

TOO CLOSE TO HOME



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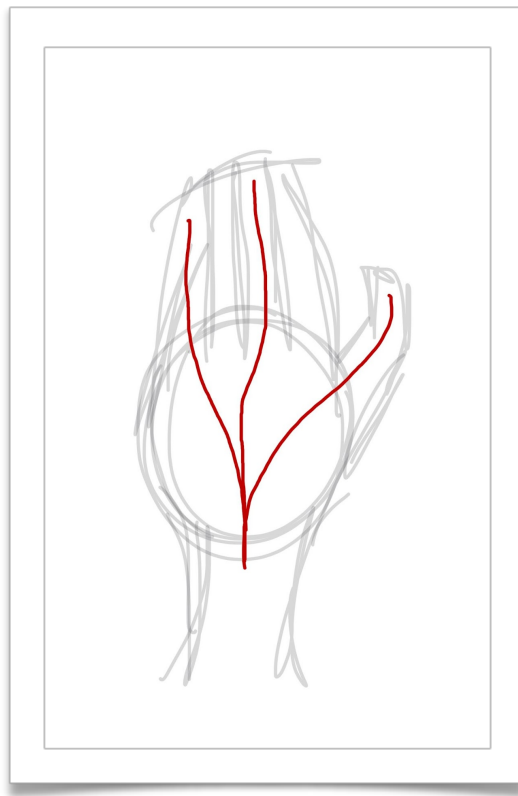
I'd like to say thanks to a few kind souls that helped me to create this (my first) scenario.

Thank you Stefan Dörrer, Peter Jacobs, Ian Christiansen, Drew Garland, Sean McLaughlin, Peter Jensen, Joshua Bartel & the disciples of the funkel.

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TOO CLOSE TO HOME

This modern scenario takes place in the dreamy American town of Roselawn – but it could easily be transferred to other places or times to fit the Keepers needs.

Samuel Dawson owns Dawson's Funeral Home in Roselawn. After Sheriff Oakley finds the body of Henry Burrows in the old woods north of Roselawn and isn't able to track down any next of kin nor identify any cause of death, he transfers the body to Dawson who is commissioned with the cremation.

Trying to burn the body, Dawson finds out that Burrows can't be damaged by fire or any other means; even his scalpel leaves no mark on his skin. Dawson knew Burrows to be a reclusive man living in a small house near the edge of the forest. Intrigued by a mystery that contradicts every science-based approach he can think of, he decides to investigate the incident and goes missing.

The investigators enter the scenario after Dawson's disappearance and will find out what secret the forest holds.

THE INVESTIGATION

INVOLVING THE INVESTIGATORS

This scenario deals with the disappearance of Samuel Dawson, shortly after he has received the body of Mr. Burrows.

There are a number of ways the investigators could get involved.

- Sheriff Oakley had a few drinks too many (as he tends to) at the 'Rabid Raccoon' and talks a little bit too much about the strange case of Burrows' death, and Dawson acting strangely after receiving the body. A few neighbors (or better yet teenagers) get curious. At his house nobody is home, yet the door seems to be unlocked...
- Dawson reaches out to some old friends. He doesn't reach them but leaves a strange voicemail. He seems to be very distressed and/or drunk. He rambles about *something impossible* and that he is *losing his mind*. And the end he says that he has go...

DAWSON'S FUNERAL HOME

The Funeral Home consists of a residential house built in the 1960s, to which the facilities of the funeral home have been added bit by bit - it consists of a foyer, a chapel, an office, a preparation room, a cremation room, and a spacious yard with two trees growing on a hill.

The House

The residential part of the house is untidy but otherwise ordinary. It is clearly the home of a bachelor. Too many empty bottles, mainly bourbon, are everywhere and could indicate an addiction problem.

A successful **Spot Hidden** will notice some pictures showing (a younger) Samuel Dawson with his wife Amy and his young daughter Rachel.

Foyer & Chapel

The foyer is a marble floored atrocity with a leather couches for guests. Two doors lead out of the room. One double door leads into the chapel, which houses up to 120 people and is kept in (calming?) blue and grey colors with electric candles on the walls.

The other door leads to the office, preparation and cremation room.

The Office

A cluttered little room filled with file cabinets, a desk and two armchairs for guests.

