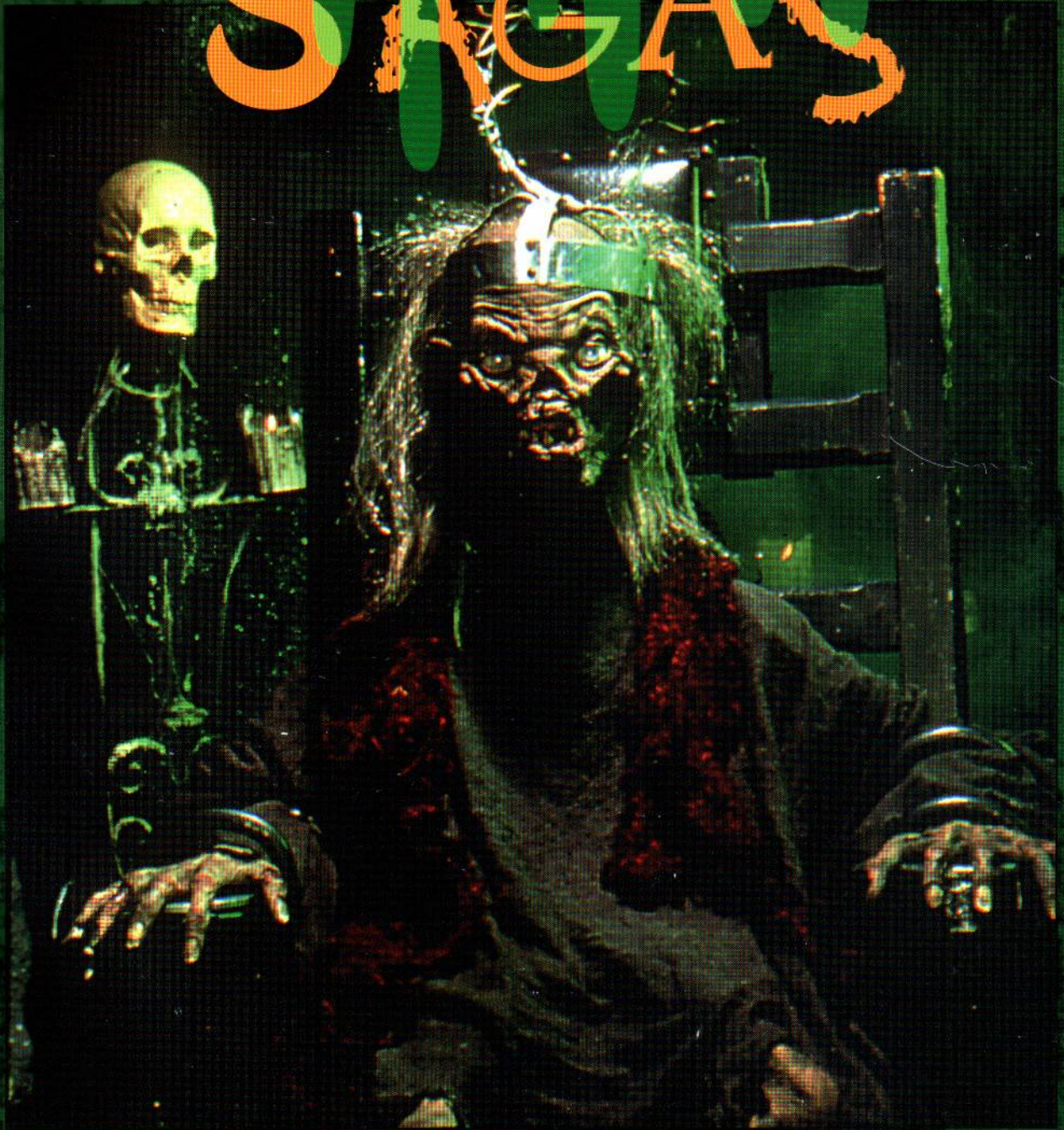


THE WORLD OF  
**TALES**  
FROM THE  
**CRYPT**

# SICK LITTLE SAGAS





THE WORLD OF  
**TALES**  
FROM THE  
**CRYPT**

# SUCK LITTLE SUCK

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# ONE

*All right, pardner ... this Crypt ain't big enough for the both of us. Strap on your irons, mosey on back to Tombstone ... and bring me back an extra-large marker, hold the epitaph, and a coffee, no sugar, plenty of scream. Hehehehehe!*

*Well, howdy, cowcreeps! It's your old pal, the "Crypto Kid," ready to herd a little horror in your direction. It's a good, old-fashioned, red-blooded round-up ... and it's your blood, to boot! Speaking of boots, planning to die with them on or off ... ?*

*So put on your ten-gallon hat, your spurs and your six-guns ... too bad you only get two, you could use all six ... and get ready for a little Western weirdness I like to call ...*

## BAD DAY AT HANGING HILL

If you are playing a *Tales From The Crypt* campaign, you will want to use shell characters for this adventure, which is set in the Old West. However, since the new bodies the player characters will be dropped into don't need to be a great deal better or worse than their own, you can save yourself some bookkeeping and just use the current characters' stats. Only their appearances need change.

If you are playing this adventure as a one-shot, let the players know that their characters are members of a relatively unsuccessful gang of bank robbers whose luck has recently run out completely.

As usual, there may have to be some adjustments made to the story if you are not running it as part of a campaign, but we will provide suggestions along the way. Let's get started ...

### SCREAM ONE: INVITATION TO A NECKTIE PARTY

#### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** The characters find themselves the guests of honor at a neck-stretching party. It sure looks bad ... until someone steps out of the crowd to save them from death — and for a fate worse than death.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The sunlight is blinding. You reach up to shade your eyes, and find you can't — someone has bound your wrists together with thick rope. The same kind of rope you can feel around your neck ...**

**When the sun passes behind a cloud, you get a look at the rest of the party. It looks as if the entire town has turned out to see this. Men, women and children, some frowning, some laughing, all their eyes riveted on you.**

**If the characters have been dropped into shells, describe the town they are in — a typical Old West setting, a few saloons, a livery stable, a doctor's office, a hotel, etc.**



Off in the corner of the platform (you're having a hard time even thinking the word "gallows"), a burly man wearing a badge is talking with a much smaller man.

"You sure you tested the traps?" the sheriff asks.

"Sure did."

"Good. I don't want no mistakes like last time. You don't break the neck clean through, first try, they can dangle there for five, ten minutes before they die. Disturbs the womenfolk."

"So why not put a bullet in 'em?"

The sheriff shakes his head. "Can't do it, Zeb. If it was a lynching, maybe we could put 'em out of their misery, but this is a legal hanging. It just ain't done."

Then he turns to you and says, "You boys got anything to say for yourselves before we stretch your necks?"

Give each character a chance to say something. Maybe they'll plead for their lives. Maybe they'll play it tough. The odds are the players are standing there thinking, "They can't hang our characters or the adventure's over!"

*Hehehehehe .... they don't know this game very well, do they? Well, we can take care of that.*

After they've each had a chance to speak, the sheriff fits heavy black cloth masks over their heads. Read aloud:

**It's stiflingly hot inside the masks ... but pretty soon you won't even feel the heat. Through the muslin, you can hear the droning voice of the preacher praying half-heartedly that your souls won't wind up in the Pit, "like they richly deserve."**

**Suddenly, he's finished. There's dead quiet all around. And then you hear the sheriff say, "Okay, Zeb, let's get 'er done."**

The players think their characters are safe — there'll be some last-minute rescue, surely. But not for one of them. The executioner pulls the trap and one of the characters (go ahead, you pick) drops through the trap. Hit him with a graphic description of how it feels to be strangled by your own weight (darn Zeb didn't set the ropes right again). Maybe call for some Strength rolls (they'll all fail, of course), and let him twist and spin on the rope until he dies.

(Don't — repeat, *don't* — use anything but words to describe his strangulation. Acting it out is an incredibly bad idea and could lead to someone being hurt.)

That should give the players pause. Figure on bringing the player with the dead character back in a little while, with a new character — but they don't need to know that. For right now, it's enough that their sense of certainty has been rattled.

After a certain amount of time in which the sheriff sputters his outrage at Zeb, it's time to get back to the hangings. They're set to pull another lever when a deep voice booms, "Stop! Set those men free!"

One of the parties on the gallows is sufficiently frightened of the speaker to immediately yank the hoods of the characters' heads. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**You see the crowd parting to let a man through. He's rail-thin, with copper-colored hair and moustache and piercing grey eyes. Everyone seems a little ... put off? ... afraid? ... of him. He's waving a paper in his hand.**

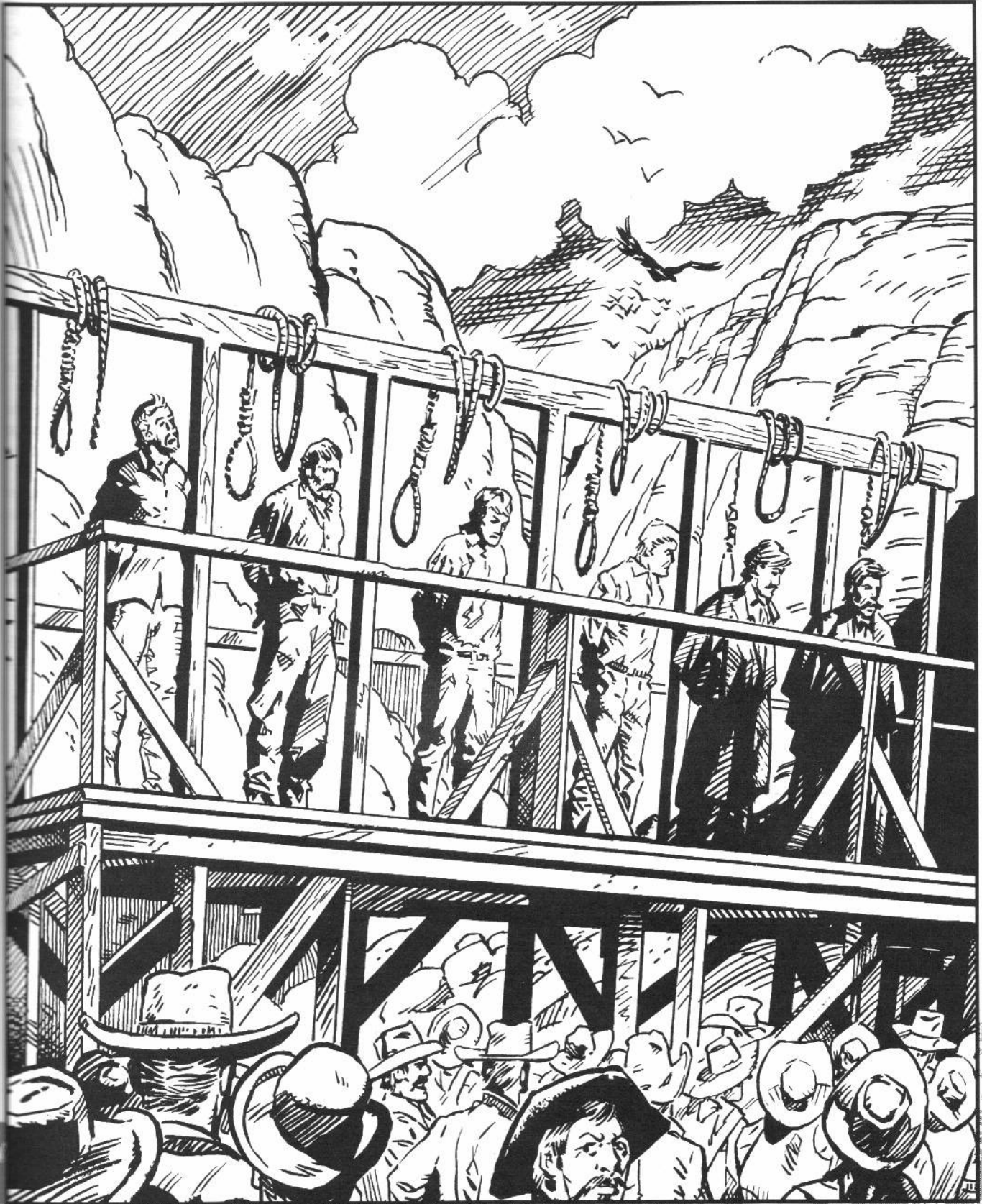
**"I've got a pardon from the Mayor. Those men are in my custody now."**

**The Sheriff curses a blue streak. "All right, Zeb, cut 'em loose. How'd you swing it this time, Barker?"**

The man has stepped up on to the gallows. Have the characters generate *perception* checks. On a 10, they can tell this man smells of money, and something more too ... there's an intensity to his expression. He looks like the type who would make a good firebrand preacher.







Paul Daly



Barker explains that he volunteered to replace the money the bank had lost and the horses the characters stole. In return, the Mayor handed responsibility for the characters over to him. He needs a few more hands out at the ranch.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The sheriff shakes his head. "Sure you don't want the dead one too, Barker?" he says acidly.**

**Barker glances down at the dangling corpse. "No, Sheriff. All things considered, it would be a mercy to put him in the ground."**

**Zeb walks behind you with a knife and cuts your bonds free. As he does so, he whispers, "Don't go thankin' your angels yet, boys. You may not like what he's raisin' on that ranch of his."**

## THE DYING T

Barker has enough horses waiting for the characters to ride double back to his ranch. What's to stop them from cutting and running? Not much — except that Barker assures them that there's lots worse fates than hanging.

About this time, you can reintroduce the player with the dead character to the game. Maybe his new character is someone Barker bailed out of jail.

With their benefactor in the lead, the characters ride through town, with the townspeople scrupulously avoiding making eye contact with them. As they pass the gallows, they see the dead man being cut down and slapped into a plain pine box for transport to Boot Hill.

Barker's ranch is a good three kilometers outside of town, the brand the letter "T" lying on its side. Most places they would call that a "lazy T," Barker explains, but for some reason people call this one a "dying T."

Call for *perception* checks, with a difficulty of 9. Let different characters notice different things. One makes note of the fact that the land is mostly scrub and rock, not fit for growing anything on. Another notices that there's no sign of any cattle or goats, just a few tired looking horses in a corral. A third notices that there are some men milling around, mostly hard cases, heavily armed. They stand silently in the shadows of the few buildings on the property, just watching the newcomers enter.

## BARKER

### AGILITY 9

Beast riding: horse 12, dodge 12, stealth 13

### DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 11

### ENDURANCE 9

### STRENGTH 9

### TOUGHNESS 10

### INTELLECT 10

Deduction 14, perception 15, science: anatomy 17, science: chemistry 17, trick 14

### MIND 11

Medicine 18, research 14

### CONFIDENCE 11

Con 13, intimidation 16, willpower 16

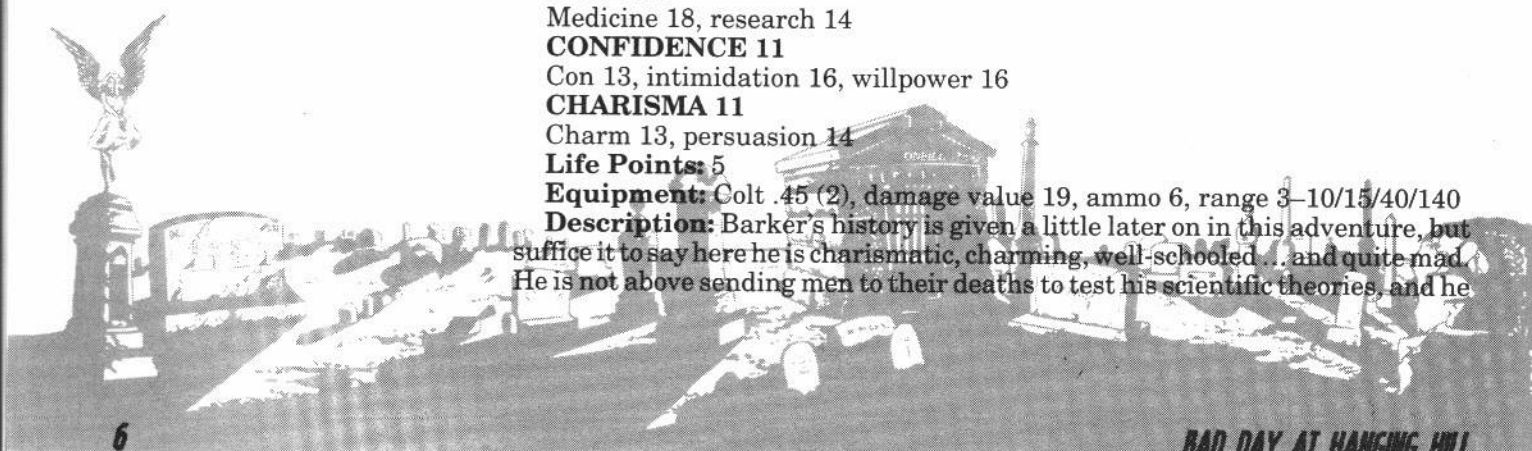
### CHARISMA 11

Charm 13, persuasion 14

### Life Points: 5

**Equipment:** Colt .45 (2), damage value 19, ammo 6, range 3-10/15/40/140

**Description:** Barker's history is given a little later on in this adventure, but suffice it to say here he is charismatic, charming, well-schooled... and quite mad. He is not above sending men to their deaths to test his scientific theories, and he





is obsessed with finding practical applications for his greatest discovery: the means to bring back the dead.

**(Barker (D6): AGILITY 3D:** Beast riding: horse 4D, dodge 4D, stealth 4D+1  
**DEXTERITY 3D:** Fire combat 3D+2 **ENDURANCE 3D STRENGTH 3D**  
**TOUGHNESS 3D+1 INTELLECT 3D+1:** Deduction 4D+2, perception 5D,  
science: anatomy 5D+2, science: chemistry 5D+2, trick 4D+2 **MIND 3D+2:**  
Medicine 6D, research 4D+2 **CONFIDENCE 3D+2:** Con 4D+1, intimidation  
5D+1, willpower 5D+1 **CHARISMA 3D+2 Fate Points: 5. Equipment:** Colt  
.45 (2), damage value 6D+1 ammo 6.)

Once inside the ranch, Barker will turn the characters over to Chance, the foreman. He instructs Chance to see to the horses and get the new hands settled in the bunkhouse — “they’ve had a long, hard day.”

## JOHN CHANCE

### AGILITY 9

Beast riding: horse 13, dodge 11, improvised weaponry 10, melee combat 10, unarmed combat 11

### DEXTERITY 10

Fire combat 12

### ENDURANCE 10

### STRENGTH 10

### TOUGHNESS 11

### INTELLECT 9

First aid 10, perception 11, tracking 12, trick 11

### MIND 8

### CONFIDENCE 9

Intimidation 12, survival: desert 11, willpower 13

### CHARISMA 9

Taunt 10

### Life Points: 4

**Equipment:** Colt .45 (2), damage value 19, ammo 6, range 3–10/15./40/140; Enfield .30, damage value 21, ammo 5, range 5–20/75/175/275

**Description:** Chance is big, canny and mean, with skin like leather. He’s got no patience with bank robbers and horse thieves, so don’t expect him to be a pal to the characters. But ... he’s also a little starved for company. The other hands do their jobs and keep to themselves, not even going into town for beer. Dealing with Chance will be a test of the characters’ roleplaying abilities and talent for interaction — he’ll be brusque and hostile with them at first, but if they show him the proper respect without being boot-lickers, he might open up a little.

**(John Chance (D6): AGILITY 3D:** Beast riding: horse 4D+1, dodge 3D+2, improvised weaponry 3D+1, melee combat 3D+1, unarmed combat 3D+2 **DEXTERITY 3D+1:** Fire combat 4D **ENDURANCE 3D+1 STRENGTH 3D+1**  
**TOUGHNESS 3D+2 INTELLECT 3D:** First aid 3D+1, perception 3D+2, tracking 4D, trick 3D+2 **MIND 2D+2 CONFIDENCE 3D:** Intimidation 4D, survival: desert 3D+2, willpower 4D+1 **CHARISMA 3D:** Taunt 3D+1. **Fate Points: 4. Equipment:** Colt .45 (2), damage value 6D+1, ammo 6; Enfield .30, damage value 7D, ammo 5.)

Unfortunately, Chance doesn’t know much. Barker hired him when he bought the place, six months ago, and he also takes care of hiring all the help. This irritates the foreman, since traditionally hiring hands should be his job. Just about all of the men hired have been drifters, or fresh out of jail, and they ain’t been too friendly.

Not that that’s all that surprising ... not with all the accidents around the place. They’ve lost at least a hand a month to one thing or another ... one got shot when his gun went off while it was being cleaned, one fell on a scythe, another



one got trampled by the horses during a lightning storm, and so on. Barker has his own personal "Boot Hill" on the north side of the spread.

## **BEDDING DOWN**

The characters have a small bunkhouse all to themselves. It has one door and several windows, all set high in the walls and too narrow for a man to fit through. The beds are simple bunks and there are a few empty chests where gear can be stowed and a chair or two. Once the characters are set, Chance will tell them breakfast is at sun-up and bid them goodnight ...

... And lock the door behind him.

Yelling and screaming won't help. Pounding on the door won't help.

Either nobody's listening or nobody cares.

## **CUT TO ...**

The characters can settle in for the night and wait to see what morning brings. Or they can try and break out, do some exploring, or try to escape. If they break out, cut to Scream Two. If they stay in the bunkhouse until Chance comes to get them at dawn, cut to Scream Three.

## **SCREAM TWO: BURY ME NOT ON THE LONE PRAIRIE — OR ANYWHERE ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER**

## **THE SITUATION**

**Standard.** This scene can be run at any point in the adventure, if the characters have managed to get out of the bunkhouse during the night. It's likely, though, that they'll make their break the first night. The characters will hear some very good news ... and get some hints of bad news in the offing.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The lock is iron. The door is heavy wood. Obviously, you're meant to stay in here. But if you did what you were supposed to do all the time, you would never have wound up in this mess in the first place, right?**

## **THE ACTION**

Breaking the door down isn't really an option — it's much too big and heavy. But the hinges are on the inside, so escape is possible. The characters will need something they can bang the pins loose with, a rock, a club, whatever. One option would be to break the leg off a chair and use that (not as effective as a rock, but then there aren't any rocks in the place). Don't bother making them roll to do a number on the door, just roleplay it out.

Since they will probably want to keep it quiet, having the door creak loudly as the hinge pins come loose should shake them up a little. Keep in mind during the scene that follows that the characters have no guns and no lanterns, as there aren't any in the bunkhouse. Fortunately, there's a bright yellow moon out tonight.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The sky is a blanket of stars over your heads. The moonlight gives a stark, bare quality to the buildings and the grounds, bleaching them white like the bones of a skeleton. You have no weapons, you have no horses ... and it's a long walk to town.**





Intimidation 10, streetwise 9, willpower 9

**CHARISMA 7**

Taunt 9

**Life Points: 1–3**

**Equipment:** Colt .45, damage value 19, ammo 6, range 3–10/15/40/140; rope.

(**Cowhands (8) (D6): AGILITY 3D:** Beast riding: horse 3D+2, dodge 3D+1, unarmed combat 3D+1 **DEXTERITY 3D:** Fire combat 3D+1 **STRENGTH 3D TOUGHNESS 3D+1 INTELLECT 2D+2:** Perception 3D, tracking 3D **MIND 2D+1 CONFIDENCE 2D+2:** Intimidation 3D+1, streetwise 3D, willpower 3D **CHARISMA 2D+1:** Taunt 3D. **Fate Points: 1–3. Equipment:** Colt .45, damage value 6D+1, ammo 6; rope.)

## THE BARN

Exactly what it sounds like — a big, empty barn. The characters can find more pitchforks in here, lots of hay, and one lantern. It's unlit and there's no oil in it, but maybe they can find some use for it later on.

## THE MAIN HOUSE

Barker's house is the nicest building on the property, a one-story affair that looks very comfortable from the inside. A light burns in the living room, and the window is partially open. There are no guards posted around the house, so the characters can steal up to it with ease.

Barker and Chance are having a heated discussion. If the characters get close to the open window, they can listen in. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**"All I'm trying to say, Mr. Barker, is that I'm the foreman of this ranch. That means I'm supposed to pick the hands,"** Chance grumbles.

**"And I'm the owner of this ranch, Chance. Your job is whatever I say it is, and you'll do it and like it. Or would you rather go back to being a cowpoke on those freights to Denver?"**

**"Your job is to supervise the men I see fit to hire, at the tasks I see fit to assign them. Any ... accidents that result from these men being poorly trained are my responsibility."**

**"And what about those new hands? What if they — ?"**

Barker cuts him off. **"They'll be well paid, in gold ... and maybe more than gold."**

At that point, Chance leaves. Barker walks over to the window to shut it. The characters would be well advised to fade back into the darkness.

## THE SHACK

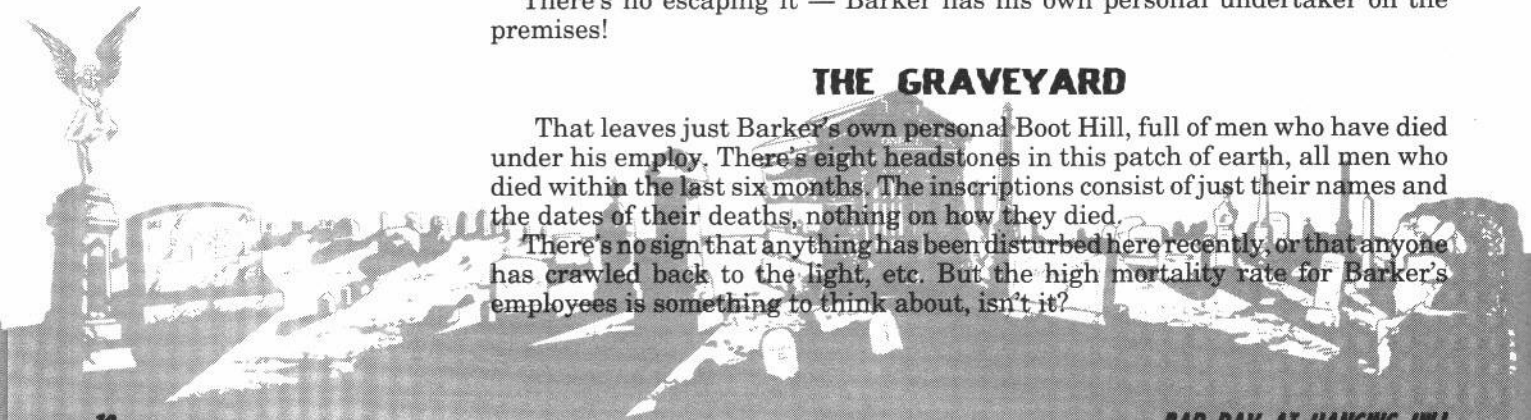
This simple wooden shack looks like just another storage shed. It's dark and unoccupied, but not locked. If the characters go inside, they'll find one long table, stained with blood. A pile of wooden boxes — coffins — rests in the corner. The shelves are lined with jars of chemicals. An Intellect or perception total of 11 reveals these to be the sort used in embalming.

There's no escaping it — Barker has his own personal undertaker on the premises!

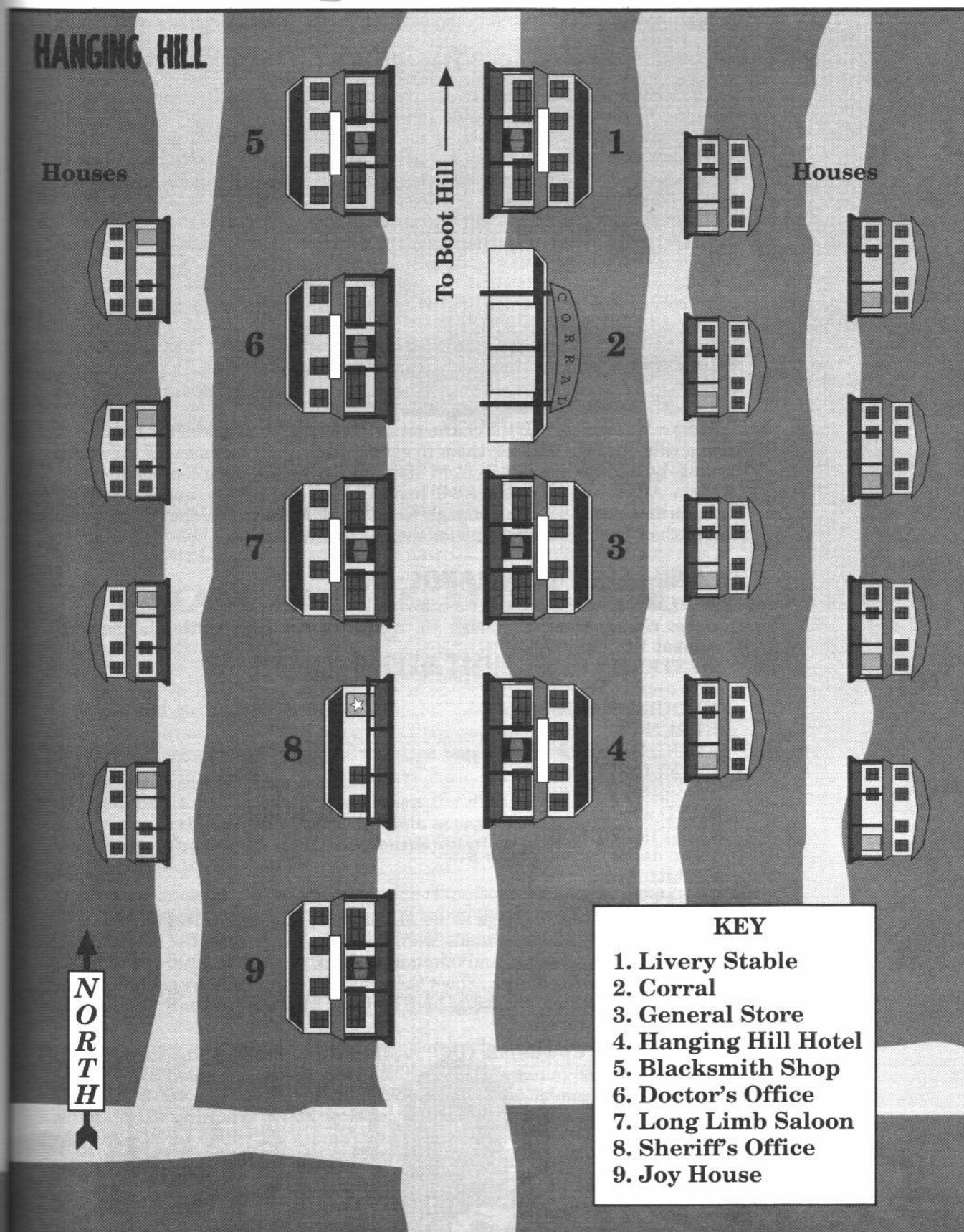
## THE GRAVEYARD

That leaves just Barker's own personal Boot Hill, full of men who have died under his employ. There's eight headstones in this patch of earth, all men who died within the last six months. The inscriptions consist of just their names and the dates of their deaths, nothing on how they died.

There's no sign that anything has been disturbed here recently, or that anyone has crawled back to the light, etc. But the high mortality rate for Barker's employees is something to think about, isn't it?







It might even make the characters think about quitting ...

## THE FENCE

Thick barbed wire is strung all the way around the ranch. To even think about climbing it, the characters would need gloves. Otherwise, they can count on taking damage value 14, most likely multiple times as they try to get over it. The other option is cutting it, which would be possible if they had the tools. (Just in case they do make it through the wire, now or at some other point in the early part of this adventure, see "Going Over the Wire," below.)

Oh, one other thing we forgot to mention ... Barker has had the barbs coated with a drug. One scratch and it's in your bloodstream. Characters will automatically lose -2 off their mental and physical attributes and suffer stun damage of 18 until they are unconscious. When they awaken, attribute levels will be restored. A *perception* total of 15 will reveal that the barbs are faintly discolored, having a slightly greenish tinge.

Five hands are working on the fence on the northern side of the ranch. One of the posts didn't set right and they're pounding it back into place. They're working by lantern light. They seem to be moving a bit slowly and stiffly, but it might just be the chill in the night air. Sure, it *might* be that ...

They work in silence. If the characters start to approach, one of the hands will turn a rifle on them and tell them to get on about their business. If they keep coming, he'll fire in the dirt in front of them. If they still keep coming, he'll fire at them. Any sound of gunshots will bring Chance and Barker, and it's doubtful the characters will be lucky enough to get fired. More likely, they'll get worse chores than Barker has in mind for them already.

