, remember that law enforcement authorities are unlikely to look the other way if they stop a vehicle carting around a case of dynamite or blasting caps. The ramifications may well make for another plot line, but you should be prepared to deal with them, should they come up.

variety of hand tools (shovels, pick axes, pry-bars), rope, flares, small generators, a well-stocked tool cabinet, (with a wide variety of small power tools, hammers, screwdrivers, wrenches and the like) extension cords, and portable light stands.

A pickup truck with the Desert Oasis Construction logo on each side is parked between the two shipping containers. The doors are locked, but an AVERAGE effort remedies that, should the hunters decide to open them up. Hotwiring them might be HARD, but they can be opened or started automatically with the keys from the office trailer.

THE PITS

There are four small pits, each about the size of a one-room home, scattered around the major pit at the center of the excavation site. There's nothing of real interest in them. However, there's a very real chance that, if they enter the smaller pits, the steep walls may give explorers a HARD time getting back out.

If the hunters choose to search the big pit during the daytime, it's only an AVERAGE complex task to find the Red Ghost's skeleton at the bottom of one of the recently dug excavations. It resembles a very large horse skeleton. The back half has been uncovered, but the rest can be unearthed with a HARD complex action (AVERAGE if they have suitable digging equipment with them, or think to raid the nearby storage facilities for the same). Each roll represents a minute of digging, so if they spend more than ten minutes doing this they're going to get noticed by the Deputy.

If, however, they search the site in the dark, the task becomes much more HEROIC in nature (only FORMIDABLE if they've got lights with them.) Unearthing the beast's front half is likewise a FORMIDABLE complex action, made only HARD with the addition of lights and equipment. If they can't get the action done in fifteen minutes (15 rolls), Lazlo shows up and asks them what the hell they're doing. See **Scene 1: Investigating the Construction Site** if they haven't already dealt with this guy.

Once unearthed, it's a FORMIDABLE task to determine that the skeleton is that of a camel, not a horse. (For those who do detect it, the differences are predominantly in the larger rib cage and the two prominent toes in the foot.) It's EASY, however, to notice that something's amiss with it—strapped to the creature's back with surprisingly un-rotted rawhide ties is most of a human skeleton. The human bones are still encased in an

antique US Army uniform, down to the pointy toed, raised-heel boots. It's HARD to determine the era, but historically minded individuals might date it at right around the beginning of the Civil War. The animal and human skeletons are closely entangled, and the rawhide straps make it a FORMIDABLE task to separate the two. However, it's EASY to note that something is missing with the human skeleton—there's no skull attached to the body.

Because of the size, it will take a lot of material (salt and flammable material) and time to burn the animal skeleton (with or without the human one). Doing so will also raise the attention of either the Deputy (during the daytime) or Mike Lazlo (at night). It's going to take INCREDIBLE effort to convince either party that the hunters should be allowed to stick around after that, even if they've been paid off earlier.

There's a ramp-road to get equipment into and out of the big pit, so there's no action required to get out of it.

The hunters may have a run-in with the Red Ghost while investigating the large pit. A detailed write up of this encounter can be found in **Act IV, Scene 1**.

The Results

Information is the main reward the hunters are likely to have uncovered in searching this site. They are likely to have uncovered the identity of the victims, and have an avenue to follow up with either John Burlington or Peter Monroe (Charlie's husband) if they so choose. They may have been able to put together an idea about what happened in the attack, and—if they encountered and bribed Mike Lazlo—may have made a contact to provide information about the local area in the future. On the other hand, depending on how their encounter went with the Deputy, they may be on the local authority's short list of people to watch, or actually brought in for questioning about the murders.

Depending on their scavenging ability, the hunters could have walked away with some useful (or pawnable) equipment. They may also have "borrowed" the company truck, which is very likely to gain them the police's attention, considering it's clearly marked with the company's logo.

If the camel and human skeletons are separated (rather than being salted and burned together) the two spirits separate as well. At that point, the hunters can deal with each ghost separately. The

Red Ghost is destroyed when its skeleton is salted and burned, but Tanner's spirit remains free and can't be laid to rest until his skull is found.

If the two skeletons are not separated, however, both spirits will remain active until Jacob Tanner's skull is recovered and destroyed, even if the camel's skeleton is salted and burned at the pit. The bond between the two spirits allows the camel spirit to remain, so long as Tanner has not yet been destroyed.

The hunters are likely to believe that they have already dealt with "the attacker" and put "it" to rest, but unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. "They" appear again, just a short distance from the construction site. (See **Act II, Scene 1: Crash Course**.)

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for discovering the victims' identities. Award one point for uncovering the Red Ghost's skeleton, and another if it's salted and burned.

Scene 3: John Burlington

The hunters may decide to approach John Burlington, owner of Desert Oasis Construction, either before or after investigating the construction site. Here's how that plays out.

The Setup

It's EASY to locate Burlington's phone number or office address, as both are not only in the local phone book, but also printed on signage and upon the sides of the temporary office trailer and construction equipment at the office site.

The Problems

Burlington's a savvy professional, and a natural leader. He's HARD to bully or lie to. He's also very concerned that the deaths of his employees will stop the multi-billion dollar construction contract he's negotiated for the casino, or that he may be held responsible because there was no security on duty at the construction site. He's anxious to make a statement to the press about "the tragedy" and has offered a reward for any information leading to the arrest of those individuals responsible for his

worker's deaths. Considering how penny-pinching Burlington is, this is a strong statement of his fear of legal retribution for the deaths.

If the hunters pose as the media, or anyone who Burlington thinks will help defend his interests in the situation, he's EASY to get information out of. If, on the other hand, they give him any indication that they believe he may be ultimately responsible, they'll find him a FORMIDABLE opponent—close lipped and difficult to get information out of.

John Burlington - Construction Owner

Description He didn't get to be the head of a construction company by being a pushover.

Agi d6 **Str** d10 **Vit** d10 **Ale** d6 **Int** d8 **Wil** d8

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 18

Traits Natural Leader d2, Stingy d4

Skills Crafts d6/Construction d10, Influence d6/
Haggling d8, Knowledge d4, Perception d6/
Intuition d8

Gear Cell phone

The Results

If the hunters convince Burlington to talk, he offers some background on his late employees. Both were with the company for years, neither had any enemies that he knew of. When the Sheriff's Department called him to identify the bodies (Monroe's husband was out of town on business), it was "the most horrible thing" he'd ever seen. Lee was apparently killed when the trailer overturned; his desk fell on him and he suffocated. It looked like someone had beaten Charlie to death with a baseball bat. She died of her injuries, probably delivered before the trailer was tipped. Burlington believes that a gang from California came in and beat up Charlie, and then when she escaped into the trailer, tipped it over out of spite before fleeing the scene. If asked about the dents, he hypothesizes that the same blunt object that Charlie was beaten with made them.

Ultimately, Burlington knows nothing about what truly happened, and is only interested in shifting the blame and limelight away from himself, so that he can get back to work on the casino.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for successfully getting background information out of Burlington.

Act II: Crash Course

This Act covers a number of scenes that may or may not happen, depending on what the hunters did in the first Act. If you haven't already thrown some Plot Points their way from their investigative success in the past Act, consider tossing a handful at them now before the action ramps up.

Scene 1: Crash Scene

This scene can be inserted into the game at any point before the destruction of the Red Ghost. If the skeletons in the pit were found *but not separated*, or if the skeletons were *not dealt with at all* before this scene occurs, then *both* the Red Ghost and Tanner are still present, although Tanner doesn't manifest. If, however, the skeletons were separated *and* the camel skeleton was salted and burned, then this scene can't take place, and **Act II, Scene 3** should be used in its place to let the hunters know that their task is not yet completed.

The Setup

This Scene takes place along the minor highway outside of Camp Verde, between the town and the casino construction site. The hunters encounter what is obviously a severe auto accident. A small four-door vehicle has left the road and crashed, nose down, into a culvert along the side of the road. A Sheriff's vehicle (the one belonging to Deputy Robbins from **Act I**) is parked across the road with its lights and emergency flashers activated. Its angle forces traffic to move around it one lane at a time, and the Deputy is pulling traffic direction duty. An ambulance, lights blazing, is parked alongside the crashed car. A woman, wrapped in a blanket, is being helped into the back of the ambulance by an EMT, while the other (**Kenny Cole**) stands near the front of the ambulance, making notes on a clipboard.

The Problems

Most of the "action" here is dealing with the Deputy and/or the ambulance driver.

TALKING WITH THE DEPUTY

Depending on their previous interaction with the Deputy, the hunters may be able to stop into the scene and do a bit of poking around without

attracting undue attention. If, however, he's pegged them earlier as troublemakers, he stops his traffic direction efforts and forces them to leave (or attempts to arrest them if they don't). On the off chance that they've made a good impression upon him, he probably stops to chat with them once the ambulance has left, and they may be able to gain additional information from him, or even do a very light-level search of the wrecked vehicle (see **Act II, Scene 2**).

Assuming the hunters' last contact with the Deputy was positive and he talks with them after the ambulance leaves, they might get some useful info out of him now. With a little prodding (an EASY task) he explains that he was driving past when he saw the victim's car in the ditch. He sounds doubtful when he explains that the woman claimed to have struck a large animal, possibly a cow, and then to have been attacked by the same.

"She was probably just trying to up the pay-out on her insurance policy," he explains. "Happens all the time. Cruddy car, minor accident, they ramp up the damages to cover things that were already wrong with the vehicle and get a bigger reimbursement check." It's pretty EASY at this point to convince him to allow the hunters to take a look at the vehicle, as he explains there's no crime involved in the situation. The woman didn't appear to be under the influence of anything, and no one other than she was involved.

If the hunters had a negative run-in with the Deputy earlier, he pauses in his traffic direction and warns them off. It would be a RIDICULOUS task to convince him to allow them to stick around. If they don't succeed in convincing him, and they persist on staying at the accident site, he attempts to arrest them, calling for back-up if necessary. Use up to four additional examples of the Sheriff's Deputy NPC on page 161 of the Supernatural RPG to represent the back-up officers, who arrive within 5 minutes of Deputy Robbins' initial call for aid.) If they've had previous negative interactions with the Deputy, and they do manage to convince him of their good intentions or right to be there, they may use the opportunity to speak to the ambulance driver or examine the wrecked vehicle.

TALKING WITH THE AMBULANCE DRIVER

While the accident victim and one EMT are already sequestered in the back of the ambulance, the hunters have a brief window of opportunity to engage the driver, Kenny Cole, and ask him a few questions about the accident. Cole takes his job seriously, and doesn't give out identifying

information about the victim in the crash (such as her name or personal information) but it's only AVERAGE difficulty to get non patient-specific information from him. The hunters have, at most, a minute or two while Cole finishes filling out his paperwork, before he insists on getting into the ambulance and taking the patient to the local hospital.

Kenny Cole - Ambulance Driver

Description Calm and analytical, this ambulance driver has seen it all—or so he thinks.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 12

Traits Cool Under Fire d2, Sensitive d4

Skills Discipline d4, Drive d4, Medicine d6/Triage d8, Science d4, Unarmed Combat d2

Gear Cell phone

If the hunters are successful in gaining Cole's confidence, they can learn the following information from him. The accident victim claims to have struck an animal. "She said she didn't see anything, she just felt it." She claims that the airbag inflated, blocking her view, and she slammed on the brakes, but that the animal (likely a cow) then began to attack the car, ramming it over and over with its hooves. She never caught sight of it, but it made a horrible braying noise and smelled foul. The animal struck her car repeatedly, breaking the windshield and she ran off the road, landing in the ditch. The animal continued to strike her car until the Deputy, who was patrolling nearby, drove up. Cole mentions that Deputy Robbins said he hadn't seen any animals in the area when he drove up.

The Results

If the hunters get the opportunity to examine the vehicle, proceed to **Act II, Scene 2** for more information. If not, it's research time, so move on to **Act III**.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point if the hunters learn about the reported animal attack from Cole. Award one Plot Point if they had a previous negative interaction with the Deputy and were able to turn it into a more positive connection with him. Award one Plot Point if the hunters realize that all of the severely injured victims have been women.

Scene 2: A Closer Look

If the hunters decide to return to the scene after the Deputy and ambulance have left, they will have a few hours before the tow truck makes its way out to clear the wrecked vehicle. This same information can be discovered during **Act II, Scene 1**, if the hunters have made a good impression on the Deputy earlier so as to garner his trust. Otherwise they will have to come back after he leaves to search the vehicle.

The Setup

The area around the wrecked vehicle is dusty rock and sand. The vegetation is harsh and scrubby, and much of it contains thorns or prickles. This makes searching the surrounding area a FORMIDABLE task—footprints don't show up well on the stony surface, and in-depth exploration is likely to result in an encounter with sharp fauna.

The Problems

A basic search of the vehicle is pretty EASY. It's not going anywhere, nose-down in the ditch as it is. The airbag has been triggered, and the front seat is now filled with a half-inflated white pillow of air.

The first thing any successful search of the vehicle will turn up is very EASY to notice—there's no blood of any sort on the outside of the car. There is, however, an extremely large indentation in the grill area, as if the vehicle struck something massive which caved the bumper and hood in towards the center of the car. An AVERAGE examination of the grill uncovers clumps of long red woolly fur stuck to the metal. The camel fur is coated with ectoplasm, which is EASY to discern once the fur is found—it's a disgusting, black, and viscous slime. Another EASY thing to notice is the large circular dents that pepper the front of the car. For hunters who have examined the office trailer at the construction site, it's EASY to tell that these are identical in size and shape.

Successful attempts at tracking the Red Ghost show its trail leading away from the construction site. Within ten yards or so, however, the trail fades out completely. It's EASY for the investigators to assume that the spirit simply dematerialized at that point.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point if a hunter makes the connection between the attack at the construction site and the car wreck. Award one Plot Point if they

successfully locate physical evidence (fur and/or ectoplasm) and another if they are able to track the beast until its trail disappears.

Scene 3: Alone At Last

This scene is for use only if the hunters have *successfully separated the skeletons* of the Red Ghost and Jacob Tanner and *destroyed* the Red Ghost's spectral form (by burning and salting the separated camel bones.) In other circumstances, use **Act II, Scene 1**.

The Setup

For over a century, Jacob Tanner's ghost has been bound to that of the camel he died upon. Released from his bond to the Red Ghost, Jacob Tanner's spirit has gone on a rampage. His always-present abusiveness to women has raged forth, and a local woman has paid the price for his fury.

A Sheriff's vehicle with its lights flashing is parked outside of a local convenience store, which happens to be very near to the county archive building. A small crowd has gathered, as two EMTs hurry to wheel a woman on a gurney into the back of the ambulance. It would be **IMPOSSIBLE** for hunters to persuade them to stop and chat—it's obvious that they are extremely concerned for the woman's health. Her face is a mess of bruises and blood, and she appears to be unconscious. One EMT climbs into the back and the other (Kenny Cole from **Act II, Scene 1**) hurries to the front and climbs into the cab, activating the lights and siren. Within a moment, they're rushing the victim to the hospital.

Deputy Robbins is inside the store, talking with the manager, a stocky man in his mid-50s. The counter's a mess; it's littered with overturned displays, broken glass, spilled merchandise, and a large quantity of blood, presumably that of the woman on the gurney. After a few moments of conversation, the Deputy turns and begins to walk back to his vehicle and the store manager starts trying to set the store back to rights.

The Problems

Here, the hunters can prod the crowd for information or they can go inside and get it from the store manager.

THE CROWD

As long as the Deputy is inside, the hunters have no problem asking questions of those gathered in the parking lot. It's **EASY** to get them to give up what little information they know, which is . . . very little.

No one present claims to have been in the store during the assault. A young man with a macho swagger and a skateboard (B.K.) claims that he not only saw the fight through the front windows, he got a picture of the assailant on his cell phone. It's **EASY** to convince him to show this off, and if asked, he sends the hunters a copy of it to their cell numbers (although this then means that B.K. has their number, which you can make lots of use of in the future . . .)

The picture is blurry, so it's **HARD** to tell that the assailant is wearing clothing that would be more appropriate during the Civil War than today, and matches the clothes worn by the skeleton attached to the camel bones, in the large pit at the construction site. If the hunters have seen a picture of Jacob Tanner, or if they see a photo of him after seeing B.K.'s camera picture, it's fairly **EASY** to tell that it's the same man. The camera picture also has a strange glow which B.K. attributes to reflection from the store window, but the hunters find it **EASY** to recognize it as the kind of aura that often surrounds a ghost or spirit caught on film.

B.K. claims that he lost sight of the assailant, who ducked behind a display when Mr. Preske, the store manager came rushing out of the back room. He called 911, and watched from outside until the Deputy arrived, but didn't see the assailant again. He guesses that the attacker slipped out the back past Mr. Preske, who B.K. refers to as "the old fart."

B.K. - First On The Scene

Description A typical teen stuck in a one-horse town.

Agi d6 **Str** d4 **Vit** d4 **Ale** d4 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4
Init d6 + d4; **LP** 8

Traits Cool Under Fire d4, Rebellious d4,
Signature Possession (Skateboard) d2

Skills Athletics d6/d8 Skateboarding, Covert d4,
Perception d4, Survival d4, Tech d6

Gear Skateboard, Cell phone with Camera

THE DEPUTY

Depending on their previous interaction with the Deputy, the hunters may be able to stop him and ask for some information. If, on the other

hand, the hunters have had a negative interaction with the Deputy in the past, he gives them a gruff brush off and refuses to answer any of their questions on his way to his vehicle.

Deputy Robbins is in a hurry to get back to the station and file his report. Assuming the hunters aren't on the outs with him, he lets them know that he doesn't have a suspect yet, but that he's hoping that the victim will be able to give more information, since the manager claims not to have seen anyone. If things aren't all that hot between Deputy Robbins and the hunters, it's RIDICULOUSLY difficult to convince him to talk with them further. If they connect the Deputy with B.K. so that he can get the assailant's photo from the boy, the task of befriending the Deputy becomes less FORMIDABLE, although what the Sheriff's Office is going to do with an APB on a 150 year old Army deserter is anyone's guess. If they succeed, he gives them what little information he has, and he's easier to deal with in any future encounters.

THE STORE MANAGER

If (either instead of or after they encounter the Deputy) the hunters attempt to engage the store manager, they find him to be in a very shaken condition. He tries to tell them that the store is closed, and it's HARD to convince him to speak with them. This is reduced to an AVERAGE task if they begin cleaning up or offer him aid in doing so. Grateful for their help (as well as their company, despite his gruff exterior), they find him easier to speak to once the cleanup has begun.

Once they're on good terms with Preske, they discover that he was in the back room working on some paperwork when he heard a loud crash. Assuming that the cashier had knocked something over, he didn't investigate until a few moments later when several more loud noises were punctuated with a scream. He ran out into the front of the store to find his cashier beat to a bloody pulp, but no assailant present. He didn't see or hear the assailant leave through the front door, and the back door's still bolted shut from the inside, so the attacker could not have escaped through that exit and bolted it behind him. Preske assumes the assailant managed to slip out the front door without being noticed while he was checking on his employee. Unfortunately, the store can't afford real video equipment—the camera mounted in the front is a fake.

If they spend time searching or cleaning in the store, the hunters may make an EASY find. Under a toppled pile of snack food, a broken jar of grape jelly's left a sticky puddle on the floor. In the center of the puddle is a boot print, with a pointed toe and raised heel. While it technically could match any sort of cowboy boot, extremely observant characters might make a FORMIDABLE connection—some markings in the footprint that correspond exactly to the boot found with the camel skeleton in the big pit at the construction site. The print is pointed towards the wall away from the cashier's counter, and if the hunters search HARD they can find a faint residue that indicates the boot's wearer walked not only towards but *through* that wall (the final footprint being half in and half out of the wall itself.) If they move their search outside, the County Archive building is just a short distance across a concrete parking lot in the same direction as the boot prints.

Mr. Preske - Store Manager

Description Long-time storeowner, he is very rooted in the real.

Agi d4 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6

Init d4 + d6; **LP** 12

Traits Lazy d4, Unbreakable Will d2

Skills Discipline d4, Influence d6, Knowledge d4, Perception d6/ Intuition d8

Gear Broom, Cash Register

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point if the hunters realize that this encounter is tied to the construction site killings, either through the picture or the footprint. Award one Plot Point if they had a previous negative interaction with the Deputy and were able to turn it into a more positive connection with him. Award one Plot Point if the hunters realize that all of the severely injured victims have been women.

Act III: Digging Deeper

At this stage in the game, the investigation should have turned up whatever it can on first blush, and now it's time to either hit the books or follow up. Don't forget that you can use the **Act IV** encounters at any point if you want to make life real interesting for the hunters. Once the hunters get to

the County Archives, things come rushing to a head (so to speak) so plan on pulling out the stops at that stage. The credits are going to roll soon after.

Scene 1: Research

At some point the hunters are likely to do some research on this phenomenon. Bring this scene up when that happens.

The Setup

One potential avenue might be the local library (which keeps archives of the local paper back through the 1950s, and local history books that cover the area through its earliest history as Fort Verde). The county offices also have an official Archive that are open to the public, which contain photographs and news articles dating back to the town's inception, as well as a local expert, in the form of Carlos Estrada (see **Act III, Scene 2**). And, of course, there's always the Internet.

The Problems

The information the hunters have already helps to determine the difficulty of the task before them. If they're starting cold, with nothing more than the newspaper article or tip that led them to Camp Verde, this task is **HARD**. If they've successfully discovered the camel skeleton, and realize they are dealing with a malevolent animal spirit, it becomes a more **AVERAGE** endeavor. If (through examining the skeleton or foot-prints, or recovering the fur) they have come to the conclusion that what they are dealing with is a camel spirit specifically, the task becomes **EASY**, as it's a local legend in the area stretching back for more than 150 years.

You can handle research challenges in a variety of ways. If time is an issue (or if you prefer a more expedient research process) you can have the hunters perform a single research roll and give them information (or not) based on the results. A higher success results in more information, or more in-depth information. The hazard of this, however, is that if the hunter fails, they run into the brick wall that keeps them from moving forward. Let the hunters make another research attempt (at a later time, or using a different avenue of approach) if this becomes a problem.

Another method of handling research rolls is to treat them as a complex action. Each time the players make a roll and add successes to their efforts, they learn a bit of information, and when they've reached the complex action threshold for their

research, they've learned everything. This allows you to feed bits and pieces of information to the hunters a little at a time, and prevents the "all or nothing" aspect of the previous method. Sure, it could take a day, but that just gives you a nice stretch of time to interrupt with a rampaging camel ghost or Civil War specter.

The following information can be discovered during the hunter's research.

CAMELS

CAMELS AVERAGE A 40-50 YEAR LIFESPAN, ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO LIVE UPWARDS OF 70 YEARS IN CAPTIVITY. CAMELS ARE NOT HOOFED, BUT INSTEAD HAVE A LARGE FLAT PADDED FOOT WITH TWO CLEARLY VISIBLE TOES. THIS PAD IS THICK AND HEAVY TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE HEAT AND ROUGH TERRAIN OF THE DESERT FLOOR. CAMELS CAN SPRINT UP TO 65 MILES PER HOUR, AND CAN MAINTAIN SPEEDS IN EXCESS OF 40 MILES PER HOUR OVER EXTENDED PERIODS. ADULT MALES NORMALLY STAND BETWEEN 6 AND 7 FEET TALL AT THE SHOULDER, AND CAN WEIGH IN EXCESS OF 1500 POUNDS.

CAMELS IN THE ARMY

IN 1836, A QUARTERMASTER BY THE NAME OF GEORGE H. CROSMAN WROTE TO THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL, ON THE TOPIC OF USING CAMELS AS AN ALTERNATE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION AND CARGO-MOVEMENT FOR THE MILITARY. AS THE NATIVE TRIBES THAT THE ARMY WAS ENGAGING IN CONFLICT WITH WERE UNIFORMLY USING HORSES BY THIS POINT, CROSMAN FELT THAT THE CAMELS, WHO WERE FIERCE OF NATURE AND STRONG OF ODOR, WOULD OFFER ARMY TROOPS AN IMMEDIATE ADVANTAGE. IN 1854, JEFFERSON DAVIS (FUTURE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES) REINTRODUCED THE IDEA, SUGGESTING THAT CAMELS MIGHT BE AN IDEAL CHOICE FOR THE US ARMY TO USE AS BOTH TRANSPORTATION AND BEASTS OF BURDEN IN THE HARSH SOUTHWESTERN CLIMATE.

IN 1856, THREE DOZEN DROMEDARY (ONE-HUMPED) CAMELS AND THEIR HANDLERS ARRIVED IN CAMP VERDE, ARIZONA, AFTER A LONG SEA AND LAND JOURNEY FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN AFRICA. THE ANIMALS WERE STATIONED AT VARIOUS MILITARY OUTPOSTS BETWEEN CAMP VERDE AND LOS ANGELES.

FALSE INFORMATION

When handling research and information gathering as a complex action, one smart option is to make the rolls clandestinely for the player. This allows you to use an alternate failure/botch mechanic that adds interest and intrigue to the information gathering session, preventing it from being a cut-and-dry fact download.

If, at any point in the research rolls, the roll fails to produce even a single success, the hunter has stumbled on an unclear or contradictory bit of information that muddles some previous fact they've uncovered. If, on the other hand, the roll results in a botch, an utterly false piece of information is uncovered, and is believed by the hunters to be factual.

Considering the second-hand and transitory nature of much of the information being researched by the hunters, this rules-variation allows Game Masters to add a bit of uncertainty and intrigue into their player's research, and keeps the characters guessing about what is true and what is not.

By the way, some players can handle knowing the truth, so you might not even need to make the rolls secretly. Let them come up with their own wild research results if they blow it! Empowering players with their own screwups at least makes them feel they have some input into the story.

INITIALLY, THE PROJECT WAS EARMARKED AS A SUCCESS, HOWEVER IN TIME, THE CAMELS PROVED PROBLEMATIC. AS CROSMAN HAD NOTED, THEY WERE OFFENSIVE TO HORSES—including the existing ARMY ANIMALS. THEY WERE ALSO SURLY BEASTS, AND EARNED A GREAT DEAL OF HATRED FROM THOSE WHO WERE USED TO WORKING WITH Milder-mannered MULES, OXEN AND HORSES.

CAMELS IN THE SOUTHWEST

A CREW SURVEYING THE BORDER BETWEEN ARIZONA AND MEXICO IN 1901 REPORTED HAVING SEEN A "WILD" CAMEL WHILE ON THEIR TRAVELS. IN 1913, NEAR WICKENBURG, ARIZONA, A RAILROAD CREW CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN ONE AS WELL. 16 YEARS LATER, NEAR BANNING CALIFORNIA, A CAMEL WAS REPORTED TO HAVE ATTACKED AND STAMPEDED HORSES AT A SMALL RANCH. VARIOUS SOURCES CLAIM THAT EACH OF THESE IS THE LAST "REAL" SIGHTING OF CAMELS ROAMING

FREE IN THE US. TO THIS DAY, HOWEVER, OCCASIONAL CAMEL SIGHTINGS TAKE PLACE IN SOUTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA, OR REMOTE AREAS OF ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO.

TRAMPLINGS

IN 1883, A FARMER'S WIFE NEAR FORT VERDE WENT OUT TO THE WELL TO GET WATER ONE EVENING. HER HUSBAND HEARD HER SCREAM AND RUSHED OUT TO HELP HER. BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE WELL, HIS WIFE WAS DEAD. HER SKULL WAS CRUSHED IN, AND HER BODY TRAMPLED. LARGE CLOVEN HOOF PRINTS WERE FOUND IN THE AREA, AND TUFTS OF RED FUR FOUND ON NEARBY CACTUS, BUT THE ASSAILANT (DESCRIBED AS A HORSE-DEMON) ESCAPED.

ALSO IN 1883, TWO MINERS REPORTED BEING ATTACKED BY A LARGE ANIMAL THAT RACED THROUGH THEIR ENCAMPMENT AND KNOCKED OVER THE TENT THE MEN WERE BOTH SLEEPING IN. THE BEAST WAS DESCRIBED AS "TWICE AS BIG AS A HORSE, AND WITH A BRAY LIKE A JACK-ASS" BUT LEFT BEHIND STRANGE HOOF PRINTS LIKE A GIANT GOAT.

IN 1967, A GROUP OF YOUNG GIRLS WERE CAMPING WITH THEIR SCOUT LEADER IN SOME CABINS LOCATED BETWEEN CAMP VERDE AND COTTONWOOD. TWO GIRLS, BOTH NINE YEARS OLD, DISAPPEARED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. THEIR BODIES WERE FOUND, SEVERAL DAYS LATER, IN A NEARBY CREEK. ALTHOUGH MOST PAPERS REFER TO THE MATTER AS AN ACCIDENTAL DROWNING, ONE ARTICLE MENTIONS THE GIRLS HAVING ALSO SUSTAINED "SEVERE INJURIES" TO THE POINT THAT IDENTIFICATION WAS DIFFICULT. THE ARTICLE CLAIMS THE WOUNDS WERE "MOST LIKELY FROM THE RIVER THROWING THEM AGAINST THE SHORE."

SEVERAL OTHER UNEXPLAINED "BEATING" DEATHS HAVE BEEN SCATTERED AROUND THE AREA IN THE PAST 100 YEARS. MOST INVOLVED FEMALE VICTIMS WHO WERE OUT IN THE DESERT AREA ON THEIR OWN FOR SOME REASON: HIKING, CAR BREAK-DOWNS, HOMESTEADERS OR THE LIKE.

THE RED GHOST

IN 1893, A FARMER IN THE AREA REPORTEDLY SHOT AND MORTALLY WOUNDED A CAMEL THAT HE FOUND GRAZING FROM HIS VEGETABLE GARDEN. THE BEAST RAN OFF, TRAILING COPIOUS AMOUNTS OF BLOOD, BUT THE FARMER REPORTED THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING

TIED ON ITS BACK, LIKE A SADDLE. A LATER SEARCH OF THE AREA REVEALED A WEATHERED HUMAN SKULL LEFT BEHIND. THE FARMER DONATED THE SKULL TO THE COUNTY HISTORICAL ARCHIVES.

AT SEVERAL POINTS BETWEEN 1893 AND PRESENT DAY, TRAVELERS HAVE REPORTED SEEING A HUGE RED CAMEL, HORSE OR GENERIC FOUR-LEGGED "DEMON." REPORTS OFTEN INCLUDE A HUMAN SKELETON ATTACHED TO THE BEAST'S BACK WITH RAWHIDE STRAPS.

JACOB TANNER

IN THE LATE 1880S, A SOLDIER NAMED JACOB TANNER WAS STATIONED AT FORT VERDE. TANNER'S NAME APPEARS IN NUMEROUS LEGAL RECORDS OF THAT PERIOD, ALWAYS ON THE DELIVERING END OF TROUBLE. HE WAS REPRIMANDED AND PUNISHED FOR THIEVERY, DRUNKEN DISRUPTIVENESS, ASSAULT (USUALLY ON WOMEN) AND FINALLY FOR DESERTING. WHEN HE WAS FOUND, HAVING BEATEN A LOCAL SALOON GIRL TO DEATH, HIS COMMANDER ORDERED AN UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT. HE WAS GIVEN 30 LASHES, THEN TIED OVER THE BACK OF A CAMEL AND THE PAIR WERE DRIVEN OUT INTO THE DESERT TO DIE.

The Results

The real gem in all of this stuff is recognizing that there are two spirits involved, the camel and Jacob Tanner, and that there's a skull being kept in the County Historical Archives. Even if the hunters blow all of their rolls, it'd be nice to give them that. Move on to **Scene 2** in the event that they want to pursue the skull lead.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point if the hunters recognize the assailant as the Red Ghost or Jacob Tanner. Award another if they make the connection between the two spirits. Award one point if they discover the location of Jacob's skull.

Scene 2: Getting A Head

This scene revolves around the County Archives, where a missing clue—Jacob Tanner's skull—turns up. See the sidebar "A Gentle Nudge" for more information about getting the story here. You shouldn't have to force the events if the hunters have been sticking to their proper routine, but you never know.

A GENTLE NUDGE

Several clues in the adventure are designed to eventually lead the hunters to the County Archives where Tanner's skull is sequestered. In **Act III, Scene 1**, the "Red Ghost" factoid mentions the farmer who shot the Red Ghost donating the skull he found in his vegetable garden to the archives. This may be enough to send the hunters seeking in that direction. This is the mostly likely plot path the hunters will take to the archives if the Red Ghost's not yet been destroyed.

As well, Tanner's footprints after the convenience store assault lead towards the archive, which is *directly next door* to the store. This is the most likely path to lead the hunters to the archives if they have separated the two skeletons and Tanner is running free.

If neither of these methods brings the hunters to the archives in a timely manner, additional hints may be implemented to help guide their path to this "end game" scenario. These might involve contacts that have "uncovered" information that the hunters missed, including the Red Ghost shooting story that mentions the skull being taken to

the archives. If one of the hunters has the Photographic Memory trait, they might find it EASY to recall an article that mentioned some controversy between the county and local Native American tribes about the archive containing unidentified human remains, but that the lawsuit was dropped when DNA testing proved that the bones (including a human skull donated by a local farmer in the late 1800s) were not related to the tribes. The same information might be HARD for other hunters to recall.

Supernatural Traits may also be used to move the hunters in the right direction. If one of the hunters is a Medium, they may be able to sense the malevolent spirit(s) presence at the archives, if they get near enough (such as standing outside the convenience store). A Spirit Guide might be able to sense that the Red Ghost and Tanner have retreated to the archives, and pass the information along to the hunters. Or, if any of the hunters are Clairvoyant or has Premonitions, it's simple for a Game Master to nudge the group towards the archives by means of vague visions and "hunches."

The Setup

The County Archives have been housed in this building since the mid-1960s when a fire damaged the former site. The building consists of two main rooms, roughly equal in size. All of the walls are concrete brick, covered with stucco to give it an “authentic” Southwestern feel. The doors are hollow metal, typical of office buildings during the era it was built in, except for the loading bay door in the back that’s made of flexible metal to allow it to roll up and out of the way. The front half of the building has a few small windows (three feet tall by six foot wide) but they’re located fairly high on the wall (the bottom ledge is five feet up) making them HARD to climb through without something to stand on. The warehouse area has no windows.

The entire building is surrounded by a parking lot. The front half is blacktop, but the back half is only gravel, and contains many deep potholes. If standing on the street out front and looking towards the buildings, the archives are immediately to the right of the convenience store mentioned in **Act II, Scene 3**.

FRONT AREA

The front room of the archives is a mini-museum, containing artifacts in floor-to-ceiling lit glass-enclosed display cabinets, life-sized mannequins wearing historic clothing, antique photos blown up to poster-size wall displays and several bookshelves lined with old, but not particularly valuable, publications about the area. To the left of the front door, there’s a small desk and chair, with an old microfiche reader for use by the public. Most of the old documents have been archived on microfiche, but not yet transferred into a digital medium.

Straight ahead, through the front room, a long counter bisects the room. A swinging gate allows employees to pass through to the work area on the other side of the counter. Two 1950s era metal desks, both painted a nondescript gray-green, fill the majority of the open area in the workspace. The rest is taken up with row upon row of filing cabinets, most painted the same color as the desks.

The desks contain normal office materials, although one has a jumbled pile of keys on key rings in one of the drawers. The keys open not only the locks to the doors to the archives, but also the cabinets and bays in the warehouse area. One set even fits the ignition and door locks to the fire truck (which is kept in good working condition for use

in the city’s parades and festivities.) Because of the jumbled nature of the keys, it’s HARD to tell what key goes to which cabinet.

WAREHOUSE

Beyond the work area is the warehouse area, a concrete-block walled room about forty feet wide and one hundred feet long. The ceiling is fifteen feet tall and there’s exposed ductwork, pipes and wiring running along it, all of which has been painted a prison-gray color. Other than the door to the office area, there are two other exits—a side door located about mid-way along the right hand wall (the side away from the convenience store) and a loading bay door (about twelve feet square) at the back of the building.

The warehouse is lined with industrial metal shelving, and several rows of similar shelving run through the building. Most of the material on the shelves is in a container of some sort, although they vary from modern plastic storage bins and cardboard boxes to antique steamer trunks and obviously hand-made rough wooden boxes. The contents are just as varied. Explorers might find high school wrestling trophies from the ‘50s, an antique scale set of the kind used by shop keepers to weigh gold dust in the mid-1800s, a collection of more than one hundred pair of vintage ladies’ gloves, a box of old “snake-oil salesman” medicine bottles, and some prehistoric fossils including one that looks a great deal like a camel skull. Open on the shelves, but not in containers, are items including a turn-of-the century cash register, several antique saddles, a wooden butter churn and an early Native American grinding stone for turning mesquite pods into flour.

