

Our Ladies of Sorrow

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2018

Our Ladies of Sorrow

FOR

CALL OF CTHULHU®

OUR LADIES OF SORROW by Kevin Ross. Edited by Keith Herber.

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FOR

CALL OF CTHULHU[®]

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Foreword

"I'll probably tell the story — at least in spots — in a somewhat poetic style. Don't let that put you off. It merely helps me to organize my thoughts and select the significant items. I won't be straying in the least from the strict truth as I've discovered it; though there may be traces of parentals in my story, I suppose, and certainly one ghost. I think all modern cities, especially the crass, newly-built, highly industrialized ones, should have ghosts. They are a civilizing influence."

—Fritz Leiber, *Our Lady of Darkness*

Our Ladies of Sorrow is a collection of modern era scenarios for Call of Cthulhu. These scenarios form a loosely-linked campaign, though Keepers are encouraged to mix in other modern day adventures to supplement those found here. Any number of investigators of any level of experience can be used to play these adventures, even as few as one or two novices.

Anyone intending to play an investigator in these scenarios should read no further lest he or she spoil the surprises that lie in wait within these pages. You've been warned...

Prospective Keepers should read this book in its entirety in order to familiarize themselves with the material presented herein. In addition to this Foreword, an Introduction outlines a great deal of important background material and offers advice for running these scenarios. The "Tenebrarum", "Suspiriorum", and "Lachrymarum" chapters are the main scenarios, the "meat" of the campaign, while the Epilogue is a brief final scenario that ends The Sorrows storyline — for now... In the Appendices, the Three Sisters article describes a number of entities from myth, folklore, and legend that may be other forms of The Sorrows. A bibliography/filmography follows, acknowledging the various fiction and non-fiction sources that either inspired or informed the writing of this book. The Afterword outlines the development of The Sorrows project over its 20 year (!) history. Finally, Thomas DeQuincey's story "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" is included, as it is the root inspiration for the creatures and the mythology presented in this book.

These scenarios are markedly different from those found in most Call of Cthulhu releases. The antagonists of *Our Ladies of Sorrow* are unabashedly supernatural in origin, as opposed to the alien and/or cosmic nature of the creatures of the Cthulhu

Mythos. There are no ravening alien monsters or bloodthirsty cults here, but instead entities more akin to ghosts or spirits. And unlike many Cthulhoid entities, The Sorrows are directly interested in the affairs of men, since they seem to enjoy tormenting mankind, perhaps even feeding off of their suffering. For this reason there is a more personal level to the threats here, as the investigators and other sympathetic parties herein become the targets of The Sorrows' unpredictable — and often malevolent — attentions. While many Call of Cthulhu campaigns at least hint at a vast scope to their antagonists' motivations, *Our Ladies of Sorrow* focuses on the fates of a few individuals.

These differences in theme and scope may seem off-putting, but rest assured that the adventures herein offer many, many opportunities for investigation and suspense, along with liberal doses of soul-chilling fear. At the very least I hope you get a case or two of the shivers out of reading or playing these scenarios. Better still if they scare you so badly you have to keep a light on at night, or leave the TV on while you sleep.

No, on second thought, maybe not the TV...

Phantasmagorically,
Kevin Ross

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to
The Ladies,
of course.

Mesdames, my work is done. Your story is told.
Now if you would be so kind as to leave me be...?

Introduction

Macbeth: “How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags! What is’t you do?”

Three Witches: “A deed without a name.”

—William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*

This section offers advice on how to use these scenarios in a campaign, including information on the nature of the book’s main antagonists, The Sorrows. Readers are warned that this section is intended for Keepers only, so if you plan to take part in these adventures as a player, you should stop reading immediately.

Using These Adventures

The scenarios in *Our Ladies of Sorrow* are set in the modern day United States; the urban setting of the first scenario is left vague enough that it can be moved to whatever city or state the Keeper desires, but the second and third pieces — set in the desert of the American southwest and a midwestern river city, respectively — would require considerable alteration if they were to be moved elsewhere. While the adventures are intended to be played in the order they appear in the book, the individual Keeper may, with some alterations, use them in any order; note however that some events that transpire in the later scenarios are foreshadowed in the childrens’ drawings found in the first chapter, “Tenebrarum”.

The Keeper is urged to mix the Sorrows scenarios in with other modern day adventures in his campaign, allowing this storyline to develop gradually, rather than having three consecutive scenarios coincidentally feature the three Sorrows. Books such as *The Stars Are Right!* and *Unseen Masters* feature a variety of good modern day Call of Cthulhu adventures with which to augment those included here.

These adventures feature threats that tend toward the psychological rather than the physical. Because of this, smaller groups of investigators — perhaps as few as one — can play in these adventures. For smaller investigative parties the Keeper might have to slightly reduce the levels of Sanity loss called for, in addition to altering the efficacy and numbers of any physical threats encountered.

The Sorrows and Delta Green

Pagan Publishing’s Delta Green is by far the most popular modern setting for Call of Cthulhu, and prospective Keepers may wish to run *Our Ladies of Sorrow* within that setting. This can be done with a minimum of fuss, really. The opening of the first scenario, “House of Shadows,” can take place as written, as the agents are finishing an unrelated operation — or perhaps the events of “Tenebrarum” develop concurrently with the other op. The amateur paranormal investigators of Phenomen-X would also find the haunting of The Three Sisters building of great interest; again, they too might be investigating another story in the city where “House of Shadows”

is set when Frank Ryder meets his doom. The paranormal writer Richard Ahern might be a member of Phenomen-X, or at least a contact of theirs. Regardless of the investigators’ affiliations, the first scenario can probably unfold largely as written.

Keepers may wish to make any of the following slight alterations in the “Suspriorum” chapter. The opening hook, where an investigator’s aunt asks her nephew for help in finding a friends’ missing son, might be changed so that the aunt is instead a high-ranking contact or other agent; or the agents may simply be sent to investigate the hikers’ disappearance as a Night at the Opera. There may be Delta Green “friendlies” in the offices of the Mohave County Sheriff or the Hualapai Nation Tribal Police Department; these individuals might facilitate the flow of information, and may be able to offer personnel to assist in some cases. Delta Green backing may also pick up the tab for vehicle and equipment expenses, including aerial searches. Sadly, none of their Delta Green contacts and gear will help the investigators when it comes down to facing Mater Suspriorum... And once again, the long history of mysterious disappearances in the Sighing Desert might be of interest to Phenomen-X.

The presence of the legendary La Llorona in “River of Tears” is another sure-fire lure for Phenomen-X. Richard Ahern can either be a Phenomen-X staffer or affiliate (or a Delta Green friendly); Ahern’s role in this scenario’s “hook” might also be replaced with another Delta Green agent or Phenomen-X correspondent, if desired. Agents with credentials (real or otherwise) from FEMA, Homeland Security, or Immigration Services might find some doors in flood-plagued Baleford easier to open. Once again, however, there really isn’t much their contacts can do to help when it comes to dealing with Mater Lachrymarum, though such contacts might help unravel some of the legal consequences afterward.

In short, most of the alterations needed to run *Our Ladies of Sorrow* within a Delta Green campaign are fairly cosmetic. The investigators’ contacts may make for slight differences in the scenario hooks and help in the flow of information, but won’t be much help when it comes to actually confronting The Sorrows.

The Nature of The Sorrows

The antagonists of *Our Ladies of Sorrow* are not Cthulhu Mythos creatures per se, though they are similar in many ways, and may in fact be yet another form of a very prominent Mythos entity. This sounds vague, and this ambiguity is deliberate. By not restricting The Sorrows to a single concrete explanation the individual Keeper can decide how much of the mythological background he wants to use, and how closely he wants to tie them to the Cthulhu Mythos.

There are three Sorrows. Mater Tenebrarum, the Mother of Darkness, is considered the youngest and most fearsome; perhaps as a result of her own torrid temperament, she dotes on the insane, the morbid, and the suicidal. Mater Suspriorum, the Mother of Sighs, the seemingly meek middle sister,

watches over the outcast, the scandalized, the isolated, the hopeless. The oldest of the three, Mater Lachrymarum, is the Mother of Tears; she is the patroness of mourning, grief and loss, especially with regard to the death of a child, and her demeanor ranges from paralyzed anguish to murderous rage.

The moods of all three Sorrows are wildly unpredictable, raging one minute, mocking the next, perhaps bordering on compassion the next. They claim to be mankind's stewards, watching over each and every man, woman, and child from birth to death. They claim they are omniscient, or close to it.

At the most basic level, The Sorrows are incredibly ancient spirits who have existed on Earth at least since the dawn of man. At some point these entities took note of the first humans and found that they could feed off the emotions of these early hominids. As the legend states "When Man first began to dream, THEY were there to plague him," for of all human emotions The Sorrows found that suffering gave them the most satisfaction. They mostly stayed out of man's sight, but they were never far from his thoughts. As mankind prospered, his limited knowledge of The Sorrows inspired him to depict them in myth, legend, and art. They became titans, goddesses, and mother figures — maiden, mother, and crone, sister, wife, and lover, witch, seeress, and wise woman, castrating monster, night-loving demon, vampire and hag, Fate, Fury, Muse, Gorgon, Norn, and an infinite number of others. It's possible that The Sorrows are at the root of every female triumvirate of legend, either already possessing the traits that inspired the myths or taking them on to further their dreadful reputation.

With such a wide range of identities and origins, it's also assumed that there may be several avatars of each of the individual Sorrows active AT THE SAME TIME. Though the death of one or more of these avatars won't affect any of the others, nor any of the other Sorrows, the surviving avatars and Sorrows may be aware of their "sister"'s death. Whether or not they ever act upon such knowledge is unknown: they are infinite, immortal, and often fickle by nature.

Perversely, this book also suggests that the three Sorrows are not really three different entities, but are themselves avatars of a single entity. Like the individual Sorrows, this entity is a creature of darkness, dreams, magic, and death, and has preyed on mankind for millennia. One such possibility for the identity of this creature would be Adam's first wife, Lilith. Spurning her husband, Lilith journeyed into the wastes, where she became the consort of demons, the mother of monsters, and the slayer of human children. She also became known for sexually attacking men, particularly in their dreams.

Another more likely possible ultimate identity of The Sorrows is the Greek titan/goddess Hecate. Hecate was the goddess of darkness, ghosts, crossroads, and magic, and (with Artemis and Selene) a triple goddess. Her three-fold statues often bore the raging heads of a snake, horse, and dog. She also shares characteristics with the various avatars of The Sorrows: like the Furies, she carries a whip and a torch; like the Gorgons she is sometimes depicted with snakes in her hair.

Ultimately, this book strongly suggests that if The Sorrows are not in fact three independent entities, that they are in fact avatars of Hecate, in much the same way that the Furies, for instance, are avatars of The Sorrows. Or, to confuse matters further, Hecate may be just another avatar of The Sorrows, rather than vice versa. Whatever the case, this book's Epilogue suggests that there is a direct relationship between Hecate and The Sorrows.

A final option is left to the individual Keeper: the descriptions of both Lilith and Hecate suggest a Cthulhu Mythos explanation for the ultimate identity of The Sorrows — Nyarlathotep. Hecate in particular seems like a heretofore neglected avatar of the Crawling Chaos, with her magical, nocturnal, necromantic reputation.

It may seem odd that such powerful creatures as The Sorrows would also take on mundane human forms, as they do in these scenarios. But it is with these forms that they do their most profound work, directly interacting with their chosen prey — man. In most cases these human forms are taken by simple possession, often temporary but sometimes permanent; the possessed person may be completely unaware that his or her actions were driven by The Sorrows. Alternately one of The Sorrows may take on the guise of a dead person who seemed appropriate to their nature, as in the *Suspatorium* and *Lachrymarum* chapters. Or they may simply create a completely new avatar; how careful The Sorrows are in manufacturing a paper trail background for such a new face may depend on how long they wish to use this form, or how easily they want their ruse to be detected by their prey. Remember, they are nothing if not capricious.

Much more information on Hecate, Lilith, the various avatars of The Sorrows, and other related entities (Fates, Furies, etc) is given in the appendix entitled "The Three Sisters." Pertinent information on the individual Sorrows is given in each scenario.

The Sorrows and Dreams

Readers of this book will quickly note that each chapter includes several dreams that may be experienced by the investigators. As stated above, The Sorrows took note of man when he first began to dream, and the few people who know of them — albeit vaguely at best — know them through dreams. These dreams are triggered when individuals come in close contact with The Sorrows, and may in fact be the Mothers' way of finding potential victims. While many of these dreams and nightmares are triggered involuntarily, without The Sorrows' effort, others are sent deliberately by them to harry their prey.

The Keeper should also bear in mind that while many of the dreams featured in this book are described in realistic terms, real-life dreams have a tendency to be illogical, surreal, unreal, and nonsensical. When running these dreams and nightmares for the players, the Keeper should use the descriptions from the text as guidelines for the individual dream's message or activities. Scenes may begin or end abruptly; char-

acters — including fellow investigators — may appear, disappear, be replaced by other characters, and so forth; time, weather, and setting may change moment to moment. In short, dreams shouldn't be played simply as "scenes that don't count" in the real world, but as unreal events that deliver clues or scares in their own bizarre fashion.

What About the Cthulhu Mythos?

Readers may have realized by now that *Our Ladies of Sorrow* is very different from most Call of Cthulhu adventures. Not only are there virtually no Cthulhoid entities within these pages, but many of the usual Mythos trappings are absent as well. Gone are the secret cults, the arcane tomes of elder lore and eldritch magic, the old abandoned houses hiding monstrous secrets, the tainted family lineage, and the crazed sorcerer-priests of the apocalypse. Hopefully this isn't too off-putting. The Keeper just has to bear in mind that this book was written to recreate the type of supernatural horror found in M.R. James' ghost stories or the recent Japanese horror films, rather than the cosmic nightmares of Lovecraft and his disciples.

Regardless of these thematic differences, these adventures play out much like regular Cthulhu investigations: interviewing witnesses and interested parties, researching building records and missing persons reports, searching buildings and desolate landscapes, reading strange books and letters and notes, viewing weird art and photographs and videos, and so forth. The difference is, these investigations don't point to Cthulhoid sources, but to even more mysterious supernatural ones.

A few Mythos elements ARE featured herein, however. All the adventures feature optional quotes from Mythos tomes pertinent to the subject at hand. The desert-dwelling servitors of Mater Suspiriorum in chapter two are sand dwellers with slight cosmetic alterations. Finally, as mentioned before, it is strongly implied that the three Sorrows may in fact be a single individual, the goddess Hecate, and that she is very likely to be an avatar of dark Nyarlathotep.

If the Keeper wishes to tie The Sorrows more closely to the Cthulhu Mythos, he or she is advised to create additional Mythos tome quotes and references that make correspondences such as those between Hecate and Nyarlathotep, for instance, more explicit. The Sorrows could also be described as being among Nyarlathotep's Million Favored Ones. Whether or not any of these explicit Mythos ties offer any tangible benefit in dealing with The Sorrows is left for the Keeper to determine.

Bending the Rules (Or Just Breaking Them)

Since this is a book for Call of Cthulhu that largely ignores Cthulhu Mythos trappings, readers may have guessed that things are going to be handled a bit differently here. To a certain degree this should extend to the way the Keeper runs these adventures. Despite the fact that these scenarios are by

and large not particularly lethal, there may be times when an unlucky investigator makes just the wrong choice or die roll and runs the risk of ending up dead. Unless he or she has done something truly stupid or otherwise deserving of his fate, or his death adds something to the story, the Keeper is urged to keep him alive, perhaps avoiding death and surviving with barely a hit point or two left, or receiving a glancing/incapacitating blow rather than a fatal one. The author's philosophy has always been that it's much more fun to keep a player character alive to torment him further rather than to accept the dice-determined kill. This is especially true if that character is somehow important to the plot, say possessed of some information the other investigators are unaware of, or, in the case of these adventures, if he is an intended target of one of The Sorrows. Naturally, the Keeper should feel free to penalize the reprieved character in some way, perhaps with a negative modifier to further rolls during this scenario, or a wound or insanity effect that lingers long afterward.

In a similar manner, Keepers are encouraged to dispense clues and other information regardless of die rolling and missed skill rolls. As before, investigators can be penalized for failing to discover this information on their own, again perhaps through modifiers to subsequent die rolls and especially by disallowing skill checks for missed skill rolls.

Likewise, the Keeper should also be flexible with regard to The Sorrows' powers. It's already established that they are virtually omniscient; at the very least, since they are goddesses, or nearly so, they are able to read minds effortlessly. The "Tenebrarum" chapter features a classic "cheat," with Mater Tenebrarum appearing in two forms at once as a means of deflecting suspicion away from herself. The Keeper shouldn't be afraid to bend the rules in favor of The Sorrows in order to produce a good story. Just don't overdo it: remember, this is all just a big game being played by bored, somewhat sadistic immortals. They can afford to lose now and then, and may even bear grudging respect to a worthy or sympathetic victim.

All this is left to the individual Keeper's discretion. A good rule of thumb is always "Unless the players have done something stupid, go easy on them, especially if an investigator's death is involved. And don't kill them when keeping them alive means you can torment them further."

Know Your Investigators

Each of the scenarios in this book features one of The Sorrows, each of whom has a preferred type of target upon whom she likes to prey. In some scenarios the Sorrow has an intended non-player character target she is tormenting whom the investigators must rescue from the Sorrow's clutches. But in all the scenarios, The Sorrows eventually turn their attentions to the potential new prey who may be interfering with them: the investigators.

Since each Sorrow has a certain type of personality she likes to prey upon, the Keeper should try to target her attacks against a likely player character target. This requires a little thinking on the part of the Keeper, and may require a little

character development between Keeper and player. Chapter one's Mater Tenebrarum, for instance, targets the morbid, the insane, and the suicidal. The Keeper should determine which of the player characters, if any, would be a likely target of the Mater's dire attentions. Has one of the investigators gone insane for a lengthy period of time? Has one seemed obsessed with gaining Mythos lore? If so, that investigator would be a prime target for Mater Tenebrarum, the consequences of which are discussed during that chapter.

Mater Lachrymarum's potential targets are fairly obvious: which investigators have children? And who's taking care of them? On the other hand, she may actually be somewhat sympathetic toward an investigator who has previously lost a child in some manner.

