

Woodson Pond©1998

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Call of Cthulhu

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Introduction

This adventure brings the investigators to the American South to help debunk the claim that a tract of land is haunted. Unfortunately, the real estate agent who hires the investigators will vanish while showing a client the land in question.

The action is set in Florida in modern times. With some slight modifications it can be set in a different place and/or time. The adventure itself is fairly short and straightforward, but is still fairly dangerous.

Getting the Investigators Involved

One of the investigators will receive a fax (or letter) from a college friend, Margaret Hilton. Although Hilton sort of lost touch with the investigator, she has heard of his/her activities through other friends of the investigator. Her fax/letter is as follows:

Dear x,

How are you doing? Where have the years gone? It seems that only a short while ago we were at school. As you remember, I'm a bit blunt, so I'll get right to the point.

As you probably heard from Jane or David, I'm working as a real estate agent in Tallahassee, Florida. My company managed to pick up a large chunk of land near Tallahassee that has a prime location for development. As you probably know, Tallahassee has almost as many college students as roaches, so I could make a tidy commission if I could sell the land to some sleazy developer.

So, you are probably asking, "Why is old Margaret writing?" Well, this will sound weird, but the land is supposed to be haunted by someone or something. Some people have even talked about a monster that lives on the land. Yes, it does sound stupid to have a track of prime real estate left undeveloped these days because of some sort of superstition. Yet, it is the oddest thing: no one who has bought the land has ever been able to complete the development. Almost as odd, no one has been

really willing to say anything concrete about it. I sort of think it is just one of those real estate dead zones where nothing ever works (like Kevin's Bar when we were in school, which was Bill's Tavern, Sam's Restaurant, and about twenty other things that never worked out). But, the land has a great location and it's just perfect for those cardboard units developers love to pack students into.

So, you are probably still wondering why I am writing. Well, I need someone to come and do something about the land. Debunk the legend, that sort of thing. One of our old friends hinted that you have been involved in some odd things, but that you are still the very soul of discretion. I can offer you a percentage of the sale if you are able to help me sell the land.

Tallahassee has an airport, although getting flights there can be a bit of a challenge. Let me know if you want to make some easy money.

Margaret Hilton
Gulf Winds Realty

If the investigators accept Hilton's invitation, then the adventure can proceed. Hilton will tell them that she is showing the land to a potential buyer and that they should call her cell phone number as soon as they arrive in town. If they decline, the investigator will learn of her mysterious disappearance.

When the investigators reach Tallahassee and call Hilton, the phone will not be answered. If they call or visit her office, they will learn that she is not in. If the investigator convinces the secretary that he/she is a friend of Hilton, the secretary will say that Hilton never came to work and that she is very worried. At this point, the investigators should realize that the action has begun.

Keeper's Background

The land that Hilton is trying to sell is known locally as the Woodson plot. The Woodson family was fairly successful in business and purchased a large chunk of land near Tallahassee after the Civil War. The land was never really developed, but Colonel Woodson, who married a woman from Tallahassee, had a house constructed there in 1881. The Woodson family enjoyed a fairly solid reputation until 1945, when John Woodson returned from the war in the Pacific.

Woodson had been a Navy pilot and was shot down in 1943 in the Pacific. Woodson thought he was lucky when he was able to reach a small island, but he changed his mind when he was taken captive by the inhabitants. He quickly learned the inhabitants, who were unknown to both the Americans and the Japanese, were cannibals. Even worse, they worshipped a horror that dwelled in a pond on the island. Subjected to constant torture and abuse, and exposed to the creature, Woodson's mind eventually broke and he joined in the worship. In 1945 he was "rescued" by an American destroyer and brought a larvae from the horror with him.

When he arrived back at the family estate, he released the larvae in the pond and kept it nourished on the blood of animals. After it grew larger, it demanded human blood. Woodson gave it his elderly mother. Over the course of the next four months, Woodson kept the thing well supplied with human victims. This phase of

the horror ended when David Woodson, John Woodson's brother, returned from Europe. After David realized something horrible was going on, the two brothers fought. The fight knocked over an oil lamp, causing the house to burn down. Both brothers perished in the fire, but the creature lived on in the pond.

Denied regular fare, the thing in the pond went into a form of hibernation, waking only occasionally when something disturbed its rest. Most people and animals could feel that there was something "wrong" with the area and so avoided it. Not surprisingly, the area earned a bad reputation, as people reported sometimes hearing or seeing odd things by the pond. Sometimes the thing would take a human victim and, if the disappearance were noted it would add to the evil reputation of the area.

The land passed from owner to owner but no one was ever able to develop it. Workers would call in sick or simply not show up and even the owners would get a bad feeling about the area. Eventually the area became so overgrown that it was more or less ignored and forgotten, but not by everyone.

A few years ago some homeless people set up a camp on the land near the pond. The thing became aware of their presence attacked them. The creature ate all but one of them, sparing Fred Burton in return for his servitude. Fred served the creature well by luring people into its grasp. In return, Fred was able to take any money or possessions the victims might have.