In the back, towards the loading bay door, there’s a large open area where an antique fire truck (formerly in service to the Yavapai County Fire Department) is stored under a large canvas tarp. A small buckboard wagon sits beside it. On the other side of the open area is a collection of life-sized mannequins dressed in vintage clothing, which were formerly on display out in the front room.

Along the left wall (opposite the fire door) are a series of three chain-link bays for containing bulky or awkwardly shaped items that don’t store well on the shelf units. These include some well-weathered pieces of farm equipment, a wooden cattle yoke, an antique banjo, several stacks of paintings leaning against a wall, as well as some large antique signage for early Camp Verde businesses. There’s also a rather mangy stuffed pronghorn antelope, with a battered felt hat hanging from one of its horns. The bays are fastened with an AVERAGE pad lock.

A locked metal cabinet, which is **HARD** to break into, is mounted to the wall just to the left of the office door. This contains antique firearms, including several Civil War era rifles. There is, however, no ammunition for them.

To the right of the office door is a small walk-in closet-type enclosure, a mini-room within the room. It's labeled as "Personal Artifacts" and its lock is **FORMIDABLE**, as the room contains the county's small collection of archived human remains. These are unidentified bones that have been tested and proven not to belong to any of the native tribes in the area. They are organized in cases with pull-out drawers, each labeled with the date and source of donation, the location the bones were found in, and any identifying information (sex, approximate age, notable markings or features, etc.) This room remains locked and is rarely entered by county employees, sometimes going years without being disturbed. There are not a lot of bones here, because the county prefers to hand them over to more appropriate agencies (museums, etc.) if possible. However, it's here that Jacob Tanner's skull is located, in one of the cases containing other "artifacts" from the late 1800s.

The Problems

So what happens here? Once again, it depends on whether the hunters are here in the daylight hours or at night.

DAYTIME

If the hunters come to the archives during normal business hours, they're greeted by **Carlos Estrada**, who seems genuinely pleased to have visitors to the normally ignored archives. He loves talking about local history, and it requires no effort to direct him towards any conversation that deals with Camp Verde, local legends or the like, or to teach them how to use the county's microfiche document archives.

If the hunters show any interest in what he's saying, it's **EASY** to convince him to allow them access to the documentation archives behind the counter, or to offer to give them a tour of the back area. On the other hand, it's **HARD** to verbally convince him to unlock or allow them access to the Personal Artifacts room where Tanner's skull is kept. He is, however, a coward, and if the hunters attempt to use intimidation or other strong-arm tactics, it's **EASY** for them to bully the archivist into handing over the keys. He will, at that point, attempt to make a strategic withdrawal from the situation, and call

the local Sheriff's Deputy (the same one the hunters may have interacted with throughout this adventure) to deal with the trespassers. It's **EASY** to bully him into sitting down and shutting up, however, as long as the hunters are paying attention to his actions. If convinced or coerced, he will continue to protest against their intrusion into the Personal Artifacts room, the cabinets and the like.

As soon as the hunters breach the locks on the Personal Artifacts room, Tanner will manifest (see **Act IV, Scene 2** for Tanner's statistics and strategies). If the Red Ghost is still out there (because the hunters didn't yet discover the camel/human skeletons, or didn't separate the two before burning and salting them), it manifests as well (See **Act IV** and use the information from both the Red Ghost and Tanner). Having both spirits active and coming at the hunters should be some clue to them that they need to get the hell out of there.

At the first signs of undeniable supernatural activity, Estrada screams, runs, and knocks himself unconscious on one of the shelving units, effectively taking him out of the scenario until the situation has resolved itself.

AFTER HOURS

Getting into the archives after hours is an **AVERAGE** task. There's no electronic security system, just the locked doors and windows between the hunters and the inside. It would be **EASY** for passersby to spot the break-in if the hunters try to use the front door, but either the side door or loading bay entrance are likely to be unobserved.

If the hunters attempt to use the county's antiquated microfiche reader without assistance, they will find it an **AVERAGE** complex action to locate pertinent information (if successful, however, they may find any of the information offered in **Act III, Scene 1**). It's **HARD** for them to dig up the same information by attempting to navigate the county's document archives in the multitudinous filing cabinets behind the counter without Estrada's aid.

The door between the front office and the warehouse is normally left unlocked after hours (it has a lock, but Estrada rarely bothers). Because the warehouse has no windows, it's dark inside, regardless of whether it's daylight outside or not.

As noted above, as soon as the hunters unlock or break into the Personal Artifacts room, Tanner (and possibly the Red Ghost) will manifest and attempt to stop (destroy) the hunters. Use the above recommendations to proceed to **Act IV** for the confrontational scenes.

Carlos Estrada - County Archivist

Description He's a bookworm, but a very talented and perceptive bookworm.

Agi d4 **Str** d4 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d12 **Wil** d4

Init d4 + d8; **LP** 10

Traits Coward d4, Photographic Memory d4

Skills Influence d4, Knowledge d6/Local History d12, Lore d6/Local Legends d8, Perception d6/Deduction d8, Science d6, Tech d6/Electronic Research d10

Gear Key ring to all archive locks

The Results

Positive interaction with Estrada can be one means for them to access any of the information offered in **Act II, Scene 1**. In an ongoing storyline, Estrada may well be turned into a long-term ally for the hunters, as he's an expert researcher, and has a soft spot for folklore and legend. It may well be an IMPOSSIBLE task, however, to convince him to speak with them again if they use bullying techniques or physical violence against him. If he is exposed to any undeniable proof of supernatural phenomenon, he will be intrigued, but if that manifestation appeared violent or dangerous in any way (such as seeing Tanner's ghost attack the hunters) it will be almost IMPOSSIBLE to convince him to have anything to do with anything spooky thereafter. Harmless legends and lore are one thing—violent ghosts are quite another.

If Estrada is given the opportunity to reach a phone after the situation goes badly, he contacts the Sheriff, which could bring Deputy Robbins into the situation—even in the middle of the ghostly confrontation scene. The Deputy is a strident disbeliever in anything paranormal, however, and will find a way to blame the hunters for any wrongdoing, regardless of any inexplicable occurrences he may witness.

If the hunters have the time and opportunity to do so, many of the artifacts in the archives may be of use to them, or of value if they have contacts that can fence such materials. A plethora of items are listed in The Setup above, but you should feel free to add in any other items you feel suit the setting. This may well be an opportunity to include an item that leads the hunters into their next adventure, if that's appropriate to the Game Master's plans.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for gaining the confidence of Carlos Estrada. Award one Plot Point for using the archives (microfiche or filing cabinets) to research information on the situation, either with Estrada's aid or illicitly.

Act IV: Close Encounters

Because of the investigatory nature of this adventure, there's no single path through its research, which makes it impossible to insert a confrontational situation with the ghost(s) in a chronological manner. Instead, both the Red Ghost and Tanner are offered in their own scene below. While certain situations (noted in the Scene write-ups) are guaranteed to bring about a confrontation, you can throw in a scuffle with either of these ghosts at any point in the story that it seems thematically appropriate.

Scene 1: Unholy Duo

Until such a time as the camel and human skeletons found in the big pit at the construction site are separated, any ghostly manifestations of the Red Ghost will include Tanner as well, and vice versa. The two have been psychically linked in such a way that they can't leave one another's presence, and their attitudes bleed over each other.

The Setup

During any joint appearance, Tanner won't actually physically manifest, at least until the end scene at the archives. Mediums and other hunters with the ability to sense ghosts and spirits may be able to sense that there are two in the area; it's only AVERAGE difficulty to do so.

As a duo, some choice locations for them to interact with the hunters include the construction site (**Act I, Scene 2**) or at the crash site in **Act II**, where you could drop in a confrontational scene at the end of the trail, rather than having the Red Ghost disappear. As well, if the skeletons were not separated before being destroyed, both the Red Ghost and Tanner manifest in the warehouse of the archives (see **Act III, Scene 2**) when the Personal Artifacts room is opened, although Tanner physically manifest then. Use the **Scene 2** version of him for that encounter.

The Problems

The Red Ghost and Tanner are a dysfunctional pair of tormented spirits, bound together and serving to goad each other for all eternity. The camel spirit's little more than a tortured animal in a supernatural form, striking out at those targets which it can't avoid. Tanner, on the other hand, is more cognizant, and uses his superior self-awareness to direct the Red Ghost through their mutual bond.

The Red Ghost's normal MO is to trample its targets, striking out with its huge cloven feet to strike its foe. This method works equally as well on human targets and non-living ones, as witnessed by the damage done to the construction site office trailer and construction equipment. Because of its bond with Tanner, the Red Ghost has come to see women as a primary target, and (unless separated from him) will always attack females first, before going on to male targets.

The Red Ghost - Camel Spirit

Manifestation The Red Ghost appears as a huge red-pelted camel, standing easily 8+ feet (2.5 meters) at the shoulder and weighing over a ton when manifested. Its massive cloven footprints are easily 12 inches (.3 meters) across.

Motivation The Red Ghost is tormented by the presence of Jacob Tanner's ghost. Tanner spurs the beast to attack, especially female targets, and the camel-ghost strikes out with deadly fury. It wants nothing more than to be left alone, but the recent construction work has disturbed its resting place.

Limitations The Red Ghost can't be laid to rest until Tanner's skeleton has been removed from its body, or Tanner's skeleton (including the missing skull) has been dealt with and his ghost laid to rest.

Agi — Str — Vit — Ale d6 Int d2 Wil d8
Init d6 + d8, LP —

Traits Spirit d8, Sure Footed d6

Skills Unarmed Combat d6/Trample d10

Gear Rawhide straps which bind Tanner's skeleton to its back

Jacob Tanner - Unmanifested

Manifestation Jacob Tanner remains unmanifested until separated from The Red Ghost. The exception to this, however, is if his skull is directly threatened. See **Act IV, Scene 2** for this variation on Tanner, and use it, rather than this one, in the end scene. While intangible he uses his telekinesis to throw heavy objects at his victims or even shove his targets directly.

Motivation After more than one hundred years of suffering from his last victim's curse, Tanner's innate abusiveness towards women has grown exponentially stronger. He is, in general, a hateful and destructive spirit, but this malevolence is especially heightened when the target is female.

Limitations Tanner's spirit is bound to the Red Ghost so long as his skeleton remains attached to it. His ghost can't be laid to rest until both his skeleton and his missing skull are recovered and destroyed, either with or separate from that of the Red Ghost. Because of his Cowardly nature, he won't manifest, save to protect his own existence (ie: the skull). He also prefers to pick on the weakest target in any group, which his prejudices identify as first females, then children or the elderly, then weak looking males.

Agi — Str — Vit — Ale d8 Int d6 Wil d10
Init d8 + d10, LP —

Traits Coward d4, Spirit d10

Skills Guns d6/Rifles d8, Melee Weapons d6/Knife d8, Ranged Weapons d6/Improvised Thrown Object d8, Unarmed Combat d6

Attacks While Tanner's not manifested, he only uses a brutal telekinetic attack to launch items at his opponents (Willpower + Improvised Thrown Object + Spirit Trait). He can affect two objects at a time in this manner.

Results

If the hunters are confronting the duo in the pit, the pair dematerializes (and flees) if and when their skeletons are caught on fire. This is an instinctive fear/defense reaction, which the hunters are likely to take as proof that they've destroyed the ghost(s). Mediums, or others with the ability to sense spirits may be able to determine that there was more than one ghost present and/or that the ghosts fled rather than being destroyed but either task would be a FORMIDABLE challenge.

In other situations, the ghosts flee if shot with rock salt or targeted with other spirit-specific tactics. The exception to this is the end-scene at the Personal Artifacts room in the county archives building, in which the ghosts (forced by Tanner) will go all out to attempt to protect the skull and destroy the hunters.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for driving off the ghosts in anything but the end-scene. Award one point for taking possession of Tanner's skull in the end-scene. Award two points for actually destroying both the Red Ghost and Tanner.

Scene 2: Dead Man Walking

The Setup

Unless the hunters have successfully separated the camel's bones from Tanner's skeleton, it's unlikely that he manifests in a physical form until the hunters actually open the Personal Artifacts room containing his skull. At that point, however, all bets are off, and Tanner physically appears and does everything in his power to prevent the hunters from destroying the skull that allows him to remain in the physical realm. This is an instinctive "all-out" response, and Tanner will not hesitate to kill those who he senses are a threat to his continued existence.

If, however, the hunters do separate the two skeletons, Tanner is more likely to take physical form. The absence of his spirit-partner both frees and unsettles him, encouraging him to take risks he previously avoided. An example of one possible scenario for this is offered in **Act II, Scene 3**.

Jacob Tanner - Manifest

Manifestation While manifested, Tanner takes a form similar to that which he wore before his death—a dusky skinned, unkempt man wearing an antique military uniform and pointy toed boots.

Motivation After more than one hundred years of suffering from his last victim's curse, Tanner's innate abusiveness towards women has grown exponentially stronger. He is, in general, a hateful and destructive spirit, but this malevolence is especially heightened when the target is female.

Limitations Tanner's ghost can't be laid to rest until both his skeleton and his missing skull are recovered and destroyed, either with or separate from that of the Red Ghost. If either the skeleton or the skull are not salted and burned, Tanner will remain.

Agi — Str — Vit — Ale d8 **Int** d6 **Wil** d10
Init d8 + d10, **LP**—

Traits Coward d4, Spirit d10

Skills Guns d6/Rifles d8, Melee Weapons d6/Knife d8, Ranged Weapons d6/Improvised Thrown Object d8, Unarmed Combat d6

Attacks While intangible, he will use a brutal telepathic attack to launch items at his opponents (Willpower + Improvised Thrown Object + Spirit Trait). He can affect two objects at a time in this manner. Once manifested, however, he will use his hand-to-hand combat skills against his foes, or attempt to disarm opponents and use their own weapons (knives, guns, etc) against them.

The Problems

Tanner is a complete bastard, especially to women. He always chooses a woman as his target, if one's available, and attempts to make disfiguring or painful attacks, such as blunt attacks to the face, hands or abdomen. As a strong spirit, not only can Tanner use telekinesis on two items at a time, he also can teleport or "blink" to another location within twenty feet of himself as a Defensive action (see page 139, *Supernatural RPG* for details). He will not give quarter or mercy, and (especially when defending his skull) will use any means at his avail to attempt to stop the hunters.

If the hunters are able to get their hands on Tanner's skull, it's EASY to salt and burn it. However, if they are under attack at the time, the Game Master should feel free to increase this difficulty to AVERAGE or even higher. As well, the hunter who is specifically attempting to salt and burn it is even more vulnerable to Tanner's attacks, as he can't defend against them at that time.

The Results

Should the skull be salted and burned, Tanner's spirit is taken to Hell. An ephemeral fiery pit seems to open under the spirit's feet, and a multitude of female forms, most suffering from hideous wounds and injuries, hungrily grasp at the soldier-ghost's legs and drag him downward. Tanner screams and clutches at the edges of the pit, but is dragged down and the pit closes up after him. This is not literally a pit to Hell, but a visual manifestation of his own evil claiming him. Hunters can't use this hellish manifestation as a means to enter Hell itself—unless, of course, you want them to. But we're not going to go into that in this adventure.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for driving Tanner off in any scene before the end-scene. Award one Point for taking possession of Tanner's skull during the end-scene, and another for actually destroying it.

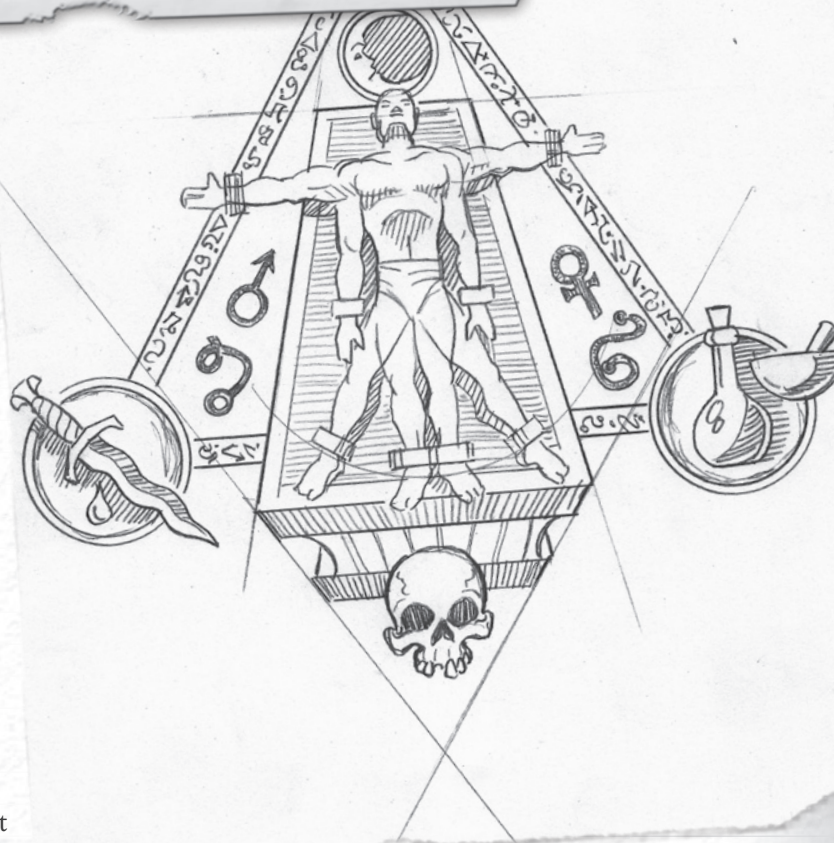
Transmutations

By George Holochwost

Whether it's as a system of belief or a substitute for what we now call modern science, alchemy's been a part of nearly all of the world's more esoteric traditions. During the Middle Ages and on into the Early Modern era, the transmutation of lead into gold was as much about refining the spirit as it was about getting rich. It's anybody's guess whether this produced enlightened saints, sages, or men who defy death and aging. In the world of *Supernatural*, alchemy certainly isn't limited to such high-minded purpose.

See, alchemy has a much darker side. Although it makes good on promises of immortality, an alchemist motivated by a fear of death or a desire for power opens himself up to terrible transformative forces the likes of which few survive and none endure. Like witches who make pacts with demons for power, alchemists walk a path that leads straight to Hell. While one alchemist's ritual is going to be different from another's, all of them are based around the idea that the human soul (and the life-force binding it to the human body) serves as fuel for the flame that refines—strike that, *corrupts*—the alchemist's humanity into demonic essence. Fortunately, these rituals are finicky. They require extremely specific circumstances that have to take place at precise times over several centuries. Screwing up any part of the ritual or leaving something out almost always ends up with the alchemist dead or worse. Unfortunately, every once in a while a really clued-in alchemist will poke his head out of the crowd of amateurs, leaving a trail of carefully disposed corpses and angling for a place in Hell's line-up.

This story concerns one of *those* guys.



This adventure needs a patient sort of hunter. Acting rashly and coming to conclusions too quickly's just going to dump the hunters in a hellstorm of bad news that could tangle them up for months if not years. On the other hand, if they look under the surface and do their research, they can keep the ritual from coming to fruition and keep things from going south. A little brute force and muscle will help at points, sure, but going in guns blazing won't fly. As only one of the fight scenes can't be avoided with some smart planning, it should work for Rookies as well as Veterans and Seasoned hunters. It'd be a good idea for at least one of the hunters to know a little about cults or history. Being good at sneaking about (Covert) or

The Key of Aeons

The Record of ADOLPHUS SESTUS; or the faithful revelation of ye great descent and the transubstantiation of the flesh vulgar.

I. PART THE FIRST - PRELIMINARY INVOCATION

As my own witness declared at the foot of the lower throne, willfully deny claim that "Those of the worthy grade of Perfect Adept will know that no transmutation can be effected in the different species of substances, though they can produce the appearance of such change" as it is by the pacts I have blooded and the ceremonies and dogmas, in which I abide, with faithful and unswerving perseverance, that I light the lamp and cast its luminosity upon that skillful path the White Lodge fears to walk. It is upon that Black Stone that I have worked my craft and come to know that the chains of this form and spirit are not affixed to those of adequate convictions and mien enduring.

browbeating (Discipline or Influence) would also be extremely useful at points, just as a way of getting around some violence.

It goes without saying that the presentation of alchemy in this adventure's purely for dramatic effect. We're shooting for the cinematic approach rather than anything resembling an academic paper. With that in mind, if you're a practitioner of an alchemic tradition yourself or you study it in real life, our apologies in advance for amping up the creepy. Please don't sic a golem on us.

Here's the Story

During the late eighteenth century, a Swiss aristocrat named **Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan** (writing under the occult alias of Adolphus Sestus) attracted his fair share of fame and notoriety by making claims of Luciferean enlightenment and power over life and death. After making some powerful enemies throughout several salons and universities in Europe, Hans-Ruedi soon found himself alienated by his peers, students, and few friends. Paranoid and megalomaniacal, Hans-Ruedi began to write strange treatises, printing and distributing them with what was left of his family's wealth. His final paper, titled "The Key of Aeons", drew the attention of the local church with its proclamations of "transcendence of mortality through the spiritual ingestion of life itself"—as taught to him by the demons of Hell. Obviously, the Bishop of Lauren had to condemn the man on the grounds of high heresy and the unholy practice of witchcraft. When the bishop's men broke down the door of Sestos's mansion, the alchemist was nowhere to be found. He'd fled to the New World in order to escape his critics, persecutors, and past.

Upon arriving in America, Von Steffan spent the remainder of his money on an old farmhouse, where it's believed he died in the midst of an English translation of "The Key of Aeons". There's no record of his death.

Flash forward to the present. In the middle of the epidemic crime and bustle of modern day Baltimore, Maryland, a darkness lurks unnoticed, and a supernatural threat that dates back to the late 1700s lays its net for its final victims. Although the alchemist's taken lives to sustain him over time, none of them have created the kind of pattern that law enforcement would notice. And, frankly, trying to sell a theory that connects any of these kidnappings to one another would be grounds for institutionalization.

Adventure Summary

This story hooks the hunters with their desire to be with a dead friend's daughter on her birthday, but it's ultimately driven by Cassandra Price's desire to find the cause of her friend Frank's freakish death. As they're present for the discovery of Frank's unnaturally aged corpse, convincing the hunters to get to work finding the cause of the bizarre death isn't going to be hard. Although they're minor, Cassie's friends—especially the hyper-social and self-destructive Becky—may provide some entertaining distractions. It's possible, though unlikely, that the hunters are just going to turn their noses up at this job. However, once they make contact with the Pigtown Kings, Von Steffan notices them and they'll have made a new enemy. Either way, if the alchemist's plans go forward without hunters messing it up, he emerges a powerful demonic being. Of course, even if the hunters do

their best to stop his ritual, they may still fail. If that happens, you've got a major new bad guy for your ongoing campaign.

You're welcome.

Breakdown of the Acts

Here's the skinny on the three Acts in this adventure.

Act I: Solve et Coagula The hunters show up in town to check on a dead friend's daughter and stumble upon a new threat.

Act II: Refinement The hunters investigate the local gang, the weirdness of a nightclub, and the simmering plot is revealed.

Act III: Rubedo The action heats up to a boil and a confrontation with the alchemist is inevitable.

Act I: Solve et Coagula

Here the hunters arrive in Baltimore and spend some time catching up with the daughter of a friend, **Martin Price**, who was killed on the job when they were first starting out. The girl, a sad teenager named **Cassie Price**, lives in South Baltimore, in Section 8 low income subsidized housing—her rundown rowhome serves as housing for Cassie and three of her friends. After spending some time with Cassie, catching up, and being introduced to her annoying roommates, they're invited to join them for Cassie's birthday celebration at a new local night spot. After bumming around the nightspot for a bit, the body of another of Cassie's friends is found, aged beyond his years by an unknown evil.

Scene 1: Old Friends

During this scene the hunters arrive in South Baltimore, catch up with Cassie, and find out about the nightclub. They become acquainted with Cassie's friends who've gathered for pre-clubbing beers and cake in celebration of Cassie's birthday. Younger hunters might relate to Cassie and her friends directly, while older hunters may decide that it's a good plan to get into the spirit of the occasion to give their old friend's daughter some much-needed distraction.

The Setup

It's a really hot day and the hunters enter the city on I-95, framing a perfect skyline view of Charm City. As they pull off the highway, they

immediately enter a fairly dilapidated working class neighborhood; consisting of nothing but formed-stone row homes and shady looking corner liquor stores. The street they end up on looks like all the others, with people lazing on their stoops being generally neighborly to each other, casually walking from stoop to stoop, and sampling bits of each other's conversations. After confirming the address, the hunters get out of their vehicle and ring the doorbell. After a minute or so of listening to the muffled conversations of excited teenage girls through the door, the door swings open and Cassie appears with half of her hair up in clips and pins and the other side matted with magenta hair dye. When she recognizes the hunters, she looks genuinely happy but with a touch of thoughtful sadness. When her friend **Becky Wells** comes running up behind her with rubber gloves waving a tube of hair dye asking who's at the door, Cassie snaps out of her sentimental stare and invites the hunters in with more enthusiasm.

The house is a three-story row home in relatively good repair. It's got three exits and a sort of makeshift fire escape-ish contraption attached to the upstairs back window—probably almost as dangerous as a house fire—that hangs over a lot covered in untamed weeds and uncut brown grass. There's a total of three bedrooms upstairs as well as a bathroom, with the roommate Becky Wells making her room in the basement. The first floor's got a kitchen, an oddly shaped living room that looks like its undergone several failed renovation efforts, and a large bathroom with a claw-foot bathtub.

All of the roommates are bustling about in various stages of hair and make-up. When the hunters inquire as to why everyone is so jazzed, Becky pulls a brightly colored flyer off the fridge and holds it up as if the hunters should know what it is. Annoyed, Cassie pulls the flyer from Becky's hands, hands it to one of the hunters, and then explains that once everyone is done with hair, make-up, and getting dressed, they (hunters apparently included) are going to have some beers and a birthday cake and then party the rest of the night away at one of Baltimore's newest dance clubs, **Ascend**.

CASSIE AND HER FRIENDS

The primary purpose of this scene is for the characters to become acquainted with Cassie's friends but also to take Cassie aside and have an

honest discussion about the last time they saw each other at Cassie's father's funeral. Here are their vital statistics and a little about their backgrounds.

Cassie Price

Description Cassie is eighteen as of today. She's a healthy teenage girl with a small, athletic build but wears the deep cut wrinkles and dark circles of little rest and personal trauma around her eyes. Although she is a young, attractive girl, her brow is generally knit with concern and her general bearing is far too heavy for a girl her age.

Despite her desire to have a tighter hold on her life, Cassie spends most of her time flopping on the couch in her overalls when she's not working her stockroom job at the Bullseye™ superstore. Among her friends, Cassie tends to laugh and joke but usually has a slightly distant reaction—as if she was somewhere else entirely when the punchline dropped. When alone, Cassie tends to sit in front of the television chain-smoking cigarettes that have stained her fingers and keep her sanity from flying apart. It's during this alone time that Cassie reflects on the terrifying, fragmented, final moments she had with her much missed dad.

The problem is that nothing is really helping. Having had the wool ripped off her eyes at the age of thirteen, Cassie has a perspective on life that only a hunter should have to bear. Confused and paralyzed by hopelessness, Cassie Price spends her days living without purpose, constantly aware of the world underneath that could rip away anything and everything that she has come to love and take security in. As a result, she's become susceptible to the influence of Becky Wells, a proud representative of the “wrong crowd”.

The only thing that seems to cheer Cassie up (at least superficially) is her budding love interest **Frankie Burns**, a good-looking, funny, but delinquent ex-boyfriend of Becky's. Although not as much of a wild child as Becky, Frankie has some seriously uncool friends and is slightly entangled with some neighborhood gang politics that could spell trouble for him and anyone close to him. Having seen what she's seen, Cassie basically dismisses Frankie's gang ties, assuming they're much less dangerous than they actually are.

Although she's taken no pains to improve on the little bit of self-defense stuff her dad taught her in the fleeting last days of his life, Cassie does own a pistol and is competent insofar as its use and will make use of it in the case of a serious threat to herself or her friend regardless of whether the danger is supernatural or mundane. Under less intense circumstances, Cassie will use the techniques she learned taking Aikido at the nearby women's crisis center shortly after her dad passed.

Agi d4 **Str** d4 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6

Init d4 + d6; **LP** 12

Traits Good-Natured d4, Lazy d4, Sensitive d4

Skills Alertness d4, Athletics d4, Covert d2, Guns d2, Knowledge d2, Lore d4, Unarmed Combat d4

Gear Cigarettes, cigarette lighter, dad's old pistol (d4 W)

Becky Wells

Description Almost immediately upon meeting her, the hunters sense that Becky Wells has about as many serious personal issues as one could possibly fit into the life of a nineteen year old girl. At least a little intoxicated or hung-over at all times, Becky does not think about what comes out of her mouth before she speaks nor does she consider the repercussions of her actions before she commits to them.

Agi d4 **Str** d4 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d4 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4

Init d6 + d4; **LP** 10

Traits Addicted (cross-addicted) d4, Allure d2, Amorous d4, Anger Issues d2, Contacts (Pigtown Kings) d2, Hooked (partying) d4, Rebellious d4, Smartass d4, Unstable (severe, untreated manic depressive disorder) d4

Skills Covert d6, Influence d2, Performance d4, Unarmed Combat d2

Gear Trashy wardrobe, gum, someone else's 40 oz., someone else's cigarette

After an intensely abusive childhood—neglected and hated by Mom for being too pretty and quite the opposite from Dad—Becky feels she's entitled to pretty much whatever her whims point her at. This self-destructive behavior further feeds her insecurities and generally angry feelings toward the world, creating a perfect storm that's amped up by her need to be trashed during most of her waking life.

But Becky gets by. Despite the crap hand that life's dealt her she manages to be pretty loyal and honest about most things. She can't keep a secret or her wiseass remarks to herself, but she knows

what pain feels like and is always there for a friend in need. Unfortunately, due to gross emotional immaturity, she's generally there with a pill or booze, but that's just because that's what Becky wants when she's got the blues. With her job as an exotic dancer at Chez Mike's Gentlemen's Room and no future prospects, Becky gets the blues a lot.

With her reputation as a party girl, Becky's become mixed up with the **Pigtown Kings**; she's dated several of them and introduced a few of them to her friends. Although she's certainly not a gang member by any stretch of the imagination, she's considered a friend and can call on them if she has need.

Tiffany Patrick & Dawn Frazier

Description Tiffany Patrick and Dawn Frazier have been best friends for so long the two seventeen year olds even look alike. High school friends of Becky, Tiffany and Dawn are a giggly pair of teenage girls who just want to have fun and enjoy their independence from their parents. About a year younger than Cassie and two years younger than Becky, Tiffany and Dawn are comfortable following the lead of the older girls most of the time.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 12

Traits Shy d4

Skills Drive d2, Influence d2, Knowledge d2, Unarmed Combat d2

Gear Trendy wardrobe, cell phone

Not much on talking seriously to anyone other than each other, these friends are pleasant if rather vapid. Unlike Becky, however, **Tiffany and Dawn** don't do emotional support except for one another, generally departing the scene as soon as things get too serious. When Becky has one of her heated screaming fights with one of her soon-to-be ex-boyfriends or Cassie doesn't get enough sleep and breaks out sobbing over her deceased father, Tiffany and Dawn become a pair of deer in headlights and will break just as fast for their rooms the moment they have any kind of opening.

The Problems

The action at this early point in the adventure is more social than anything else. After all, there isn't really a "job" as such, so let the hunters do what they feel is helpful to their friend's daughter. Here's some complications to work into the scene.

CASSIE'S LOSS

This is where the importance of being tied to Cassie's story is emphasized. It's important that at least one hunter was present, or even directly involved in the events that lead to Martin Price's death. Although the specifics of the tragedy can be tailored to fit whatever campaign in which *Transmutations* is inserted, Martin's death needs to have happened:

in an obviously supernatural way.

in front of Cassie and at least one of the hunters.

in a way that feels like someone could have stopped it despite that not really being the case.

Whatever is decided, the story of her dad's death should be worked out ahead of time in your notes so that it can be presented in a consistent way during play as well as allowing the hunters who were involved the opportunity to invest some emotional weight into playing out their connection to Cassie Price.

IF THESE WALLS HAD EARS

Well, they do, kind of. As soon as the hunters have a bit to settle down amidst the chaos of the roommates, they notice the wind has left Cassie's sails. The hunter's arrival reminds Cassie that she hasn't really had anyone with whom she could discuss the truth of her dad's demise since the tragic event occurred. With her roommates around, the hunters really need to be discreet without ignoring Cassie's emotional needs. This needs to be dealt with before the club if there's any hope of the birthday girl having a sufficiently great time at her party. If they fail to do so, Cassie has a lousy time, completely defeating the purpose of the hunters' visit.

IT TAKES ONE BAD APPLE

Becky Wells is a hot mess. A consummate party girl, Becky's been the single worst influence on Cassie since her dad's passing. Despite her attempts to be "just like a sister" to Cassie, she's attracted many negative elements to herself, and as her roommate, to Cassie as well. Becky enjoys her drugs and her bad boys and refuses to listen to any advice that would suggest getting her crap together. Any hunter with a concern for Cassie's well being (or Becky's, for that matter) should consider addressing this with her at some point. Unfortunately, talking

directly to Becky right before a big party—or letting her overhear such a conversation—is a terrible idea. Prone to hyper-melodramatic freak-outs and flamboyant displays of negative-narcissism, Becky ruins the evening for everyone if they make her feel condescended to or judged.

Cassie isn't the easiest person to get alone today, so it's going to take some HARD maneuvering to separate her from Becky. If the hunters are somehow able to get Becky to leave, getting away from Tiffany and Dawn is extremely EASY. Once alone, the hunter (or hunters) who had a connection to Cassie at the time of her dad's death will be able to take her aside and speak frankly about all of the actual events surrounding the supernatural tragedy.

The Results

Once Cassie has a nice, deep moment of comfort and the feeling of being totally understood, she'll have a big, brief sob and then hug and thank the hunters who took the time to sort things out with her. If the hunters also take this time to discuss Becky with Cassie, they'll find out that Cassie is well aware of how Becky lives her life and will assure the hunters that she's beyond her best friend's childish manipulations and social pressuring and that things are just particularly bad for Becky right now. She'll then explain that Becky is caught up with the local neighborhood gang and also discuss Becky's substance abuse. If the hunters offer to help her talk to her friend, she'll dismiss such offers with "I'll take care of Becky. Let's just have fun tonight."

The Rewards

Give the players one Plot Point each for getting some time alone with Cassie to talk to her about her Dad. There could be more Plot Points involved, too, depending on what the hunters' Complications are and how well they pull off the issue of Becky being glued to Cassie's side.

Scene 2: Ascend

This scene begins once the whole crew is dressed, made-up, and ready to go to the nightclub for the evening. Cassie, Becky, Tiffany, and Dawn are all in tow and they meet several members of the Pigtown Kings. They inform Cassie that Frankie came to the club earlier and said he would meet them inside. This scene's designed to give the hunters a sense of the club's layout, and possibly

even notice all the occult markings hidden in the club's décor, both of which play a vital role in the final confrontation with Von Steffan.

The Setup

After finishing up the last of Cassie's birthday cake and a few beers, the girls decide it's time to get dressed and head to Ascend. Becky acts like it's urgent that she get there on time as she's told friends to meet her outside the club (because she thinks they can get her in for free and is afraid she'll miss them if they're too late). When they finally do arrive, they park on the street a block or two from the club. As they approach, they realize that Ascend seems a bit more dubious than it was originally described to them.

Ascend is set up inside of a large warehouse in an industrial park in South Baltimore, surrounded by dormant factories, smaller warehouses, and acres of concrete. From the outside, the long rowdy line of brightly dressed patrons extending two blocks is the only clue to it being a club. With the exception of the front door, the entire building has a chain link barbed wire fence surrounding it. The only other exit is an emergency exit around back—the kind with a really loud alarm. There's also a FORMIDABLY well-hidden trap door behind the DJ booth that's roped off from use and guarded by a huge bouncer (who is really just guarding the DJ booth).

The Problems

The hunters get wind of strange stuff going on inside the club, most of which centers on three things. They might not make much of them all at this stage in the adventure, but it's early.

MEETING THE PIGTOWN KINGS

Outside of the club, the hunters get to meet Becky's lovely friends—the Pigtown Kings. Among them are **Ty-Ty Cross**, **Kenny Smalls**, and **Joey Wilks**. They're all dressed in long white t-shirts, black Pittsburgh Pirates baseball hats, and huge jeans worn around the hips with oversized, pristine white sneakers and posture like they're doing a comedy skit about hip hop. They all talk in exaggerated street slang stretched over extremely thick Baltimore accents, a combination that makes them almost indecipherable. They might look ridiculous but they're deadly serious about what and who they are: a gang that deals drugs and steals cars in and around this part of town. Becky tries to get the boys to get her through the door without

charge. Preoccupied with something, the Pigtown Kings won't even give Becky a place in line. Becky's furious but surprisingly does not make a scene.