Mater Suspiriorum's attentions are a little more subtle, however, and for this reason the Keeper should work with each player to learn a little bit more about their investigators. Before playing any of these scenarios, spend some time discussing the investigator's background. Find out what his or her family life is like. Does he get along with his parents/spouse/children? Does he have many friends? What is the most shameful thing he's ever done? Has he been involved in some sort of scandal, public or otherwise? Is there some secret he hides, perhaps even from his investigator allies? Is there some other factor, whether personal or sociological, that makes a given investigator an "outsider" or outcast in some way? Do a little prodding, searching for or developing fears or flaws or weaknesses for your investigators. None of these things need necessarily be used, but they will help when it comes time to choose who Mater Suspiriorum singles out during her chapter.

Book One:

HOUSE OF SHADOWS

Tenebrarum



"We were there when you first came into this world. Do you remember? My sister held you in her arms, while my sister gently opened your eyelids with her thumb. And I blew the first breath into your lungs. Likewise will we be there on your dying day. My sister will hold your hand, my sister will kiss your lips and draw the last breath from your lungs. And I? It will be my hand that stills your heart."

This, the first of The Sorrows scenarios, takes place in any medium- to large-sized city or town of the Keeper's choosing. The city in question must be large enough to support a college or university, even a small one. The main setting of this adventure is a multi-story apartment building, and it is assumed there are similar buildings elsewhere in the city. The Keeper should also bear in mind the city is large enough to support at least two used bookstores. From these meager requirements, a safe estimate would be a minimum population of at least 15,000 to 20,000 people. Using these guidelines, the Keeper should feel free to situate House of Shadows wherever it would fit in his campaign, be it a medium-sized midwestern college town or a quieter neighborhood in a busy metropolitan area.

House of Shadows begins with one or more of the investigators sitting in a diner or coffeeshop one afternoon. The investigators may be between cases, merely relaxing, having lunch, chatting with friends or spouses, or whatever. Alternately, they may be tying up the loose ends in another investigation which they have just finished elsewhere in this city. Whether or not the investigators are natives of the city in question is immaterial, as are their reasons for being in the diner.

Any number of investigators of any occupation and any degree of experience can enjoy this adventure, though larger numbers may find the physical threat level too low to pose much challenge. Groups of three to four investigators would be optimal, and even a group of only one or two might find this a pleasantly harrowing experience.

The Keeper should keep track of how much Sanity is lost by each of the investigators during the course of this adventure. If more than 20 Sanity points are lost by a single individual, it could be of importance in the scenario's final stage.

Keeper Information

The apartment building known as The Three Sisters, located just a short distance from where the scenario begins, is home to an avatar of Mater Tenebrarum, the Mother of Darkness. This immortal creature has lived in the building off and on for nearly a century, taking on various guises as she haunted the residents, driving many to despair, madness, and even death. Like all three of The Sorrows, Mater Tenebrarum has many such avatars throughout the world, each independent of the others. One guise Tenebrarum assumes is an old hag whose form is that of the long dead Elizabeth Salmon, one of the three sisters who financed the construction of the apartment building which was named after them. Another form is a young college student named Madeline "Maddie" Mercier, who currently lives in The Three Sisters.

Mater Tenebrarum haunts the sleeping and the waking alike. By night she glides the halls of the building as Elizabeth Salmon, often using a Hand of Glory to deepen the slumber of the residents. She then enters the apartments of one or more tenants, hovering over them and sating her appetite on the nightmares her presence causes. These frightening experiences are vaguely recalled by the victims the next day, but so far no one realizes how widespread these nightmares are, nor that the dreams resemble the hag

riding attacks of folklore and the Old Hag sleep disorder.

Mater Tenebrarum usually dons the form of Maddie Mercier, and it is in this guise that she launches her most devastating assaults. At present, Maddie is dating another resident of The Three Sisters, a young journalist named Kurt Winter. Winter is something of a loner, and suffers from depression, and Mater Tenebrarum intends to capitalize on these weaknesses in order to drive Winter further into despair, and eventually death—another plaything drained of usefulness for her cruel amusement.

Winter is not Mater Tenebrarum's only target within The Three Sisters, however. An aging, once famous writer named Frank Ryder has also lived there several years, and he too has been plagued by Tenebrarum. The old man has been befriended by Kurt Winter, their companionship raising the spirits of both—to the annoyance of the Dark Mother. Worse, Winter and Ryder have discussed their similar nightmares, and have begun to suspect the Three Sisters building is haunted. But the Mother of Darkness has turned the friendship to her advantage, seducing Ryder in order to destroy his will, and eventually intending to reveal the tryst to Winter to crush him as well.

Unfortunately, Maddie hadn't counted on the old writer's sense of loyalty. As the scenario begins, Ryder has just informed Maddie he intends to confess their infidelity to Winter. Angry, and fearing this might soften the blow she wanted to deliver more cruelly herself, Mater Tenebrarum decides to kill Ryder. As Ryder sets out on foot to meet with Winter elsewhere in the city, the Mother of Darkness follows, in the guise of Elizabeth Salmon.

Ryder's mysterious death—he is apparently chased to his death in traffic by an old woman whom only they have seen—and his cryptic last words should lead the investigators to delve into the old man's past. One way or another, perhaps by following the sinister woman after the accident, the investigators find themselves at the building called The Three Sisters. There they enter the web of Mater Tenebrarum, the Mother of Darkness. And as they delve into the building's history and its inhabitants, the investigators become her playthings. With Kurt Winter spiralling deeper into depression, and other residents and even outsiders running afoul of her baleful will, can the investigators avoid being bewitched into madness and death?

Investigator Information

As stated earlier, the investigators begin this scenario sitting in a small diner, cafe, or coffeeshop one afternoon. The circumstances that brought them here are unimportant. They are seated at a table or in a booth next to a large window with a clear view of the sidewalk and street beyond. The flow of pedestrians and traffic is unremarkably normal.

The Accident

As they sit talking, an elderly man, bespectacled and slim, walks by on a cane, dressed in a sport coat, jeans, and an aged fedora. With a successful Spot Hidden an investigator makes note of him from the time he comes in view, otherwise little attention is paid to the man when he halts and turns around to face the way he

came. Again, if the initial Spot Hidden failed, no one notices the man talking with an equally elderly woman wearing a shapeless dark gray dress.

The conversation cannot be heard through the glass, but seems normal enough, and other passersby pay them no heed. Allow a second Spot Hidden roll, and if successful the investigator sees the old man's demeanor change to sharp surprise, even dismay, while the woman smiles. The man becomes increasingly disturbed the more the woman speaks, and he begins to argue with her and back away from her even as she steps closer to him. As their voices raise, investigators can hear them arguing, unintelligibly, through the thick window.

A successful Listen roll allows an investigator to hear the old man saying something to the effect of "You!? It can't be! No! No! It can't—" Then he hurriedly backs away, between two vehicles parked on the curb, directly into the path of an oncoming van. Braking suddenly, the van strikes the old man, snapping his body forward and hurling him, doll-like, against the back of a car parked nearby. The battered body crumples to the pavement, motionless. The old woman turns toward the diner window, for the first time noticing the investigators. She smiles cruelly, turns and walks back the way she came.

Anyone witnessing the accident and seeing the woman's bizarre reaction loses 0/1 points of Sanity.

The diner becomes a beehive of activity as people leap to their feet and move toward the windows and door for a better look. The investigators can push through the throng at the door to get outside, where they have three possible courses of action: either see to the old man, talk to the driver, or try to follow the strange woman.

The Victim

The old man lies on the edge of the street, between the parked car and the van. Passersby have stopped to aid him, possibly keeping investigators from getting too close. An investigator claiming to be a physician or EMT can get close and tend to the man.

The fallen man is barely conscious and largely unresponsive. A Medicine or halved Idea roll indicates he is fatally injured. There are deep gashes on his temple and scalp, blood runs freely from his mouth, and one arm and both legs are broken, one break a terrible compound fracture at the knee. A further Medicine roll surmises that he has several broken ribs and a punctured lung. His breathing is ragged, and he is coughing on his own blood. Death is imminent.

The man manages to focus his last few seconds of life into a few whispered words. "Three...three sisters...no! No, she's...she's dangerous...can't..." He exhales raggedly and dies. Anyone who tends to the man or otherwise views his wounds and his subsequent death loses 0/1D3 Sanity points. Occupations such as policeman, soldier, physician, or EMT are immune to this loss.

The Driver

The driver of the small van is a woman in her thirties, aghast at what has happened. Panicking, she joins the crowd around the dying man, repeating over and over "I didn't see him! Oh my God!"

He just stepped out of nowhere! I didn't see him! Oh my God!"

Her name is Susan Simon, and she was on her way to pick up her daughter from school. She saw no old woman with the old man, but then she didn't even see the old man until he stepped into the street between the parked cars.

The Police

The police arrive within a few minutes. Initially, two pairs of patrolmen drive off the gawkers, examine the body, interview the driver, and begin asking for witness information.

Any investigators making a successful Listen roll while eavesdropping on the witness statements note that no one mentions the old woman who seemed to have frightened the old man into running into traffic. If none of the investigators catch this, a Psychology roll made while investigators make their own statement to the patrolmen notes the cops are surprised at the mention of the old woman. If asked, they claim that no one else saw an old woman. Nevertheless the patrolmen take down the old woman's description too.

As the EMTs load the body into the back of the ambulance, another Listen roll hears one of them identify the dead man as Frank Ryder, age seventy-four. A check of a local phonebook finds a listing for a Frank Ryder with an address of 401 21st Street, just a few blocks from here.

The Old Woman

If one or more of the investigators decide to pursue the old woman, they need to make a Spot Hidden roll on leaving the diner. With a successful roll, they see her nearly 100 yards away, a distance she couldn't possibly have covered in the few seconds since they last saw her. She is walking away from them at a casual pace, and soon turns a corner. Sprinting to the corner, trying to keep pace, a Spot Hidden roll is again needed to see her. Somehow she has outpaced them and is now nearly a block away.

Allow a CON x5 roll to sprint and halve the gap between them before she turns yet another corner. No Spot Hidden is needed this time as they round the corner to find she has outpaced them *again*, and is walking up the steps of an apartment building.

As she reaches the top of the steps, a random pursuing investigator should make a POW x1 roll. If they succeed they feel momentarily dizzy. Failing, they find they must stop in their tracks, breath gone, chest tight, their whole body chilled. The paralysis lasts only a few seconds, and in the meantime the crone enters the building.

Entering the building, the investigators find a wide hallway inside, with stairs at the far end of the hall. Just inside the door to the left is a bank of numbered mail boxes.

A plain looking woman in her sixties is getting her mail, and seems startled by the investigators' entry. If asked, she says she saw no one come through the lobby. If asked about an old woman who might live there, she claims not to know, and a Psychology roll notes her growing suspicion and fear of the intruders. A successful Fast Talk roll or some form of proof of a reliable or official authority (police, doctor, EMT, FBI, etc.) is necessary to keep her from quickly begging out of the interview and hurrying into her

apartment, just across the hall.

If calmed, the woman introduces herself as Connie Duke. She wonders what this is all about, and if told about the accident and the old couple, she claims there is no such couple living here—other than her and her sixty-six year old husband. There is an old man and an old woman in the building, but they don't live together, and don't keep each other's company. The woman's description rings no bells, but if the victim is described she cries "Oh! That sounds like Mr. Ryder! Oh, I hope it's not him. Such a nice old gentleman." She tells them Ryder lives on the third floor, number 11. The old woman she mentioned, Mrs. Morangello, lives across the hall in number 10. Connie has nothing else of importance to add.

If the investigators decide to check on these third floor tenants, they find an elevator at the back of the hall next to the staircase. Each floor has four apartments. On the third floor, numbers 10 and 11 are close to the front of the building. Knocking at number 11's locked door raises no one. If the investigators are crass enough to break into the dead man's apartment moments after his death, the Keeper should feel free to have them arrested. Knocking at number 10 eventually brings to the door a stooped, wizened little woman with a plump belly and a halo of frizzy gray hair—clearly *not* the woman seen earlier. She is curt with the investigators, a Psychology roll noting her suspicion of strangers. A print of Jesus and a crucifix can be seen hanging on the walls of her apartment. She claims to know nothing of Ryder's whereabouts or any old woman he may have been seen with, and in any case ends the interview abruptly, closing and locking her door.

If the investigators decide to search the building for the vanished woman, allow them to meet one or two other residents, but not Kurt Winter. But before too long the building's superintendent, Todd Beach, finds them. Beach is stout, tough looking, and suspicious of strangers in his building. Again, if the investigators can show some sign of authority, Beach's reactions won't be as testy. But regardless of who they are, and why they're here, there's nothing he or they can do. News of Ryder's death is an unpleas-

ant surprise to Beach, but it's a police matter now. If the investigators don't leave soon after Beach encounters them, the super calls the cops to report suspicious characters hanging around.

With their pursuit of the creepy old woman at an apparent dead end, the investigators are left to rejoin their fellows back at the cafe. As they leave they may note the building's address, 401 21st Street, and the large, faded decorative mosaic across the front of the building just above the first floor—three women in dressed in flowing Greek or Roman styled robes.

The First Night

By the time the investigators have regrouped it is late afternoon, at least. While there may still be time for them to do some research on the dead man or the Three Sisters building, they may not see a need for haste. Let them carry out the evening's activities as they desire.

Once they've gone to bed, all investigators present at the old man's death should roll POW x3. Any failed rolls, or the highest if all rolls succeed, results in a Night Hag attack, described below. At least one investigator should suffer this nightmare experience, and the Keeper is of course free to rule that any or all the investigators should suffer it. These attacks occur regardless of the investigators' sleeping arrangements, no matter where they are, even if they are sleeping in the same bed as another person.

The Nightmare

Randomly determine the time of night each investigator has this dream, even if it means some dreams occur simultaneously.

At some point during the night, the afflicted investigator awakens with a start. A Listen roll allows an investigator to hear light footsteps from an adjacent room or hallway—but the investigator is unable to move, even to turn his head to see who or what it is. No matter how much they struggle, they are paralyzed, with



a resultant loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

As the footsteps approach, a POW x5 roll reveals a dark hazy human shape approaching the bed. Failing the roll, the investigator never sees their assailant. The shape crawls onto the bed atop the paralyzed sleeper, calling for a further loss of 1/1D3 Sanity points, as he or she feels the breath being crushed out of them as the thing flattens itself onto their chest.

If the first POW roll was successful, a second POW x5 lets the terrified victim see through the dark hazy features to see—mere inches away—the malevolent, grinning face of the old woman they saw in the street earlier today. Anyone actually seeing the demented crone loses another 1/1D3 Sanity points.

Throughout the ordeal the investigator is unable to move or speak, with the attack lasting anywhere from a few minutes to nearly an hour. When the nightmare entity finally withdraws, it leaves the investigator weak, temporarily drained of 1D10 Magic Points and out of breath, now able to move and speak, but unsure of whether this was real or a dream. If an investigator is reduced to 0 or fewer Magic Points they will not awake for a number of hours equal to the Magic Point loss, regardless of any and all attempts to rouse them.

Anyone in bed with the victim sleeps through the event without being disturbed. There is no physical evidence of the attack to be found; doors and windows are locked and secure. A successful Sanity roll allows the victim to write off the experience as no more than a bad dream, and his or her Sanity losses are halved, dropping any fractions.

An investigator making a Psychology or Occult roll realizes the victim has suffered what is called night hag, or old hag attack, sometimes referred to as “hag riding.” These nightmares occur worldwide, and were originally believed to be caused by witches or hags sitting on the chest of sleepers while drawing the breath and life from them. The investigators can research this phenomenon further, as discussed in the following section. If any of the investigators learn that their comrades had similar nightmares, all who had the dreams lose 0/1 points of Sanity.

Investigations

Hopefully the investigators are intrigued enough to delve further into these strange events—the old man’s mysterious death and cryptic final words, the sinister crone no one else seems to have seen, and the awful nightmares one or more of them may have suffered. The most likely avenues of investigation are the victim, the nightmare, and the building, each discussed below.

The Victim Frank Ryder

The morning paper carries a brief item about the traffic accident that took the life of seventy-four year old Frank Ryder. See the *Tenebrarum Papers #1*. No charges are pending, as it appeared the man stepped into oncoming traffic well outside of a crosswalk. Ryder is described as a retired writer of detective and science fic-

tion novels, popular in the late 50s, 60s, and early 70s. No titles are listed. Authorities are requesting help in locating any next of kin.

A couple hours of library research discovers that Ryder won several awards for his mystery and science fiction books throughout the 1960s. His detective novels—*Penny’s Boat*, *White Flags*, *The Blameless*, *The Smoking Jacket*, *Bullet Dance*, and *No Shirt, No Shoes, No Alibi*—were a mixture of *noir* and *psychedelia*. His science fiction—*Retro Grade*, *Fire on High*, *The Star Knight*, and *The Oyster Men*—often dealt with time travel and galactic politics in a similarly surreal manner. Several of the mystery novels were optioned for films, as were a few of his science fiction works, but nothing ever came of these potentially lucrative deals. His output had decreased considerably over the past couple decades as markets dried up and tastes changed. The big publishers deserted him, leaving him to reprint several of his most popular works with small specialty presses. Fortunately, Ryder managed his finances well, and was able to live fairly comfortably.

With a successful Library or Internet Use roll, an investigator turns up a reference to Ryder’s parents fleeing Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Another roll reveals that Ryder was born Franz Reuter in Germany in 1934, and that his parents fled the country in 1944. They emigrated to America, where they changed their name to avoid the stigma associated with the fascist government they hated. His mother worked as a nurse, his father as a metal worker, and they put Franz through college in their new hometown of Chicago. Both parents died in the 1950s, Karl Ryder of complications from a foundry accident, his wife Vernaline a few years later of cancer.

Frank never married and for much of his career had a reputation as a shy but prolific ladies’ man. He moved to this city nearly twenty years ago, and has lived in the Three Sisters for about four years. From their researches, the investigators find no

Tenebrarum Papers #1

an article from the local newspaper

Man Dies in Traffic Mishap

Frank Ryder, 74 years old, died in a traffic accident yesterday after stumbling off a curb and into the path of a van driven by Susan Simon.

The elderly Ryder, who walked with the aid of a cane, was described by witnesses as suddenly plunging off the sidewalk directly into the path of the van.

Frank Ryder, a resident of the Three Sisters apartment building at 401 21st Street, was a semi-retired writer who had enjoyed some success writing detective and science fiction novels in 1950s, 60s, and 70s. It is not known if he had any next of kin, and authorities are requesting help locating any relatives of the man.