On the desk are two photographs. One showing a woman holding a baby (Amy & Rachel) and another showing a younger happy couple on a bench between two trees (showing the hill in the yard – which a **successful INT roll** will point out).

Searching the desk will find two things: a medical file in a drawer and a locked cabinet door. The cabinet door can be opened with **successful STR test** (providing a **bonus die** for tools used, like a letter opener or pocket knife). Inside a few more bottles of bourbon can be found - some of them even still full.

The medical file is that of Henry W. Burrows and covered in shaky handwriting.

He doesn't burn! HE DOESN'T BURN! is written again and again all over the document. Burrows' address in Roselawn is circled.

The Preparation Room

A stainless steel gurney fills the center of the room with a low hanging neon light above it. A multitude of white cabinets filled with all kinds of medical supplies cover one wall.

A small desk with a selection of heavy-used medical books can be found here - though nothing of interest can be learned from them. A whiteboard covers the last wall. It still has the name BURROWS written on it.

The Cremation Room

Entering the room the aged neon lights take a second to spring to life. Another gurney is standing skewed in front of the giant steel door of the incinerator. A body is lying on it and has only briefly been covered - leaving the impression that it has been abandoned in a hurry.

The body on the gurney is Mr. Burrows. Removing the cover shows a man that apart from being dead looks astonishingly well for his age. Applying **SAN** rolls for investigators that see a dead body for the first time is at the Keeper's discretion.

If an investigator has a medical skill greater than 40 Mr. Burrows unnatural resistance to decay will lead to a **SAN o/1 check**.

Further investigation of the body will show that it cannot be damaged in any way. Examining the hands will find strange scars on the palms of the hands. When using the incinerator Mr. Burrows body will lie in the flames without even a hair on his body catching fire. No matter how the investigators learn of Mr. Burrows immunity to decay and destruction, this knowledge provokes a **SAN o/1d4 check**.

The Graves in the Yard

If the investigators choose to enter the property a **Spot Hidden** roll will discover two gravestones between the trees on the mound. Another way to learn about the graves could be from the photos Dawson keeps on his desk.

An **extreme success** will uncover that the graves have been disturbed.

Further examination of the gravesite reveals that both graves have been opened. A **successful Forensics check** will find out that the grave seem to have been opened from the inside, followed by a **SAN o/1d3 check**.

The main lead the investigators should gather from Dawson's House and the Funeral Home should be that Dawson seems to have taken an interest in Burrows' unique condition and tried to learn more by visiting his home.

BURROWS' HOUSE

The address found in the **medical file** leads the investigators to a small house at the north end of Roselawn right at the edge of the forest. Burrows built this wooden cabin for himself and his then wife Meredith.

Burrows valued his privacy, so the property is surrounded with a 2m high fence - yet getting onto the premises shouldn't be too hard. Getting over the fence is a **regular DEX check** but choosing to check the gate rewards the investigators with a simpler option - it is unlocked.

Curious investigators may be disappointed while trying to peek inside as all the curtains are drawn.

Access to the house can be gained through the door in the front (**hard STR or regular Locksmith**) or through the less sturdy door in the back (**regular STR or Locksmith**).

Smashing a window would also be an option. Whether or not this heavy handed approach attracts any attention is up to the Keeper.

Inside the house, the investigators will find **a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen**, a bath & a storage room of which only the first three contain any useful information.

The Living Room

Upon entering the living room, the investigators will be confronted with a strange scene. The whole room has been filled with books. They seem to cover all kinds of subjects, ranging from astronomy and astrology to mythology and from metaphysics to downright occult. A **successful Library Use or INT check** will point out that what first seems like the chaos left behind by a madman is actually a unique system of order. The different piles seem to relate to each other's position in the room. For example, the pile of books about astrology can be found between those of astronomy and esoteric.

At the keepers choice, a **Mythos Tome** might be hidden here.

Also a strange smell can be noticed coming from the kitchen.

The Bedroom

The first thing that catches one's eye is that only one side of the bed is fitted with bedding. Meredith died many years ago. Her fate isn't part of this scenario.

The rest of the room is very normal. Neither the nightstand nor the closet that can be found here will contain anything out of the ordinary.