These kids are bad news. Once inside, it's blatantly obvious that the Pigtown Kings are directly involved in Ascend's drug dealing. Cassie's got nothing to gain from having anything to do with these guys, and things could get even worse for Becky. If the hunters approach Cassie and Becky about the Pigtown Kings, doing it in line's the best time to do it. Considering Becky's feelings of rejection, it's EASY to give her the advice she needs to hear. Cassie takes little convincing but insists that Frankie Burns is very different from the others. She has no idea how true this is at that very moment...

Ty-Ty (Timothy) Cross

Description Ty-Ty is an overweight bully with a shaved head and a pinched, pig-like face that was a lot scarier in high school than he is now.

Almost twenty-one years old, Ty-Ty is a pathetic underachiever and small time pusher who maintains control over the Pigtown Kings by feeding them lies and promises of being "real players" one day. As a result of his wide-eyed ambition and delusional sense of his own capabilities, Ty-Ty's landed his whole crew in a crap-ton of trouble that he can barely comprehend. Ty-Ty's old best friend, Frankie Burns, knew that something was rotten about the sudden increase in cash and status, even going so far as to threaten reporting the whole situation to the police. In response, Ty-Ty freaked out and contacted his new supplier with the concerns. It was for this reason that Frankie was asked to shop up early that evening...

Ty-Ty lives in his mother's basement and keeps his operations from her entirely. He keeps his gun and stash in a sentry lock safe that he keeps behind a piece of loose paneling behind his bed.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d4 **Ale** d4 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4

Init d6 + d4; **LP** 8

Traits Alchemic Link d8, In Plain Sight d4, Wrong Side of the Law d4

Skills Covert d4, Discipline d4, Drive d2, Guns d2, Influence d2, Tech d4

Gear Oversized clothes, pristine white sneakers, cell phone, pistol (d4 W)

Kenny Smalls & Joey Wilks

Description Kenny and Joey are kids from around the neighborhood who just have nothing better to do. They look like skinnier clones of Ty-Ty, at least dresswise.

NEW TRAIT: ALCHEMIC LINK (D4/D8)

You've eaten or otherwise ingested Prima, the alchemical substance prepared by an alchemist with Von Steffan's Black Stone. This creates a mystic link between you and the alchemist, giving him unnatural influence over you and the ability to siphon life from a distance. When the alchemist acts against you, he gains the Complication's die rating as a bonus to his actions. It doesn't apply to his defense against your actions, however.

d4: At this level, the alchemist is capable of using his life-draining powers at a distance of up to 50 miles, albeit with a -2 Skill step. Somebody with this level of the Complication's taken Prima only once or twice.

d8: If the link is this strong, the alchemist's life-draining powers are unaffected by distance. This represents somebody who's taken Prima multiple times.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d4 **Wil** d6

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 12

Traits In Plain Sight d4, Alchemic Link d4, Wrong Side of the Law d4

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d4, Influence d4

Gear Oversized clothes, pristine white sneakers, cell phone, drug paraphernalia

Kenny and Joey hate the idea of employment, and figure they can afford new console games and bags of weed just fine without one. Despite the fact that they don't really believe any of Ty-Ty's promises, they figure it's better than a real job and that it'd be pretty cool if any of what Cross says actually does come true. Pretty excited about their new prosperity, the two boys have absolutely no idea how badly Ty-Ty's horrible, unrealistic judgment has actually screwed them.

ASCEND INTERIOR

Once inside the club, things begin to get strange. Cassie goes in search of Frankie Burns—"I'll be right back!"—and Becky beelines for the dance floor. The club doesn't have the atmosphere one would expect of a popular nightspot. Ascend is certainly packed to capacity, but the energy of the place is entirely wrong. Instead of the normal upbeat jump of a club filled with tons of dancing kids, it's as if the entire place is on tranquilizers and floating in syrup.

It's nearly IMPOSSIBLE to tell that there's a supernatural disturbance. Nonetheless, upon close inspection, a hunter with adequate Lore (such as a Specialty in Symbols) and a little HARD work discerns variations of traditional alchemical symbols for salt, sulfur, and mercury blended into the patterns of psychedelic art covering the walls. Seeing the massive etching of the focusing tablet on the dance floor requires a HEROIC effort while everybody's dancing on it. Even taking the strange atmosphere into account, there's something up with those alchemical symbols. Although there does seem to be a sort of transcendence theme to the whole club, the symbols are drawn with far more care and too much attention to detail than anyone but a practicing occultist or hunter would care to invest. They're the work of either a detail-obsessed artist or a genuine practitioner of the black arts. Unfortunately, the distinction is IMPOSSIBLE to make at this point, but reinforces the right theories once the hunters have more information and are further along on the hunt. Right now, the symbols are just very out of place.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Despite the fact that this is a rave club in the midst of a fairly bad neighborhood in Baltimore, the uniformity of intoxication's still strange. Although it's EASY to tell people at the club are indulging themselves, it's HARD to notice the pattern of intoxication in the place. Alert hunters notice people bumping into things, failing to pick up on passing comments, or paying no attention to change in music or lights. They just sort of stare off into space and bob their heads to a beat that's not audible. Although not supernatural *per se*, the uniformity of everyone's state is pretty freaky.

The Pigtown Kings spread out to the corners of the club to hold court for their bleary eyed customers. The hunters may well wonder what everybody's on, and it's probably in the best interest of everyone's safety if the hunters found out. If the hunters ask around, they'll have to put forth an AVERAGE effort to get answers. Although the Pigtown Kings only call it "good stuff" or something equally dismissive when the hunters ask, the kids who are actually on it tell the hunters it's a new, amazing drug called Prima. If pressed for more information, they just continue on with vague but dripping praise of the drug's effect.

The Results

Once the hunters have had a little time to interact with or worry about the Pigtown Kings, notice weird symbols, or get a sense that there's more than just a little drug use going around, they can head to the chill-out room. Actually, the next scene can take place at any point in between, but the reveal in **Scene 3** might end up being the focus of their attention.

The Rewards

The players each get one Plot Point for figuring out there's something weird going on here with the symbols, and another for pegging it as alchemy or occult-related.

Scene 3: Withered

This scene kicks off the hunt and begins when the characters decide to relax in the "chill-out" room of Ascend. It's here that the body of Frankie Burns is found dead, reduced to a desiccated husk by the alchemist's life-draining rituals. This scene ought to feel time sensitive; the hunters need to react to the situation before the normal folks get a working grasp of how truly unnatural the cause of death must've been.

The Setup

So the hunters are worn out from dancing or sick of the booming electronic beats. Right about this point, they notice the chill-out room. It's the only place to actually *sit* in the entire club. The room's full of kids well on the way toward stone-cold drunk, propping up the walls and lounging on the overstuffed furniture with expressions of oblivious bliss. Some are completely passed out. Could be a good place to retire to.

It really can't be that simple, of course.

The Problems

This stuff happens more or less in order. The first bit leads to the others, and happens shortly after the hunters pull away from the main room and get some quiet space.

WHERE'S FRANKIE?

Cassie comes bouncing into the room with a big smile on her face. She tells the hunters that she's having a good time but can't find Frankie Burns who, according to all sources, arrived at Ascend

early tonight. Once she's had a chance to look around, she sees a familiar hooded sweatshirt and Pigtown Kings ensemble passed out in the corner, head down with his face obscured by the hoodie. Excited, Cassie runs over and jumps onto Frankie's lap, saying, "Wish me a happy birthday!" As soon as the words escape her mouth, Frankie's head lolls back and Cassie lets out a piercing, sustained scream. When the hunters get a good look, they realize that if this is indeed Frankie, he's somehow aged about fifty years and given up the ghost.

DAMAGE CONTROL

The moment Cassie screams, the hunters need an excuse to stay near the body. Cassie's screaming attracts a lot of attention, with bouncers responding quickly and a circle of club-goers surrounding the scene. The hunters should probably consider an appropriate lie in order to conceal the unnatural facts of Frankie's demise. Claiming relation to Frankie or impersonating off-duty emergency workers or doctors should do well enough to appease the bouncers, but will be a **HARD** trick to pull off on the actual police.

When the police arrive, the players will need to either get out of the way and leave the grounds, or be prepared to give a statement to the police. It's probably best if the hunters counsel Cassie a bit before she gives hers, making sure that she doesn't blurt out anything without thinking. This will be a **HARD** task considering how hectic and panicked the room has become. If the hunters removed the identifiers from Frankie's body, the police will go about the incident as if Frankie were simply a sad old man that decided to give it one last hoorah before dropping dead from heart failure in the back room. If the players failed to recover Frankie's ID card before his body is handled by the police, the cops will be utterly confused, quickly taping off the scene as to preserve the evidence until a more qualified investigator arrives. The only passing benefit of sticking around is to constructively make contact with the police. If any of the hunters are on the Wrong Side of the Law, they can't ask the police and paramedics any questions they think might help. Needless to say, the police have no way whatsoever to know anything about the true cause of death.

On the off chance that the hunters take inventory of reactions of the various supporting characters, it's **EASY** to tell that Cassie is in a state of shock, Becky looks completely freaked out, Tiffany and Dawn look disturbed and concerned, and the Pigtown Kings are absolutely terrified out of their

wits, consumed by the bleak realization that this could be any one of them if they should go against the will of their new master. Once the police arrive, the Pigtown Kings are nowhere to be found.

FRANKIE, IS THAT YOU?

It's probably best if the hunters make sure that this is actually Frankie, as Cassie could be jumping to conclusions. If the hunters search the body for indentifying marks, they'll quickly find that this dead, seventy-year old man is in fact the remains of a twenty-year old drug dealer named Frankie Burns. Frankie has a wallet with a monthly bus pass and his MVA issued identification card. He also has a gold necklace with a cubic zirconia "F" hanging from it that's **EASY** to notice.

If the hunters have the sense to remove these items from the body, they make it **IMPOSSIBLE** for the police to figure out the identity of the corpse in any sort of reasonable time. However, doing so in front of a room full of bouncers and transfixed onlookers requires a covert action of **AVERAGE** difficulty. If the hunters don't think quickly, and they don't get what they need before the police arrive, recovering the items becomes substantially **HARDER**.

The Results

If the hunters come out of this scene with only one thing, it should be that they have caught the trail of a supernatural threat of an unusual and obviously powerful sort. Despite the rushed nature of their initial encounter, they've been given a fair amount of info to go on. However, first things first and that means getting everyone's emotions under control and on the same page. Once that's taken care of, tactics and research are the next major concern.

The Rewards

Each hunter gets a Plot Point for "handling" the situation, two if there were police involved. You might add more to the total if things go off the rails but the hunters steer it back with some clever double-talk, outright lies, or other classic hunter moves.

Act II: Refinement

It's during this Act that the characters will perform the bulk of their investigation. Events will determine the nature of their dialogue with the

Pigtown Kings, uncover the truth of Ascend, and reveal a vague outline of the alchemist's plot as well as the nature of Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan himself. Hunters with strong Lore and Knowledge skills will be of particular importance during Scene 3.

Scene 1: Revelation

The hunters return to Cassie's house, where the girls emotionally decompress with a vengeance. Cassie puts the hunters on the spot and Becky comes clean. After discussing the details, the hunters have some good leads and opportunities to shed light on Frankie's death. Becky also reveals a new problem that could have dire results for nearly everyone if doesn't get resolved. You should know that this is a scene about getting the hunters to ask the right questions, not about giving them final answers.

The Setup

After leaving the club, the hunters and the girls return home and the dam breaks. Cassie, in her hysteria, cuts loose with shouts of "What *did* that to Frankie?" and "You've got to find whatever did that and *stop* it!" which puts the hunters on the spot in a big way in front of the other girls. Luckily, Tiffany and Dawn don't want to deal and immediately beeline up the stairs to hide in their bedrooms as soon as the waterworks start back up and don't really catch what Cassie means by "it". Becky, who looks thoughtful for once, sinks into the sofa and takes on a distant, vacant expression, not taking notice of anything the hunters or Cassie are saying for the first several minutes.

The Problems

Once again, there's nothing here that can immediately be solved with a shotgun of rock salt or the Roman Rite, so it's up to the hunters to get social. Keep in mind that the girls have knocked back a few at the club, coloring their perceptions.

MAKING THINGS RIGHT WITH CASSIE

Cassie is inconsolable, thinking, "first Dad gets taken from me and now this?" If the hunters try to calm her down with quiet voices, hugs, or any other form of soft sympathy, she shakes them off and then really cuts loose. Although she eventually comes around after venting off most of her rage, it's better

to get her on board as quickly as possible, for both her sake and for the benefit of saving as much time as possible.

Any attempt to control Cassie or what Cassie says from here until the end of the scene creates an IMPOSSIBLE situation and results in her telling the offending hunter to get the hell out of her house. She'll rescind and apologize once she calms down, but not a minute sooner. However, if the hunters sympathize with Cassie, and take a good look at her situation, they realize that the only thing that's going to make this better is doing something about whatever killed Frankie Burns. If the hunters go the route of aggression and payback, Cassie straightens up and makes her dad proud, taking resolve and focus in her desire for revenge. Mind you, taking this crusader mentality makes it pretty clear to Becky that there's something going on that hasn't been shared with her. Despite her intoxication, she insists that she be included.

WHAT WAS EVERYONE ON AT ASCEND?

Once Cassie and the hunters are on the same page, the hunters might ask questions about what everyone's on (assuming they didn't ask while at the club). Even if they did ask, Becky gives the hunters more information than anyone at the club would have. Although Becky doesn't know exactly what Prima is, she knows some of the factors surrounding its distribution and history. If nobody asks Becky about Prima, she still suggests that Ty-Ty and his boys had to have had something to do with Frankie's death.

If the Prima conversation goes down with Becky, she spills all the beans she has. She makes it clear that Ty-Ty and his boys are the only people she knows who sell Prima and that they never sell it outside of Ascend. She mentions that once, in the past, when she inquired about their supplier, they totally overreacted like they were very scared of something, and then became threatening, warning her to "never ask that question again." Becky also adds that the Pigtown Kings pretty much sold pot and whatever they stole out of Ty-Ty's mom's medicine cabinet until Ascend's grand opening two weeks ago. Now, in just the stretch of two weeks, with only four nights of sales, the Prima pill is the only drug anyone is interested in these days.

The Results

Depending on how the discussion with the girls progresses, the characters have a few good leads on how to begin the hunt for Von Steffan. First and

foremost is the option of talking to the Pigtown Kings, which takes some sorting out on Becky's part but happens if the hunters want it to. Other options include getting a Prima sample for testing, and of course, digging up some Lore on life-draining supernatural threats.

The Rewards

Give the hunters a Plot Point for staying cool with Cassie and not trying to coddle her. If Becky spills the beans and the hunters learn about Prima as a result of their actions, give them another Plot Point.

Scene 2: Agents of the Black Stone

Whether it's finding out more about Ty-Ty's operation, getting a sample of Prima for testing purposes, or finding out what Frankie was doing before he ended up dead, the hunters' next step is talking to the Pigtown Kings. The outcome of this scene—based on how Ty-Ty and his boys are treated—has a direct effect on the gang's actions in **Act III**.

The Setup

Becky can't get hold of Ty-Ty until the next day as he and the other Kings tend to sleep until late in the afternoon. When he's eventually reached on the phone, he's really shaken up and extremely reluctant to make any plans to speak to anyone. Nonetheless, he's currently terrified of Frankie's fate becoming his own and is trying to pass his anxiety off as "having business on his mind."

When a meeting is finally arranged, one way or another, it will take place at Ty-Ty's house in his basement; the only place that young Timothy Cross feels truly safe. As mentioned previously, Ty-Ty lives here alone with his mom, since his dad's currently in prison for repeated possession of narcotics. The two-story row home is neat but filthy, the house going mostly unused as Ty-Ty's mother rarely gets out of bed, locked in her room out of fear of her son's friends. Ty-Ty holes up in the basement sanctuary, a clothing strewn pigsty where he crouches pig-like in front of an extremely expensive plasma widescreen to which is attached his prized GameStation 4 with all the newest games, some not even out of their shrink-wrap.

The Problems

The way this goes depends on the hunters' approach. The following sections cover most of it, but feel free to mix and match.

MEETING WITH THE BOSS

There are several ways of going about setting up a talk with Ty-Ty and his boys. However, considering his fear, bad judgment, and fragile ego, getting him to cooperate will require rather flawless diplomacy.

If the hunters go the threatening route, they'll receive a +2 Skill step bonus to all intimidation attempts against the gang leader due to Ty-Ty's precarious and panicked mental state. This is the quickest path to getting info, but it makes Ty-Ty and his gang view the hunters as enemies and threats unless the hunters take HEROIC pains to restore trust. Obviously, going about the meeting in a less aggressive fashion might be better.

GIVING UP THE GOODS

Ty-Ty is ultimately a coward and he's very, very scared. If he had his (few) wits about him, he'd never consider passing a Prima sample to anyone outside of Ascend (as those were Von Steffan's precise orders, back when he made the deal), but in his current messed up state, he could very well panic and give up a sample or, if pressed, the stuff he's been told to cut it with. All it would take is intimidation (opposed by his Willpower + Discipline) or a promise to get him out of his rapidly deteriorating predicament (opposed by his Alertness + Discipline).

If Ty-Ty is sufficiently scared of the hunters (or convinced that they can keep him safe) he explains what he knows about Prima and shows them his stash, as well as a jar that used to be filled with the powder that Von Steffan provided them. He tells the hunters that Prima is a combination of mundane MDMA powder and a special cut that's given to them along with the drug. They've been ordered to sell the two substances mixed fifty-fifty (what Ty-Ty refers to as "face-to-face"). Ty-Ty believes that the cutting compound is low-grade heroin "or something". Any hunter with an understanding of medicine has an EASY time determining that this isn't true and that the nature of the substance requires more research.

THE TROUBLE WITH FRANKIE

Ty-Ty doesn't respond well to questions about his dead friend, and composes himself a bit more stoically if pressed for details about his death. That said, the pudgy Ty-Ty offers no significant resistance to the persuasions of intimidating adults, and squeals if the right words and actions are chosen . . . at least until he erupts into a fit of paranoid hysteria.

Discussing Frankie's death is much more difficult than getting information about Prima. As soon as the image of his old friend's shriveled corpse comes into his mind's eye, the hunters see Ty-Ty relive it, his eyes angled down and away as if Frankie's body was still at his feet. If pressed hard, he exclaims that if he tells the hunters any more information about the "old German cat" that he works for, the same thing will happen to him and there's nothing they'll be able to do about it. If asked to further describe Von Steffan, the description is no more articulate than "old, white, and German," or "rich-looking, serious, and real smart."

The Results

When this scene comes to a close, the relationship between the hunters and the Pigtown Kings is clearly defined. They've either scared the hell out of Ty-Ty, made Ty-Ty despise them, or convinced Ty-Ty that they're jealous and trying to steal his thunder like all adults have been doing his whole life. Either way, Hans-Reudi knows what's up and makes Ty-Ty repent for his inevitable lack of discretion.

The Rewards

The hunters get a Plot Point for getting information out of Ty-Ty, and another if they role play their own Complications and/or Skills appropriately to do it. In other words, if the group's bruiser flexes some muscle, he's at least playing to type.

Scene 3: Illumination

The culmination of the all their hard work during the first two scenes in **Act II**, this scene is not so much based in a specific location as it is a freeform investigation period. The hunters can use their own resources to narrow down, and ultimately determine, the nature of their adversary. You should be prepared for the hunters to try a wide variety of solutions for confirming their clues, including going online, searching public records, historical society records, and seeking out facilities or services

to test the make-up of the mysterious drug-cutting substance. This scene obviously makes use of Knowledge and Lore skills but may also require some quickly fabricated false identities in order to gain or speed up access to important information. You should make sure that you don't stymie your players with clue-based bottlenecks as well as minding the pacing of this scene; letting it drag could diminish the story's momentum.

The Setup

The set up for this scene is simple and quick. Ask the hunters which avenues they're prepared to pursue, and then run a series of brief vignettes for each course of action. A quick description of slipping past security at the Hall of Records, fast-talking a difficult receptionist at the Greater Baltimore Historical Society, or convincing a lab tech at Johns Hopkins University to test the composition of the elusive Prima powder. It's important not to restrict the players too much, but be careful not to let them stray too far from the plot or create red herrings for themselves out of misapprehended conclusions.

The Problems

With the vignettes out of the way, it's time to shift the focus onto the major action in the investigation, as follows.

PRIMA UNVEILED

Determining the actual ingredients of Ty-Ty's powder is going to require some resources that are generally not within the average hunter's arsenal. Arrangements have to be made. Testing the powder reveals that it is, in fact, human hair, blood, and fingernail clippings. If the hunters aren't doing the research themselves, it's likely they're going to end up with a very disturbed lab technician unless they're quick with an AVERAGE cover story. If the hunters decided to test the powder themselves using someone else's facilities (which likely requires a cover story or an incident of breaking and entering) the research is quite HARD but ultimately produces the same findings.

Once the powder's ingredients are revealed, the uses for such a grotesque concoction remain unknown. Although the mundane materials are unusual, their mystical function is all the more terrifying. If the hunters search their tomes and journals for this kind of powder's uses, they stumble upon the occult concept of sympathetic and

material links, as well as the terrible power of such a connection to one's victims. Once this information's found, you should mention that examples of this sort of sympathetic linking to create magical results occurs in both the earliest methods of pre-shamanic magical belief as well as the most advanced and esoteric grimoires of the medieval alchemists. This second association should immediately remind the hunters of the symbols they saw at Ascend, assuming they paid attention.

PAPER TRAIL FROM THE PAST

Investigating the Ascend warehouse uncovers a chain of clues that eventually leads to the alchemist's past and to the location of a precious and unlikely clue. An EASY investigation into the ownership of the Ascend warehouse reveals that a small, private investment firm allegedly based in Switzerland owns it. Digging deeper, the firm apparently doesn't actually have any assets other than the Ascend warehouse, and otherwise doesn't exist. The company's on record as being owned by an "H. Von Steffan". Searches on Von Steffan in the Greater Baltimore area turn up a land conveyance record from the turn of the eighteenth century that connects a historic site in nearby Ellicott City to Von Steffan.

The Results

The hunters now have some of the hardest clues they are going to get during their investigation. With incontrovertible evidence that black magic is involved, they should now be ready find a way to end Von Steffan's reign of occult terror. Having discovered the paper trail, their next stop should be the historic site in Ellicott City as rushing off to fight the alchemist at this point in their knowledge could be disastrous for all humans involved.

The Rewards

One Plot Point goes to the hunters if they get somebody to analyze Prima, two if they do it themselves. They also get a Plot Point for looking into the warehouse's ownership. And if the hunters uncover the link to Ellicott City, that's another Plot Point, especially if you didn't have to drop it in their lap.

Act III: Rubedo

Beginning with the discovery of Von Steffan's former home and the clues found inside, this Act ends with a return to the Ascend warehouse. A direct confrontation with the alchemist as he works to complete the last stages of his ritual transformation comes immediately after. If the hunters don't take special precautions to protect Cassie or her friends, they're taken as hostages to deter interference with the final ceremony. Although the first scene relies on investigation and perception skills, the final scene marks the end of the hunt—a deadly showdown with the Master Alchemist Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan himself.

Scene 1: Origins

During **Act II, Scene 3**, the hunters discovered that Von Steffan's name is connected to an old home located in the nearby suburb of Ellicott City. During this scene they investigate that very site, commit a felony, and recover a clue that gives them what they need for the final battle against Von Steffan. Unfortunately for the hunters, it's while they're investigating the old house that the alchemist has, with the help of the kings, captured one or more of Cassie, Becky, Tiffany, and Dawn (depending on which was left unguarded). The successful recovery of the clue is an EASY Covert check under ideal circumstances, but social skills are mandatory if they manage to get caught in the act.

The Setup

The characters leave the city on RT 40, which takes them through some of the most impoverished areas of Baltimore. There's a gradual gentrification leading into more suburban surroundings. Eventually, modern architecture gives way to colonial and the hunters arrive in the historic district of Ellicott City. After a few turns, there's a dirt road that leads them to a cluster of old wooden buildings comprising Von Steffan's former estate. There's one car in the gravel parking area and the front door appears to be open.

The houses are red-stained wood with black shutters, colonial homes built in the late 1700s. One's a carriage house, two are servants' quarters, and the main house is now a museum full of antiques and plaques inscribed with historical trivia.

The car belongs to Debbie Lee Jacobs, a lovely woman in her early eighties who's cared for the site for over forty years. She's hard of hearing and half blind but knows an enormous amount about colonial farmhouses.

The Problems

The big score here is found in the museum, though the hunters won't be able to do anything with it unless they take care of the caretaker.

THE KEY OF AEONS

At the center of the main exhibit gallery is a glass case filled with old books left by the house's earliest occupants. A clue of immeasurable importance hides among them. Stuck between two antique farmer's journals rests a thick book with handwritten pages and the strange title "The Key of Aeons." It takes an AVERAGE amount of observation to see it, and a little AVERAGE Lore to recognize the occult reference. Although incomplete, the book contains a full introduction and several detailed illustrations that together describe a clear overview of what Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan has been up to and intends to bring to fruition.

In summary, the book describes a long ritual operation similar to those practiced by medieval occultists during the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, such as that described in the *Book of Abramelin* and those performed by Queen Elizabeth's astrologer John Dee and his scriber Edward Kelly during the sixteenth century. However, while those rites called upon the celestial forces, Von Steffan's complex alchemical formula is based around a devotional practice to the powers of Hell.

The ritual involves a long series of sacrifices to a corrupted mockery of the traditional philosopher's stone, (called "The Black Stone") which, if performed in accordance with a specific series of astrological and historical events, preserves the alchemist's life for the duration of the ritual. It also turns him into a demon at the completion of the final ceremony, using the last sacrifice as its brand new host body. The accompanying plates show a step by step preparation of the ritual, describing a ritual chamber marked with symbols identical to those seen at Ascend. The only difference is that the central floor sigil required for the rite is on the ceiling (above the Black Stone) in the book,

and is on the floor at the club. It's an EASY leap to realize that this means the actual ritual chamber is underneath the Ascend warehouse itself.

Unfortunately for the hunters, the last of these ritual events occurs in five hours at midnight.

Above all else, the book emphasizes the protection and safety of the stone itself: if anything causes the fragile object to break before the completion of the ritual, the alchemist's soul is instantly ripped from his body and dragged down into Hell, where it's devoured by monstrous dogs. Much to the dismay of the hunters, this sounds a lot easier a task than it actually is.

WELCOME! I'M DEBBIE LEE JACOBS

Debbie Lee isn't much of an obstacle if any attempt is made to run interference. However, if she ends up on the first floor, she's a much bigger issue. As Debbie has spent four decades as one of two custodians of the site, she has a deeply imbedded sense of every object in the house. Taking anything from under her sharp eye (Alertness d8 + Perception d6) won't be a piece of cake.

Assuming kind old Debbie isn't given cause to get involved or is otherwise distracted, picking the rusted lock on the glass bookcase will prove EASY work.

The Results

The hunters are now fully equipped with the knowledge necessary to hunt down Von Steffan, stop his ritual, and send his corrupt spirit directly to the pit. Although their approach is a key factor in their success or failure, the "Key of Aeons" has all the information they need to prevent the final demonic transformation.

The Rewards

Getting their hands on the "Key of Aeons" is worth three Plot Points. It's worth one less than that if they treated Debbie Lee Jacobs in any sort of harsh manner.

Scene 2: Fixity

Taking place in two locations, this scene deals with a new crisis that further emphasizes the need for speed and quick decisions. While visiting the historical site, any of the girls in the house who didn't come along for the ride have been kidnapped by the newly motivated and dread-filled Pigtown Kings who, incidentally, have also become captives

of Steffan and his hired muscle. The events most likely begin at Cassie's house and the realization that the girls have been kidnapped (or in the case that the girls had been left guarded, a cease-and-desist style note penned by Von Steffan) Although it's possible to avoid an actual physical conflict during this scene, it's highly likely that there's going to be a fight when the hunters break into Ascend.

The Setup

Immediately after talking to the hunters in **Act II, Scene 2**, Ty-Ty was contacted by Von Steffan. Ty-Ty was told that his treachery was not a secret and that if he wanted to make things right, he'd need to bring Von Steffan one person for each of the Pigtown Kings if they expected to keep their lives. So, while the hunters were at the house in Ellicott City, the Pigtown Kings made their move.

Not being the most hardened of criminals, Ty-Ty, Kenny and Joey went to Cassie's house and lured Becky, Tiffany, and Dawn outside to come for a ride with them, asking if they wanted to come to a private party at Ascend that evening. Although Becky may resist the allure of the invitation, Dawn and Tiffany find the hunters and all of Cassie's drama to be completely boring, and find a way to sneak out with the Pigtown Kings even if they have been well-warned about the danger the Kings pose. Once the girls get into Ty-Ty's mom's cigarette-stinking station wagon, they're taken to Ascend and handed over to Von Steffan's bouncers.

Once the hunters get back, they find either a panicked Becky (if Becky knew better to go with the Kings) or a note from Becky bragging that she's gone to a VIP party at Ascend. Upon arriving at Ascend, the club is closed and Ty-Ty's mom's station wagon is parked outside (Cassie or Becky will recognize the car). Inside, the lights are on and Ascend's three largest bouncers wait for the hunters to intervene. They've been paid to work overtime and are willing to break some kneecaps for their generous boss. However, they've been here for a few hours and, after Ty-Ty arrived, became a lot less vigilant. The three bored bouncers are sitting in the ticket booth by the front door when the hunters arrive.

The Problems

Things have got a little complicated. Once the hunters show up at Ascend, they have some decisions to make.

BREAKING IN TO ASCEND

The double locks on the front and back door are really very well made as are the doors themselves. Whether breaking in or breaking down the door, this isn't going to be easy. You can handle most of this as a complex action, with the bouncers as the nasty surprise in the event that the hunters botch or don't get their act together fast enough.

Ascend is a concrete warehouse with heavy metal warehouse doors. The locks on the doors are brand new industrial-quality locks. With a good set of lock picks and some skill, these locks present an AVERAGE complex action—take care of things in six rolls (representing about a minute each) or the bouncers notice. However, if the hunters lack the tools (or patience) they can just smash down the door. This is EASY but extremely loud, and definitely brings the bouncers running. See “Hired Help.”

If the characters manage to pick the lock on the back door in a discrete fashion, it's a HARD complex action to sneak in and locate the trap door leading to the warehouse's basement. Give them ten rolls to do it, then bring in the bouncers. If they botch, they alert Von Steffan himself, who'll be expecting them.

The basement is a dark and damp dirt-floored hole serving as Von Steffan's ritual chamber. Once the trap door's open, crackling green light and chanting can be heard. If the bouncers see or hear *that*, they'll certainly go home for the night and the events of the final scene begin.

HIRED HELP

Von Steffan's security staff is there to hold the line, and these guys are huge. Although they can be bypassed, a confrontation is likely. If the hunters go to the front door or smash either door, the bouncers are ready to brawl. They won't respond to talking or pleas for assistance and immediately attack the group. However, these guys are being paid two hundred dollars a head and are far from ready to die for Von Steffan's cause. If the hunters draw guns or any weapon bigger than switchblade, it's pretty EASY to get them to back down (and even leave if scared enough).

Bouncers (3)

Description Mullets, attitude, and unflattering clothing, this hired muscle isn't quite as scary as it thinks it is.

Prepared only to contend with drunks and rowdy kids, these jerks are not prepared for a posse of hunters equipped with firearms and machetes (or whatever baroque death-dealing gear they happen to have on them at the time). Preferring to hit on under-aged girls and posture at the door of the club, these guys can lay down quite a beating if they feel like they have the upper hand.

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d4 **Int** d4 **Wil** d6

Init d6 + d4; **LP** 14

Traits Crude d4, Formidable Presence d2, Hardy Constitution d4, Lazy d4, Overconfident d2

Skills Alertness d6/Sight d8, Discipline d6, Influence d6/Intimidation d8

Gear Black tank top and weight lifting pants with gymnasium logo.

The Results

Once the hunters find the trap door, the die is cast. They emerge from the basement either as heroes, cosmic failures, or corpses. If the bouncers have been dealt with, they've left the premises as quickly as humanly possible and are entirely unwilling to assist in the final fight, no matter what is offered for their services.

The Rewards

Award one Plot Point for getting into Ascend and opening the trap door. Two Plot Points go to taking care of the bouncers, if it comes to that, and a Plot Point for managing all of this without having to take care of the bouncers at all.

Scene 3: Sanctum Sanctorum

This adventure comes to its conclusion with the *mano-a-mojo* confrontation with Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan himself, on his home turf, in the midst of his ritual chamber, surrounded by hostages, and infused with demonic power. No pressure.

This scene most certainly results in combat, with characters skilled in those abilities playing a vital role. Although someone needs to do the fighting, the most lethal blow that can be dealt to Von Steffan merely requires the hunter to recognize the situation and perform the simple action that's required for the job. Failing to successfully defeat Von Steffan during this scene not only has dire consequences for the story, but potentially the entire campaign as well.

The Setup

Once the characters open up the trap door leading down into the ritual chamber, a crackling greenish light swells from the basement. At the bottom of the stairs, a black-robed Von Steffan is seen putting the final touches of an alchemical symbol on the far wall. In the center of the chamber, upon a pedestal, is the Black Stone, throbbing with an eerie green glow, casting a sickly pallor onto the faces of the bound captives lined up against the far wall. Crumpled at the foot of the Black Stone's pedestal is the body of Ty-Ty Cross, sucked dry by Von Steffan for his disobedience and lack of loyalty.

Joey, Kenny, and whichever of the girls remained at the house during the last scene are all here and tied to chairs. They are petrified with fear and completely helpless.

The Problems

There's one Extra Value sized problem down here, and it's the alchemist. Of course, the hunters have other things to consider, like the captives, and the Black Stone that Von Steffan's been using this whole time to power his Dark Works.

BEHOLD, FRATER ADOLPHUS SESTUS!

At long last, the hunters now stand before a three hundred year old creature that's now more demon than man. He must be stopped or he will leave this encounter as rippling gout of evil, black smoke.

Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan, The Alchemist

Description Over three centuries old, Hans-Ruedi Von Steffan, on the eve of his apotheosis, barely resembles the human he once was. His flesh, now losing its hold on the soul to which it was once anchored, hangs about his body in sagging folds, rubbery and loose. With cataract eyes rimmed with rheumy discharge, Von Steffan's long boney hands perform the gestures and signs of the final ceremony and tug at the essence of his victims in order to replenish and repair his body (until the ritual is completed).

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d6 **Int** d12 **Wil** d10

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 18

Traits Duty (become a demon or perish) d12, Formidable Presence (d4), Life-Draining (see Attacks) d6, Natural Linguist (German, Greek, Latin, English), Obsessed (immortality) d6, Paranoid d4, Slave to Tradition d4, Telekinesis d8, Unbreakable Will d6

Skills Covert d6, Craft d6/Alchemy d12, Discipline d12, Influence d10, Knowledge d6/History d12/Occult d12/Religion d10, Lore d6/Demons d10, Perception d6, Science d6, Unarmed Combat d4

Gear Black velvet ceremonial robe, "The Black Stone"

Attacks As a result of his diligent performance of the rituals up until now, Hans-Ruedi already demonstrates formidable demonic power even though he is still partly human. Once secured by his Telekinesis, a target is subject to having its life drained. The alchemist must overwhelm the prone target with his Willpower + Life Draining Trait opposed by their Resistance (Vitality + Vitality). If the target has the Alchemic Link Complication (such as the deceased Ty-Ty, Joey, and Kenny) Von Steffan hits with his powers with much greater ease. Each successful Life-Draining hit against a secured target allows Ruedi to transfer life from the target and give it to himself. This reduces the victim's Life Points score by two and increases Von Steffan's by 2, effectively making it harder to knock him out or incapacitate him. This draining lasts until the end of this scene or until the ritual is brought to an end, such as with the destruction of the Black Stone.

Although Von Steffan is a deadly and durable opponent, his Achilles' heel is glowing bright green and is plainly displayed in the center of the room. The Black Stone's about as sturdy as a wine glass and can be easily shattered if an opponent is in range of it. Because of the indentation it sits in, thrown objects or projectiles can't hit it, so its attacker must be within a few feet to destroy it. Once the Black Stone is destroyed, Von Steffan undergoes a vile and accelerated decomposition; his skin coming completely loose and hitting the floor as his internal organs and liquefied bones are propelled upwards in a sickening "schlop" with the entire wet mess collapsing onto the floor just as it evaporates into a sulphurous smoke that dissipates into the air.