Police have ruled the death an accident, and no charges are pending against the driver.

references to any living relatives of Ryder.

If the investigators have contacts within the police department, they find the police have little to add. A Fast Talk roll might glean the name and address of the van's driver, Susan Simon, a housewife who has no useful information. Like all the other witnesses, she didn't see an old woman talking to the deceased, and didn't even see Ryder until he stepped out in front of her. The cops are unable to find any next of kin, and they're not optimistic, either. They're treating the case as a simple traffic mishap.

The Nightmares

Researching the awful nightmares suffered by one or more of their number, the investigators find it a common phenomenon. A successful Library or Internet Use roll discovers that as many as 15% of the populace have suffered at least one such attack in their lives. The symptoms are disturbingly familiar: paralysis, the sound of footsteps, a visible or invisible entity, a crushing weight on the chest and loss of breath, frightening faces or eyes, and eventual release and awakening. Folklore explanations include being ridden by a witch or hag, sexual attacks by incubus or succubus, or demonic sendings via magic. Scientific explanations include poor digestion, sleep disorder, and sexual repression. An Idea roll notes the hag attacks are vaguely similar to tales of alien abductions.

Another successful Library Use roll turns up a book on the subject: David J. Hufford's *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* from University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. This book contains descriptions of dozens of night hag attacks—some quite harrowing—and is equal parts psychological and folklore study. It can be read in 20-EDU +1 days, and adds 2 points to Psychoanalysis, 3 points to Psychology, and 2 points to Occult. The Tenebrarum Papers #2 contains a quoted passage outlining the common elements and other information about old hag attacks.

"The Three Sisters", 401 21st Street

The tenement is located in an old part of town largely given over to small businesses and a few apartment buildings similar to The Three Sisters. Within a few minutes' walking distance is the small diner or coffeshop where the scenario begins, a Chinese restaurant, a Mexican taqueria, a franchise sub shop, two pizza parlors, a dry cleaner's store, a pawn shop, an accountant, a bank, a men's clothing store, an appliance store, a photo developer, a used CD and record shop, a copy and print shop, two tattoo and piercing parlors, three hair salons, two convenience stores, an old hotel, and an automobile repair shop. The neighborhood is old and run-down, but not yet given over to squalor and crime. A fair amount of the area's business is derived from the college or university the

town hosts, whose campus is several blocks from here.

The viewer's first impression of The Three Sisters is the large mosaic design above the ground floor: three maidens in flowing robes of white, green, and blue. The old tenement appears well over a century old, and a Spot Hidden notes what appears to be old soot and fire damage to the uppermost floors of the structure's five stories, the result of a devastating fire in 1913. The building is bordered on the south and west by 21st and Sumner Streets. There are fire escapes on the north and south sides of the building, the former letting out onto the roof of the empty single story building that adjoins The Three Sisters. A narrow alley runs north and south behind the building.

Whenever the investigators visit the Three Sisters, they draw the attention of the building's manager, Todd Beach. Beach is on the site almost twenty-four hours a day, seeing to the everyday maintenance of the building. He won't hesitate to call the police if he becomes suspicious of strangers. Likewise, if any of the residents complain about the investigators' presence, Beach not only informs the police, but Lilah Starrett, the building's owner, as well.

The First Floor

Apartment 1: Bill and Connie Duke

The Dukes are Bill, sixty-six, retired from the railroad, and Connie, sixty-one, a part-time university secretary. They have lived here for seven years, having moved in shortly after Bill took early retirement. Bill is white-haired, tall, slim, and ruddy faced. Friendly and outgoing, he enjoys playing golf with other railroad employees and retirees. Connie is short, stout, and also amiable, and loves to cook. She often babysits resident Naomi Wills, whom Connie adores. Typical items in their apartment are old cookbooks and recipes, and golf and retirement magazines.

Unknown to Connie, Bill has had a handful of night hag attacks like the ones the investigators have experienced. He hasn't thought too much about them, thinking them simple nightmares. If asked about any strange experiences he may have had within the building, he won't even think of these dreams, but if specifically asked about nightmares, a Psychology roll might notice his startled reaction. Even if pressed he won't discuss them, but if an investigator can interview him away from Connie—perhaps during a round of golf or over a couple beers—he'll be willing to talk.

In all respects the nightmares are typical of old hag experiences. Mere bad dreams to him, it's been quite a few months since he last had one. The hag was an invisible presence in Bill's nightmares.

Bill Duke, retired railroad engineer, 66

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 11

DEX 12 APP 13 EDU 17 SAN 55 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Golf Club 35% 1D8+db.

Skills: Accounting 35%, Bargain 30%, Credit Rating 55%,

Tenebrarum Papers #2a passage from *The Terror That Comes in the Night*

The following outline summarizes the initial findings concerning the nature and frequency of the experience.

I. Description**A. Primary features (definitive)**

1. subjective impression of wakefulness
2. immobility variously perceived (paralysis, restraint, fear of moving)
3. realistic perception of actual environment
4. Fear

B. Secondary features (reported more than once, most experiences contain at least one, often more)

1. supine position (very common)
2. feeling of presence (common)
3. feeling of pressure, usually on chest (common)
4. numinous quality (common)
5. fear of death (somewhat common)

II. Frequency and distribution

- A. Overall: 23 percent of sample
- B. By sex: the difference in number of positive reports is not significant
- C. Pattern of recurrence
 1. once only or once and occasionally, with intervals of months or years (most common)
 2. one or more “runs” of frequent attacks lasting one or two weeks (sometimes)
 3. frequent chronic attacks over a long period (rarely)

History 45%, Law 35%, Listen 40%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Natural History 40%, Operate Heavy Machinery (Locomotive) 60%, Play Golf 60%, Spot Hidden 35%, Languages: English 65%.

Connie Duke, secretary, 61

STR 11 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 18 SAN 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0**Weapons:** All at base percentages.

Skills: Art (Cooking) 70%, Computer Use 30%, Craft (Sewing) 65%, Credit Rating 40%, First Aid 45%, Law 20%, Listen 55%, Psychology 35%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Languages: English 70%.**Apartment 2: Leo and Carla Boyd**

Leo Boyd is a maintenance worker at the local university. His wife Carla works at Big Time Books & More, a store that sells new &

used books, records, and CDs. Big Time is described in a later section about the neighborhood's two book stores. The couple have lived in The Three Sisters for just under two years, during which time both have had a handful of night hag experiences. For both Leo and Carla, the night hag appeared as a dark shapeless entity. The Boyds are largely unimaginative people, though Carla is an avid reader. They are friends with Jeff Weller and Tonya Brownlee from Apartment 7.

Leo Boyd, university maintenance man, 34

STR 13 CON 10 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 13 SAN 59 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4**Weapons:** *Fist 65% 1D3+db, Club 45% 1D6+db.*

Skills: *Credit Rating 50%, Electrical Repair 65%, Listen 45%, Locksmith 20%, Mechanical Repair 65%, Spot Hidden 45%.*

Languages: *English 65%.***Carla Boyd, bookstore employee, 34**

STR 10 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 13
DEX 13 APP 14 EDU 15 SAN 60 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0**Weapons:** All at base percentages.

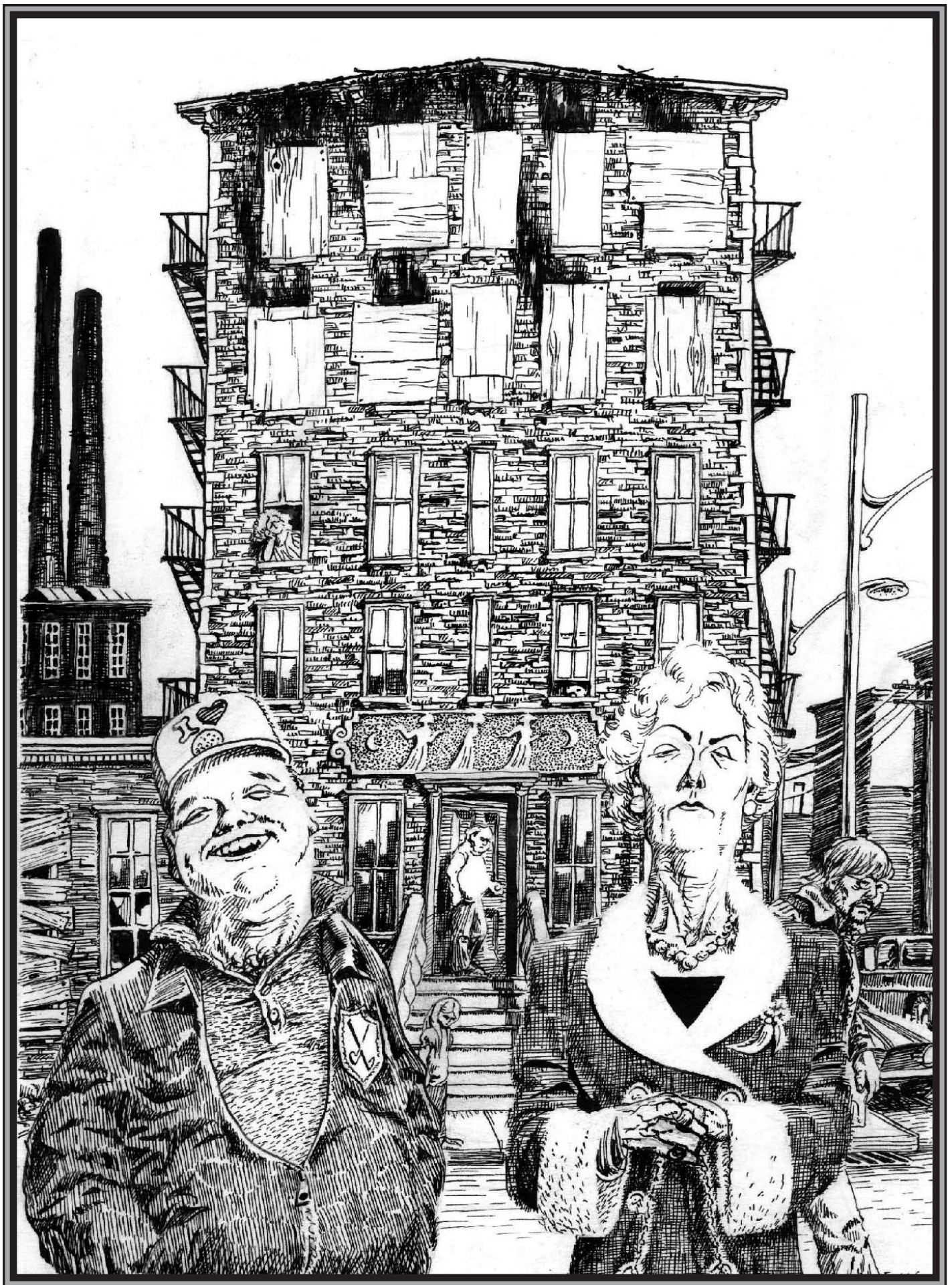
Skills: *Accounting 20%, Bargain 35%, Computer Use 25%, Fast Talk 20%, Library Use 40%, Listen 40%, Psychology 15%, Spot Hidden 35%, Swim 25%.*

Languages: *English 65%.***Apartment 3: Todd Beach, Superintendent**

Beach is a burly man in his late forties. He has lived in The Three Sisters for just over eight years, ever since his divorce. He performs routine maintenance on the building, everything from painting to plumbing to garbage collection, minor repairs, and so forth. When not working elsewhere, he spends a lot of time in his own apartment on the first floor, from where he keeps an eye on the comings and goings of residents and visitors. He also has a workshop in the basement where he does repairs and makes his own small furniture projects.

He regularly reports to the Starretts, who own the building, and always acts in their best interests. Like many other building residents, Beach has had a couple of night hag attacks over the years, but never thought enough of them to mention them to anyone. In Beach's case the hag appeared to be a frightening old woman, and if shown a photograph of Elizabeth Salmon he shudders and says, “Yeah, that could be her.” Nevertheless, Beach doesn't believe The Three Sisters is haunted, and won't risk his job investigating such bullcrap. Beach owns a .38 special revolver, which he keeps hidden—and loaded—at the bottom of a drawer in his kitchen.

Note that there is no Apartment 4, as long ago numbers 3 and 4 were combined into a single unit.



Todd Beach, building superintendent, 49

STR 15 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 12 POW 10
DEX 12 APP 10 EDU 14 SAN 47 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist* 65% 1D3+db.

Skills: *Accounting* 35%, *Craft (Plumbing)* 45%, *Craft (Woodworking)* 55%, *Electrical Repair* 40%, *Listen* 40%, *Locksmith* 20%, *Mechanical Repair* 65%, *Spot Hidden* 45%.

Languages: *English* 60%.

The Second Floor

Apartment 5: Kurt Winter

Kurt Winter is a twenty-five-year-old journalist employed as a writer at the local newspaper. He is tall and thin, with glasses, a sparse goatee, and shaggy, mousey blonde hair. He has lived here for two years. Winter is shy and solitary, and prone to fits of depression, as anyone spending a few hours with him and making a successful Psychology roll will surmise. He enjoys writing and research, and is very adept at using libraries and the internet to seek out information.

Winter has written articles for newspapers and magazines throughout the state, and has also published works on the internet. These have all been items of local interest and local history. Winter's apartment is somewhat ill-kept, and contains his computer and a bevy of reference books. Above his desk is a small Riker Mount containing a Death's-head Hawkmoth, about the size of a man's palm, given to him by his girlfriend, Maddie Mercier. A Zoology or Biology roll notes the scientific name of this creature is *Acherontia atropos*, after the Greek Fate sister who cuts the thread of a man's life at the time of his death.

Winter's small library also contains several of Frank Ryder's books, mostly paperbacks, but a couple of old first editions from the 1960s. Almost all these books are personally inscribed to Winter by Ryder. Another offbeat volume in Winter's library is *The Paramental Factor*, by Richard Ahern, a speculative, new age occult work similar to the works of *Mothman Prophecies* author John Keel. *The Paramental Factor* posits that strange entities walk among us everyday, but whether they are ghosts or aliens or extradimensional travelers is unknown. The book and its author are discussed in a separate section later in the adventure, but a few passages are excerpted in the Tenebrarum Papers #3.

Winter was urged to read this book by his now late friend, Frank Ryder, as the latter was intrigued by Ahern's theories. Winter and Ryder realized they had frequently had similar night hag dreams. In Winter's experience, the hag was always a dark cloudy shape, but Ryder sometimes saw a terrifying old woman. The pair suspected The Three Sisters was haunted. Now Ryder's death leaves Winter depressed yet again. If the investigators can gain his trust, perhaps by telling him of the strange circumstances of Ryder's death, Winter may help them look into the haunting of The Three Sisters. Unfortunately, his girlfriend Maddie Mercier is actually Mater Tenebrarum, and the deeper he delves into the

Tenebrarum Papers #3

excerpts from Richard Ahern's *The Paramental Factor*

You're not going to believe what you read in this book. That's too bad, as each and every story related here is absolutely, indisputably true. I've tried to illustrate some of the similarities shared by these occurrences in an effort to show the truth about what they mean: that there are entities among us who are not human, perhaps not even a part of reality as we currently define it. I call them paramentals—"para" indicating "outside" and "elemental" being a force of nature. Ergo, a paramental is some force from outside our natural reality.

Mothman. Springheeled Jack. Alien abductors. Ghosts. Bigfoot. Old Hag. These are just a few of the masks they wear. They prowl our cities, our backroads, our forests, our skies—even our bedrooms. There's no question they're real—as real as they can be, anyway. The question is: what the hell do they want? Why are they here? Who or what are they? . . .

Personally, I find the Old Hag to be one of the most mystifying and terrifying of the paramentals. Here is an entity—or entities—that enters our homes regardless of locked doors, sleeping companions, time of day, and so forth. Right into our bedrooms they stalk, haunting us—hunting us—when we are vulnerable, and presumably all alone with our dreams and nightmares. Their presence seems to have physical components, or their hallucinatory equivalent: the sound of footsteps, sour smells, heavy breathing, crushing weight on the chest. Strangely, the Hag is formless enough to bypass doors and ignore bedmates, yet able to register on several of the senses. Paramental, indeed. . .

Studies suggest as many as one in every six or seven people have had an Old Hag experience. Think of that, sometime, in the context of your neighborhood, or office, or class, or what have you. Imagine how many people you must know who have encountered the Hag . . .

But consider this: if the Hag is just a dream, why do so many people around the world have the same dream? Is the Hag hardwired into our DNA somehow, an ancestral memory or some Akashic construct? If so, where did it originate? Could the dream-Hag itself be a real, living being? Something that feeds off us and then flees back down the neurons into the collective unconscious? . . .

mystery the closer he comes to running headlong into her trap.

Kurt Winter is an integral part of this scenario, and featured in the climax. He also is instrumental in the final scene of Our Ladies of Sorrow. The Keeper is encouraged to keep Winter alive,

and friends with the investigators.

Kurt Winter, journalist, 25

STR 11 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 15 POW 12
DEX 11 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 56 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Accounting 20%, Art (Writing) 85%, Computer Use 50%, Credit Rating 45%, Dodge 25%, Drive Auto 25%, Fast Talk 35%, History 55%, Law 25%, Library/Internet Use 80%, Listen 45%, Photography 30%, Psychology 45%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: English 90%.

Apartment 6: Vacant

This apartment is currently vacant. It is very similar to the other apartments in the building, with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, and walk-in closet. Depending on the type of city the Keeper has set the scenario in, monthly rent may be anywhere from \$500 to \$1000 or more, with an additional month's rent due as a security deposit. If the investigators want to rent the apartment they'll have to come up with the money, of course, in addition to undergoing a background check by the Starretts. There is a 45% chance the owners will find out about any criminal problems the investigator may have had, which would bar them from getting a lease.

Apartment 7: Jeff Waller and Tonya Brownlee

Jeff Waller is a tall, hulking, chain smoker who works at a foundry on the outskirts of the city. Often dirty and ill-tempered after a long day on the job, he is generally quiet and unassuming, despite his size and glum demeanor. His girlfriend Tonya is a few years older and works in the kitchen of the local hospital. She dabbles

in fiction writing, which she loves pressing like minded strangers to read. She took a minor disliking to Frank Ryder when he was dismissive of her efforts.

The couple likes listening to loud rock music, but aren't obnoxious about it. Tonya has had a few night hag dreams—she saw a menacing old crone, but since it's been so long since the last such nightmare she can't make a positive identification now. She is eager to talk about the dreams, however, and offers to help in any way she can if the investigators suggest the building is haunted.