A **successful Spot Hidden** will direct the players attention towards a small black book that is stuck between the nightstand and the bed. It is Burrows' diary and contains details about what he found in the forest.

The Diary tells Burrows' story about a place he found in the woods. It is a round clearing where nothing grows. When he stepped on this ground for the first time he *felt* that something was there on *the other side*.

He started researching similar phenomena - being a widower he had enough time to do so - and got lost in the fascination he felt for this place. A hand drawn map can be found in the journal describing how to get to the clearing north of here.

As the years went by his obsession intensified, digging deeper and deeper into obscure literature that only fueled the fire of his ambition to make contact with what he could feel there.

Finally he found a book describing an old ritual to *move between worlds*.

Part of the ritual was the brewing of a special tea that is supposed to cleanse the body for the crossing over.

The Kitchen

The strange smell originates from here. The whole kitchen is used to dry bunches of strange weeds and roots to produce a dark green brew that smells horrible. This is the tea described in the ritual text.

In the corner is a little table with two chairs. An old book with strange diagrams is lying open on the table and next to it are pieces of paper covered in hasty writing. **The book** explains the specifics of the ritual.

The Ritual consists of the drinking of the tea followed by an hour of meditation before the 'sign of the traveller' has to be applied to each hand. After the palms of each traveller have been cut in this manner each of them has to bow down, touch the ground with his hands and forehead until they feel ready to cross over. It is also stated that the barrier can only be passed in the moonlight.

The clues from Burrows' home should lead the investigators to the place in the woods he mentioned in his **journal**. With the map, the ritual text and the tea found in the kitchen, they have everything they need to investigate further. By now, curious players might be interested more in the things Burrows found than to learn about Dawson's fate.

TALKING TO THE SHERIFF

Getting Sheriff Morgan Oakley to open up about the the circumstances of Burrows death takes a hard **Fast Talk** or regular **Persuade** roll. If any of the characters is employed in law enforcement or similar they get a bonus die to their **Persuade**. If a character is female he may talk after a **Charm** roll with a bonus die.

The sheriff will tell the players that he found Burrows in the woods to the north. A preliminary examination of the body showed no indication of a crime so he gave the body to Dawson for an autopsy and has not heard back since.

Oakley grew up in Roselawn and knows it by heart. He never really connected to Burrows though. Burrows kept to himself and only went to town to stock up and food and supplies which he always bought in big amounts.

If the players leave a good impression Oakley might share the story about Marc Keeley (owner of Roselawn's village store) checking on Burrows after he hadn't been seen in the village for an unusual long time. Keeley got chased off the property by Burrows wielding an old shotgun. Keeley was terrified and angry but there was nothing the sheriff could do – after all Keeley was trespassing.

If the player share their discoveries with Oakley he will be quick to declare the Funeral Home a potential crime scene and seal off the premises. After that he'll have his hands full investigating the case. Oakley will not follow Burrow's journal to a *wild goose chase* into the woods – to convince him otherwise will take a hard **Persuade** roll. Forcing a confrontation with the indestructible body of Burrows will most likely overwhelm him – every social interaction after that has to be made with a penalty die.

Much easier to secure is the support of deputy Monica Evans. If the players didn't get on Oakley's bad side he might send Evans along to prevent yet another case file on his desk.

THE COLD PLACE IN THE WOODS

Getting to the clearing in the woods shouldn't be too much of a problem. A successful **Navigation check** will get the players to the location in 3 hours, a failed one in 4 and a fumble in 5.

Should the investigators search Burrows' house for a compass, or additional map they can find it with a successful **Luck check**. Using these will grant a **bonus die** on the **Navigation check**.

Using **Track** to find Dawson's trail through the woods is also an option, resulting in finding the clearing in about 3 hours.

About 1.5 hours before they reach the location they have to leave the road and find their way through the undergrowth. Ask for **DEX checks** to see how well they deal with going off-road. Failing will cause them to trip or be scuffed by branches for **1d3 damage**.

Once they arrive, the investigators find a strange circular clearing hidden away far from the made paths. The ground here is dead as if the earth has been scorched. The place *feels cold* - players with a POW greater than 60 can feel it clearly and react with anxiety.

A successful **Spot Hidden** reveals fresh footprints that vanish in the middle of the clearing - **SAN 0/1**.