SACRIFICIAL LAMBS

Despite their respective flaws and integrity, Cassie's friends need help. Although only one is required for the completion of the ritual, the rest serve as offerings to the alchemist's masters once the ritual ends.

Rescuing the hostages is going to be pretty HARD once the fight starts. Nonetheless, Von Steffan has one priority and one priority alone. If one of the hunters offers to switch places with one

of the soon-to-be-sacrifices in exchange for letting him complete the ritual, he weighs his chances and almost immediately agrees. Although this endangers the hunter in question, it gets the hostages out of harm's way and grants the hunters a less precarious battleground.

THE BLACK STONE

The keystone to Von Steffan's plan, the destruction of this object will save the day. Unfortunately, the alchemist will do anything to protect it.

As soon as it becomes apparent that the hunters are hell-bent on stopping the ritual at any cost, Von Steffan cuts lose with his Telekinesis on the two strongest looking combatants. Once he does this, he proceeds to bolster his health while chanting the final verses of the last ritual. If Von Steffan manages to stay on his feet or remain alive for three turns of combat, he ejects his black demon essence from his mouth and pursues a body elsewhere. If for any reason Von Steffan stops doing the ritual or the Black Stone is shattered, the ceremony fails and he undergoes the rapid decomposition described above.

Epilogue

If the hunters succeed, they will have stopped an unimaginably terrible event and should be proud of themselves. They've exterminated a really old and difficult enemy who has plagued the local area for the last three centuries. Although the kids are saddened by the death of their friends Frankie and Ty-Ty, they've gotten some perspective together and will move on from here with better perspective on what's important.

If the hunters have failed, they have allowed the birth of a powerful demon (calling itself "Sestus") that takes a special interest in them. This demon may return and take brutal revenge on the kids in order to pull the hunters back in for a final round, or it may just seek them out directly, working behind the scenes of their already desperate lives, driving in nails of torment and misery until they expose their soft bellies for it to devour. Either way, Sestus makes a good reoccurring villain for the series.

As the hunters pack up their tools and tell Cassie goodbye, she half-jokingly tells them that she had a really good time during their visit and impresses on them how much their help is appreciated. With bleary eyes and a fond farewell, the hunters hit the road again.



Hell Hound On My Trail

By Graeme Davis

This story's set somewhere around the middle of Season 2, before Azazel opens the Devil's Gate. Things are still low-key by the standards of the business, and it's just us against them.

You can run this adventure with the Winchester Boys—maybe with Bobby Singer and/or a couple of others as backup—or you can use player-created hunters.

Rookies can handle it if they're smart and well equipped, but it's better suited to Veteran or Seasoned hunters.

Adventure Summary

Demons lie. Every hunter knows that just like he knows his own name. The hunters meet a demon who is really, really good at it. So good, in fact, that he lied his way out of Hell and now a hellspawn bounty hunter's after him. Of course, it's tough to tell a demonically possessed human from an ordinary Joe or Jane. At first he tries to convince the hunters that he's just a poor schmuck who made a deal at a crossroads, and now a "big bad demon" has come to collect. He begs for help, and he's very convincing.

If the hunters figure out he's a demon, he changes his tune. He's an honest, hardworking bounty hunter for Hell, sent to bring this rogue demon back, and the job's a little too tough for him. He just wants to do his job and go home, and Earth will be rid of two demons for the price of one. The hunters help out, and everybody goes home happy.

But the fact is, he's just a lying sonofabitch who escaped from Hell and wants to have some fun. Once the hunters have taken out the hellspawn on his trail, he's free to have all the fun he wants—and

This is an adventure that you can drop into your campaign anytime, anywhere. There's nothing in it that requires a particular location, and when a location is mentioned you can pick a suitable spot wherever your fearless hunters happen to be, and inject a little local color: palm trees in Florida, Saguaro cactus in the Southwest, corn fields in the Midwest, and so on. You can also use this story as a one-off, or if you're feeling really mean, use it as a side-plot to complicate everyone's lives even more.

the hunters will have pissed off a very tough spirit with a very unforgiving nature and a long, long memory.

Breakdown of the Acts

This scenario's divided into three acts, the meat of which is explained here:

Act I: Me and the Devil Blues: On a lonely road, the hunters run into a guy with serious demon trouble and help him out. In the process, they realize they're up against a pretty tough demon—or what they think is a demon. Just as they guy is explaining his problem, the “demon” attacks again.

Act II: They're Red Hot: It turns out the guy with the problem is the real demon. He's a bounty hunter for Hell, and he needs their help to bring down his quarry. After some research and planning, they all go to the demon's hideout for the showdown.

Act III: I Believe I'll Dust My Broom: The hunters have been played—their new friend is the one on the run, they just helped get rid of the real bounty hunter, and Demon Number One is about to pull a Houdini. If they don't stop him right away, the hunters have to track him down and stop a ritual he's planning which makes him as good as untraceable.

Here's the Story

The demon on the run is using the body of **Alan Mills**, a software entrepreneur with some serious computer skills but as Frank N. Furter said, “no real muscle.” The demon itself is an Olympic-class liar, and once the hunters have thrown off the pursuer, it plays up the Mills persona and tries to persuade them to help.

Sooner or later the hunters will figure out the truth, and when that happens the demon simply adopts another persona and claims to be a bounty hunter needing some help on a tough case. After the hunters have dealt with the hellspawn after him, their new friend laughs at them and takes off—leaving them with the sinking feeling that the “demon” they just took out was the real bounty hunter.

Meanwhile, the fugitive demon moves to another city, takes over the body of an art importer, and finishes collecting the ingredients for a ritual that will make its demonic essence unreadable so that no other bounty hunters can come after it. Once the ritual is complete, he's going to look like just another human. Then the real fun begins. Wall

Street, politics—the sky's the limit. There are so many places in this world where a really good liar can make a comfortable life.

Act I: Me and the Devil Blues

The hunters meet Alan Mills and save him from a demon biker. The poor sap explains that he made a crossroads deal to keep his software company afloat, and the demon has come to collect his soul. Refusing to help him would be like kicking a puppy—and besides, isn't demon-busting what Our Heroes do? They'd better act fast, though—the Big Bad is still on the trail. And it isn't exactly a demon ...

Scene 1: When You Got a Good Friend

This scene drops the hunters right into the action and introduces them to the adventure's central character. It takes place on a remote dirt road at night—just the thing to liven up a boring road trip.

The Setup

The hunters are driving down a dirt road somewhere remote when out of nowhere a guy hits their windshield. He looks pretty beat up, and his eyes are wide with fear. He bounces off the hood of their car, gets up, and looks behind him. That's when the hunters see what's got him so scared.

At first glance, it's a heavyset guy in biker leathers who is seriously pissed off at Guy Number One. Then he fires off lightning from his fingers, and in the flash the hunters see his eyes. Solid black. It's an EASY task for anyone with Lore skill to see they're facing a real badass biker from Hell—complete with demon rider. It takes a FORMIDABLE effort (and a little lateral thinking) to guess that this is in fact a tsayid, not a demon.

The Problems

The hunters basically have two options: hightail it out of there or stop and render assistance. Don't be afraid to let the hunters think the biker's an actual honest-to-Lucifer demon, either. They'll get the message sooner or later.

TAKING OFF

Getting away is easy. The driver throws the car into reverse and floors the gas pedal. As he does so, the fugitive dives through a window (breaking it on the way, if it's not already open) and wiggles into the car screaming for the hunters to get him out of there. The possessed biker throws some more lightning at them as they leave, causing an impressive light show but doing no serious damage.

TAKING IT TO HIM

If the hunters get out and fight, they realize just how tough this “demon” is. After a couple of rounds, it's EASY to figure out that they won't be able to take it down without some serious preparation. Meanwhile, the fugitive is doing his very best to take their car and get out of Dodge. Once this happens, the demon biker gets out of combat with the hunters and follows the car. He ignores them unless they attack him or get in his way, and pauses only to get them out of his way so he can get back on the trail of the fugitive.

Tsayid—Possessed Biker

Description Tsayid are Hell's bounty hunters, hellspawn spirits related to djinn, hellhounds, and other demon-like horrors. They are hired by true demons to enforce payment on soul deals and to recover souls that have escaped. They are not subtle by nature, and usually possess the toughest body they can find. Their normal strategy is hunt down their mark and beat the living crap out of them until the soul or demon lets go. Then they drag the demon or soul back to Hell, just like a hellhound collects payment for a crossroads demon. If anyone gets in their way, they pound on them until they get *out* of the way. Although they're dedicated to their job, they're not above coming back for a little revenge against anyone who has caused them serious trouble. They drag their souls down to Hell too, and though nobody really knows what they do with them, it's probably painful.

Lore The following lore is FORMIDABLE to uncover unless the hunters learn that the tsayid is a “demonic bounty hunter” and displays such things as discharging tremendous shocks of electricity or breaking through Devil's Traps. With that information, it becomes HARD.

In many ways, tsayid are like true black-eyed demons: they can possess mortal vessels, come

from Hell, and respond to such things as holy water or exorcism rituals. However, they are nowhere near as smart, and were never human. They are more like hellhounds—driven, vicious, and single-minded.

Their name comes from the Hebrew for hunter, and is definitely appropriate. On the rare occasion that mortals encounter a tsayid, the experience is often over quickly ... so long as the mortal doesn't interfere in the tsayid's own relentless pursuit of its target.

Tsayid take the form of violent lightning or sparks when they are driven out of their host. This can harm the host if the ritual of exorcism is performed poorly or the tsayid leaves on its own accord.

Agi d8 **Str** d12 + d4 **Vit** d12 + d2 **Ale** d8 **Int** d8
Wil d12

Init d8 + d8; **LP** 30

Traits Tough d4, Electrokinesis d12, Telekinesis d4, Anger Issues d6, Duty (hunt escaped demons) d8

Skills Alertness d6/Sight d8, Drive d6/Motorcycle d12+d4, Guns d4, Influence d6/Intimidation d10, Lore d6/Demons d12, Mechanic d6/Motorcycles d12, Melee Weapons d6/Knives d8/Chains d12, Perception d6/Sight d8, Ranged Weapons d6/Stungun d12, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d12

Gear Stungun, 6-foot length of chain (d4 B)

Alan Mills—Possessed Nerd

Description He wears a torn sport coat over a T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers, and has the kind of face you could never pick out of a crowd. Around his neck he wears a leather pouch, and he's reluctant to let the hunters look at it. If they take it from him by force, they find it contains some red sand, a yellow dust that can be identified as corn pollen (FORMIDABLE Intelligence + Science task), and a small feather from a golden eagle (HARD Intelligence + Science task to identify). He says he got it from a Navajo shaman in New Mexico a few weeks ago, and it seems to be a protective amulet (a HARD Intelligence + Lore task to identify). It gives him another d4 to roll when defending against any attack by a tsayid, djinn, or hellhound, but it's personalized. To anyone else, it's a bag of junk.

Demons Lie The demon possessing Alan Mills is very good at lying. Whenever one of the hunters tries to find out whether he's telling the truth, the player should make an opposed

roll with Intelligence plus any applicable Skills and Traits against the demon's Intelligence + Performance/Acting + Plausible. The Plausible Trait's covered at the end of the adventure.

Agi d8 **Str** d12 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d12 + d4 **Int** d10 **Wil** d12

Init d12 + d4 + d8; **LP** 20

Traits Compulsive Liar d4, Coward d6, Fast On Your Feet d4, Lucky d4, Plausible d6

Skills Craft d6/Electronics d8, Discipline d6/Concentration d8, Drive d6, Guns d4, Influence d6/Persuasion d12, Knowledge d6/Video Games d8/Role Playing Games d8, Lore d6/Demons d10, Perception d6/Video Games d8/Intuition d12, Science d6/Physical Sciences d10, Tech d6/Computer Programming d12+d2/Create Technical Devices d8/Electronics d8/Hacking d10, Performance d6 /Acting d12, Unarmed Combat d4

Gear Amulet

If the hunters bail out of the car and start running, they find they're slower than the fugitive and he keeps them between himself and the biker. Then he doubles back, jumps in the car and burns rubber, leaving them on foot with a very upset hellspawn biker who goes to town on them for a couple of turns out of frustration, and then leaves them in the dust as he sets out after his quarry.

Tracking the car is an AVERAGE task because of the dirt road, and because it's the only road around. When the hunters find the car, it's a little dented but not seriously damaged, but a tire has blown out and the guy who took it's trying to change the wheel. He looks up when the hunters arrive on the scene, and amidst frantic apologies he begs them to help him and promises to tell them everything if they can just get him somewhere safe.

The Results

Either way, the hunters find themselves in a safe place (at least till the tsayid shows up) with a guy whom they believe has a demon on his tail. They'll probably want to ask him a few questions. If they were crazy and kept fighting the hellspawn biker despite all warnings to the contrary, they could also be really messed up. Laying low for the time being's probably a good idea.

The Rewards

Taking on a hellspawn-possessed biker in the first scene's always a winner when it comes to Plot Points. Give the players 2 points a head for

even facing the thing, and hand out one or two more depending on how they played up the rescue attempt of Alan. Chances are they've burned through some already.

Scene 2: Last Fair Deal Gone Down

Having gotten away from the hellspawn biker, the hunters can find out about their new friend and his problem. They should have plenty of time to get what they need before the chase is on again.

The Setup

It doesn't matter exactly where the hunters are; it should probably be somewhere fairly close by, and a place they have been to before. A roadhouse would be great if there's one around, but any place will do so long as it can be made somewhat secure. The hunters' new friend is more than willing to spill the beans, and in fact they can hardly get a word in edgewise as he tells them about his situation.

Here's a few questions the hunters might ask, and the answers the fugitive gives. You can read it aloud to the players or put it into your own words, however you like.

HEY! YOU OKAY?

"Oh, my God! Thank you so, so much! I never expected... I never even dreamed..."

WHY DON'T YOU JUST CALM DOWN AND TELL US WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

"Oh—yes, right. Well, that thing is after me..."

YEAH, WE KIND OF GOT THAT IMPRESSION. WHY IS IT AFTER YOU?

"Well, this is going to sound crazy, but..."

CRAZIER THAN A DEMON BIKER THROWING LIGHTNING AROUND? I DOUBT THAT.

"You see—I made a deal..."

**LET ME GUESS. YOU SOLD YOUR SOUL AND
BADASS BACK THERE HAS COME TO COLLECT.**

“Uh—yeah. That’s pretty much it. My name’s Alan, by the way—Alan Mills.”

**WELL, NICE TO MEET YOU, ALAN MILLS. TELL US
THE REST OF YOUR STORY—LIKE WHAT YOU SOLD
YOUR SOUL FOR.**

“Money. I’m in the software business, and funding dried up just a few months before my company was ready to launch our product. It’s going to revolutionize everything—I’ll be richer than Bill Gates if I can just get it to market.”

**SO YOU SOLD YOUR SOUL TO BE THE NEXT BILL
GATES.**

“I thought I could beat the system. As soon as I’d made the deal, I started researching everything I could about demons so I could beat the collectors. I was able to trap a few of them and exorcise some others, but they keep getting tougher. This one caught me by surprise, but I’m pretty sure I can get rid of it. All I need is a little help, and maybe a few ingredients.”

A LITTLE HELP?

“Yes. If we can destroy its physical form, I know a ritual that can stop it possessing anyone else—maybe even trap it permanently. They’ll send another one, of course, but in the meantime I can cover my tracks, keep finding stuff out, and maybe figure out a way to break the deal.”

AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO DO THAT?

“I’m still working on that part, but I’m getting closer. I’m almost three years past due, and I’m getting better at this all the time.”

**SO YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT DEMONS? MAYBE WE
COULD SHARE INFORMATION. WE’RE IN THAT LINE
OF WORK TOO.**

“I’d be happy to, but right now we need to get rid of that demon. Afterward, I’ll tell you anything you want to know.”

The Problems

This is a good time for the hunters to pool information and figure out ways to take the “demon” out, or at least slow it down. They can also take a look at their new friend.

Using Lore, it’s a HARD task (given the right books and/or an internet connection) to find out about lightning-hurling spirits known as tsayid. Unless they specifically ask about the shocking nature of the biker, their investigation will otherwise lead them to standard demon lore. If they do check out the lightning-throwing, then fill them in on the lore provided in the biker’s stat block. If they come to the realization that the tsayid isn’t like other demons from Hell, they may wonder if Alan is just plain wrong.

Alan Mills checks out completely. His driver’s license and credit cards have his name on them, and he can talk knowledgeably about software. If the hunters have a laptop and an Internet connection, it’s EASY to find out that he founded a small R&D shop in Silicon Valley five years ago and started having trouble attracting investors around two years ago. He’s been missing for the last three months.

The body belongs to Alan Mills all right, and so does the knowledge of software. But he’s possessed by a demon who is a very good liar—even for a demon—and the story about the deal is bull.

The trap he talked about is a fairly simple one, consisting of a silver cross and a bottle half-filled with whiskey, grave dirt, and a few drops of Mills’ own blood. He explains that the whiskey and blood are the bait, and the grave dirt binds the demon once it goes into the bottle after them. Then the bottle is stoppered and the silver cross is folded down over the stopper to seal the bottle. The demon has to be in black smoke form to get into the bottle, which is why its physical form has to be destroyed. The only problem is, it will never work. This isn’t how demons get trapped, although given the sketchy nature of demon lore at the best of times, knowing this for a fact requires a FORMIDABLE effort. Anything less leaves it within the realms of possibility.

The demon riding Alan Mills is using the quest for ingredients as a diversion to buy time while he plans his next move. He wants the hunters to focus on something so they don’t look at him too closely and figure out the truth. In the unlikely event that all the ingredients for the trap can be assembled right there and then, Mills will be happy to have the hunters build it. He will even modestly brush off their thanks for showing them how to make it.

There are, of course, various ways the hunters can figure out that Alan Mills is possessed, if they think to do so. Salt, holy water, the Devil's Trap—they will all work, but the demon's greatest defense is plausibility. His goal is to make sure that they never even start to wonder about him. If the hunters do uncover his true nature, skip to the next scene right away. Otherwise, wait for the conversation to flag a little.

The Results

At the end of this scene, the hunters know a lot more about Alan Mills, and some of it's even true. They may even know he's possessed by a demon—and if not, they will by the end of the next scene. But now it's time to cut the chatter.

The Rewards

It's an exposition scene, but give the players two Plot Points each for success at talking Alan Mills up. Don't be afraid to chop that in half if you feel you've had to lead them around by the nose for the Q&A.

Scene 3: Up Jumped the Devil

The Q&A comes to an end when the biker demon attacks. If the hunters have been smart, they have already done a few things to protect their location, but it will get in eventually.

The Setup

The hunters are in some kind of safe place, along with demon-possessed software mogul-to-be Alan Mills. They think he's just trying to break a deal and save his soul. However much they have found out, a titanic crash from outside lets them know that the possessed biker has found them. It's time to fight or run.

There is a little time to react as the possessed biker tries to break in. Exactly how long depends on the kind of defenses they have set up.

All the usual defenses won't work nearly as well with the tsayid as they would a true demon. For one, laying out salt will only slow the tsayid down—if its quarry is on the other side and it makes an AVERAGE Willpower + Duty Trait roll, it can break through the line of salt. Same goes for Devil's Traps and other magic circles, although it's HARD for it to bypass those sorts of things.

This tsayid's going to assume the hunters have set up such defenses, so it may just try to break through the wall with a FORMDIABLE Strength + Duty Trait roll. It also expects that the hunters have lookouts posted, and does its best to approach without being seen.

Once it's forced its way in, the tsayid largely ignores the hunters. It disables them with lightning or Telekinesis (which pretty much looks like lightning as well) if they get in the way, but it's really after Alan Mills. It's looking for a chance to zap him with its stungun and take the disabled body somewhere quiet to finish the job, but it happily beats the crap out of Mills right there until it drives the demon out.

The Problems

This is not supposed to be the final fight. It's more of a chance for the demon and the hunters to get to know each other. The demon will hit for keeps and take Mills down if it can, but it will leave if its host body takes more than 10 points of Wound damage. If the hunters are in a roadhouse, there are no other hunters around, so the only backup they can count on is a couple more shotguns. There is no time for rituals or any other fancy stuff.

As mentioned above, the so-called demon bottle Alan prepared does nothing. The possessed biker goes after the demonic essence it can sense in Mills' body rather than the smell of the vessel's blood, ignoring it just like a car thief ignores a patch of oil in an adjacent parking space.

This scene can end in one of four ways:

1. THE HUNTERS CUT AND RUN

This is the smart option. This demon is too powerful to take on without some planning and preparation. The demon tries to follow, but so long as they still have their car they can outdistance it.

2. MILLS RUNS AND THE DEMON GOES AFTER HIM

This is an option you can use if the players don't realize that this fight is a good way to get killed. In fact, the demon possessing Alan Mills hopes to use the hunters as a diversion and escape during the fight. If he's caught trying to leave he will pretend to be hysterical with fear, and thanks to his Acting skill he will be very convincing. Otherwise, he will simply not be there when the dust settles. He may even steal the hunters' car again.

3. THE DEMON IS DRIVEN OFF OR KILLED

If the hunters are well prepared and fight intelligently, they just might be able to destroy the possessed biker's physical form. The tsayid leaves the body in the form of scary black lightning and gets away as quickly as it can (which should clue them in that it wasn't a true demon, if they still weren't on top of that). A few days later it returns in another body, also chosen for size and strength. If the hunters somehow manage to deal with the demon in a more permanent way, another one is sent after Mills. The new one's stronger and smarter than the first (kick its Attributes up by a +1 step), and it arrives in a couple of days. In addition to its mission to recover the demon possessing Mills, it has a grudge against the hunters.

4. THE TSAYID GETS MILLS

Once the tsayid has zapped or beaten Mills into unconsciousness it grabs him and tries to leave, planning to find a nice, quiet spot to torture Mills until the demon flees the body. The hunters can either follow it or let it go. If they follow it, Mills wakes up at a suitable time and starts struggling and yelling before breaking free and running towards them. The tsayid gives this attack up as a bad job and leaves, planning to wait for a better opportunity. If they just let the hellspawn take Mills the story could be over—the runaway soul gets returned to Hell—or Mills may come around and manage to escape, heading back to the hunters and coincidentally leading the demon back to them.

OH, AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

If the hunters don't already know it by the beginning of this fight, they need to know that Mills is a demon before the scene ends. There are a few ways to handle this. His eyes could go solid black if he and the possessed biker get into a tussle. He could escape by ripping a door off its hinges or battering a hole in a wall, again with the black eyes. He could even get backed up against a line of salt that was put down to keep the possessed biker out, or stumble into a Devil's Trap they laid earlier. If the players are a little slow on the uptake, a few EASY or AVERAGE Lore rolls should help the hunters remember that they've read about demons being able to do exactly what Mills just did. It doesn't matter how the hunters figure out he's a demon, as long as they do.

The Results

When the dust settles, the hunters have gained two things in addition to various cuts and contusions: They know the poor sap they were trying to help is actually possessed by a demon, and they know that the creature hunting him is a tough sonofabitch who likes to get in close but can use lightning and telekinesis to get things and people out of his way. If they're smart, they want to get out of wherever they are and regroup, and they probably have a lot of questions for their new friend.

The Rewards

Toss another two Plot Points per hunter at the players for this conflict. How the players react to the fight, and the understanding that the tsayid is a little too powerful, might determine whether you hand out another one or two Plot Points. If the players are playing up the Complications of their hunters, so much the better.

Act II—They're Red Hot

It turns out that Alan Mills is possessed by a demon that needs a little help on this job. It knows where the hellspawn's hideout is, and together the group can do some research and plan their attack. Then, it's off to the showdown.

Scene 1: I'm A Steady Rollin' Man

So Alan Mills is more than just Alan Mills, software executive. He's got a demon rider who is a "bounty hunter for Hell," aiming to capture the tsayid that just attacked them. He possessed Mills for his computer skills, but the tsayid got the jump on him before he could switch to a tougher body. If the hunters help out, they can rid the world of two creatures from Hell for the price of one.

The Setup

There are two things the hunters might want to do right away: get somewhere safe, and have a long talk with Alan Mills, or whatever has possessed him.

The Problems

Where they go is up to you and the players—because this adventure's designed to be dropped into the middle of whatever the hunters are doing at the time, it's short on specific locations, but most likely they know of some place nearby. A motel, a roadhouse, an abandoned amusement park, and old mine—any of these will do, and so will most of the other spots described in Chapter 9 of the *Supernatural RPG* core book. They can also have the conversation on the road, assuming their car is still intact. The tsayid is taking some time to figure out its next move, so it won't bother them—although they don't know that.

The possessed Alan Mills is like a whole different person. Gone is the whimpering geek, replaced by a matter-of-fact and strangely reasonable persona something like a friendly Marine—or a bounty hunter, which is exactly what the lying weasel is pretending to be now. Try channeling Tommy Lee Jones and you'll have about the right tone for him.

The course of the conversation is determined by the kind of questions the hunters ask. Here are some examples:

SO, ALAN MILLS, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO TELL US?

"Okay, kids, you caught me. (holds up his hands in mock surrender) I've got a job to do and I'm just borrowing Alan here for a while."

WHAT JOB?

"Well, you know I said that thing was hunting me? Other way round. He skipped from Hell a few weeks ago, and I've been tracking him. Nasty sonofabitch, too—some Chinese general from way back. Massacres, rapes, torture, the whole nine yards. And you should hear what he did to his enemies."

YOU'RE HUNTING HIM. IS THAT WHY HE WAS KICKING YOUR BUTT ALL OVER THE ROAD WHEN WE FIRST RAN INTO YOU? AND WHY YOU'VE BEEN RUNNING AWAY EVER SINCE?

"Bastard got the jump on me. I'd borrowed Alan to do some research—he's quite the computer whiz, you know—and General Kimchi, or whatever his name used to be, showed up out of

nowhere. Now there's only so much I can do with a body like this. Not a whole lot to work with. So what you've been seeing is a tactical withdrawal."

AND DRAGGING US INTO IT WAS WHAT—TACTICAL SUPPORT?

"Give that man a cigar! I just needed to put some distance between him and me, buy some time to regroup. When it turned out you meddling kids actually had some idea of what you were doing, that was an added bonus."

YOU STILL HAVEN'T EXPLAINED WHY HE'S COMING AFTER YOU. SHOULDN'T HE BE SCARED OF YOU IF YOU'RE A BIG, BAD BOUNTY HUNTER FROM HELL?

"Ever read Sun Tzu? He has. *Always attack where your enemy is weak, and avoid the places where he is strong.* Something like that, anyway. He caught me with my pants down and seized the opportunity, just like anyone would. I'm not proud to admit it, but things could have got sticky back there."

AND YOU SUCKERED US IN WITH THE SOUL-SELLING STORY BECAUSE . . . ?

"Isn't it obvious? Me demon, you hunter. Some serious trust issues there. Let's just say I'm not absolutely sure you would have volunteered to help if I'd told you the truth."

AND WHY SHOULD WE HELP YOU NOW?

"C'mon, kid, think about it. Right now you have two demons on the loose, one of them psychotic. You help me get him, we both go away, and you have no demons on the loose. See?"

AND YOU'LL JUST GO BACK TO HELL, ALL BY YOURSELF?

"That's where I collect my bounty, kid. Cash on delivery—except it's not exactly cash."

I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT THAT. BUT HEY, WHAT WAS THE DEAL WITH THAT USELESS DEMON TRAP YOU CONCOCTED?

"I needed to give you something to do. You know, so you wouldn't be thinking about me too much?"

THANKS A LOT!

"What can I say, kid? I'm a demon and demons lie. Don't they put that on the first page of your little handbook? They ought to."

SO HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT LYING NOW?

"You don't. But that's not really the question you should be asking yourselves. The question is, do you want to help put an end to this before the General and I get to a heavily populated area? He had no regard for innocent lives to begin with, and a few thousand years in Hell haven't exactly put him in touch with his warm and fuzzy side."

IS THAT A THREAT?

"Just stating the obvious, kid. If you think about it, you have three choices. You can help me out, in which case this will go quicker and cleaner. You can stand back and leave me to it, which could involve some collateral damage. Or you can get in my way, forcing me to squish you like bugs and costing me some time off the trail. Your call."

The demon has said two true things in this whole conversation. First, he was borrowing Alan's body to make use of his computer skills and do some research on the tsayid in the hope of getting the jump on his pursuer. Instead the tsayid got the jump on him. Second, the hunters have to make a choice. Will they help him, try to stop him, or get out of the way?

If the hunters have learned that the biker is possessed by a tsayid, they could try to call Alan on it and ask him why he's trying to spin this whole "Chinese general" bull. The demon recovers quickly by saying that the tsayid once *possessed* a Chinese general, and that really tsayid are just another kind of demon, so it's all just semantics. This isn't actually true, but "Alan Mills" is a convincing guy.

The Results

At the end of this scene, the hunters have a new perspective on the situation, and hopefully a new place to hide out and prepare their next move. One thing they and the Alan Mills demon are likely to agree on is that the sooner the other demon is taken down, the better for everyone.

The rest of this story assumes that the hunters decide to help out with the "demon hunt." If they don't, there are a few ways to get things back on track:

NONE OF OUR BEESWAX

No hunter worth his salt is just going to walk away from a situation like this, and at the very least it's going to cost the players a few of the Plot Points they were hoping to earn. If they insist on washing their hands of it all, you can just let it go (and let the players know about missing out on the Plot Points), or the demon can take a hand. Remember, he's a manipulative little weasel, and he actually wants the hunters along because he can't take out the tsayid all by himself. He's also shopping for a new body (see "Daddy Needs A New Body" in the next scene) and it's a safe bet that at least one of the hunters has a better body than Mills. So he tries to possess the hunter. If he succeeds, Mills collapses and the possessed hunter runs off into the night, leaving the others with a strong motivation to rescue their friend. Once they catch up with him, the demon can be persuaded to leave the hunter's body and take Mills back in exchange for the hunters' help.

ONE DEMON AT A TIME

Once they know Mills is possessed by a demon, the hunters will probably start thinking about how they can get rid of it—either right now, or by pulling a double-cross once the tsayid is taken care of. Attacking Mills right now leads him to try and escape, preferably riding one of the hunters' bodies, and he tries to lead them into a confrontation with the hellspawn on his trail. Planning a double-cross for later has a lot to recommend it, since they have his help taking out the tsayid and he's probably weakened from the fight.

The Rewards

More exposition, but generally one of the scenes where the players' role playing earns them Plot Points, rather than if they score information. At the very least, they should leave the scene with another point or two.

Scene 2: 32-20 Blues

Now they know the truth, the hunters can do some research and tool up to go and take out this "demon," or they can pursue whatever other plan they've come up with. Depending on how it's played, this scene can be no more than a few minutes of talking, or it can involve some serious breaking and entering as the hunters go shopping for gear.

The Setup

While the location where this scene takes place is not important to the story, it can make a great difference to what the hunters can do. Information gathering is easier in a university library with Internet access than in a one-room shack in the middle of nowhere, and recovering from wounds is easier in a small-town clinic than in a graveyard.

The Problems

As the players decide what their characters are doing, you should adjust the difficulty of the various tasks according to the resources they have at their disposal.

GETTING PATCHED UP

One or more hunters are probably wounded, and depending on their Skills and situation they may find it EASY or DIFFICULT to recover from Wound damage. Alan Mills' body is not in the best of shape either, but the demon possessing it seems unconcerned.

RE-EQUIPPING

Having seen how tough the tsayid is in its biker body, the hunters probably want to get their hands on some extra firepower. Solutions might include a visit to a local gun store (legal or otherwise), drafting some extra help (which can be a good way to introduce new characters to the group), and mystical research and equipment gathering. You can cover this activity with a few dice rolls or spin it out into a whole Act by itself, as preferred.

RESEARCHING ANTI-DEMON MEASURES

Pages 130-132 of the *Supernatural RPG Core Rule Book* covers the nature of demons in general and lists a few things that should help the hunters to fight them. As with weapons and mundane equipment, you can cover the task of researching and assembling the necessary materials in detail or gloss over it, as preferred.

If they know it's a tsayid, then they might try coming up with ways to weaken or harm such a thing. Clever hunters might think of weird things like grounding the biker with a length of chain and a lot of water (holy water even better). If they do have this idea, or something else related to "dump the biker in water" you can decide if you think it will work or not. Or you could ask them to spend Plot Points, and then you tell it would work, because that's the sort of thing Plot Points are for.

RESEARCHING THE CHINESE GENERAL

The Mills demon insists that this is a waste of time, as the historical character bears as much resemblance to the loose demon as an infant does to an adult. A HARD use of Knowledge nets information on several ancient Chinese generals who were renowned for their brutality, but no real leads. Mills claims that he was not briefed on the target's original name, and that the "demon" currently goes by a number of different names, none of them pronounceable with human vocal equipment.

DADDY NEEDS A NEW BODY

Now he's established in his "bounty hunter" persona, the demon possessing Alan Mills decides that he needs a new body with more combat effectiveness. The hunters will probably be horrified at this idea, and lively discussions will ensue. If it seems that this will lose him the hunters' help the demon will back down with an ironic "Doesn't hurt to ask," but the hunters (and the players) should be spooked for the rest of the adventure. They may catch him casting appraising glances at their own bodies, and worry whenever he's out of their sight. This is not a vital part of the story, but playing it well can add some spice to things.

TACTICAL PLANNING

Mills claims that when the biker jumped him he had just found out that it was holed up in an abandoned house on the outskirts of a small town

not far away. This is another lie; he knows that wherever he goes, the other demon is bound to show up sooner or later. He can draw a rough map of the outside of the house, but has not seen the inside.

The Results

By the end of this scene the hunters should have a plan and enough equipment to carry it out. They may be helping Mills willingly or unwillingly, but they certainly shouldn't trust him. They may even plan to double-cross him once the tsayid is out of the way.

The Rewards

It's often a good idea, in "montage" scenes like this one, to hand out a Plot Point for every clever or resourceful element the hunters stack up in their planning and preparation. Think of it as loading their plans with dramatic potential. They're going to need Plot Points for the next few confrontations, after all.

Scene 3: Stop Breakin' Down

The hunters are ready to kick some hellspawn butt, and the possessed Alan Mills leads them to the abandoned house. Nobody's home, so they have some time to prepare the battleground. When the biker arrives, it's clobberin' time.

The Setup

The house is empty, but Mills assures them that this is the right place and the tsayid must be out looking for him. The tsayid is tracking them to the house at this moment, and shows up in a little while.

Just how long it takes the tsayid-possessed biker to arrive is up to you and depends in part on the strength of the hunting party. If they're mostly Rookies, give them at least a half hour to prepare the ground for the battle that they know is coming. Veteran hunters will only need fifteen minutes or so, while a Seasoned group should have what it takes to deal with him showing up in five minutes or less. As well as preparing the field of battle, the hunters probably want to set up everything they need for an exorcism.

If any of the hunters becomes suspicious at finding the house apparently untouched, the Mills demon insists that he can see and sense clear indications of the possessed biker's recent presence, and he has no time to explain it all to a bunch of dumb mortals because the tsayid could be back at any moment. They need to be preparing, not wondering why they can't see things that mortals can't see.

Outside: The house looks abandoned, all right. The paint is peeling, the front door is off its hinges, and most of the windows are broken. There is no useful cover anywhere near the house.

Inside: Everything is covered with dust. The floorboards are bare, and shreds of wallpaper hang from the walls. Windows are either bare or half-covered by decaying curtains.

Front Hall and Stairs: Doors lead to the drawing room, dining room, and kitchen, and the stairs lead up to the second floor. There are a few footprints in the dust by the front door. It's HARD to see that some of them are recent; an extraordinary success shows that none of the visible prints were made by the same size and type of boots that the possessed biker wore, but Mills brushes off any doubts by suggesting that the demon has simply picked up a new body. Halfway up the stairs is a dangerously rotten board, which is HARD to spot. Anyone who doesn't see it falls through, trapping their leg until they make an EASY Agility action that inflicts a Wound for each botch.

Drawing Room: The room contains a broken rocking chair and a moldering couch that counts as light cover. The couch is heavy and requires two people to move it. Above the fireplace hangs a rusty antique musket, which cannot be made to fire without a FORMIDABLE repair task; even then, there is no gunpowder or ammunition for it in the house. However, it's equivalent to a baseball bat (d6 B) when used as a club. In the hearth is an iron poker that counts as a nightstick (d4 B).

Dining Room: The chairs in here are rotten and mostly broken, and they're no use as furniture or weapons. The table is heavier, and if tipped over it can be used as cover. Doors lead to the kitchen and front hall.

Kitchen: This room contains a number of cabinets (now useful only as firewood) and an iron stove. Searching the wreckage of the cabinets (an EASY task) turns up a rusty carving knife (d2 W). A pantry contains four empty bottles and a few dead roaches. Doors lead to the dining room, the front hall, and the scullery.