Their apartment is cluttered with items such as romance and mystery novels, countless rock CDs, an acoustic guitar, a cheap samurai sword, and lots of horror movies on DVD. They have lived here for about two years.

Jeff Waller, foundry worker, 24

STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 16 INT 12 POW 9
DEX 12 APP 10 EDU 12 SAN 44 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Fist 65% 1D3+db, Hammer or Club 60% 1D6+db.

Skills: Craft (Metal Working) 60%, Dodge 45%, Listen 30%, Mechanical Repair 55%, Sneak 45%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Tonya Brownlee, hospital cook, 27

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 13 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 11 APP 10 EDU 11 SAN 53 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Art (Cooking) 60%, Art (Writing) 15%, Bargain 30%, Computer Use 15%, Fast Talk 35%, Occult 15%, Psychology 20%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Languages: English 55%.

The Three Sisters Apartment Building

The Three Sisters is five stories high, with a large basement. The first four floors are taken up by apartments, as described above, but a few other areas bear further description. Note that each apartment has access to a fire escape, which is usually shared with an adjacent apartment. Felonious characters and investigators may be able to gain access to other apartments by forcing or breaking in windows from the fire escape. These fire escapes are not easily accessible from the street, being equipped with spring-loaded ladders that slide down from the second story when weight is placed on them.

Just inside the front door, to the left, are a series of mail slots for the apartments. Packages and larger items are usually left with Todd Beach, the building superintendent. At the far end of the main hall, on all floors, are the staircases, the one on the right leading up, the left leading down.

On the left of the stairs is a small elevator. A vintage affair, it is equipped with an interior cage-door and a second solid door. Noisy, and a little bumpy, the elevator provides access to the basement and the first four floors of the building. The button for the fifth floor is missing, taped over, and disconnected. A Mechanical Repair and an Electrical Repair roll are needed to rig the elevator so it will access the fifth floor. If the investigators manage to get the elevator to go to the fifth floor, the cage and outer doors slide back to reveal the opening has been sealed shut with sheets of plywood—STR 14 to pry open.

There is a fire extinguisher just inside the front door, and another next to the elevator, along with a fire axe in a glass case. Each floor above has two fire extinguishers, one at the far end of the hall and another next to the elevator, along with a fire axe.

Apartment 8: Bridget and Naomi Wills

Bridget Wills is an unmarried mother in her early thirties, and has lived in the building for four years. She works afternoons and evenings as a server at a nice restaurant in an upscale part of town. Bridget has an eight-year-old daughter, Naomi, who also lives here. Bridget is a good mother, trying her best to raise her daughter alone. She takes Naomi to school in the morning and sometimes picks her up afterward, otherwise Naomi walks home by herself. Naomi usually stays with Connie Duke, in Apartment 1, who feeds and takes care of her until Bridget gets home, usually after ten p.m.

Bridget knows nothing about any strange goings-on at The Three Sisters, but Naomi often speaks of a friend who visits her sometimes in the night, whom she calls “Gramma,” even though Bridget’s mother is dead. Gramma likes to come in through the window and talk to her, Naomi says. Prior to Gramma showing up a couple years ago, Naomi had several nightmares—night hag attacks—which Bridget remembers terrified the little girl.

Little Naomi is a rather creepy child, with frequent strange stares and smiles. Bridget won’t allow the investigators to talk to Naomi about Gramma or other odd topics without a good explanation or at least a successful Persuade or Psychology roll. The Wills’ refrigerator door and apartment walls are decorated with several of Naomi’s crayon and colored pencil drawings, some of which may seem disturbingly prescient to the investigators. These drawings and Naomi’s further peculiarities are discussed in the Events section below.

Bridgit Wills, waitress, 32

STR 12 CON 12 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 11
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 14 SAN 55 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Accounting 35%, Bargain 35%, Dodge 35%, First Aid 45%, Listen 45%, Psychology 45%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: English 65%.

Naomi Wills, odd child, 8

STR 5 CON 8 SIZ 6 INT 9 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 12 EDU 4 SAN 49 HP 7

Damage Bonus: -1D6

Weapons: Bite 30% 1D3+db, Kick 60% 1D6+db.

Skills: Art (Drawing) 35%, Climb 55%, Dodge 60%, Glare Ominously 65%, Hide 70%, Listen 45%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 45%, Sulk 80%.

Languages: English 30%.

The Third Floor

Apartment 9: Maddie Mercier

Madeline Mercier, known as Maddie, is a young nursing student,

age nineteen, who moved into The Three Sisters last year, when she started school. She is small, lithe, and dark eyed, with dark hair framing her pretty face. Maddie is smart, well read, and wickedly sarcastic. Maddie prefers to wear dark clothing and makeup, and quite a few rings, earrings, and necklaces, along with a tiny diamond stud in the side of her nose. She is currently dating Kurt Winter of Apartment 5, and was also good friends with Frank Ryder. Frank could spontaneously recite Shakespeare with her.

Maddie is saddened by the old writer’s death, and a Psychology roll notes that, like Winter, she too is subject to periods of depression. She seems to have few other friends.

Maddie is suspicious of the investigators and their story about the old hag they saw at Ryder’s death. Throughout the scenario Maddie mocks and questions their actions, jesting, of course. She herself hasn’t had any bad dreams or other strange experiences in The Three Sisters, and doesn’t believe the place is haunted. This becomes a favorite subject of her humor once the topic has been raised. Maddie should seem totally non-plussed by any of the weirdness going on around her.

Maddie is actually an avatar of Mater Tenebrarum, an ancient parasitic and predatory spirit who has haunted The Three Sisters in various forms for over a century, plaguing the dreams of residents, feeding on their suffering, and eventually driving some to madness and death. Several years ago she possessed and displaced the young Madeline Mercier back in Madeline’s home in rural Missouri, and has now returned to her favorite lair with her new face. She had been toying with Frank Ryder and Kurt Winter until the former spoiled her game. Now she intends to drive Winter into deep despair and eventual suicide. When the investigators enter the picture they also become her targets. Mater Tenebrarum’s methods of dealing with the investigators are discussed in the Events section below.

Once the investigators suspect Maddie’s involvement in the haunting of The Three Sisters, they may begin looking into her background and her current activities. Her participation in nursing school is easily gleaned from almost any of the tenants. A Library Use or Internet research roll finds that she is indeed enrolled at the college in town. Contacting the college to check on her records requires a successful Fast Talk roll, and reveals nothing out of the ordinary. Searchers might learn her schedule, and attempt to follow her, or inquire about her with classmates. If a pursuer fails a Luck roll, Maddie spots him or her, and may confront the investigator, perhaps angrily. Her classmates state she’s smart, but keeps mostly to herself, so no one knows much about her, or who her friends might be. Her family life and schooling in Missouri also checks out.

Maddie is gone much of the day, usually at class, but sometimes working either at the hospital or as a server at a coffeeshop close to campus. She only has a few hours off each weekend with which to spend time with Winter, or study, or do her laundry.

Maddie’s apartment contains her clothes, jewelry, computer, TV, simple furniture, textbooks, and so forth. Her computer files offer nothing out of the ordinary—schoolwork, instant messages (almost exclusively with Winter), etc. The only items otherwise of

note within her apartment are a few odd knick-knacks, some art prints by Dali as well as a print of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, an incense burner shaped like a skull, a metronome which she claims helps her sleep, a venus fly-trap plant, and several gothic music CDs from the 1980s and 1990s, including bands such as Bauhaus, Sisters of Mercy, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and Die Laughing.

Maddie Mercier, nursing student, 19

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 11 INT 15 POW 14
DEX 14 APP 15 EDU 15 SAN NA HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Biology 20%, Chemistry 20%, Computer Use 45%, Dodge 45%, First Aid 55%, Listen 40%, Literature 55%, Medicine 40%, Pharmacy 20%, Psychology 40%, Spot Hidden 35%.

Languages: English 85%.

Apartment 10: Mary Elizabeth Morangello

Mrs. Morangello is a seventy-seven year old spinster, and has lived in The Three Sisters for twelve years. She is stooped and withered,

with a plump belly and frizzy head of gray hair. Mary is in the first stages of dementia caused by advanced age. She is suspicious of strangers and extremely religious. The apartment has a sour body odor smell to it, as does Mary. She doesn't leave her apartment very often, only to do a little shopping or to attend church.

She won't answer any personal questions asked by the investigators, and may chase them off, or call Todd Beach, or even the police if she is harassed too much.

Her apartment is filled with religious books and art objects. If the investigators bother her about the building being haunted, Mary may hand them a cheap Bible before slamming and locking her door. The Keeper is urged to play up Mary's secrecy and hostility toward the investigators, as they seek the old hag haunting The Three Sisters. Her withered appearance, suspicious glares, and religious rantings should give onlookers occasional goosebumps.

Mary Morangello, religious spinster, 77

STR 6 CON 9 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 11
DEX 9 APP 9 EDU 17 SAN 54 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Glare Ominously 55%, History 35%, Library Use

A History of The Three Sisters Apartment Building

The following is a brief history of The Three Sisters building, from its construction in 1892 until the present day. Each item requires a separate Library/Internet Use roll and thirty minutes or so of searching.

1892: On January 7th, The Three Sisters building is opened after two years of construction. The building is named after Christine Salmon Wolfe, Deirdre Salmon Frey, and Elizabeth Salmon, heiresses to the Salmon munitions fortune. Newspaper articles about the opening of the building include photographs showing the three women, all in their seventies or older, standing in front of the building as it is being opened to the public. Any investigator who witnessed the death of Frank Ryder recognizes the woman identified as Elizabeth Salmon as the woman who frightened Ryder to his death. This revelations calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

1913: In the early morning hours of April 25th, a fire breaks out in The Three Sisters, killing three residents. The fire apparently started in the top front apartment where an elderly woman, Imogen Nolotski, sixty-nine, apparently fell asleep in Apartment 19 while smoking. Also killed in the fire were David J. Harris and his wife Mary Anne, of Apartment 18, aged fifty-six and fifty-five, respectively. The other residents all made it to safety with relatively minor injuries

1921: February 23rd, eight-year-old William Dodge of Apartment 7 dies of an undisclosed illness. The young Dodge's

obituary appears below.

"OBITUARY—William Eric Dodge 1913–1921

William Eric Dodge, aged 8 years, died Thursday of natural causes at his home in The Three Sisters building, 401 21st Street. William is survived by his parents, Matthew and Caroline Dodge, of the same addresss, and two younger brothers, Richard, age 5, and Steven, age 2. William Dodge was a bright and creative boy, and a beloved son. Death is believed to have been due to complications from a recent illness. Memorial services are to be held Monday morning at 11 AM at the Crater–Sterling Funeral Home, with interment to follow at Blackwood Cemetery."

1931: Katherine McCully, thirty-one, living in Apartment 11, commits suicide by slitting her wrists with a razor in the bathtub on January 19. She is believed to have been lonely and despondent for some time.

1938: June 4th, factory worker Sanford Jones, twenty-two, a tenant of Apartment 6, bludgeons his wife Judith, seventeen, to death. Sanford claims Judith was seeing another man, so he killed her.

1959: Dustin Woodley, thirty-nine, living in Apartment 13, is found dead in his apartment on

(continued on page 26...)

40%, Occult 15%, Quote Bible Passage 85%.

Languages: English 65%.

Apartment II: Frank Ryder

The late Frank Ryder's apartment is a maze of books, magazines, and bric-a-brac. The place is a little unkempt, and smells of body odor and tobacco. An old battered desk next to a window has an

even older manual typewriter sitting on it, but it looks dusty and long out of use. In the desk's top drawer is a spiral notebook filled with Ryder's crabbed handwritten notes—his commonplace book of ideas, quotes, and miscellaneous thoughts. A few pertinent passages are reproduced nearby. See the Tenebrarum Papers #4.

Bookshelves offer dozens and dozens of copies of Ryder's own books, of various ages, editions, and languages. There are hun-



dreds of other books here as well, everything from mysteries to Shakespeare, science fiction to Greek tragedy. These volumes are packed into cheap bookshelves at all angles—in order to fit in more. Arranged across the top of one bookshelf are Ryder's awards: an O. Henry, a Hugo, an Edgar Allan Poe, a Gold Dagger, and two Silver Daggers.

A photo album on one of the shelves holds dozens of photos dating from the 1960s to the 1980s. Most are pictures of Ryder with other literary figures at various conventions and other literary gatherings. Rolls of EDU x1, or Idea rolls for investigators who are authors themselves, identify such luminaries as Mickey Spillane, Rod Serling, Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch, Ramsey Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Harlan Ellison, Philip K. Dick, and Stephen King, among many others.

Ryder also possesses a well-thumbed copy of Richard Ahern's *The Paramental Factor*. Ryder's copy is inscribed "For Frank Ryder, a fellow explorer of the strange, With Admiration & Best Wishes, Richard Ahern." On one of Ryder's bookshelves is a small Riker Mount containing a Death's-head Hawkmoth, exactly like the one owned by Kurt Winter. If Kurt or Maddie are asked, Maddie bought one for Ryder when he remarked admiringly about Kurt's. Maddie can even tell the investigators the name of the nearby curio shop where she purchased them.

Ryder's apartment is otherwise unremarkable, the simple, well-worn, well lived-in digs of an old literary gentleman. Old clothes, simple foodstuffs, vintage keepsakes, a record player and dozens of old jazz and blues records, worn furniture, and so forth.

No computer, no electronics other than an old television—local channels only, no cable or satellite.

Frank Ryder died with no will and no known next of kin. He was also two months behind on his rent. As such, with his death Lilah Starrett begins legal proceedings to seize Ryder's belongings until they can be appraised, so the Starretts can then get the restitution they're owed. Winter is appalled by this, but is financially unable to hire a lawyer to fight Lilah Starrett. As the scenario progresses, the Starretts hire local bookseller Jerry Nagel to appraise Ryder's collection.

Apartment 12: Robert Dorder

Dorder is a middle-aged photographer. He does weddings, graduations, family portraits, glamour shots, engagement photos, and the like. He keeps a small developing lab in a closet in his apartment, little used in this age of digital cameras. Dorder has lived here for sixteen years, longer than any other resident. Miraculously, he has not suffered any night hag attacks, though if asked, he might lie and lead the investigators to believe he has, just to see if there's a way he can profit from such an admission.

He is of average height, a little thickset, with pale skin and dark hair and eyes. He is a lifelong bachelor, and occasionally visits prostitutes. He is also something of a lecherous voyeur. He has tripod mounted cameras aimed out his windows which he uses to snap pics of attractive female passersby. In addition to several photo albums containing examples of his paying work, Dorder has a couple containing nothing but passersby photos, including

September 11th. He apparently hanged himself as much as a week earlier, and though no foul play is suspected, the police are baffled by the fact that Woodley's left hand has been cut off after his death and is still missing. The door to Woodley's apartment is found locked, his keys inside the apartment with him. Woodley has a long criminal record for breaking and entering, and several armed robberies.

1960: On May 25th, pastry chef Mario Pignatelli, fifty-four years old, a tenant of Apartment 16, leaps or falls to his death from the fire escape of The Three Sisters building. Pignatelli's possible motives for suicide are unknown, and in the end the police treat the death as an accident.

1964: Oliver Curran, eighty-two, is found dead in his bedroom in Apartment 3. Cause of death is ruled as natural causes—heart failure.

1977: On the night of October 20th, college student Dewey Kilbey, twenty-two, and his girlfriend Amy Hiebert, eighteen, are robbed and murdered in the alley behind The Three Sisters by "two black guys" who are subsequently caught by the police in possession of Kilbey's wallet. Despite inconsistencies in the prosecution's case, both receive life sentences. Kilbey and Hiebert are not residents of the building, but are

walking through the neighborhood after attending an old film noir movie revival at a nearby theater.

1993: February 25th, Corey Plainton, twenty-one, of Apartment 6, is shot to death—fourteen times—in his apartment. Plainton has a reputation as a local drug dealer, and police quickly arrest Forrest "Nails" Berends, thirty-one, Joe Kirby, twenty-one, and Albert "Money" Kipp, twenty-four, in connection with the murder. Nails and his accomplices are known rivals of Plainton, and eyewitnesses positively identify them leaving the building just after the shooting.

1993: November 11th, spinster Sunday school teacher Lorna Kingerey, ninety-nine years old, dies alone in Apartment 11. She has lived in The Three Sisters for thirty-nine years, her only companions at the time of her death a pair of black cats. Authorities are unable to find any next of kin.

If the Keeper wishes to play Miss Kingerey up as a suspect, he might allow the investigators to make Idea rolls to note that many of the building's tragedies occurred during her residence in the building, and the fact that she lived in the same apartment where another tenant committed suicide—and where Frank Ryder lived as well. Unfortunately, nothing can be learned about the woman, and in this case these are merely coincidental circumstances.

several shots of his neighbor across the hall, Maddie Mercier.

If the investigators comment on Maddie's looks, or Ryder's relationships with others in the building, Dorder smirkingly recounts how he once saw Frank Ryder go into Maddie's apartment with her, alone, for quite some time. It was only one time, though. Dorder uses a computer for some of his work, and is fairly adept at manipulating photos digitally. This gets the creepy photographer into trouble later in the scenario, as described in the Events section. Other than all manner of photographic equipment, Dorder's apartment contains nothing out of the ordinary.

Robert Dorder, photographer, 46

STR 12 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 11 EDU 17 SAN 53 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Accounting 25%, Chemistry 20%, Computer Use 35%, Credit Rating 35%, Hide 25%, Library Use 35%, Listen 45%, Photography 70%, Psychology 35%, Sneak 25%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Languages: English 70%.

The Fourth Floor

Apartment 13: Walter Park

Walter Park is a young meat cutter working at a large chain grocery store across town. He has lived in the building for just under three years. Park is a Korean immigrant and very reticent, even though he speaks decent English. He barely speaks to his fellow tenants, and is similarly shy among his colleagues behind the meat counter. Park merely prefers to keep to himself.

If the investigators can get him to open up, perhaps with a Psychology or Fast Talk roll, or if they speak to him in his native Korean, Park admits he too has had strange nightmares about an invisible evil presence that sought to crush and kill him. The latest of these was a few months ago. He also states that attacks such as these are not unknown in his native Korea. Park's apartment is a mess, but contains nothing of note anyway.