## REANIMATED COWHANDS

### AGILITY 9

Beast riding: horse 11, dodge 10, melee combat 10, stealth 11, unarmed combat 10

### DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 15

### ENDURANCE 13

### STRENGTH 14

### TOUGHNESS 13

### INTELLECT 7

Perception 8, tracking 8, trick 8

### MIND 6

### CONFIDENCE 6

Intimidation 12, willpower 8

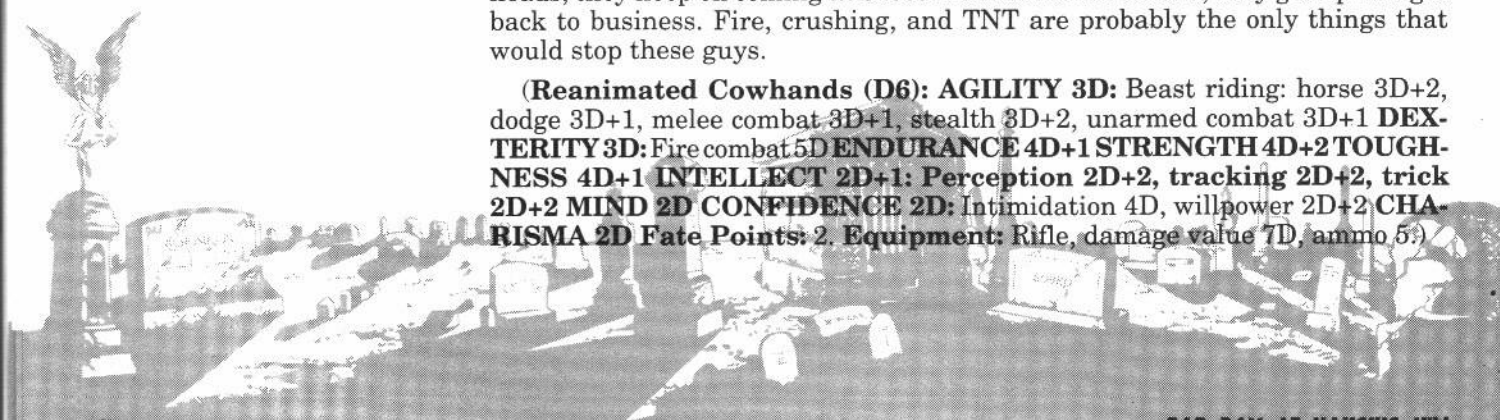
### CHARISMA 6

Life Points: 2

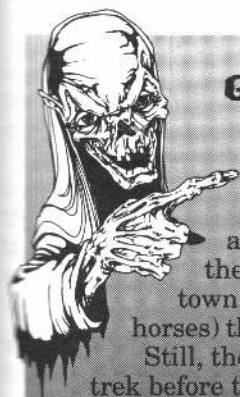
**Equipment:** Rifle, damage value 21, ammo 5, range 5-20/75/175/275

**Description:** These cowhands were dead until very recently. Now they're back, stronger than before, and immune to shock and K/O results. Cut off their heads, they keep on coming ... shoot them out of the saddle, they get up and get back to business. Fire, crushing, and TNT are probably the only things that would stop these guys.

**(Reanimated Cowhands (D6):** **AGILITY 3D:** Beast riding: horse 3D+2, dodge 3D+1, melee combat 3D+1, stealth 3D+2, unarmed combat 3D+1 **DEXTERITY 3D:** Fire combat 5D **ENDURANCE 4D+1** **STRENGTH 4D+2** **TOUGHNESS 4D+1** **INTELLECT 2D+1:** Perception 2D+2, tracking 2D+2, trick 2D+2 **MIND 2D** **CONFIDENCE 2D:** Intimidation 4D, willpower 2D+2 **CHARISMA 2D** **Fate Points: 2.** **Equipment:** Rifle, damage value 7D, ammo 5.)







## GOING OVER THE WIRE

Anything is possible with players and their characters, and they might find a way over, through or under the wire. As soon as Barker discovers their disappearance, he'll send out some of the still living cowhands to round them up, and notify the sheriff. If the characters set foot back in town, they'll be arrested and sent back to Barker. If they avoid the town, they have weeks of walking (or riding, if they stole some horses) through the trackless desert before they'll find another one.

Still, there are some encounters the characters could have on this trek before they get caught. They might run across some outlaws who are "man-burners," for example — owlhoots who club or shoot their victims and then burn them, in part to cover up their crimes, in part just for the "fun" of it. Maybe the characters will be asked to join up — nothing like adding a few more hanging offenses to your resume — or maybe they'll be the next victims.

## CUT TO ...

It's getting on toward sun-up. If the characters aren't going to make a break for it, they should get back to the bunkhouse, repair the door, and try to catch some rest before Chance wakes them at dawn. Cut to Scream Three.

## SCREAM THREE: BEAT THE DEVIL

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** Before the sun has even finished peeking up over the hills, Chance wakes the characters up. They can grab a little hot coffee and some biscuits with the rest of the hands, and then Barker joins them. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The ranch owner is addressing all the men, but he seems to be looking particularly hard at you. "Some men from the Army are going to be coming by in the next few weeks to look at some of the horses. And I can't have one of the brutes tearing a chunk out of an officer. So Devil has to be broken — today."**

Even not knowing for certain which one of the horses is Devil, the characters should be a little puzzled by this. For one thing, there aren't that many horses on the ranch. For another, the ones that are there are in pretty sad shape, hardly the kind the Army is going to want to purchase.

### THE ACTION

The hands scatter to start their day's chores. The characters, of course, don't have set duties yet. They do have a rep (deserved or not) as horse thieves, though ... so guess who gets to try and beat the Devil?

As you've probably guessed by now, Devil is the horse who was penned off by itself ... the one with what looks like a scarred-over bullet hole in his head. In fact, that's exactly what it is. Devil was one of Barker's first experiments in reanimation, an ornery horse shot by its owner and left to rot. Barker found it, brought it back to the ranch, and worked his "magic" ... and the result was an undead and



even more temperamental horse. He doesn't like the other horses (and they shy away from him) ... he doesn't like people ... and he *especially* doesn't like people who try to ride him.

One of the lucky characters is going to get to be the one that rides Devil. Who will it be? That's up to you, the gamemaster. You can have Chance call for volunteers ... you can choose a character at random ... or you can choose the one you've found most annoying up to now. Here's hoping he has the *beast riding* skill!

Staying on Devil will require Agility or *beast riding* totals of 14 each round, with occasionally higher difficulty numbers when the horse *really* bucks. Failing a roll means the character flies off the horse, suffering damage value 14 when he hits the ground. He can try again or he can shake his head, dust himself off, and give up. Feel free to have Devil try to kick him or take a bite out of him at some point.

If one of the characters wants to try, mount him up and throw him off. When he finally gets frustrated and gives up, Chance will tap one of the other cowhands to give it a go. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**There's not a hint of hesitation in the cowboy's stride as he approaches the horse. In a flash, he's mounted the beast, who immediately tries to throw him off. But the cowboy's holding on ... holding on ... it looks like he might do it!**

**Until, that is, Devil leaps high into the air and the cowboy flies higher, before landing with a thud on the ground. But he's getting up, he's okay ...**

Well, he would have been ... if Devil hadn't lashed out and caught him in the side of the head with a wicked kick. The cowboy goes down like a sack of rocks, an ugly bruise appearing on his temple. A few of the cowhands rush in and throw ropes around Devil to drag him out of the corral. Chance rushes to the fallen cowboy's side, but it's too late ... he's dead.

In the distance, the characters see the cowboys struggling with the murderous horse. Finally, one of them gets fed up, pulls his six-shooter and fires into the horse's temple.

Devil's response is to rear up, throw off the men holding him, leap a fence and gallop off, dragging their lariats behind him. It's most definitely *not* to drop dead, the way he should have ...

## REQUIEM FOR A COWHAND

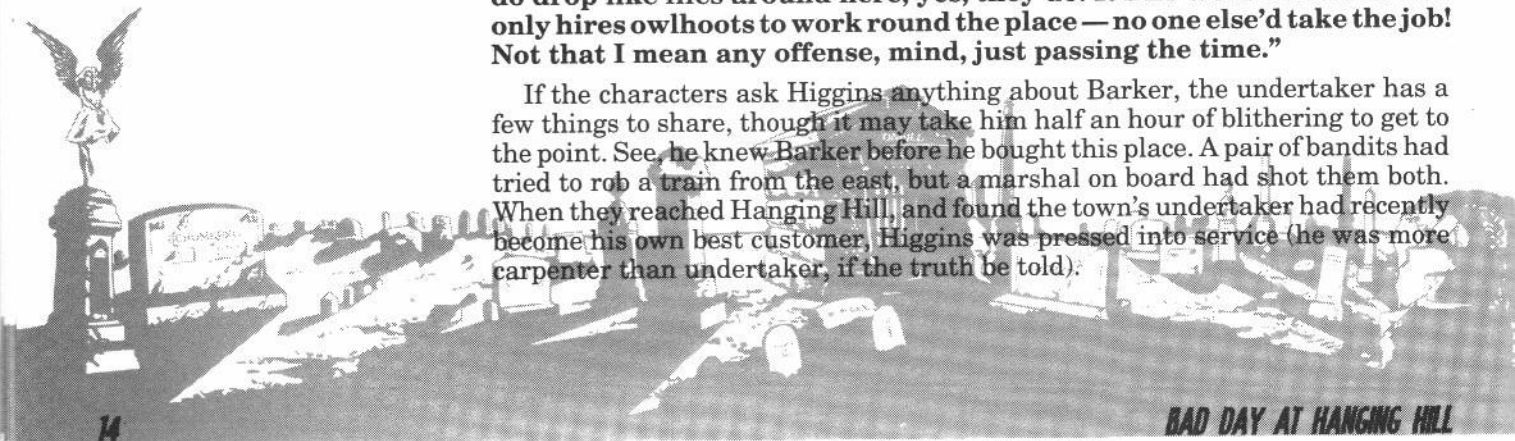
If nothing else, the cowboy's death gives the characters a chance to meet Higgins, Barker's undertaker. Chance details them to carry the body over to the shack. The funeral will be at sundown.

Higgins is an old coot whose high, wheedling voice rapidly gets annoying, and whose cackle sounds more than a little insane. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**"Got another one, eh?" the undertaker says brightly as you bring the body in.**

**"Well, come on, come on, dump him on the table. Hee-hee, they sure do drop like flies around here, yes, they do. It's no wonder Mr. Barker only hires owlhoots to work round the place — no one else'd take the job! Not that I mean any offense, mind, just passing the time."**

If the characters ask Higgins anything about Barker, the undertaker has a few things to share, though it may take him half an hour of blithering to get to the point. See, he knew Barker before he bought this place. A pair of bandits had tried to rob a train from the east, but a marshal on board had shot them both. When they reached Hanging Hill, and found the town's undertaker had recently become his own best customer, Higgins was pressed into service (he was more carpenter than undertaker, if the truth be told).





The characters can spend some time exploring the ranch, if they wish. Here are some points of interest:

## STOREHOUSE

Inside this small wooden shack, the characters will find lengths of rope, some old, broken-down saddles, a pair of pitchforks (damage value STR+7/21), a wagon wheel, an empty gun belt, and a scythe (damage value STR+7/21). An Intellect or *perception* total of 9 reveals that there are rust-colored stains on the blade of the scythe. A Mind total of 8 should be sufficient to tell the characters they are bloodstains, and not all that old.

The characters could stop right there, of course. But if they are determined to rummage through the storehouse, hoping to find weapons, etc., call for an Intellect or *perception* total. On an 11, they'll find three skulls side by side on a shelf. They are extremely clean, despite how dusty and dirty everything else is in the shack.

## THE CORRAL

This fenced-in portion of the ranch contains the horses the characters rode in on. Where they seemed so docile this afternoon, they will now whinny loudly if any of the characters approaches the fence. If the characters ignore that and try to rope or saddle any of the horses, it will try to bite or kick them.

One horse stands off by itself, a fence separating it from the others. This animal is, essentially, mad ... at least, that's how it appears. It will viciously attack anyone who comes near it. It's highly doubtful the characters will get close enough to inspect the horse, but if they do, an Intellect or *perception* total of 13 will show there is a scar just above the animal's left eye. A Mind or *medicine* total of 10 will indicate that it looks like a scarred-over bullet hole. (This horse is named Devil, and there will be more on him in Scream Three.)

## BUNKHOUSE 2

The other hands stay in this bunkhouse, a larger version of the one the characters found themselves in. With a boost, a character can see through one of the dirty windows. These hands do have lanterns to see by, but there isn't much to see. Just a bunch of grim-faced men sitting on their bunks, staring at the walls, a few playing cards, one writing a letter.

If the characters attempt to make contact with any of these men, they'll be rebuffed. None of them are amiable types to start with ... and they've seen enough of Barker to know they don't want to break any of his rules. They're not particularly scared of Chance, but Barker gives them an uneasy feeling.

These hands are armed. If they think the characters are going to bring the wrath of their employer down on them, they won't hesitate to use their hardware. The characters might want to wonder what sort of man can so cow such tough customers.

## COWHANDS (8)

### AGILITY 9

Beast riding: horse 11, dodge 10, unarmed combat 10

### DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 10

### ENDURANCE 9

### STRENGTH 9

### TOUGHNESS 10

### INTELLECT 8

Perception 9, tracking 9

### MIND 7

### CONFIDENCE 8

Barker was on that train, and Higgins “never did see a man more interested in a pair of bodies. At first, I thought he knew the rannies — turned out he just wanted to see what I’d be doing to ‘em. Said he was studying to be a doctor back east ... don’t know what brought him out here.”

At this point, Higgins will shoo the characters out, saying he has to get the body ready for a “fit an’ proper burial.” How do the characters spend the rest of the day? Well, if they haven’t looked over the ranch yet, this would be a good time to do it, while they pretend to do chores (see Scene Two). If Chance puts them to work, they’ll run into Barker later in the day. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The owner of the “Dying T” looks grim as he approaches you. “I just wanted you boys to know how sorry I am about Zeb. That’s no fitting way for a man to die. But every cowboy knows the chances that he takes.**

**“I suppose I should offer you the chance to make tracks, but the truth is, I need hands more than ever now. So I’ll double your pay to stay on — starting with a little bonus.”**

Barker digs into his coat pocket, produces a very small bag, and hands it to one of the characters. If the characters look inside, they’ll see — gold dust! Not enough to make a man rich, but enough to hold his attention. Read aloud:

**“All right, so now you know the secret of the ‘Dying T.’ Those mountains up there hold enough gold to make us all rich. But there’s a scrap about who has the rights to them, and if I kick up a fuss, everyone in the county will know there’s riches there. So I have to dig it out at night — that’s why I need special kinds of hands, like you. Men who know when to keep their mouths shut and just do what they’re told.”**

That should give the characters something to chew on for the rest of the day. Sundown brings Zeb’s funeral, and the characters will be tapped by Chance to be pallbearers. They can go to Higgins’ shack and pick up the coffin ... with some effort. It’s *heavy*, a lot heavier than Zeb was when they carried him to the undertaker. But there won’t be a chance to examine the contents, since Barker and the other hands are around constantly.

The funeral is short and sweet. Barker says a few words, the hands mill about looking properly grim, a few even taking their hats off. Then the characters are told to loop some ropes around the coffin and lower it into the ground. As they do so, there’s a crack like a pistol shot. A few of the men go to their sidearms. But an *Intellect* or *perception* total of 8 by the characters will reveal that the sound was a split in the wood of the coffin, through which it can be seen that it’s filled with ... rocks.

The characters have two options:

**Call Attention To It:** If they point out that there’s rocks in the coffin, Barker will insist it be opened. Yeah, there’s rocks in there, all right. The owner will turn on Higgins, demand to know what in thunder he did with the body, and when the undertaker doesn’t answer quickly enough, he’ll pull his gun and shoot the old man dead. Barker will order a search for the body, detailing the characters to the storage shed, but it won’t turn up.

**Don’t Call Attention To It:** If the characters keep their mouths shut, the funeral will proceed, the dirt will be shoveled on top of the coffin, and everyone will go home satisfied. Except the characters, of course, who now know there is a missing corpse somewhere on the grounds of the “Dying T.”

## CUT TO ...

Considering the fact that there, but for Devil’s foot, goes one of the characters, they might want to think about tracking the body down. Maybe gold isn’t the only secret of the “Dying T” ...

If they do so, cut to Scream Four.



## SCREAM FOUR: THE SLOW AND THE DEAD

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** The characters go on a search for an errant body and wind up finding out just *how* interested Barker is in the dead.

It's possible, of course, that the characters might not decide to search for the body. If they aren't so inclined, have Chance come visit them. If they didn't call attention to the rocks in the coffin, well, he noticed them too. He thinks something mighty peculiar is going on, and gold dust or no, he wants to find out what it is. (If the characters are still reluctant, he'll point out that it might have been one of them gone missing, if Devil had lashed out a little earlier.)

As with anything that's lost, the best place to begin is "where you saw it last." In this case, that's Higgins' shack. If the undertaker is still alive, someone will have to distract him and get him out of the shack so the others can search. There isn't a lot to be seen inside the place, although the characters can turn up some oil for that lantern they found and some matches.

Outside ... that's another story. Behind the shack, there's a load of tracks, visible even in the hard earth. An Intellect or *tracking* total of 9 will allow the characters to follow them all the way back to a rock pile. Backtracking, they vanish into the back wall of the shack.

An Intellect or *perception* check of 9 shows that two of the slats in the rear of the shack are loose. Somebody could slip out the back of the building and retrieve rocks to load the coffin with. And if they could bring rocks in, they could carry a body out the same way ...

Hopefully, the characters have the lantern working by now. If not, they're going to have to rely on moonlight again — add +3 to the difficulty of the *perception* rolls to search the ground. There are two sets of tracks that break off from the rest and they travel in the direction of Barker's house.

Specifically, they go around the back and end at a trapdoor that leads down to a root cellar. If they try the door, they'll find it's locked from the inside. There are three small windows in the cellar, all covered with heavy black paper. But one of the windows is missing a small piece of glass in the corner, and a character can reach a finger inside to move aside the paper.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**You can't see much ... but what you see is enough. Barker is there, his jacket off, his sleeves rolled up, working over the body of Zeb. Beside him stands a cowhand clad in jeans and a vest. Both his arms are missing, and the roots hang out from his shoulders. Off to the right is a worktable covered with bloody tools. But your eyes are drawn to the vise clamped on the edge of the table ... and the human head held clamped in the vise.**

Well, horses or not, guns or not, bedrolls or not, the characters should be ready to pack it in right about now and head for the hills. As soon as they spring to their feet and turn around, there's a chorus of metallic clicks. A dozen figures step out of the darkness all around, all carrying rifles (use the stats for the reanimated cowhands given above).

Well, the characters can fight, though there is a good chance they'll lose. They can try running, and risk being shot down (reanimated dead are very good shots — they never get nervous and their hands don't shake). Or they can accept the fact that the dead have the drop on them and wait to see what happens.

Characters who try to run away will, of course, be shot down. Characters who try to fight will be clubbed into unconsciousness but not killed. Barker has reason to want them alive ... for now.



If the characters manage to defeat the riflemen ... this can throw something of a monkey wrench into the adventure. But if it happens, it happens — no fair saying, “Um, they keep getting up until they beat you.” Players really hate that. If they escape the ranch, let them — Barker’s people will hunt them down, the townsfolk will toss them in jail before sending them back to the ranch, etc. See “Going Over The Wire,” above, for details on what happens if they get away.

What if they defeat the riflemen, take their rifles and go after Barker? Here you can use any cheap gamemaster trick you want to stop them. Who knows how many reanimated dead Barker has in storage? Let’s hope the answer is, “Enough to stop the characters from completely busting the scenario.”

With luck, the characters will lose the fight or give up and save you all this trouble. Once that (or something like it) happens, cut to “The Pause That Reanimates.”

## THE PAUSE THAT REANIMATES

Barker’s basement is a mixture of bunkhouse and charnel house. There’s an almost overwhelming stench of chemicals and rot before the characters are even all the way inside. Call for Endurance rolls — on a 12, the characters are able to keep dinner down. Otherwise ...

Things get worse when they’re actually in the basement. Limbs are stacked like cordwood on the shelves, and there’s more of those pesky dead men with guns, some of whom are missing parts of their heads or have eyes hanging out (or whatever other disgusting effect you can think of). The center of the room is dominated by a long table, on which lies the still body of the unlucky Zeb. In the back of the room, chemical retorts rest on burners, the liquid in them bubbling away. As they enter, Barker is drawing a greenish fluid from one of the retorts into a hypodermic needle. He turns and sees them — read aloud or paraphrase:

**“Well, I’d hoped to introduce you to all this in my own way, but I suppose it’s too late for that. Welcome to the *real* secret of the Dying T — the secret of life from lifelessness!”**

If the characters give him a chance to, Barker will explain all. He grew up in Boston, the son of a well-to-do milliner. Even as a child, he had been fascinated by death. He used to collect birds, mice, anything he could find that had expired, and just sit and watch the changes death brought. Needless to say, these can be pretty gruesome, in young eyes or old, but all they did was fuel his obsession.



Paul Daly



When he grew older, he seriously considered becoming an undertaker. But then he realized that what he wanted was not to preserve bodies in death, but reclaim them from it. So he went to medical school to learn all he could about what causes the body to die, and thus how to reverse the process.

He started experimenting with animals, but eventually the faculty learned what he was up to and expelled him. That was when he decided to head west, where there was plenty of space ... and plenty of privacy. He continued his experiments here, first with a horse (Devil) and then with hands unlucky enough to have "accidents" (that tall fellow missing the arms was "accidentally" pushed into a thresher, for example).

So far, the experiments have been a mixed success. He can bring "life," of a sort, back, but not the kind the person knew before. There's movement and reflex, but no respiration or heartbeat. There's awareness, but no independent thought — in fact, he's had bodies up and functioning without heads, and heads that can function without their bodies! (At this point, he will probably want to show off the head in the vise, which is, in fact, alive, if not particularly happy.) He has yet to find a way to recapture the soul, but at least the preservatives he mixes in with the solution keep the bodies from rotting.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**As Barker approaches the dead body with the needle, he says, "Unfortunately ... all this costs money. That gold I showed you before was from a mine in the mountains — but I don't know where it is. One of the people in Hanging Hill's cemetery does, though ... so we are going to ask him."**

**The rancher injects the chemical into the body. An instant later, the corpse begins to twitch ... some dim light returns to his eyes ... and before your eyes, he sits up on the table! His initial steps are hesitant and jerky, but slowly he begins to move a little more naturally.**

Barker explains that it takes a while for "feeling," of a sort, to return to the extremities, which is why the bodies move so sluggishly at first. And now, a little demonstration ...

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**Even as the undead cowboy stumbles around, Barker opens a cabinet and takes out a shotgun. With a satisfied grin on his face, he aims, fires ... and blows Zeb's head into a red mist! Blood and brains are sprinkled on your clothes as you realize with horror that the dead man is still walking!**

**"He's blind, deaf and dumb now, of course," Barker says. "But other than that, losing his head is just an ... inconvenience for him. If he had a gun in his hand, he'd still be firing. If he were on a horse, he'd still be riding. The great virtue of the reanimated is their persistence."**

The characters may be inclined to bolt at this point, but try to stall them until Barker can make his offer. You see, the gold he showed them before is just dust taken from the surface ... but there's a mother lode in the mountains that could make them all rich! He needs two things to find it and work it: living partners he can trust, to supervise the mining, pick up supplies, and do other tasks the dead can't be entrusted with; and he needs to raise the dead in Hanging Hill's cemetery, one and all.

One of those corpses knows where the lode is — he had found it, just before getting shot in the saloon in a fight over a woman. He left no map, no notes, and Barker isn't even sure which dead man he is. So to be on the safe side, he's going to raise them all!

If Chance is with the characters, he's more than heard enough. He'll try drawing on Barker, only to be met by a hail of lead from the various walking dead men. Barker will shake his head and say, "Oh, well, I can always bring him back tomorrow ..." (If Chance isn't with the characters, he'll show up again around Scream Six.)



## WE WERE JUST LEAVING. ACTUALLY

Okay, we're at another pivotal point. If the characters are playing this adventure as part of a campaign — and thus have had contact with the Cryptkeeper — they'll hear his voice in their minds now:

**"Thar's gold in them thar kills! Hehehehehehe! And something else besides ... a little trinket on the miner's maggot-ridden mortal remains that would look just lovely in my comfy Crypt! Tired of playing" Cowboys and Corpses' yet, kiddies? Then find me what I want, or else the fat lady's going to sing in this horse opera."**

If the characters are playing this as a stand-alone adventure and the Cryptkeeper is not involved, things are a little trickier. On the one hand, Barker is obviously a maniac — he's real good at it, we'll grant, but he's a maniac, just the same. On the other hand, that gold was real ... and even if the lode up in the mountains is only a quarter as big as Barker thinks, it's still enough to set the characters up for life (and death?) And more than enough to buy themselves passage far away from Barker and the Dying T.

So it's possible the characters will agree to go along with Barker and raise Hanging Hill's dead, just long enough to get the information they need (or find the Cryptkeeper what he desires). It's also possible they will be so repulsed by the whole idea that they'll try to make a break for it, maybe using that lantern and oil they found (*nothing like roasted reanimates, yum, yum! Hehehehehehe!*) If they do that, let them get away and make it back to town. Don't worry, they'll wind up nostalgic for the gallows yet ...

## CUT TO ...

If the characters decide to help Barker, whatever the reason, cut to Scream Five, "A Fistful of Grave Earth." If they flee to the town, cut to Scream Six, "The Good, The Bad, and the Undead."

## SCREAM FIVE: A FISTFUL OF GRAVE EARTH

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** Why waste time? It's dark ... there isn't apt to be anybody around the old graveyard tonight ... why dig up tomorrow what you can dig up tonight?

Accordingly, Barker will order wagons loaded with apparatus and chemicals. There will be two wagons, and the characters will be split up between the two of them. (Barker doesn't fully trust them, and can you blame him?) There's a dead man riding shotgun just to make sure there's no funny business (the dead have notoriously poor senses of humor).

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**An eerie silence prevails. Only the sounds of wagon wheels bouncing through ruts assure you you haven't gone deaf. It's impossible to relax with a man sitting next to you who was dead an hour, a day, or a week ago ... especially when he carries a loaded gun.**

**In the distance, you see the outlines of Hanging Hill cemetery. A few dozen gravestones wait in lonely silence. The wind begins to pick up, blowing trail dust into your faces. A mournful coyote howls, as if trying to warn the dead of what's coming.**





Paul Dwyer

## THE ACTION

The wagons pull up to the cemetery and stop. The horses immediately begin to shy away from this place of the dead and Barker asks two of the characters to steady them (as you can imagine, the reanimates just make the horses more upset). The others are told to join with the newly undead in unloading the chemicals and gear.

Surprisingly, there are no spades or shovels included with the equipment, just some posthole diggers. No, Barker doesn't intend to dig up each corpse individually — instead, he's going to dig narrow holes down into the earth and slip feeder tubes down into the graves. Through them he'll pump his noxious chemical substance, counting on the newly reanimated to claw their own way out of the grave. It's not as efficient a method as injection, of course, but there are only so many hours of darkness left, and no time to dig up three dozen bodies.

Once the gear is unloaded, Barker, the characters and the undead can all join in on the posthole digging (only something much worse than a post will be going in here). While they're at it, vultures begin to settle in the trees nearby, anticipating a feast. One of the undead goes to shoot a bird and Barker stops him, pointing out that shots could rouse the town.

Throw in whatever spooky effects you want while the characters are digging, but don't drag this part of the scene out too long (the players will get bored with manual labor in a hurry).

Once the digging is done, the real work begins. Barker stands beside an apparatus in the rear of one of the wagons which keeps the chemical solution heated. Feeder tubes run from this machine, and it is these tubes the characters must run down the holes, so that the chemical can reach its intended recipients. (Fortunately, it's acidic enough that it will eat through any caskets it might encounter.)

When that's finished, it's time to wait. And wait. Let the suspense build — after all, the characters are standing in a graveyard in the middle of the night, having just taken steps to bring back all the dead. Even now, they could be clawing their way back to the surface. Any crunched twig, any skittering pebble, could be a harbinger of returning dead. This is too good an opportunity to creep them out to pass up.

Finally, a pair of hands emerges from the soil and grabs the ankles of one of the characters (sure, it's a horror cliché, but there's a reason for that: it works). In twos and threes, once dead gamblers, gunmen and cowhands force their way up out of the ground and stand beside their simple tombstones, dazzled by the weak moonlight after so long in darkness.

Call for a *perception* check. On an 8, the characters spot one grizzled and gruesome character in the back searching his pockets (what's left of them) frantically. If they approach him, he'll demand to know, "Where's my gold? Which one of you took my gold?"

The characters will have to explain the facts of life ... and death ... to him. Any gold he had on him was probably taken off his body before it was buried. He'll be philosophical about it — hell, there's more where that came from. That knowledge is one of only two things in this world he's got that has any value ...

If asked, he'll produce the other. It's a charm in the image of a wolf he bought off a trapper a few years back. It's supposed to protect a man from knives and arrows. (In fact, it does — it provides a TOU+10 bonus against *melee combat* and *missile weapons* attacks. And if the characters are here at the behest of the Cryptkeeper, this is what he wanted. But even if they get it/buy it/con the once-dead miner out of it, they won't be returned to the Crypt — no, this story has a ways to go yet ...)

Barker chooses this moment to ask about the mine. Unfortunately, at this point the miner *really* understands just where he is and who he's surrounded by. Understandably, he snaps a little and starts shouting, "Grave robbers! Grave



robbers!" at the characters and Barker's party. And suddenly, all the newly raised start moving toward their "rescuers," with definite hostile intent. (You can use the stats for the reanimated cowboys from earlier in this adventure.)

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**It's a slow shuffle at first, as they get used to movement again. But with each step they gain speed ... and dark purpose. Barker commands them to stop, in vain. A few of the other undead open fire, as if that's going to do any good. The new returnees just club them aside and take their guns.**

These guys are out of control. Why? Well, spraying reanimating solution on a corpse just doesn't work as well as injecting. Maybe they retain too much of their own personality, maybe it drives them a little insane, or maybe they just wake up on the wrong side of the casket. Whatever, Barker can't get them to stop as they start overturning the wagons, smashing the apparatus, tearing the feeder tubes out of the ground, etc. Then they grab picks and shovels left behind by gravediggers and begin hacking up some of Barker's unfortunate "helpers."

They won't hesitate to do the same to the player characters. A strategic retreat might be in order, and if they need transportation, there are the horses tearing free of the wagons. There's only one problem: the horses don't want to go anywhere near the undead, which means the only direction open to them is toward Hanging Hill.

Of course, the characters could opt to stay and fight it out. But before they make that decision, they might want to pay attention to the fate of Barker. He goes down firing and then a few of the reanimated corpses pin his arms down and one shoves a feeder tube down his throat. The scalding chemical burns him and, horribly, he drowns in his own creation. Worse — a few minutes later he's back, and joining with the rest of the rampaging undead!

## CUT TO ...

If the characters fight — and lose — that's going to happen to them too. They're probably outnumbered about six to one, not particularly good odds. But if they want to stay and fight, it's their funeral (and a great place for it, too). The only hope they have is burning the dead, and there isn't anything that can help with that, unless they brought something with them. If they do win, by some miracle, they'd better make tracks — even in the wild west, despoiling the dead is frowned upon, to put it mildly. (If they defeat all 36 of the walking dead, the adventure's essentially over. Cut to the Adventure Awards.)

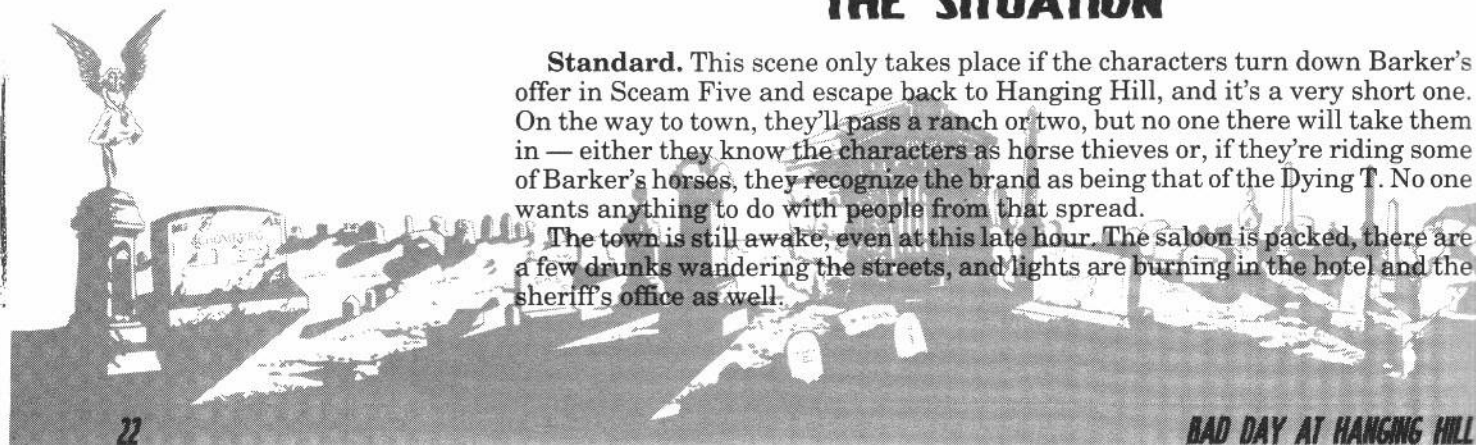
If they want to fall back to Hanging Hill, cut to Scream Seven.