Scullery: Behind the kitchen is the scullery with a stoneware sink. The faucets turn, but there is no water. A couple of broken dishes and a wooden pail stand under the sink. Doors lead to the kitchen and outside.

Outhouse: This is built lean-to fashion against the house. It was originally a two-seater with a thin dividing wall, but the wall and the seats have fallen in. There is nothing here but a rich crop of nettles.

Landing: A cupboard contains some forgotten scraps of bedding that are now a thriving moth colony. Everything is covered in squirming grubs, and a cloud of moths flies out in a panic as soon as the door is opened. The distraction kicks up the Difficulty of any task attempted on the landing by a +2 step for d2 rounds. If necessary, treat the moths as an insect swarm (see p. 156 of the core rulebook) with no attacks. Doors lead to the bathroom and the three bedrooms.

Bedroom 1: The master bedroom is above the drawing room. There is a dull and speckled brass bed whose mattress has fallen through and become a rats' nest. There are six rats hanging out in the mattress, and if they spot the hunters first no one will hear anything but rustling and scrabbling as they escape into the space between the walls. If anyone happens to surprise or corner one of them, it will try to bite once and run for its life. Opposite the bed is a tall, empty wardrobe with one door hanging off. The other door is on the floor and has a broken and spotted mirror fastened to the inside.

Rat

Description Your basic rat: beady eyes, dirty fur, scaly tail, and pointy little teeth. Rats just want to hang out in their nest, look for food, and make lots of baby rats. They will only fight if they're surprised or cornered, and they will take any chance they can to get away from something as big as a human. Their **bite** (1W) can be painful but the biggest danger is disease because they're none too picky about oral hygiene.

Ag d8 **Str** d2 **Vit** d2 **Ale** d10 **Int** d2 **Wil** d8

Init d8+d10; **LP** 4

Traits Sharp Sense (hearing, smell) d6

Skills Perception d4, Survival d4, Unarmed combat d4

Rat Bites Blood poisoning's nasty, and after a day without medical attention a rat-bitten hunter must make a successful HARD Resistance check or be out of commission with fever, shakes, and delirium. The next day, there's no chance of dying and an EASY Alertness + Medicine roll sees the patient good as new in 24 hours. On day two, staying alive without treatment

requires an EASY Resistance check, successful treatment requires an AVERAGE Alertness + Medicine roll, and recovery time is two days. On each successive day without treatment, the difficulty of Resistance and treatment rolls increases by a +1 step and the recovery time after treatment increases by one day.

Bedroom 2: This room is above the dining room, and contains nothing but a faded spot on the wall where a picture must have hung once. The window has a good view of the outside doors to the kitchen and the scullery, and the rear of the house.

Bathroom: The bathroom is above the scullery. The cast iron tub is a good size. Like the sink in the scullery, the faucets here turn but there is no water. If the hunters can disconnect the pipes and move it (a HARD Strength task—up to three characters can throw their Strength together), the tub could provide heavy cover.

Bedroom 3: This room is above the kitchen. It looks like it was used for storage. There are a couple of crates in here that could be piled up to make light cover for one person. There is also a dressmaker's form on a stand, which could look something like a headless body at first glance, if the light is bad (AVERAGE Alertness check at night). A second glance clears up any confusion, but by then a startled hunter might have shot at the thing and given their position away. The window at the back is a good lookout point, but doesn't cover the kitchen and scullery doors unless the lookout sticks his or her head all the way out.

The Problems

This is a straightforward fight. The hunters have a little time to prepare and a few things to play with, but in the end it's all down to preparing the ground and dealing with the combat.

The hunters can wait in the house and jump the tsayid as he comes in, or they can wait outside and surround the place once he's in there. The outside approach allows them to do something like setting fire to the house with the tsayid inside and jumping on him when he comes out all ablaze, but there's very little cover within fifty yards of the house. Also—and the Mills demon knows this even though the hunters don't—the possessed biker won't go into the house if Mills isn't already in there, and he's not charmed by the thought of using himself as bait.

Mills argues for getting into the house and setting up traps and ambushes. He uses the lack of outside cover as an argument against staking out

the house, and he also points out that if the house is on fire, there is no way to tell the black smoke of an escaping demon from the black smoke of the fire itself. He won't tell them this if they've already figured out that tsayid leave bodies as lightning and not smoke, though—he keeps up with the hunters' current "theories."

The possessed biker still has the wounds from previous combats, but they don't slow him down noticeably. As before, his priority is to grab Mills, knock him out with the stungun or with an old-fashioned blow to the head, and get away somewhere so he can recover the escaped soul. He fights the hunters if they attack him or get in his way, but it's clear that he's after Mills.

The Results

If this fight looks like it's going bad, Mills gets out of there and this time he won't look back. The hunters can try to find him, but he's out of the state in a few hours and out of the country in a few days, and so is the hellspawn that's hunting him.

The tsayid doesn't quit this time, even if it's in imminent danger of being destroyed. If it's not able to capture Mills it turns to lightning, leaves the biker's dying body, and goes in search of another one. It's too corny to have its last words be "I'll be back" in a strong Austrian accent, but the idea is the same.

If the hunters were planning to pull a double-cross on the Mills demon as soon as the possessed biker hits the floor, they had better be quick about it because he's not going to stick around. Go to the next scene.

The Rewards

A confrontation with the tsayid is worth another two Plot Points. If they actually defeat it here, double that award, and remember to give them Plot Points for handling the other tricky variables on their plate—Mills, rats, creepy old building, and so on.

Act III—I Believe I'll Dust My Broom

Oh, boy. Our brave hunters have been played big time. They just took out the hunter and now the hunted is making like Elvis and leaving the building. They have to stop it fast or they're looking at a long search. It's not a hopeless search, but by the time they track the demon down it has

possessed an art dealer and is shopping for the last ingredient in a ritual that makes it undetectable. Then it's gonna have free run of the whole world.

Scene 1: Ramblin' On My Mind

Demons lie, but this one's a prizewinner. Having fooled the hunters into getting rid of the real bounty hunter, the demon pauses for a gloat before heading off to pastures new.

The Setup

The hunters are standing in the ruins of the abandoned house, looking down at a dead or seriously injured biker. They may find it hard to believe that this is finally over. Well, it's not.

Mills joins them, wearing a big grin and clapping in ironic recognition of their efforts.

"Thanks, kiddies," he says. "That ought to slow the sucker down for a while. Now, I need a change of clothes and then I've got a plane to catch." If no one does anything his eyes go solid black, he exhales a cloud of black smoke, and the body of Alan Mills collapses to the floor while the smoke goes out through the nearest window or chimney.

The Problems

The hunters only have a few seconds to react: ten turns at most. If they were planning to double-cross the Mills demon, now's the time. Here's what they're faced with.

HE AIN'T LEFT YET

The demon is focused on getting away, and it's hard to distract him and lead him into a Devil's Trap or any other kind of ambush the hunters may have prepared. A splash of holy water surprises him enough to lose his action for the first turn, but after that he's even more determined to get out of there.

The best kind of plan involves jumping Mills while he's still talking and preventing the demon from leaving his body so that they can conduct an exorcism. The hunters need something that will stop the demon from coming out his mouth, eyes, or ears—and not to be indelicate, but there are other bodily openings it might try to use. If the hunters want to keep Mills alive they will need to make sure that whatever they use to block the nose and mouth will not stop him from breathing. Possibilities include holy water, blessed

communion wafer, pages from a Bible, and good old-fashioned salt. A little duct tape should keep things in place, but remember the suffocation issue.

Remember, too, that keeping the demon in the body is not the same as rendering the demon helpless. Even if Mills is hog-tied, the demon is pretty strong, and can probably muscle its way out of a gag or bond if the hunters are not paying close enough attention. You should decide how easy or difficult to make this scene, depending on the hunters' level of experience and how good their plan is.

HE'S LEFT THE BODY

Once the demon is out of Mill's body, things become a good deal more complicated. The black smoke moves fast—real fast—and is invulnerable to physical damage. The demon-trapping bottle Mills came up with in **Act I, Scene 2** is bull, but the hunters may have prepared a Devil's Trap in advance and have an outside chance at diverting the demon into the trap. This not only takes a handful of Plot Points to pull off, but a **HEROIC** result on Agility + Lore/Demons. Kids, don't try this one at home.

HE'S LEFT THE BUILDING

The worst-case scenario is that the hunters were caught completely by surprise, and just stood and stared as the black smoke from Mills' body went out of the house. The hunters may try to chase down the black smoke from Mills and the lightning from the biker to do whatever they can to prevent them from possessing new bodies, but they have almost no chance of succeeding. In the first place, the two escaping spirits take off in opposite directions, and by the time the hunters get out of the house they will have no way of finding them. Second, both the Mills demon and the tsayid stay close to the ground and disappear into the first cover they can find. It's a lose/lose.

The Results

If this scene goes well, the hunters have exorcised the demon from Mills and forced the tsayid out of the biker's body. In that case, the adventure's over and the remaining scenes are unnecessary. With the Mills demon returned to Hell, the tsayid may go back too, or if you want it may come back and attack the hunters for getting in its way.

If the scene goes badly, one or both of their antagonists have vacated, leaving the hunters with a choice: to try and track one or both of them, or to shrug their shoulders and walk away. The remaining scenes assume that they decide to continue the chase. If they walk away, both the demon and the tsayid are out there and you can have the hunters stumble across their path during some future adventure.

It may take a minute or two for the hunters to figure out how they've been played. If hints need to be dropped to the players, you should point out that the possessed biker chose to attack Mills here, knowing that there were probably armed hunters backing Mills up. A fugitive, on the other hand, would most likely abandon a hideout that had been found by his pursuers and get a head start before they realized he wasn't going to show up. In fact—no, it couldn't be—did they actually take out the hunter and let the fugitive get away? These and similar thoughts should come into the hunters' minds as their heads clear after the fight, even if it takes a few Intelligence rolls and other actions to get the information across to the players.

As all this is sinking in, the hunters have other problems to attend to. First, the combat was probably a violent one, and parts of the house may be on fire and/or about to collapse. Second, if either Mills or the biker survived the pounding their bodies took in the fight, the hunters have to decide what to do with them. Do they leave them to die, or drag them out, patch them up, and get them some medical attention? Do they even tell them why they suddenly wake up in the ICU with some very weird memories?

They'd both make useful contacts, and this could even be a way to introduce a new character into the group. Mills has some serious tech chops and could make a huge difference to the group's research capabilities. He could also help them with the design and manufacture of electronic gear. He has the imagination to understand what has happened to him (as his Role Playing Games Specialty clearly proves) and far from being a startup failure who sold his soul instead of stock options, he might actually be a successful technology entrepreneur with some cash to throw around. The biker (whose name is **Moose**, by the way) can handle himself in a fight and has a lot of biker buddies as well as contacts at biker bars across the country. Game stats for a typical biker and computer geek can be found at the end of this adventure.

The Rewards

Yeah, the players may be pretty mad during this scene. Good and mad. Plot Points can take the edge off, so distribute as many as three Plot Points per player for their efforts, including any more demonic confrontations. Don't reward passive behavior, though. If a hunter's on the sidelines, he doesn't get the benefits.

Scene 2: Stones In My Passway

How do you track down a demon that can switch bodies at will? This is the problem facing Our Heroes in this scene, and they find out that it's not as impossible as it sounds.

The Setup

One or both of the demons escaped and the hunters have to figure out a way to track them. This isn't easy, since both the Mills demon and the tsayid possess new bodies at the first opportunity. The Mills demon heads for a big city such as New York or Los Angeles and possesses an art dealer to put together the things it needs for a ritual to disguise its demonic essence so the tsayid cannot find it. The tsayid keeps following until it's destroyed or until it captures its quarry.

The Problems

The first problem is tracking the escaped hellspawn. There are various ways to handle this, both mundane and supernatural.

WITH MUNDANE MEANS

If the hunters deserve a break, then Mills has a printout of an e-ticket in his pocket which indicates where the demon intends to go, or a scrap of paper with a contact name and phone number in the destination city. If not, then they have to check local missing persons reports to try to get names and photos of possible new bodies for either the demon or its tsayid hunter. Demons don't generally like to stay in black smoke form for too long, and the tsayid is similarly loath to hang out as lightning, so any reported disappearances within twenty-four hours of the big fight are likely leads. It's **HARD** to check the bodies' movements through credit card receipts either with Intelligence + Influence (Administration and Bureaucracy

are both useful specialties) or Tech/Hacking. The Contacts Asset may also be useful in finding this kind of information.

Don't forget to remind the players that even brain-dead bodies are perfectly fine for demons to possess, so they'll be casting their net pretty wide. In the interests of drama, of course, stumbling across a good lead is a perfectly reasonable option.

THE SUPERNATURAL OPTION

Supernatural means include Clairvoyance, Premonitions, or a helpful word from a Spirit Guide. Spending a Plot Point or two can turn up a ritual that effectively sticks a pin in a map to show where either the demon, the tsayid, or both are at that time.

The Results

If they're successful, the hunters track the demon to a small warehouse in a big city. You can decide which city, depending on the needs of the campaign; if the hunters need to be somewhere in particular for the start of a new adventure, the hunt for the demon can lead them right there.

The Rewards

Let's face it: the hunters are going to track down the demon. So with that as a given, hand out a Plot Point per player and consider adding more if they were particularly clever or cunning in the decision-making. If not, move on.

Scene 3: If I Had Possession Over Judgment Day

The demon's possessed one **Frederick Westburg**, an importer of exotic art and home accents. After exhausting the possibilities of demon interior decorator jokes, the hunters stake out Westburg's warehouse and figure a way to get in. Some snooping will turn up evidence of his planned Tibetan ritual, and then it's up to the hunters to stop it.

The Setup

The warehouse is situated in a small business park on the outskirts of the city, with a parking lot at the front and a loading dock at the back.

Outside: The building has no company logo or other markings on the outside, and the area's completely unremarkable. Security cameras are set up at all four corners, covering all sides of the building.

Reception Area: The front door opens onto this carpeted room, which has a reception desk and doors leading to a restroom, an office, and the warehouse itself. The desk is staffed 24/7 by one of three security guards (use the description on p. 160 of the *Supernatural RPG*), each on an eight-hour shift. All are armed with a light pistol (d4 W), a nightstick (d4 B), and a radio linking them to their base. Whoever is on duty passes the time reading magazines and watching the monitors linked to the security cameras. None of them is about to die for their employer (actually, for their agency's client) but they call in before going to investigate anything suspicious. If the agency does not get the all-clear within five minutes of the initial call they send a car with two more guards; it arrives after fifteen minutes.

Restroom: A typical restroom with a toilet and sink. It's clean, and the only noticeable thing is a stack of a half-dozen sports magazines on top of the cistern.

Office: The office contains a large desk with a couple of chairs in front of it, and a lateral file cabinet against one wall. The files relate to a normal import business specializing in imported home furnishings like stone Buddha heads, faux-antique statues, and Indian bronzes. The average price of an object is around \$50.00, and nothing in inventory cost Westburg more than \$500.00 to acquire. The desk drawers are locked with an AVERAGE lock when Westburg is not present. The top right-hand drawer contains a few papers and a loaded .38 Special (light pistol, d4 wounds), plus a box with 14 more rounds. The other drawers contain more papers relating to the business. There's a computer on the desk containing more business files, including one encrypted file (HARD to decrypt), which is a list of objects (see sidebar). Anyone who speaks or reads Chinese realizes on an AVERAGE check that the phrase "tsang-chi-lai" refers to concealment. A HARD use of Lore reveals that the names of the cup and trumpet on the list match the

descriptions of those in the safe (see below). A recent email from a contact in China refers to "the scroll in which you expressed interest" being shipped by air and due to arrive in two days from the date when the hunters first see the building. Checking online bank records (which is HARD to do) shows a payment made to the sender of the email two days ago, for \$125,000.00.

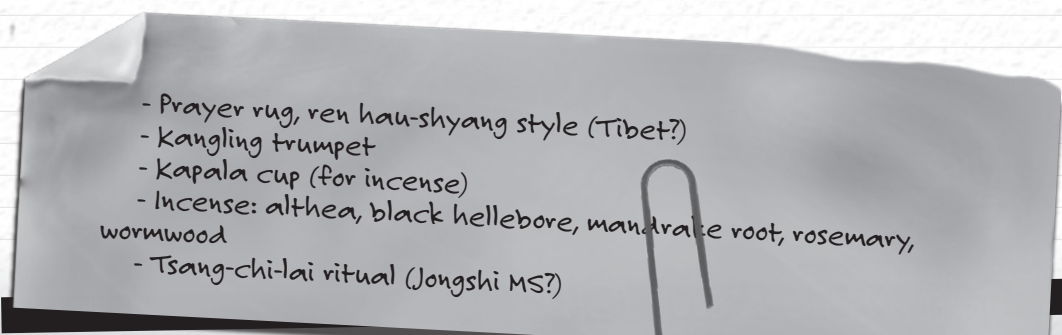
Warehouse: The warehouse is part-filled with crates containing the company's merchandise. They are upscale home décor items rather than genuine antiques, and while some of them may look exotic none of them has any mystical power. A crate in one corner of the warehouse conceals a safe (HARD to open) containing a Tibetan prayer rug, a short trumpet made from a human femur bound in silver, a dish made from a human skull with scorch marks inside, and a bag filled with an aromatic brownish powder. An AVERAGE use of Lore reveals that these are ritual items used in a variety of Tibetan ceremonies.

The Problems

Here are some likely options for action in the warehouse.

CASING THE JOINT

By watching the building the hunters will be able to establish that office hours are 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. During that time there is one other man in the building beside the security guard—Westburg himself—and he comes and goes between the office and the warehouse area. A cleaning crew of two people comes in at 7:00 pm and leaves at 8:00 pm. Deliveries are on Tuesdays and Thursdays, consisting of one or two eighteen-wheelers that pull up to the loading dock and offload crates. The delivery trucks normally arrive mid-morning. Smaller delivery vans, usually in the livery of local furnishing stores, come and go at irregular times during business hours.

- 
- Prayer rug, ren hau-shyang style (Tibet?)
 - Kangling trumpet
 - Kapala cup (for incense)
 - Incense: althea, black hellebore, mandrake root, rosemary, wormwood
 - Tsang-chi-lai ritual (Jongshi MS?)

RESEARCH

Although the building itself is unmarked, a map of the business park reveals that a company called Foreign Accents occupies it. EASY research in local business directories reveals that the company was set up about ten years ago and supplies exotic home furnishings to a number of local stores. The owner is given as Frederick Westburg.

GETTING INSIDE

Given the cameras and round-the-clock security guards, the hunters don't find it easy to get inside the warehouse for an undisturbed look around. Posing as buyers for a furniture store gets them a guided tour around the warehouse and a peek inside a few crates, but they will need to be more creative if they want to search the place. If they cannot search the place, they will miss the clues in the office and the objects in the hidden safe in the warehouse. Hunters posing as engineers find it HARD to rig the security monitors so they show a one-hour loop, effectively cutting them off from the cameras. How the hunters get around the guards is up to them.

FIGURING OUT THE PLAN

Various clues can be found in the office and warehouse (see above) that hint that Westburg is planning to conduct a Tibetan ritual that has something to do with concealment. The final ingredient, a rare scroll, is on its way. The rolls for understanding the significance of the various clues are given above. If the players are unable to put the clues together and realize that the demon is trying to make itself undetectable, you should allow each hunter a HARD Intelligence + Lore + Intuitive Leaps (for characters who have that trait) action to put the pieces together.

The Results

Hopefully, the hunters can figure out what is going on and prevent it from happening, and then capture Westburg and exorcise the demon back to Hell.

If the hunters do nothing to prevent it, a courier delivers the scroll at around 5:15 pm two days from now. The demon spends four hours studying the scroll, and then locks himself in the warehouse rather than leaving at his usual time. The ritual takes around two hours to complete, after which "Westburg" is undetectable as a demon

by aura. Neither a hunter nor a pursuing tsayid can identify him as possessed unless he openly uses a demonic ability. The demon then skips through a succession of new bodies to throw off possible pursuit, and disappears into the mortal population.

The Rewards

Another mix of planning and investigation deserves two Plot Points each, or half that if the players don't twig to the plot going on without some major flashing signs. Once they settle the score with Westburg/Mills, they get another two Plot Points each.

Continuing the Adventure

If the hunters fail to take the demon out of Westburg, this adventure could turn into a chase which has the potential to last for a very long time. If he completed the ritual, the demon is a lot harder to find, both for the hunters themselves and for any more tsayid bounty hunters sent from Hell to bring it back. From now on, every time the hunters run across a story about a securities fraud or a pyramid scheme gone awry and hear the guy behind it claim it wasn't him, that something was forcing him to do whatever he did, they will probably wonder if this is their demon. It might very well be, but of course it will have skipped to a new body as soon as the net started to close.

But that's not the worst of it. By helping Mills the hunters have made a serious enemy out of a tsayid, and they're not the forgiving type. It could show up and attack them at any time.

New Assets

Plausible (d6-d12)

Maybe you have an honest face, maybe you know just what to say, but in some way you are very good at making people believe you. This not only makes you a good liar, it also helps when you are trying to convince someone of something that is true but hard to believe—like, for example, demons being real. Whenever you are trying to make someone believe something, your Trait die is added to any actions to convince them.

Ordinary People

These two stock characters are handy once Alan Mills or Moose are freed of possession, but they can be used in any adventure you like when the need arises.

Biker

Description He lives to ride, and likes drinking and fighting almost as much. A modern-day cowboy on a steel horse, no one tells him what to do—at least not twice, being unconscious and/or bleeding shortly after the first occasion. The only way to win his respect is to be just as badass as he is. Fight him to a standstill and he'll be your friend for life, as long as you're not ridin' Japanese. It's likely he's seen some real freaky stuff on his endless travels, and he may even know what a hunter is.

Motivation Live free or die tryin'. He wants the freedom of the open road, good grub and cheap booze (and cheap women don't hurt either), and a satisfying fight now and again. As long as there's no ass hat telling him he can't have a little fun, he's real easy to get along with.

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d10 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d12
Init d6 + d6; **LP** 20

Traits Born Behind the Wheel/Motorcycles d4, Brawler d2, Cool Under Fire d2, Gear Head d2, Tough d4, Addiction/Alcohol d4, Anger Issues d2, Crude d4

Skills Drive d6/Motorcycle d12, Guns d4, Influence d6/Intimidation d10, Mechanic d6/Motorcycles d12, Melee Weapons d6/Knives d8, Perception d6/Sight d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Gear Motorcycle, knife (d2 W), chain (d4 W)

Computer Geek

Description They laughed in high school, but now he holds the power. With a few keystrokes he can empty your bank account, erase your credit, put you on a hundred watch lists from terrorist to pedophile, and do any of a dozen other things that you really don't want to happen. But he has not succumbed to the power of the Dark Side, and uses his gift for good. Proudly wearing a tie with a short-sleeved shirt, the computer geek is the guy who keeps everything running. He knows more than anyone could possibly imagine—and if information exists, he can find it.

Motivation The world can be a better place.

Information is the answer and technology is the key. Any problem from world hunger to corporate corruption to demonic possession can be solved with the right information and the right technology. He's used to being unappreciated, but data has no favorites and tomorrow is there to be shaped.

Agi d4 **Str** d4 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d12 **Wil** d10
Init d4 + d6; **LP** 10

Traits Higher Education d6, Low Profile d2, Tech Expert d8, Coward d4, Fragile d4, Socially Awkward d4

Skills Craft d6/Electronics d8, Discipline d6/Concentration d8, Drive d4, Knowledge d6/Video Games d8/Role playing Games d8, Perception d6/Video Games d8, Science d6/Physical Sciences d10, Tech d6/Computer Programming d12+d2/Create Technical Devices d8/Electronics d8/Hacking d10

Gear Laptop, computer repair kit

His Lesser Half

By Ralph Dula



Adventure Summary

Unlike the other scenarios in this collection, **His Lesser Half** is a lot more direct and follows a fairly straight line toward the climax. It's good for a straightforward evening or two of action. Hunters with a healthy amount of combat experience will find it easier to negotiate the conflict scenes, though some investigative know-how will be useful.

The hunters are asked to meet a relatively well-known "fixer," **Zach Schram**, at a normal-looking bed and breakfast in New Jersey. As soon as they're brought up to speed on the job, a small crowd of thugs shows up to beat some threat into them. They learn more about the thugs' boss, **Larry Boher**, and the strange behavior he's been displaying for the past few months regarding Schram. The more they find out about this guy, the more mysterious his actions seem to be.

The biggest fear for many hunters is that one of their own might go over to the other side. Not just simply selling out, but actually becoming one of the inhuman beasts they dedicate their lives to killing. Having to face a monster that's not only stronger and tougher than you, but knows everything you do because it's fought side-by-side with you in the past, is one of the worst situations a hunter can be in. When a hunter reunites with a colleague after a long absence, in the back of their mind they're often wondering if something's gotten to them since they last time they met, and if they'll end up killing someone they once called friend. Or maybe get killed by them.

So what if the situation is reversed? What happens when it turns out a fellow hunter was never human, and his current target is a human being, albeit one who dabbles in the black arts? And what if the hunter in question has no idea of his inhuman origins?

You and your players are about to find out.

When the hunters investigate Boher's house, the story gets thick with disaster and supernatural hoodoo. Boher's responsible for something major, and uncovering the secret he's been keeping (and his connection to Schram) drops the hunters smack-dab into the middle of one singularly messed-up situation. And that's not counting the mob hit.

Breakdown of the Acts

Here's the way the adventure comes together.

Act I: I Know A Man Who Knows A Man Who Knows You: The hunters meet Zach Schram, get jumped by some hired muscle, and pick Schram's brain about the mysterious Larry Boher.

Act II: Home of the Strange: The hunters break into Boher's house, but run into trouble of the canine variety.

Act III: We Were Just Passing By And Noticed You Were Preparing For A Siege: The hunters jump on the trail of Boher, and find out just how dangerous the man's life is—and how messed up Schram's life is, too.

Here's the Story

Larry Boher grew up in New Jersey, a boy born with a good head on his shoulders, but with nothing in the way of morality or pleasant personality to fill it with. The fact that he got the short straw—literally—when it came to his physical development did nothing to help any of those things. He stopped growing when he was in the sixth grade, and being 5'2" and only 120 pounds soaking wet, with all the bullying and teasing that drew to him, Boher came out with the distinct feeling that the world owed him and he'd collect that debt any way he could.

Unfortunately for the world at large, the taint of the supernatural in Jersey goes far beyond the Jersey Devil and the occasional Mothman sighting. It's got its fair share of dabblers in the black arts, and Boher was related to one of them. Grandma Boher died long before Larry was born, and her collection of arcane tomes sat in the family attic for years, until Larry went pawing through them one night while looking for something to sell for quick cash. For some reason he decided that the spells and rituals detailed would actually work, and he set out to enact one that promised to "magnify his physical form and protect it from infirmities, present and future."

That kind of mojo takes a long time and a lot of human sacrifice to work. Unfortunately for the world, Larry had that kind of patience, and his frail physical form meant it was easy for him to get people to let their guard down around him, never expecting him for a threat. Larry studied up on narcotics and became a master of luring victims away from others. So it was that dozens of people were brought to a run-down house on the edge of town that Larry rented exclusively for occult activity.

Twenty years ago Boher completed the necessary number of sacrifices. While he may not have grown in stature or gained muscle tone, he could now hit like a prizefighter and had the stamina of a marathon runner. He was never sick after the ritual was over, and all five of his senses improved. The fact that he didn't need to exercise or watch his diet, let alone make further human sacrifices, was just icing on the cake.

As stereotypical as it sounds, being a Jersey boy meant Boher had friends who were in the mob. It took some time, but after he convinced them just how tough he'd become they decided they could use him. Soon the tales of the frail looking hitman who could snap your neck with one punch, even if he had to stand on a box to do it, became a statewide urban legend. Larry loved it; it allowed him to vent his frustration with the world one murder at a time, earning a tidy paycheck in the process.

Thanks to an unexpected side effect of the ritual he enacted, Larry's many victims may find justice. The books had instructed Boher to make a fetish as part of the ritual. Boher believed that with each killing the newly freed soul was bound to the fetish, which stored them like a battery until he had murdered enough people for the ritual to change him. The books led him to believe that the souls would be completely consumed once the spell was over, the essences of those he'd killed being completely eradicated.

Such was not the case. While the individual personalities were destroyed by the spell's completion, a fair amount of life energy remained, with the negative traits Larry wanted to get rid of being bound into it. This invisible energy escaped from the fetish when the ritual ended, seeking out a host for itself to dwell in.

As fate would have it, that host turned out to be one Zach Schram. Born dead just as Boher finished his ritual, both the doctors and his grieving parents were shocked when the newborn suddenly started breathing again. His parents hailed it as a

miracle, the doctor in charge of the delivery made a tidy sum writing a medical journal article about it, and life went on.

Only it wasn't the spirit that was originally intended for Zach's body that was in the driver's seat. That spirit had departed the moment the body had died, replaced by the amalgam of spirits left over from Boher's ritual. Their energy reanimated the body, and it was their fusion of souls that gave the body life.

The amalgamated spirits that live in "Zach" have no idea of what they are, or any inkling that they are anything more than a normal human being who has had the worst luck when it comes to health. He's never been able to develop decent muscle tone, and growing up he spent more time out of school than in, his immune system nearly non-existent. Combined with his lack of coordination and massive number of allergies, his life has been one of near-constant suffering and agony.

The fact that such a feeble specimen of humanity might become a hunter is surprising to those who know him. Always having an interest in the supernatural, perhaps because of some unconscious knowledge of what he is, Zach's studies quickly led him to understand just how real monsters were, and he couldn't turn a blind eye to their existence. Well aware that his fragile health made him a poor choice for direct confrontation with the supernatural, he decided to be a behind-the-scenes supporter, providing hunters with the gear and artifacts that they need to do their job. Making enough to support himself is just a fringe benefit.

Act I: A man I know . . .

Part of being a hunter, or at least one that survives more than a few hunts, is not being afraid of asking for help. Whether it's standing shoulder-to-shoulder against a vampire or just getting a place to stay or money for bus fare, hunters know they have to look out for one another. So when the hunters get a request for a meeting with one of their fellows, asking for their aid, it's not that suspicious. When the hunter goes through a number of cut outs to ask for a personal meeting, and refuses to give details as to why they should meet, *then* it gets suspicious.

THE HUNTER JOB NETWORK

Most hunters know other hunters, and even if they don't know many, the ones they do know might know a lot of others. This informal, loose association of like-minded (or at least, similarly obsessed) people is frequently the lead-in for a job like this one. Before the game starts, it's important to determine the identity of this walk-on character. It could be somebody from an earlier story, or a mentor, or even a family member. Whoever it is, it's somebody the hunters know, somebody they trust.

If they've got Assets like Contacts or Reputation, it's someone associated with those Traits who gets in touch. On the dark side of the coin, someone with the Idealist Complication might have been too open with their contact information amongst their fellow hunters, because how could sharing ways to contact them be a bad thing?

Scene 1: If You Accept This Mission . . .

As this scene begins, someone the hunters know and trust delivers a letter to them, a request for help from Zach Schram (see the sidebar, "The Hunter Job Network.") The bearer of the message doesn't know much about Schram, saying that "a friend of a friend of a friend" asked for the letter to be delivered to the hunters. He does know that Schram has a reputation as a fixer, being a person to go when you have money and need something special for a hunt. While the Bela Talbots of the world make the growth of their bank account the most important thing, Schram's known to supply things for an IOU, with those IOUs being politely forgotten more often than not. With the letter delivered the friend departs, leaving the hunters alone with the missive.

The Setup

The letter's in a white envelope, and the hunters might be surprised that it's run off a computer printer rather than the usual handwritten note. They may also be surprised that somebody went to all this trouble and didn't leave much information in the letter. It reads:

Table 4.1: Investigation	
Result	Information
AVERAGE	Schram's involved in the world of hunting, though his involvement leans more toward supplying gear to others than actually going out and hunting himself.
HARD	Schram stays out of the hunt due to physical problems. He's got some sort of debilitating illness. Despite that, he's got a sharp mind, and he wheels and deals just as shrewdly as a Wall Street broker.
FORMIDABLE	Schram's taken financial hits when it comes to helping other hunters, never collecting on payments owed to him for gear he's provided. It's earned him a lot of respect over the years, though he also makes a quick buck selling stuff to non-hunters from time to time.
HEROIC	Schram's so screwed up physically that he once, while on a hunt for some flesh-eating blob, he accidentally shot his hunting buddy. The hunter who got shot bears no grudge against Schram; it was an accident, and "he's such a bad shot a flesh wound was the worst he could do to me."

HELLO,
 WORD OF YOUR HUNTING PROWESS HAS
 REACHED ME. I FEEL THAT BECAUSE OF THAT,
 AND BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE YOU KNOW AND DON'T
 KNOW, I CAN CALL UPON YOU FOR ASSISTANCE. I AM
 CONCERNED THAT I AM A TARGET AND I NEED YOU TO
 HELP ME STAY AMONG THE LIVING. PLEASE COME TO
 THE ADDRESS BELOW SO WE CAN TALK IN PERSON.
 I AM SORRY I CAN'T PROVIDE FUNDS FOR YOUR
 JOURNEY, BUT AT THIS POINT I CAN'T BE CERTAIN MY
 BANK ACCOUNT ISN'T BEING MONITORED."

Below the typed section is an address in New Jersey, as well as what could be a signature of someone with very poor handwriting or a place where the printer spit out a blob of ink.

The Problems

At this point alarm bells should be going off in the hunters' heads. A hunter they've never heard of before asking for their assistance, with a letter anybody could have typed up with an illegible signature, not to mention leaving out most of the specifics regarding the job. Is this a trap?

RESEARCHING ZACH

Your players may want to research Zach Schram and try and figure out just who the hell he is and why he might want their help. There's a few good ways to do this.

Willpower + Influence lets a hunter call up his peers and try and find out more about Schram, while Intelligence + Knowledge lets them recall having heard of him before. Use of Intelligence +

Tech could let a hunter snoop around online and find references to Schram, or a player may decide to use Willpower + Covert amongst other hunters to be more sneaky in finding out about the man than someone using Influence.

To determine what it is the hunters find out about Schram, compare their result to table 4.1.

RESEARCHING THE ADDRESS

The hunters might also try looking up the New Jersey address. It's EASY to find out that it's a bed & breakfast owned by the Rendinelli family in a rural part of the state. It couldn't be more normal and mundane.

The Results

The hunters have a little more information, but not the whole picture. It's good enough to get them headed to New Jersey, though. If they're unsure about the whole deal, tell the players that it seems Schram is like a young Bobby Singer, or like Bela Talbot—only male, more reliable, and not as hot.

The Rewards

This is a short scene, not much more than a reference check and exposition, but you can hand out one Plot Point for every level of information the hunters turned up on Schram, based on the table. In other words, if they go HEROIC, they get four Plot Points. Good enough . . .

Scene 2: I Know a Place Out in the Woods . . .

The Setup

After hours of driving with only the occasional house or farm to break the monotony, the hunters drive down a private forest road and approach a luxurious three-story building surrounded by a dozen expensive luxury cars. There's a woman behind the desk, all smiles and curls, who politely welcomes them to the Rendinelli Bed & Breakfast and asks if they're meeting with someone. At the mention of Schram's name the woman nods and directs them to the dining area.

The Problems

The action starts out with some exposition, but it quickly progresses from there.

MEETING ZACH SCHRAM

The hunters can pick Schram out instantly from the room full of B&B guests. The guy is painfully thin, wears a suit that doesn't fit, and as he rises to greet the hunters he knocks over his drink and has a coughing fit. None of the other diners pay the slightest attention to him.

Zach Schram

Description The guy who tries to do good all the time, no matter how bad his life is. Sadly, his life is bad all the time.

Agi d4 **Str** d4 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d12 **Int** d8 **Wil** d12
Init d12 + d4; **LP** 14

Traits Fragile d8, Klutz d8, Rotten Luck d4

Skills Covert d6/Streetwise d10, Discipline d6, Drive d4, Influence d6/Barter d10 /Haggling d10/Persuasion d10, Knowledge d6/Appraisal d10, Lore d6, Melee Weapons d6, Perception d6

Gear Car, home, assortment of occult items at home

Schram introduces himself in a tired and ragged voice. He says he's spent all of his waking hours at the table since he sent the letter. It's EASY to see a perpetual shake in Schram's hands, the reason his letter was typed, not handwritten. A waitress arrives with menus boasting prices that make any hunter without the Wealthy Asset clench up; Schram notes he's paying for everything if anyone complains.

Once the food arrives and everyone is settled in Schram explains why he's called the hunters to him for help. He's been working as a fixer for hunters, as well as making money on the side selling to tourists—people with an interest in mystical artifacts. He's passed off fakes before—he launches into a tale about the fortune he's made selling copies of the paperback *Necronomicon* over the years, but a coughing fit stops him short.