Walter Park, meat cutter, 33

STR 14 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 10 EDU 12 SAN 53 HP 14

Tenebrarum Papers #4 —passages from Frank Ryder's notebook

...Had the dream again. Started like the other times, like a sex-dream from the old days (oh how I miss those days—even just the dreams!), but then turned into a nightmare. Just a black shape hanging there above me, crushing me, holding me fast while its pale yellow eyes burned through me. Woke in a cold sweat...

...Night hag. Now I remember! A little research at the Temple of Knowledge jogged some dusty brain cells. I'm having night hag attacks—at my ripe old age! Maybe there's a story in this, or even a full-blown novel. Ghosties were never my forte though, and these days I'm afraid jotting down more than a shopping list would require dusting off more brain cells than I have left to me. Ah me! This is more the purview of Mssrs. Campbell and King anyway...

...So Kurt has them too. Not terribly surprising. I seem to recall that 10% of the population have seen the Night Hag at least once. If true, there's probably another "victim" or two here in the Sisters somewhere. Maybe I'll ask Mary to say a prayer for me. But I probably won't, and she probably wouldn't anyway...

...Having read Hufford & Ahern, I'm beginning to wonder—is she real?...

...Talked to Ahern, but all he wanted to talk about was The Oyster Men, rather than the Hag. He told me nothing I didn't already know. Kurt, on the other hand, thinks we're

definitely haunted. This seems to amuse him. Oh to be young and fearless—and foolish!—again...

...Who are these 3 Sisters, anyway? Faith, Hope & Charity? Clotho, Lachesis & Atropos? Stheno, Euryale & Medusa? Old Will's Weird Sisters? They look Greek or Roman to me. Have to ask Mrs. Starrett about them sometime. She'll probably send me a bill for the answer. But the thought remains: do the 3 Sisters have anything to do with the haunting? Have to have Kurt see what he can find out about this place—especially the fire that closed off the top two floors. Did someone die up there and leave a nymphomaniac ghost?...

...I AM haunted. Whispers in the dark. The damned hag. Paranoia. Crazy Mary stares at me. That little Wills waif stares at me. I'm going mad. Need to get away. Away from the Sisters, away from the damned hag. Fresh air. Fresh scenery. I'd go back to Kingsport if I wasn't afraid of what my dreams might be like there, NOW...

...Thom. De Quincy, Levana & Our Ladies? Something to do with hallucinations or drug-dreams a la Confessions? Must check to see...

...What have I done? What have we done? I should feel alive, renewed. I did feel that way at first, but now... I can't believe I was so stupid. Stupid, stupid old fool. I have undone us. Undone us all...

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Cleaver* 55% 1D6+db, *Fist* 55% 1D3+db, *Knife* 40% 1D6+db.

Skills: *Bargain* 45%, *Craft (Meat Cutting)* 60%, *Dodge* 35%, *Listen* 40%, *Sneak* 20%, *Spot Hidden* 45%.

Languages: *English* 45%, *Korean* 60%.

Apartments 14 and 15: Closed Off

These two apartments were damaged in the fire of 1913, and are sealed off with a wall across the hallway. See The Closed Off Sections for more information.

Apartment 16: Danny Fitzgerald, Joshua Place, Ben Schlatter

Three college students occupy this cramped apartment. The older boys have lived here for about a year and a half, the youngest—Schlatter—just a few months. Danny Fitzgerald, a student from out of state, is a cocky, athletic sophomore studying business administration. If there's a party, "Fitz" wants to go, and if there's a sport, he wants to play. He's normally a good natured fellow, but when drunk he loves practical jokes.

Josh Place is a sophomore studying electrical engineering. Smart, but relatively unambitious, Josh has a filthy mouth and a vicious sense of humor.

Ben Schlatter—called "Schlatsie" by his roommates—is a freshman studying chemistry. Ben is from the same nearby town as Josh, and knew Josh's younger brother. Ben is tall and thick, but not terrifically athletic. He's often the butt of his roommates' pranks, even though he often has to help them with their homework.

The apartment is typical of college-age roommates: not very clean, but equipped with lots of alcohol, an Xbox 360, three computers, a large well-used bong, lots of porn on DVD and hard drive, battered furniture, two loft beds and a hideaway bed.

Fitzgerald and Place are reluctant to talk about their nightmares in any serious way, but if told that their roommates and other tenants have had similar nightmares a Psychology roll notes their surprise and a twinge of unease. A further Psychology or Fast Talk roll is needed to get them to admit they've had several such experiences themselves, both involving invisible assailants. Schlatter, on the other hand, is shocked by the investigators' questions, and readily admits to having these nightmares frequently. Aside from nightmare attacks, he thinks he saw the hag, or the ghost, or whatever it is, while he was wide awake, if not exactly sober at the time.

Not long after he moved in Danny and Josh ditched Ben at the bar and he came home alone about two in the morning. As he fumbled with his door key he saw something moving out of the corner of his eye, and there, floating silently up the stairs and through the barrier that blocks off the upper floor was a strange old woman in a long dress. Ben remembers being too terrified to move, as she looked scary as hell. She had some kind of lantern or candle in her hand that he couldn't quite see. He says she had this feeling about her that made him think if she even looked at him he was going to die.

Since sighting the floating woman, Ben's night hag attacks have all been visitations by that horrible old woman. If shown a photograph of Elizabeth Salmon, Ben says that's her, and loses 1/1D3 Sanity. He might decide to move if he witnesses or learns of any additional weirdness in The Three Sisters—or "The Three Bitches" as Josh calls it. If the other guys ever found out about this encounter they'd razz him unmercifully.

Fitz knows one other interesting bit of information, but the investigators need to either ask him about Ryder while making a Fast Talk roll, or buy him several drinks to get him to spill it. Fitz was coming home one night and saw the old man leaving Maddie Mercier's apartment, and when Ryder saw Fitz, the shocked and embarrassed look on his face told Fitz the old boy'd been shacking up with her.

Danny Fitzgerald, college student, 20

STR 14 CON 14 SIZ 15 INT 13 POW 13
DEX 15 APP 15 EDU 13 SAN 63 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist* 75% (two attacks per round) 1D3+db, *Grapple* 65%, *Kick* 45% 1D6+db.

Skills: *Accounting* 25%, *Computer Use* 15%, *Dodge* 75%, *Fast Talk* 45%, *Jump* 55%, *Listen* 35%, *Psychology* 25%, *Sneak* 25%, *Spot Hidden* 35%, *Throw* 55%.

Languages: *English* 60%.

Joshua Place, college student, 20

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 10 EDU 14 SAN 57 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: *Fist* 60% 1D3+db.

Skills: *Computer Use* 25%, *Dodge* 35%, *Electrical Repair* 35%, *Electronics* 35%, *Fast Talk* 35%, *Library/Internet Use* 35%, *Listen* 35%, *Mechanical Repair* 35%, *Physics* 15%, *Psychology* 25%, *Spot Hidden* 45%.

Languages: *English* 65%.

Ben Schlatter, college student, 19

STR 10 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 15 POW 12
DEX 11 APP 11 EDU 14 SAN 54 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: *All at base percentages.*

Skills: *Chemistry* 55%, *Computer Use* 45%, *History* 35%, *Library/Internet Use* 45%, *Listen* 45%, *Natural History* 25%, *Physics* 10%, *Psychology* 20%, *Spot Hidden* 40%.

Languages: *English* 70%.

The Basement

The basement is dark and damp. Coming off the elevator or from the stairs, to the left investigators find a large locked laundry room containing three washing machines and three dryers, all coin operated. Residents are provided with a key for this door. Across the hall from the laundry room is Todd Beach's workshop, also locked, containing a variety of power tools, hand tools, and other

supplies for building maintenance. Beach has the only key.

On the same side of the hall as the workshop is a large storage room, again locked. Inside are stored tenant belongings, furniture, files, and assorted detritus, some of it dating back to the building's construction. Some of this junk is stored in a chain-link cage, though it is not usually locked. Again, Beach has the only key, and usually accompanies any tenant who needs access to this room. Beach won't allow an investigator inside, but a tenant who makes a Luck roll is given the key as Beach is too trusting or too busy to accompany them. A team of investigators could search here for hours and hours, but ultimately, there is nothing to find that has any bearing on the haunting, other than the children's drawings once found by Naomi Wills, and described in the Events section. Across the hall from the storage room is the building's unlocked boiler room. Again, nothing out of the ordinary here.

The Closed-Off Sections

The top two floors of The Three Sisters were burned in the fire of 1913. Most of the damage was contained to the four front apartments on the two top floors, which were closed and sealed off, along with the two back apartments on the top floor. A wall was built across the hall on the fourth floor, closing off the two front apartments. The wall can be loudly and messily hacked through in ten minutes or so, or a Mechanical Repair notes that if the baseboard and edging are removed the wall can actually be made to pivot to allow access to Apartments 14 and 15.

The entire top floor is also sealed off. On the fourth floor the stairs up are completely blocked by a makeshift wall with a padlocked door that opens onto the stairway. Beach has the only key, though anyone with a Phillips screwdriver can unfasten the hasp in a few minutes and open the door. As mentioned, the elevator has also been rigged to deny access to the top floor. This floor is also accessible via the fire escapes, though the windows into these apartments are boarded up. STR 30 to force them open, or 35 points of damage to hack a man-sized hole through them.

Inside

The closed off areas are dark, and light sources are all but required. The air is thick and musty, the smell of smoke remarkably still present. Walls and floors are charred, or blackened with soot, especially inside Apartments 14 and 15 on the fourth floor, and 18 and 19 on the fifth floor. A successful Idea roll notes the undisturbed dust in the hallways shows no sign of footprints, suggesting no one—no one *physcial* at least—has been here recently.

Anyone venturing into the damaged areas risks suffering some minor injury. A failed Luck roll indicates an investigator has stepped through fire weakened floorboards, taking 1D4-1 points of damage, or snagged themselves on a rusty nail for 1D2 points of damage. A fumbled roll might indicate a sprained ankle or serious infection.

All the apartments are locked, but easily bypassed by forcing them (STR 10) or picking the old locks. But there is little to find and all of it damaged by fire, smoke, and water: a blackened loveseat, a charred dining room table, a burned coat rack,, broken

vases, old newspapers, melted silverware, a pair of eyeglasses cracked by the heat, a one-eyed doll, etc.

The roof can be accessed via the stairs from the fifth floor, but the door to the roof is locked (STR 17) and Beach has the key. The fire escapes also reach to the roof, but there is nothing to be found.

This is the lair of Tenebrarum. Exploring the burned out areas, investigators making a Listen roll think they hear faint twittering sounds, or what seems to be a footstep or two, but no source can be found. Spot Hidden rolls catch, from the corner of the eye, what seem to be shadows moving and shifting along the walls. Again, closer inspection reveals nothing.

The Owners- Lilah and Archie Starrett

Sooner or later the investigators will likely get in touch with the owners of The Three Sisters, probably through the recommendation of building superintendent Todd Beach, who doesn't particularly want to deal with inquisitive outsiders. If the investigators want to explore the building, rent the open apartment, or investigate a possible haunting, Beach directs them to his employers, the Starretts.

The Starretts live in an upscale residential neighborhood, in an impressive single-story brick house. They are quite wealthy, still drawing on the Salmon munitions fortune to which Lilah is an heir. They are frequent contributors to the local college. A typical meeting with the Starretts is 65% likely to be with Lilah alone, 25% with both Lilah and Archie, and 10% with Archie alone.

Lilah Starrett dominates any encounter. In her mid- to late fifties, she's smart, classy looking, well dressed, and articulate. Money is first and foremost for her, her social reputation a very close second. Anyone who wants to investigate a possible haunting at The Three Sisters must either provide examples of their experience in such matters, or succeed in a Credit Rating or Persuade roll, or face being dismissed by Lilah as amateurs. A subsequent halved Fast Talk roll might work, or might completely alienate her if failed.

If talked into such an investigation, Lilah demands 25% of all proceeds from any commercial venture, and immunity from any liability involving the investigation. If the investigators seem suspicious, amateurish, or otherwise unworthy of her attention, or if the Keeper wishes, Lilah may ask for an advance on royalties against whatever profits they may gain from their investigation.

Archie Starrett is short, stocky, and totally subservient to his wife. Cheerful, pleasant, and unassuming, he is more than happy to let Lilah run their business affairs. He loves to play golf, and counts Three Sisters resident Bill Duke among his friends and partners. Investigators befriending Archie, especially by playing golf with him, gain a 20% bonus to all rolls in negotiations with Lilah.

Investigators who break the law or rile Lilah's tenants, or in any way incur her wrath find themselves approached by the

police, possibly even taken in for questioning.

Any investigator who makes a Luck roll *and* a Spot Hidden roll while inside the Starrett house notes a framed photograph on the wall, taken in front of The Three Sisters building. This photo shows the grand opening of the building in 1892. Anyone who saw the old crone drive Frank Ryder to his death recognizes the woman in the photo. Lilah identifies this woman as a distant aunt, Elizabeth Salmon. She refuses to believe any nonsense about this woman being either alive or a ghost, since she's been dead for over one hundred years. Anyone pressing the matter finds the interview at an end and further negotiations strained.

Lilah Starrett, building owner, 56

STR 10 CON 10 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 14
DEX 11 APP 12 EDU 17 SAN 70 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: 9mm Automatic Pistol 35% 1D10.

Skills: Accounting 55%, Bargain 45%, Credit Rating 75%, History 45%, Law 55%, Library Use 45%, Psychology 65%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Languages: English 75%.

Archie Starrett, meek husband, 58

STR 11 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 13
DEX 11 APP 11 EDU 16 SAN 55 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Golf Club 35% 1D8+db.

Skills: Accounting 40%, Computer Use 35%, Credit Rating 55%, Law 15%, Listen 70%, Psychology 45%, Spot Hidden 40%.

Once the investigators are alerted to the name Elizabeth Salmon, through the photo of the mysterious old woman present at both the opening of The Three Sisters building in 1892, and the death of Frank Ryder in 2009, they may wish to see what they can find out about her. A Library/Internet Use roll reveals Elizabeth was the oldest of the three Salmon sisters, heiresses to the fortune made by their family as a result of their support of the Union in the Civil War. After the war, the sisters used their fortune to fund various real estate pursuits, one of which was The Three Sisters building in 1892. Born in 1817, Elizabeth never married, and died in 1899 in Virginia, alone. Her sisters had families which extend into the present day, including that of Lilah Starrett, current owner of the building.

Anyone making a search of the name Elizabeth Salmon who *fails* a Library/Internet Use roll discovers a story about an 18th century English witch named Elizabeth Salomon, reproduced in the *Tenebrarum Papers #5*. This story might be found in any book on witches and witchcraft, perhaps even a Mythos book that touches on the subject. Note this is a false lead about an unrelated person. A red herring, it has no bearing on the actual scenario.

The Three Sisters: Ghosts? Hags? Witches?

Once the investigators start researching what little they know

Tenebrarum Papers #5

story of the witch Elizabeth Salomon

Three women were brought before Magistrate Hines in Bramley, Leeds, on May the 27th, 1717. Louisa Potts and her accomplices, Margaret Banner and Elizabeth Salomon, were accused of numerous acts of witchcraft which had been reported in the area. Several farmers had suffered blighted crops and dead or sickened livestock; a cat was found disembowelled and hung from a tree; and several residents were made ill with debilitating fever and rash. It was also noted that ravens flocked around the homes of the accused in alarming numbers. In addition, seventy-four-year-old Ruth Hatherley died shortly after publicly voicing suspicion of Louisa Potts' involvement in the local problems. Potts, Banner, and Salomon were all found guilty of witchcraft and hanged, along with Potts' husband, Gilbert, who had protested violently against the charges levelled at his wife. After the hangings the town seemed to return to normal, but three months later young John Foley, aged fourteen, went mad one night and died raving three days later. Foley had been Elizabeth Salomon's chief accuser. Nevertheless, with Foley's death Bramley suffered no further unfortunate occurrences that might be related to Potts and her black dames.

about the haunting of The Three Sisters, they have a number of subtle—and unfortunately short—avenues to take. These include the night hag attacks, Elizabeth Salmon, and Ryder's cryptic references to the works by Ahern, Hufford, and De Quincey. The night hag information was discussed earlier, along with Hufford's book. The few details known about Elizabeth Salmon have also been covered. Richard Ahern's book is quoted above, and Ahern himself is featured in a subsequent section of the Events.

One of the areas of research the investigators may want to explore stems from a speculative reference in Frank Ryder's journal to various female mythological entities that existed in groups of three. Ryder wondered whether The Three Sisters apartment building was named for the Fates or the gorgons, or any others.

If the investigators choose to follow this lead, allow them to gather as much of the information contained in this book's The Three Sisters appendix as the Keeper desires. Each entry should require a successful Library/Internet Use roll and a half-hour or so of searching. For now the Keeper should omit entries inappropriate to the current scenario, such as those for La Llorona and the Faceless Woman, and perhaps Baba Yaga, The Morrigan, and Black Annis as well—though these latter might also be used to deliberately obfuscate the investigation. While this mythological information is plentiful, and illustrative of the prolificness of female triple goddesses and other entities, it doesn't help much in determining what may be behind The Three Sisters haunting. But

do allow investigators who search along these lines skill checks in Anthropology and Occult.

Ryder's ramblings contain a more productive clue, however, when he mentions "Thom. DeQuincy [sic], Levana & Our Ladies?" A Library/Internet Use roll reveals Ryder was referring to Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859) and his story "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" published in 1845, from the longer work *Suspiria De Profundis*. Copies of this story are easily found online. De Quincey was a famous 19th century essayist, scholar, and drug addict, best known for his work *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* first written in 1821.

Whether a lucky guess on Ryder's part, or a suggestion per-versely placed in his mind by Mater Tenebrarum, Ryder was on the right track with De Quincey and The Sorrows. Let the investigators read the story if they wish. Astute investigators may then try to use the story to guess the identity of the haunter of The Three Sisters apartment building. This may very well lead them to suspect Maddie Mercier, since the haunting involves shadows and darkness, and the Mother of Darkness is the youngest of The Sorrows. See Maddie and the Shadow in the Events section for a way to possibly divert suspicion away from Maddie.

If the investigators seek further references to The Sorrows, a few quotations from occult or Mythos tomes appear nearby. The Keeper can determine whether or not these passages are found, and if so where. Again, this information offers no clues on how to deal with the situation, merely what might be haunting The Three Sisters.

Hauntings

This section outlines some unsettling events which likely occur to the investigators in their travels in the city and inside the Three Sisters building.