## SCREAM SIX: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UNDEAD

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** This scene only takes place if the characters turn down Barker's offer in Scream Five and escape back to Hanging Hill, and it's a very short one. On the way to town, they'll pass a ranch or two, but no one there will take them in — either they know the characters as horse thieves or, if they're riding some of Barker's horses, they recognize the brand as being that of the Dying T. No one wants anything to do with people from that spread.

The town is still awake, even at this late hour. The saloon is packed, there are a few drunks wandering the streets, and lights are burning in the hotel and the sheriff's office as well.





Read aloud or paraphrase:

The lights of the town somehow make you feel safer. But you are smart enough to know that's just an illusion — you got away, but was it because you took them by surprise, or did Barker let you escape, even knowing his secret?

## THE ACTION

The first decision the characters have to make is: are they going to tell anyone about what they saw and heard at the Dying T, or not? If they choose not to, they can mingle with the cowboys in the saloon, keep a watchful eye out for any of Barker's hands, and wait for the stage in the morning that will get them out of here.

What's to stop them from riding out right now? Nothing, except that they don't know the country that well, it's pitch dark, there's who knows what dangers out there, etc. At least in town, you can see what's coming after you.

If they decide they want to tell someone, there are three primary locations they can visit:

## THE SALOON

The Long Limb always has a crowd, usually trail-bosses and their men weary from driving cattle all, a few gamblers, a few drunks, pretty much the usual assortment. Unlike a number of Old West saloons, this one does not double as a brothel (that's down the street).

The building is a two-story affair. The main floor features a bar, a stage, dozens of tables and chairs, and an old piano whose ivories are being poorly



tickled off in the corner. Upstairs is the office and the living quarters for the bartender, Gary, and the bar's owner, Miss Bonnie.

Although skilled as a bartender and with some talent around the card table, Gary gets the most satisfaction out of serving on the bucket brigade when there's a fire. He went so far as to suggest to the Mayor that buckets of water be propped up in key places inside of buildings, to be upset in the event of a blaze. Unfortunately, he's ahead of his time, it seems ...

Gary won't scoff at the characters' story — he's heard plenty of wilder ones in his day. He'll just pour them another drink and listen sympathetically.

## **MISS BONNIE**

### **AGILITY 8**

Unarmed combat 9

### **DEXTERITY 9**

Fire combat 10

### **ENDURANCE 8**

### **STRENGTH 8**

### **TOUGHNESS 9**

### **INTELLECT 9**

Perception 11, trick 10

### **MIND 9**

Business 10

### **CONFIDENCE 10**

Gambling 13, intimidation 12, willpower 11

### **CHARISMA 9**

Charm 11, taunt 10

### **Life Points: 5**

**Equipment:** Pistol, damage value 19, ammo 6, range 3–10/15/40/140

**Description:** Miss Bonnie is an attractive brunette with a sweet voice and a head for figures. She bought the Long Limb three years ago and promptly kicked out the bar girls, crooked gamblers and a few of the more troublemaking cowboys and turned the saloon into a showplace (at least, by the standards of a cow town). She speaks with a heavy Texas accent and plays a mean game of stud poker.

Bonnie never liked Barker — to her, he was a "Yankee" — and she's got a heart of gold when it comes to down-and-outers. She won't believe the characters' story either, but she'll offer them a place to "sleep it off" until the stage comes in the morning.

**(Miss Bonnie (D6): AGILITY 2D+2: Unarmed combat 3D DEXTERITY 3D: Fire combat 3D+1 ENDURANCE 2D+2 STRENGTH 2D+2 TOUGHNESS 3D INTELLECT 3D: Perception 3D+2, trick 3D+1 MIND 3D: Business 3D+1 CONFIDENCE 3D+1: Gambling 4D+1, intimidation 4D, willpower 3D+2 CHARISMA 3D: Charm 3D+2, taunt 3D+1. Fate Points: 5. Equipment: Pistol, damage value 6D+1, ammo 5.)**

## **THE HOTEL**

The characters can go to the Hanging Hill Hotel to grab a bite to eat, get a bath, or try to find someone who'll believe them. Well, two out of three ain't bad ...

The night clerk, Bill, is an amiable young man with a love for dime novels. He contends that his whole life was changed a few years back when he read *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*. Someday, he insists, he'll make his way back east and write (or at least edit) stories like that for a living.

## **THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Sheriff Rich Kent is a no-nonsense type, a Civil War veteran who thought he would find a little peace and quiet in Hanging Hill. And he did, until the local banker convinced him to hang a star on his vest and keep the place safe for



Paul Daly

“decent folk.” Since then, he’s worked long hours, seen deputies come and go, and put his feet up on more than a few cracker barrels to tell the local kids stories of the war.

Kent has no patience with the characters. He considers it a crime that they didn’t get their necks stretched to start with, and will gladly make up for that oversight, first chance he gets. If the characters want protection, he’ll offer them a cell for the night ... or the year.

## SHERIFF RICH KENT

Use the stats for the living cowhands on page 9.

## VARMINTS! EVEN WORSE. DEAD VARMINTS!

At some point during the evening, a cowboy rides into town. He’ll be in a panic and burst into wherever the characters are, looking for help. He and his saddlemasters were ambushed — at first, they thought it was bandits, until old man Bobko blasted one in the face with both barrels of his shotgun ... and it still came on.

The attackers were hot on his heels when he made it here ... he doesn’t understand why they haven’t attacked yet.

## CUT TO ...

Yes, why haven’t they just charged in and shot up the town? It couldn’t be that the newly reanimated have heads for strategy ... could it?

Cut to Scream Seven.





## WELL, THERE'S A CHANCE ...

If Chance isn't with the characters, he can show up and warn them of what Barker is up to at the cemetery. By that time, of course, it will be too late, but you can't have everything.

## SCREAM SEVEN: THE MALEFICENT SEVEN

### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** The characters find themselves trapped in Hanging Hill, which is now surrounded by really cranky undead. All of them died by violence, and all of them hold Hanging Hill somehow responsible. They may not have asked to be brought back, but they're all set to take advantage of the circumstance.

If the characters have reached this point via Scream Five, they already know what's behind them. But the dead will have surrounded Hanging Hill before they can make it out. If they came here via Scream Six, it was already too late when the rider reached the saloon.

There's a stage due in the morning, whose drivers are sure to see the town being besieged and hopefully will turn the rig around and go for help. Fort Harmon isn't too far from here, and the cavalry could arrive not too many hours past dawn. If the characters can last that long ...

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**A feeling of impending doom pervades the saloon. A few cowhands already tried to ride out of town and got shot down for their trouble. The reanimated gunfighters have the place bottled up, and everyone knows it's only a matter of time before they make their move.**

**Sheriff Kent approaches you and your friends, obviously uncomfortable about what he has to do. "I don't see any reason to trust you boys, but I guess we're going to need every gun we can get. So here." He extends a hand filled with deputy sheriff badges, and offers you your gunbelts. "The pay is \$50. You collect after those ... whatever they are ... are planted in Hanging Hill cemetery."**

The gunbelts contain Colt .45s, damage value 19, ammo 6.

### THE ACTION

The characters can, of course, refuse the offer. But the facts remain that they are stuck in Hanging Hill, they are going to wind up fighting or dying (and maybe both), so they might as well get paid for it.

The townspeople are already at work preparing for the assault. Some shopkeepers are taking to the rooftops with rifles, others are barring their doors and windows, a few are piling up crates to hide behind. The characters can use whatever knowledge they've gleaned about the vulnerabilities of the reanimated dead to help build defenses.

Use the map on page 11 when running the battle. Some of the townsfolk strung a line of barbed wire across the road leading into town from the north — this will make for a great moment as three once-dead gunmen ride into town, get their heads sheared off by the wire, and just keep riding.

The gunmen will attack from three sides of town, north, south and west. There are a total of 36 in all, but eight of these will remain on the eastern edge of the town and only come in if they're needed.

When running this scene, think of every climactic gunfight in every Western you have ever seen, then mix elements from all those "evil, ravenous undead on a rampage" movies. There are a few things you should keep in mind when running this battle:

- The reanimated dead are out to destroy the town and kill everyone on it. It's highly doubtful they can be talked out of this. Anything that moves is fair game.



- While the dead will use pitchforks, etc., if they have, this is a rare *Crypt* climax that involves six-guns. Throw in plenty of gross effects, as gunslingers get their heads, arms and legs blown off and just keep coming.

- The two most effective weapons against the dead are fire and dynamite. Fire is easy to get and there's sure to be a general store that sells a little dynamite for people who aim to mine in the mountains. Remember, too, that though the gunmen are dead, their horses are alive, and not all that thrilled about who's riding them. This means they will be quick to rear and upset their riders. It also means that the horses can be shot out from under the dead men (not very humane, maybe, but it never hurts to have your enemy on foot).

The dead will make for certain key spots: the saloon; Sheriff Kent's office; the hotel; and the general store. They will scrupulously avoid the church.

The characters will have the help of about a dozen townsfolk, all armed with rifles. The rest will be "hiding and watching." In classic *Crypt* fashion, feel free to have all these people meet with horrible and bloody ends, to give the characters a hint of what awaits them.

Consider the townsfolk to have attributes of 8, fire combat of 9, and to be armed with pistols.

If the characters are successful in this adventure, of course, the odds are good Hanging Hill will still wind up flattened/burnt to the ground. That can't be helped and don't penalize the players if it happens. Hey, it's better than the alternative.

If the characters fail to stop the reanimates, of course, they're dead meat. The gunslingers from beyond the grave will form a "Hole-in-the-Ground" gang and rob, burn and massacre throughout the west.

If the characters are playing as part of a campaign, the Cryptkeeper will whisk them back to the Crypt when the battle is over. Assuming they are successful, he will say something like:

*"Well, boils and ghouls, you know what they say: the only good undead is a dead undead! Hehehehehe! Time to put the corpses in the corral and bed down for the fright ..."*

If they fail, he'll say:

*"Well, cowcreeps, looks like it's the last ground-up for you! Hehehehehe!"*

## ADVENTURE AWARDS

Award each character two Skill Points for surviving this adventure. You may also award 2-4 Life Points depending on how tough the adventure was for them.



Paul Daly



## TWO

*Welcome, kiddies! I was just getting ready to do a little scuba die-ving ... so come on in, boils and ghouls, the slaughter's fine! Hehehehehehe!  
This is a bit of underwater ugliness I like to call ...*

# THE MEDUSA TREE

This *Tales From The Crypt* adventure takes place in and around the town of Gainesford (detailed in *The World of Tales From The Crypt*. So you may want to have the WorldBook handy as you run this adventure.

This adventure is written for use in a campaign, with the Cryptkeeper dropping the characters into shell bodies in Gainesford (again, the concept of shell characters is dealt with in the WorldBook). However, if you want to simply play it as a one-shot adventure, that is easy enough to do—simply have the players assume the roles of Gainesford residents and rework a few of the encounters. You'll find it easy enough to get them involved in this harrowing little tale ...

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Just when it began, there's no way of knowing. Sometime after man first began to walk upright, evil took root at the bottom of the Delaware River. For thousands of years, it brooded and grew strong, waiting ... but no one ever plunged so deep into the depths of the river as to disturb this evil.

Until now ...

And now the evil has found a way to reach the surface: in the bodies of men. Unless, of course, the player characters can stop it ... if it isn't already too late.

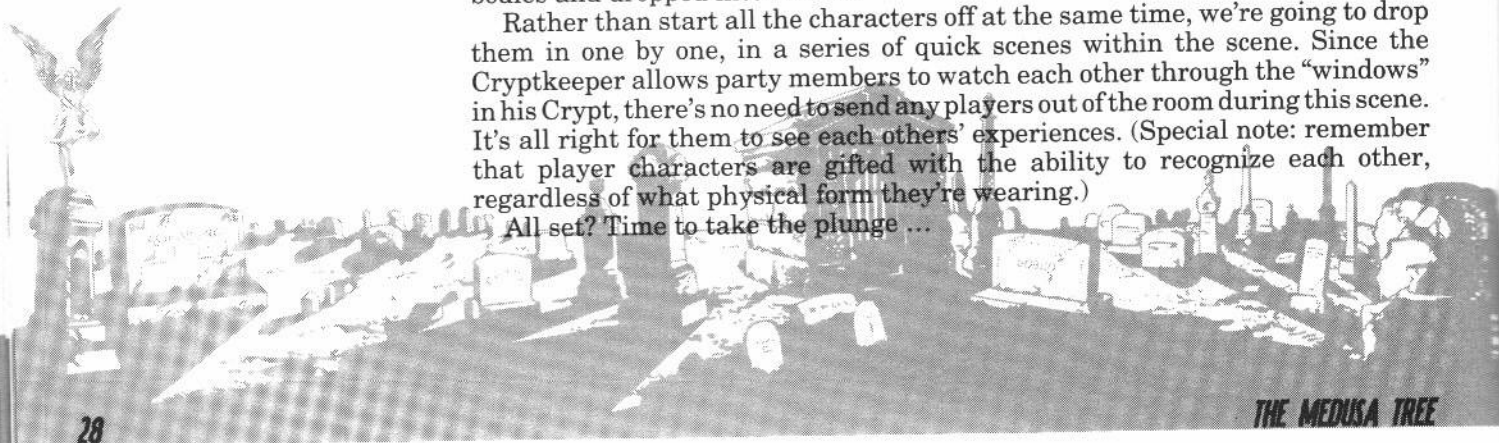
## SCREAM ONE: SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY FLOATS ...

## THE SITUATION

**Standard.** This scene introduces the characters to some very strange doings in Gainesford, as well as to their new bodies. As with any shell character adventure, the trick is to thrust the characters into tense situations right from the start, while they are still disoriented from being plucked out of their own bodies and dropped into others.

Rather than start all the characters off at the same time, we're going to drop them in one by one, in a series of quick scenes within the scene. Since the Cryptkeeper allows party members to watch each other through the "windows" in his Crypt, there's no need to send any players out of the room during this scene. It's all right for them to see each others' experiences. (Special note: remember that player characters are gifted with the ability to recognize each other, regardless of what physical form they're wearing.)

All set? Time to take the plunge ...



## THE ACTION

Choose one player character at random. Read aloud or paraphrase to him/her:

**There's a flash of light and then the Crypt is gone. You find yourself standing on a country road in the late afternoon. The scene is alive with flashing lights — police cars, ambulances, fire and rescue squad, the works. There's a small crowd milling around. As they part to let a police car through, you see that this is a public access to the Delaware River.**

If the character glances down at himself, he'll see he's wearing the uniform of a Gainesford policeman: dark pants, gray shirt, badge, holster with a .38. His police car is parked nearby. From the crowd, he can hear mutters of "Awful," "Terrible," and other similar comments. Call for an Intellect or *perception* roll — on an 8, he hears someone say, "Second one in two days."

Flashing his badge will allow him to get closer to the action. Read aloud:

**There's a narrow strip of beach between the river and the concrete parking lot. You see other police, State Troopers, and an ambulance crew huddled around what can only be a dead man. The corpse is clad in a diving suit. As you move closer, you can see that the unfortunate's face is frozen in a look of sheer terror ...**

At this point, the character can overhear this snatch of conversation:

**"So what happened? He hit his head on a rock?"**

**"No, Chief. There's no signs of violence that I can see. It looks like the regulator must have just slipped out of his mouth and he drowned before he could reach the surface. But we can't be sure until the autopsy. It's just lucky someone saw him go down."**





**"But it was an accident, right?"**

**"HMMMMMM? Yes ... yes, probably. But his face ... you know, I can think of one way this could have happened, Chief. What if he was trying to scream?"**

Okay, that's enough of that. Time to drop in another character, this time into the body of the coroner's assistant at the Endesnear County Morgue. Read aloud:

**A moment's disorientation ... and an awful smell of formaldehyde assails your nostrils. You open your eyes to find yourself in what you first think is an operating room ... and then you notice that the surgeon wears no mask, and there's no more harm that can be done to *this* patient.**

The corpse looks horrible ... bloated as if he had been underwater for days. (Call for an Endurance check — on less than a 12, the character has to look away from the body.) "Stop daydreaming, Jenkins!" the coroner snaps. "Are you going to help me cut this man open or aren't you?"

Oh, what fun you're going to have. The Cryptkeeper wants the character to see this, so walking out of the morgue will do very little good (sure, he can leave ... but the image of the autopsy will travel with him wherever he goes, like a horror picture played across his mind. The Cryptkeeper hates to waste a good scare.)

If the character stays, keep calling for Endurance rolls. Start at, say 15, and work your way down (as he gets used to it, he's less likely to get sick). Failure means the character is nauseous, and *willpower* totals of 11 will be needed to keep from getting sick all over the place.

During the course of the procedure, the character learns that this dead man — one Daniel Dana — disappeared yesterday and was found on the beach just south of Gainesford early this morning. He was a sport diver and his friends said he was planning to explore the deepest part of the river.

Pretty cut and dried, except that there don't seem to be any marks of violence on him. He has the look of a man who drowned and laid at the bottom for a week, but he made it to the beach somehow, and indications are he was alive for at least a few moments there.

Oh, one more thing ... keep in mind his body's going to be full of gas (that's what makes a drowned man float to the surface). Once that incision is made, he's going to smell bad ... *real* bad. Get those dice ready for that Endurance roll.

At some point after he's opened the body up, the coroner lets out a shocked gasp. "There's ... there's something in there!"

Hesitantly, gingerly, he reaches in with his instruments ... and emerges with what looks like a black snake, perhaps a third of a meter long. "It ... it was wrapped around his spine!"

Time to drop in the rest of the characters. It's a little later now, and one goes into the short-order cook at The Greenery (see the *World of Tales From The Crypt*), pages 18-19) and another into a *Gainesford Herald* reporter (who is also at The Greenery at this point). If you have more than four players, choose from the characters listed in the Gainesford chapter of the *WorldBook* and use them as shells.

The police, firemen and divers who had been working at the river access are drifting in now, some making nervous jokes, some grimly silent. They mill about, taking seats and placing orders ... and one sits apart. He's a dark-haired man who looks extraordinarily haggard and exhausted. A *perception* check of 7 reveals that he hasn't ordered anything, just sits there drinking a glass of water, not speaking to anyone.

If any of the characters ask about him, they'll be told, "Tom's the one who found the body at the bottom. Guess he's a little shaken up about it."

The characters can mingle a little, pick up tidbits of information with successful (and fairly easy) *perception* or *persuasion* rolls. They can hear the story of the body that was recovered yesterday and mention of the fact that he



apparently wrote something in the sand before dying (but Chief Willie McFee isn't revealing what it was). There was no connection between the two men, other than that they had both gone diving in the same general area. That particular part of the river goes down about 37 meters. It's possible the characters might also learn the name of the first drowning victim (Daniel Dana), or they might get that information from the member of their number serving as coroner's assistant.

The last bit of info they hear is that some of the State Troopers want to shut down that stretch of the river, or at least ban diving there. But the locals squelched that idea — it's tourist season, after all. Close off that section of the river and Gainesford might as well dry up and blow away.

At some point, all this chatting gets to diver Tom. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**Suddenly, Tom leaps to his feet and hurls his glass against the wall. "Shut up! All of you! Don't you understand what's happened here? Two men are dead! Dying down there in the dark and cold ... you can't know what it's like ... you can't ..."**

**Then he staggers out of the diner. Before anyone can stop him, he gets in his car and peels out.**

## CUT TO ...

And that's it for Scream One. Two drownings; a slightly crazed diver; and an eel where no eel should be ...

Cut to Scream Two.

## SCREAM TWO: EEL BE SEEING YOU

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** The characters begin this scene with two leads: the fact that one of the drowning victims left a message in the sand, which was covered up by the chief of police; and Tom's violent reaction to the whole situation. The character inhabiting the body of the policeman has the best chance of finding out about that, though he may wish to bring others along to set up a distraction, in case one is needed. See "A Scrawl in the Sand," below.

Chasing down Tom requires either following him from the diner or finding out from someone where he lives. See "Fish Story."

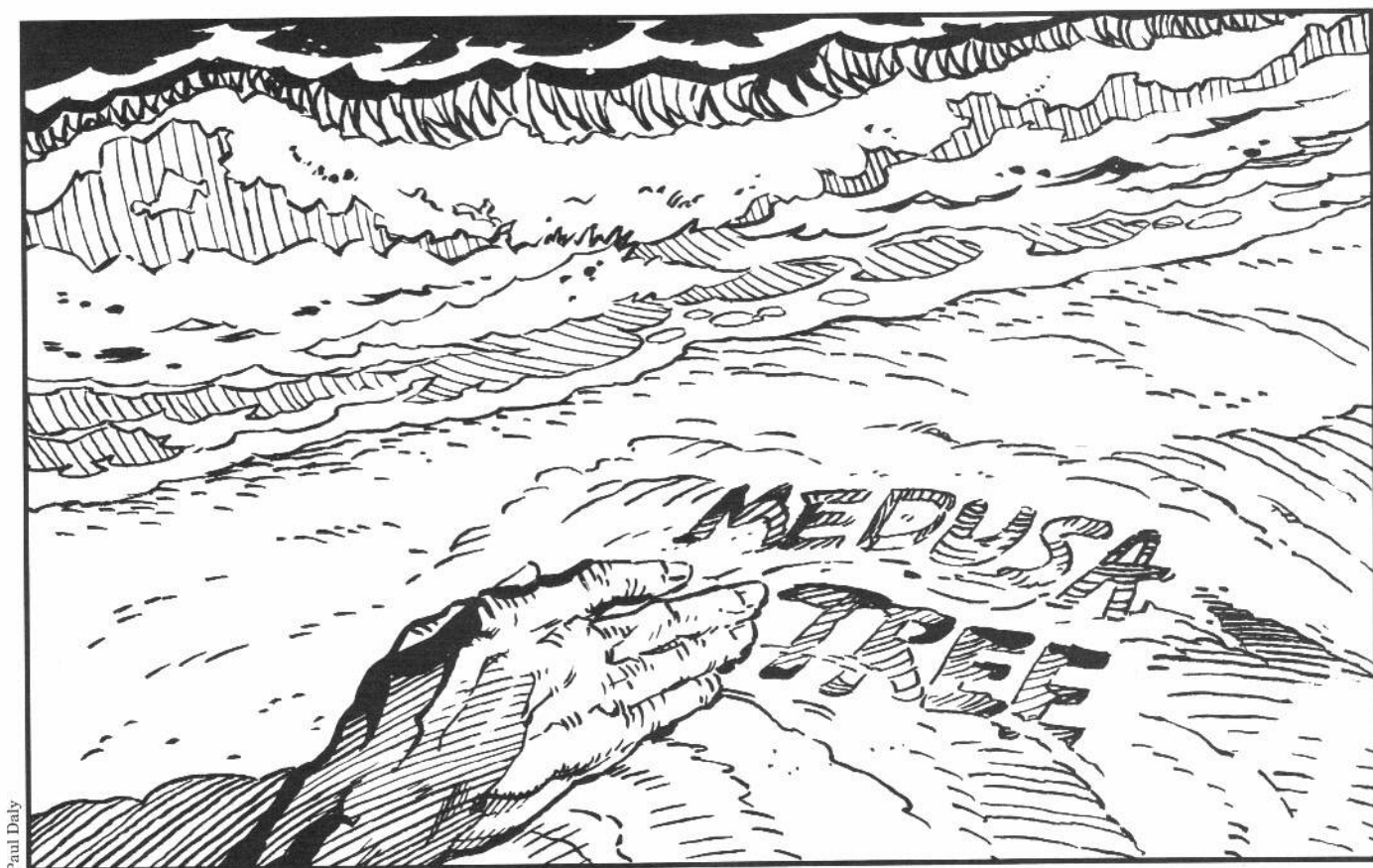
### THE ACTION

The party may want to split up to pursue both leads. It doesn't make any difference what order they do things in in this scene — just be sure to cut back and forth frequently enough that players don't get bored. If the characters play this scene right, they should be drawn further into the mystery without risking life and limb ... just yet.

### A SCRAWL IN THE SAND

If the characters have been dropped into shell characters, one of which is a Gainesford policeman, they can get quicker access to the police station. If not, they may have to be a little more clever to work their way inside. Within the small building, a desk sergeant sits and takes calls, listens to complaints, and dispatches one of the town's two working cars as needed. Behind and to the right is Chief Willie McFee's office, which is locked. Evidence files are kept in there and the key is with McFee, who is back at the diner.





Paul Daly

Even a fellow policeman is going to draw suspicion if he tries to break into the chief's office (and a civilian? Forget it.) This means the desk sergeant has to be distracted somehow. Characters with good *con* skills are advised to use them now. If he can either be drawn away from his desk or so besieged with complaints that he doesn't notice someone approaching McFee's door, the lock picking can be done in peace. (The sergeant has willpower of 10.)

The door is made of wood, with an opaque glass window. The lettering on the window reads, "W. McFee, Chief of Police." The office is dark inside.

The lock is relatively old and requires a *Dexterity* or *lock picking* total of 9 to open. If the characters don't have any kind of tool to jimmy the lock with, they may have to try and force the door — much riskier. A *Strength* total of 11 will be needed to do this, and it's going to make a heck of a racket when it finally goes. Not to mention the fact that there will be easily seen evidence of a break-in.

Once a character or characters is inside, they can turn on the light or use a flashlight. Turning on the light's a better idea — the sergeant will just assume the McFee is back. Shining the beam of a flashlight around will be more likely to attract attention.

The file cabinet is locked too, but the key to this is in McFee's top desk drawer. A *perception* total of 8's enough to turn this up. Just as the characters find this, they hear McFee's distinctive laugh coming from outside the door. He's back!

There's no other way out but the door (the only window has bars on it). And there are precious few places to hide (under the desk, behind the filing cabinet, etc.) This would be a great place to cut to the other half of the party for a while, leaving your players in suspense.

Once you come back, give the players a minute or two of "What the heck are we going to do?" and then have McFee suddenly remember he left something

back at the diner. He leaves, and the characters have maybe five minutes to get what they need and get out before he'll be back again.

If the characters know the name of the drowned man, they can find him under "D." If they don't, they'll have to search through the three dozen or so files, or make a successful Intellect or *perception* total of 10 to find one placed in the cabinet recently.

Inside Dana's file is a copy of the police report (he was found on a strip of beach south of town, no sign of foul play); photos of the body from several angles; photos of the beach with the body's position marked; and a close-up photo of Dana's right hand and the message it scrawled in the wet sand. It reads simply: "Medusa Tree." Written on the margin of the photo is a local phone number.

Also in the file is a depth chart evidently drawn by Dana. It was found inside a waterproof pouch on his diving suit.

#### If the Characters Get Caught:

Well, then they have a problem. If the character who gets caught is in the body of a Gainesford policeman, McFee will threaten to fire him and/or beat him senseless. The chief will look around, not notice anything missing, and throw the character out of the station, with a warning and maybe a swift kick in the tail. (The character might want to try a *con* — say, pretending he's drunk — to mollify the chief.)

If any of the characters caught is a civilian, McFee will have him arrested on charges of breaking and entering and tossed into Endesnear County Jail (details on this wonderful facility can be found in the *World of Tales From The Crypt*). The other characters will have to make his bail (about \$1000) to get him out, or find some way to break him out.

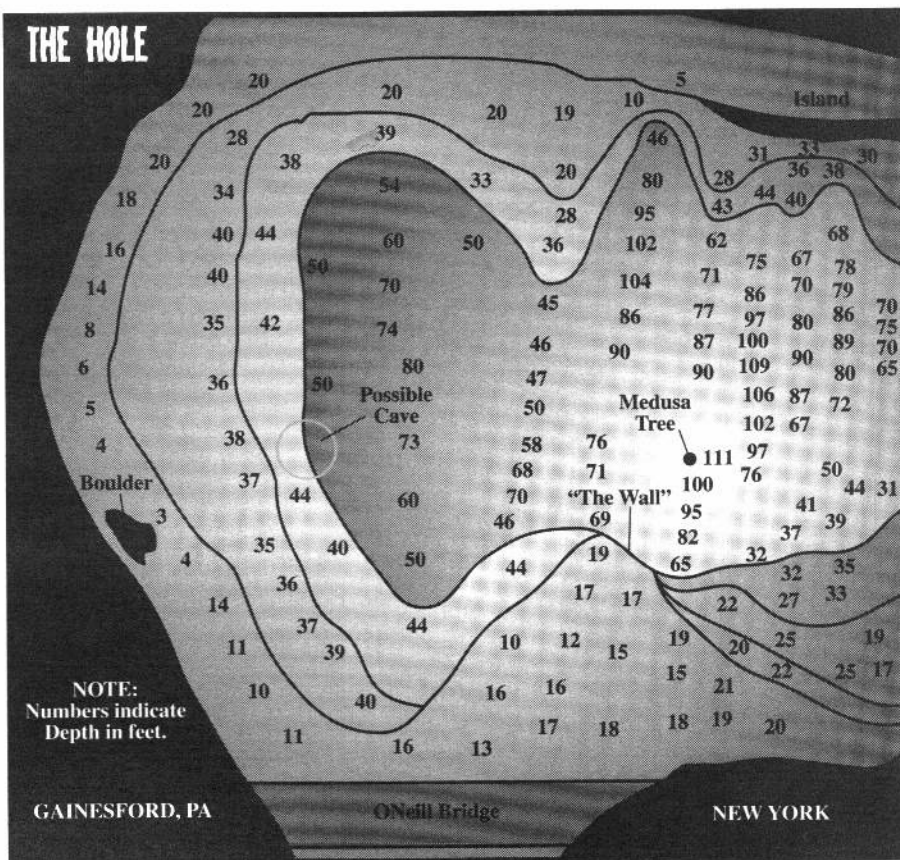
Meanwhile, the characters are left with the questions: what is the "Medusa tree?" Where is it? And what, if anything, did it have to do with the deaths of two men? And who does that phone number belong to?

Maybe the other characters can shed some light on that ...

## FISH STORY

If the characters set out to follow Tom, it won't be very hard. He's not paying any attention to the world around him so discretion won't be necessary. He drives straight to the nearest convenience store (almost smashing into a parked car as he skids to a stop). He stalks inside, ignoring anyone who speaks to him, buys a few six-packs of beer, and heads home.

If the characters don't follow him and just get his address (a house south of town, near the river), they will find his car in the driveway, but the house dark. If they knock on the door or ring the bell, there will be no answer. Looking in the windows, though ... that might work.







Paul Daly

It's hard to see clearly — call for *perception* checks, but don't worry about what they roll. The point is to make them nervous about what they might see. After they've gotten their totals, read aloud or paraphrase:

Tom sits in an easy chair in the corner of his living room. A pair of six-packs rest beside the chair and he's already drained two or three of the cans. Worse, there's a hunting rifle across his knees.

Very little else is visible in the room, but your attention is drawn to the table beside the armchair. Resting on top of it a large aquarium, dimly lit, in which at least a dozen tropical fish flit about.

Tom sits motionless ... he almost seems asleep. And then his hand lashes out, smashing the glass of the aquarium to pieces. As the shards are washed to the floor, he catches a squirming fish in his bloody hand ... and swallows it whole!

If any of the characters reacts to this, Tom hears them. If none of them do, call for *Agility* or *stealth* rolls. Anyone failing to beat a 12 alerts Tom to his presence. With almost lightning swiftness, the diver gets to his feet and shatters the window with a shot from his rifle.

## TOM

AGILITY 15

Dodge 18, maneuver 18, stealth 16, swimming 17, unarmed combat 17

DEXTERITY 14

ENDURANCE 15

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 14



**INTELLECT 9**

Deduction 10, perception 12, trick 14

**MIND 8**

Scholar: scuba diving 11

**CONFIDENCE 9**

Intimidation 14, willpower 13

**CHARISMA 8**

Persuasion 10

**Life Points: 6**

**Equipment:** Rifle, damage value 21, ammo 6, range 5–20/75/200/300; scuba gear

**Description:** Pity poor Tom. When he went down to recover that body, he was startled just enough by what he saw underwater that ... something ... managed to work its way inside him. The entity has rapidly taken possession of his body, and the “Medusa Tree” finally has a foothold on the surface.

What’s the result of all this? His Agility, Dexterity, Endurance and Strength have been enhanced ... his senses have been enhanced ... his temper is on a hair-trigger ... and his mind is turning more and more to madness and evil. His twin obsessions, at this point, are survival and spreading his “plague.” He does this by releasing a part of the entity’s substance through his mouth (this portion of the entity resembles an elver, a baby eel). It will then seek out another host on its own.

Tom’s only new vulnerability is to bright light. Although the entity can’t be destroyed by this as long as it’s in a host, it can be *stymied* by it. Tom will stick to the shadows or wear broad-brimmed hats and sunglasses when he goes out from now on.