Recently he put out notice that he had a German work from the Seventies, the handwritten tome of a bunch of lunatics in Berlin who were certain they'd discovered a way to transfer emotions from one person to another. In fact their supposed emotional transfers came from an overabundance of drug use, but the book still has a reputation for being a true mystical work. So when it came into Schram's possession he put it up for sale. He was quite surprised when a hunter was the one who came asking to buy the book, offering quite more than it was worth for it. The hunter was one Jonas McCluskey. It's HARD to remember that he's a hunter known for his greed as well as his skill. After he kills a zombie, the rumor goes, he checks to see if it has any gold fillings he can sell. That may be why he's only got four fingers on one hand.

So Jonas bought the book and Schram figured that was the end of that, until Jonas came back to him a few weeks later. Jonas admitted an occult collector by the name of Larry Boher had contacted him. He paid Jonas a hefty sum to acquire the book from Schram and *not* to let Schram learn the real buyer's identity. McCluskey agreed to the deal, but he'd come to Schram with the truth. He was worried he was betraying a brother hunter to one of his enemies. So he told him everything.

Only problem is that Schram has no idea who Boher is.

GENERAL THUGGERY

Just as Schram admits his ignorance of Boher there's a scream from the entranceway. The woman from the front desk is thrown into the dining room and crashes into a wooden table. The four big burly men responsible walk in; their rugged clothes and filthy bodies make it look as though they've been camping out in the woods for days, which in fact is exactly the case. Their eyes quickly settle on Schram and his dining companions, and the men make their way over, making a mess out of anyone who happens to be in their way.

The good news is these men are just normal humans. The bad news is that they're both too stupid and too confident to back down from a fight. Flashing a gun or a badge isn't going to dissuade these men from messing the hunters up.

Quartet of Thugs

Description Willing to die for Boher, as if they fail he'll kill them anyway.

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6
Init d6 + d6; **LP** 18

Traits Brawler d2, Cool Under Fire d6, Duty d12, Tough d8

Skills Athletics d6, Survival d6, Unarmed Combat d6

Gear Camping Gear (in woods), cell phones, beefy fists (d8b+d2b)

Their tactics are simple: rush the hunters and beat them to death. They're counting on surprise and their natural talent for inflicting death to give them the edge in battle. They don't care about innocent bystanders. In fact, they're quite happy with the thought of people soaking up bullets meant for them (here's where you review the Firing into Crowds rules on page 87 of the *Supernatural RPG*). The thugs threaten to shoot an innocent if they think the hunters might do something stupid like dropping their weapons or surrendering. And they follow up on their threat if called on it.

The Results

While they might be a bit bloodied, the hunters shouldn't have that much difficulty defeating the goons. Whether they kill them or just leave them unconscious, they have just had a major showing of violence in a public place, with plenty of witnesses, all of who are shocked by what they have seen. Nobody's more shocked than the members of the bed & breakfast staff, who've been bribed to call the goons as soon as anyone showed up to meet with Schram. Their obvious shock at the defeat of the hired goons (and the fact they're the only staffers who stick around to watch the battle) should clue the hunters into their involvement. It's an EASY task to get them to talk, and they explain they had been paid to keep an eye on Schram, and to make a call if anyone came to meet him. They knew something bad would happen to whoever met with him, but they thought it wouldn't happen

RUNNING SCHRAM

With his low Attributes and his many Complications, Schram comes off as an accident-prone fool who might be a distant relation of Inspector Clouseau. This is intentional. Play it up, because it adds to the adventure on two levels.

The first is humor. It's rare that humor shoves horror into the back seat on *Supernatural*, but it happens. While the threat to life and limb is still present, it shares the stage with over-the-top slapstick. So when Schram fails a roll it should be spectacular, even if he didn't Botch. A failed Covert roll to sneak down some stairs ends with him tumbling down them, cursing at the top of his lungs all the while. A failed Athletics doesn't just mean he couldn't climb the fence, but he overexerted himself so much that his lunch is now visible again for all to see. In short, the hunters should roll their eyes at Schram's failure and wonder why they're bothering to help him.

On another level, Schram's flubs add horror. Once the hunters learn of his origins the comedic failings they witnessed earlier take on a whole new level.

Not only is Schram's existence based on the ravaged remains of the souls of Bohr's victims, but their life is one of complete amnesia of their previous existences, in which constant physical suffering is a norm that defines their life. Suddenly the fellow who was a cross between comic relief and a pain in the ass is now a tragic figure . . . or an unholy beast to be slain, depending on the views of your hunters.

until after they left the building, and they had no clue the thugs-for-hire were camping in the forest waiting for the call to action.

As for the goons themselves, there's not much for them to say. They're muscle-for-hire, though if the hunters manage to successfully interrogate them (against Willpower + Discipline) they let slip that Boher hired them. They say that anybody who met with Schram was to be killed, though they were told to leave Schram unmolested.

For his part, Schram is confused and shocked by the violence. Even if the thugs don't talk he knows it was Boher who sent them. He gathers up the few things he has in his room upstairs, then asks the hunters to follow him home. As he gets into his car he brushes off any questions or concerns about the violence they just committed

or any evidence they might have left. "It's not something you have to worry about," he says. "It's why I chose that place."

And with that he's gone, and as his taillights fade off into the distance hopefully your hunters are right behind them.

The Rewards

This scene's all about the thug throw-down, so hand out two Plot Points each for taking care of that, and an additional two Plot Points for handling the staff and customers smartly during the scene.

Scene 3: Q&A

This scene exists to quiz Schram about what the hell is going on. A lot of it is exposition, and the hunters don't really need to make rolls to get the information out of Schram. Your job is to make the conversation feel organic, so paraphrase when you need to in order to avoid the appearance of just reading off a bunch of text.

The Setup

It takes an hour to reach Schram's home, a one-story house in a nice part of town. Once everyone is settled in and taken advantage of his bathroom to clean off bloodstains or treat wounds he tells his tale. He's shaking as he talks, though whether with rage, fear, or a natural palsy it's hard to tell.

The Problems

The "action" here is all conversation, so try and hit all the main points and then move on once the hunters have what they think they need. It's presented in a kind of question and answer format, but even if the hunters don't ask the exact questions it should work as a guide to the debrief.

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED BACK THERE?

"I can't believe it. The Rendenelli has been around for nearly a century. It's a place the elite go and do things they don't want to be made public, kind of a neutral ground for criminals, politicians, and the wealthy to meet up and make deals and do things that the general public wouldn't approve of. Hell, I stay there semi-regularly to meet with customers. We've got this gentlemen's agreement, those of us who use the place. For Boher to breach that . . ."

WHO IS THIS BOHER GUY?

"When I got a name, I did a little digging, and this Boher scares the hell out of me. For the last twenty years he's been linked to organized crime, the prime suspect in more mob hits than you can count, all of 'em where the victim went toe-to-toe with an elephant and lost. But nobody's ever actually got close to putting him away for any of it. It's because of the way he looks."

WHAT'S HE LOOK LIKE?

Schram pulls out a picture, pointing to a man in the middle of a crowd. The man is two heads shorter than the other people, and looks like a sneeze would blow him over. Despite that, he walks proudly, the look on his face one of smug superiority.

"This is Boher. Found the image in a web article on one of the last times someone tried to bring him to trial. One of the main reasons no one can connect him to the crimes is that they can't believe such a little guy could do enough damage to a man for him to need a closed-casket funeral, let alone commit thirty two murders where the bodies were left like that. And that's the murders where someone tried to connect them to Boher. No idea how many others he may have done they never found the bodies for."

WHAT DID YOU TURN UP ABOUT BOHER?

"After McCluskey talked to me I started sending out messages, trying to find out if Boher had been dealing with anyone else to buy things. Turns out the man is quite the buyer of occult artifacts. Books, leftover bits of creatures, eyewitness accounts of supernatural events; if you can name it he's purchased it. Even more freakish is that it turns out it's easier to name everyone I knew that hadn't dealt with Boher than those who had. It's like the guy's been interacting with everyone I know in the business, keeping it all on the down low, so he never has to run into me or let me know he exists. And I think McCluskey letting me know got him killed."

SO WHY ASK US?

"About a week after I started asking about Boher, McCluskey bought the big one. Not pleasant. They found his body on a road; they think it was a hit and run by an SUV. Then other hunters I'd contacted about Boher started asking me why I was interested in him. I freaked at that

point. I figured out which folks I know that haven't had contact with Boher, hoping they might be able to help me do something about him. But most of them are almost as bad at fighting as I am, or don't work well with others. I need people I can trust not to be in Boher's pocket, and who're skilled at working as a team.

"I asked around, you folks got recommended to me, and so I wrote you. And here we are."

SO YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHY BOHER WOULD TAKE AN INTEREST IN YOU?

"Nope. I never had any contact with him, and as far I can tell he had no connection to anything I ever hunted down. Then again, I would never have known about him wanting the book if McCluskey hadn't told me, so who knows."

HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT MCCLUSKEY'S PLACE? MAYBE HE HAD SOME LEADS ON WHY BOHER WAS INTERESTED IN YOU?

"McCluskey was a traveling man, living from a suitcase as he went on the hunt. He was staying at a hotel when he died, and the cops confiscated all his stuff when he died. I've got no idea where it is now."

SO WHAT DOES THIS BOHER GUY DO NOW? YOU SAID HE WAS POSSIBLY LINKED TO ALL THESE KILLINGS. IS MURDER ALL THAT HE DOES WITH HIS TIME?

"It's been a few years since he was a suspect in any murders. Doesn't mean he hasn't done more in the meantime. Seems to like the good life, from what I can tell. Likes to travel and be the center of attention when he does. Maybe he does work outside of New Jersey as well. Some poking on the Internet shows he's been an investor in some start-up businesses that took off. He seems pretty savvy, so we can't underestimate him."

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?

"Bad health. Been like this since I was born. Wish I could say I smoked ten packs a day or drank like a fish to get this way, but I'd be lying to you."

The Results

Once the Q&A session is over Schram reveals that he knows where Boher lives. Probably the most disturbing thing Schram discovered about Boher was that the guy lives only a few miles from where Schram grew up, and only a few miles from the house the hunters are now in. Once the hunters are ready Schram leads them to Boher's house to get some answers.

The Rewards

It's another reference and expo scene, and they probably didn't even have to roll dice for it. One Plot Point each, plus additional points for good play (when talking to Schram or anybody else.)

Act II: Home of the Strange

This Act is all about Boher's charming New Jersey home and the consequences of poking around in it for information. Out of necessity, the scenes in this Act should play out in order. If the hunters hit the books or the Internet earlier, you might need to crib elements from **Scene 3** before you move to **Scene 1**.

Scene 1: Vanity House

This scene takes place at the Boher home, and assumes the hunters are going to try and get inside. They might not; in which case, you're going to have to get creative.

The Setup

Boher's home is part of an affluent development built along a hillside that overlooks a small valley. It would be a beautiful view, if not for the sewage treatment plant that sprawls across the valley floor. Schram explains that while the air is pleasant at the moment, normally a foul stench is wafting up from the valley, reminding the homeowners why their property was relatively cheap. Because of the smell, few people stay outside their homes for long, lessening the chance of anyone seeing them break into Boher's home, which is located at the bottom of the hill, near the lip of the valley.

The Problems

The action here centers on the act of getting into Boher's house and looking around. See "Alternate Actions" for other approaches to this scene, especially since not every hunter goes straight for breaking and entering when the opportunity presents itself.

HOME INVASION

There's no sign of a car in the driveway, so the hunters can hope Boher isn't at home. Whether the hunters decide to go through the backyard and its well-manicured garden or directly through the front door, they don't need to worry about anyone noticing them; people mind their own business in this neighborhood. However, while approaching the house is EASY, getting into it is HARD.

Deadbolt locks and reinforced glass have been used to insure security, and any hunter who decides to climb up to the second floor finds the windows and balcony doors are just as secure. Hunters with an AVERAGE degree of observation might note the lack of any kind of electrical security, with no keypads or motion sensors or other things they might expect in a high-class home. There's a reason for that, but we'll get to that later.

THE INSIDE SCOOP

Each room of the first floor, from the kitchen to the bathroom, is a testament to Boher's narcissism. Every wall has at least three photos of Boher, ranging from shots on vacation at foreign beaches to meeting C-list celebrities or minor political figures. In each case he's the center of attention, with everyone else in the picture fawning over him or otherwise deferring to him.

Aside from the photos, each of the rooms is nicely furnished, filled with expensive knick-knacks that some hunters might want to pocket for later sale. There's only one thing that might strike the hunters as odd, and that's the contents of the kitchen. Boher's choice in foods seems modeled on the sugar cube method of eating, rather than the food pyramid. When the hunters move to the upstairs they find that rather than photos the walls are covered with awards and commendations to Boher for both charity donations and from companies he's invested in. While Boher has no love for his fellow man, he does love being the center of attention, and philanthropy is a good way of getting the limelight. It's also a great way to have influential character witnesses available when you become a suspect in a murder trial.

Boher has a locked study on the second floor, which is HARD to get into. Unfortunately, Boher keeps nothing that could implicate him in any supernatural or criminal act. It's just as HARD to hack into his desktop computer, and it would take an IMPOSSIBLE effort to crack his banking or business passwords. However, reading through his e-mails does show he's a man with some clout in a number of areas, with owners of various companies frequently communicating with him for advice or instructions. It quickly becomes apparent that Boher likes to make insane demands and goes back and forth on decisions regarding properties he owns. He likes power, and he likes lording it over people.

The Results

So far this is just your average affluent bastard's house. The hunters might have found some incriminating evidence, but nothing weird or supernaturally connected. For that, they're going to have to go to the place where all horrible things are stored in . . . the basement. Jump ahead to **Scene 2: Where Else Would You Keep Your Evil But The Basement.**

Alternate Actions

Players being the creative and suspicious types that they are, their hunters may decide that heading directly to Boher's house isn't the best course of action. They may wish to try to gather more information from any number of sources before going into the lair of the Boher, as it were. Among their possible sources of information:

THE LAW

An especially likely avenue of information for those hunters with the Carries a Badge Asset, an AVERAGE call to those with law enforcement powers confirms that Boher has indeed been a suspect in all the cases Schram mentioned, and a few more besides. He's also turned up several times in the surveillance footage of known mob members, hobnobbing with both legbreakers and "management" with apparent ease. Despite this documentation of his association with the criminally inclined no evidence's been recorded of him actually being involved in illegal activity. And when those who knew Boher were arrested and offered reduced sentences for turning evidence

on him, nobody spoke against him; the hunter's contact informs him that fear of Boher seemed to be the prime motivator for the silent treatment.

The hunter's contacts also let on that Boher isn't registered as owning firearms, a fact rather odd for a suspected mobster. They also reveal that, at one time, Boher's neighbors made claims of animal cruelty. No evidence was found to back up the claims, and the matter was dropped. No more information is given at this point, as the cops chalked it up to "nutty neighbors" and didn't seem to treat the claims too seriously.

If the hunters think to inquire about what went down at the Rendinelli Bed & Breakfast they find their contact has no idea what they're talking about. A lot of powerful people are fond of the place, and they clamp down on what's happened before word gets out.

FELLOW HUNTERS

Your players might think contacting those hunters that did business with Boher is a good idea. If they take this road, it won't be that hard for them to find a friend who can put them in touch. Otherwise, they can simply get the information from Schram and his detailed notes on who did business with Boher. Let your hunters make whatever rolls they want, but despite their efforts the general response is one of hostility and paranoia. A bunch of complete strangers calling up to ask about random business dealings they shouldn't have knowledge of is not going to make those called happy or pleasant. Some of them may know of Schram's investigations, and the thought more people might be probing their activities is also going to be anger-inducing.

In short, contacting those Boher does business with should leave the hunters frustrated and worried that Boher might catch wind of the hunters' interest in him. It won't—the seed of doubt planted in the minds of Boher's business partners after the calls prevents them from doing so—but your hunters don't know that. Let them sweat it out they may have shot themselves in the foot by trying this avenue of investigation.

Another option is for your hunters to put feelers out to see if any other hunters have encountered Boher, in the "doing something he deserves death for" category of activity. None have, but whether that means he's kept a low profile or managed to kill anyone who stumbled onto him is something for your players to fret over.

THE SUPERNATURAL

Perhaps the hunters have a psychic's number programmed into their cell phone and want to call 'em up to do a long distance-read on Boher. Or maybe a hunter with a high Lore rating burns Plot Points to have the right stuff to work a divination ritual from the privacy of his hotel room.

Here's the thing: the hunters are the stars of the story, but you don't want them to eliminate all the mystery of the adventure in the first act. If the players go this route, let 'em confirm the basics: Boher is a killer gifted by unnatural means with an enhanced physique, and knows a fair bit about the supernatural world. You might have the source of their information hint as to its exact source, with nonsense like "Boher's splitting of his weakness into others grants him strength," or some such. Technically, such a statement is true, since a plurality of people died to empower him—even if together their remaining essences animated only one person. Give them enough to clue them into parts to the plot they missed, but don't spoon feed it to them.

You can put the kibosh on the players learning too much from this avenue of investigation. The simplest way is for the connection to the spirit world (or whatever method they chose to employ) coming undone due to the stress put on whoever is doing the divining. Other options: disrupting the ritual or effort by a foe who's escaped the hunters in the past; or the appearance of a foe linked to a hunter's Hunted Complication. Maybe a demon the hunters faced in the past possesses the medium and taunts them before disrupting the attempt to learn about Boher; or later on, one of the hunters gets a text on their phone saying someone laid a curse on them to fail at something important. Whatever the case, your players should feel like the lack of information is a natural part of the game world, rather than an arbitrary stopping of them getting information they want.

MEET THE NEIGHBORS

The hunters may decide immediately breaking into Boher's home is not the way to go, wanting to wait until daylight so they can talk to his neighbors and get information on Boher. Whether posing as police or potential new neighbors interested in the vacant house at the end of the block, the hunters find that everyone's willing to talk about Boher. The man has made no effort to befriend anyone in the neighborhood, and every attempt to approach him has been rebuffed. Several neighbors comment that they've seen him working for hours

in his yard without rest. They seem both surprised and jealous that such a small man has such a reservoir of energy. They also say they've never seen anyone go into the house with Boher. It seems he values his privacy.

If the hunters use law enforcement connections and bring up the animal cruelty charges with the neighbors, or front up a **FORMIDABLE** Willpower + Influence roll, the neighbors discuss the topic. Several people in the neighborhood saw Boher taking large dogs into the house over the course of a year. Different dogs each time, judging by the varying descriptions of them from people, but no one ever saw Boher leave the house with a dog. Being nosy neighbors, those who live around him say there's never any empty dog food bags or other signs in the trash. Someone thought he was a "Creepy Dog Man... the male equivalent of a Cat Lady, y'know," and called the police about it. But the cops went to his house and found no signs of any animals, and the matter was dropped.

The Rewards

Getting into the house nets the hunters two Plot Points each for achieving that story goal. If they try out any of the Alternative Actions, give 'em between one and three points for those based on how they took care of it.

Scene 2: Where Else Would You Keep Your Evil But In The Basement?

This scene takes place as soon as the hunters go downstairs in Boher's house. It's set apart from the previous scene because it's also when Boher's security system—his dogs—surprise the hunters.

The Setup

Boher's basement may not be what the hunters are expecting. It's split in half, and one portion of it is the poorly-lit, dusty mess filled with cobwebs that they might normally associate with fighting the supernatural. However, in this case all that they'll find is a washer, dryer, and furnace, along with a few gardening supplies from before Boher realized he was making enough money to pay someone to take care of his groundskeeping.

The other half is a combination display room/game room. Well-lit and clean, a massive home theater system fills one end, with a flatscreen TV that covers a wall and dozens of DVDs sitting in expensive wooden cabinets. Equally expensive bookcases cover the walls of the remainder of the room, filled with arcane curios and tomes. No attempt to hide his supernatural interest down here, Boher has everything out for display, with both leather chairs to lounge in while the hunters go through it, as well as a well-stocked liquor cabinet in case they don't mind drinking on the job.

The Problems

Here's what activity in the basement produces, whether the hunters want it to or not.

THE BOHER COLLECTION

Even just an **AVERAGE** investigation into Boher's library lets hunters know that the collection they're going through is composed entirely of worthless works. There's a lot of people who talk out of their rear when it comes to the supernatural, and it seems like Boher has a book from everyone over the last one hundred fifty years who falls into that category.

It's **HARDER** to recognize that all of the works Boher has are from people who genuinely believed they had knowledge of the supernatural, rather than charlatans looking to make some cash from the gullible. At the same time, the hunters notice another common theme: regardless of the culture or era the book is from, each volume concerns magic involving transference of some sort. Whether it's sympathetic magic like a voodoo doll, imprinting of emotional feelings on others (a "love spell," to the uninitiated), or the stealing of life force from another to give the practitioner his strength, every work involves something being taken from someone or being forced on someone else. No demon summoning, turning invisible, or anything else.

There's no sign of Boher anywhere in the home, nor any clue to his current whereabouts. Let the hunters and Schram talk about their next move for a while. If they decide to wait around for Boher to show up nothing's going to happen, and once they decide it's time to go things get interesting.

RELEASE THE HOUNDS

As the hunters may now know, Boher has a fixation on transference lore. What they're about to learn is that he's used that knowledge to give his home a supernatural defense against intruders. Years ago he bought and subsequently sacrificed a number of guard dogs, using a ritual created by an Irish sorcerer from the eighteenth century. The spirits of the dogs were bound into the home, and according to Boher's interpretation of the ritual the spirits would manifest as ghostly hounds, tearing intruders to shreds the moment they enter the building.

This is the first time the spell's ever been triggered, and Boher would be surprised by how wrong he was. While it *did* bind the spirits to the house, and *does* forces them to attack intruders, they're not ghostly specters with ethereal jaws. Instead, the hounds form bodies from the material of the dwelling they were bound into. Given the differences between the building materials used one hundred fifty years ago in Ireland and the New Jersey of today, it's also taken a bit for the hounds to manifest. This just so happens to take place once the hunters are leaving.

As the hunters make their way upstairs or towards the front door, the house begins to shake and loud creaking noises come up through the floor. Wall paneling and floorboards tear out of place and gather rapidly together in piles, joined by pieces of furniture, books, and other things found in the house. This detritus forms into the rough size and shape of German Shepherds, their makeshift bodies composed of photos and pages of books rather than skin. With the same cries of pain they made when Boher sacrificed them for his spell they attack the hunters.

Witnessing all this could result in the hunters Getting Scared (page 97 of the *Supernatural RPG*). There are six dogs, forming at different spots all over the house, and they converge on the hunters as fast as possible. You should decide based on the combat readiness of the hunters how many of the dogs form in the same room as them, and how many form in other rooms and take time to join the battle.

Dog Guardians

Description Big dogs made out of trash and household items. The **bite** of these creatures inflicts d4 W, rather than the d4 B a mundane dog inflicts.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d4 **Wil** d6
Init d6 + d8; **LP** 12

Traits Devoted (master) d4, Sharp Sense (hearing, smell) d6

Skills Athletics d6/Running d8, Influence d4, Perception d4, Unarmed Combat d6/Biting d8

Unliving Form Being soul-powered collections of debris, the dog guardians are immune to Stun damage, and like zombies they're immune to poison, lack of air, disease and so on. This also gives them an armor value of 2 W. When a dog accumulates Wound damage equal to its Life Points it's body is destroyed, falling into pieces as the spirit goes to wherever dogs go when they die. Heaven, from what Don Bluth tells us.

Awareness Trained to be guard dogs, the spirits' senses are bound to Boher's property. They have full awareness of where everyone and everything is, both in the house and on the grounds of Boher's home. This negates any possible penalties from lighting, smoke grenades, and so on. It also means that Covert actions to hide from them are a waste of time so long as the hunters stay on Boher's land, as the dogs unerringly home in on the intruders.

During the course of the battle none of the dogs attack Schram, no matter what he does or how great a target he makes. Depending on the hunters' actions (like perhaps leaving him alone with the dogs while they run off) this lack of attack may be pretty obvious, or something overlooked in the heat of battle. Whatever the case, Schram is as surprised as the hunters are by his apparent immunity.

The Results

Once the hunters have defeated the dogs, have them make Alertness + Perception rolls. Whoever gets the highest result notices that the removal of part of the wall by the formation of one of the creatures has revealed a hollow space. An AVERAGE examination by somebody with Craft or Perception shows there was no hidden opening or other method of getting at the concealed material; it appears someone just walled up a bunch of stuff and forgot about it. This becomes

A WIZARD DID IT?

Those who've read page 121 of the *Supernatural* rulebook know that the low-magic tone of *Supernatural*, at least when it comes to people casting spells, is an integral part of the setting. Reading through this adventure, you may have concerns both about Boher's magical abilities and the possibility of your players saying their hunters should now be able to produce magical guardians and other things through the use of the arcane love Boher has collected.

In the case of Boher's magical knowledge, the easiest way to solve the problem is to say he's the exception that proves the rule. Yes, he managed to transfer his negative aspects into a mass of souls that animated a body, as well as bind the spirits of dogs into his dwelling, not to mention his trick for hiding things. So long as this is the only time you ever use a villain like this in your game and keep from people showing up who chuck fireballs at the drop of a hat and fly like a bird his appearance won't stretch the overall tone for your campaign. You can even have fun as the hunters try and convince their peers of the foe they fought. "A guy who mastered the dark arts so he didn't have to buy a security system and could eat all the fast

food he wanted without gaining weight?" might be the way other hunters sum up tales of Boher, as they look at your players' hunters for signs of concussion or drug use.

As for concerns about players wanting their characters to use Boher's magic, note that all of his rituals require blood sacrifices of some sort, and whether you're making animal or human sacrifices that kind of action doesn't make you many friends in the world of hunters or mundane society. That alone should convince your players to not have their characters follow in Boher's footsteps. Failing that, allow them to create their own guardians or doom the souls of some innocent people to make themselves stronger or faster. Then give them the Dark Secret Complication at d8 and a few others related to mental derangements as they dabble in things man was not meant to know. Or you could just have them fail at the magic, earning them no bennies, and maybe a few Complications weakening their physical form.

Remember: *Supernatural* is supposed to be a game about heroes fighting against monsters far tougher than them. Fighting fire with fire when dealing with them usually ends up poorly for those concerned, as recent seasons of the show can attest.

even crazier when a check reveals that among the papers, portable hard drive, and books are notes dated as recently as a week ago.

After this scene, move straight to **Scene 3: A Look at the Past and Present**.

The Rewards

There's two Plot Points each for defeating the dogs, two each for the clever researching earlier, and a single point for the hunter who noticed the hidey-hole in the wall.

Scene 3: A Look at the Past and Present

Once the hunters have decided if they wish to peruse their findings in Boher's home or go somewhere else, it's time for the snooping research portion of the adventure.

The Setup

This scene might work well as a montage—picture the hunters sitting on a hotel bed reading through papers, or holed up in a local library flipping through pages in a computer file from Boher's hard drive. Have the players make rolls, but don't be too concerned about the results. If they fail, give them some leads and have them put two and two together. If they get extraordinary successes, you can simply embellish the results with helpful hints. It shouldn't be a long scene, so don't let it drag.

The Problems

The books, notes, and hard drive found in the wall of Boher's house provide a number of useful clues to what's going on. The hunters are probably going to need access to a safer place to review all of it, so you might parcel out some of the following info-chunks immediately while leaving the others 'til later.

BOOKS OF MAGIC

It's EASY to tell that the books are the real deal when it comes to magic, unlike the books Boher had out for public display. They come from a variety of times and places, and like others in his basement they all deal with some sort of transference-related magic. With an AVERAGE skim through the books a

hunter stumbles over the ritual that allowed Boher to create the dog guardians; another such result (or an EXTRAORDINARY success) describes how he created the hidey-hole. It's a vicious ritual, involving a human sacrifice being restrained as the caster forces wood shavings, nails, and other building supplies down the throat of the victim until they die. Doing so allows the sorcerer to take the empty space those items take up in his body and transfer it into the walls of their home, also allowing him to call the items forth at any time.

The book of most interest to hunters is the one that has sticky notes, looseleaf sheets of paper, and section headers strewn through it. This book contains the rite that Boher used to enhance himself, and the additions he's made to it include a detailed charting of the boost to his physical form following the ritual, from gaining strength without an increase in muscle tone to being able to eat poorly and rarely sleep with little problem. There are also ideas for improving the ritual so it can be used later to make him even stronger; judging by the hostility of the notes in the book, Boher has failed in his attempts to do so, as the notes mark one section or another of the book as having provided too little information for him to improve the spell, along with failing to mention the side effect of the spell. What that side effect is, he failed to put into the notations.

SCRAPBOOK OF A SERIAL KILLER

The papers are clippings and copies of articles related to a number of murders, both ones that Schram can confirm Boher was suspected in, as well as ones he's never heard of. Boher has made notes and scribbles on these, mocking both the police for failing to connect him successfully to the crimes and with individual notes on the victims, explaining in great detail how he found them physically inferior to him and easy to kill. There's more than enough detail on each murder to prove to anyone that Boher committed the murders, as well as having serious issues.

D:\\OCCULTSTUFF

The hard drive's what Boher works off on when conducting work online regarding either his criminal or mystical activities, literally pulling it out of its mystical hidey-hole every time he wished to go online for things related to his two pursuits. Boher was savvy enough to know that keeping files on a desktop computer was a security risk, so he decided an external hard drive was the way to

go. Boher's ego shines through again on the hard drive, with a text file for every item the hunters found in the basement on display. Each file is dozens of pages long; each can be summed up as a listing of how Boher came to acquire the item, how much it cost, and a several-thousand word listing of how whoever made the item had no idea of how magic worked, and how his own skills are far superior to theirs. In other words, Boher has collected a vast collection of fraudulent arcane lore just so he can look at it and stroke his ego with the fact he knows more about real magic than they ever did.

Also on the hard drive is a listing of who Boher's been in contact with to acquire his collection. It's up to you to decide how many of the names his hunters recognize on the list, but there should be enough recognition for them to realize he's both got connections and money. It seems Schram's paranoia was somewhat justified.

Finally, with regards to the magical interests of Boher, there's an entire file devoted to Schram. Filled with pictures of the man and detailed accountings of his activities, it's quite clear that Boher has been paying a team of private investigators and less-savory types to keep track of Schram for the last nine years. That this has been going on for so long is a shock to Schram, especially since that means Boher had been watching him even before he became a hunter. Schram had assumed he had somehow crossed paths with Boher in his dealings or rare hunt, but to find out he has been watched by the man since he was a boy is almost too much to take.

BOHER'S INSURANCE FILE

The rest of the information on the hard drive relates to Boher's criminal activities. While the hardcopies found with the hard drive feed the killer's ego regarding his past activities, the information on the hard drive is insurance in case any of his employers ever decide he's a liability that needs to be taken care of. Not that Boher thinks anyone could possibly kill him, given his strength and toughness, but if someone were to cross him he'd like to destroy them emotionally and socially before he gets around to killing them. Every single person who ever hired him for a hit has a file on the drive, along with enough evidence to connect them to the crime, while leaving Boher unmentioned. There's fifty six people who could go to jail for the information in these files, as well as ninety six unsolved murders that could be put to rest.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Boher has a file open on a hit that's dated to occur the next day, a few hours drive away from his home. He's been hired to kill a witness to a murder, and unless the hunters stop him kill #97 is "taken care of" before the end of the next day.

The Results

Given that the hunters are now aware of Boher's magical activities and how many people are dead because of it, they should have more than a passing interest in saving his latest victim and stopping him for good. There's more than enough information for them to head to the site of his next hit, and since they have no idea when he'll return to his home it's their best chance for confronting him.

The Rewards

This scene requires a lot of freethinking, decision-making, and not a lot of action. That said, every helpful fact that the hunters acquire is worth two Plot Points, and there's a lot more for good role playing.

Act III: Siege, Anyone?

So your hunters have to put the pedal to the metal to get to the site of Boher's next hit. They're still unclear on exactly how "improved" his dabbling with the dark arts have made him, and they're probably low on ammo and injured from their dance with the dogs . . . and possibly the police, if you decided dealing with the guardians led to the neighbors calling 911. It's one hundred six miles to the site of Boher's hit, it's dark, and if they're lucky they have a half a pack of cigarettes and a full tank of gas between them. Sunglasses optional.

The hunters don't have much time to prep, since they have no idea when Boher plans to kill his target. The notes Boher has on his computer suggest he was given the target's address and nothing more, so either he plans to kill the man at home or follow him from home until he can get him into a secluded place to kill him.

At this point a lot of questions might run through the players' minds. Certainly, Boher's interest in Schram is one, but a more pressing concern is what exactly Boher can do, and how they're going to stop him. By now they should

understand that he's physically stronger and tougher, but to what extent is unanswered. They may be worried that he has other abilities, given what they encountered in his home, and since he had men attack them at the B&B he may not be alone when they encounter him. It may not occur to them that the man Boher's been hired to kill is just as deadly in his own way.

Scene 1: Approaching the Situation

Once again, the hunters have to case a location. This scene starts with stakeout duty and quickly turns into a confrontation.

The Setup

The address of Boher's next victim is in a luxury development, one in a series of identical houses. The folks behind the housing ran with the idea that luxury homes from which you could look out your window and see raw nature would negate the fact that the location they chose would require a several-hour commute to work for whoever lived there. So far only one person has purchased a home. The lights are on and a car out front are the only sign anyone's around.

The Problems

Given the vacant homes and the isolated setting, the hunters can set up observation posts in a variety of places and see what develops. An AVERAGE effort reveals that the occupant of the house is aware that something's up. The hunters see no sign of him, either at the windows (which have their curtains and shades drawn), or outside the building. Also, the decorative hedges that surround each house have been chopped down around his home, their savaged remains spread across the ground rather than in piles, so as not to provide cover. Clearly, Boher's target is aware that someone is coming for him.

With that in mind the hunters may decide to approach the mystery man, believing the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Or they might wait for Boher to show himself, then ambush him; whether the ambush occurs before or after Boher deals with the target depends on your hunters' views on using a complete stranger as cannon fodder.

WAIT AND SEE

If the hunters adopt a wait and see approach, it's Boher's Agility + Covert against the hunters' Alertness + Perception. Depending on how the hunters have positioned themselves they might not be able to see Boher as he comes in from the woods behind the house, so you might not even allow the rolls.

In the event Boher does make it inside the house, the hunters' first clue is the sound of gunfire and screaming. If they choose to intervene, refer to the next section and adjust things appropriately. Waiting for Boher to come out lets him kill his target and come out unscathed—let that be a lesson in using strangers as redshirts.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Those hunters brave enough to openly approach the house and knock find themselves waiting for a while. If some of the hunters hung back, they see the curtains in each room move, as if someone's running from each one to get a view of his visitors. Finally the door opens, revealing a fellow big enough that the shotgun in his hands looks like a pool cue. He looks the hunters up and down, before commenting none of them are short enough to be Boher. Any mention of being there to stop Boher gets them in the door instantly; otherwise it's going to take some FORMIDABLE convincing.

SAFEHOUSE

Once inside the house hunters can see that just like the yard the inside of the house has also undergone changes. Doors have been barricaded with furniture, holes chopped in the walls ("For ease of movement," the man explains. "Good thing they went with cheap materials to build these houses, huh?"), and broken glass lining the floor beneath random windows. In short, the fellow seems to be doing everything he can to prepare for Boher's arrival.

The man, **Scapanelli** by name, really doesn't care who the hunters are, and dismisses their attempts at explaining why they're in his home. "Boher's killed a lot of people over the years," he says. "I'm sure someone sent you to get some payback on him, and hearing he was coming for me must give you a chance to nail him."

Antony Scapanelli

Description A made man for whom a few more kills won't make a difference.

Agi d6 **Str** d8 **Vit** d10 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d6
Init d6 + d6 + d2; **LP** 20

Traits Focused Hunter (Humans) d4, Split-Second Timing d2, Tough d8

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6, Guns d6, Influence d4

Gear Pump-action shotgun (d10 W)

Scapanelli tells them he's willing to work with any plan they might come up with to get Boher that doesn't involve using himself as bait. Setting up traps, pooling information, he's all for it. He explains that it's an open secret that Boher's gunning for him, as the people he's crossed want him to be afraid before he dies. He also freely admits that they want him dead for witnessing a murder, along with the fact that he saw it happen while he was committing one of his own. He casually discusses how he managed to pick the same isolated lake to kill someone that some other individuals had chosen for the same purpose. Those individuals were mighty influential in certain circles, he explains with a wink, and he came across them doing away with another individual "in the same business, and who was only getting killed so someone could move up the ladder, if you know what I mean." Scapanelli reported what he saw to his boss, and the two he squealed on met a final fate, but they left behind friends who both wanted revenge and had Boher's number.