The Eagle

One day, on the streets, an investigator making a successful Listen roll hears a strange bird cry. Natural History or Zoology identifies the cry of a golden eagle, a desert creature out of place in this urban area. A Spot Hidden roll spies the creature perched on a building ledge nearby.

This event has no bearing on the immediate adventure. The eagle is a familiar of Mater Suspiriorum, who they meet in the next scenario, "Desert of Sighs".

Failing Lights

Tenebrarum is a master of shadows and darkness and failing lights will plague the investigators. It begins subtly, perhaps with their car's dome light or instrument panel going out, or the light in the bathroom of their hotel room burns out.

Later, as they're descending a stairwell somewhere, the light above them goes out, then a genuinely innocent voice above apologizes for accidentally hitting the switch. But later in the adven-

Tenebrarum Papers #6

various quotes pertaining to The Sorrows

1. From an informally written diary or confessional:

"Once you have met them, they will never let you rest. Seen or unseen, they will dog your steps, plumb your dreams, perhaps even guide you down paths you may not have believed imaginable. Curse them, implore them, try to ignore them, but thereafter your life will play out according to their whims. Pray that you bore them, that they grow tired of you as a child grows tired of an old plaything. Otherwise you may discover why they call themselves The Sorrows."

2. From a source similar to the previous:

"They are three dark sisters, these Sorrows, Maters Lachrymarum, Suspiriorum, and Tenebrarum. Are They fictions, dreams, or spirits? They are all of these, and yet They are none of them as well. They are more."

"I have seen Them. I have heard Their terrible whispers. My own secrets revealed to me, and Theirs as well. All They want, They say, is to be embraced, loved. Known. But to know Them is to lose one's grip on one's own soul."

"They claim to grieve, but Their sorrow is a scourge. They claim to love, but Their love is an abyss."

3. From a more scholarly source, or a more rational one at least:

"The Sorrows, or Our Ladies of Sorrow, are awful spirits from the Dawn of Man, ageless and endless. They may be daughters of Lilith, though they sometimes show a compassion for mankind which the Queen of Night lacks. Or they may be kin of grim Hecate, though they do not shun the daylight as she does. They may be three, or they may merely be one. There are hundreds of legends about them, in their multitude of forms. Which stories, if any, are closest to the truth is anyone's guess."

4. The cryptic legend most frequently used to describe them, from any type of source:

"They wear many forms and many faces. They are known by many names.

When Man first began to dream, *they* were there to plague Him.

"When the last Man on Earth dies, *they* will be there to mourn Him.

"They are The Sorrows, and from the first breath He takes, until the very last beat of His heart,

Their prey is *Man*.

ture another stairway goes completely dark—and stays that way.

Still later, as they walk down the street one night, the street-lamp overhead blinks out, then the next one, and the next one. If the investigators seem frightened by any of these blackouts, assess a loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

Shadows Outside

Normal shadows begin behaving strangely. Some seem to move, even when the source of the shadow is stationary, or there is a shadow—a human-shaped shadow—that seems to have no source. Anyone unnerved by these weird shadows may lose 0/1 Sanity point.

The Sound of Her Wings

During the Three Sisters investigation, one or more characters hear what sounds like something flapping in the night sky somewhere above them, perhaps in conjunction with the streetlamp failure described above. A Spot Hidden roll reveals what looks like a large ragged man-sized shape hanging on the side of a building, perhaps from a window. If approached the ragged shape seems to catch the wind and drift out of sight around the corner of the building. Investigators spooked by the event lose 0/1D3–1 points of Sanity.

Shadows Inside

These events are similar to the shadows described above, except they occur inside The Three Sisters. There should be at least one of these events prior to the variation described below, Maddie and the Shadow.

The Elevator

As the car is moving it suddenly lurches to a stop. Then the interior light goes out, leaving the car pitch black. Let the investigator fumble with whatever light source they may have with them, a lighter, matches, or a mini-flash. When the light flicks on, the investigator finds himself face to face with the old crone, Elizabeth Salmon. Failing a DEX x1 roll, the investigator shrieks and pulls away, dropping and extinguishing the light. If the roll succeeds, they jerk away and the light goes out, but the investigator holds on and can snap it back on, or light another one.

This shock costs the victim 1/1D3 points of Sanity. If the Keeper wishes, when the investigator flicks their light back on it rapidly fades or blows out, leaving the poor investigator again in the dark with a now chuckling figure. Sanity loss is 0/1. Then the elevator door suddenly opens and a tenant stands gaping at the car's shaking occupant in the now lit car.

The Moth

A sleeping investigator is awakened by a faint tapping or flapping sound coming from somewhere in his room. Following the sound, the investigator discovers the long dead body of a Death's-head Hawkmoth on a windowsill, atop the air conditioner, or perhaps clutching the drapes.

If the investigators think to check Frank Ryder's apartment, they find the glass case that held the specimen empty. This dis-

covery calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

Music

This should occur at least once or twice prior to the climax, where the source of the music is finally discovered. It is merely the suggestion of distant music coming from somewhere in the building, and probably won't even seem remarkable at first. On a subsequent visit, the odd, distant, dirge-like waltz is heard again. Despite any efforts, the source of the music cannot be found.

The Basement is Dark

While the investigators are off in one of the darker corners of the basement, all the lights go out, leaving them in the darkness. The investigators can use personal light sources if they have them. As they stumble about in the dark, a halved Listen or Spot Hidden roll may detect a light footstep, or breathing, or a shadow that moved. These unseen presences call for a loss of 0/1 Sanity, at the Keeper's discretion. The Keeper may wish to have one or more of their personal light sources fail, again plunging the investigators into darkness.

Leaving the basement, they find the light switches seem to work normally. It looks like somebody simply turned off the lights on them. But who?

Maddie and the Shadow

The Keeper should use this event after the investigators have taken note of the peculiar behavior of shadows, and more importantly if and when the investigators start to suspect Maddie Mercier is behind the haunting of The Three Sisters.

The investigators should be somewhere in the building, perhaps exploring or conferring with Winter or another resident. A Spot Hidden roll detects an extra shadow next to those cast by the people present. When this is pointed out, the shadow suddenly appears to flee, flickering across the floor and walls. If the investigators pursue the shadow, they see it rounding corners and climbing stairs. A random resident or two may take note of the investigators wildly chasing through the halls.

On the third floor the shadow continues to pour up the stairs, but more importantly Maddie Mercier is seen just unlocking her apartment door as the pursuers rush past. The shadow continues upward, eventually disappearing somewhere on the fourth floor.

Hopefully the seeds of doubt have been planted. If Maddie is one of their suspects, she was seen at the same time as the fleeing shadow. Does that eliminate the possibility she is the haunter? At any rate, she later derides them mercilessly about their crazy ghost chase. "Are you guys mental or something?"

The Book Dealers

Investigators seeking research materials have not only the local college library at their disposal, but a pair of local booksellers as well. One of these, Big Time Books & More, is where Three Sis-

ters resident Carla Boyd is employed. The second, Nagel's Books, is a small used bookstore.

Big Time Books & More

Big Time is a large store located in a strip mall a few blocks from the main campus. Bright, clean, and well-organized, they stock new and used books, including lots of remaindered items, usually 50–65% off suggested retail. They also carry a good selection of used CDs, vinyl records, electronic games, puzzles, and calendars. While there are no Mythos tomes here, there are sure to be useful volumes such as *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, and *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits*, both by Rosemary Ellen Guiley, and the shorter version of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, but nothing containing his "Levana" story.

Todd Venable

Big Time is owned and operated by Todd Venable, a thirty-six year old past hippy with an easy smile and a laid back attitude. If befriended, Venable can try to track down specific volumes for the investigators, for reasonable prices with a few days' or weeks' search. If asked about rarer volumes, Venable mentions Nagel's Books downtown, though he warns that Jerry Nagel is something of a shark when it comes to prices. If pressed, Venable states that Nagel deals all over the world via the internet, and while he's not a cheat, his methods are sometimes unscrupulous—such as bilking heirs on the value of valuable books in order to resell them for higher sums of money.

Todd Venable, book dealer, 36

STR 9 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 13
DEX 11 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 65 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Appraise Books 45%, Bargain 45%, Computer Use 25%, Credit Rating 30%, History 60%, Library/Internet Use 65%, Listen 35%, Psychology 20%, Spot Hidden 35%.

Languages: English 85%.

Nagel's Books

Nagel's shop is located on a side street near the city's main business district. It is the antithesis of Big Time—small, dingy and dark, but stocked with older valuable books and sets. Here one might find a twenty-volume hardcover set of Robert Louis Stevenson's complete works from the early 1900s, or an even older copy or two of Dickens. Prices are at a premium however. Nagel has a little bit of everything from wildlife to Old West history to science fiction.

Among the volumes Nagel currently has on hand are a used trade paperback copy of David J. Hufford's *The Terror That Comes in the Night*, at \$12, and a mass market paperback copy of Richard Ahern's first book, *The Abduction Agenda*, at \$5. Nagel also has very good copies of the following Frank Ryder books: a 1968 paperback of *The Star Knight*, signed by Ryder, at

\$35; a 1961 hardcover of the mystery *The Blameless* at \$80; and a 1962 hardcover of *Penny's Boat* for \$110. When word gets around of Ryder's death, these prices may double.

Jerry Nagel

Jerry Nagel himself is a small, thin, bearded man in his fifties, with graying swept-back hair, cold eyes, and nicotine-stained fingers. Nagel is something of a snob when it comes to literature and valuable books, and has the attitude that everyone is out to screw him so he might as well screw everyone else first. He has a small desk inside the front door of the shop, where he usually sits at his computer monitoring his Ebay and other online bookselling operations. When he needs to ship a sold item his wife picks it up and mails it the next day.

Nagel is willing to aid the investigators in their researches as long as the money is good. He can try to track down rare volumes for them, but always at premium prices.

Nagel is contacted by Lilah Starrett soon after the death of Frank Ryder. Ryder owed the Starretts a couple months' rent. At some point, when the investigators are at The Three Sisters, they see Nagel inside, either entering or leaving, or actually inside Ryder's apartment. Lilah Starrett calls on Nagel to appraise Ryder's collection, with an eye toward selling it to recoup her rent, since Ryder has no next of kin and no will. Mrs. Starrett and Nagel take pains to avoid discussing the matter with anyone else, and this could antagonize the former into legal action against the investigators if they pry too much. When he learns of this, Kurt Winter is angry but unable to argue, given the Starretts' legal right to recover what they're owed.

Nagel may try to steal some of Ryder's books or papers to sell on his own, without Mrs. Starrett's knowledge. This may in fact be the fate of Ryder's commonplace book if the investigators don't get to it first. Nagel offers to sell it to them for \$1000—"the notes and innermost thoughts of the late award-winning author"—if they're interested. Unfortunately for him, Nagel's interest in Ryder's belongings eventually wins him a fatal visit from Mater Tenebrarum, as discussed in the Events section below.

Nagel is basically an opportunistic snob who can help or hinder the investigators in minor ways before he becomes a casualty of the adventure.

Jerry Nagel, unscrupulous book dealer, 57

STR 11 CON 10 SIZ 13 INT 14 POW 14
DEX 12 APP 14 EDU 17 SAN 70 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Appraise Books 80%, Bargain 65%, Computer Use 20%, Credit Rating 35%, Fast Talk 75%, History 65%, Law 20%, Library Use/Internet Use 60%, Listen 35%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 35%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Languages: English 85%.

Dreams & Nightmares

As the case proceeds, the investigators will find themselves haunted by mysterious dreams and nightmares, a gift from Mater Tenebrarum. Any investigator failing a POW x5 roll is a potential victim of one of the following dreams. The last of the listed dreams has a very specific target and usage.

The Night Hag

The investigators may suffer more night hag attacks, similar to the one described in *The First Night*. If the Keeper wishes, an investigator who has suffered a hag attack and makes a POW x3 after awakening remembers their attacker speaking to them, whispering one of the mysterious passages listed nearby under Cryptic Utterances.

The TV

This dream should occur at least once during the adventure, and likely only once.

The dreaming investigator awakes in the middle of the night when the television suddenly comes on. There's no one else awake and all doors and windows are secured. It's an old black and white movie melodrama from the 1940s or 1950s.

If the investigator can make an EDU x1 roll, he recognizes the lead actress as Frances Liston, who had a brief career in Hollywood. In the morning, the investigator may not be certain whether this was real or a dream.

Later, in the *Lachrymarum* book, the dreamer may recall this incident when their investigation turns toward film actress Frances Liston.

The Accident

This dream is a vivid re-enactment of the death of Frank Ryder, from the moment the investigators saw him on the sidewalk. The dream covers only the accident and it's aftermath, and does not involve the pursuit of the mysterious old woman. Anyone having this dream loses 0/1 Sanity points.

The Return of Frank Ryder

This dream should only occur to an investigator who witnessed Frank Ryder's death. That investigator awakes in the night, having heard someone in his room (regardless of the actual situation, the dreamer sleeps alone in the nightmare). The room is dark and the light won't come on, but a figure can be seen sitting in a chair nearby, shrouded in gloom yet still identifiable as Frank Ryder. Ryder sits smoking his pipe and talks pleasantly with the dreamer, about anything the dreamer wishes to discuss.

The dream-Ryder is maddeningly cryptic, however, and won't reveal the identity of Mater Tenebrarum, though he may hint that the haunter is indeed she. He may offer such clues as "You've seen her, you know," along with the warning "You should

have left her alone. But you saw her, and you followed her. And now she's seen you too. I'm afraid you may be joining me soon."

Ryder comes across calm and friendly, but very vague. After a few moments he fades into the darkness. "She's calling me..." The dreamer awakens with a start—for real this time—and may lose 0/1 points of Sanity from his conversation with the dead. Kurt Winter has a dream very similar to this at some point in the scenario, and may discuss it with the investigators, if he trusts them.

Hand of Glory

This is listed as a dream because it is unlikely any of the investigators will spend their nights sleeping in The Three Sisters building. If any do, perhaps by renting the empty apartment or staying with Winter or by other arrangements, then this event is not a dream and actually happens to them. Or, if the Keeper wishes, he can throw reality to the wind and have this nightmare actually occur regardless of where the victim is sleeping. In the half-logic of dreams and dark faerie tales, the hag may drag an investigator straight out of his hotel bed and into the hallway of The Three Sisters building.

This nightmare begins very much like a night hag encounter, with the investigator awakening to find himself unable to move. The door to his room is open, and the hallway outside is dimly lit. As the paralyzed investigator watches from the corner of his eye, the old crone present at Ryder's death *floats* past the open doorway, on down the hallway, causing a loss of 0/1D3 Sanity points. Moments later she glides back, grinning malevolently, her eyes wide.

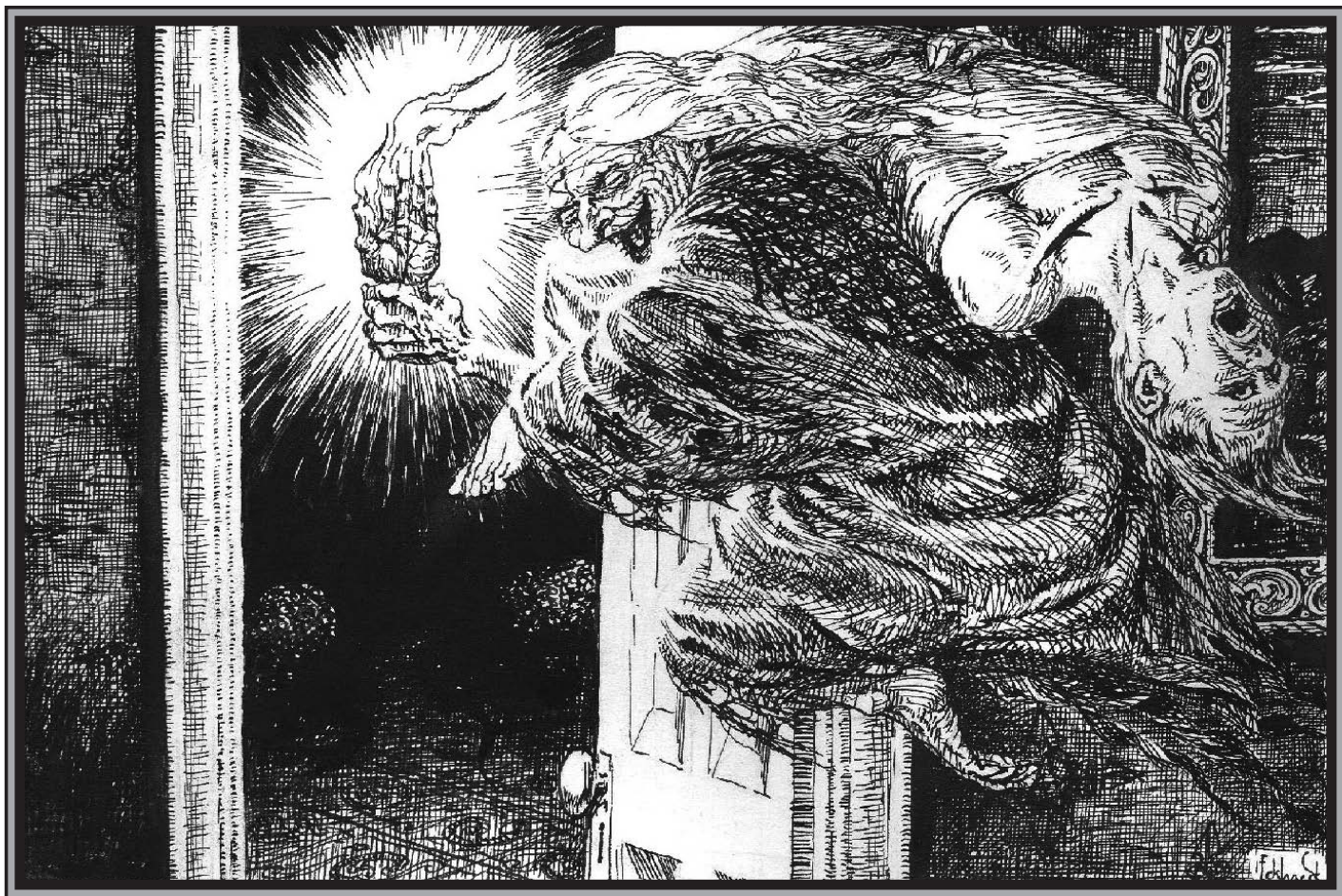
In her hand the hag clutches a severed human left hand, each finger of which is topped with a burning wick. An Occult roll identifies the horrible light source as a Hand of Glory, cut from a hanged man's arm and specially ensorcelled by witches to deepen the slumber of sleepers so that they can't be awakened normally.