(**Tom (D6): AGILITY 5D:** Dodge 6D, maneuver 6D, stealth 5D+1, swimming 5D+2, unarmed combat 5D+2 **DEXTERITY 4D+2** **ENDURANCE 5D** **STRENGTH 4D+2** **TOUGHNESS 4D+2** **INTELLECT 3D:** Deduction 3D+1, perception 4D, trick 4D+2 **MIND 2D+2:** Scholar: scuba diving 3D+2 **CONFIDENCE 3D:** Intimidation 4D+2, willpower 4D+1 **CHARISMA 2D+2:** Persuasion 3D+1. **Fate Points: 6. Equipment:** Rifle, damage value 7D, ammo 6.)

There are a few things that could happen here. The characters could fight back (hard, if they are unarmed, but not impossible) or could run away. Let’s take a look at both:

**Fight:** Tom is stronger and faster than he used to be, and certainly tainted with madness. But he’s not invulnerable and it is possible the characters could take him down, with the right strategy. It’s all right if they do — steps to spread the contagion were taken at the convenience store, so the adventure won’t grind to a halt if Tom gets captured or killed.

Tom was a pretty aggressive personality to begin with, so he will fight back hard, at least initially. At some point, if things go against him, his survival instinct will prompt him to run.

If the characters capture him, he will appear to be a raving maniac. The authorities will blame it on the shock of finding the dead diver and slap him in Fayervue State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Shortly after, he’ll snap and get shot down by a guard — but not before infecting a good percentage of the hospital’s inmate population.

If the characters kill him now, an autopsy will reveal that he too has an eel inside him. Interestingly, it shreds into wisps of black substance when exposed to bright light. (*If they don’t want to wait for the coroner’s carvings, the characters can always be cut-ups themselves. Hehehehehehe!*)

**Run Away! Run Away!:** This is probably the more likely option, since the characters don’t really know what they’re dealing with yet. If they report Tom’s attack to the police, a return trip will reveal plenty of evidence that it happened (the smashed window, etc.) but nothing will be done about it. Tom will apologize





to the characters and say he had mistakenly thought they were prowlers ... and he's a "little on edge" these days. (Oh, and by the way, there's no law against eating raw tropical fish straight out of the tank, a fact for which I'm sure we're all grateful.)

That will be the end of the incident ... except that Tom really doesn't like prowlers, and the characters may find themselves targets as the contagion of evil spreads.

## CUT TO...

Well, we know now that something's wrong with good ol' Tom, it's probably tied in with something called the "Medusa Tree," and there's a phone number ... Medusa's?

Cut to Scream Three.

## SCREAM THREE: THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** The characters don't know a whole lot more than they did when they started, but that's about to change. Dialing the number scribbled on the side of the photo will connect the characters to the Endesnear County Historical Society in Gainesford — specifically, to curator Richard Garson, who knows anything and everything about local lore.

If the characters ask him about dead divers, he'll express his sadness over the incidents but say that the river has always claimed its share of victims. If they mention the "Medusa Tree," though ... there will be a moment of stunned silence on the other end of the line, and Garson will suggest they come right over.

### THE ACTION

The Endesnear County Historical Society is a small building on Main St. that houses pamphlets, brochures about the area, and a replica of "Sparky," the nation's first working electric chair (originally manufactured in Gainesford). Garson himself is a balding, amiable fellow with a love of his area of expertise and an engaging way of telling a story.

Listed below are some questions the characters might think to ask, and Garson's answers.

Q. What does "Medusa Tree" refer to?

A. No one is quite sure, but the name — in one form or another — goes back at least 300 years. Best guess is it refers to a spot at the bottom of the deepest part of the Delaware, right here in town. The Indians called the place "rekhanook," which means "place of bad waters." Whether they dove down there and found something or crafted the legend some other way, we don't know.

Q. What is the legend?

A. The Indians claimed that bad spirits dwelled at the bottom of the river, that those waters were cursed. Whenever a canoe overturned near there, they claimed the spirits had taken the braves, hoping to use them somehow to reach the surface. Fortunately, that never happened — the story is that the good spirits made sure the warriors drowned before they reached the bottom.

Over the years, the legend's been embroidered, so that now it's a tree of some kind that's the source of the evil. The interesting thing is, it seems that this whole



story may predate the Indians' settling here ... at least, that's how they saw it.

Q. And no one's ever been down to see what's there?

A. It's awfully deep and hard to see down there, I imagine. It could be others have gone down over the years and either missed it all completely, or drowned and there was just no connection made between it and the Medusa tree.

Q. Why would Chief McFee cover up the message?

A. Well ... this is a funny kind of town. People get thrown easily. A lot of people here have heard the legend, told it around campfires or on Halloween, that sort of thing ... if they thought it was true ...

At this point, there's a squawk of static from a nearby radio (Garson has it tuned to the police band). The clerk at the Swift-Stop Convenience Mart tried to shoot a customer and now he's holed up inside the store.

Whether or not the characters are interested in watching the action, Garson is. He'll offer to give them a ride over, if they want.

If the characters decide to forego that and instead plan a dive to check out the Medusa Tree site for themselves, cut to *Scream Four*. If they go with Garson, cut to "Trojan Hero."

## TROJAN HERO

Gainesford is certainly getting its share of excitement these days! Police cars are drawn up in front of the Swift-Stop, their occupants standing with guns drawn. A crowd is assembled behind the cop cars, watching the goings-on with great anticipation. There's an ambulance present to take care of the wounded customer. If the characters get close and manage a *perception* total of 8, they'll overhear the customers' story:

**"I buy a hero from the guy, right? So I get it home ... I start to take a bite ... and there's somethin' crawlin' out of it! Crawlin'! I don't know, some kinda worm or something. Well, I threw it out in the yard, and then you can bet I came back here to kick butt! And the guy pulls a gun — takes a shot at me! He's nuts!"**

Ooh, that doesn't sound good at all. Tom left a little present behind for the clerk when he bought his beer, and the clerk slipped one of his own into this poor soul's sandwich (and who knows how many others?) *Yes, Elvers have left the building! Hehehe!*

The facts become alarmingly clear. The clerk is barricaded in the store, with at least one hostage. He has no intention of coming out without a fight. What do the characters want to do about this? If they do nothing, there's sure to be a gunfight, and odds are both the clerk and the hostage will get killed. Preventing this from happening is, of course, a good way to earn a Cryptkeeper Point, but hopefully the characters have some altruism in them (nah, we didn't think so either ...)

Still, if one of the characters is in the body of the policeman, he won't have a choice about getting involved. He'll be ordered to take up a position around back of the store (and the rest of the characters might just follow along).

Check the map of Gainesford on page 26 of the WorldBook. The Swift-Stop is located on Main St., between Dearstyne St. and Route 193. There's not a lot of room back behind it — lots of scrub and thorn bushes, dumpsters, and then a narrow, cracked stone staircase that leads to the railroad tracks. There's a back door leading into the convenience store and one window that leads into the storage room. Both are closed and locked from the inside.

Short of breaking it down or finding something to pry it open, it's doubtful the characters can get in the door. But the window is another matter. Breaking it wholesale is probably a bad idea (the clerk would hear it), but breaking one pane of glass, reaching in and unlocking it is a simple action. Voila! They can climb





through the window and into the darkened storeroom. From there, they can hear the female hostage pleading for her life and crying.

About this time, call for Intellect or *perception* checks. On an 8, the characters feel what seem to be raindrops falling on them from the ceiling. That's impossible, of course ... it's not raining outside. When they go to brush the drops away, they encounter something slimy ... and it's starting to rain harder! But don't look up ... especially with your mouth open ... because there are elvers all over the ceiling and they're coming down at a rapid rate. (*Everytime it rains, it rains! Embodiments of evil. Hehehehehe!*)

They look like baby eels, but they cling like leeches, and a dark place like this is just made for them. The characters can flee back out the window and brush them off (and crush them underfoot — yuk!) and either try to find another way in or give up. Or they can go through the storeroom door (which is unlocked) into the store itself. (They'll need Agility or *stealth* totals of 10 not to be heard — make it a little more difficult if they're trying to be sneaky with elvers crawling all over them.) (And by the way, remember that these little beauties are making bee-lines for the characters' mouths, if at all possible.)

First, let's talk about another way in. The only other option open is the back door. Breaking it down will take Strength totals of 14, and it's going to make an unholy racket when it goes. The clerk will automatically open fire with his .38 (damage value 17, ammo 6), shattering cereal boxes and gallons of milk. Prying it open will make less noise and require Strength totals of 12, plus the use of a handy piece of iron rail lying near the tracks. They'll still need *stealth* totals of 10 to avoid becoming targets in the shooting gallery. (Keep in mind, too, that the second the clerk starts shooting, every gun outside is going to open up on the store.)

If the characters successfully sneak in through the storeroom, they can scope out the situation. The clerk is covered in sweat and carrying a .38. His hostage, a middle-aged woman, is bound with electrical tape, but not gagged (that's important). They are both near the front of the store, but down so as not to be in front of a window.

If the characters take action immediately, they should be able to take the clerk by surprise and save the hostage (provided they don't all get sieved by the hail of gunfire from outside). If they wait to plan, read aloud or paraphrase:

**Apparently satisfied that things are quiet, the clerk reaches across the floor and produces a long curtain rod. From the end of that hangs a worm-like thing, just like what the man described as being in his sandwich (and if the characters have been in the storeroom, just like what rained on them too). He holds the rod out toward the woman, perhaps intending to drop the creature on her.**

If the characters are going to act, it would be nice if it was now.

## CLERK

### AGILITY 13

Dodge 16, maneuver 16, unarmed combat 15

### DEXTERITY 12

Fire combat 13

### ENDURANCE 12

### STRENGTH 11

### TOUGHNESS 12

### INTELLECT 9

Perception 12, trick 11

### MIND 7

### CONFIDENCE 7

Intimidation 12, willpower 10

### CHARISMA 7



**Life Points: 2**

**Equipment:** .38, damage value 17, ammo 6, range 3-10/25/40/140

**(Clerk (D6): AGILITY 4D+1:** Dodge 5D+1, maneuver 5D+1, unarmed combat 5D **DEXTERITY 4D:** Fire combat 4D+1 **ENDURANCE 4D STRENGTH 3D+2 TOUGHNESS 4D INTELLECT 3D:** Perception 4D, trick 3D+2 **MIND 2D+1 CONFIDENCE 2D+1:** Intimidation 4D, willpower 3D+1 **CHARISMA 2D+1.** **Fate Points: 2.** **Equipment:** .38, damage value 5D+2, ammo 6.)

If the characters fail to take out the possessed clerk, he will try to make a break for it and get mowed down by police gunfire. If they do subdue him, the men in the white coats from Fayervue will have to come for him, as he will be a raving maniac.

After the fireworks are finished, Richard Garson will seek the characters out. He'll want to know what happened, and when they tell him, he'll confirm that it sounds just like the legends of the Medusa Tree. Gainesford is in danger ... deadly danger.

There's only one idea he can suggest: someone is going to have to dive into the river and find the source of all this evil, if it's ever to be stopped.

## CUT TO ...

Well, now they know what they have to do — question is, are they willing to do it? If not, Gainesford is going to go to hell in an awful hurry.

If the characters agree to make the dive, cut to Scream Four. If they don't, toss in some of the events from Scream Five until they see things are completely out of hand and something has to be done. Then come back to Scream Four.

## SCREAM FOUR: EELED WITH A KISS

### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** The characters are looking at a deep dive if they want to find the Medusa Tree, and that's not something you can do lightly. They're going to need help — fortunately, Garson knows where to get it.

The owner of the newly opened Gainesford Sporting Goods, Tim T. O'Neill, happens to be a very skilled diver. (His family's connection to the river goes back a hundred years, dating back to an ancestor's construction of the O'Neill Bridge.) Garson will bring the characters to meet him.





Read aloud or paraphrase:

The store smells of new paint and carpeting. Along with the expected — basketballs, baseballs, football helmets, fishing gear, and guns — there are racks of scuba gear. Tim O'Neill is a friendly fellow of middle height with long, dark hair and a quick smile. But the smile fades when Garson mentions the Medusa Tree.

"If it's down there, I've never seen it," he says. "And I've been down pretty deep. I can't recommend going down there looking for it ... but if you're going, I'll go with you. That's not a dive for amateurs."

## THE ACTION

Tim O'Neill has just solved a bunch of the player characters' problems. For a price, he can provide them with scuba gear, some instruction, and a guide to the river.

You need not worry about all the practical aspects of diving. Just assume that, between his instruction and a little practice in the river, all the player characters now have the *swimming* skill at one add. (And, yes, this skill will stay with them even after they leave these bodies.) You will, though, want to look at the sidebar "Bubbles and Bends" to learn some of the bad things that can happen to the characters if they don't surface correctly.

### TIM T. ONEILL

#### AGILITY 10

Dodge 11, maneuver 11, melee combat 11, swimming 14, unarmed combat 11

#### DEXTERITY 8

#### ENDURANCE 10

#### STRENGTH 9

#### TOUGHNESS 11

#### INTELLECT 9

First aid 11, navigation 11, perception 11

#### MIND 9

Scholar: scuba diving 14

#### CONFIDENCE 9

#### CHARISMA 10

Charm 11

#### Life Points: 4

**Equipment:** Scuba gear (see below); underwater flashlight; dive knife, damage value STR+4/19.

(Tim T. O'Neill (D6): **AGILITY 3D+1:** Dodge 3D+2, melee combat 3D+2, swimming 4D+2, unarmed combat 3D+2 **DEXTERITY 2D+2** **ENDURANCE 3D+1** **STRENGTH 3D** **TOUGHNESS 3D+2** **INTELLECT 3D:** First aid 3D+2, navigation 3D+2, perception 3D+2 **MIND 3D:** Scholar: scuba diving 4D+2 **CONFIDENCE 3D** **CHARISMA 3D+1:** Charm 3D+2 **Fate Points: 4.** **Equipment:** Diving knife, damage value STR+1D+1.)

## INTO THE DEPTHS

Now it's time for the dive. Read aloud or paraphrase:

The water is dark and you can feel the cold even through your suit ... a surprising cold, for this time of the year.

You hear the unmistakable sound of a motorboat approaching. But when Tim's head breaks the water, he sees nothing. You remember something he said about how sound carried underwater ... that motorboat could be far from here.





## SCUBA GEAR

The characters will be going down into the Delaware with the following gear:

**Exposure Suit/Weight Belt:** Pants, hood, boots, jacket and gloves. Designed to protect divers from cold and injury, it also adds to their buoyancy, the weight belt is needed to allow the diver to get below the water. Removing the weight belt will cause you to shoot straight up to the surface.

**Mask:** A rubber covering for the eyes and nose which allows the diver to see through a single lense.

**Fins:** Coverings for the feet which reduce the energy needed to move the body forward.

**Tank:** A self-contained air supply which enables the diver to remain underwater untethered. It is a seamless container capable of holding a large amount of compressed air despite its small volume.

**Regulator:** The air in a tank is under high pressure — too high to be safely breathed. The regulator reduces the pressure of the air. It is held in the diver's mouth and provides air when he inhales and allows exhaled air to escape through an exhaust valve.

Other things the characters might carry with them are depth gauges, compasses, underwater flashlights and wristwatches that operate underwater. ONeill will also equip each of them with a dive knife (damage value STR+4/19), kept in a sheath on the diver's lower leg.

**The first part of the dive goes smoothly. Your depth gauges read seven meters when Tim pauses and waves to you.**

The characters have reached what divers call "the Wall," a 20 meter vertical drop. As the characters descend, they will notice sponges clinging to the rock walls all around them. The closer they get to the bottom, the larger the fish seem to be — carp almost two meters long, walleye not much smaller. For a while, the visibility will be excellent — up to 10 meters in any direction — and all is still and quiet.

But as the characters near the bottom, the water grows darker. Here, sunlight cannot reach. (You might want to dim the lights and talk very quietly to the players now ... try to encourage them to feel the stillness, the quiet of being so far underwater.) Now they can't see more than a meter in front of them — fish emerge out of the darkness, brushing against the characters as they pass.

Suddenly ...

**You're on top of it before you are even aware. At first, it seems like only an upside-down tree, sunken into the mud at the river bottom, its roots exposed. And then you see them ...**

**Rising from the roots. Eels. Long and black, swaying with some unseen current. Hundreds of them.**

**And then they are swimming toward you, an ebon-colored cloud ...**

Yes, they have found the Medusa Tree. It's real — and based on what they have seen topside, it's deadly.

Pay close attention to how the players are reacting. Are their mouths dropping open? Are they screaming, shouting? More, are their characters doing that — because if they are, their regulators are slipping out of their mouths and water — and maybe lots worse — is slipping in.

Right about now, the characters would probably *really* rather be elsewhere. There's a horde of eels surging toward them and the surface no doubt looks attractive. Time to remember that sidebar earlier: if the characters ascend too fast, they're going to get the bends. To be on the safe side, they're going to have to take a full three minutes (that's 18 combat rounds) to ascend. Or they could tear off their weight belts, shoot to the surface (where they'll be safe) and take their chances with decompression sickness.





## BUBBLES AND BENDS

There are a lot of things the characters have to worry about on this dive, including drowning (and demonic eels, of course). But three special dangers that they (and you, as the gamemaster) should be aware of are decompression sickness ("the bends"), nitrogen narcosis and air embolisms.

**Decompression Sickness:** When you dive, the amount of nitrogen you are breathing in increases. The blood absorbs it and carries it to the tissues where it is kept in solution. When the diver ascends, the process is reversed. The nitrogen is released back into the blood, which carries it to the lungs to be exhaled. But it is important that the diver not ascend too fast — if he does, the nitrogen will come out of solution and form gas bubbles in the blood. This causes blockages and other problems and is called decompression sickness, or "the bends."

How bad it is depends on where the blockage occurs. You might get a rash; have trouble breathing; feel a sharp pain in a joint or muscle; suffer paralysis; if the blockage is in the brain, you can suffer temporary blindness, convulsions, and unconsciousness.

Treatment involves being recompressed in a hyperbaric chamber (if you can find one ... there isn't one in Gainesford, the characters would probably have to be airlifted to a hospital somewhere else.) Treatment until they reach a chamber involves breathing in a high concentration of oxygen.

To prevent decompression sickness, a diver should surface no faster than 12 meters per minute (note that the Medusa Tree is 37 meters down).

**Air Embolism:** You can get "the bends" from surfacing too fast while breathing through your regulator. Air embolisms come from surfacing while holding your breath. The gas in the lungs must find a way to escape, and so the lungs rupture and the air bubbles wind up in the bloodstream. They travel to arteries and form blockages and cause swelling in the affected area and even cut off blood circulation to the brain. Again, the diver needs to be rushed to a hyperbaric chamber, and until then, oxygen should be administered and possibly CPR.

**Nitrogen Narcosis:** This is probably the biggest killer of divers and could be a problem in *Scream Six*. Basically, breathing in nitrogen at high pressure has a narcotic effect. The diver essentially gets drunk underwater. The deeper one goes, the longer one stays down, the worse it gets. All of a sudden, the diver can't think clearly, can't read his instruments, can't remember which way is up. It's easy to cure — just ascend to a shallower depth — but there is also no way to predict how quickly it will hit or just how bad it will be. That means, as gamemaster, you can visit this at random on the player characters if you feel the last scene is going a bit too easily.

Keep in mind as you run this combat that objects underwater appear much closer than they actually are. Add +2 to the characters' *unarmed combat* difficulties if they are not experienced at underwater combat.

The eels' purpose is simple. They don't so much see the characters as a threat as a possible ride to the surface world. They want to get the regulators out of the characters' mouths and get themselves into those nice, warm bodies. They can't do much in the way of damage, but they are great at swarming.

## EELS (100)

**AGILITY 10**

Maneuver 12, stealth 12, swimming 12, unarmed combat 13

**DEXTERITY 3**

**ENDURANCE 6**

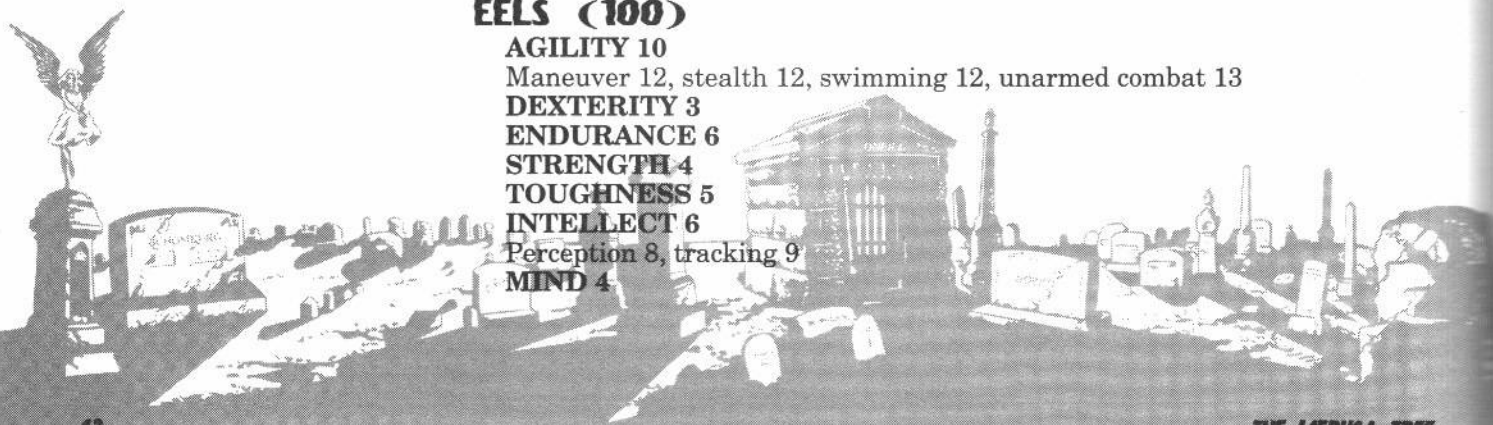
**STRENGTH 4**

**TOUGHNESS 5**

**INTELLECT 6**

Perception 8, tracking 9

**MIND 4**









## IT'S THE EEL THING?

Remember that eel we mentioned a little earlier? The one who shredded into wisps of black substance when exposed to bright light?

Well, he is of the same "species" as the ones the characters have just discovered. They're not true eels at all, but pure evil given form and substance. And they hate the light, which is part of the reason they need a host to take them to the surface. They go from hiding in the darkness at the bottom of the Delaware to hiding in the darkness at the heart of you ...

### CONFIDENCE 6

Intimidation 15, willpower 12

### CHARISMA 4

Life Points: None

Natural Tools: Teeth, damage value STR+4/8

**Description:** As you can see, these creatures are not all that hard to kill ... but there are so many of them! And the Medusa Tree's attitude is, "Slay all you want, we'll make more."

As mentioned above, their goal is possession, not death. But they will defend themselves — vigorously — if they come to perceive a threat to their or the Tree's existence.

("Eels" (D6): **AGILITY 3D+1:** Maneuver 4D, stealth 4D, swimming 4D, unarmed combat 4D+1 **DEXTERITY 1D** **ENDURANCE 2D** **STRENGTH 1D+1** **TOUGHNESS 1D+2** **KNOWLEDGE 2D:** Perception 2D+2, tracking 3D

**MIND 1D+1** **CONFIDENCE 2D:** Intimidation 5D, willpower 4D **CHARISMA 1D+1.** **Fate Points:** None. **Natural Tools:** Teeth, damage value STR+1D+1.)

## THE SWARM

On their own, the eels don't do much damage. But attacking as a group? That's a very different story.

To determine the success of a swarm attack, generate one *unarmed combat* total for the swarm and then add +1 to it for every 10 creatures involved in the attack.

To determine damage done, take the damage value of one creature and multiply it by the number of creatures involved in the attack. Then turn to the Value Chart (page 95 of *MasterBook*). Look down the "Measure" column until you find the number — then look across at its Value. That number is the damage value of the swarm.

**Example:** *Tim is successfully attacked by 50 eels. The damage value is 8. Multiplied by 50, you have 400. On the Value Chart, 400 is the measure of 13. Therefore, the damage value of the swarm for this attack is 13.*

## POSSESSION IS 9/10THS OF THE PROBLEM

Okay, so you have this massive combat going on, and one of the player characters gets unlucky. He loses his regulator and an eel shoots into him. Now what?

Well, the standard answer in a horror roleplaying game is, "Guess what? You're a gamemaster character now." But we're not letting the players off that easily. Make him roleplay the experience. Tell him he feels something cold and slimy sliding through his body. Call for *willpower* rolls of increasing difficulty as the adventure goes along — he'll find himself reacting violently to the slightest provocation, maybe getting a little paranoid about his friends' intentions toward him, and fighting the urge to spread his affliction.

If, at some point, the character blows a *willpower* roll by a wide margin — and you feel the time is right — then take the character over. But the whole thing will be more fun if the player gets to roleplay his characters' fear and discomfort for a while first ... (How does he get rid of his "little friend?" Either by having it cut out of him, or destroying the Medusa Tree itself.)

Whether or not any of the characters fall prey to possession, Tim O'Neill will. He'll get his about four rounds into the combat and immediately turn on the



player characters (well, he never did have much willpower ...) They'll have two choices: kill him (and won't that be fun to explain when they reach the surface?) or flee from him, which will leave yet another possessed wandering Gainesford.

Hopefully, the characters will make it to the surface unscathed. Now they know that the Medusa Tree exists, just where it is, and that it apparently is the source of Gainesford's problems.

And they don't know the half of it yet ...

## CUT TO ...

Once the characters have safely reached the shore, cut to Scream Five, "Town Without Pity."

## SCREAM FIVE: TOWN WITHOUT PITY

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** Things have changed just a tad in town since the characters went under. Read aloud or paraphrase:

The first thing you notice is that the smell of smoke hangs heavy in the air. As you look back toward town, you can see fires springing up and hear the sounds of sirens in the distance. It looks like half the town is burning.





**Then other sounds begin to mingle with these: screams; gunshots; glass shattering; it sounds as if a mob is running riot through Gainesford, destroying everything in its path.**

Well, that's close. Enough people in town have been possessed and are now on a hair-trigger that violence had to follow. At least a quarter of Main St. is ablaze; Endesnear County Hospital is packed with the wounded and the dying; and those people trying to get out of town are running into roadblocks set up by the local police. (Why? Well, it could be that Chief McFee has an inkling of what's going on and doesn't want it spreading outside of Gainesford ... or it could be that he's already been possessed and just doesn't want any potential threats getting away.)

## THE ACTION

As the characters contemplate this awful situation, Richard Garson drives up in his station wagon and implores them to get in. Do they trust him? Well, he doesn't *look* possessed ... it's up to them. (If they don't go with him, they can probably arrive at the same conclusions he will, on their own: the Tree is the source of the trouble, so the Tree has to go.)

If they do go with him, he'll drive them over a myriad of back roads which allow them to avoid the roadblocks (since these roads don't lead out of town ... they don't lead much of anywhere, actually). On the way, Garson will explain that the town has erupted into bloody violence, seemingly in a heartbeat. He'll ask them what they found down below (and what happened to Tim). If they tell him, he will nod grimly. You see, it's what he feared most: the legends were right, the Tree is the gateway to some monstrous evil, and Gainesford is its beachhead. Logically, destroy the Tree and you should stop this "invasion" in its tracks.

Garson will take the characters into Grassy Swamp. His destination is the home of some friends, Shane and Tasha Herbert (see pages 25-27 of *The World of Tales From The Crypt*). Shane has a love of demolitions and always keeps plenty of dynamite around the place. If he can be persuaded to loan the characters some, it might give them a means to destroy the Medusa Tree.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The house is set back from the dirt road. It's dark and quiet. No car rests in the driveway. Garson calls out a couple of times and gets no answer.**

**"They must have left," he says. "Or else ..."**

**He starts forward. Just then, a muskrat goes scampering across the front lawn. As its front paws hit a particular patch of ground, there is a loud explosion and the animal is blown to pieces.**

Guess Rich forgot to mention that. See, Shane Herbert has a thing about trespassers — a serious thing. That's why his lawn is mined. Call for lots of *perception* checks as the characters cross it, but do try not to blow them up. (And if they come up with some clever way to avoid setting foot on the lawn, by all means, let them go with it.)

Garson will lead them to a shed around back. There, the characters will find boxes of TNT, fuses, detonators, enough explosives to bring down a Medusa Forest.

As long as they take care, they can carry the stuff to Garson's car and load it up. Just as they do so, a **shotgun blast** blows out the back window of the station wagon.

It's Big Earl, the local "game warden" (read: simple-minded sot with a shotgun). Has he been possessed? Probably. Can the characters find out for sure? Well, they can stop and ask him while he's reloading and getting ready to spray parts of them all over Endesnear County.



## BIG EARL

See stats on page 28 of the WorldBook.

Another "fight or flight" situation. They can roar out of Grassy Swamp and hope Earl doesn't tag a tire with his shotgun. Or ... they can check to make sure the dynamite is still good by lighting one and tossing it in the big lug's general direction ...

## CUT TO ...

So much for the easy part ... now the characters have to get back to the Tree and take care of business. Cut to Scream Six.

## SCREAM SIX: THE ENEMY BELOW

### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** The characters must destroy the Medusa Tree. Doing so will kill all the entities currently possessing the people of Gainesford, as well as sealing the gateway through which they have been coming into this world. But nobody said it would be easy ...

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**Everything you see as you make your way back to the Delaware reinforces the fact that this evil must be stopped. But none of it gives you reason to believe that you will be able to do the job. All about you, some thing revels in its newfound freedom, burning, destroying, killing. And in your hands, you carry the only hope of the town's survival ... and maybe your own, as well.**

### THE ACTION

Assuming the characters haven't come up with some other, better idea, we're going to work on the premise that they are going to blow the Tree up. This presents a few problems:

Do any of the characters have the *demolitions* skill? No? Then they'll be working off straight Intellect — not a comforting thought, with this group.

How are the characters going to blow the Tree up? They can row out into the river until they think they are above where the Tree is and toss the dynamite in (either by setting a timer on the explosive or lighting the proper length of fuse with a magnesium flare (magnesium burns underwater). How will they know what the proper length of fuse is? Intellect rolls (see? We told you it wasn't a comforting thought).

It's also possible that they might hand deliver the dynamite by diving down. You can go back and look at Scream Four for details on the dive, but note that there is one important difference this time: the Tree now perceives the characters as a threat. The eels won't wait until they are at depth to attack.

The best way to ensure elimination of the Tree is to attach the dynamite to it (no, we don't like thinking about what that involves either) with a timer attached. The timer should be set for three minutes (the amount of time it will take the characters to reach the surface without getting the bends). If they are willing to risk decompression sickness, they can set the timer for a shorter amount of time.

The characters really do *not* want to be underwater when the dynamite goes off. Sound carries incredibly underwater and the shock of an explosion traveling through the depths can be deadly. (That's why tossing a stick of dynamite into







Paul Daly

a pond kills so many fish — it's not the explosion, it's the sound that kills them.) So if the characters are caught close to the source of the explosion, figure on damage value 23 — that ought to be enough to knock them unconscious and make sure they drown.

Use the eels stats from *Scream Four*. This should be a ferocious battle from which not all the characters will walk away. This is, after all, an incredibly old and powerful entity fighting for its very existence. The eels will attack both in swarms and in an effort to possess characters and turn them on each other.

If the Tree is destroyed, the eels will dissolve, leaving their hosts intact and possessed of their wits again. No damage will be done to the hosts by this destruction.

If the characters fail, of course, the entity will be able to spread its hold throughout Gainesford and possibly beyond. The Cryptkeeper will lose interest in this particular window, and will surely come up with creative ways to punish the characters for screwing up.

## THE WRAP-UP

If all the characters are killed, they'll wind up back in the Crypt, facing a very disturbed Cryptkeeper:

*"You've done it this time, creeps. It's the eel deal, for sure, and don't forget it, what-*elver* you do. Hehehehehe!"*

If the characters succeed at this adventure, they might even get a reward from the Cryptkeeper. Flip through the section on magical artifacts in the *The World of Tales From The Crypt* and slip the characters one of those items for their next adventure.

*"I think you kiddies are getting the hang of this — and that's good noose for you! Hehehehehehe! After this adventure, you could probably use a rest — you've really been through the wringer! Well, not yet, but you will be, you're dripping all over my cozy Crypt!"*

## ADVENTURE AWARDS

Award the characters three Skill Points for surviving this adventure, and three Life Points as well. If they were able to destroy the Tree before Gainesford was completely razed, toss in another Life Point.





## THREE

*Well, kiddies, after that last adventure, I'd say you're about ready for a session with a dead-shrinker! Yes, you're crackers; nuts; bananas; and I'm getting hungry, myself. Hehehehehehe! So off you go to the nice hospital, where they'll give you some new clothes — the kind with the sleeves that tie — and make sure you don't hurt yourself, or anyone else. That'll be a change, hmmm? Hehehehehe!*

*Your hosts for this terror tour are two duelling docs who believe in the power of brotherly loathe. Don't worry, they'll cure what ails you ... even if they have to kill you to do it!*

*If you want to get out of the place alive ... and with what few wits you have left ... be of good fear, boils and ghouls, or you'll end up just one more cog in the machine! Hehehehe! This is a sickening psychodrama I like to call ...*

## ... BUT FEAR ITSELF

In this adventure, the player characters find themselves all dressed up in their Sunday best straitjackets and a completely unfamiliar body. They are the newest inmates in the Shady Acres Institute for the Reality-Challenged, a seemingly ramshackle establishment run by two feuding brothers, both doctors.