With the knowledge Scapanelli isn't an innocent, hunters may be less willing to risk their lives to protect him. Voicing that fact, or expressing a desire to leave, causes Scapanelli to turn on the hunters—he doesn't judge them for any talk of Boher using magic or having devil dogs at his house, and he feels the same courtesy should be extended to him about what he says and his occupation. He expresses such dissatisfaction with violence, if need be; he already plans to kill Boher, so what are a few more people?

The Results

If the hunters end up taking on Scapanelli, skip forward to **Scene 3: You're Much Shorter, And Deadlier, In Person**. You can use information from the next scene to help deciding on tactics. If the hunters don't incite Scapanelli to violence,

KILLING SCHRAM

At some point after the revelation of Schram's origins some player may decide the best thing to do is to kill Schram. After all, he's not a normal human, and killing what's essentially a cadaver rejuvenated by the remnants of the tortured souls of the dead is probably a lot less of a moral quandary than killing a regular person. Plus, given the link between him and Boher, it's entirely possible that if he dies Boher might lose his enhanced physical state, making him easier to put down. They may believe his goading of Scapanelli is a bluff, hoping they'll fight amongst themselves and make it easier for him to kill them.

It's a nice idea, but if your hunters try to implement it they find it's not the short-term solution they're hoping for. Killing Schram does indeed send the spiritual remnants in him to whatever afterlife awaits them, and disrupts the benefits Boher enjoys from the ritual. However, it isn't an instantaneous thing, instead being a gradual reduction in power over the course of several weeks.

In other words: if one of the hunters decide that killing Schram in the middle of battle with Boher makes the latter easier to defeat, they're sadly mistaken.

allow them to work out whatever plans they wish to prepare for Boher's arrival. Hours pass, and then the phone rings.

The Rewards

This scene is packed with ways for the hunters to show off their Complications, so encourage them to do that more often by handing out Plot Points regularly.

Scene 2: You Rang?

This scene more or less requires the hunters to have brought Schram with them, and to have made it inside Scapanelli's house. If Schram wasn't with them, you might have him show up just as the scene starts. He followed the hunters, he says, and needed to be with them when they took Boher down. Either way, it's about to be all out war with a phone call in Scapanelli's house.

The Setup

It's Scapanelli's speakerphone. He hates being tied to a corded phone, and cell phones are things that seem far too tiny in his massive hands that he keeps managing to lose. He'll walk over to answer, at which point read the following to your players:

"HEY," A NASALLY VOICE SAYS IN A OBVIOUSLY FAKE TONE OF FRIENDSHIP. "LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN GETTING READY FOR ME. I LIKE A CHALLENGE. NOT THAT YOU'LL GIVE ME ONE, BUT 'A' FOR EFFORT AND ALL THAT.

"AS FOR YOUR VISITORS . . . WELL, I HEAR SOMEONE BROKE INTO MY HOUSE, AND ONLY A BUNCH OF HUNTERS WOULD BE DUMB ENOUGH TO LIVE THROUGH THAT AND STILL POKE THEIR NOSES INTO MY BUSINESS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY TOLD YOU ABOUT ME, SCAPANELLI, BUT IT'S PROBABLY ALL TRUE."

It may seem as if Boher has eyes inside the room, which is generally the impression he's trying to give. Boher's more aware than most people, supernaturally aware . . . so he's playing it up.

"AND YOU BROUGHT SCHRAM WITH YOU. I HAVE TO ADMIT HE WAS QUITE A SHOCK TO ME. I'M SURE YOU READ THROUGH MY BOOKS—THE GOOD ONES—AND KNOW WHAT I DID TO IMPROVE MYSELF. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO MY NEGATIVE ASPECTS. I FIGURED THE SOULS OF THE PEOPLE I KILLED WOULD BE CONSUMED TO OFFSET ALL MY PHYSICAL WEAKNESS, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

"THE BOOKS DIDN'T TELL ME PART OF THE PEOPLE I SACRIFICED MIGHT SURVIVE. THAT IT MIGHT SEEK OUT A STILL BORN INFANT AND ANIMATE IT, GIVING ITSELF A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE EVEN AS IT LIVED UNAWARE OF ITS TRUE NATURE. AND THAT'S NOT EVEN BRINGING UP THAT IT WOULD BE STUCK WITH ALL THE PHYSICAL PROBLEMS I'D HAVE HAD TO DEAL WITH, AND THAT I HAD BEFORE.

"THAT'S YOU, SCHRAM, IN CASE STUPIDITY WAS SOMETHING ELSE I WAS ABLE TO FOIST OFF ON YOU AND YOU CAN'T KEEP UP. I HAD NO IDEA YOU EXISTED, UNTIL SOMEBODY I WAS HIRED TO HIT TURNED OUT TO BE THE SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON OR SOME SUCH. HE USED HIS MOJO ON ME, FOUND OUT ABOUT YOU, AND TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU IN RETURN FOR SPARING HIM.

"YOU FASCINATED ME, SCHRAM. ALL MY WEAKNESSES IN A TIDY, SICKLY PACKAGE. I HIRED SO MANY PEOPLE TO WATCH YOU, BECAUSE I WANTED TO

KNOW ALL THE THINGS I HAD SPARED MYSELF. EVERY ILLNESS, EVERY WEAKNESS, EVERY BIT OF SUFFERING THAT MAKES UP YOUR LIFE HAS MADE ME SURE I DID THE RIGHT THING IN ENHANCING MYSELF.

"THAT'S WHY I HAD MCCLUSKEY DEAL WITH YOU. I HATED THE THOUGHT OF ACTUALLY HAVING TO DEAL WITH YOU FACE-TO-FACE. BUT I'M AFRAID I DIDN'T PLAY IT COOL ENOUGH WITH HIM, AND HE FIGURED SOMETHING WAS GOING ON. SO HE BLABBED TO YOU AND I HAD TO DO HIM IN, AND THAT'S LED TO ALL OF US BEING HERE."

And here's the kicker. Boher's not calling from across town; he's just outside the house. He makes his pitch to Scapanelli:

“YES, I SAID ‘HERE.’ I’M RIGHT HERE, READY TO KILL YOU.

BUT I’LL MAKE A DEAL WITH YOU, SCAPANELLI. YOU KILL SCHRAM AND I WON’T KILL YOU. YOU MAIM UP HIS CORPSE, I PRESENT IT AS YOU, AND YOU GO OFF SOMEWHERE TO START OVER AGAIN. I DON’T NEED HIM AROUND ANYMORE, AND IT REALLY WOULD HAVE MADE MY LIFE SIMPLER IF I’D JUST KILLED HIM WHEN I FOUND OUT HE EXISTED. OR WHEN I HAD MY FRIENDS AMBUSH HIM EARLIER. OH, WELL.”

Scapanelli's only response is to level his shotgun.

The Problems

Scapanelli has to be dealt with. He believes Schram will let him walk away, and he feels he's got a better chance against the hunters than Boher, no matter how much they outnumber him. Check back to **Scene 1: Approaching the Situation** for Scapanelli's vitals.

The Results

Once Scapanelli is down, allow the hunters to reorient themselves. Depending on how the fight went, Schram could be dead, and if not the question of what to do with him might be a hot button topic. Let them debate Schram's existence for a while, and once it starts to get boring move on to final scene.

The Rewards

Scapanelli is tough. He's worth three Plot Points each to the players, which they're going to need.

Scene 3: You're Much Shorter, and Deadlier, in Person

This is it: the confrontation with Boher. This can happen anytime you want to move the adventure to its climax, but generally it works best when the hunters have learned that Boher used magic to transfer his weaknesses into Schram. It's not necessary, of course; you can paraphrase the phone call in **Scene 2: You Rang?** and use it as banter during the fight.

The Setup

A rumbling begins to fill the house, and before the hunters can react one of the outer walls collapses inward. Any thought of a leather-clad Austrian with a metal skeleton being the intruder disappears as the dust settles. It's Boher, even shorter in person and with a neatly groomed beard and suit that make you think of leprechauns.

He dusts himself off. "Really cheap material they used for this house," he says. "I wouldn't have been able to make such an entry otherwise." He looks down at Scapanelli's body. "Huh, I counted to twenty and decided to come in. I didn't realize you'd finished the fight already." He shrugs. "Guess I'll have to end things."

The Problems

And with that he attacks. Hopefully the hunters can handle him. If not, after he kills them and Schram he returns to his usual ways, and once he finds out his vigor is fading (see the "Killing Schram" sidebar) he begins a new campaign of kidnapping people for sacrifice. Maybe your players' next batch of hunters could look into that.

Larry "The" Boher

Description Self-Improvement Master of the Dark Arts.

Agi d6 **Str** d10 **Vit** d12 **Ale** d6 **Int** d8 **Wil** d8

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 24

Traits Brawler d4, Contacts d6, Cool Under Fire d6, Dark Secret d8, Hardy Constitution d6, Natural Athlete d6, Overconfidence d6, Sharp

Sense (all) d2, Talented (Stealth and Dodge) d6, Tough d8, Wealthy d4

Skills Athletics d6/Climbing d8/Dodge d8/Jumping d8, Covert d6/Stealth d8, Discipline d6, Influence d6, Knowledge d6, Lore d6/Cults d10, Perception d4, Science d6/Toxicology d8, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d12

Gear Cocky attitude, deceptively deadly punch

The Rewards

Major plot dealt with? Five point team goal. Personally took care of business? Three Plot Points to hunters who mixed it up with Complications, clever role play, and leprechaun jokes.

Conclusion

With Boher dead, the aforementioned problem of Schram and his origins rears its head again, assuming he's survived this long. If they're willing to let him live he goes right back to his wheeling-and-dealing ways, the knowledge of how he came to be doing nothing to slow him in his work as a fixer. Sadly, the maladies he's suffered over the years have done permanent damage to him, so even with Boher gone he never recovers to a normal level of health. Magic never comes with a happy ending.

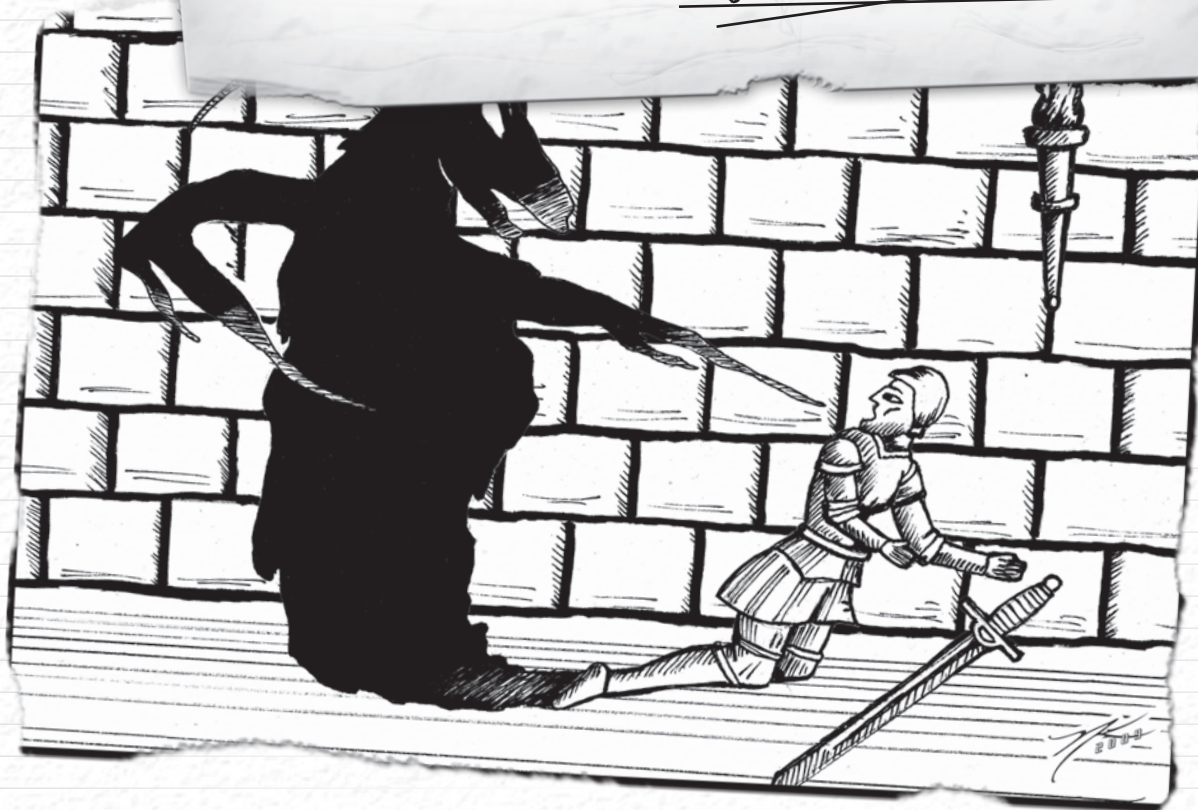
As for Boher and Scapanelli's death, assuming the hunters leave the evidence in Boher's house regarding his crimes, they're more than willing to just sweep everything under the rug. Bringing it all public would reveal that Boher got off with a vast number of crimes, and far too many people in power would have egg on their face after such a revelation.

Then again, you may wish for it to come out. A lot of people would be enraged that Boher got away with the murders of their loved ones, and that kind of anger can lead to dabbling in things man wasn't meant to play with. Perhaps someone makes a pact with a demon to get the power they need to hunt down the jury that acquitted Boher in their mother's murder. Or maybe someone lays a curse on a judge or two that ruled Boher innocent. It's entirely possible that Boher's dabbling in magic has started a cycle of violence and magic that lasts for years to come.

Finally, your hunters may be a bit worried about the hunters who were dealing with Boher. While they don't know where Boher got the books with the real mojo in them, the fact that there are hunters out there who dealt with him may be worrisome to some. Were they totally innocent of knowledge when it came to Boher and his interest, or did they have some inkling and just not care, so long as they got paid? Maybe it's time for someone to police the ranks of hunters.

Synchronicity

By C.A. Suleiman



This scenario tests not only the hunters' skills, but their compassion and wisdom, as well. Just like jobs that feature demons as the opponent, the villain of this story acts through the hands of an innocent—in this case, the husband of a fellow hunter. He's just as much the victim here as any of the men he is responsible for killing, perhaps even more so, since he's victimized twice over: first, by his experiences as a soldier in Iraq; and then again by an evil force that's using his broken spirit as a means to escape its ancient bonds. Given the power level of the entity in question, this job doesn't revolve around combat—hunters who think they're gonna solve the problem with violence alone are likely in for quite a rude awakening. Rather, this scenario tests their ability to think not only creatively, but also compassionately. As such, the job's suitable for hunters of any age or level of experience.

Adventure Summary

This scenario revolves around what is intended to be a pleasant visit with a fellow hunter—a feisty firebrand of a woman named **Lilah Walker**. Lilah's husband **Staff Sergeant Blake Walker** is recently returned from Iraq, where he served nearly three full tours of duty in the U.S. Army, and Lilah has invited the hunters to join her at her mountain home for a weekend of beers, barbecue and bragging. When local hunters begin to go missing, however, the hunters are soon drawn into a mission of the distinctly supernatural variety. Even if the hunters are not otherwise inclined to get involved, Lilah, an expert on local lore (both natural and supernatural), knows a suspicious disappearance when she sees one, and all but dares her hunter friends to step up to the challenge, thinking that a chance to hunt with them will be

From: Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Hamdan
To: Master Sergeant Brent Hopper
CC: Captain Matthew Hutcheson
Subject: Transfer Order (Walker_TO2174463)
Attachments: HDForm_DD256; HDForm_DD214/5; TOForm_2174463

Master Sergeant,

Attached, please find e-copies of the Honorable Discharge Certificate (DD Form 256), DD Form 214/5, and accompanying transfer order for Staff Sergeant Blake A. Walker, Company Woodward. As expected, the army physician returned with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress for Sergeant Walker, who is being released from his service effective immediately. As the transfer order indicates, Sergeant Walker is to be placed on the next available transport craft out of Iraq; he'll finalize the rest of his de-com when he lands in-country (at Bragg, barring the unforeseen), but make no mistake—the top brass want Walker away from theater and resting comfortably at his West Virginia home by week's end.

On a more personal level, I know that you've served with Sergeant Walker for some time—for most of his two and-a-half tours, unless I'm mistaken—so it's only fitting that you be the one to implement and expedite his military release. Whatever you may have heard around the motor pool surrounding the incident at Abu Sayyad, it is imperative that you understand two things about Sergeant Walker: First, the simple fact that he and the rest of his squad were in an untenable situation, deep in hostile territory, on that dark day; and second, that it's always easy to sit in judgment while safely removed from the harsh realities of a war event. As a career soldier, I know that you'll keep to your oaths of confidence; that much is expected. But as Walker's friend, you might otherwise have been tempted to believe the worst, to fall head first into the blood-spattered gears of the rumor mill. Well, rest easy, soldier.

As far as the United States Army is concerned, Staff Sergeant Blake Walker is a decorated war hero. All that remains is for us to help get the man home to his wife. I'm sure we understand each other.

Regards,
Tony

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Hamdan
United States Army

exciting
and rewarding; even fun. Little does she know that the thing she is so eager to hunt is, in fact, squatting like a toxic toad inside her own husband's mind.

You should, as with any adventure, read through the entire thing before you sit down to run it. Pay special attention to both the overall pacing of the narrative and the slow reveal. Although the episode introduces a powerful new type of villain into the *Supernatural* cosmology, the primary focus of the story itself is not on "who dunnit," but rather on the tragedy that is Blake

Walker's condition. The theme revolves around the question of what it means to be both hunter and hunted, and regardless of how the specific events play out, the hunters should come out of the episode shaken, as though put through a grueling test—if they come out alive at all.

Breakdown of the Acts

The following short bullet points let you know how the scenario's three Acts line up.

Act I: The Human Abstract The hunters are the guests of a hunter and her husband, a returned Iraq War vet. As a party is held in their honor, word of strange disappearances reaches them.

Act II: Auguries of Innocence The hunters investigate the disappearances, and find out that they're still going on. The evidence starts to lead to their hunter friend's husband.

Act III: The Divine Image The hunters track down the Iraqi vet, armed with an ancient ritual and hopefully a lot of luck. Nothing could go that smoothly, however . . .

Here's the Story

"War is hell." Everyone knows the expression, knows that it tells a deep and abiding truth. But few truly *know* it, in the way that those who experience the horror of war first-hand—the soldiers and casualties of war—know it. And none have gazed into the hell of war in quite the same way as Staff Sergeant Blake Walker.

Born and raised in a sleepy West Virginia town, Blake Walker never had any plans to enter military service; indeed, he had just entered his sophomore year at Mountain State College when, on one fateful morning in September of 2001, a handful of religious extremists turned his world upside down. Walker dropped out of school the next day, signed his Army enlistment papers the following morning, and was on his way to boot camp by the end of the week. He was 19 years old.

Over the next seven years, the Army deployed Walker to every major hotspot in the Bush administration's ill-fated "war on terror;" first to Afghanistan, where his squad specialized in hostile terrain operations, and finally to Iraq, where Walker believed he and his men could do the most good. Even after Saddam Hussein was apprehended (and later hanged to death on-camera), Walker felt duty-bound to stay in Iraq, despite the service he'd already given his country. The war was taking its toll on him by then, of course—all that talk about the reason for the war being a lie being thrown around back home—but he was a *soldier* now, and if he didn't stick around to do the job, the Army would just call up some poor reservist to fill his spot, some kid even more likely to die than himself. So that was that.

Several months into his third tour, Walker found himself and his squad assigned to an unmapped location in the middle of the desert, about twenty five miles south-east of the mining village of Akashat. There, Walker and his men came upon a strange, dusty structure that they

assumed was an ancient and remote mosque—though the place bore none of the usual hallmarks of Islamic architecture. The building's remoteness and unfamiliarity demanded that it be called in, and when Walker did so, he was ordered to gain entrance to the structure and ascertain its purpose and overall threat level. When he tried to execute the order peacefully, a robed doorman informed him that he was trespassing on holy ground. Operational regs forbid soldiers from forcefully intruding on places of worship, but when Walker sent pictures of the place back to command, he was told that it was no temple of any kind and so it didn't benefit from the protection afforded by those regulations. He was told to order an immediate evac of the building—by force, if necessary—and that once all those inside had been moved outside, to move on with his mission.

The hours that followed were the darkest. In his statement, Walker describes the inhabitants as a group of men composed of what he calls "equal parts Iraqis and non-Iraqis." He tells of how these men, despite being peacefully inclined and "insanely outgunned," gave a "fierce, almost desperate resistance" to the intrusion of Walker and his squad that day. When the dust settled, Walker had indeed gained entry, as ordered... but at a truly terrible cost.

Staff Sergeant Blake Walker was never the same after the incident at what came to be known as Abu Sayyad (the name Walker found written on the walls inside the desert temple). Many lost their lives that day, including most of Walker's own men, who were overwhelmed by the violent zealotry of the temple priests. And Blake Walker, one of only two survivors, felt each loss more deeply than the last. Although his physical recuperation went surprisingly fast, his mental health was a concern from the day of his admittance to the U.S. Army hospital. He was crushed by survivor's guilt, and hospital records recount how he was forced to relive the incident over and over in nightmares that robbed him of sleep and threatened to stretch his sanity beyond the breaking point.

The army tried to assist Walker's recovery by lionizing him in ceremony, awarding him a Distinguished Service Medal for his uncommon valor at Abu Sayyad, but this only seemed to make things worse. When his body had healed fully, Walker was transferred first to a mental ward and later to a private barracks inside the Green Zone in Baghdad—but to no avail. As a weapon of war, Blake Walker was now all but useless. Soon after, word came down that after his years of faithful

service, Sergeant Blake Walker was to be honorably discharged from the U.S. Army and returned to his wife and home in West Virginia.

What none of the doctors, officers, psychologists—or indeed, even the patient himself—knows is that Blake Walker was afflicted with something far worse than post-traumatic stress disorder on that fateful day in the desert. He saw the face of evil in that ancient place, and the face of evil gazed also into him. (See “The Adversary” sidebar on page 88 for more.) And now that poor Blake Walker has finally come home, his nightmare is just beginning.

Act I: The Human Abstract

The first Act sees the hunters arriving in Milton, West Virginia, as the houseguests of a fellow hunter named Lilah Walker. She’s a stationary sort, having staked out the Milton area (and its surrounding woodlands) as her turf, so she’s always excited to host other hunters, whether they’re just passing through or, as in this case, arriving by way of specific invitation. After spending a little time catching up, Lilah informs the hunters of the party she’s hosting that evening in their “honor” (i.e., the party excuse *du jour*) and then drags them off into town to get supplies, where they hear tell of a famed local hunter having gone missing. Things round out with the party itself.

Scene 1: Milton

The story opens with the hunters arriving in Milton, a small town amid the green hills of Pocahontas County, about thirty miles from Richwood, where their fellow hunter and friend Lilah lives. Here, they reconnect with their friend and meet her husband Blake (and her bloodhound **Pandora**) for the first time. Hunters who’re originally from more rural areas should appreciate Milton’s rustic surrounds, especially once they get to the Walker house, and the scene serves to put the hunters at ease, as though their host’s house is a safe haven—separate and secure from the troubles surely yet to come.

The primary function of this scene is to introduce the Walkers and their dog, Pandora, but also to both establish the dynamics of the couple’s relationship and to lure the hunters into a false sense of security with regards to Blake Walker.

The Setup

The scenario can take place most any time of year, but late summer/early autumn works the best. The hunters arrive by car along State Route 219, passing through miles of classic West Virginia woodlands on their way in. Milton is a sleepy little mountain town, long on charm and short on frills (or even amenities). Once a thriving mining town, the community slowed to a crawl after the coal mine went through a bitter labor/union dispute, only to dry up entirely not long thereafter, anyway. Today, the town gets by, but just barely. West Virginia has the second weakest economy in the union to begin with (after Mississippi), and the global financial crisis certainly didn’t help matters any. Modern Milton survives mostly on the efforts of its sawmill and other wood-based factories, along with the niche tourism offered by the surrounding scenery and the area’s lone, flat body of water, Pinnacle Lake. At the height of its mining days, Milton boasted a population of almost 15,000 people; today, just a couple thousand souls remain to call the town their home.

The Walkers live in a modest but beautifully situated house at the apex of a rugged escarpment. Two stories of wood and stone look out over a wooded basin that sits shrouded in a low, white mist nearly year-round. The main floor is the top floor, and it houses the carport, foyer, living room (with fireplace), kitchen (with breakfast nook and pantry), half bath, master bedroom, and a wooden deck that runs the length of the house, providing a breathtaking view of the valley below. The bottom floor is always dimly lit, and it contains a den, a small storage area, two guest bedrooms and a full bath.

To the hunters’ surprise, the road leading to their host’s home is fully paved and clearly well maintained. Only when the hunters pull off the main road and onto the Walkers’ driveway do things get rough, but even then, Lilah makes sure to re-gravel the dirt road with every change of season (and has just tended to it recently, in preparation for the return of her husband). When the hunters arrive, Lilah appears at the front door with a cigarette in one hand and a phone in the other; she pops the cigarette into her mouth, makes the universal sign for someone yapping away on the other end of the line, and motions for her friends to come on in. It’s a beautiful Saturday in the neighborhood, and Lilah has a screen door to the deck, which causes a refreshing breeze to move through the house.

The Problems

There's no conflict here, but there's opportunity for the hunters to connect with Lilah and, more importantly, to meet Blake and Pandora.

CATCHING UP WITH LILAH

Getting Lilah to open up is easier than easy, as she's been looking forward to her friends' arrival for some time now. She offers the hunters a beer (or some coffee, if the hunters arrived before early afternoon) and launch into an animated discussion of the big party she's throwing that night. She tells of how she's been on the phone with her friends—several of whom are attractive and willing, she says with a wink—all morning/afternoon, and that she's more than ready to cut loose. When the hunters first arrive, Blake is in the bedroom lying down (if asked, she says he complained of a headache) but emerges not long thereafter, roused by the sounds of guests in his home. For observant hunters, it's EASY to note that he's wearing mismatched socks on his feet.

A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE

Although the hunters don't know it yet, the subject of their soon-to-be hunt is sitting in the same house with them when they arrive. And while Blake Walker doesn't fully grasp the nature of what he's become (or, more accurately, what's riding around inside him, and pulling his strings once the sun goes down), that doesn't mean that he's not taking in every bit of useful information his supernatural "guest" might want. During this scene, Blake takes subconscious stock of each of the hunters in turn, paying special attention to any particular strengths or weaknesses. He isn't bold (or even capable) enough to dig for any specific piece or even type of information, but his sharp eyes, ears and nose are more than sufficient for the task. Noticing that Blake is scrutinizing the hunters in this way is an IMPOSSIBLE task, since even Blake himself isn't consciously aware that he's doing it.

THE NOSE KNOWS

Only one soul in Milton is onto Blake Walker, and that soul belongs to Pandora—Lilah's pet bloodhound. While noticing that something supernatural is going on with Blake is IMPOSSIBLE at this point in the story, noticing that something is amiss with Pandora is not. Unless somebody's actively scrutinizing the dog

throughout the scene, realizing that she reacts strangely to Blake's presence is HARD. If, for some reason, a hunter pretty much just sits and watches the dog's behavior, whether relative to Blake or otherwise, the task is of merely AVERAGE difficulty. (Game stats for Blake Walker show up on page 93, at the end of **Act III: The Divine Image.**)

Lilah Walker

Description Lilah is an attractive dirty-blonde in her late twenties, who looks like she probably would have fit in just fine as a background actor on *The Dukes of Hazzard*. She has bright eyes, a healthy color, and an athletic build that often draws more than looks from the less gentlemanly residents of Milton and its surrounds. Although she works a day-job as a liason to the West Virginia Park Service, she is 100% pure troublemaker at heart, though her capacity for kindness—especially with regard to animals—is nearly limitless. She knows the area in and around Milton better than most, and has on more than one occasion led search and rescue parties deep into those wooded hills.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d8 **Ale** d6 **Int** d6 **Wil** d8

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 14

Traits Allure d2, Contacts d2, Good-Natured d4, Rebellious d4, Tough d4

Skills Alertness d4, Animals d6, Covert d4, Drive d2, Guns d6, Influence d2, Lore d6/West Virginia d8, Mechanic d2, Melee Weapons d6, Perception d4, Survival d6/First Aid d8, Unarmed Combat d2

Gear Cell phone (w/ GPS), cigarette lighter, dog leash, first aid kit, hunting knife (d4 W), pick-up truck, pistol (d6 W)

Lilah was drawn violently into the world of the supernatural at the tender age of 11, while on a game-tracking trip into the mountains with her father, Gerald McCandless. Late one night, her father heard what he thought was the approach of a bear, and he made Lilah hide in the tent with the screen zipped up. Through the thin wall of the tent, she saw her father's silhouette snatched bodily into the air and pulled screaming into the forest. Her father got off a single shot with his rifle, but other than a few spatters of blood she found no trace of either him or his assailant. Eight years later, a full-fledged hunter in her own right, Lilah was tracking those same woods with her then-boyfriend, Maynard, a budding hunter with whom she had taken up some months before. The two hunters came upon tracks that led them to the den

of a terrible creature, one that feasted on the flesh of men by night and slumbered during the day. The inexperience of the duo led to the death of her boyfriend at the monster's hands, but Maynard's sacrifice gave Lilah the time she needed to put the thing down. Amongst the detritus in the back of its nest she found a set of U.S. Army dog tags, bearing the legend "McCandless, Gerald J." and stained red with her father's blood.

When Lilah met Blake, she knew she'd found the man with whom she could spend the rest of her life. Cast in her father's honorable image, Blake was a warrior through and through, even before he joined the military. Being away from him for as much as a year at a stretch was difficult, but Lilah believed, as her husband did, that there was no greater service one could provide for one's country than to serve as a veteran of a foreign war. When the stories about the Iraq war's legitimacy came out, she was even more devastated than Blake and immediately began to campaign for his return.

And now that he's back, she believes she'll have the ever after to which she feels that she is entitled. And while she certainly has earned it, her hopes are once more in danger of being dashed against the rocks of the supernatural.

Pandora, the Bloodhound

Description Pandora's a bloodhound. She's big, red, and weighs about one hundred pounds. Being a bloodhound, Pandora is much more lover (of scents and trouble in particular) than she is fighter, and as such, probably won't be directly involved in any combat that occurs. The exception to this is in the event that anyone or anything attacks Lilah, in which case Pandora will launch herself at the assailant and defend Lilah with her last breath. If Pandora does enter combat, she attacks with her **bite** (d4 B), and if it results in an extraordinary success, it indicates that she has grappled the target.

Ag d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d8 **Int** d4 **Wil** d6

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 12

Traits Devoted (master) d6, Lucky d4, Sharp Sense (hearing) d4, Sharp Sense (smell) d6

Skills Athletics d6/Running d8, Influence d4, Perception d6/Smell d12, Unarmed Combat d6/Biting d8

Gear Literal dog tags, subcutaneous tracking chip, morose but adorable countenance

In her day-job as liaison to the West Virginia Park Service, Lilah Walker has occasion to encounter a great many different types of animals. And it was in this capacity that Lilah

first encountered Pandora, an intractably curious bloodhound pup who was being groomed to track fugitives and missing persons for the state. Her skill training was coming along fine, but due to her fiercely independent spirit, Pandora had so much trouble with the obedience training that she was eventually dropped from the program on account of it. Having already seen the dog's enthusiastic talent, and never being one to let a little attitude get in the way, Lilah happily took Pandora in as her own.

That was almost four years ago. The two haven't looked back since, and are nearly inseparable today. From the day Blake Walker returned to Milton, however, Pandora has been in a state of constant unease. Lilah just assumes this is the dog's natural reaction to a strange man moving in and essentially taking over her role as Lilah's "favorite," and even Pandora herself—in that way of dog comprehension—doesn't fully understand why she's reacting to Lilah's mate the way she is. All that Pandora knows is that every wrinkle on her face tells her that something's wrong with Blake.

The Results

The hunters should leave this scene feeling comfortable around the Walkers and their adorable dog, Pandora. Lilah is eager to catch up with her friends, but is even more eager to get to the store to pick up supplies for both the evening's festivities and the remainder of the weekend, thus setting up **Scene 2**.

The Rewards

This is a good scene to hand out Plot Points for engaging in interaction fueled by Assets and, especially, Complications. It's a little light on the reveal, but there will be a lot of opportunity soon for more.

Scene 2: On Another's Sorrow

This scene revolves around a supply run to the local superstore in town. Lilah hasn't left the house all day up to this point, so she's eager and rarin' to go. Headachey Blake stays behind, of course, but Lilah insists that everyone else posse up, including Pandora, who loves to tag along with Lilah on her various trips around town (and who will essentially "refuse" to be left alone with Blake, regardless). While at the superstore, the hunters are introduced

to the episode's three primary supporting characters—a trio of noisome local “hunters”—who, in their noisome way, clue the real hunters in on the possibility of a supernatural threat being present in Milton.

The Setup

Lilah allows her guests to finish up whatever beverage she offered them, but is quick to hustle everyone back out to the carport, where her truck awaits. She gives a little *hup!* and Pandora jumps up into the back of the truck, and once everyone else is safely inside (or distributed between two cars, if the hunters number more than five), Lilah takes off. Lilah's musical tastes cover pretty much the entire music library of your average classic rock station. Both driver and dog are in almost stubbornly good spirits, and it can't help but rub off on the hunters.

The errand's destination is Milton's one and only Bullseye™, part of a chain of superstores that took off across America as the global economic crisis worsened. Taking up almost 200,000 square feet of retail space and situated on a lot that exceeds sixteen full acres, the superstore is a tall and boxy affair with off-white exteriors and a red, slatted roof. The parking, like many of the outlet's patrons, is plentiful. Inside, the building is divided into four broad sections: the department store, the grocery, the coffee shop and the sporting goods store. After the department store, the sporting goods store occupies the largest portion of the retail space, and it is here that the hunters encounter the supporting characters.

The Problems

The following points of action (or revelation) take place in the sporting goods section.

GOOD FOR SPORTSMEN

One or more of the hunters might be inclined to check out the sporting goods store—located at the back of the massive space—on their own. If none do, Lilah goes there herself at the end of her visit. (It's part of her routine to swing through the sporting goods section whenever she comes in, regardless of what brought her to the store.) Hunters accustomed to more populated areas are undoubtedly surprised by just how much the section has to offer: Here, they can find and purchase all manner of axes, baseball bats, chainsaws, hatchets, knives and contact

stun guns. They can also find and purchase most anything listed in the “General Gear” section of the *Supernatural RPG* (with the exception of computers and EMF meters and the like), as well as any firearm in the book—provided it doesn't have “Antique” as part of its name and is not a submachine gun. Judging by the selection offered here, the people of Milton take their hunting, fishing and football very seriously.

MEETING THE OTHER HUNTERS

Standing by a long glass case filled with fishing lures and pocketknives are **Brent McCutcheon**, **Caleb Parker**, and **Stu Tygart**, three of Milton's most active “big game” hunters. They are presently embroiled in a discussion (of the classically midwestern, “faux heated” variety) with “Big T.R.,” a large friend of theirs who works as a clerk in the sporting goods store. They aren't trying to keep the conversation private, by any means, and it's an EASY prospect to eavesdrop on every word. Those who listen in learn that the trio's fellow friend and sportsman, to whom they refer as “Jasper,” went missing recently, and that the three are not only worried about the man but also concerned over the nature of his disappearance.

Getting the game hunters to open up about their friend is potentially EASY, but it depends on the circumstances. The following sections expand on this.

YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE

While the sportsmen are hardly looking for privacy, only Brent is actually interested in getting the opinion of strangers on the matter. Of the other two, Stu is mostly just quiet, but Caleb seems to have a hefty distrust of the hunters from the get-go. Unless some attempt is made to cater to his ego specifically—*before* trying to get any further information from the group—Caleb's resistance will complicate any subsequent interaction, raising the difficulty of any relevant social rolls by one step. Caleb gives the hunters such an opportunity, but it sure won't sound like one; only a socially mature hunter with an understanding of Caleb's primate politics sees the situation for what it is.

THEY'S WITH LILAH!

There's no love lost between Lilah and the three sportsmen, especially Caleb Parker. In her job as liaison with the West Virginia Park Service, she's kept abreast of all the most egregious violations of

local hunting ordinances, and it is in this capacity that she has the occasional run-in with the four. Most recently, an incredibly rare mountain lion was spotted in the woods around Milton, but disappeared just as suddenly; suspecting foul play, Lilah went to the area reported as the lion's territory and there discovered evidence of a fresh kill. Mountain lions are endangered, and therefore always on the "closed season" rolls in West Virginia, but Lilah suspects Caleb Parker (with or without his pack) of shooting the animal anyway, for trophy.