The hag looms over the helpless sleeper, resting the candle on the nightstand while she wraps the bedclothes tightly around him or her. Then, tittering, she takes the Hand, slings the cocooned victim over her back, and floats out of the room. The trapped vic-

Cryptic Utterances

"We were there when you first came into this world. Do you remember? My sister held you in her arms, while my sister gently opened your eyelids with her thumb. And I blew the first breath into your lungs. Likewise will we be there on your dying day. My sister will hold your hand, my sister will kiss your lips and draw the last breath from your lungs. And I? It will be my hand that stills your heart."

"Do you know why a child finds comfort in being rocked to sleep? Because in his heart of hearts, in his oldest memories and deepest dreams, he remembers his first meeting with us."



tim then finds themselves in The Three Sisters building, having just been carried out of Apartment 11—Ryder's, or their own, if they were actually staying in the building.

The still paralyzed investigator—unable to scream or even whimper—hangs upside down and helpless on the crone's bony back as she reaches down and unfastens a heating duct. Then she crawls inside, dragging her prey by the feet after her. This calls for a loss of 1/1D4 Sanity points.

The journey into the black depths is agonizingly long, and after what seems like hours, the dragging stops and suddenly the crone's leering face is next to the investigator's own, again lit by the grisly Hand—Sanity loss is 0/1D2.

"I'll be leaving you now," she coos, "but not alone." She blows the candle out, and then there are skittering sounds as small unseen things approach in the blackness. Allow the horror of the situation to sink in. If the investigator is dreaming, he or she awakens now—with a terrible scream. Halve all Sanity losses for the dream.

If the investigator wasn't dreaming, but was actually taken into the ducts by the crone, he or she suffers a further 1/1D6 Sanity loss—doubled if he or she is claustrophobic or nyctophobic (a fear of darkness). After a few minutes the trapped victim is able to move—the duct is just large enough to squirm a few inches at a time—and perhaps shout for help. If the victim doesn't move, but shouts and waits for rescue, call for a Luck roll but double the result. If the roll still succeeds, he is found and pulled out of the ducts in that many minutes (for example, the die roll is 25, dou-

bled to 50, so 50 minutes). If the roll fails, add that many minutes and try again. If the victim tries to escape on his own, roll Luck but don't double the roll. If successful he or she escapes in that many minutes, otherwise add that many minutes and try again. Every hour or portion thereof spent trapped in the ducts calls for a loss of 1/1D4 Sanity points, again, doubled if the victim is claustrophobic or nyctophobic. (If he wasn't when he went in, he surely may be when he gets out.)

Insanity: Into the Darkness

This dream occurs the first night after an investigator has suffered from some form of insanity as a result of the events of this adventure, or when a potential target of the Mother of Shadows has lost 12–15 points of Sanity. The investigator dreams that he is in a very dark room, with sparse furniture indistinct in the gloom, and no discernible exit. A seductive voice speaks to the investigator, its source unseen in the room.

"We have met before, you and I. And we will meet again very soon. And when next we meet you will see my face, and you will have a very important decision to make. But know this: we will not meet a third time..." The investigator awakens with no further effects.

Events

This adventure doesn't operate on a set timeline, and is left largely

to the discretion of the Keeper and the actions of the investigators. The events described below can be used as the Keeper desires or as the situation calls for. The order given below is a rough guide only, and some Events actually involve several incidents which may be used at different times during the scenario. The last few Events outline the escalation of *Mater Tenebrarum*'s attacks, leading up to the final confrontation in *The Fall of the House of Shadows*.

Kurt & Maddie

The two main non-player characters in *House of Shadows* are Kurt Winter and Maddie Mercier, though the latter's busy school and work schedules keep her offscreen much of the time. Kurt, however, is much more accessible to the investigators, and while he is deeply saddened by his friend Frank Ryder's death, he is eager to get to the bottom of the mystery that may have cost the old man his life. To this end, Winter is glad to aid the investigators in their quest for the source of *The Three Sisters*' haunting. He can help interview building residents, do background research, participate in ghost watches, and so forth. He is available mostly in the evenings, but may be busy with something else if a random investigator fails a Luck roll or if the Keeper desires otherwise. Winter is reluctant to break the law, but might do so to preserve Ryder's belongings, for example. His loyalty to Ryder is unshakable, though learning the old man slept with Maddie would send him spinning into a deep depression, perhaps even a suicidal one.

Maddie, on the other hand, is unflappable. She pokes fun at the investigators' ghost hunt, and thinks Ryder and Kurt are silly for wasting so much time on that nonsense. If confronted with the fact she slept with Ryder (fellow residents Robert Dorder and Danny Fitzgerald know of it, or suspect it, at least), she snaps, "It's nobody's business." A successful Fast Talk roll (or any additional pressure, since *Mater Tenebrarum* actually *wants* to tell the investigators what happened, to torment them) and the promise that the interviewer can never tell Kurt gets her to admit her betrayal. The old man came home drunk one night after too much wine at his favorite restaurant. Ryder was sad and tearful, and she tried to comfort him, but his attentions turned amorous, and she pitied him too much to stop him. It was nothing to either of them, and left both of them ashamed and terrified Kurt would find out and that it would destroy him, so they swore to never mention it. Maddie gives the investigators a wide berth after they discover her infidelity.

Naomi Wills

Little Naomi Wills should be used as a source of unease throughout the scenario. Interviewing her reveals the presence of a sinister old woman in her dreams, her "Gramma." As the scenario progresses, the investigators—whom she begins to call "The Weirdos"—may encounter Naomi in various places throughout *The Three Sisters*. She may show up silently and unexpectedly while they're exploring the place, or she may come upon them picking a lock or doing something else they shouldn't be doing. Or she can merely give them a creepy stare passing them in the hall. Later on, as the investigators get closer to the truth, or per-

haps press Naomi too hard, the little girl will sternly state, "You better stop it or I'll put a spell on you. Gramma told me how."

Naomi doesn't know any spells, of course, and is just a strange little girl with a real live nightmare for an invisible friend, but she should definitely give the investigators the creeps. Her mother Bridget is too busy and too protective to give too much credence to the absurd witch and possession stories of a bunch of strangers, and may call the police if the investigators seem threatening. Naomi's artwork, discussed below, is another source of weirdness.

The Children's Drawings

When the investigators interview Bridget Wills and her strange daughter Naomi, they may notice several examples of Naomi's artwork displayed around the Wills' apartment. A Spot Hidden roll singles out a couple of colored pencil drawings, one of a woman crying, and another of a black human-shaped thing with great black wings. Coaxed with a Fast Talk roll, Naomi says they're a crying lady and an angel, respectively. Among her other artworks is a picture of a lady standing next to a bridge waving at cars, but the waterline is drawn above the cars; several outlines of a child's left hand, each a different color; a boy with a sad look on his face lying in bed, surrounded by three women; and a very good picture of a black cat. Naomi doesn't have much of an explanation for any of these pictures, other than the one of the sick boy was copied from one she saw in the storage room in the basement.

If the investigators are interested in seeking out these other drawings, they need to somehow get the key to the storage room, or have one of the tenants get it for them. Bridget and Naomi can give them a vague idea of where to look for the drawings amid all the junk. Once there, an Idea roll finds them. They are in a crumbling cardboard box in the back of one of the caged sections. There are dozens of drawings, most in crayon but a few in pencil. An Idea roll estimates the artist is eight to ten years old. Among the pictures is one of a woman dressed in black kneeling on the ground amid dozens of crosses; a lady with three dogs on leashes; a few pictures of the outline of a child's hand; an ornate silver key; a gold bug; countless drawings of various types of dinosaurs, often fighting each other in bloody combat; several more of cowboys and Indians fighting, sometimes on horseback; a man accompanied by a dark humanoid shape with bird wings; an evil-looking woman with a big bloody knife; and a leering witch and a cat with arched back standing next to a black cauldron with a hand protruding from it.

Many of these old drawings are signed "William Dodge," and all seem to be by the same artist. If the investigators have researched the history of the building they probably came across the obituary of young *Three Sisters* resident William Dodge. Otherwise a subsequent search discovers it. If they seem overly disturbed by some of the images from the children's drawings, a loss of 0/1 Sanity points may be called for. (Note that several of these pictures foreshadow events that take place in subsequent adventures in this book. When those events happen the Keeper should call for Idea rolls to see if the investigators recall these eerily premonitory drawings, perhaps calling for Sanity loss.)

Note also that investigators exploring the basement may be



targeted for minor attacks by Mater Tenebrarum (see *The Basement is Dark*, in *Hauntings*, above).

Richard Ahern

In his commonplace book *Ryder* mentions being in contact with new age/occult writer Richard Ahern, author of *The Paramental Factor*. Ahern has written extensively about alien abduction, mothman, and big-foot, and has had articles published in *Fate*, *Fortean Times*, *Paranoia*, and *The UFO Times*. He has also appeared on Art Bell's *Coast to Coast AM* radio show, *Larry King Live*, and several other television programs about the paranormal. With a successful halved Know roll, investigators prominent in similar fields may already be acquainted with Ahern.

Ahern is an unassuming man in his late thirties, with rectangular black-framed eyeglasses, thinning hair cropped close to the skull, and a dark goatee. He is married and has two very young children. Though his books speculate wildly (they sell better), Ahern himself is a confirmed skeptic.

If contacted by the investigators (his cellphone number is in *Ryder*'s commonplace book, and *Winter* has it as well), Ahern can be of little help. *Ryder* initially contacted him for help about the night hag dreams he and *Winter* were having, but Ahern couldn't tell him anything he didn't already know. When they spoke later, *Ryder* asked if he had ever heard of *The Sorrows*, three ancient goddesses or spirits that may be sinister personifications of human grief. Ahern had no idea what he was talking about. The paranormal author is shocked to hear of the old man's death, and if told the circumstances he suggests the investigators drop the matter immediately.

"If this thing is real, it killed the old man. Whether it's a ghost or a witch or a paramental or whatever, finding out you're right about something like this isn't worth dying for. Get out of there, write a book about what you know so far. Stay there and you may end up like *Ryder*."

Ahern might also be a useful character with which to deliver additional clues and research items, if desired, and should definitely cross paths with the investigators in other scenarios in the *Keeper's* campaign; in particular, he makes a brief but memorable appearance in the *Lachrymarum* book, "River of Tears".

Richard Ahern, paranormal author, 39

STR 11 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 15
POW 13
DEX 10 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 53
HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Anthropology 45%, Art (Writing) 70%, Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Fast Talk 45%, History 50%, Law 20%, Library/Internet Use 60%, Listen 40%, Natural History 25%, Occult 70%, Photography 20%, Psychoanalysis 10%, Psychology 45%, Spot Hidden 35%.

Languages: English 80%, Latin 25%.

Nagel's Fate

As the scenario progresses, unscrupulous book dealer Jerry Nagel earns Mater Tenebrarum's baleful attention, most likely by stealing some of Ryder's books or papers, or trying to bilk Mrs. Starrett out of their true worth. The investigators are assumed to have met Nagel, either at his shop or while he is appraising Ryder's collection in The Three Sisters. If any of them gave Nagel their phone numbers, they receive a call one morning from the police, asking that they come down to the station to answer some questions. If they didn't give him their number, Kurt Winter is called in instead, and telephones the investigators to tell them the following news.

Nagel has been found dead in his shop. It looks like a heart attack, but the police wanted to speak with Winter or the investigators because their telephone numbers were among the last few calls from Nagel's cellphone, made last night about the time of his death. Neither Winter nor the investigators received any such calls, however.

If asked for details of Nagel's death, they state merely that his body was discovered in his shop, apparently soon after he died. A Law roll, or law enforcement credentials, gets the interviewing officers to be more candid. A neighbor in an adjoining building heard a smoke alarm shrieking and, tracking it down, they entered Nagel's shop and found him in the tiny bathroom of the store. He had been burning various bills and scrap papers on a plate, and had his cigarette lighter in his hand and his cellphone open next to him. The fire had gone out, but surely Nagel knew better than to light an open fire in a friggin' bookstore.

The guy was a smoker and had a history of heart problems, and while the circumstances seem odd, nothing was taken, so it looks like heart failure. Pressed for anything further, Sergeant Ron Parris (see below) says the neighbor told him when he came into the bookshop, every light in the place was on. Also, Nagel had a key in his hand that opened a locked cabinet that just contained a few books and papers. Parris says that the books and papers were old mystery and sci-fi stuff, and yes, if asked he thinks they were by Frank Ryder come to think of it.

Again, he may show the investigators these items if they are law enforcement, or make another Law roll. The books and papers—perhaps including Ryder's commonplace book, if Nagel took it—are all valuable items belonging to Ryder. An Idea roll guesses that Nagel was going to sell them, and perhaps pocket the proceeds himself. If the investigators are allowed into the shop after Nagel's death, they spot on the dead man's desk a copy of David J. Hufford's book *The Terror That Comes in the Night*, the book about night hag attacks. If asked, Nagel's wife Julia says

that Jerry had been having terrible nightmares recently.

The policemen who interview Winter and/or the investigators, and who cover subsequent criminal events in this scenario, are Sergeant Ron Parris and Officer Len McTighe. Parris is of average build, prematurely gray, friendly, and a solid cop. McTighe is big and beefy, with dark hair and moustache, and a sour disposition. Where Parris is more friendly and lenient, McTighe is prone to taking anyone and everyone in for questioning.

Ron Parris, police detective, 39

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 14
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 68 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: .38 Revolver 55% 1D10, Baton 55% 1D6, Fist 65% 1D3.

Skills: Credit Rating 45%, Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 45%, Hide 20%, Law 65%, Library/Internet Use 40%, Listen 50%, Psychology 45%, Sneak 25%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Languages: English 65%.

Len McTighe, police detective, 41

STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 13 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 13 EDU 16 SAN 54 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: 9mm Automatic 60% 1D10, Baton 65% 1D8, Fist 75% 1D3.

Skills: Credit Rating 35%, Dodge 35%, Drive Auto 40%, Law 65%, Library/Internet Use 35%, Listen 50%, Psychology 35%, Sneak 20%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: English 55%.

Ghost Hunting and Exorcism

The investigators may decide to use traditional ghost hunting methods and gear in their search for the haunter of The Three Sisters. Mater Tenebrarum is greatly amused by these fumbblings in the dark, and may create any number of phenomena for the benefit of those seeking her. Technological gadgets such as electromagnetic force (EMF) detectors and thermometers may show sharp spikes in EMF, or isolated areas ice cold. Still or video cameras may show strange shadows or totally black spots areas—all of which can be attributed to camera malfunction rather than paranormal phenomena. Infrared may show something *black* coming down the hallway toward the viewer, but nothing can be seen with the naked eye. Devices for recording electronic voice phenomena (EVP) may pick up breathing, soft laughter, or a word or name (perhaps "Ryyyyyyderrrrrr" or an investigator's name). If the Keeper desires, these phenomena might only be heard once before they disappear from the recording. Batteries may be completely drained, or a laptop's hard drive erased, or something similarly catastrophic may befall a camera. These phenomena may call for minor Sanity loss, but the worst should probably be no more than 0/1D3 points.

The investigators may decide the best way to deal with The Three Sisters' reticent haunter is to exorcise the building or cast

some sort of banishment spell. The Keeper may wish to have Todd Beach or Lilah Starrett interfere with this plan. Beach would at least protest until he could confirm Mrs. Starrett's approval of such a bullcrap stunt. Regardless of these other ramifications of the exorcism, if the investigators can find someone to perform the rite, it goes off without a hitch. This might take a few minutes, or a more elaborate ritual might see the party traipsing up and down the stairs and hallways intoning Latin for an entire afternoon. There are no retaliatory steps taken against them, no sign that there ever was a haunting. Until that evening.

That night, the investigator whose idea it was to perform the exorcism, or the investigator who performed it himself, suffers a night hag attack, as described earlier in the scenario. The victim sees the snarling face and form of Elizabeth Salmon crouched upon him, slowly sucking the life from him. Just before he passes out, the leering hag gloats, "Are you happy now? You drove me out of the building—and now the whole world is mine!" The investigator loses 1/2D3 points of Sanity, and awakens the next morning, pale, feverish, and sweating, and reduced to 1 Magic Point. This character has all statistics and skills halved until he recovers his lost Magic Points, which are regained at the normal rate.

And regardless of the type of exorcism, the haunting of The Three Sisters continues exactly as before. Mater Tenebrarum does not bow to the petty magics of mortals.

A Ghost Photo!

Eager for attention—and maybe a few dollars—photographer Robert Dorder decides to fake a photograph of a ghost to try to sell to the ghost hunting investigators. Using a photo of an old woman passerby and another of the hallway outside Ryder's apartment, Dorder uses his Photoshop skills to create a frightening image of a sinister creature. Late in the adventure, Dorder contacts the investigators, saying he has discovered something among some old photos he's taken of the building.

In his apartment, Dorder deals out a number of photos across the table. Most show the interior or exterior of The Three Sisters, but one catches the investigators' eyes: the barely visible old lady ghost near Ryder's apartment. Allow Spot Hidden rolls to detect possible fraud, but nothing seems suspicious, superficially.

A Psychology roll notes Dorder's nervousness, and if pressed he says it's just the idea of having accidentally photographed whatever it was that is haunting the building, perhaps the entity that killed Frank Ryder, that upsets him.

Dorder gives the investigators a copy of the picture for study, stating that since it was taken with a digital camera there is no negative. He offers them the first publication rights for the image, once they're satisfied the photo is genuine.

With access to photographic and image enhancement software, a successful Photography roll concludes the ghost photo could be a fake, but if so it's a good one. If the roll is less than 20% of the character's skill, faint cropping lines will be detected along the edges of the crone's image, signifying the pic is definitely a fake. At any rate, the old woman in the photo is not the one present at Ryder's death.

It's up to the investigators whether or not they confront

Dorder with their suspicions, but the photographer angrily insists it's real and that he'll sell it to someone else if they don't want it. If this occurs, Dorder shuns the investigators afterward, and may try to have them arrested for trespassing or whatever else he can think of.

The Locked Room Murder

Not long after Dorder tries to hoodwink the investigators with his fake ghost photo, Mater Tenebrarum turns her wrath upon him, perhaps to punish the lecherous photographer for constantly ogling her avatar, Maddie.