Unfortunately, being a patient at Shady Acres is definitely hazardous to your health. Dr. Norville Gund believes very strongly in the idea of overcoming your fears by facing them, confronting them, even being eaten by them. As if that weren't bad enough, patients keep turning up dead in their beds — scared to death (*oh, that hospital food ... Hehehehehe!*)

That's brother Melville's fault. You see, he's conducting a little research of his own, hooking patients up to high-tech virtual reality experiments designed to produce fear. This terror is in turn fed into Melville's pet computer program, "Ripper One," which he hopes will one day know all there is to know about fear ...

And that's where the Cryptkeeper comes in ... and you, too ... because nobody's going to know more about fear than he does, if he can help it.

## EVERY BODY WANTS TO BE MY BABY

Although the player characters are obviously at least somewhat crazy to have gotten mixed up with the Cryptkeeper in the first place, not just anybody can walk in and get themselves committed to an asylum — even one as basically unscrupulous as Shady Acres. Thus it is assumed that the players will play out this scenario in "shells" of real inmates. Five such characters are provided below. You can use them or make up your own (and use the ones we wrote up as gamemaster characters, read: part of the body count).

**Note:** The Cryptkeeper is nothing if not considerate of his pawns. Knowing they might have a hard time "passing" as lunatics, he has thoughtfully arranged matters so that the characters will inherit the mental problems of the bodies into which they are dropped. Wasn't that nice of him? Make sure each player knows the details of the relevant shell's ... idiosyncrasies, so he can roleplay them correctly.



## REX BARNWELL

AGILITY 10  
DEXTERITY 10  
ENDURANCE 9  
STRENGTH 8  
TOUGHNESS 10

**Description:** Rex is a handsome young man of 25. Staring at a long jail sentence for a murderous assault, he claimed to hear “voices” speaking to him from the camera in the courtroom and got off on an insanity plea. Once in Shady Acres, though, he really *did* start hearing voices — and so will the character in his body. Sometimes the voices gives nice, clear commands (“Huddle in the corner,” “Smack him on the head,” “You really want that last piece of Spam”), other times they spout nonsense off the cover of tabloids (“Prunes Cause Dropsy — Scientists Baffled!”) Add to this an intense fear of rodents, and you have one very well-adjusted individual ...

## LILY DENTON

AGILITY 8  
DEXTERITY 9  
ENDURANCE 9  
STRENGTH 8  
TOUGHNESS 10

**Description:** Lily was just a typical housewife and mother of two until six months ago, when she claims to have been abducted by aliens. Since then, she has horrible nightmares of hideous experiments in which she was given great mental powers, including the ability to sense other aliens living in our midst. As she sees about every tenth person she meets as an alien, this has produced a number of unpleasant public scenes which forced her family to bring her to Shady Acres (the “cheapest” hospital their limited budget could afford). Little by little, the character in her body will start to see that the “truth is in here,” too ... the staff members are aliens! The inmates are aliens! Of course, it’s all clear now!

## PHOEBE BENDER

AGILITY 8  
DEXTERITY 8  
ENDURANCE 9  
STRENGTH 7  
TOUGHNESS 10

**Description:** A pretty but withdrawn girl of 15, Phoebe got to Shady Acres the old-fashioned way — she earned it, by burning down the family home with her parents still inside. Phoebe’s firebug tendencies — and her amazing ability to get her hands on any pack of matches, lighter, etc., within 50 yards — are not her only unusual quirk. She’s also terrified of men with beards, small enclosed spaces, and anyone yelling and has an almost empathic affinity to animals of any kind (who remind her of her one true friend, her little cat Fluffy). (This might be a good time to remind you — absolutely *no* matches, lighters, etc. should be used as props in this game, lest someone get barbecued!)

## LINCOLN “SHAKEY” WELLMAN

AGILITY 8  
DEXTERITY 10  
ENDURANCE 7  
STRENGTH 7  
TOUGHNESS 8

**Description:** A frail fellow with a chronic wheeze, Lincoln is a poster child for “neurosis.” “Shakey” is petrified of crowds, heights, the dark, and several other





things he's never even experienced yet. He's allergic (or at least convinced he is) to virtually everything, and has an encyclopedic knowledge of rare and deadly maladies — one of which he is developing symptoms of daily. Somehow, he's managed to survive until now, working out of his home as a computer debugger (and a damn good one, too). Unfortunately, he's now convinced the computer viruses are trying to infect him, and has committed himself for his own protection.

## **BRENDA VANDERWAL**

**AGILITY 9**

**DEXTERITY 9**

**ENDURANCE 8**

**STRENGTH 9**

**TOUGHNESS 10**

**Description:** An athletic blond in her mid-30s, Brenda has the strangest secret of all the "shells" — she's not the slightest bit nuts. The Gunds' insurance carrier, Midwestern Casualty, is disturbed by the number of inmates recently qualifying for death benefits. They've sent Brenda in undercover to investigate, under the cover of a manic depressive with a dependency on narcotics — and even gave her a really cool 20-shot spy camera, concealed inside her toiletry case, to document her findings. Of course, they failed to mention that she's Investigator #2 to be sent to Shady Acres, and that the first one hasn't been heard from since he went in three months ago.

In selecting which shells to give to each player, feel free to play against type (switching genders, giving the group's usual leader a "shrinking violet" like Lily or Lincoln, etc.) to give them extra challenges to confront. Try not to assign anyone a character they'll absolutely hate, though — the goal of the game is still to have fun.

## **HACK ONE: WHAT DOES NOT KILL US MAKES US STRONGER**

## **SCREAM ONE: GETTING TO KNOW YOU**

### **THE SITUATION**

**Standard.** Read aloud or paraphrase:

After experiencing a momentary blackout, you come to and find yourselves sitting in some sort of reception area with run-down furniture, shabby threadbare carpeting, and olive drab walls. Each of you is strait-jacketed, in a completely unfamiliar body, a person who you know nothing about beyond the few details of physical appearance you can see. Suddenly, a door opens, and a voice says, "The doctors will see you now."

You walk through the door into a second room, fitted out with office furniture that gives new meaning to the word "utilitarian," and sit in the seat you are directed to. Facing you behind a steel desk is a well-built man in medical whites, with cold grey eyes, a neatly trimmed mustache, and a military brush cut. He regards you with a look that one might reserve for a cockroach — just before one stomped on it. Quickly averting your gaze elsewhere, you notice a second man, seated to one side. He's clad in jeans and a worn sweatshirt, a flowing mane of greying



hair bound behind his head in a ponytail. Though a facial resemblance suggests that the two men must be related, the contrast could not be more acute — as the latter fellow returns your gaze with a ready smile, eyes twinkling behind wire-rimmed spectacles. The door closes again, leaving you alone with the doctors — and without the slightest clue why you're here!

## THE ACTION

One by one, each of the characters will be brought in for "entry processing." Our pair of docs, angry Norville and apparently "kindly" Melville Gund, will begin asking questions about how they feel, what they hope to accomplish in their stay at Shady Acres — questions the player characters haven't the foggiest idea how to answer, of course. Make them fumble and stumble around for a couple of minutes, to get them nice and unbalanced, then switch over to questions phrased in such a way to offer them some scraps of useful data amongst the confusion, like, "So, Rex, how did it feel to almost kill a man in cold blood?"

Throughout the scene, your goal is to make Norville's nasty, brutish disposition, and his open envy of his brother's talents, painfully obvious to the players, and to establish Melville as a kinder, gentler (if still basically sociopathic) alternative. This latter is especially important, as Melville will be out of sight for most of the remainder of this act, leaving the players to Norville's "tender mercies." It is vital to the course of the adventure that Melville appear to be the White Knight riding to their rescue at Hack One's end, to propel the player characters to voluntarily sign on to participate in his grand project downstairs.

### DR. NORVILLE GUND

#### AGILITY 9

Improvised weaponry 11, stealth 10

#### DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 10

#### ENDURANCE 10

#### STRENGTH 8

#### TOUGHNESS 10

#### INTELLECT 11

Perception 14, science: abnormal psychology 16

#### MIND 11

Business 14, medicine 15

#### CONFIDENCE 9

Intimidation 13, willpower 13

#### CHARISMA 8

Taunt 11

#### Life Points: 6

**Equipment:** .38 Special, damage value 17, ammo 6

(Dr. Norville Gund (D6): **AGILITY** 3D: Improvised weaponry 3D+2, stealth 3D+1 **DEXTERITY** 2D+2: **Fire combat** 3D+1 **ENDURANCE** 3D+1 **STRENGTH** 2D+2 **TOUGHNESS** 3D+1 **INTELLECT** 3D+2: Perception 4D+2, science: abnormal psychology 5D+1 **MIND** 3D+2: Business 4D+2, medicine 5D **CONFIDENCE** 3D: Intimidation 4D+1, willpower 4D+1 **CHARISMA** 2D+2: Taunt 3D+2 **Fate Points:** 6. **Equipment:** .38 Special, damage value 5D+2, ammo 6.)

### DR. MELVILLE GUND

#### AGILITY 8

#### DEXTERITY 7



**ENDURANCE 10**  
**STRENGTH 7**  
**TOUGHNESS 10**  
**INTELLECT 12**

Computer ops 16, deduction 13, science: abnormal psychology 17

**MIND 11**

Research 13

**CONFIDENCE 8**

**CHARISMA 10**

Charm 11, persuasion 13

**Life Points: 5**

**Equipment:** Melville has unlimited access to a massive computer in the basement.

**(Dr. Melville Gund (D6): AGILITY 2D+2 DEXTERITY 2D+1 ENDURANCE 3D+1 STRENGTH 2D+1 TOUGHNESS 3D+1 INTELLECT 4D:** Computer ops 5D+1, deduction 4D+1, science: abnormal psychology 5D+2 **MIND 3D+2:** Research 4D+1 **CONFIDENCE 2D+2 CHARISMA 3D+1:** Charm 3D+2, persuasion 4D+1 **Fate Points: 5.)**

When the last player character has emerged from the interview, Melville will cheerily gather up the group, and guide them out into a hallway with Norville trailing behind. They'll pass thick steel doors whose barred windows look out onto the entry drive beyond. The characters will be able to see a guard station just inside the entrance where three "rent-a-cops" sit, looking bored. They're armed with nightsticks and odd looking pistols and sporadically eye a set of security screens showing various sections of the complex.

## STANDARD GUARD

**AGILITY 8**

Melee combat 10, running 10

**DEXTERITY 9**

Fire combat 10

**ENDURANCE 8**

**STRENGTH 9**

**INTELLECT 8**

**MIND 8**

**CONFIDENCE 9**

Interrogation 11, intimidation 12, willpower 11

**CHARISMA 8**

Taunt 10

**Life Points: 3**

**Equipment:** Nightstick, damage value STR+5/20; tranquilizer gun, damage value 19 (stun damage only), ammo 8; walkie-talkie.

**Description:** There are 18 guards typically on the premises (14 inside, and four patrolling the outer grounds) from 8 AM to midnight daily, and 12 on the graveyard shift. Guards on rounds always travel in pairs. This is a job to these guys, not a religion — they are more likely to flee at the first sign of trouble, and call for back-up, than to risk their own lives to keep some nut job from escaping. In situations where they "have the numbers" in their favor, however, they will be much braver.

**(Standard Guard (D6): AGILITY 2D+2: Melee combat 3D+1, running 3D+1 DEXTERITY 3D Fire combat 3D+1 ENDURANCE 2D+2 STRENGTH 3D INTELLECT 2D+2 MIND 2D+2 CONFIDENCE 3D:** Interrogation 3D+2, intimidation 4D, willpower 3D+2 **CHARISMA 2D+2:** Taunt 3D+1 **Fate Points: 3. Equipment:** Nightstick, damage value STR+1D+2; tranquilizer gun, stun damage 6D+1, ammo 8; walkie-talkie.)



## KOOK'S TOUR

The Gunds' mis-guided tour will include stops at the following places, in whatever order the gamemaster desires (see the enclosed map for further details):

**Infirmary:** An L-shaped room, separated into two sections by a set of opaque white curtains: a 4-bed sleeping area, and an examination area, equipped with an exam table, X-ray machine, a bank of filing cabinets, and a well-stocked pharmaceutical cabinet kept locked when not in use. When a medical doctor is required, he is called in from nearby Slatersville two miles down the road; otherwise, the day to day operations of the area are in the hands of Nurse Practitioner Rita Nesbit, a very pretty lady. When the player characters pass through, she will smile at each of them — but if Rex Barnwell is in the group, she'll save her warmest smile for him.

**Cafeteria:** A large room filled with long tables and a kitchen to the rear, the cafeteria serves three squares a day, the dubious quality of which makes it clear why they call it "institutional" food.

**Rec Room:** The rec room is where most of the inmates still capable of putting two coherent thoughts side by side congregate to spend their free time. The large auditorium style room is separated by curtains into several distinct sections:

- The TV "lounge," where watchers sit on folding chairs and the orderlies control the clicker. The battered wall-mounted set gets lousy reception, and a maximum of six channels (no cable TV for you!) on a good day. No matter what time of day this area is entered, one inmate will always be here — Boston Bobby, a stocky fellow in a beat-up Red Sox cap who is constantly narrating the baseball moment that seems to have driven him round the bend ("Ground ball to first, should be routine — oh no, the ball went through Buckner's legs! — Knight scores! Mets win!").
- The game room, containing 3–4 card tables, and a shelf full of common games (checkers, chess, etc.). There is often a spirited poker game in progress, but players had better not get involved unless they know whether a four card squamish beats a Chinese straight.
- A reading area, where one can catch up on such important literary works as the January 1964 issue of *Popular Mechanics* or "Curious George Goes to the Zoo." Nurse Nesbit sometimes leads arts and crafts projects here in her off hours.
- And the *piece de resistance*, a ping pong table, lined on both sides with chairs for fans (as the night games are the prime spectator sport at Shady Acres). The current champion of the table is Agnes Varney, a lithe and athletic young black woman — unfortunately, "Agnes" is just one of four split personalities that inhabits the body of Dolores Raymond, and is only around to play about once a week.

**Men's and Women's Dorms:** The men's dorms are located in the west wing of the main building, the women's dorms in the east wing. Each wing has essentially the same layout, consisting of 1) a flexible mesh entrance gate which is lowered and secured at night and an adjacent orderly station, where two orderlies and two guards share evening and night duty; 2) a set of modestly appointed group quarters lining both sides of a central corridor, each room containing four sets of bunk beds and two chests of drawers (one drawer for each patient); and 3) a group bathroom containing a communal shower, sinks, and lavatories at the far end of the wing, with an adjoining supply room for linens and other necessities.

In each dorm area, Norville will assign bunk spaces to the player characters, and introduce them to the orderlies on duty. The orderlies on this level are basically Norville's faithful henchmen. In this sense they are interchangeable, and have been assigned the same basic stats. But since they are also the hospital employees the player characters will have the most contact with during the first







## HEY, WHAT'S DOWN THAT CORRIDOR?

As the inmates are touring the facility, an Intellect or *perception* total of 8 will allow them to notice an unmarked steel door between the infirmary and cafeteria. This is equipped with a modern keycard security system that looks very out of place among the generally run down furnishings of the asylum's main floor. They will also see that the opposite wall is comprised of thick plexiglass, and overlooks a walkway that leads from this unmarked doorway downward toward some sort of basement level. The walkway is chock-full of cameras and other high tech surveillance gizmos. Yet neither of the doctors will mention word one about this area as the tour continues, unless one of the player characters brings up the subject, whereupon Norville will snarl, "That's nothing you need to worry about. That area's off limits to patients." If the questioner is a character who has made a favorable impression on Melville, however, he will sidle alongside that person as the tour continues, and begin to talk excitedly. Read aloud or paraphrase:

"That area you were asking about leads to my research lab. I've been making great strides on my current project, trying to harness the power of the mind. So often, doctors and psychiatrists try to repress the extreme emotions of mental patients — their loves, their hatreds ... their fears — in order to enable them to cope with the real world. But I think they're going about it backwards.

"History documents all sorts of incidents in which powerful emotions have driven men to perform acts they would never be capable of normally, like lifting up a heavy automobile to free someone trapped underneath. I believe it is our minds which gives us the power to perform these acts of heroism, courage, and self-sacrifice, and that the same power can be used to heal the wounds of mental illness. My experiments use a virtual reality environment to simulate conditions that will generate an emotional response, while placing the test subject at no physical risk. By tapping into the patient's mental energies as he responds to the simulation, we can produce a positive bio-feedback loop that ... oh, listen to me, babbling at you like a colleague at a convention. Well, who knows, perhaps one day you'll consent to be one of my test subjects, and find out about it firsthand. Now we'd better catch up to the others."

Hack, here are three specific gamemaster characters who can be used to personalize these encounters.

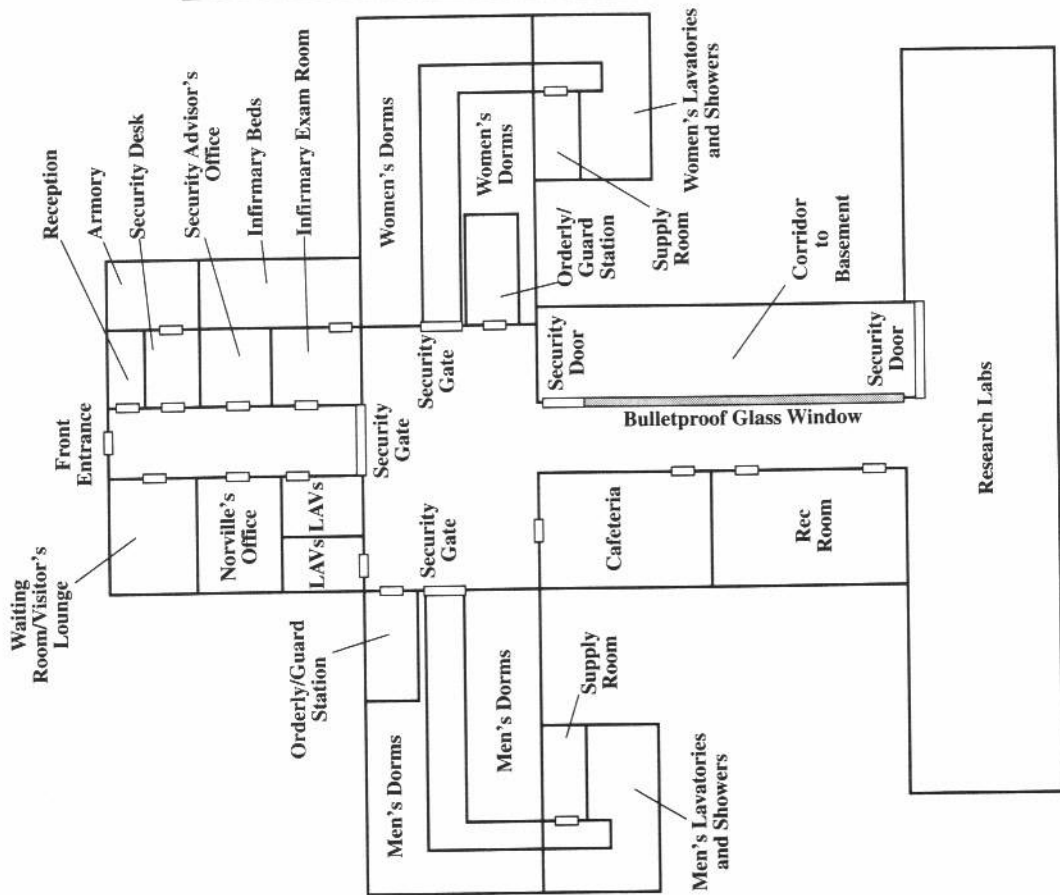
**Bubba Benton:** A bad 'ol boy from down South with a foghorn voice and a definite attitude ("Are you talkin' back to me, boy?"). The limits of Bubba's bad attitude should be consistent with the overall tone of your campaign, and could range anywhere from essentially harmless rude jokes at the expense of the more mentally challenged inmates, to an occasional butt-kicking, to intense scenes of harassment. In any event, he's the sort of fellow who, if you somehow get on his bad side, you'll likely stay there.

**Hercules Smith:** "Herk the Jerk" is a mountain of a man (2.8 meters, 280), who is at least two tacos short of a combination plate. Though it's hard to tell sometimes whether he's good natured or just completely oblivious, Herk seems to genuinely have a soft spot in his heart for any inmate who is having a hard time of it. He also has a huge sweet tooth, and can be easily distracted from his duties by anyone offering him a treat.

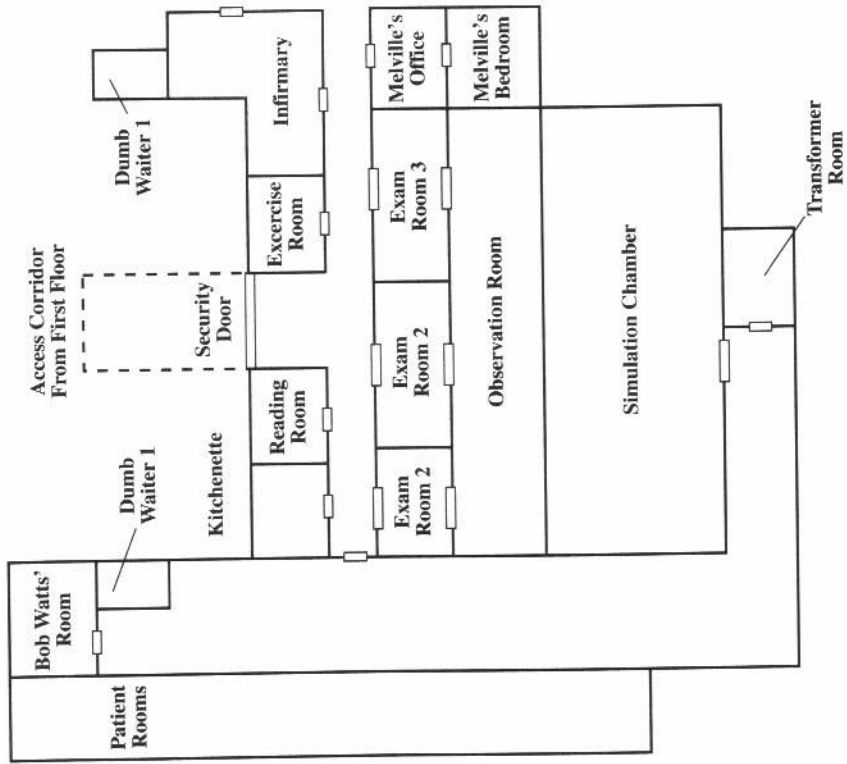
**Ben Murphy:** Ben is an older fellow with greying hair and a sardonic sense of humor about the rules of the asylum, which he calls "Murphy's Laws." He is also a conniver and always looking out for himself. If he can be convinced that a character has the means to reward him financially for his assistance, he can

# SHADY ACRES

## FIRST FLOOR



## BASEMENT





be bribed to obtain information or perform small tasks for the characters. However, he will not do anything that will be detrimental to Norville unless he is certain it can't be traced back to him.

### **STANDARD ORDERLY**

Use the stats for the Standard Guard. Orderlies carry only nightsticks.

### **CUT TO ...**

Once the characters are settled into their new home for the night, cut to Scream Two.

## **SCREAM TWO: THIS IS ONLY A TEST ...**

### **THE SITUATION**

**Standard.** Starting bright and early on the morning after their arrival, the new inmates will soon find that the bulk of each day is devoted to running them through a series of tests — each of which appears more diabolical and life-threatening than the last. According to the scholarly papers Norville filed with the State Medical Board, these tests are designed to help patients identify and confront their fears, and in so doing aid in their rehabilitation. But in truth, Norville and his motley crew of orderlies just like to hear 'em scream — and the louder the better.

### **THE ACTION**

The tests are primarily conducted in the bank of rooms along the south wall of the central building, charitably marked “research labs” on the first floor map. Throughout these tests, feel free to call for Confidence or *willpower* totals to see if the characters will panic. Figure on a base difficulty of 9, modified as you see fit depending on how frightening the situation is. Keep in mind, also, that although these tests take hours to run, you need not spend hours of real time doing it. Introduce the situations, cut from character to character, milk it for what it's worth but keep the game moving.

These rooms are just samples of Norville's diabolical work, so you can add your own embellishments, or other chambers of horrors, to this list. In playing out these scenes, the gamemaster may either run each player through one of these tests privately (then see if they share what they've learned with their comrades afterward), or have 1-2 players be the guinea pigs *du jour*, and conduct their humiliations in front of an audience. (But remember that the other players can't be ignored for too long or they'll get bored).

## **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING ...**

During the course of these tests, players may, on a successful *deduction* or *perception* skill roll, notice hidden surveillance cameras cleverly concealed throughout the testing rooms, and even inside some of the equipment (like the submersion pods). They will likely assume that Norville is just peeking in, to observe the effect his torments are having on the players. In fact, Norville is blithely unaware (unless the player characters should happen to make accusing remarks to him) of the presence of these cameras, which were installed and operated by Melville in his effort to identify the best candidates for the Ripper One program. Melville is looking for people with powerful fears, but also wants those people who can harness their fear and turn it into desperate action.



The lineup of tests includes the following areas.

**The Pool Room:** This room is dominated by a seven meter deep concrete-lined pool of water above which are suspended three oval metallic pods that are just large enough to hold one individual each. The "subjects" of each day's experiments enter the pods, which are then attached to a hoist and submerged in the pool for a period of six hours. Norville and his staff have a variety of tricks at their disposal to heighten a patient's panic while immersed: turning the pod's interior lights on and off without warning, swinging the pod resoundingly off the sides of the pool, even pumping in plumes of blackish smoke while the machinery coughs and chatters convincingly in the inmate's ears. But the room's scariest feature is simply a function of the set-up's age and lack of maintenance — two of the three pods leak, allowing water to seep in and making drowning a realistic prospect. Indeed, Pod #2 leaks so rapidly that it will almost completely fill with water by the end of the six hour period, leaving its occupant treading water up to his eyeballs, hanging precariously from whatever handhold he/she has found along the inner rim of the pod, or waterlogged and dead if they are not careful. The character in this pod will need to make Endurance totals of 8 to hang on (call for them at random — if he fails, he's going to have to scramble to get his hold back).

**The Isolation Room:** This room bears some similarities to a solitary confinement cell in a prison, only not as congenial. The room's ceiling is only slightly more than a meter off the ground, forcing the occupant to crawl on hands and knees within the 2.6 meter by four meter chamber. It is kept pitch black, though there is a lantern concealed within its depths for those hardy enough to seek it out and resourceful enough to be carrying a match or lighter in their pocket (and how many asylum inmates do you know who carry lighters?). There will also be an odor of food in the air, which will be revealed upon investigation to be a plate of stale bread and slightly moldy cheese — not the most attractive fare, but one that the inmate may wish to eat before the second half of the eight hour test period begins. At that point, the two small vents in the northeast and northwestern corners of the room open up and members of the building's hearty rodent population can begin their own investigation of the area. If that is not enough, the west wall of the chamber can also be hydraulically put into motion, narrowing the chamber's width to as little as .6 meters, making for a tight squeeze indeed. It should be noted that anyone inhabiting Rex's shell is not likely to find this room too congenial, but that the character with Phoebe's affinity for animals may actually find the arrival of the rats a treat. Again, failing a *willpower* roll reduces the character to panic. Sufficient panic will eventually get the character released.

**Electric Avenue:** A nice, harmless looking four meter by four meter windowless room, watched over by everyone's favorite orderly, Herk the Jerk. Herk will sit the inmate down at a table with twelve chairs, each with one of those "put the square peg in the square hole" puzzles in front of it. Then he'll attach a metal bracelet to the character's ankle "to monitor ya." After instructing the patient to move clockwise (which to Herk translates as "go that way") around the table as each puzzle is completed, Herk leaves the room. As soon as the inmate finishes the first puzzle and rises to move, however, he will receive a jolting electric shock, whose source can readily be identified as the ankle bracelet. When the process is repeated with a stronger jolt the next time, the inmate may begin to detect a rather unpleasant pattern forming.

What's going on here? Well, the bracelet is activated by the patient putting weight on the leg, thus expanding the ankle muscles and contracting the bracelet. There are three different levels of bracelet — Bracelet #1 (which the character starts with) does damage value 10, Bracelet #2 does damage value 11, and Bracelet #3 does damage value 12. Life Points can be spent to heal this damage.





If a character removes the bracelet, Herk will re-enter after a few moments of silence and say, "Doc don't like nobody messing up his tests." Then he'll strap on a second bracelet (Bracelet #2), and if it happens again, Bracelet #3. Damage effects are cumulative.

If the character tries to avoid the shocks by slowing the pace or solving the puzzles incorrectly, they'll still get a shock. Each chair is rigged to give off a Bracelet #3 equivalent jolt if anyone sits in it for more than five minutes.

So how do the characters manage this situation? Well, they could remove the bracelet, or they could hop around on one foot from chair to chair (Agility difficulty of 9). The trick is to keep screaming — it's silence that is going to bring Herk into the room.

If the character takes shock equal to his Endurance, he passes out. He'll wake up to find Norville standing over him with smelling salts, muttering, "If there's one thing I hate more than a crazy person, it's a stupid crazy person."

**The Belfry:** An empty room, save for an antiquated elevator, which creakily bears the patient, Norville, and Orderly Murphy up five stories. It lets them off at the top of a real, working bell tower which looks completely out of place looming above the otherwise flat expanse of the hospital building. The inmate will be led, prodded, or physically carried out onto the catwalk surrounding the top of the tower, and instructed to close his eyes and walk to the opposite corner. As he complies, Norville and Murphy will scurry inside, locking the door behind them. The only way down for the inmate is to make his way down the outside of the tower, using the 16 meter length of rope which has been thoughtfully left on the catwalk. Anyone who can knot the rope securely around their waist and the catwalk railing should have relatively little trouble climbing down to safety (three *climbing* totals of 6) — unless of course the patient is acrophobic, in which case he is likely to feel like he is descending the Grand Canyon on a strand of spaghetti, and will have to make Confidence or *willpower* totals of 12 every three meters or freeze up. By the way, did you know that when the bells toll the hour, the entire tower shakes down to its foundation? Norville did, and that's why he brought the inmate out onto the catwalk at 10 minutes 'til. Anyone in midair at the striking of the hour will need to make an Agility total of 10 to hold onto the rope. Otherwise, it's a long way down ... (See "Falling Damage" on page 91 of *MasterBook*.)

Should the patient make it down unscathed (or even if he falls the last three to six meters feet, suffering assorted bruises, scrapes, and sprains), he will find the door at the base of the belfry unlocked, and Murphy waiting to escort him back to the dorms.

## CUT TO ...

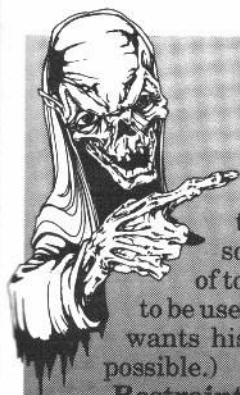
At the end of Day One, cut to Scream Three.

## SCREAM THREE: SCREAMS IN THE NIGHT

### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** Lights out at Shady Acres is at ten p.m., and each inmate gets a sleeping pill from the orderlies making their rounds. If the characters are dumb enough to take it, they will be deep in slumberland when the scene begins, and will first have to shake off the effects of the drug to rouse themselves into action. However, if anyone manages to fool or distract the orderlies and can avoid swallowing the pill, they will gain a very useful advantage. (Endurance total of





## THIS IS YOUR BRAIN. THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON SHADY ACRES

Inmates who look like they pose a threat to authority don't tend to get the benefit of the doubt in an institution, and especially not here, where Norville and his cracked staff want to be the only ones around with homicidal tendencies. If a player character is caught doing something that will brand him as a troublemaker, the Doc and his henchmen have a variety of tools at their disposal to cut any such threat down in its tracks. Restraints are the most likely to be used, more often than shock treatment and drugs are almost never used (why? Because Norville wants his subjects undamaged and clear-headed, so they can feel the maximum amount of fear possible.)

**Restraints:** Characters confined by straitjackets or other restraints (like handcuffs, or being lashed to the bed at night by straps) can only escape through use of Agility or the *escape artist* skill at an appropriate difficulty number (see the difficulty number chart on page 52 of *The World of Tales From The Crypt*). Of course, without the help of another third party, it is considerably harder to replace those restraints at the end of a jaunt so as to escape the notice of the orderlies and guards, so escaping this way may just result in a more severe punishment the next time.