This is the place that eclipses with *somewhere else* - the place for the ritual Burrows talked about.

Optional Consequences: If the the keeper wants to add a little zombie action into the mix, a fumbled **Navigation check** could mean they meet Dawson's resurrected wife and daughter in the woods. Their stats are provided at the end of the scenario.

THE RITUAL

***SAN loss** during the ritual and 'on the other side' should not be felt by the players instantly. The keeper should keep track of it and hit the players with it after they return.*

In the **book** found in the kitchen Burrows described how he used the **tea** to cleanse body and mind for the journey to the other side. But this cleansing comes at cost. Every player drinking from the tea has to make a **CON check**. A **success** means nausea - **failure** causes 1d10 minutes of violent vomiting and a **fumble** also causes diarrhea and a penalty die for all actions in the next 3 hours.

Keepers should try to emphasize the disturbing feeling of being in the middle of the forest while losing control over one's bodily functions. You know your players best - if there's no way for them around making fun of the situation you should adjust as needed.

After this 'cleansing' they have to meditate an hour on the dead soil. They are alone with an eerie silence and can feel the energy of this place. It feels cold and alien.

Next are the cuts. After the hour of meditation is done the *mark of the traveller* has to be applied to each hand before the players bow down and focus on whatever waits on the other side.

After a few minutes it is apparent to everyone involved that something has changed. After they avert their eyes from the ground they can see a tower that has appeared in the middle of the clearing - shimmering white in the cold light of the moon and extending into the sky and the infinity beyond - or at least as far as they can perceive. The white tower seems to be made from homogeneous lightly translucent material. An archway shows the bottom of a stairwell leading up. This sight asks for a **SAN 1/1d4** check.

Anybody making the trip to the clearing without participating in the ritual will not see anything unusual. But as the player enter the tower they'll bear witness of them starting to glow from the inside and vanishing - **SAN 1/1d6**.

THE OTHER SIDE

Climbing the stairs takes a while. Shortly after entering the tower the investigators lose their sense of time - but soon they can see a different kind of light illuminating the steps above. As they take the last steps they will find themselves on the top of a small white tower overlooking a vast black desert with white crystalline mountains shimmering in the distance. As they try to make sense of their surroundings. A semi-translucent orb appears. Its surface is covered with small wriggling tentacles that manifest and dissolve again. It hovers in front of the tower - silently. Experiencing the *other side* and meeting the orb will cost the players **SAN 1/1d6**.

If one of the players tries to communicate with this being nothing happens at first as they feel examined. But shortly after they can clearly *hear* a voice inside their heads.

"What do you desire?" will be the greeting. After that the investigators should plot their own course of dialogue.

If they inquire about Burrows or Dawson the being will have the following to say:

- Burrows came here. He was old and brittle and asked the being for a body that was untouchable by time and the elements. He got what he wanted.
- Dawson came here too. After being asked by the being what he wished for he answered that there was nothing more he wanted than for his dead wife and daughter to live again. He also got what he wanted.

A successful **Spot Hidden** roll will witness Burrows' and Dawson's tormented faces among the mass of tentacles for a moment when the thing talks about them. Their wishes have been granted in a terrible way. Burrows' body has been made indestructible and Dawson's wife and daughter (what was left of them anyway) have been awakened from the slumber of death. But both of them have paid the price and their souls are now a part of the consciousness devouring orb. Of course the last part wasn't mentioned by the being beforehand.

The being acts like a malevolent djinn. It will grant every wish it is asked for but in the worst way possible. The worst thing players can do is to make a wish. Keepers should be creative when granting wishes to the players in the most horrible way possible.

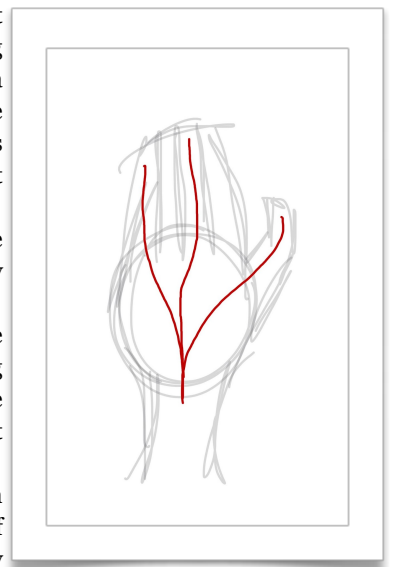
The being feeds on the despair and pain it causes by 'granting wishes'.