Unfortunately, Hilton happened to drive by the land and was curious enough to find out more about it. She was able to talk her boss into buying the land and then she set out to sell it. She quickly learned that no one appeared to want it, mainly because of its reputation. At this point she contacted the investigators. The night she contacted them she took a client out to the land. Unfortunately for her and the client, the thing was hungry that night. When he saw the two walking around, Burton ran out of the bushes and grabbed Hilton's brief case and made sure to stay in sight so Hilton and the client, Ted Nesk, would chase him. When he reached the pond he stopped and the thing took Hilton and Nesk. After the thing was finished, Burton mucked around in the water until he could find her purse and his wallet. He then dumped the car in a "bad neighborhood" so it would be stolen.

Investigation

The following is useful information the investigators might be able to turn up.

Hilton and Nesk

The investigators can learn about Hilton from her office. By all accounts, she was blunt, honest and responsible, just as the investigator will remember her from college. There is no reason why Hilton would run off on her own.

Ted Nesk was a purchasing agent for a real estate developer. The developer he works for does have some history of code violations and Nesk is known to have done a few shady deals. If the investigators check up on Nesk they will find that there is no reason to believe that Nesk would have either harmed Hilton or run away with her.

The police will find Hilton's car that night when they catch some kids joy riding in it. The kids will claim that some "gross man" just drove it into the neighborhood and left it there, with the engine still running. The police will, of course, believe

none of this and the kids will be the prime suspects.

The kids (Tony Brown, Jamil Jackson and Henry Erics) do have minor police records (some shoplifting and truancy) but do not seem to be the type of kids that would kill two people and steal a car. The police will, of course, not find any evidence that indicates that the kids did anything to Hilton and Nesk. However, they will be charged with stealing the car and kept in jail.

If the investigators are able to talk to the kids or learn about their story (perhaps by talking to the police or the press) they will be able to get a rough description of Burton. However, the description would fit almost any homeless man.

Checking the Woodson Land

According to Hilton's office, she was showing a client the Woodson land. The police will do a cursory sweep of the area (it is a large area, with plenty of brambles and tons of kudzu) that will turn up nothing except the car tracks. If the investigators do a careful search (a clever investigator might call Hilton's cell phone and listen for the noise it makes) around the pond they might find Hilton's cell phone, which she dropped when the thing grabbed her. If the investigators tell the police about the phone, they will check the area more thoroughly.

If the police search the area more carefully, or if the investigators do, they have a good chance of finding one of Burton's many "nests." Burton has constructed, out of various pieces of debris, discards and refuse, various hidden shelters on the land. Searching these will turn up Hilton's briefcase. If the police find the briefcase, they will search the area even more thoroughly and look for Burton. If the investigators do not get the police involved, the rest of the investigation is up to them.

History of the Woodson Land

If the investigators check up on the history of the land, a check of the deed records will reveal the land was purchased in 1881 by Colonel David Woodson. A check of local newspaper records and such will reveal nothing unusual about the area or the Woodson family, at least until 1945.

The following article appeared in the local paper in 1945:

Tragedy Strikes the Woodson Family

Late last night the Woodson house burned to the ground, causing the deaths of Mrs. Evelyn Woodson, John Woodson and David Woodson. Evelyn Woodson was well loved in the community and a regular contributor to local charities. Both John and David served bravely during the war. David served in Europe in an armored division while John was a Naval aviator. This tragic loss has brought sadness to our community...

Further investigation will reveal no other printed sources. However, if the investigators talk to some of local people, they will learn that the area has a bad reputation. For example, Bill Jenkins, who owns the land nearby, went to the pond as a kid on a bet and saw part of the thing. He will say that he thinks he saw something like a tentacle in the water, but he thinks it was a trick of the light and his fear. Still, he will say, he never went near the pond again.

Maps

The map for the adventure details the area around Woodson pond. The land is thickly wooded with plenty of kudzu growing over everything. As noted in the Investigation section, Burton has various “nests” hidden about on the land. These are not marked.

Woodson Road: The paved road that goes by the property. Colonel Woodson had this section of the road built in the 19th century and it still bears his name.

Woodson House: The burnt out remains of the house. Hardly anything is left beside the foundation.

Altar: The altar is made out of concrete and is covered in plants. The altar has various odd symbols on it that were impressed in when the concrete was still wet. The altar was made by Woodson in imitation of the stone altar used by the islanders. Some of the marks on the altar do correspond to some known Pacific culture occult symbols, but others are Mythos related. Successful use of the Cthulhu Mythos skill will reveal that the symbols are mostly meaningless, although some have a vague resemblance to marks associated with Cthulhu. Aside from the marks, the altar is just old concrete.

Woodson Pond: The pond is murky and has plenty of vegetation in it. It is fed by a stream. The thing dwells at the bottom of the pond. Bones and personal possessions of past victims lie in the mud on the bottom of the pond. If the pond were dragged, one of Hilton’s shoes and Nesk’s toupee would be found.

Action

There are two main sources of action. The first is Burton and the second, and most deadly, is the thing.