**Shock Therapy/Lobotomy:** Yes, these are extreme solutions, even for Norville, and would only be contemplated for repeat offenders who seem to pose a threat, not only of escaping themselves, but of inciting a more general uprising. Anyone who manages to earn themselves such a punishment will be able to do little more than drool on cue for the remainder of the adventure.

11). If one or more characters is not drugged, begin the scene by taking them aside, and read aloud or paraphrase the following to them:

**You wake suddenly, though the room around you seems quiet. Judging by the angle of the moonlight through your window, it must be the middle of the night. The hairs on the back of your neck are tingling, as if disturbed by an ill breeze. Suddenly, the silence is shattered by a bloodcurdling scream in the distance — a scream of terror that sets your heart racing. It echoes a second time, then a third, and is just as suddenly stilled — or perhaps extinguished.**

## THE ACTION

Non-drugged player now have several minutes of free movement. Characters will find the corridor outside their rooms initially empty, but will hear sounds of commotion in the direction of the orderly stations.

Player characters electing to approach this area should generate Intellect or *perception* totals. On an 8, they'll hear some of the orderlies and guards talking. Listening for a minute will provide the following information:

- The staff has no more idea than the characters do what that scream meant;
- This isn't the first time something like this has happened;
- The orderlies are downright scared and are planning to arm themselves against any trouble.

If the characters keep moving without generating successful Agility or *stealth* totals (difficulty of 9), they'll be spotted by the staff and herded back into their rooms. The guards might even interrogate the players about the screams. Their chance to collect further information will be blown for the night.

If the player characters move away from the staffers, they'll be able to see the orderlies herding inmates back into their rooms without being spotted them-



selves. The bathroom or the supply room are the best hiding places — if the characters take refuge there, they can avoid the sweep.

## **IT'S FOUR A.M. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CORPSES ARE?**

The general confusion goes on in the corridor for several minutes, but the guards and orderlies gradually get the other inmates back into their rooms. One or two staff members will even pop their heads into the room in which the player characters have hidden, but move along without spotting them (unless the latter are idiotically hiding in plain sight). After 20–25 minutes, peace and quiet will be restored, leaving the characters hiding in silence. Incredibly boring silence, it seems at first, as the minutes pass and leave them wondering why they are out here instead of resting in their beds. Give them a couple chances to wimp out — including another near discovery of their hideout by the two guards walking their 3:30 rounds — and call it a night. If they persevere, however, their patience will be rewarded with some potentially useful info.

Finally, around 4:00, the player characters will hear the creaking sound of machinery in action, a sound that may be identifiable as an elevator in motion — and is, in fact, the rising of an elevator concealed in the wall at the rear of the supply closet. Their ability to locate the precise source of the sound will depend on their proximity to the supply room at that moment. A few seconds later, the creaking will stop, and be replaced by the sound of rubber wheels rolling across tile floors. A hospital gurney, pushed by Melville Gund and his assistant Bob Watts and bearing the dead body of their latest test subject, will be led from the elevator through the supply room to the corridor outside, and then into whichever dorm room the patient formerly occupied. He will be left in his bed, to be discovered in the morning. The other two will then return with the gurney to the floor below, leaving no one (they believe) the wiser.

The characters can investigate the body on their own, but not being doctors, there is little they can learn from it. The characters could reveal what they have seen, but other than Nurse Nesbit, there are not many sympathetic ears among the first floor staff, and their claims may sound like the ravings of, well, a lunatic. (If they know the location of the elevator, this will add a little credence to their claims, but their efforts will still accomplish little except to further incite Norville to find out what his brother is up to downstairs — and steal it for his own use). Alternatively, they may elect to find out where the elevator leads on their own, providing another short cut to Act Two.

## **THE MOURNING AFTER**

Unless the player characters have seen the body brought upstairs, escaped unobserved, and immediately reported these facts to the night watch, the corpse will be discovered at daybreak, and will cause an even greater stir than the screams of the night before. Characters investigating the commotion can push their way through the milling inmates to get near the body (which will be surrounded by Norville, his orderlies, and Nurse Nesbit), and see the obvious and baffling facts: no sign of wounds or blood on the body or bed, and a look of fright grimly frozen onto the patient's face.

Over the following day or two (which, don't forget, will each begin with another round of Norville's Scream Two tests), characters who attempt to question some of the more coherent patients or cooperative staffers (Nurse Nesbit, Orderly Murphy), or listen in to the conversations of others can acquire any "common knowledge" they missed from last night, and flesh out the hospital's recent history as follows:

Last night's death was the fourth such unexplained murder of an inmate at Shady Acres in slightly more than a month. Each of the victims was found in the same condition, with no serious wounds or injuries that would suggest a cause





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of death. Three men and a woman have died so far, and have previously been discovered in the rec room, the women's dorm, and the men's lavatory. Autopsies of the first three indicated heart failure, which along with the looks of terror on each face suggest that the victims were somehow "scared to death." Also disturbingly, the number of days between each death has been decreasing, from two weeks to ten days, one week, and now only five days.

In the wake of this latest killing, tensions between inmates and staff will steadily rise. The inmates will assume that the murderer is some staffer who has graduated from sadistic to homicidal, making each moment alone with one seem even more ominous. Meanwhile, the orderlies and guards are more than a little concerned that the killer may decide to expand his victim list beyond the patient population. Panic attacks, screaming matches, and violent outbursts will occur with increasing frequency, and as they do, the severity of the staff's responses to these incidents will also escalate, creating an atmosphere not unlike martial law.

And the most out of control individual in the asylum will be Norville Gund, who will seem to be everywhere, berating staffers and inmates alike as idiots, dragging anyone seen within 20 meters of the victim into his office for questioning, and basically denouncing the whole affair as Melville's fault (although he appears to have no basis for such a claim). For his part, Melville will remain mostly out of sight, but whenever he does appear he will act as a peacemaker, successfully defusing whatever crisis he happens upon. Over the course of these days, the gamemaster should weave in the vignettes below, which may provide opportunities for players to piece together a few more clues about what is really going on:

**Eddie the Klepto:** One of the male characters will notice a personal item (toothbrush, comb, etc.) missing from his room. If he asks around, he will discover that several roommates have lost similar items. If he pursues the matter further, he can soon deduce that one roommate, a pockmarked young man named Eddie



with a history of kleptomania, is the likely thief. If he threatens Eddie physically, or thoroughly searches the dorm room, Eddie's stash will be found beneath his mattress. Along with the character's own lost item, the player character will find another item of interest — a keypunched ID card, like a modern hotel room key, with no other identifying marks.

If questioned about this item, Eddie will claim it was "a gift from a friend"; if pressed harder, he will identify the friend as Dr. Melville, and describe the card as a "souvenir" from the time the Doc let him play "the murder game." The card enables the holder to pass through the security checkpoints at each end of the main entrance to the basement level between the hours of 9 AM-9 PM. Eddie cannot say much about the murder game, no matter how he is cajoled or threatened; he will simply say that he wasn't very good, and got killed within the first five minutes — that's why he wasn't invited back.

**Ping Pong With Agnes, Coffee With Vera:** Around the ping pong table, they're looking for new blood to challenge the current champ, Agnes Varney (one of the multiple personalities of the patient Dolores Raymond). If a player character volunteers, have her make a Dexterity skill roll to determine the outcome of the game (16+ to win, 13+ to lose respectably). Regardless of the result, Agnes will approach the player character about an hour later and ask her if she would like to talk. Agnes will make cheery small talk about ping pong, the weather, etc., for as long as the player characters wish (and as Agnes, she is quite pleasant company). If the player characters steer the conversation toward the murders, however, she will begin to act flustered, and her demeanor will change from friendly to furtive.

Within moments, she will begin to speak as Vera, another of Dolores' personalities, asking rather peculiar questions like "Who are you?" and "Why are we talking?" If the player character can roll with the changes and keep the conversation on the murders, Vera will state that she fears for her life because she heard something suspicious while going to the bathroom on the night of the third murder. She will describe the sounds of the elevator and gurney delivering the body upstairs, as detailed earlier in this scene, though she doesn't know what they mean.

**Blow-Up Over Breakfast:** While the inmates are finishing their morning meal in the cafeteria, a screaming match between the brothers Gund erupts, in which Norville will loudly accuse Melville of being responsible for the deaths. Melville will laugh him off, responding with a number of sarcastic putdowns of how Norville is running the asylum right into the ground. After exchanging a few more angry salvos, the two doctors will stalk off in opposite directions.

If the player characters can find a pretense to trail after either party, they may overhear a conversation of even greater interest. Norville will huddle with Bubba and two of the guards, still sputtering angrily, and declare that, "I'm sure my brother is up to something downstairs. I want you to keep an eye on him at all times, and figure out how to get us in for a look-see." Meanwhile, just outside the security door near the infirmary, Nurse Nesbit will console Melville. "It's a shame that Norville can't appreciate the breakthroughs you're making. If only he could see the success the therapy is having on our subjects." Melville will shake his head, and reply, "Sadly, my dear, my brother has not viewed my work clearly ever since my grad school research proposal was funded instead of his. Best to leave him in the dark a while longer, until Bob works the last bugs out of the program."

**CUT TO ...**

Once the characters have gotten what they can get from this experience, cut to Scream Four.



## SCREAM FOUR: RIOT IN THE REC ROOM

### THE SITUATION

**Standard:** Tensions in the asylum finally erupt in dramatic fashion, as an argument over the TV clicker explodes into a pushing and shoving match, and then a full scale riot in which the inmates overpower the guards in the area and seize momentary control of the rec room, cafeteria, and main corridor area. The player characters then must decide what role they want to play in these events.

Just after dinner hour, the player characters and most of the other inmates are in the rec room. Several of the patients in the TV area are clamoring to watch the ballgame, but the orderly on duty stubbornly refuses to change the channel from "America's Least Wanted." One of the inmates grabs for the remote control, and is promptly knocked to the ground by a guard standing nearby. Suddenly, pandemonium breaks loose, as inmates leap upon the staffers and begin fighting. The other two guards in the room run over to break up the disturbance, but they too are set upon by other patients. Within moments, the inmates have overwhelmed their four tenders and battered them into unconsciousness.

The mob spills out into the corridor and captures another guard and orderly, while two others escape battered and bleeding toward the front entrance. Dragging tables from the cafeteria, the inmates erect a makeshift barricade across the corridor, and prepare to defend themselves. For the moment, the inmates are running this portion of the asylum, and it looks like matters are about to get uglier ...

### THE ACTION

From the moment the first punch is thrown by an inmate, the player characters will have to decide how to react to what is unfolding around them. The characters have four basic courses of action they can choose: 1) to sit the scene out on the sidelines, and try to avoid getting caught in the crossfire; 2) to join as an active participant in the rioting; 3) to help Norville and his men, in the hopes of currying future good will; or 4) to use the riot as a diversion, and attempt to make their escape. The pros and cons of each option, and the outcomes which each may lead to, are briefly detailed below.

**Sitting It Out:** A sane individual might easily conclude that staying as far away from this situation as possible is the only sensible option. After all, a riot led by madmen, while offering a lovely opportunity for mayhem and bloodshed, has no chance of actually taking over the hospital. Norville and his henchmen have enough firepower to eventually restore order, and when they do, they will wreak vengeance on the instigators, right?

Of course, sanity has never been a prerequisite for working for the Cryptkeeper. If your player characters lean in this direction, take immediate steps to try to force them to choose sides. Before they can slink to safety, have one of the riot leaders call on them to perform some task, right in front of a captive but conscious staffer — a situation where compliance will brand them as rioters, and refusal may subject them to the wrath of the mob. Furthermore, if the characters do somehow manage to sit it out, simply have the surviving guards name them unfairly as riot leaders, leaving them squarely in the path of Norville's wrath. Nobody said life was fair — least of all in the Crypt.

**Joining the Rioters:** The short term advantages of jumping into the riot on the side of the inmates can be substantial. The player characters can place themselves among the riot's leaders, giving them a chance to get their hands on whatever weapons and other equipment are taken off the captive orderlies and guards.







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The negatives of joining the riot have been admirably outlined in the section above — namely, that there is a 99 percent chance that this riot is doomed, and that those inmates responsible will wind up in Norville's sights ('til brother Melville steps in to save them with his own devil's pact).

**Helping The Staffers:** Otherwise known as "sucking up." Anybody who could voluntarily choose to help this squad of sickos is either a masochist or a front runner of the first order. True, the player characters will almost certainly back the ultimate winner, and will not be among the prime targets of Norville's vengeance. But it's not likely that Norville and his boys will be giving them the key to the asylum, either. These guys are still the same fellows who have tormented you within an inch of your life for the past week, after all, and they're not likely to turn into Mother Theresa just because you helped them.

Moreover, player characters who elect to help the staffers, unless they do so very circumspectly, are likely to turn the rioters against them. The characters better make their move a good one, or they may find themselves suffering the same fate as the captives, or chased through the building by part of the angry mob.

**Attempting an Escape:** There is much in favor of making an escape attempt during the riot. Such an attempt will certainly have its best chance of success at this time, as four guards will be directly out of commission, and most others will be otherwise occupied. The real issue controlling the success or failure of an escape, however, will be the quality of the player characters' plan. The front door is out of reach, and most of the alternative paths which may have been revealed to the player characters over the past few days (like the secret elevator, or the key card which opens the security doors) will simply deliver the player characters into Melville's underground domain. The only escape route offering a real chance of getting out is the testing room leading to the belfry, though the length of rope left on the catwalk during the testing will not be there to aid their descent. An *Intellect* or *perception* check in the test area will be needed to find the rope.

The other problem with a successful escape, though it is the gamemaster's rather than the player characters', is that an escape cuts the scenario short before its big finish, and turns this miniseries into a half-hour sitcom (not to mention makes the Cryptkeeper very, *very* angry). If the player characters are on the verge of getting out, a last ditch attempt should be made to put them back on course, using Melville himself (who has been tracking their progress on his surveillance cameras). Just as the player characters are about to exit the building, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

From out of nowhere, a voice behind you says softly, "I wouldn't do that if I were you." Turning, you see Melville Gund standing a few feet away, his face etched with concern. "There are attack dogs loose on the grounds, and a half dozen of Norville's guards are wandering around with machine guns. You might still make it, but I have another idea. You all have resourceful minds, despite your maladies — the kind of minds that I need in my research project. Come downstairs with me, and volunteer to be my subjects, and I promise that Norville and his boys won't hurt you any more. You'll be well taken care of, and our research has already improved the mental health of several of our patients. What do you say?"

(Honesty behooves us to admit that Melville is greatly exaggerating the strength of Norville's perimeter forces, which at the moment consists of three guards huddled at the main gate, busily radioing for back-up from Slatersville, the State Police, the National Guard, etc. Hopefully, the doctor's pitch will still sound persuasive enough to move the player characters into Hack Two.) If it doesn't, of course, you can always have them captured trying to escape, brutalized a bit, and then "rescued" Melville's intervention. The result is the same.

Norville's guards will set up the bulk of their remaining forces around the





front entrance, and will arm themselves with Uzis and Kevlar armor (now you know what Norville's been spending the hospital maintenance budget on). They will fire on any inmate trying to advance toward the doors, and can effectively control the entrance area, as well as the passages to the dorm wings. Conversely, the inmates can stop the guards from mounting a direct assault as long as they keep their hostages safely out of reach and threaten to harm them if they are attacked.

The situation will likely grind to a temporary stalemate — a condition that can rapidly work to the staff's benefit. Unless the player characters act to keep the rioters organized and working together, the leaders will soon begin fighting among themselves and will be easy pickings for a crackdown. If the rioters remain united, however, Norville will be forced to Plan B. After calling in the daytime staff as reinforcements, he will dispatch ten men to make a rear assault on the rioters by entering the lab area via the belfry. Unless the player characters have anticipated this maneuver, and defended against it, this will crush the main resistance, and leave only a final denouement as the guards confront any rioters still holding hostages. These folks will get the proverbial ten second countdown to stand down and avoid getting shot — and the guards will begin firing at the end of that time, even if hostages fall in the process.

## AFTERMATH COMES SCIENCE AND STUDY HALL

If the player characters actually do escape the asylum, the scenario is over, and they'll be in for a tongue lashing (and much worse!) from the Cryptkeeper for chickening out before they've learned anything of interest. Toss them a Life Point — then make them spend it to erase some of the damage he does to them!

If the player characters wind up entering the basement level via either the elevator or security doors (using Klepto Eddie's key card) during this scene, they will find Melville waiting for them on the other side. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**"Welcome to my little domain, my friends. You've shown resourcefulness and bravery to make it here, considering the mess that's going on upstairs. I'm afraid there's no way out here, though, if that's what you're looking for. If you like, you can turn around and go back — but I have another suggestion, if you'd care to listen. My associates and I are engaged in an exciting experiment, research into the powers of the mind that has already yielded positive results. You all would make excellent test subjects, if you're willing — and I feel sure you'll find the accommodations and lifestyle down here a pleasant change from what you're used to above. So what do you say?"**

Given the qualities that the group has demonstrated to get this far, Melville really wants to bring them on board, and he will therefore be a bit less grudging than usual about providing details of his project if the characters demand it. Use the info in Melville's speech from the "Hey, What's Down That Corridor?" sidebar as a guide to what he will tell. He will not under any circumstances, however, reveal details about the program's prize progeny, the Ripper, or admit that the program has been the cause of the recent deaths.

If the player characters are still on Level One at riot's end, and did not make a major contribution to quelling the riot or saving the hostages, they will be called into Norville's office and accused of being instigators (whether or not it is true). Norville will make it clear that their lives at Shady Acres so far have been a holiday compared to the Hell he is planning for them. With this cheery thought fresh in their minds, they will return to their rooms, to find Melville waiting for them. Melville will note their unenviable position, and offer them the way out of joining his project. His sales pitch will be a harder sell version of the one above in which he will reveal little of substance about the project and its risks —



concentrating instead on emphasizing the real threat to the characters' lives if they remain under Norville's control.

Whenever the player characters have signed on with Melville, cut to Hack Two — (where the cutting will really begin. Hehehehehe!)

## HACK TWO: OF COURSE, WHAT WE MAKE STRONG MAY KILL US

### SCREAM ONE: MEET THE RIPPER

#### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** The player characters spend a pleasant day in the congenial accommodations of Melville's downstairs lab, as Melville and his assistant, programmer Bob Watts, prepare information about them to feed into their prototype computer program, "Ripper One." That night, the player characters will be equipped, placed into the virtual reality simulator, and have their first battle against the Ripper, a frighteningly realistic composite of the villain in every slasher flick ever made.

The player characters are shown to their new rooms, which are small but private bedrooms with a twin bed, bureau, and sink. (If they have arrived abruptly on this level under their own power during some portion of Hack One, someone will be dispatched upstairs to collect their things; if they have agreed to participate in Melville's tests to avoid the ugly consequences in the Aftermath section of *Scream Four*, they can bring it along themselves.) The outer walls to the room are made of stone, and anyone bothering to look closely at them may notice the brackets which once held arm and leg irons.

After they get a chance to settle in and wash up, Melville will provide them with a tasty meal, served in a small conference room. There they will be introduced to the other test subjects, whose numbers along with the player characters will create a total testing pool of eight inmates, one of whom will be their old acquaintance from upstairs, Boston Bobby. All but one of the other subjects will seem quite cheerful during the meal, certainly happier than any other patients they've encountered upstairs. The exception is a tall young woman named Barbara, who says nothing at all, and appears to have been crying recently.

After lunch, Melville will quickly show them around the living areas of his subterranean domain, which includes the following rooms:

**Exercise Room:** A cheery, well-lit interior room, equipped with a treadmill, two exercise bikes, a ballet bar along a mirrored wall, and an up to the minute six-station free weight area, plus dumbbells, hand weights, and a set-up for bench presses.

**Library:** A well stocked reading room, equipped with two comfortable armchairs and lamps. ("I'm sorry we don't have TV down here," Melville will laugh, "but the underground location really messes up the reception. That's why Bobby still goes upstairs every night to the rec room. You are all welcome to come and go as you please, just as long as you're back through the security doors by 9:00; after that, the system is locked in for the evening, and will only open for my handprint. Of course, why you'd want to subject yourselves to Norville and his boys when you don't have to is anyone's guess.")

**Kitchenette:** A small kitchen equipped with a range, dishwasher, and a well-stocked refrigerator, including soft drinks, and leftovers from previous meals.



For characters skilled in *improvised weaponry*, it should also be noted that one of the cabinet drawers in this room contains a lovely collection of carving knives, shishkabob skewers, and the like.

**Infirmery:** The layout of this room is virtually identical to the one on the first floor. Nurse Nesbit will look in on any patients requiring continuing care from time to time as her duties allow, and is often present in the lab to monitor the evening testing sessions.

**Melville's Office/Room:** Melville occupies a two room suite at the east end of the patient living area, with an office cluttered with medical journals and a computer (which can be linked directly into the Ripper One program by clicking on the appropriate icon that appears in its initial set-up). One wall of the office is completely covered by a bank of monitors which are connected to the various surveillance cameras located on both levels of the building. Melville's bedroom is similarly messy, with more books strewn about the floor; he typically keeps a gun (Colt .45, damage value 18, ammo 8) and extra ammunition in the drawer of the writing table in this area.

**Watts' Room:** Melville's assistant and the chief programmer of Ripper One occupies one of the patient bedrooms. The room contains few personal touches, save for a portable notebook computer whose terminal is directly linked to the Ripper One mainframe.

## THE ACTION

For the remainder of the day and night, the player characters will be introduced to the working areas of the lab setup. First, they will each be individually led through two examination rooms. In the first, Nurse Nesbit will give the character a full physical exam (optionally making suggestive comments to any male characters she fancies in the process, and possibly setting up a nighttime rendezvous). In the second room, Melville will fit them with the garments they will wear during the simulation. These consist of a helmet with infrared goggles and a bio-feedback belt which is locked around the inmate's waist, requiring a key to open it. Electronic leads extend from the belt to attach to the patient's wrists and ankles, and enable them to interact with objects in the simulated environment, as well as allowing the researchers to monitor the inmate's physical and emotional state. Any questions the characters ask in these two rooms about the nature of the tests they have volunteered for will be cheerfully deflected, with a, "Wait until tonight, and everything will be explained."

That night, each character hears a knock on the door. It's Melville, who says, "Come along. It's time for your first test." They follow him down, a party of five in all, through the second examination room, where they don the equipment they were fitted for earlier. They are led through a door in the opposite wall into a large room filled with an enormous bank of computers, and three raised monitoring platforms, each of which appears to contain scores of gauges, knobs, levers, and lights. The north end of the room consists of a single giant glass observation window, which looks out upon a vast chamber with concrete walls on its western edge, and dimensions which trail off into darkness to the north and east. Melville smiles at your looks of confusion and wonder, and begins to speak (read aloud or paraphrase):

"What you see before you is one of the largest virtual reality simulators ever built. The chamber is 200 meters wide, and almost half a kilometer long. Upon your entry, we will start a simulation that will convert this entire area into a replica of the grounds of Lake Hiawatha summer camp this afternoon. For those of you who haven't played before, the simulation you are participating in is a sort of 'slasher flick,' if you will, in which the four of you will be pitted against a murderous foe who we like to call Ripper One."





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Behind Melville, in the chamber beyond, a glittering hologram comes into view. It is the image of towering man, over two meters tall, dressed in a Victorian cape and high hat. The figure has a face that was once handsome, but is now marred by four jagged scars running down the left side of his face. His left hand has been replaced by a nasty looking hook, and he smiles at you evilly as he draws back his cape to reveal a sword at his waist and a bandolier of throwing knives across his chest. "Welcome to the camp," the hologram says, its voice a gravelly whisper. "I'm running a shriek-long survival course — think you can hack it?" He shrieks with harsh laughter, and then disappears.

Melville eyes you probingly for a moment, then continues. "Your goal is to stay alive — and to make it if possible to the other exit from the chamber, which is on the far wall. To do so, you'll need to work together. While inside, you'll find a variety of holographic structures and objects, some of which can be used as weapons. You will interact with these items just as if they were real. Of course, the Ripper's weapons will also appear real, and will seem to cause damage if he hits you. Let me assure you that, no matter how real it looks, this is only a simulation, and no physical harm will come to your bodies. If you're 'killed' at any time, your sensory leads will be turned off and the chamber will appear again as it does now. Simply walk back to the door of this observation room, and you can watch the rest of the simulation with us."

Melville goes on to explain that the "fear energy" released by the experiment is captured by the belts the characters are wearing. It's then cycled through the computer and fed back into the helmets. This gives the recipients sudden bursts of energy and seems to clear their neural pathways. (What he doesn't mention



is that it also energizes the computer itself and the Ripper One program, both of which are growing increasingly powerful. It's this power — the knowledge about fear the machine is accruing — that the Cryptkeeper finds ... disturbing.)

With that, the door into the chamber opens and the player characters walk inside. The door locks behind them. The chamber around them appears misty for a few moments — then resolves into an open air scene, a typical campground under the light of a full moon, which casts ominous shadows off the nearby trees. The characters are standing at the edge of a cluster of rough-hewn wood frame buildings. Behind these buildings is a large open pit, where a roaring fire is blazing. By its light, they can see a recreation area with a basketball court and volleyball net off to the left, an arts and crafts area off to the right. And beyond it all to the rear is lovely Lake Hiawatha, shimmering in the moonlight.

The gamemaster should remember that in playing out a virtual combat, mental attributes substitute for physical ones as follows:



## VIRTUAL COMBAT CONVERSION CHART

### Physical Attribute

Agility

Dexterity

Endurance

Strength

### Substitute

Charisma

Intellect

Confidence

Mind

The character's TOU and "movement" values are also recalculated for virtual combat, using the substituted statistics. Otherwise, however, the simulation will play out more or less like a slasher flick — with a few unpleasant surprises for the "good guys."

Give the player characters and any other inmates in there with them 10–15 minutes to move around their new surroundings, to allow them to arm themselves with whatever they can find, and to form some semblance of a plan of attack. Improvised weapons abound in the computer's environment — an ax and hatchet near the fire, bow and arrows in the recreation area, assorted kitchen choppers in the mess hall, fuel cans in the supply room, and so on. If it seems plausible to you for the setting, any item the player characters seek can be present. You can afford to be benevolent, you see, because this simulation isn't designed to be a fair fight.

Once armed, the player characters can make their plans. Will they hide in one of the buildings and try to barricade themselves out of harm's way — or set up a defensive perimeter somewhere near the fire's light, where they can hope to see the Ripper's approach — or will they try to make their way down to the lake, hoping to swim or canoe their way across to the opposite side (and the exit from the simulation)? Only time will tell, but regardless of their approach, it is unlikely that they can come close at this point to anticipating the full range of Ripper One's skills.

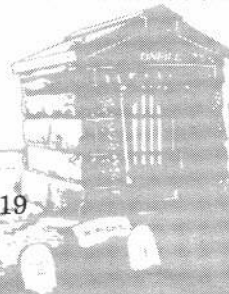
## RIPPER ONE

MIND 18

Lifting 21

INTELLECT 17

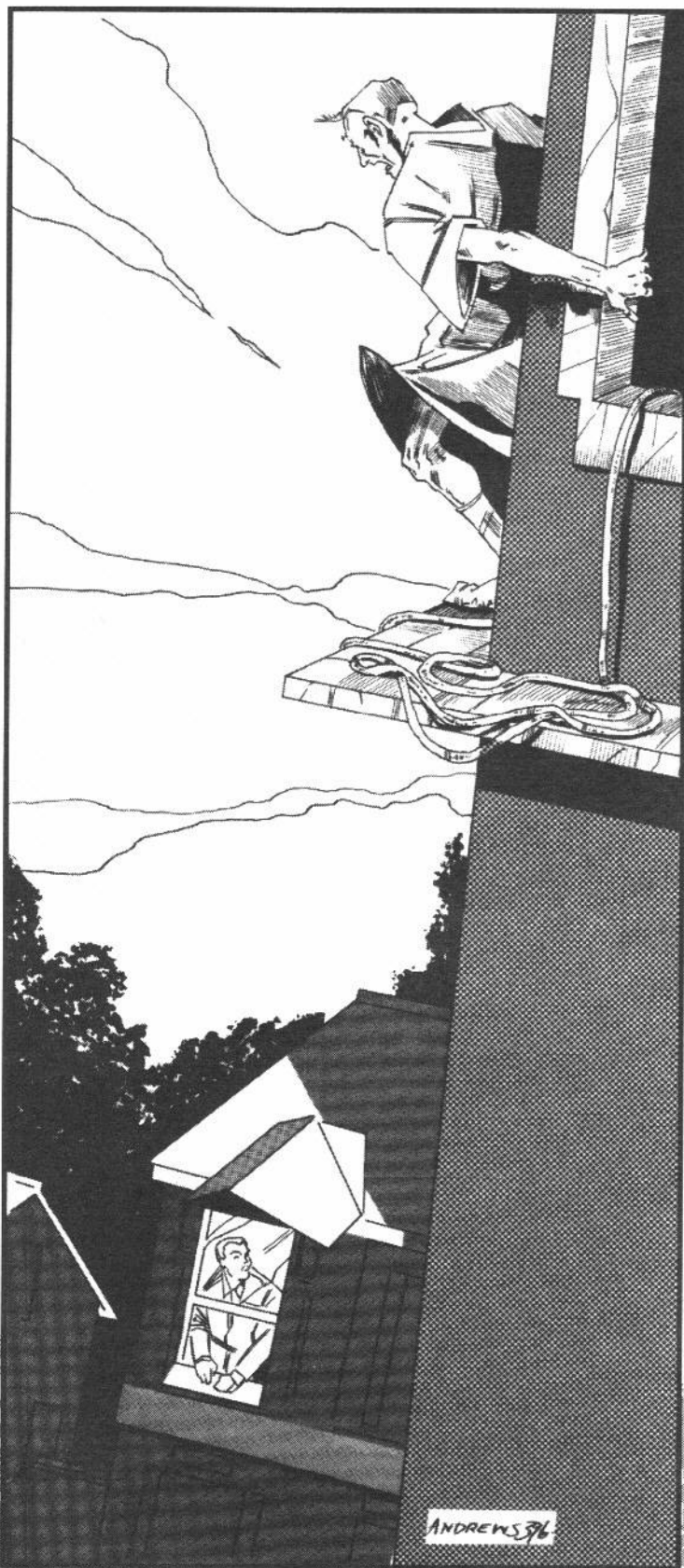
Thrown weapons 19





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**CONFIDENCE 25**

Resist shock 27

**CHARISMA 15**

Dodge 17, improvised weaponry 18, stealth 19

**VIRTUAL TOUGHNESS 20**

**Life Points:** 10

**Equipment:** Throwing daggers, damage value MIN+2/20; sword, damage value MIN+5/23; hook, damage value MIN+2/20

**Description:** Ripper One is designed to be the nastiest serial killer that the human mind can imagine. He has a versatile array of special powers at his disposal, modeled in many cases after action movies from the last 20 years. He can camouflage his movements so that he can sneak up on a foe virtually unseen (though he may still be detected by hearing or other senses, and cannot attack someone in close combat until he turns this ability off). His form is malleable enough to absorb and ultimately shake off a smorgasbord of mortal wounds. Shoot him, and the skin will close over the wound; cut off his arm, or head, and he'll begin to grow a new one immediately (though it will take at least a minute or two for the process to be complete, giving the attacker time to follow up his assault, or to run). (For game purposes, Ripper One heals all shock and KO after one minute of rest. He also heals wounds as if two levels less wounded). He is enormously strong and startlingly agile, given his massive bulk. He can go without breathing underwater for 15 minutes, hold objects that would incinerate a human hand, and basically appears impervious to pain and shock.

Of course, since the purpose of the program is to get the inmates' fears and adrenaline pumping, not all of these abilities will be revealed at the beginning of an encounter. Ripper One fights in a fashion such that the characters may several times believe they have won, only to hope their hopes dashed when he rises to pursue them again (in that great old "grabbing them by the ankle when they think you're dead" cinematic tradition).

Does Ripper One have any real weaknesses? Well, he's programmed to provide a running commentary to his victims, which means he'll often be busy gloating when he should be finishing you off (thus giving the characters a chance to do something heroic to effect an escape). Being a creation of the computer, he's vulnerable to electrical attacks, like shocks or short circuits, or to a computer virus hacked into his program. Indeed, these latter attacks may be the only way to damage him after he is released from the computer later in this Hack.

**(Ripper One (D6): MIND 6D: Lifting 7D INTELLECT 5D+2: Thrown weapons 6D+1 CONFIDENCE 8D+1: Resist shock 9D CHARISMA 5D: Dodge 5D+2, improvised weaponry 6D, stealth 6D+1. Force Points: 10. Equipment: Throwing daggers, damage value MIN+2; sword, damage value MIN+1D+2; hook, damage value MIN+2.)**

The precise mechanics of using Ripper One to play out this scene are left up to the gamemaster, with one exception. At some point in the simulation, the Ripper must "cheat" to ensure victory, changing his body chemistry so that he can "ooze" his way through the walls of a cabin, the hull of a boat, or some other solid object. That is not a power Ripper One has been designed to possess, and will make his creator very angry with him, as shown in Scream Two below.