Burrows was made *indestructible* by not being part of our reality anymore. He couldn't feel anything, ingest food or water.

Dawson was reunited with his loved ones. But the sight of the reanimated strongly decayed corpses of his wife and child made him lose his mind. He roams the woods lost in psychotic delirium. Meeting him or *his family* is not a part of this scenario - but could be used to connect to another adventure.

THE ORB

The orb feeds on negative emotions like fear, despair and pain but can only do harm to the investigators after they 'let him in' by making a wish. By asking for a wish the players hand over power to the entity which is then used against them.



Otherwise the orb is not very interested in the investigators. After engaging in the initial conversation he will soon lose interest dealing with the visitors. If they do not ask for a wish, fail social skill checks or try to attack it - it will simply dissolve.

Optional mechanic: Forcing player's to make a wish.

If the Keeper would like to escalate the situation on the other side a little more he can ask the players to make a POW check as soon as they engage in conversation with the orb. If the roll is failed the orb will suggest fulfilling them their deepest desires. Pictures of what the player's most intensely wish for are projected into their minds (ask the players to describe these visions) and they can't help but asking the orb for a wish.

Example Wishes and Consequences:

Money & Possession:

The player receives the requested amount of money or item, only to discover it was stolen from a major crime syndicate – and they want it back – SAN 1/1d6.

Knowledge:

The player gets access to lost wisdom of the stars but it is beyond his mind to comprehend – SAN1d10/1d100.

THE CONCLUSION

The best option for the players is to realize the hostile and deceitful nature of the thing in the black desert and to back away. Powerlessness is one of the major themes here and may be a bit bleak for some players but the mythos doesn't really care about the human opinion on fairness.

The biggest enemy in this scenario will be the players own curiosity and greed (if wishes are made).

After they descend the tower again and step back into reality the Keeper should hit them with the accumulated **SAN loss** of witnessing the tower, meeting the orb and any wishes and consequences thereof.

CHARACTERS

Sheriff Morgan Oakley

Sheriff Morgan is a god fearing man in his mid fifties. He grew up in Roselawn and places the safety of it's citizens before his own wellbeing.

STR 50 CON 45 SIZ 65 DEX 55 INT 70
 APP 45 POW 70 EDU 55 SAN 70 HP 11
 DB: - Build: 0 Move: 5 MP: 11 Luck: 45

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 40% (20/8), damage 1D3

.45 Revolver 70% (35/14), damage 1D10+2

Armor: none.

Deputy Monica Evans

Monica Evans has been Oakley's deputy for three years. At first some townsfolk had some issues with the law being represented by a woman, but Evans is an army veteran and tough as nails – it didn't take a long time (and only a few twisted arms) for her to being accepted in Roselawn.

STR 55 CON 55 SIZ 70 DEX 55 INT 65
 APP 35 POW 55 EDU 65 SAN 55 HP 12
 DB: +1D4 Build: +1 Move: 7 MP: 11 Luck: 40

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 60% (30/12), damage 1D3+1D4

Glock 17 80% (40/16), damage 1D10

Armor: none.

Amy Dawson (undead wife)

Dawson's wife can be found shambling through the woods if the investigators are not careful.

STR 70 CON 80 SIZ 65 DEX 40 INT -
 APP - POW 5 EDU - SAN - HP 14
 DB: +1D4 Build: +1 Move: 7 MP: 11

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting 30% (15/6), damage 1D3 + 1D4

Dodge: Lacking volition, this is not an option

Armor: Major wounds delivered to the body will result in loss of a limb. Otherwise ignore damage except to the head (one penalty die on rolls to target the head).

Sanity Loss: 0/1D8 Sanity points to see Amy.

Rachel Dawson (undead daughter)

Even in death Rachel won't leave Amy's side.