Hunting for Burton

If the investigators learn of Burton’s existence (from the kids or by finding his “nests”), they will probably want to find him. Burton leaves the Woodson land during the day to panhandle and wander about the town, trying to find people to lure back to the thing. Trying to find Burton in town will be a real challenge, since the investigators will not have a very good description of him. The investigators could go after every homeless person in the city, but there are quite a few and if they are too “active” the police would probably become involved.

Burton always returns to the Woodson land at night to sleep in one of his “nests.” Sometimes he will bring people there, promising that he is bringing them there for a meal (this is true, but they end up as the food). The investigators best bet of getting Burton is to search the land at night or early in the morning before Burton leaves. Burton will try to avoid the investigators. If they find him, he will seem nervous, but will try to bluff his way out. If he feels threatened, he will fight and try to get to the pond in the hopes that the thing will protect him.

Since so many things could happen with Burton, the exact events must be left to the Keeper's discretion.

Facing the Thing

At some point the investigators will have to face the thing. As noted above, it lives in the pond. During the day it burrows deep in the muck and will avoid revealing itself. It also will avoid large groups of people. It will attack people at night if those people are only in small groups or alone. It will also attack if it feels threatened.

The thing is immune to most poisons, so dumping stuff in the pond will not harm it. It also lacks vital organs and reforms quickly, so explosives will not kill it. There are really only two ways to destroy the thing. The first is to use magic. The second is to kill it by getting it out of the water and drying it out. This can be done best by draining the pond. Blocking off the inflow will drain the pond in a couple days and the investigators can also use pumps. When the thing realizes the pond is emptying out, it will do its best to stop it. It will seek for any blockage and try to destroy any pumps. Hence, the investigators will need to keep the thing busy while the pond empties out. Naturally, the thing will fight viciously to preserve its existence.

Conclusion

The adventure lasts until the investigators defeat the thing, they give up or are defeated. If they destroy the thing, they should receive a 1D8 Sanity Point award. If they simply flee, the thing will continue to take victims. Such cowardice should cost the investigators 1D3 Sanity Points.

If the investigators are able to prove that the kids are innocent, they and their parents will be grateful.

With the destruction of the thing, the real estate agency will be able to sell the land and make a tidy profit. Since the investigators do not have a contract with the agency, they might get nothing for their efforts. If they are persuasive, they might be able to get a small percentage of the commission.

NPC

Fred Burton, Servant of the Thing

STR: 12 CON:11 SIZ: 13 INT:11 POW:09 DEX:12 APP: 7 EDU: 9 SAN: 00 HP: 12

DB: None

Important Skills: Conceal 45%, Fast Talk 15%, Hide 55%, Listen 55%, Persuade 24%, Sneak 56%, Spot Hidden 37%

Weapons: Chair leg 35% Damage 1D6, Knife 40% Damage 1D4

Description: Burton has dirty black hair, a wild beard, and grey eyes. He dresses in cast off and scavenged clothing. Burton once had a decent job, but unfortunately he developed severe mental illness. He did seek help, but in the 1980s he ended up on the streets and deteriorated even more. He eventually drifted to Tallahassee and had the misfortune of encountering the thing. Burton serves the thing by bringing it food and worshipping it. In return, he gets to keep anything he can scavenge from the victims. Burton is cunning and careful and has established a sort of mental rapport with the thing, which enables him to understand its commands.

Mythos Beings

The Thing in the Pond

Description: This being is a hideous creature that is loosely associated with Cthulhu and his ilk. These creatures are known to have been worshipped by a few very depraved people in the Pacific.

The thing appears as a pale white-grey blob, with mottled splotches. From the mass protrudes two thick tentacles that lash and twitch. The creature is horrid to look at and typically has bits and pieces of semi-digested victims visible in its body.

The thing is less intelligent than a human being, but still thinks (in an alien sort of way) and will act accordingly.

The thing attacks by grabbing and crushing with its tentacles. Having no mouth, the thing rends its victims into pieces and absorbs the chunks directly into its body. As noted below, the nature of the thing makes it very resistant to most weapons. If it is “killed” but not dried out, burned, etc, it will reform itself in the pond at the rate of 3 hit points every day. The thing is, however, vulnerable to fire and being dried out. Each hour it spends out of water inflicts 1D3 points of damage to it and it takes normal damage from fire. It can heal such damage, providing it can immerse itself in water.

Characteristics	Rolls	Average	Stats
STR	3D6+6	16-17	19
CON	2D6+6	13	15
SIZ	3D6+10	20-21	22
INT	2D6	7	8
POW	3D6	10-11	12
DEX	3D6	10-11	12
HP		17-18	19
Damage Bonus		+1D6	+2D6

Move: 4 (water) 1 (land)

Weapons: Two tentacles 45% Damage 1D6+DB

Armor: None, but the gelatinous body and lack of vital organs causes the thing to sustain only 1 point from impaling (bullets) and blunt weapons (clubs). Slashing weapons do half damage. Fire and acids will do full damage.

Spells: None

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8

Handouts

Handout #1

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Margaret Hilton
Gulf Winds Realty

Handout #2

Tallahassee Democrat, 1945

Tragedy Strikes the Woodson Family

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