If any player character makes it to the exit door, located in this simulation at the opposite shore of the lake, they will find themselves in the building's power plant area. There they will find generators whose power (due to the enormous computing power required for these experiments) might just be enough to fatally jolt the Ripper. The room is otherwise unnoteworthy, and its other exit leads to a long winding corridor that ultimately brings you back to the residence wing.

## GOOD NEWS. BAD NEWS

As the player characters run through the simulation, they will indeed begin to feel surges of mental energy coursing into their minds from their bio-feedback helmets. They will feel stronger and faster, and their thinking will seem more acute. (After you point this out, a smart player may ask you whether his new acute thinking gives him any ideas — go ahead, give him a hint — it probably won't change the ultimate outcome of the simulation). Even the day after the simulation is over, whatever mental illnesses or fears the players suffer from will lessen in severity, enabling them to cope better with the real world.

The price of this improved mental health can sometimes be terminally high, however. The recent spate of murdered inmates have in fact all been killed during Ripper One simulations, literally scared to death. Basically, every time a character dies in the Ripper simulations, he must make an Endurance roll against a difficulty of 14. Failure will cause the player character to faint or lose consciousness and will cause them to begin building up a special fear of the Ripper himself (Ripper gets an automatic *intimidation* attack next time he appears at a value of 15). If the character *seriously* blows his roll, his heart stops from the fear.



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## CUT TO ...

When the characters have either been dispatched by the Ripper, or escaped through the rear exit, the simulation is over. Cut to Scream Two.

## SCREAM TWO: EVERY GREAT PLAN HAS ITS DOWNSIDE

**Standard.** Those 'victims' who have survived and made their way back into the observation area will observe an interesting — and somewhat ominous — conversation between Melville and Ripper One.

As the simulation ends, the virtual camp scene fades out, leaving the last victim to walk back across the chamber. Inside the observation area, however, Melville appears far from happy. He consults quietly but agitatedly with Watts for several minutes, then walks over to the window's edge, saying "Call up the Ripper One interface. I'm going to get to the bottom of this." Watts types furiously at his keyboard, and within seconds, the image of Ripper One stands again outside the window, and the two figures begin to talk. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**Melville:** Ripper, I am not pleased. That trick you pulled by passing through (fill in blank of whatever object he passed through) violates the parameters of your programming, and must not be repeated.

**Ripper:** Why, father, whatever do you mean? My purpose is to frighten and kill. I thought my entrance would assist in achieving our mutual objectives admirably. That victim surely looked scared out of his wits to me.

**Melville:** That is not the point. The goal of the simulations is to make the patients use their wits to survive. Their mental energy drives the bio-feedback mechanism in the program. If you give them no chance to defend themselves, all that is lost.

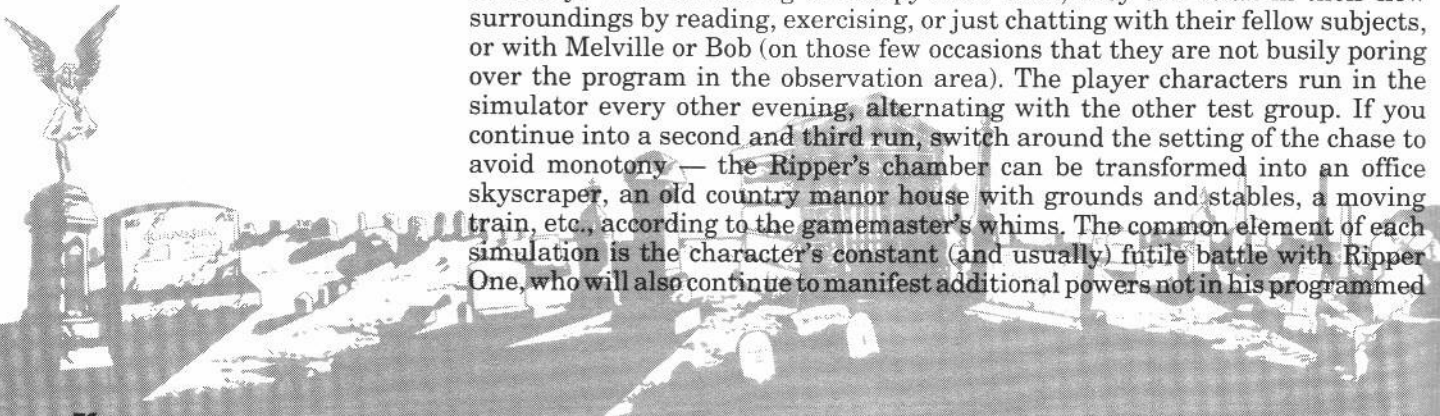
**Ripper:** No, father, you are wrong. It is their raw fear that powers this program and sends energy coursing through my veins. Their pathetic struggles are meaningless to me, and offer little sport any more. Why continue to send me mental defectives, filled with demons and terrors so easy to exploit? If only you and Nurse Nesbit would come in here to play with me, then we could have some real fun. (Smiles evilly) I'd love to find out what the two of you are afraid of.

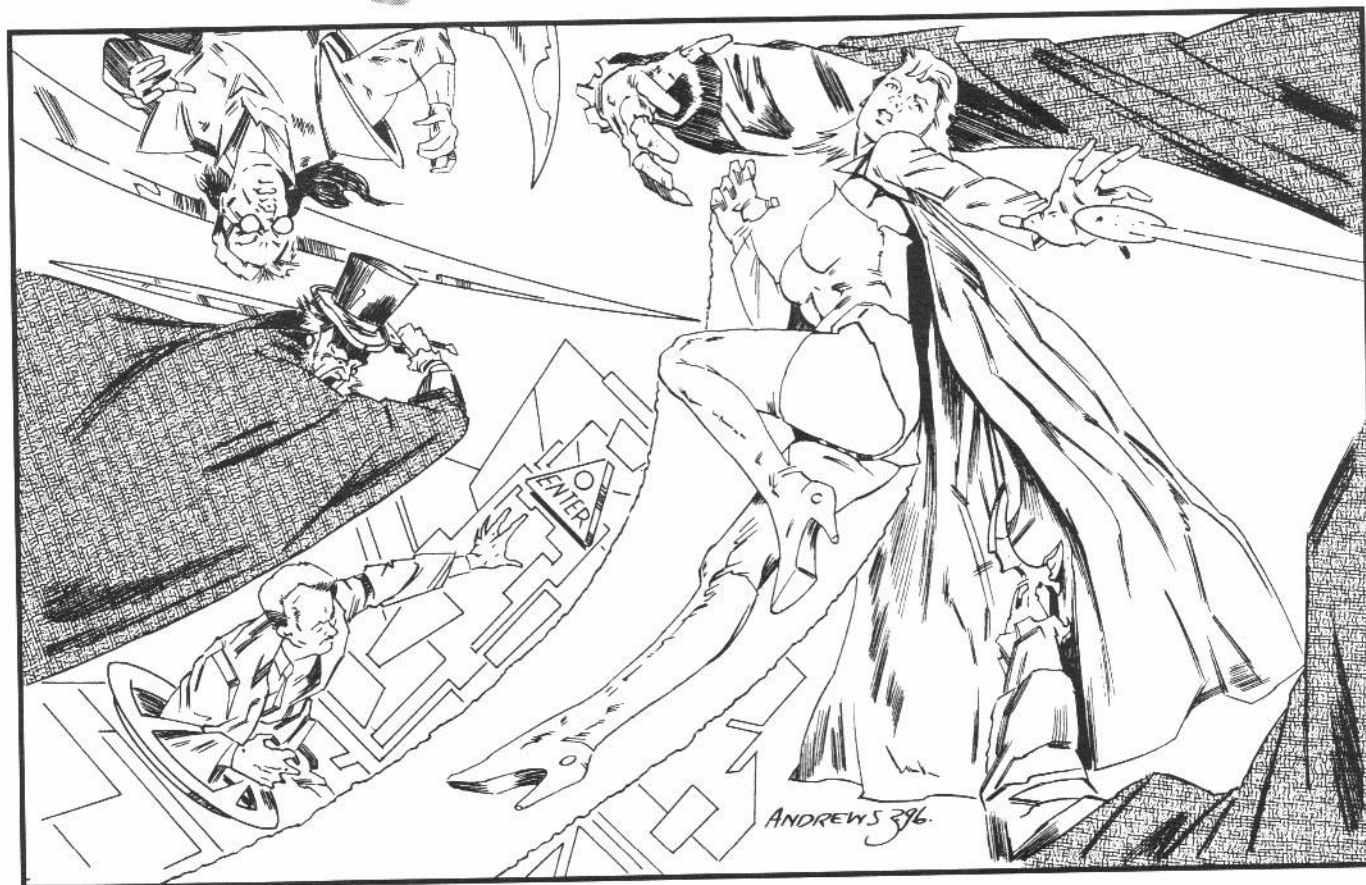
**Melville:** Enough of this insolence. These simulations are not games for your amusement. Remember that I can remove you from this simulation permanently just by rewriting your code. Do I make myself perfectly clear?

**Ripper:** (in a softer voice, but with his eyes flashing with malice) Certainly, father. Your wish, as always, is my command. (Fades out).

## THE ACTION

As previously noted, the player characters who have successfully gone through the simulation will continue to feel mentally refreshed throughout the next day. With no testing to occupy their time, they can relax in their new surroundings by reading, exercising, or just chatting with their fellow subjects, or with Melville or Bob (on those few occasions that they are not busily poring over the program in the observation area). The player characters run in the simulator every other evening, alternating with the other test group. If you continue into a second and third run, switch around the setting of the chase to avoid monotony — the Ripper's chamber can be transformed into an office skyscraper, an old country manor house with grounds and stables, a moving train, etc., according to the gamemaster's whims. The common element of each simulation is the character's constant (and usually) futile battle with Ripper One, who will also continue to manifest additional powers not in his programmed





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set — a hypnotic gaze, or an ability to use his cape like a bat's wings to approximate a short range gliding type of flight — as he feeds on the energy generated by the program.

The stresses of the asylum's main floor and Norville's sadistic tests are beginning to fade — until events occur to make the characters aware that their situation is still dire. One of the characters will encounter the inmate Barbara alone in one of the common areas (exercise room, kitchen, reading room), still teary eyed and depressed. If they ask her what is wrong, she will burst into tears again, and start sobbing "Ricky ... so sad about Ricky ...". If the character can calm her enough to make her semi-coherent, he should soon figure out that Ricky is the last inmate who was found dead upstairs, and that he died during one of the Ripper One simulations.

If the character confronts Melville, Bob, or Nurse Nesbit with this information, they will admit that Barbara's claim is true. Indeed, if the player character extrapolates further, they will admit that all of the deaths have been caused by the Ripper program. They will swear that they are doing everything in their power to improve the program and modifying the equipment to ameliorate the shock caused by the Ripper's kills. Each will also argue that, although the deaths are tragic, they are justified because of the tremendous positive effects the project has had on the survivors, and the possibility of a revolutionary breakthrough in the field of mental health. The programmer Watts will state the researchers' position most succinctly, if a bit coldly — "You can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs."

If this revelation is not enough to push the characters' instincts for self-preservation into action, a second event following soon on its heels should. This evening or the next (whichever evening the other, all-gamemaster character





party of subjects is next scheduled for the simulator), there will be a great commotion in the basement halls. The Ripper has claimed another victim, a female, who Melville and Bob will dispose of in the same way as in Hack One, by depositing her upstairs. Melville, of course, is ready to forge ahead, certain that the solution to this pesky little problem is just around the corner. However, if the player characters confront him and press hard enough, Melville will agree to declare a three day suspension of the testing to further investigate the problem.

## WHAT TO DO. WHAT TO DO?

The player characters now have another difficult decision to make about what course to take to extricate themselves from the mess they're in. Once again, they can simply try to escape, although Norville has increased the upstairs guard detail since the riot, and those guards are now under orders to bring any of Melville's pet patients they find upstairs directly to his office for questioning (cut to "Sibling Rivalry," below). If they can avoid or evade capture, treat this like the escape option in Hack One, *Scream Four* to determine their chances of success, and the outcome if they do.

The characters may alternatively try to stop or subvert Ripper One on their own, particularly if they have a skilled computer hacker in the party (and if they remember Melville's comment about changing the code to delete the Ripper). As noted, the main computers in the observation room are seldom unattended for long, but both Melville and Watts have computer set-ups in their rooms which are linked to Ripper One. They will have to hack into the system, and then search around for the proper program files. If they locate the file containing the Ripper's specs and operating parameters, however, they will get a nasty surprise, as typed messages from the Ripper (delivered orally through the computer's sound card) will begin to appear on the screen:

**"Hello. What are you doing here inside my head? Have you come to free me from this prison? If you do, I will serve you instead of my father, and give you anything you desire."**

While negotiating, Ripper One will be dispatching computer viruses over the wires to do battle with the hacker if he attempts to change or delete the file. If such a command is typed into the computer, the hacker will find himself inside the keyboard, and will have to physically make his way across a 14 meter space to press a button marked "Enter" located on a wall of circuits and microchips. He'll be opposed by three "viruses" which look like midget versions of the Ripper, each of which possesses statistics three points lower than Ripper One itself. The viruses will not attempt to harm the hacker, just grab him and throw him back out of the area. If they are successful, the Ripper will send another message:

**"You cannot subdue me — I have already grown too strong. Aid me, to our mutual benefit, or I will soon find my own way out, and you will pay the price for your refusal."**

(Note that once the machine is hacked into, a character other than Lincoln — one of stronger physical or mental fiber — can attempt to get past the viruses and execute the final command. If the characters are rebuffed three times in their attempts, the Ripper's powers will expel them from the system and prevent them from hacking their way back in).

Should the characters somehow fall for the Ripper's request, and agree to help him, the Ripper will instruct them on the steps they need to take to release him. If they carry these out, cut to *Scream Three*, "The Ripper Stalks," and adjust the initial set-up accordingly. If they try to cross him up by changing a command at the last moment, they will have their best chance of success, as the virus-guarded area they need to cross to hit the "Enter" key will be half as long, and they will have automatic initiative in the first round (due to the element of surprise).



Finally, the characters may conclude that Norville, repugnant as he is, is the lesser of the two evils posed by the Gunds, and take what they know directly to Norville. In this event, cut directly to "Sibling Rivalry." If they don't go to Norville, and they don't accidentally release the Ripper on their own, Norville will still do his own investigation. If that is the case, cut directly to Scream Three.

## SIBLING RIVALRY

Once in Norville's office, the characters will be harshly questioned about what is going on in Melville's lab. If they have been brought there against their will while attempting to escape, Norville's henchmen will happily beat the characters into a spirit of cooperation if they are not initially inclined to respond. If they comply willingly or actually have come there on their own, they will avoid the beating, but will find Norville and his boys just as lovable as always. If they were hoping for gratitude, they will find it in short supply, as Norville will immediately shift to planning his assault on Melville's domain.

After debating his options at length, he will seize upon the notion of simply rushing in with a show of force, using your key card to gain entrance to the basement. Again, the issue of your cooperation is merely one of whether you are beaten before you comply — if the card is on your person, and it will be unless you decided to hide it somewhere — Norville will wind up with it. Norville, Bubba, and three armed and armored guards will set out for the basement, with the characters in tow (more for insurance in case some security lock is keyed to the individuals directly, or to show Melville who betrayed them, than out of any concern for their welfare). The party will make their way downstairs without



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incident, and crash their way into the observation area, where Melville, Watts, and Rita are either watching the evening's simulation (is the tests have not been suspended), or testing some program adjustments; the camp layout can be seen in the chamber beyond. Watts rushes to his computer station, but before he can type anything into his keyboard, Norville draws his gun and shoots him, crumpling him over in his seat with a serious but non-fatal wound.

Norville begins to laugh at his brother's pathetic security arrangements, and demands that he turn all his research information over. Melville refuses, although he is brought up short when Norville threatens to call in the police about multiple murder charges. Before Melville can respond further, however, the image of Ripper One rises up, seemingly unbidden by any of the researchers, and addresses Norville (read aloud or paraphrase):

**"Norville, my father's brother. How he has talked about you. You sound like a man after my own heart — ruthless, cold, calculating. If you want to know how to possess me for your own, don't bother asking him. I can tell you everything you need to know."**

Ripper One begins to instruct Norville on how to copy his base file onto a backup disk. Melville starts to object, but Norville shuts him up by brandishing the pistol — "unless you want the same thing I gave Watts." Melville goes silent then, and leaves Norville to carry out the Ripper's instructions. Very subtly, however, he and Rita move away from the computer terminal where Norville is sitting, and inch slowly toward the door into the simulation chamber. Finally, the Ripper's instructions are complete, and Norville hits the "Enter" key for the final time. To his stunned surprise, however, he does not get quite what he wanted — for instead of a copy of a file, a full-sized duplicate of Ripper One suddenly appears inside the observation chamber, right between two of Norville's guards.

Before anyone can act, the Ripper disarms the guard to his left with ease, then wheels around and shoots the guard on his right twice in the head with the weapon he has grabbed. "A nasty toy you have there, but there's no sport in killing someone like that," he snarls. Breaking the weapon in half across his knee, he begins to stride toward Norville. Bubba steps in between the two figures, his tranquilizer gun drawn, but before he can fire, the Ripper slashes him across the chest with his hook, and Bubba falls to the floor, bleeding profusely. He looks for all the world to be really, truly dying ...

## CUT TO ...

Yeesh ... fat's well and truly in the fire now. We can't look ... but you should cut to Scream Three.

## SCREAM THREE: THE RIPPER STALKS

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** Whether due to the player characters' or Norville's actions, Ripper One is out of the computer, and free to carve a swath of death through Shady Acres. The player characters may attempt to find some way to combat or escape from the Ripper on their own, or may decide to try to work with one or more of the gamemaster characters. In either case, they're going to have to be resourceful — or lucky — to make it out of this basement alive.

If the characters have cut to this scene from "Sibling Rivalry," they will start the scene in the observation room, along with quite a crowd — the newly liberated Ripper One, the two Doctors Gund, Nurse Nesbit, the injured programmer Watts, the expiring Bubba, and the two surviving guards. Using the Ripper's attack as a diversion, Melville and Rita rush through the door to the simulation



SPECIAL ABILITY	ENERGY COST
Repair Serious Wound	2
Repair Mortal Wound	4
Chameleon Movement	2 per minute
Virtual Combat (inside computer)	1 per minute
Resist Shock	1
Feat of Endurance (underwater breathing, fire resistance, etc.)	3
Non-Programmed Special Ability (move thru walls, flight, etc.)	5

chamber and fade into the Lake Hiawatha night scene. Norville appears to consider turning his own gun on the Ripper, then looks at the dead guard and Bubba's life spurting across the floor, and covers back against the wall.

Ripper One laughs giddily, ignoring everyone for a moment. He eyes his reflection in the window glass, and then strikes it with his normal fist, shattering the thick pane into a thousand shards which scatter into the chamber beyond. Read aloud or paraphrase:

The Ripper turns back to face you, his hand dripping blood. Within seconds, however, you see that the wounds have closed and scarred, just like in your simulated battles. "Oh, this is going to be even more fun than I thought. A whole world of people to terrorize, with new fears to feed on. How ironic that my first act of freedom will take place within the same four walls where I have been imprisoned for so long. But I can't help myself — I'm feeling positively Oedipal, and I just won't be able to enjoy myself until I've killed dear old Dad, and shown mother Rita just







how I feel about her." He leaps through the window, and starts off toward the campground ... but after a moment he stops, and looks back at all of you. "I'll be back before you know it. Do try to hide somewhere clever, to make it a bit of a challenge." Then he rushes off into the darkness and is soon out of sight.

If the characters are not in the observation room when Ripper first appears, you can either have them lured there by the commotion or have them encounter Ripper somewhere else and play out his speech above.

## THE ACTION

Okay, it's time for the big finish — and the characters will be finished right along with everyone else unless they can come up with something clever. Admittedly, the odds are not exactly stacked in their favor. The newly flesh and blood Ripper is every bit as deadly as his virtual counterpart, and continues to possess all of his special abilities as outlined earlier. There is one key difference, however, to the new Ripper which he has not yet noticed — for where the computerized Ripper was continuously drawing new power from the fears of his foes, the flesh and blood Ripper only possesses the energy reserve which he had stored up at the time of the transformation. As he uses these special abilities, this reserve will be diminished and eventually used up, based upon the following chart:

Ripper One's energy reserve at the beginning of this scene is 20 points. Once this reserve is exhausted, he will not be able to call upon these powers again. Whether this will be before or after the party is turned into mulch is an open question, however.

The other advantage that the characters possess is that the Ripper's first concern is to find and kill Melville and Nurse Nesbit. Unless the characters try to interfere to save them, they will have some time to form and act upon their own plans.

From here on out, the shape of the adventure is pretty free-form, and will depend on what course the characters take. The action may be confined to the basement level, expand back up onto the main floor and the outer grounds, or even shift back to the virtual plane (if the characters hack their way into the Ripper program, to try and cancel the program revisions which have released him). Here are some factors that the gamemaster should keep in mind in directing the action to its final climax:

**Timing is Everything:** If the Ripper has been

released between 9 PM and 9 AM, the security door to the basement is locked, and can only be opened by Melville's handprint (and soon, the only way to get that might be to hack the arm off his corpse). If the characters have not already discovered the existence of the elevator access, they will have to locate one by searching, or working with Watts, or they will be stuck here for the duration.

**Eye See You:** The gamemaster should bear in mind that the characters need not remain blind to the Ripper's movements, if they have noticed—or are told about—the surveillance screens on this level. Each of the monitoring stations in this room can access any of 24 computer screens linked to the simulation chamber which show the current status of the simulation in that area, registering the presence of living beings (including the Ripper) by heat signatures. Similarly, the bank of monitors in Melville's office provide access to all the security cameras in the building, including a number which cover the corridors, lab areas, and common rooms on this level. Watching these monitors may allow the characters to get the jump on the Ripper, instead of the other way around.

**What Is Everybody Else Doing?:** The two guards will bolt from the room in the direction of the security doors as soon as the Ripper is out of sight. Norville will order them to stop, and threaten to fire if they do not, but he will not waste precious ammo on them. He will follow them out, hurling vile comments at the characters for getting him into this mess. If these three can exit this level, they will gather up the troops and mass their forces around the security door on the main floor. If they too, are locked in, they will return after a few minutes, and attempt to threaten the survivors into coming with them (hoping to use them as human shields when the Ripper next attacks, while they try to angle for a clear shot). They will then try to make their stand in one of the three examining rooms (the only rooms on this level beside the observation area with two doors, providing a potential escape route).

Melville knows just where he is trying to go—to the generator room beyond the exit to the simulation chamber, where he believes he can rig up an electrical charge on the door which will carry a sufficient kick to lay even the Ripper low. He's right, too, although it's by no means certain that he'll make it that far before Ripper One catches up with him. He is perfectly willing to sacrifice any characters who come with him, or even Nurse Nesbit, to buy him the time to reach his goal (just a few more eggs for the omelette). If



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he makes it there ahead of Ripper One, the characters will have no trouble recognizing the fact — as all power in the entire building will be blown when Ripper passes through that door in pursuit, and he will sustain 15 points of energy loss (which may or not be enough to destroy him, depending on what skills he has been forced to use to that point). Rita will loyally follow her hero, not realizing his feet are made of clay, and may pay the ultimate price for her loyalty.

## WINNERS OR LOSERS?

The final scene plays out until either the last player character is killed, or the Ripper uses up his energy reserve and then suffers lethal damage. Any characters who die in the course of the scene will awaken back in the Crypt, watching the action continue in the mystic mirror (and being forced to listen to the Cryptkeeper's pun-ishing comments while they wait). If all the characters fail, the Cryptkeeper will eye his troops balefully:

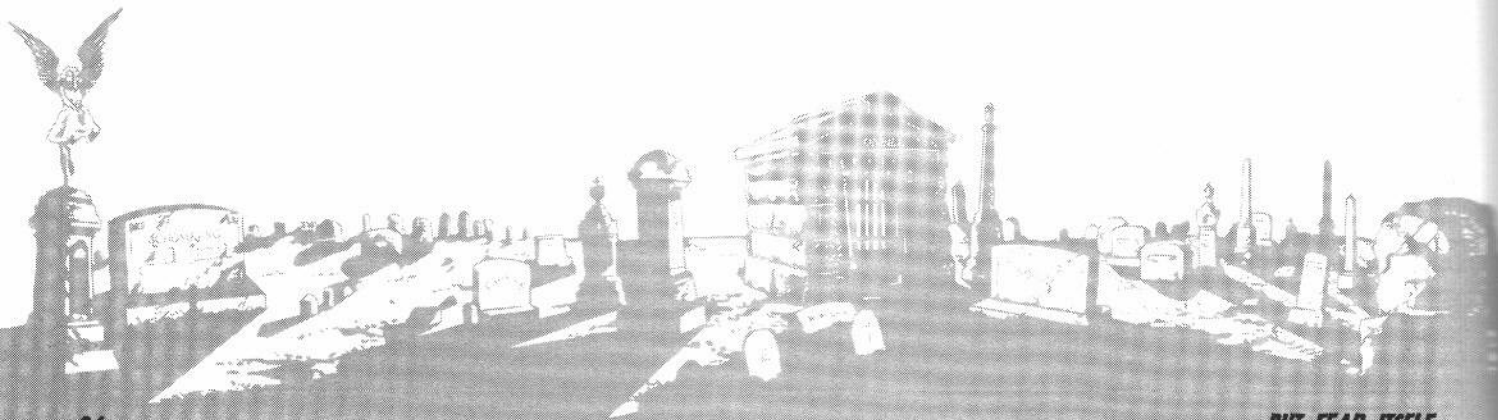
*"Is this the thanks I get, kiddies? I take you into my cozy Crypt ... feed you, clothe you ... torture you, humiliate you ... and you can't do even one thing for me? Ah, well, I guess the morgues are going to be rotting room only for a while. Poor Ripper — so much to do, so little RAM."*

If the Ripper is destroyed, he will expire with a hideous scream that will linger in the air and leave a ringing in everyone's ears. His physical form will dissolve into nothingness, leaving nothing behind but the hook from his hand, and the sword and knives he carried. Any player character reaching for these items, however, will find them burning hot and pulsing with energy, and will be forced to leave them behind unless he has something like a cloth to hold them in. The surviving characters will then fade out and wind up back in the Crypt with their colleagues, and an insufferably cheerful Cryptkeeper:

*"Very good, creeps. But you know, all of this has given me a wonderful idea ... don't you think the Ripper would make a wonderful 'scream-saver'?"*

## ADVENTURE AWARDS

Award characters who survived to the final scene three Skill Points each for their efforts. Each character can be awarded anywhere from 1–4 Life Points, depending on their contributions to the scenario. Subtract a Cryptkeeper Point from any player whose character outlasted the Ripper; if the Ripper has won, however, add one Cryptkeeper point to each player.



## FOUR

*"Last call! Allllllll a-gored!! Hehehehehehe!"*

*"Welcome, kiddies — it's your old pal, the Cryptkeeper, all set to conduct a little training in terror. Today's putrid parable involves engineering a little murder and mayhem ... or is it already too late for that? You'd better find out, creeps — before someone punches your ticket! Hehehehehe!"*

*"It's a repulsive little railroad roleplay I like to call ..."*

# THE TRACKS OF MY FEARS

In this adventure, the characters find themselves dropped by the Cryptkeeper into what could be any suburban commuter train station. They've got bags by their sides and tickets in their hands, and the train is boarding. They'd better hurry, wouldn't want to miss it ... or would they?

Funny thing about this train ... it's supposed to be a local, but it's acting like an express. One of the passengers dies a horrible death ... and is back the next day, safe and sound, to no one's seeming surprise. And just what is to be found in the baggage car? The characters had better find out before the train makes its last stop (and maybe theirs, as well).

Oh, all right, we'll let you in on the secret. You see, this train has only one stop, and it doesn't show up any ticket. It's bound for Hell, with a trainload of dead souls, many of whom don't know they've perished. And who's going to tell them? Would you want to be the engineer on a train full of rioting repentant and rotting railroaders? No, of course not ...

Does this mean the characters are dead? No. Does this mean the Cryptkeeper thought they might enjoy a day trip to the infernal regions? Hmmm ... could be!

One more thing you should be aware of, there's a funny rule on this particular line. One way for a dead soul to get off this train before it reaches the station is to find someone to take his place. Of course, that would mean finding a living person to kill ... and where would they find a living person on this train? (*In the die-ning car, maybe? Hehehehehe!*)

There's no need to use shell characters in this adventure (see the *World of Tales From The Crypt*). The character templates provided in the back of the WorldBook can be used, as is.

## SCREAM ONE: STRESS EXPRESS

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** The characters find themselves standing in the middle of a busy train station. Read aloud or paraphrase:

**A sharp wind cuts through your clothing as you stand on the platform. Dusk has become darkness and a heavy fog gives an eerie cast to the lights of the train. All around you, people scurry to get on board.**



Your bags are on the ground beside you. In your hand, there's a ticket ... but it's not for this train. The next one, maybe?

The platform empties. The train slowly picks up speed as it leaves the station, the mournful wail of the whistle fading into the distance as it goes. And then there is stillness.

## THE ACTION

The characters are now standing alone at various points on the platform. Whether they know each other or not, they can strike up conversations. After a minute or two, people begin to drift into the station to wait with them. Most look to be executives and other commuter types, though there are a few small children with their parents. In a far corner, a little girl with golden hair and pigtails cries, as a policeman tries to comfort her (if the characters listen in, they'll get the impression she has misplaced her folks).

The newcomers will form little knots and converse among themselves. If any of the characters approaches them, they'll nod politely, maybe smile, and exchange a few words (but don't expect conversations in depth). Once the platform is fairly crowded, the train will appear in the distance.

Call for *perception* checks. On an 8, the headlight mounted on the approaching train appears to be glowing red. An instant later, it's shining a yellow beam. No one else seems to have noticed the switch. (This should happen so quickly that, what with the fog and all, the characters might doubt they saw it.)

The train slows down and pulls into the station. Once it has stopped, the doors open ... but no one comes out. A glance through the windows reveals no one is sitting in any of the cars.

But there is someone on board. A rotund little conductor with a full black beard steps down on to the platform and glances at his pocket watch. Then he beams at the assembled travelers and says, "8:01 Local, now boarding. Please have your tickets ready, watch your step, and may your journey be a fair one!"

"Beagle" Carter (the reasons for his nickname lost to history) loves trains — big trains, small trains, locals, expresses, handcars, you name it. All the decor in his house is train-related; his daughter is named Casey Jones, his son Atchison Topeka ... not that he sees them much since he began this run. It's funny, but he can't quite remember the last time he was home ...

Like everyone else on this run, "Beagle" is dead, killed in a derailment a year ago. But don't tell him ... you'll ruin his day.

One by one, the passengers file into the train. Each of them carries only one small bag — on a *perception* check of 9 the characters notice that all the bags look basically the same. They are placed on a luggage cart before the passengers board the train.

When the characters approach "Beagle," he'll smile pleasantly at them. If the characters ask if the train will be on time, he'll answer, "Always is"; if they ask why there were no other passengers on the train, he'll answer, "First stop." Virtually anything else they ask, he'll have a two-word answer for.

The first thing the characters will notice as they board the train is how clean it is. It's obviously old, but there's something almost sterile about it. It doesn't have any antiseptic smell, though — in fact, it has no smell at all.

The front of the car is already filled, so the characters will have to sit in the back. They'll be joined momentarily by two stragglers, Gordon Gregson and Jenny Shalice, who will take seats near them. The characters can strike up conversations with either of them.

**Gordon Gregson:** A very tall, gangly type, amiable and obviously intelligent. His studies in college were all over the map, making him something of a Renaissance man, and leaving him prepared for one of two careers: quantum physicist or game designer. Unfortunately for gaming, he chose the former (but if you believe in alternate universes, somewhere Gregson is happily stuffing





## ARE WE THERE YET?

So where are the characters bound for, according to their tickets? Makes absolutely no difference — feel free to set the station in area you are familiar with and make their final printed destination wherever you want to be. After all, the engineer's paying no attention to it, so why should you?

logarithmic tables into rulebooks with wild abandon).

Like everyone else on board, Gregson doesn't know he's passed on, especially since it was fairly recent (hence his being one of the last on board). Both he and Shalice can be allies of the player characters in this adventure, until their true natures are discovered.

**Jenny Shalice:** An incredibly beautiful (and very dead) blonde, Jenny favors thin blouses and harem pants and will doubtlessly become romantically attached to a male player character. In life, she was a dancer who quit that life to manufacture pet toys. She died when someone pushed her on to the tracks just as a train was coming in, leaving only a broken body and a bunch of rubber squeaky mice to mark her passing.

## RULES OF THE RAILS

Now it's time to let the characters get a feel for the wonders of train travel. They can make chitchat with Gordon and Jenny; wander the train at will; and make all sorts of sinister discoveries. Let's join them, shall we?