STR 40 CON 60 SIZ 35 DEX 50 INT -
 APP - POW 5 EDU - SAN - HP 10
 DB: - Build: -1 Move: 7 MP: 10

Attacks per round: 1

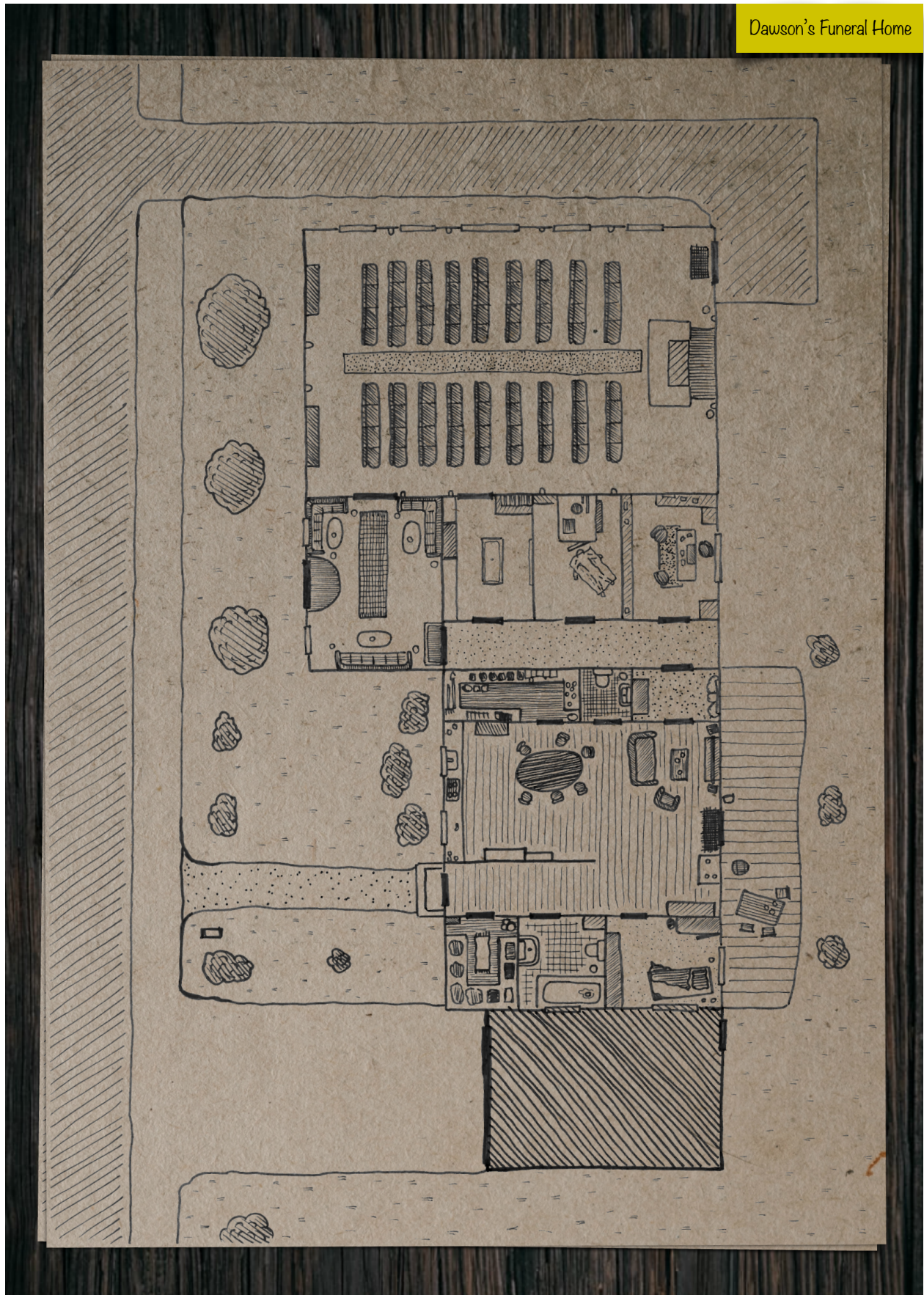
Fighting 40% (20/8), damage 1D3

Dodge: Lacking volition, this is not an option

Armor: Major wounds delivered to the body will result in loss of a limb. Otherwise ignore damage except to the head (one penalty die on rolls to target the head).

Sanity Loss: 1/1D10 Sanity points to see Rachel.





Burrow's House