If Lilah is with the hunters when they begin dialogue with the three, the difficulty of getting the pack to open up rises to AVERAGE. This penalty stacks with the one above, thus making the initial roll of getting the men to open up a HARD task, should the hunters fail to assuage Caleb's ego, as noted above.

THE GOOD SEED

The closest thing to a voice of reason that the trio has is Brent McCutcheon. The missing hunter is his kin, and Brent is more interested in seeing him found than in stroking Caleb's ego, though he's afraid to challenge Caleb's bravado directly. If the hunters make an attempt to at least seem genuinely concerned, then the roll to get Brent (specifically) to open up is reduced by one step. If the hunters succeed at the roll for him but not for his friends, he still opens up to them, but waits until the other two hunters leave (and they do, immediately) before doing so.

The Three "Hunters" (Brent, Caleb & Stu)

Description Even if hunting wasn't as big as it is in West Virginia, there really isn't a whole lot else for a blue-collar good ol' boy to do in and around Milton *besides* hunt. As such, the number of hunters in Milton is pretty high and wherever there are sufficient numbers of blue-collar good ol' boys, they find a way to tribalize. Such is the case with Brent McCutcheon, Caleb Parker and Stu Tygart, who have been hunting together since they were all teenagers. Of the three, Stu is the oldest (by four years) and Brent is the youngest. Caleb is the most hotheaded of the group—in addition to the stats listed below, he also has Anger Issues d4—and is known for holding state hunting regulations in extremely low regard. Together with Jasper Largent, the four men comprise one of Milton's most avid

and successful (and commensurately immodest) packs of hunters.

Agi d6 **Str** d6 **Vit** d6 **Ale** d6 **Int** d4 **Wil** d4

Init d6 + d6; **LP** 10

Traits Crude d6, Focused Hunter (deer) d4, Lazy d4

Skills Animals d4, Athletics d4, Craft d4, Discipline d2, Drive d2, Guns d4, Knowledge d2, Melee Weapons d2, Perception d4, Ranged Weapons d4

Gear Camouflage outfit w/ matching Jones cap, can of chew, cell phone, hunting rifle (d8 W), pocket knife (d2 W)

The recent disappearance of Jasper has thrown the pack into genuine disarray. Not only is he the pack "alpha," he's also the oldest, best, and brightest of the bunch, and their chances of meeting (or exceeding) their bag limits this hunting season drop accordingly in his absence. Jasper is also Brent's cousin, and where family ties are involved Milton men tend to get a little hot under the collar. While Caleb's interest in locating Jasper lies mostly in keeping his hunting numbers (and local status) up, Brent and Stu both have genuine concern for the man, though Stu is more of the old school type who rarely shows emotion, especially around strangers.

The Results

Assuming the hunters can get one or more of the trio to talk about the missing friend, they learn that Jasper Largent is not only one of the most well known and respected big game hunters for many miles, but also the mentor figure of the "pack." According to the men, Jasper left on what they describe as an impromptu solo hunt in the heavily wooded vale north of town. He left the others a message saying simply that he'd "caught a scent," and was gone. He hasn't been seen since and calls to his cell phone are left unanswered and unreturned. This was two days ago. If asked how normal this sort of thing is for Jasper, all three men reply the same way: "Totally out of character." There's more that the three men could tell the hunters (especially Caleb), but for now, that's all they're willing to say. The hunters are, after all, outsiders.

Lilah spends the ride back to her house bitching and moaning about Caleb to anyone who listens. She's convinced that he's not only guilty of the infamous mountain lion killing, but that he's simply a bad seed overall. She tells the hunters how the presence of Jasper Largent in the kid's life is

essentially the only thing keeping him on anything even resembling the straight and narrow. She closes by sniping something about looking forward to searching Caleb's house for evidence of the mountain lion when he finally does get caught for something else, "which he almost certainly will," she quips.

As of this moment, there really isn't enough data to suggest a supernatural source for the disappearance of Jasper Largent, and this is intentional. The scene should feel to the players more like an introduction to the sportsmen, and to Caleb's villainy in the eyes of Lilah Walker, than the timely but obligatory revelation of the supernatural in the story. For Lilah's part, she files the issue away and gets back to the business at hand, which is of course getting down fo' boogie.

The Rewards

Award the players two Plot Points for getting the game hunters away from Lilah long enough to learn about Largent. Again, there's a lot of space here to flex some Traits and thus earn points for it.

Scene 3: Why Was Cupid a Boy?

This scene begins later that evening, and revolves around the party Lilah Walker is throwing at her house. She says it's in honor of the visiting hunters but when it comes down to it, Lilah's got an "any port in a storm" attitude to partying. The party gives the hunters an opportunity to mingle with the town's younger and sexier demographic, which in turn creates opportunities for both story and character development. The scene should have a more narrative and free-flowing feel, in terms of pace and tone, and while you shouldn't draw it out unnecessarily, it should last long enough to make the hunters (and their players) feel as though they've been part of an event that lasted long into the West Virginia night.

The Setup

Unlike parties in more urbanized locales, Milton-style get-togethers (or at least those hosted by Lilah and her friends) start early and run late, as a rule. The first wave of guests, which includes attractive younger people of both sexes, arrives around seven pm, and these first arrivals help Lilah finish up the rest of her preparations. Lilah's a "do everything yourself" sort at heart, so she refuses

any offers to help from the hunters, but once actual guests arrive, she grudgingly accepts a few extra hands, just so she's good and done by the time the second wave arrives, which is about thirty minutes later. This second wave includes a few more attractive younger people of both sexes, as well as one or two attractive individuals of the previous generation (and, of course, one or two not-so attractive folks).

The food and alcohol are plentiful and tasty, if not too healthy, and the party kicks into high gear at around nine pm. All told, about forty people show up over the course of the evening, though not all of them stay until the wee hours. The house probably wouldn't have the room to host so many, but for the deck, which is wide, sturdy and extremely pleasant.

The Problems

The vast majority of the action takes place in the kitchen, living room and out on the deck, which are all three connected.

SO, WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

At some point, one of the hunters is going to want to talk to Blake face to face, especially if the hunters have already heard the basics of his story from Lilah. Blake is present, but not very sociable. He looks tired and a little bleary-eyed, as though he's already half a dozen drinks into a buzz, even though he's not drinking that fast. He's not in a bad mood, however, so getting him to open up about his experiences in the military is relatively EASY. If convinced to get chatty, he relates the basics of his time in the army (always careful to begin at the start, which is 9/11), and even mentions the incident at Abu Sayyad, as it is the undeniable culmination of the tale, but under no circumstances does he discuss any details about what he saw inside the temple that day, nor will he admit that he was discharged from service on medical order. All he's told Lilah is that, due to being injured in combat, he was allowed to go.

LOCAL LORE

Now that Lilah is relaxed (and socially lubricated), one of the hunters might want to pick her brain a bit on the local lore, especially with regards to the woods surrounding Milton. As this is her specialty, she's more than happy to dish on all the local weirdness, but won't do it while any ordinary folk are within earshot. If a hunter can

get her alone, or is willing to let the conversation be interrupted for periods of time, he can learn that Milton proper is mostly free of supernatural influence, but that things have been known to haunt the woods from time to time (including the monster that took her father from her when she was a kid). If asked, she says that things have been mercifully quiet up there of late.

TELL ME ABOUT JASPER

Even though Lilah has disregarded all thoughts of Jasper Largent for the time being, it's likely that his disappearance has piqued one or more hunters' interest. Asking around after him sends the questioner to Shirley, a playful blonde who falls squarely in the "older-but-still-hot" category of partygoer. In contrast to Blake, Shirley got an early start to her drinking this particular evening and is two sheets blowing by the time she's approached. If the hunter's even remotely attractive, Shirley flirts a little; if the hunter also has the Allure, Amorous or Formidable Presence Assets (at any level), Shirley flirts like it's her job. A patient hunter eventually learns that Jasper is a widower, having lost his wife to an unknown illness some years back, and who now lives alone in a red cabin on the shores of Pinnacle Lake. Shirley describes him fondly, and it's EASY to tell that she knew the man intimately at one point.

The Results

The party is an opportunity for the hunters to chat with the locals, and depending on the hunters' personalities, to get even more intimate with one or more of them. Should things go down like that, the hunters do, of course, have their own bedrooms to which they can retire, though the lucky ones might have roommate wrinkles to smooth over in the morning, depending on how many hunters there are. The party's also an opportunity for players to develop their hunters' personal stories in other ways, such as by trying to renew the bonds forged between their hunters and Lilah. If pressed to discuss hunting matters, Lilah, who should be good and drunk by then, revisits the story of her father's death. Doing so once every few years, provided she does it with fellow hunters around, is in fact incredibly therapeutic for her.

For his part, Blake is definitely the resident wallflower of the evening's festivities. Along about ten pm, he complains of having a headache to whoever's around and regretfully retires to bed for the night. Lilah won't stumble in until after three

am, and by the time she does, she's drunk as a skunk and all talked out (for a change). What none of the partygoers knows, not even Blake himself, is that Blake Walker isn't done partying for the night... not quite yet. Later on, he rises from his bed and sneaks, as if in a trance, out a window in the dead of night. Unfortunately for Caleb Parker, the hunt's on.

The Rewards

In addition to social success, which should garner some Plot Points, you should definitely add two or three to the pile for getting the scoop on Largent's place or learning more about Blake.

Act II: Auguries of Innocence

As is typical for *Supernatural* stories, the second Act involves much research and investigation. It kicks off with the hunters hearing of the disappearance of Caleb Parker, one of the game hunters they met the day before. Not long thereafter, they discover the remains of Jasper Largent, the first local hunter to go missing, with evidence at the scene pointing to something supernatural as the culprit. By the end of the act,

CAN'T WE JUST TRACK CALEB?

Players who find the latest absence too suspicious to ignore might be tempted to get Lilah to activate a trace on Caleb's cell phone, thereby allowing them to track him. Even if Lilah was eager to do such a thing (and she sure as hell is not), there are two problems with such an event occurring during this act: First, a resident of Milton can't legally be declared missing until 24 hours have passed; and second, a cell trace requires a court order from a judge, and as it's now Sunday, there's just no way that's going to happen—especially not for a jerk like Caleb Parker. Characters determined (or foolish) enough to use police assistance will have to wait until the next morning, at the earliest.

the hunters will have unearthed the true nature of the Milton monster, as well as the means by which they can free poor Blake of its evil.

The pace of the act is slightly different from the others in that the events of the first two scenes can take place in almost any order, depending on what the hunters decide to do first. Either way, the third scene is certain to close out the act.

Scene 1: Broken Love

This scene picks up the hunters' story on the morning following the party. As Lilah's guests, the hunters are free to do as they like, of course, and at each decision moment throughout the day, you should make sure to give the players a sense of free will when determining their next course of action, and might even have to run a "split scene," should the hunters opt to split up. Either way, Lilah tries to get all the hunters to go with her to get brunch at her favorite local restaurant, and one way or another, the hunters learn of the disappearance of Caleb Parker.

The Setup

The hunters rise late on Sunday, the morning after the party. Chances are good that one or more of them is at least marginally hung over, but you shouldn't impose any combat penalties against a hunter on that account alone. Being hung over just provides that much more of an interesting context for that hunter's day. Despite her own level of consumption the night before, Lilah wakes relatively early and just as relatively bright-eyed. She starts by brewing a fresh pot of coffee in the kitchen, and if that doesn't rouse the others by the time she finishes reading her newspaper, she breaks out the stereo and starts playing Jethro Tull and Zeppelin in the living room, which invariably solves the problem for all but the deepest and/or most hung over of sleepers. (Only Blake, who is pretending to be dead to the world, is exempt.)

Once everyone but Blake is up and about, Lilah informs them in her matter-of-fact manner that she's taking them to her favorite place for "breakfast foods," a quaint and popular restaurant in town called Ned's Waffle Häus. She does this even if the hunters made plans for the day the night before, and pouts something fierce if they ultimately refuse to go to brunch with her. If one or more of the hunters goes with, they arrive to find Brent McCutcheon sitting alone in a back booth, looking simultaneously worried and glum. If none of the hunters approaches him of his own

accord, Brent waits until Lilah and the hunter(s) have finished their meal and then approaches the table humbly. Hat in hand, he turns to Lilah and begins, "I know you don't like Caleb Parker much, and there are times when I sure don't either, but now he's missing, too."

If the hunters don't go with Lilah to breakfast, you can also setup the Problems in this scene indirectly by having Lilah call them from the diner and fill them in.

The Problems

The action in this scene comes about as a follow-up to Brent's revelation at the Waffle Häus.

WHAT DOES BRENT KNOW?

Either by talking to him directly or by getting the scoop from Lilah, the hunters are going to learn the following.

Although Brent is no huge fan of Caleb, when it comes down to it, he's just terrified; not only of losing his pack, which includes his cousin and mentor, Jasper, but also of being the next to disappear. He's not stupid, and gets help where and how he can at this point. Brent relates how, following his run-in with the hunters at the superstore, Caleb was eager to get up into the area of woods where Jasper disappeared. Brent pleaded with Caleb to wait until the morning, when all three men could gear up and go into the woods together, and he says that Caleb agreed. Caleb hasn't answered or returned a call all morning, however, and when Brent finally went to his home, both Caleb and his Jeep were gone.

WHAT ABOUT JASPER'S PLACE?

After the amorous exchange with Shirley the night before, one or more of the hunters might want to break into Jasper Largent's place on the lake today, now that they know that he lives alone. They're free to do this, either before the brunch or concurrent with it, in the event that the group splits up.

Those who go arrive to find a rustic little log cabin nestled against the shores of Pinnacle Lake. Being a sportsman who lives alone in a remote location, the security is pretty good, even for a log cabin; it's a task of AVERAGE difficulty finding a way inside that doesn't involve doing serious damage to the property. Once inside, the hunters find a lonesome widower's abode, decorated lovingly with all manner of pictures of his lost

beloved. Of special note is the gun rack on the living room wall, with space for two rifles, now empty. Lastly, any hunter scouring the cabin thoroughly comes across what is easily the most valuable piece of information: Nestled against the far wall in Jasper's bedroom is a corner desk, so cluttered with papers that it's almost unrecognizable as a desk. Among the papers are several newspaper clippings—not of Jasper's dead wife, nor even of his own hunting exploits, as one might expect—but of mysterious occurrences in and around Milton. Was Jasper Largent a budding hunter? Like, a real one? Also on the desk are several maps of the woods around Pinnacle Lake, including one hand-drawn by Largent himself. On three of the maps, including Largent's own, one particular area is circled in red ink. Twice (see **Scene 2: A Poison Tree**).

The Results

The hunters should come out of this scene with at least one, if not two, sources of information that lead them into **Scene 2**. They might even have had a little face-time with Brent that can win him over more to their cause. It's a good thing if the hunters feel as if they've picked up the scent, in other words.

The Rewards

As this is another scene centering on information gathering, the chief rewards you hand out should be connected to information earned. Add at least one Plot Point for learning more about Largent's place, another for getting on Brent's good side, and a Plot Point for uncovering Largent's collection of proto-hunter knick-knacks and clippings.

Scene 2: A Poison Tree

Armed with new information from two different sources, the hunters head into the woods north of Milton. There, they discover the gruesome remains of Jasper Largent, the game hunter who disappeared before they arrived in town. Evidence found at the scene points to a supernatural culprit, and the hunters' investigation gets underway in earnest.

THE ADVERSARY

The real monster in Milton isn't Blake Walker; it's the ancient entity that has hijacked him, body and soul. Only if they have interacted with a Trickster (such as the one Sam and Dean encounter in the "Tall Tales" episode of Season Two) can the hunters say they've ever faced down an enemy as powerful as what's inside Blake Walker. The lore, while voluminous, is short on certainties, but the thing is believed to be a sort of dark counterpart to the handful of beings known as Tricksters. As demon is to angel, so is this entity to the Trickster. (And given the incredibly callous nature of the Trickster, the prospect of an even darker version of one should be horrifying to any sane hunter.)

As with other supernatural beings of advanced age and power, this entity is known to different cultures in different ways. To the ancient Greeks, who were the first to write openly about the thing, it was known as an *eidolon*, or "shadow double," while certain Hindu writings referred to it as the *kamarupa*. Scholars of Fortian phenomena, in their essential

misapprehension of the being's true nature, dubbed it the "perispirit." Whatever it might be called, the entity is more demigod than demon and has been around just as long as the Trickster has. It is, in a very real way, the supernal shadow made manifest—the primordial "other" to a race of godlike others.

Like all *eidolons*, the one now plaguing Milton has had a thousand names, and no name at all. (Some of the cultural lore even implies that if an *eidolon* does have a true name, no human mind would ever want to know it.) What's important to such a being isn't a name, but a portfolio. The one riding around in the Blake-mobile, for example, is the *eidolon* of the hunt, the primordial shadow of a killer. It can only climb inside the soul of a killer—in this case, a soldier—and must ritually hunt down and sacrifice other killers—in this case, big game hunters. And once it gets going, it won't stop until someone makes it stop. Someone very, very brave.

The Setup

Whether following Jasper Largent's map or Brent McCutcheon's advice, the end result is the same: The hunters' next likely destination is an area of woods just north of Milton proper. Knowing that something supernatural might be involved, Lilah instructs Brent (and Stu, if he's

around and involved) to stay behind in town, citing “official Park Service” business or some such convenient excuse. She promises to keep the frightened Brent up to date as things progress.

As before, Lilah gets the gang to pile into her truck (or, again, into two separate vehicles with four-wheel drive). There’s only one road leading to the specific area of wilderness into which the group is headed, and the going gets pretty rough towards the end, with the region’s ever-present moisture turning the track nearly to mud. To Lilah’s surprise (though perhaps not to the hunters’), she arrives at the end of the track to find a green Jeep parked off to the side, its wheels half buried in mud. A quick glance at the bumper, with its “Keep Honking. I’m Reloading!” sticker, confirms it’s Caleb’s.

The Problems

Determining what happened here is EASY, thanks to the muddy conditions; Caleb parked in a hurry, got out, and ran into the woods. Once fully into the forest, however, the tracks first grow harder to follow, then disappear entirely. But it’s no dead end, thanks to the *smell*. Farther along in the same general direction, the hunters come upon a grisly scene. Dug into the dirt floor of a small clearing is what looks, at first glance, to be a fire pit. On closer inspection, the hunters see that mixed in among the burned out embers are the remains of a human being. The body appears to have been put into the pit naked, though it’s HARD to tell if it was done post-mortem. On the far side of the pit, just beyond the lip, sits a fat tree stump with a flattened top. Carved into the top is a pair of strange sigils. Atop the sigils rests a pair of human ears.

THE DECEASED

There aren’t any clothes or items at the scene by which to identify the victim, but it’s EASY to use the Medicine Skill to determine the skeleton’s height, gender and approximate age: six foot two, male, around forty years old. One can also tell that whomever the severed ears once belonged to was likely a Caucasian male, also around forty years old.

THE SIGILS

The scene is gruesome, of course, but of particular interest to hunters will be the sigils carved into the tree trunk. Anyone trained in Lore can attempt a roll to recognize the source of the symbols, but is HARD. Success confirms only that

they seem to be of ancient Mesopotamian origin. (Educated hunters might make the connection that ancient Mesopotamia included modern-day Iraq.) It’s possible that one or more of the hunters is not only trained in Lore, but also has a specialty relevant to ancient Mesopotamia. If this is the case, you should allow that hunter to make a roll to glean more information. If successful, the hunter can translate the symbols roughly as “father” and “hunt.” Regardless of specialty or roll, you shouldn’t provide any information pertaining to the ritual described in **Scene 3**, not even on an extraordinary success.

If by some chance one of the hunters is fluent in Arabic, he might recall that the name of the location mentioned in Blake’s story—Abu Sayyad—translates roughly as “father of hunters.” (You shouldn’t remind a player of this, however; the player either makes the connection or doesn’t.)

I AIN’T GOING IN THERE

If for some reason the hunters are as yet reticent to head into the woods, Lilah lights a fire under them by offering in exasperated tones to “handle it” herself. At that point, only a truly cowardly and/or heartless hunter refuses to tag along, especially considering these are the very same woods in which Lilah lost her father.

The Results

In the unlikely event that the hunters cover all of the bases in the Problems above—in other words, a hunter specializing in Mesopotamia and a hunter fluent in Arabic are both present—then the real culprit’s just been uncovered, assuming the players can put two and two together. Otherwise, Lilah suggests that they copy down the symbols, leaving the scene undisturbed, and return to her house, where all her hunter’s reference materials await.

The Rewards

Finding clues earns the players Plot Points in this scene at a rate of one Plot Point per discovery. In the unlikely event that the hunters have the resources in their own group to add things all together, award them two more Plot Points on top of whatever else you hand out.

Scene 3: Earth's Answer

The “headquarters” of this scene is Lilah’s house, but the action involved, especially any independent investigation the hunters perform, can take place anywhere—or, as is more likely, via any electronic medium (laptop, phone, etc.). Ultimately, this scene is about two important things: First, discovering not only the nature of the monster, but the fact that it is almost certainly riding around inside Lilah’s husband; and second, presenting the hunters with a moral quandary revolving around how best to handle the hunt from here on out.

The Setup

The setup for this sequence is fairly straightforward. Lilah and the hunters race back to her house to do some follow-up research on the clues they found at the charnel site in the woods. You should be sure to allow hunters to go their own way, if they choose, but there really isn’t anything of esoteric value to be learned in a town of Milton’s size (though things of non-esoteric value, such as land tax records and the like, might be available, were it not a Sunday).

A few minutes after arriving at the house, Lilah emerges from the basement holding a book, her face a washed out mask of confusion and dismay. She shows the hunters the chapter of the book that holds the information they seek, and points out how two pages have been very carefully removed. While it’s true that anyone who came through the house the night before could have had time to do such a thing, the storage area (where she keeps her books) was locked... and her husband has the only other key. Blake is, of course, nowhere to be found.

The Problems

At this juncture, with the hunters doing their own research, it should be looking pretty bad for Blake. As one might expect, Lilah starts to fray around the edges, faced with the prospect of having to hunt down and kill her own husband. The hunters can go through all the usual channels to dig up information on this creature—uncovering at least basic references to this type of activity is of AVERAGE difficulty—but in the event that they are coming up short, there’s one more avenue open to Lilah: The other survivor of Abu Sayyad, another recently discharged soldier, named Tad Hogan.

WHOSE BONES?

In the event that a hunter wants confirmation on the identity of the corpse, it’s a pretty EASY task to find out that Jasper Largent is on record as being a forty two year-old white male who stood six foot two inches tall. Once this is confirmed, the hunters should be rightly interested in the whereabouts of Caleb Parker, since it was his car found near the scene.

SURVIVOR’S TALE

After his ordeal in Iraq, Tad Hogan isn’t eager to discuss the matter, but will respond sympathetically to a genuine plea from his former platoon commander’s wife. Hogan knows the priests at Abu Sayyad were the guardians of something secret and terrible, and that Blake “wasn’t the same” after that day. He also knows that Abu Sayyad means “father of hunters.”

RESEARCHING

Successful Lore rolls, either by the hunters or by contacts on their behalf, provide basic data on the rare and powerful entity known to the ancient Greeks as an *eidolon* (see sidebar, “The Adversary”). Initial rolls should provide just enough information for the hunters to know what they’re dealing with, but not the means to save Blake’s life. When it starts to look like the only way to “save” Blake is to kill him, Lilah bursts into a fit of angry sobs, alternately screaming at the hunters and pleading with them to find another way. She knows time is of the essence, but this is her *husband*.

A single reference from an obscure source turns up after a second scene of HARD researching. It cites a way to draw an *eidolon* out of a soul. According to the source, the *eidolon* lives in shadow, and from its host’s shadow can it be expelled. The only way to do so is through an ancient Mesopotamian ritual—the lore calls it the Black Calling—that involves each participant holding an iron nail in his or her mouth, while one recites the ritual’s words and the others drive nails into the host body’s shadow. At the ritual’s completion, the entity has no choice but to vacate the body, but immediately attempt to enter another nearby body. But by ritually branding this second vessel, using the sigils of the entity’s identity, it can be forced to *stay* in that body. So, while killing an *eidolon* is all but impossible, it is possible to trap one inside its own host, by way of this ritual.

The Results

Once both the identity of the monster and the terms of the ritual are uncovered, the hunters have a difficult choice to make: Do they willfully condemn another human soul, just so Blake Walker can be free to live in peace? Lilah thinks so, and if it comes down to it, offers to host the newly subdued entity...even if it means spending the rest of her life in prison.

The Rewards

Like **Scene 2's** rewards, this scene is all about discovery and information pegging. Points should be handed out when the players add more to the big picture about Blake. If they come to some difficult conclusions, add a Point to the pool, especially if Lilah agrees. If they get feedback from Tad Hogan, give them one Plot Point for that, too.

Act III: The Divine Image

Now that the hunters have discovered just what they're dealing with, as well as just how to deal with it, all that remains is for them to finish the job. In this third and final act, the hunt is well and truly on. Armed with their weapons and a renewed resolve (and, in all likelihood, the Black Calling ritual), the hunters track Blake Walker to his den in the woods—a task easier said than done—and at last confront the ancient evil lurking within him.

Scene 1: The Lamb

During this scene, the hunters have to find a way to track Blake to wherever he's holed up in the forest. When they finally hit upon the best solution, they are put through a rather grueling game of cat and mouse in tracking him through the woods, as Blake (or, rather, the entity within) knows to expect their arrival.

The Setup

This scene picks up the next morning, with the hunters at Lilah's house. She's barely holding it together, but the discovery of the Black Calling ritual gives her some hope. She knows how the supernatural world operates and she's confident the ritual will work, even if she has to give up her own body to the accursed thing that's taken a hold of her man.

The Problems

The first question on the hunters' minds should be, "How do we find Blake?" There are, of course, any number of ways for the hunters to be set on the right track, and it's up to you to decide how best to navigate those options. However it happens, the scene really kicks into gear as the hunters head once more into the woods north of Milton, this time determined to come out victorious. Lilah insists on accompanying the hunters, but won't let anyone else do so.

IT'S THE DOG, STUPID

They might not realize it, as the answer is literally sitting in front of their faces, but the easiest way to track Blake is through Pandora, the bloodhound. Just because Blake is possessed by a primordial god-shadow doesn't mean he doesn't stink, and the dog knows his scent very well by now. She loves to work and will be glad to help. If the hunters arrive at the solution of using the bloodhound to track Blake, all Pandora requires is to be driven to the edge of the forest and then allowed to do her job, with the hunters tagging along just behind. If the hunters are following Caleb's cell signal, there's no need for the dog to come with (though they could certainly be doing both). Tracking Blake cold, without the aid of either the dog or the cell signal, is a **FORMIDABLE** challenge, even for experienced trackers among the group.

IS IT CALEB TIME, YET?

Now that Lilah is faced with the prospect of losing her husband, she might be more amenable to calling in a favor to get a cell phone trace on Caleb Parker's phone. It's now Monday (and twenty four hours after Caleb's disappearance), so if none of the hunters hits on the dog solution, this would certainly be the next best thing, except...

PHONE TRAP

On the forest floor, not too far from Blake's new sacrificial pit, lies the cell phone of Caleb Parker. Unfortunately for the hunters, Blake has purposely left it there as a trap. Regardless of how the hunters are tracking him, Blake has orchestrated it so they'll have to pass through a certain wooded "bottleneck" in order to reach him. Lying in the middle of a rough path between two red spruce trees is Caleb's cell phone. Anyone touching the cell phone, or stepping within a foot

of it, sets off the mine trap Blake has set there. Treat this mine trap as a fragmentation grenade (5d6 W) (see "Explosions" on page 90 of *Supernatural RPG*). You should give the hunters an opportunity to spot the trap, but Blake is no fool and it'll be very HARD to do, unless one is specifically looking for traps, snares, or the like, in which case it's pretty much your AVERAGE trap. If Pandora is with the hunters when the mine goes off, she survives the explosion with just a few cuts and bruises.

The Results

If the hunters survive Blake's mine trap, it's just a short trek to his forest abode. Getting there, however, will require some tracking away from the site of the trap. If Pandora is with the hunters, it's a simple matter for her to pick up the trail once more. If not, the hunters will have to do a little HARD tracking. Either way, it's just a short walk to culmination.

The Rewards

Did they bring Pandora along? Two Plot Points. Did they bring Lilah? Give them a Plot Point if their Complications made them sweat that choice, or they played out the conversation. If they spotted and/or avoided the trap, that's another three Plot Points. They're going to need them.

Scene 2: The Little Vagabond

The story comes to an end with the final confrontation between the hunters, including Lilah, and the monster within Blake Walker. There's an unexpected twist, however—one that might change the hunters' plans for the Black Calling ritual (assuming they were successful in tracking it down). Regardless, it's do-or-die time for the hunters.

The Setup

Once the hunters have won through to the other side of the woodland bottleneck, they find a steep rise leading uphill through a dense patch of thicket. Being Covert while trudging through the underbrush is HARD, but doable if everyone just remains patient and composed (though the mine explosion alerted Blake to their presence,

SHADOWBORN

As a being of shadow, the *eidolon* is essentially immune to physical attack; but by the same origin, it is compelled by the shadow of the soul it has claimed. Driving an iron nail into the shadow of the thing's host causes the entity within to panic, focusing all its efforts on removing the nails before it can get back to physically dispatching its assailants. This essentially results in a combat of the mind, as the hunters work quickly to drive enough nails into Blake's shadow to complete the ritual and force the *eidolon* out.

Driving the first nail into the shadow is difficult, as Blake is very quick and the thing inside him knows what the hunters are trying to do. It requires a standard Melee Weapon attack against Blake, with a successful hit doing no damage but rooting Blake's shadow to that spot, creating a narrow axis around which he can move. Once the first nail is in, each successive nail attempt receives a +1 Skill step. Once three nails are driven in, each successive attempt receives a

+2 Skill step. Complicating this process is the fact that the *eidolon's* will is powerful, and can literally force the nails out of Blake's shadow. It does this by making a Willpower + Discipline roll, contested by the hunter's Vitality + Willpower. A successful roll means that nail flies out of the ground, as though by Telekinesis, and the hunter who drove it in takes 2 Stun damage. The entity can attempt to force out two different nails in the same turn by taking the usual -1 Skill step penalty per attempt, but it suffers an additional -1 Skill step penalty per attempt if it has three or more nails to contend with at the time of the roll. It can't make three or more attempts; two is the limit, and it will only try that if truly desperate. It can, however, split its actions in order to first expel the last nail and then, now that it's free, make a physical attack.

The spoken part of the ritual takes five turns to complete, and cannot be started until at least one nail has been driven into Blake's shadow. If the *eidolon* expels all nails for a full turn, the ritualist loses that turn; the ritualist needn't start the ritual over, but must wait until another nail has been driven in before the ritual can continue.

anyway, unless they spotted the trap early.) On the other side of the thicket, the forest itself seems to open up, depositing the hunters into an open area with a spectacular view of not only the town

below, but the lake, as well. (It's actually a beautiful spot for camping, just not for ritual murder and dismemberment.)

This site has a sacrificial pit dug into its floor as well, but unlike the first site, the ritual surface isn't a tree trunk but a wide, natural outcropping of rock. The hunters can see that the same sigils have been scratched into the rock face. About twenty feet from the stone is a dark blue tent. Next to the stone, sitting gagged and bound to a plastic chair, is Caleb Parker.

The Problems

Time is obviously of the essence here. A conflict takes place between the hunters and Blake, but the ritual needs five turns of incantations and a properly inscribed host. The hunters are going to need to diversify.

MAN VS. MAN

Where Blake is at the start of the scene depends on whether or not he's been alerted to the hunters' approach. If the mine trap went off, he's onto them. If not, then he'll have to make contested rolls with the hunters to see who got the drop on who. (Odds are high that Blake will win such a contest.) If he knows they're here, he's waiting high up in one of the trees that rings the overlook area, ready to rain death down on the group with either his assault rifle or his bow (depending on what the hunters are armed with). If he doesn't, he's sitting in his tent when they arrive.

Blake Walker, the Monster of Milton

Description Blake Walker was a highly trained combat veteran even before his will was overtaken by the *eidolon*. And now, his body enhanced to superhuman levels, Blake is an incredibly dangerous opponent. Even with all its power, however, the *eidolon* has one major limitation, and it's one that the hunters will have to exploit if they're to have any chance of saving Blake's soul.

Motivation The *eidolon* has one primary urge, and that's to kill other killers. For more information, see the sidebar on page 89, "The Adversary." It can possess any mortal whose soul has been "tainted" by the taking of another life, which in this day and age gives it a lot of options.

Limitations As a creature of shadow possessing a mortal host, the *eidolon* has a great deal of power—but it's still vulnerable. See the sidebar

"Shadowborn" for more information on how to free Blake from the *eidolon*'s possession.

Agi d12 **Str** d12 + d4 **Vit** d12 **Ale** d12 **Int** d10

Wil d12 (all values drop by -2 steps when not possessed)

Init d12 + d12; **LP** 24 (doesn't die at 24

Wound; body destroyed at 48 Wound; recovers 1 Stun per turn)

Traits Brawler d6, Danger Sense d8, Obsessed (killing killers) d6, Sharp Senses (all five) d6, Unbreakable Will d6

Skills Athletics d6/Running d12, Covert d6/Stealth d10, Discipline d6/Resistance d10, Guns d6/Pistols d12/Rifles d12, Heavy Weapons d6/Mines d10, Perception d6/Tracking d12, Ranged Weapons d6/Crossbow d10, Survival d6/Desert d10/Forest d10, Unarmed Combat d6/Brawling d10

Gear Assault rifle (d8 W), camouflage fatigues, crossbow (d6 W), heavy pistol (d8 W), hunting knife (d4 W)

CALEB'S ALIVE!

The sudden introduction of another living soul into the scene should give the hunters pause, especially if they've come ready to perform the Black Calling ritual. Lilah suggests that Caleb act as the host vessel for the expelled *eidolon*, but only if nobody else mentions it first. Once combat starts, she runs to Caleb and tries to inscribe the sigils of identity onto his flesh, even against the wishes of her fellow hunters. Inscribing rituals takes three turns of combat, and each turn deals d4 Basic damage to Caleb. Caleb's already taken 4 points of Stun, so she might kill him if she's not careful. Allow the players to spend Plot Points to actually reduce the damage (one Plot Point staves off one point of Wound or Stun), if they can describe helping Lilah not to hurt Caleb *too* much.

Conclusion

At the end of the fifth turn of ritual recitation Blake Walker turns his sweat-covered face to the sky, and with a primal scream, ejects the *eidolon* from his soul. The entity seems to be sucked back into Blake's body from within his shadow, flowing like a plume of vacuumed mist, before spilling out of his eyes in a flood of black tears. If the hunters followed the ritual instructions, the only place the monster can go is into Caleb Parker (or whoever else is chosen to be the second vessel), and so it does. If one of the hunters ritually branded Caleb with the sigils before that moment, the entity will

be trapped, in a weakened state, inside his body forever (or at least until Caleb dies, but that's another episode for another day).

If one or more of the hunters failed to keep a nail in his mouth through the end of the ritual, the expelled entity has an option as to which nearby warrior to inhabit, and it will of course choose the one that isn't presently restrained. If it successfully possesses one of the hunters, it immediately turns tail and runs at incredible speed. If the remaining hunters (plus Blake) can't catch up to the fleeing hunter and complete the ritual again, the hunters have earned themselves a new worst enemy. (In this event, you are free to pursue any story avenue he wishes, though it's recommended that he turn the possessed hunter into a supporting character and have the hunter's player generate a new character.)

In the event that the hunters can't or won't complete the ritual, they have no choice but to kill Blake Walker. If they do, however, they're opening themselves up to possession, as above, since they won't destroy the *eidolon* that way. Keeping nails in their mouths throughout the process of killing Blake prevents possession, of course, but if they

know enough to use the nails, then they know enough to perform the ritual. If they still choose not to, out of some sense of obligation to Caleb Parker, they will be safe from possession but not from Lilah Walker, who never forgives them for letting her husband die when a viable alternative was at hand. In this event, the *eidolon*—having no soul to claim, and unknown to the hunters—sinks into the ground where its host perished, there to await the arrival of its next host; most likely Caleb Parker, who becomes a new long-term enemy of the hunters.

If the hunters complete the ritual, Blake Walker emerges from his stupor as though waking from a nightmare. He looks down and sees himself once again in uniform, his face black with paint, his hands once again red with blood. The tears come fast and hard then, and don't let up until he is safely back in Lilah's arms. Even after the events of the past week are explained to him in detail, Blake Walker has a long road to recovery ahead of him. His mind is bruised, his soul battered and weak, but at least both mind and soul are once more his own. And he has the hunters to thank for that.

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