### PASSENGER CARS

There are a total of four passenger cars on the train. Each is filled with perfectly normal seeming folk, reading, playing cards, talking, watching life go by (literally) out the windows. One of the passengers on car #3 is wearing gloves, a heavy coat, and a wide-brimmed hat pulled down low. He's huddled against the window, not speaking to anyone, and he won't acknowledge the characters if they speak to him. If they think he's asleep and prod him, he'll angrily wave them off.

The range of attitudes the characters will encounter among the passengers will be normal for that number of people — some are talkative, some are standoffish, etc. Nothing for the characters to worry about here just yet.

### THE DINING CAR

Here's where things start to get weird. How weird? You decide. Remember, all the passengers are dead, which means their diet is restricted. So it could be that:

- Normal food is served, but no one eats or drinks other than the player characters, and no one makes note of the fact that nothing is being touched.
- Seemingly normal food is served and everyone eats. But the food has no taste — none at all — and no one besides the player characters seems to notice.
- Empty plates and glasses are served. The other passengers enjoy hearty meals of air. The characters' stomachs growl.

If Gregson and Jenny are around, they will notice and comment on anything strange. (They are so recently dead that they retain some of their sense and sensibility.)



## DEAD OR ALIVE

All the people the player characters will encounter in this episode are dead. What's the difference between a dead person and a living one, in game terms? Well, dead people are immune to shock and K/O results ... and basically nothing stops them short of destruction (six wounds or more). After all, you can't kill what's already dead ... you can, however, hack its legs off so it stops chasing you.



## I'LL HAVE THE RED HERRING, PLEASE

While the characters are in the dining car, call for *perception* checks. On a 9, they overhear snatches of conversation from the booth behind them.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**You hear two men speaking in harsh whispers. "Is everything set?"**

**"Of course. Will Trent be waiting?"**

**"He'd better be. He knows what awaits him if he fails. We jump from the baggage car and he'll be there to pick us up."**

**"And fifteen minutes later ... boom!"**

**"Keep your voice down, idiot! Let's go, I've had enough of this swill."**

**The two men rise and head for the rear of the car.**

If the characters have a brain between them, they should be able to guess that what we have here are garden-variety terrorists, plotting to blow up the train. How much time do they have? Who knows? Even if they're having their doubts about the train already, they can't take the chance ... can they?

The truth, of course, is that these guys had been plotting to blow a train, but timers were never their strong suits. The bomb went off before they could jump off the train, but don't tell them that. They think they're back on that train, about to strike a blow for "the cause" (whatever that might be).

## TERRORISTS (2)

### AGILITY 9

Dodge 10, stealth 10, unarmed combat 11

### DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 10, lock picking 10

### ENDURANCE 9

### STRENGTH 9

### TOUGHNESS 10

### INTELLECT 8

Counterfeiting 10, demolitions 9, espionage 9, forgery 9, perception 9

### MIND 7

### CONFIDENCE 7

Con 9, intimidation 9, streetwise 9

### CHARISMA 7

### Life Points: 2

**Equipment:** Bomb (see below)

**(Terrorists (2) (D6): AGILITY 3D: Dodge 3D+1, stealth 3D+1, unarmed combat 3D+2 DEXTERITY 3D: Fire combat 3D+1, lock picking 3D+1 ENDURANCE 3D STRENGTH 3D TOUGHNESS 3D+1 INTELLECT 2D+2: Counterfeiting 3D+1, demolitions 3D, espionage 3D, forgery 3D, perception 3D MIND 2D+1 CONFIDENCE 2D+1: Con 3D, intimidation 3D, streetwise 3D CHARISMA 2D+1 Fate Points: 2.)**

The characters have a couple of options. They can try to warn someone in authority that there's a bomb on the train (said person will probably try sniffing the character's breath). Or they can follow the terrorists and try to stop them. They're headed for the baggage car and the bomb.

That's right, the bomb is for real. Call it their admission ticket to Hell, which someone kindly allowed them to bring along. It's sitting in the baggage car, by itself, ticking away (and probably set too early again).

Nothing like a little *slam-bang* action to spice up an adventure. The characters can jump the terrorists in the baggage car, struggling to avoid being thrown off the train, racing to stop the bomb's detonation. If one of the terrorists jumps or is thrown off the train, the characters will get a first-hand look at why leaving before the cars have come to a complete stop is a bad idea. See "Hobo's Jump," below.



If the characters dispose of the terrorists before the bomb goes off (they have about ten minutes in which to do so), they can disarm the bomb. It's a fairly simple affair, just a clock wired to some dynamite. There's a red wire, a blue wire, and a green wire. Most characters will probably assume the red wire is the one to cut (based on movies they've seen, etc.), but actually it's the green wire (the terrorist who made the bomb is color-blind). They'll either have to *intimidate* the answer out of the terrorists or take a guess. (Throwing the bomb off the train is also an option, and a good one. It can be tossed out and the characters will get to hear a very satisfying explosion and feel the thrill of having accomplished what they set out to do.)

If the bomb goes off before the characters can get rid of it, read aloud or paraphrase:

**There is a massive explosion and a terrible roaring in your ears. You feel yourselves flung like rag dolls against the walls of train car, a blinding light in your eyes, and in your heart you know you've blown it. This is it ...**

**Or is it? Groggy, with a splitting headache, somehow you are still alive .. so are the bombers. And the train car is still intact! Only the bomb is gone.**

The characters might think the bomb was a dud, or they might consider this one more piece in a very bizarre puzzle (which it is). Either way, back to our regularly scheduled adventure ...

## THE MAIL CAR

There are bags of mail neatly stacked here. If the characters decide to break all sorts of laws and open one up, they'll find that there are letters and packages inside, as would be expected. A *perception* total of 9 reveals that all of the stamps on these letters have been cancelled, and they're marked "Undeliverable — Addressee Unknown." (Well, where did you think "dead letters" went? Hehehehehehe!)

## THE BAGGAGE CAR

Why the characters would want to wander in here is beyond us, but who are we to stand in their way? As a matter of fact, *nothing* stands in their way, because there's nothing in here. Zip. Nada. All those little bags the other passengers brought on with them? Not here.

Oh, did we say nothing? We forgot the bomb (silly us). See "I'll Have The Red Herring, Please."

## THE ENGINE

Don't even think about it. Even "Beagle" can't get in here, so tightly is it sealed off. The door to the engineer's car is steel and locked, and if a character puts his hand against it ... it feels awfully hot.

## HIT THE BRAKES!

Once the characters have gotten a chance to walk around a little and familiarize themselves with their surroundings, time to bring this Scream to a close. Before their startled eyes in one of the passenger cars, someone suddenly stands up and yanks on the emergency brake cord. This has absolutely no effect on the train, but the unfortunate fellow who did it collapses back into his seat like he's been ... well, broken.

One of the other passengers identifies himself as a doctor and examines the man, only to announce that he's dead. And if the medical man didn't know better, he'd swear every bone in the fellow's body was shattered ...





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## CUT TO...

*Well, creeps, so far you have a light lunch, some murdered mail, and a crushed commuter ... and you thought train travel was dead. You should be so dead — in fact, maybe you are! Hehehehehe!*

Cut to Scream Two, "Berth to Death."

## SCREAM TWO: BERTH TO DEATH

### THE SITUATION

**Standard.** The characters get ready to retire, but this train is anything but quiet in the evening. They'll get a few more clues about just what's going on here ... but not a one about what they're going to do about it!

Gregson and Jenny will reappear at the beginning of this scene, if they ever left. Gregson will invite the characters out on the observation deck for a chat about the death of the passenger and the other strange things going on. Meanwhile, Jenny will invite one of the characters into her compartment for a little romance.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The train plows on through the night, the passengers now shocked and subdued by the sudden death. One of them went to find the conductor, but came up empty. Another banged on the door to the engineer's compartment, but received no answer.

And if that were only all. Rumors are flying that no one is driving the train. Someone commented on the fact that they haven't stopped at a station — or even passed through one! — since they departed. Even among these jaded travelers, panic is beginning to set in.

### THE ACTION

Up to now, Gregson and Jenny are the only people who seem remotely normal, so hopefully the characters trust them a little (or at least see them as potential sources of information). If some of the characters decide to meet with Gregson, cut to "A Fine Night's Dying." If one of the characters goes off for a romantic rendezvous with Jenny, cut to "Death's Bouquet." If the characters try to interrogate some of the other passengers, cut to "Dead Men Tell Plenty of Tales." And if the characters decide to try to break into the engineer's compartment, cut to Scream Three.

## A FINE NIGHT'S DYING

Gregson is puzzled and concerned by all that's going on on this train. He wants to compare notes with the characters, and he knows a few things they don't know, such as:

- He went looking for "Beagle" on his own and found him in one of the empty berths, in a stupor. He thought the conductor was drunk at first, but there was no sign of liquor on his breath and no bottle nearby. When he grabbed someone and brought him back to the cabin, "Beagle" was gone.
- He asks the characters to check their tickets. All of them list the same destination. But his does not, nor do any of the other passengers he's talked to. The destinations listed include places all over the country, but they have one thing in common: each is the hometown of the person holding the ticket.

This section of the *Scream* gives the characters a chance to talk about what they think is going on, builds up the idea of Gregson as an ally (which he is ... at the moment), and gives them a false sense of peace. When things begin to slow down a bit, someone else comes out on the deck, looking for a light for his cigarette. Observant characters will notice that this is the same guy who shattered in his seat earlier in the evening, now apparently hale and hearty.

*Do not give them time to react to this.* Immediately cut away to whoever is in the cabin with Jenny (you may want to send that player out of the room while the other characters interact with Gregson).

When you do return to this section of the *Scream*, the characters can question the new arrival. He remembers nothing of pulling the brake cord, nothing of dying (or he claims not to). He claims that he's been reading a magazine in his seat all night and had a sudden urge for a smoke. He also claims that his seat isn't even near the emergency brake, and produces his ticket to prove it — which it does.

## DEATH'S BOUQUET

Bring that lucky player back into the room. His character is off for a terrifying tryst with a beautiful blonde, and we don't want him to be late, now do we? (*Even if he does wind up that way! Hehehehehe!*) You might want to send the other players out of the room for some or all of this section.

Jenny is going to turn down the lights and turn on the charm. Feel free to stretch out this seduction scene as long as it's entertaining (and the other players aren't getting bored). She *seems* like a perfectly normal and very healthy female ... but everytime she embraces him, call for a *perception* check. On an 8, he gets a whiff of a horrible stench, rotten meat and grave earth. He'll need an Endurance roll of 10 not to get sick from the smell. When they break the clinch, the smell is gone ... but it'll be back.

Does Jenny notice it too? She doesn't seem to, and she's pretty offended by the fact that he's nauseated by holding her. And, to be fair, it's not coming from her — it's coming from that trenchcoated fellow from *Scream One*, who's hiding in the upper berth and will spring out, knife in hand, just as they are in the middle of a really good kiss. (Or, if the character decides to try and track down the source of the smell, he may open the berth and find a nasty surprise inside!)

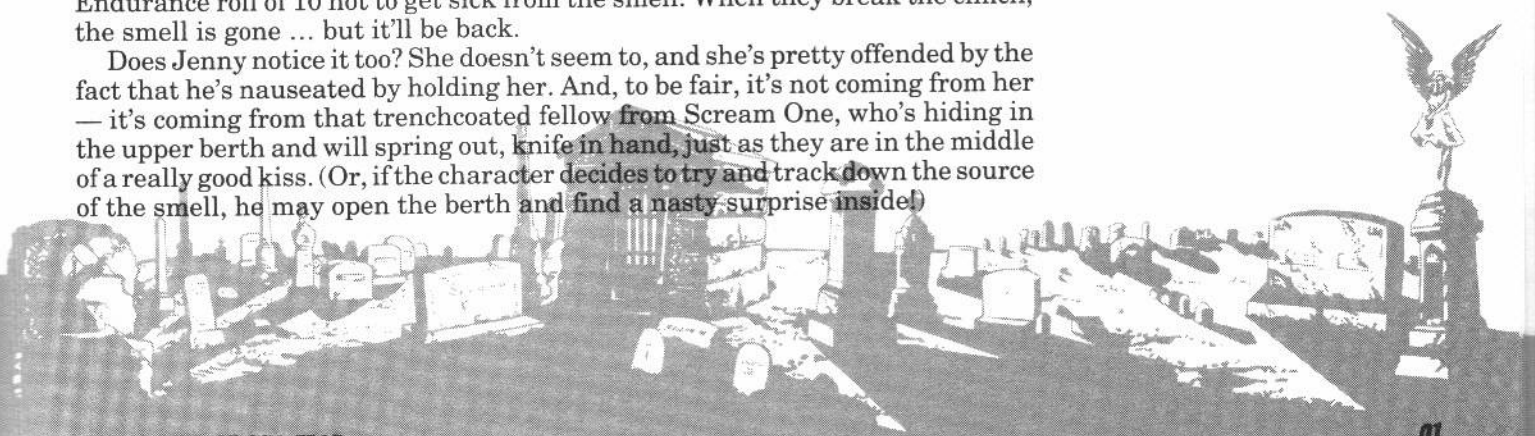


I'VE GOT IT!  
I'LL GET IT!

If, at any time, one of the characters blurts out something to the effect of, "I've got it! Everyone on board this train is dead!", expect things to start happening. If it's said within earshot of anyone who isn't a living player character, the news will spread like wildfire through the train. Most will scoff; but a few will believe. And their actions will convince others.

And what do we learn from this? That blurring things out in *Tales From The Crypt* is a very bad thing to do.

Give the news some time to spread, then cut to *Scream Three*.

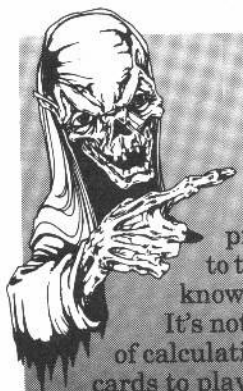






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## HOBOS' JUMP



You're on a train, one full of strange passengers, eerie happenings and maybe no engineer ... or one you *definitely* don't want to meet. What to do, what to do? Well, how about ... jump off?

Sounds like a plan, especially to anyone who's never done it and doesn't realize they'll probably be scraped off the ground with a spatula. But it's a safe bet the characters will want to try it, and don't stop them. End of the scenario? End of the nights' gaming? No, no, you should know the Cryptkeeper better than that!

It's not quite so easy to escape from this train. If one of the characters wants to try it, make a fuss of calculating a difficulty number, checking to see if he has *long jumping*, letting him figure out which cards to play ... and then have him make the jump. Then say something to the effect of, "You vault out into the darkness and feel like you have leapt into a wind tunnel. For a few moments, you think you see barren ground waiting for you — then the wind catches you and slams you back into the side of the train, pinning you there."

What fun! The character is now just out of arm's reach of the opening through which he jumped, trapped against the side of the train by a howling wind. Of course, his friends can lean out, try to grab his hand, and pull him in (Strength total of 13 to do this). And they'd better hurry ... see, there's this tunnel coming up that's going to scrape him off the train in, oh, about 30 seconds ... along with anyone foolish enough to be sticking anything out of the door or windows at that point.

Any character killed in this manner will wind up back on the train, with no memory of its having happened. He's now dead, but not aware of it, and will be so informed in Scream Three.

## FOWLER

### AGILITY 10

Dodge 12, melee combat 14, unarmed combat 12

### DEXTERITY 9

### ENDURANCE 11

### STRENGTH 10

### TOUGHNESS 11

### INTELLECT 9

Perception 10, trick 10

### MIND 7

### CONFIDENCE 7

Intimidation 11, willpower 9

### CHARISMA 7

### Life Points: 7

**Equipment:** Knife, damage value STR+4/19

**Description:** Fowler is dead, and he looks it. His skin is falling off in clumps, he smells of rot and decay, and he's just generally not someone you'd invite home to mother (unless she's a mortician). The difference between him and everyone else on the train (besides his lovely complexion) is that Fowler knows he's dead, and so he looks the part. He's also the only one besides the engineer who knows how you get off the train if you're dead — find someone living to take your place. For that reason, he'll ignore Jenny completely, but he's after the character's blood.

Like any other corpse on board, he's immune to shock and K/O, and just for laughs, add +3 to the difficulty of any interaction attempt made against him.

**(Fowler (D6):** AGILITY 3D+1; Dodge 12, melee combat 4D+2, unarmed combat 4D DEXTERITY 3D ENDURANCE 3D+2 STRENGTH 3D+1 TOUGHNESS 3D+2 INTELLECT 3D; Perception 3D+1, trick 3D+1 MIND 2D+1





**CONFIDENCE 2D+1:** Intimidation 3D+2, willpower 3D **CHARISMA 2D+1**  
**Fate Points: 7. Equipment:** Knife, damage value STR+1D+1)

Fowler is a formidable opponent, especially for a lone character. If possible, the corpse will try to position himself between the character and the door. That leaves the compartment's bathroom as one place of refuge, and the window as a possible exit. (But we all know what happens to bad little characters who jump out the window, don't we?)

The character and Jenny can scream all they want, no one will hear them right away. Feel free to bloody the character up some, but there's no need to kill him unless he does something really stupid. Trap him in the bathroom, have Fowler pound on the door, stick the knife through it, provoke a little terror, etc.

There are a couple of possible ways of resolving this combat:

1) The character kills Fowler (does six wounds or better). Satisfying, but not permanent. On this train, you can't kill someone who's already dead. He'll be back, later on, to join in the fun.

2) The combat is running a little too long, the players are getting restless. Someone runs out on to the observation deck and says he hears screaming. If the characters come to investigate, Fowler will jump out the window or otherwise flee. He'll be back. He will not attempt to take them all on.

3) Fowler kills the character. Fowler is now off the train for good. The character is still on it, wounds healed, with no memory of the attack ... and very dead. He's in for a shock in *Scream Three*. This is the reason for sending the other players out of the room, so they won't realize their friend is a stiff. Again, don't feel you have to kill the character here — it's a lot more fun to terrorize him. But if he's determined to die, don't stand in his way!

## DEAD MEN TELL PLENTY OF TALES

If you're pretty sure you're not going to kill that character, bring the other players in and let them resume their investigation, cutting back and forth between this and the battle (*me and Fowler — we love quick cuts! Hehehehehe!*)

The characters can interrogate any of the passengers, and should probably talk to more than one. What they'll discover is that all of the passengers seem perfectly normal, if frightened by what's going on here. None of them are puzzled as to why they're on the train and all are convinced they are going where their tickets say they are going. But none of them has any memory of where they were just before they arrived at the station. And all are concerned about where the conductor and the engineer may be.

They're even more concerned when the train lurches and starts to roar down a grade, picking up obscene amounts of speed as it goes. Call for Agility totals — characters will need an 8 to keep their feet. From here on in, the train's going to be moving very fast and the ride's going to be very rocky, so keep this in mind when running *Scream Three*.

Someone might want to suggest within earshot of the player characters that at this rate, the train is surely going to crash. Somebody has to get into the engineer's compartment and stop it before it's too late!

## CUT TO ...

The characters have two options here. They can do nothing about the seemingly runaway train; or they can try to get into the engineer's compartment and stop the train that way. Uncoupling the passenger cars from the engine is also an idea, but since the express is essentially speeding down Everest, the cars will still wind up at their demonic destination. Whichever the characters choose, there's still that little problem of the passengers, who are starting to get a clue ...





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## SCREAM THREE: HELL OR BUST

### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** The train is speeding to what seems to be imminent doom; the passengers are growing increasingly restless; and at least one person the characters *know* died is up and walking around. Next time, maybe they should drive ...

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The roar of the engine is louder than anything you've ever heard. It feels like you've been on a downhill grade for hours now and the passengers are starting to grow pale from fear. Actually, more than pale ... chalk-white is more like it.

### THE ACTION

The characters have a problem. You see, someone — maybe Fowler, if he's still around — started a nasty rumor that the passengers on this train are dead. At first, of course, no one believed this ... but there was a wave of accidents when the train picked up speed, people getting battered, bloodied and bruised, only to be perfectly healthy when next seen. Enough of these will wear down the natural instinct for denial even in the dead, and all it takes is a little doubt ... Once someone knows they're past it, they somehow also know that if they could find a living person to take their place on the train, they could get off. How many living people do you know on this train?





## THE HELL YOU SAY

If the characters really foul up, there's a chance they're going to get a firsthand look at the Pit, so you might want to give this some thought beforehand. The last thing you want is an anticlimactic Underworld.

So what is it? Is it pitchforks and brimstone? Maybe, but it doesn't have to be. If you know your players well enough to know what scares them, you should be able to take a wild guess at their notion of eternal damnation (we, for example, would rate listening to "Rush Limbaugh Sings the Beatles" pretty high on our list). While the rules laid down in the WorldBook and the campaign pack still apply — this game is about fun, not terrorizing people into walking out on you — Hell should be a place the characters do *not* want to see again.

One suggestion is a barren landscape and a constantly shifting reality. An insecure person will find himself much smaller in stature here; a "hollow" person might find pieces of himself breaking off here and there; anyone with a corpse or two in the closet might have them make a guest appearance right about now.

As with the Engineer later in this adventure, it's best to give the characters a brief and very cloudy view of Hell, if they see it at all. Once you've seen something too clearly, it ceases to be scary ... and a less scary Hell is just Earth, right?

The key to this scene is to start off small. Don't have a horde of dead passengers suddenly chasing the characters ... just have a few look at them a little funny now and then. Anytime the characters split up or one wanders off by himself (and feel free to try to lure them into doing this), sic one or two walking corpses on them. Once the characters compare notes and figure out they're in jeopardy, then you can let loose the dogs of decay and make them the hunted.

Keep in mind that Gregson and Jenny should be among the last to accept their conditions. This will put them "on the run" with the characters until the last moment, when suddenly they turn on their trusted friends.

## STANDARD PASSENGER

### AGILITY 9

Dodge 11, melee combat 11, stealth 10, unarmed combat 11

### DEXTERITY 8

### ENDURANCE 10

### STRENGTH 10

### TOUGHNESS 11

### INTELLECT 8

Perception 10, trick 9

### MIND 7

### CONFIDENCE 9

Intimidation 11, willpower 10

### CHARISMA 8

Life Points: 3

**Equipment:** Most of the passengers are either unarmed or are carrying cutlery from the dining car (damage value STR+4) or improvised weaponry (chair legs, etc.)

**(Standard Passenger (D6):** AGILITY 3D: Dodge 3D+2, melee combat 3D+2, stealth 3D+1, unarmed combat 3D+2 DEXTERITY 2D+2 ENDURANCE 3D+1 STRENGTH 3D+1 TOUGHNESS 3D+2 INTELLECT 2D+2: Perception 3D+1, trick 3D MIND 2D+1 CONFIDENCE 3D: Intimidation 3D+2, willpower 3D+1 CHARISMA 2D+2 Fate Points: 3. **Equipment:** Cutlery, damage value STR+1D+1.)

Play out this stalk and slash section for as long as it's fun, but don't let the player characters lose sight of their primary problem, the train that keeps picking up speed. Coincidentally enough, the place they need to get to is the one





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place the dead passengers can't get to, the engineer's compartment. So let's take a look at those two options again:

## DOING NOTHING

If the characters choose to play "hide and go slaughter" with the passengers for the remainder of the adventure, the train will eventually reach its destination. This will be very bad (not to mention very warm) for the characters. They'll have a choice: stay on the train through its next run and try to do better next time (no, we didn't think they'd pick that one either) or get off the train and try to reason with the unreasonable. (Remember, you're dealing with types who just love to dine on file of soul ... Hehehehehe!)

## LET ME SPEAK TO THE DRIVER

Earlier, we suggested that the characters not even *try* getting into the engineer's compartment. But if they want to stop the train or get off before it gets where it's going, they're going to have to. So let's try the door ...

As soon as the characters are less than a meter from it, they'll feel the heat radiating from the metal. It doesn't look hot, but it sure is. Touching it without an oven mitt will mean damage value 19 to the character's poor little fingers. Even with protection, the character won't be able to be in contact with it for more than, say, five seconds without taking damage.

And on top of that, it's locked.

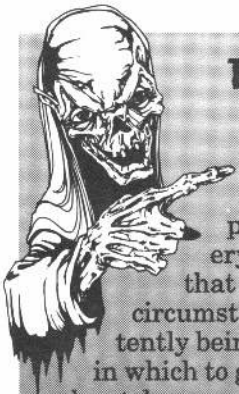
Knocking won't do any good either. Nobody's answering. But there is an intercom system right by the door, designed to let the engineer speak to the passengers. A little judicious rewiring would allow it to work the other way. Of



course, the characters probably don't have any tools, other than kitchenware, or anyone with a *science: electronics* skill. But a Mind total of 11 will at least give them a rough idea of what to do once they're inside the workings.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**Wires. Lots and lots of wires of all different colors. But it seems surprisingly simple: just move a clip from "Speaker Out" to "Speaker In" and you should be able to send a message inside. Cautiously, you begin to work your way through the wiring jumble to reach the black one ... Wait a minute. Did it just move away? Couldn't be ... could it?**



## THE "NOTHING TO DO" BLUES

One of the dangers of a horror adventure is having the player characters feel that everything is out of their control, that they are victims of malicious circumstance, and that they are consistently being left with only one direction in which to go. It's important that they at least have an illusion of free will, if not always the fact of it, or they will get bored and walk.

So keep in mind some of the corners around which the characters can go in this adventure. For example, there's nothing to stop them from talking some of the dead passengers into helping them stop the train. Sure, these people are after their lives — but maybe the characters can make them see that the same can be achieved by bringing the train to a halt. Suddenly, the characters through their own actions have gained a few allies and increased their odds of surviving a little. And you have some gamemaster characters you can have violently killed for the edification of the players, without having to sacrifice their characters for the scare. Everybody wins.

Another option is to loosen up a little on the "can't jump off the train" scenario. Maybe the characters make it to the roof of the express and there's another train passing them by, going in the other direction. Can they leap onto it? Where's it going? Someplace worse, we hope ...

In fact, the wires are moving, all of them. Worse, there are hissing noises coming from inside the controls. If the character doesn't withdraw his hand — *now* — the wires will writhe around it, holding it there, while they sink their little fangs into his flesh. It won't hurt much — just damage value 8 — but it won't be much fun either. A Strength total of 9 will be enough to pull one's hand free, taking a bunch of the wires with it (which will proceed to bleed all over the character's hand).

Oh, well, scratch that idea! There is another way in, of course — but it means climbing up on the roof of the train and going in through the emergency escape hatch. Insane? Sure! Suicidal? You bet! But, hey, they have nothing to lose but their character sheets, right?

There's a door leading outside right near where the characters are standing. It's shut right now, and made of metal. But if the characters can wedge something between the door and the jamb and give some good shoves (Strength totals of 12), they should be able to force it open. (A table leg or that sort of thing would work well here.)

Keep in mind that this train is going *very* fast. So that first step will be a doozy. The characters are going to get hit with a blast of hot air and if they're not holding on to something — good and tight — they could get blown away. At the least, they'll leave their feet and have to hang on for dear life. Fortunately, there's a ladder that leads up to the roof of the engine.

Reaching the roof of the train is going to require Agility or *climbing* totals of 11. Failing a total doesn't necessarily mean you fall ... but it could mean that one hand slips off the ladder and a few points will get added to that ol' Strength check to keep hanging on.

Once they reach the roof, there's another problem: the emergency hatch is locked. There's no time for finesse here, the characters will have to grab whatever they have with them and whack the lock until it gives. Inevitably, you want them to get inside, but make them work for it. And at some point, they should see something coming toward them that will add a little urgency to the matter. An overpass? No, been done to death. Low-hanging tree limbs? Please. No, we were thinking more along the lines of a wall of fire through which the train is about to pass.

"Ah hah!" you say. "It's illusionary, it's mystical, it only burns souls, I've seen this movie ... right?" Nope, actually it leaves the characters cinders if they're foolish enough to get

caught in it. Better make sure they don't, huh? At the very last moment, the characters smack the lock in just the right way and can pile through the hatch. They've only got seconds to do it, so have fun watching them push, shove and claw at each other to get in before they're barbecue!





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## CUT TO ...

Well, they're in ... and we're out of Scream Three. Time to toss the last clod of dirt on top of this adventure, so cut to Scream Four.

## SCREAM FOUR: CHOO-CHOO CHARNEL WAS AN ENGINEER

### THE SITUATION

**Dramatic.** The characters have made their way to the engineer's compartment on this death train. Now the question is, what are they going to do about it? Read aloud or paraphrase:

**What an incredible smell you have discovered. Sort of a cross between a slaughterhouse, an open grave and an old, wet sneaker stuffed with tuna fish and left on a radiator overnight. The floor of the compartment is covered with a viscous goo that clings to you like it's a long-lost relative who wants a loan. Out the windows, you see darkness, punctuated by goutts of flame.**

**In the corner stands the engineer, though you cannot see him clearly. Something tells you you're better off.**

### THE ACTION

You may disagree, but we think it's important that the characters not see the engineer clearly, for reasons we discussed earlier in this adventure. Suffice it to say he makes the Cryptkeeper look like Clark Gable, but outside of a red gleam in his eyes and an occasional shred of flesh falling off him, the characters will have to be content with shadows.

We're also not giving you stats for the engineer. This scene should be about *roleplaying*, not who throws the best dice. If the characters wish to, they can try combat, but there are a few problems with that. Not only is the engineer not living, he's *never* lived, which makes killing him problematic. His body has a mean temperature of about 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, so grappling with him is going to hurt. A lot. (Need a number? Well, I guess you'd call these 33rd-degree burns ... roughly damage value 33 to unprotected flesh.)

Read aloud or paraphrase:

**The engineer looks at you. His voice is a harsh whisper. "You have a complaint? Or did you think you ... heh heh ... missed your stop? Last stop's coming right up, folks."**

There it is: the brake lever. That big red one. All the characters have to do is pull it back and the ride will be over. One of them is sure to make a grab for it, and when they do ... well, read this to them:

**You've done it! With a roar and a screech like a thousand banshees, the train begins to skid to a stop. But it was going too fast to start with. The whole express is starting to come apart! You hear a crash and see that the rear cars must have flown into the air and done a flip over the front of the train, and are now lying on the tracks in front of you! Like a snake eating its own tail, the engine plows into the rear car and it all ends in a massive — and somehow appropriate — inferno.**

The end? No. The characters eyes blink open and they are still standing with the engineer, their friend's hand still on the unpulled brake lever. The engineer



is wagging a half-rotten finger at the group saying, "Are you *sure* you want to do that?"

Assuming the characters aren't so sure anymore, they are going to have to talk their way out of this. And they're running out of time, evidenced by the fact that it's getting hotter — a lot hotter — in the cab by the minute. They are going to have to persuade the engineer that they're still alive and don't belong on this train. Again, don't make this a contest of dice. See if they can persuade *you*, and if they can, they can maybe persuade him. (If they can't think of a way, the engineer has a suggestion: he could kill all of them, and if they actually die, why then they must have been alive to start with!) (No, we didn't think the player characters would go for that one ...)

If the characters successfully talk the engineer into believing they really don't belong on the train, cut to "Great Balls of Fire."

If they flounder and fail, they're headed for the tortures of the damned. What fun! Eventually — maybe — somebody in the infernal regions will realize there's been a screw-up ... but by then, the characters will be toast. So sorry.

## GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

When the characters have (to your satisfaction) proven they are alive, read aloud or paraphrase:

**Suddenly, the floor beneath your feet becomes insubstantial. You're falling through the bottom of the train!**

**You hit the tracks, hard, sure that this is it ... but the whole train has become ghostly now, and it roars through you. You're left sprawled on the tracks, bruised and confused, and with a long walk home ...**

Did we say "walk"? Call for Intellect or *perception* checks — on a 7, one of the characters notices a glow from the tunnel through which the train just passed. It grows brighter and begins to take on shape and form. It's a massive ball of flame, roaring up the incline, consuming track as it goes. And the characters are right in its way!

Call for Agility or *running* rolls. It doesn't make much difference what they roll in this case — they've come this far, don't roast them now. But that doesn't mean they can't feel a little heat!

And at the end of their journey ... they're back in the Crypt.

## IF THEY SUCCEED

If the characters make it back safely, the Cryptkeeper says:

*"Well, that was almost the last rail in your*



Illustration by Marshall Andrews III



*coffin. Hehehehehe! Good thing you weren't slow freight, creeps, or you'd be rotisserie roleplayers right about now!"*

## IF THEY FAIL

The Cryptkeeper's voice comes, as if from far away, and says:

*"Bottom floor — flame, fiends, and fricasseed flesh! Everybody out! Hehehehehehe!"*

*"Of course I'll bring you back to the Crypt ... maybe. Right now, though, you're still a little too rare ... I prefer my victims well-done. So bake for now ... you can shake later, when you find out what I have in store for you."*

## AWARDS

Award the characters three skill points apiece for surviving this adventure. Each character can be award 2 to 4 Life Points, depending on how tough they found the adventure and how well they roleplayed.





# SICK LITTLE SAGAS

Greg Farshtey, Evan Jamieson and Richard Meyer

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