It is evening, and the investigators should be present in the building, maybe even on their way to confront Dorder about the fake ghost picture. Regardless of where they are, they hear a racket coming from somewhere inside. As they travel from floor to floor, an Idea roll indicates the noise is coming from the third floor—and that it's a tremendous fight of some kind.

On the third floor those present—a Luck roll indicates Kurt Winter is here—find Josh Place, the foul-mouthed college student from the fourth floor, outside the door to Dorder's apartment. From inside come crashing noises and the sound of someone moaning. The door is locked and resists attempts to force it, and no one within responds to entreaties from outside. Meanwhile the fracas within continues, and it sounds if Dorder is the one being beaten and smashed into walls. "Pleeatthhhh...No mowwwe...I won' thhell," he pleads.

Finally he screams, and at this point an attempt to force the door succeeds—too late. Just as the door breaks down there is a sound of shattered glass and a long scream trails off and ends with a distant muffled crack.

"I'm calling the cops," mutters Mary Morangelo, from the doorway of her apartment at the end of the hall, and she disappears inside and locks her door.

Dorder's apartment is dark, and broken furniture and debris are scattered everywhere. None of the light switches work, though the windows onto the street offer dim illumination, and from the far room come intermittent flashes of bright light. Most of the windows are cracked or broken, but the one in the study, furthest from the door, is completely shattered and dripping with blood. In the street below, Dorder's crumpled body lies in a spreading lake of blood.

On the floor of the study, one of Dorder's digital cameras takes a flash picture, and continues to do so every fifteen seconds until picked up and shut off. With a successful Luck roll, an investigator can conceal the flash camera in a pocket, purse, boot top, etc. There is no sign of Dorder's attacker.

There is only one door out of the apartment, and the investigators came in that way, so Dorder's assailant could only have escaped through the bedroom window onto the fire escape. This is unlikely since that window is cracked, but still closed, and the investigators would have seen someone moving from the study to the bedroom as they came in. As they ponder this puzzle in the dark, a female voice chuckles in the room. If they shine their lights on the source, they do so into the eyes of a fellow investigator. If they're without light sources and just jump on the chuckler, they

tackle this investigator. He or she has no inkling of this brief possession, as they heard the sinister laugh too. This unsettling moment costs all present 0/1 points of Sanity.

On the street below, a handful of onlookers gather around Dorder's clearly dead form, dressed in T-shirt and sweatpants. No one saw anyone use the fire escape. There are no further manifestations, and the witnesses to the locked room murder of Dorder must now await the police.

Shortly after the first uniformed officers show up, Sergeant Parris and Officer McTighe arrive and begin taking witness statements. They are surprised to see the investigators here, and single them out for questioning downtown. There they are grilled thoroughly about their presence at the crime scene and their relationship with the victim; Parris refers to the investigators as "angels of death," since they seem to be connected to so many recent deaths in the city. The cops are suspicious of the investigators, but the accounts of the other witnesses corroborate their stories.

With a successful Luck roll, the investigator who pocketed Dorder's camera keeps it hidden, otherwise the cops find it. This could lead to charges of interfering with a crime scene unless a Law, Credit Rating or halved Fast Talk roll convinces Parris they merely picked it up to switch it off. The questioning takes several hours, during which time the cops do thorough checks into the investigators' backgrounds and criminal records. Unless there are outstanding legal problems, the investigators are probably released in the early hours of dawn.

If the investigators turned over the camera, or left it where it lay, the police check out the contents within a couple of hours. If they think of it, the investigators need a Law or Persuade roll to convince the cops to let them see the photos. If the investigators absconded with the camera, they can study it at their leisure.

There are nine images, most of which are so dark or blurry they are useless. One shows Dorder on his knees slumped against his computer desk, his back to the camera; there are spots of blood on his arm and shoulder. Another from a different, skewed angle, shows Dorder on his back on the floor, his face badly bruised and bloodied. A Spot Hidden roll made while examining one of the blurry shots notices a tiny spot of glare amidst an indistinct shape. An Idea roll realizes that by rotating the picture the shape is revealed to be a face, and the glare is a nasal stud. The dark figure in the photo, the invisible killer of Robert Dorder, and the likely haunter of The Three Sisters, is Maddie Mercier.

The Fall of the House of Shadows

This scenario's final sequence of events begins with the investigators going back to The Three Sisters, for whatever reason. Ideally they have deciphered the photographic clue from Robert Dorder's savage slaying and are on their way to confront their new prime suspect, Maddie Mercier. If they have left this confrontation to

the police, the authorities handle it themselves, forbidding the investigators from taking part, probably even detaining the meddlesome outsiders at the station until they have finished with Miss Mercier. If this is the case, the cops come back satisfied with Maddie's story and alibi: she was working at the hospital last night at the time Dorder was killed, and her co-workers can corroborate that she worked all night. Of course Mater Tenebrarum could easily have flitted across town and taken a few minutes to brutalize Dorder before flitting back to the hospital, absent for a few minutes at most.

In this case it's assumed the investigators are going to want to talk to Maddie themselves, and thus they enter The Three Sisters braced for such a confrontation.

Lilah in Black

As the investigators enter the building, a dark figure slowly descends the staircase at the end of the hall. It is the building's owner, Lilah Starrett. She is wearing a long black dress, with black gloves, black purse, black high heels, and even a fashionable flat-crowned black hat—with a black veil. She stops in the center of the hallway, before the investigators can get very far inside the building.

"Stop," she commands. "I forbid you to enter this building." Allow the investigators to argue, but she warns, "I'll have you arrested for trespassing."

Asked why the sudden change of heart, she claims they've meddled enough, and that they've gotten enough people killed. Pressed for clarification, she coldly states, "You know what I'm talking about," and now there's no mistaking the subtle change in voice and intonation—this is a different Lilah Starrett than the one they've met previously. Allow the investigators to ask more questions, but the possessed Lilah is vague and condescending. At some point in their conversation Lilah delivers the speech contained in the box nearby, either now, or after she has dealt with Todd Beach (see below). If they try to approach her, she reaches into her purse and pulls out a cheap 9mm automatic pistol. She is ready to shoot anyone foolish enough to make any desperate moves.

Shortly after Lilah produces the gun, Todd Beach comes out of his apartment and is stunned by the scene he finds. "Everything OK, Mrs. Starrett?" he stutters. Lilah never takes her eyes or her gun off the investigators. "Yes, Todd." "Should I call the cops, Mrs. Starrett?" "Yes, Todd," she says flatly, "and an ambulance." "An ambulance? What for?" stammers the bewildered Beach. "For this", she says, turning the gun on him and shooting him in the leg before quickly swinging the gun back on the investigators. Beach drops to the floor wailing and cursing. He crawls off, bleeding, as Lilah smiles cruelly. "And call the fire department too, Todd." He drags himself into his apartment, cursing as he slams the door.

This is a good spot for Lilah to deliver her acid-tongued rant (see nearby boxed section) possibly ending with her sticking the gun in her mouth and blowing her brains out all over the wall behind her, collapsing on the floor, one high-heeled foot left

Tenebrarum Papers #7 the rant of Lilah Starrett

“You idiots think you know everything now, but you know NOTHING.

You see only the shadow of the smoke.

Not the smoke itself.

Nor the fire that it comes from.

Nor what fueled the fire.

Let alone who started that fire in the first place.

YOU KNOW NOTHING.”

twitching. Otherwise, she commits suicide if the investigators move to rush her, or whenever Lilah tires of the banter. Those witnessing the ghastly death lose 1/1D4 points of Sanity. Examining the body, they find Mrs. Starrett is indeed good and dead.

Evacuation

The investigators are left with a dead woman and her cryptic last words. If they don't think of it themselves, an investigator making a halved Idea roll wonders why she wanted Beach to call the fire department—and there was all that talk about smoke and fire. Any investigator making a POW x3 roll smells smoke coming from upstairs.

Mater Tenebrarum started a fire in Frank Ryder's third floor apartment, even as Lilah shot Todd Beach. The fire already threatens the life of Mary Morangello in neighboring Apartment 10. The investigators can flee the building if they wish, but doing so would abandon the tenants to a horrible death and result in possible Sanity losses on the part of the investigators.

The following listing shows which residents are home when the fire breaks out. Remember that each floor has a fire extinguisher and an axe in a wall cabinet in the alcove next to the elevator, and another fire extinguisher at the other end of the hall.

Ground Floor

Apartment 1: Bill Duke is out playing golf but Connie is home. Having heard the commotion, then gunfire, she has locked herself in her apartment, unaware of the fire. Even if told there's a fire, a Fast Talk roll or show of authority (police, FBI, EMT, doctor, etc) is required to get her to unlock and open the door. She'll eventually leave of her own volition, when the smell of smoke drives her out of her apartment.

Apartment 2: Leo Boyd is off at work, but Carla, like Connie Duke, is locked in her apartment due to the fracas outside. The above methods also work in getting her to evacuate.

Apartment 3: Todd Beach, like the other terrified ground floor residents, has to be convinced to leave. Due to his gunshot wound, he'll need help getting out of the building.

Second Floor

Reaching the second floor, investigators find smoke drifting



through the building and see flames on the third floor hallway.

Apartment 5: The door to Kurt Winter's apartment is unlocked, but Winter is not inside, or anywhere to be seen.

Apartment 7: Jeff Waller and Tonya Brownlee are both at work. Their door is locked.

Apartment 8: Bridget and Naomi Wills are both at home. As they flee, Naomi is screaming and crying, "What about Gramma?"

Third Floor

By the time investigators reach this floor flames are licking up toward the ceiling, and the smoke grows thick. If the investigators hesitated any length of time before attempting to evacuate the building, Apartment 10 is already on fire and it will be impossible to reach or rescue Mary Morangelo.

Apartment 9: Maddie Mercier's door is locked and there is no reply from within. Breaking in, they find her gone.

Apartment 10: Mary Morangelo is home, and may be doomed by the time the investigators get here. If they do get to her in time, she has to be helped out of the building.

Apartment 11: Frank Ryder's place is engulfed in flames.

Apartment 12: Robert Dorder's place is also ablaze.

Fourth Floor

When they reach the fourth floor they find it not yet on fire, but the rising smoke chokes the hallway.

Investigators who make a Listen roll hear the strange, distant, dirge-like waltz music they may have previously heard in the building, but whose source they could never find. Those who made successful rolls realize it is coming from somewhere above them—in the closed off fifth floor.

Apartment 13: Walter Park is home asleep in his locked apartment, but wakes at the pounding at his door and makes an escape.

Apartment 16: Danny Fitzgerald is home asleep in the locked apartment while his roommates Josh Place and Ben Schlatter are off to class. It takes several desperate moments to arouse the hung-over Fitz.

The Rescues

It takes only a few minutes to evacuate all the residents investigators can find, from first floor to fourth. As they rescue the last of the residents, have each investigator roll CON x5 or less on D100. Those failing suffer 1 point of damage from minor smoke inhalation.

Hopefully the investigators won't give up just yet. Kurt Winter and Maddie Mercier are still missing. One is a suspect, the other a friend who's a likely target of their murderous foe.

An Idea roll estimates they have several minutes to search the remaining floors and still flee relatively safely via the stairs. Perhaps a few more minutes if they choose to flee by the fire escapes.

Rendezvous in Darkness: Mater Tenebrarum

The stairway door to the fifth floor is still padlocked, though a few whacks with a fire axe destroys the latch. It's not a good idea to use the elevator during the fire, and the sealed windows off the fire escape are sturdy and difficult to break. As the investigators enter the perpetually dark fifth floor, call for CON x5 and Luck rolls to avoid the -10% penalty to sight- and physically-derived skills and minor accidents, described in The Closed-Off Sections (above).

The Death Waltz music (the beginning of Track 8, "The Compass and the Ruler," from Trevor Jones' soundtrack to the film *From Hell* is perfect) is coming from Apartment 18 at the far end of the hall, near the front of the building. While the other apartments can be broken into, they prove empty. The door to 18 is locked, and withstands all attempts to pick the lock or force the door. It needs to be hacked apart or the lock destroyed, either of which requires 25 points of damage inflicted by axe or firearm.

As they work at the door a randomly chosen investigator hears a strange rustling noise in the darkened hallway. If they have a light source, they can swing it around to find thousands of cockroaches swarming across the floor toward them. If they are not spotted, the first inkling of their presence is when they begin crawling up the legs and torso of the chosen investigator. The roaches cover them, squirming into clothes and hair, and threatening to enter the victim's mouth and nose.

This attacked character loses 1/1D5 points of Sanity, but it is all a hallucination. No one else is attacked. If the victim tries to stomp at the sea of scuttling bodies, they need a successful Luck roll to keep from breaking through the weak floor, suffering 1D4 damage. If the roll is fumbled, damage is 1D6, and they plunge through the floor up to their waist. A second Sanity roll is called for, as now the victim is at the mercy of the roaches. Sanity loss is another 1/1D5 points. Two Psychology rolls from comrades are necessary to convince the victim he is hallucinating, and if the rolls succeed, the victim watches the roaches dissolve and vanish.

With the hallucination banished, the investigators can finish demolishing the door.

Apartment 18

The apartment is almost totally dark. There is a very dim light in the living room, from where the music emanates.

The living room contains a pair of upholstered chairs flanked by wooden tables. Maddie Mercier—Mater Tenebrarum—sits casually in one of the chairs. On her right a table holds the Hand of Glory, wicks burning, while on her left, in the other chair, sits

Kurt Winter, looking stricken. He seems distant and unresponsive. On the table at his left an old hand-cranked Victrola plays the Death Waltz. The music winds down and stops as investigators enter the room.

Mater Tenebrarum smiles ominously and says, “Now you see the smoke, at least,” referring to Lilah Starrett’s pre-suicide speech.

If the investigators don’t attack, or are content to talk, Mater Tenebrarum obliges.

What’s wrong with Kurt?

“He’s deciding,” she says.

Deciding what?

“Whether or not he’s coming with me.”

Coming where?

No answer.

Does he know you killed all those people, that you killed Ryder?

“He knows, but he loves me.”

Why did you kill those people?

“Some of them I loved. Others I didn’t.”

Who are you anyway? What are you?

“I’m your mother. Your lover. Your Angel of Death. I am Eve, Mary, Hecate, Atropos, Lilith, Skuld, Megaera, Kali, Nemesis. I am the voice that whispers in the dark. I am endless night.”

What’s it mean?

“It means you’re not as smart as I’d thought.”

At some point, Mater Tenebrarum also tries to claim any investigators she may have targeted during this adventure. Any investigator with a history of insanity or suicide, or who has lost 20 or more Sanity points during this investigation is a likely candidate.

“You,” she says, pointing at her prey, “are you ready to come with me? You’ve often gazed into the darkness, but always turned away because you feared it. I know you want to *know* things, but you’re afraid of what that knowledge might do to you, because it’s hurt you before. I can show you *everything* you ever wanted to know—and more! I can show you what lies in the Abyss! Take my hand and you will never be afraid of the dark ever again.”

Have the targeted investigator make a Sanity roll and if it fails the investigator begins to believe she makes a good case. Regardless of the roll, the choice is the investigator’s to make.

The investigators can also try to rouse Kurt Winter, if they wish. To do so they have to break through Maddie’s spell by triggering an emotional response from him while at the same time making a Psychology roll. Effective triggers would include reminding Kurt that this is the woman who killed Frank Ryder and other victims, or that she is the night hag, or that she has set the building afire—anything the Keeper feels would likely shock Kurt awake. Informing Kurt that Maddie slept with Ryder to just to hurt them angers Mater Tenebrarum.

Once Kurt is roused, or Mater Tenebrarum is successfully attacked, her Grasp spell is disrupted. With her game thwarted, her power begins to dwindle. She may implore Kurt—and any

other prey—to come with her, but if combat is entered she now attacks each individual separately, rather than the entire group.

Her complete spell list is given below, but attacks such as Mindblast, Wither Limb, Cause Blindness and similar non-lethal magics might be preferable since this is the first scenario in the campaign. Once she loses Kurt she probably doesn’t last long, and dies leaving the bloodied, beautiful form of lovely young Maddie staring up at her killers.

If things go badly for the investigators, the Keeper may have Kurt rouse himself from Maddie’s spell. Angry with her for killing Ryder, he may strike the first blow that frees the investigators to aid in her destruction.

Once Mater Tenebrarum is defeated, all they have to do is escape the burning building!

Mater Tenebrarum, young Maddie Mercier, 19

STR 25 CON 45 SIZ 11 INT 20 POW 35
DEX 16 APP 15 EDU N/A SAN N/A
HP 28

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: *Fist* 80% 1D3+db, *Knife* 80% 1D6+db, *Any others* at 50%—80% as desired, damage as per weapon.

Skills: *Cthulhu Mythos* 90%, *Dodge* 75%, *Hide* 80% 100% in any indoors area where there are shadows, *Listen* 90%, *Occult* 90%, *Persuade* 90%, *Psychology* 80%, *Spot Hidden* 90%.

The Grasp of Tenebrarum

Any attempt to approach Winter, or attack Mater Tenebrarum is met with a variation of the Grasp of Cthulhu spell. Mater Tenebrarum has a vast store of Magic Points gathered from decades of feeding on the tenants of The Three Sisters, and can keep this spell going indefinitely regardless of the number of investigators affected by it.

Targets captured by the Grasp are frozen in place, their bodies gripped by some invisible force; note that in this variation, victims do not lose STR. An investigator’s only hope is to roll POW x1 or less to break free of the spell. This can be attempted once per minute, including the first onset of the spell.

An investigator who hangs back and doesn’t enter the apartment with the others is unaffected by the initial spell, and can spring a surprise attack with a successful Luck roll.

(All of Mater Tenebrarum’s magical attacks draw from this limitless store of Magic Points, but all POW vs. POW contests use her POW of 35. Her regenerating power—see her statistics at the end of this adventure—also draws from her personal Magic Point total of 35.)

Languages: *All Languages 90%.*

Armor: *None, but she can instantly regenerate damage at the rate of 1 Hit Point per 1 Magic Point she expends. These points must be drawn from her personal Magic Point total of 35.*

Spells: *Bind Enemy, Cause Blindness, Cause Disease, Cloud Memory, Clutch of Nyogtha, Command Animal, Contact Mater Suspiriorum, Contact Mater Lachrymarum, Contact Ghoul, Contact Rat—Thing, Create Zombie, Dampen Light (variant), Dominate, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Eyes of the Zombie, Grasp of Cthulhu (variant), Implant Fear, Implant Suggestion, Mental Suggestion, Mesmerize, Mindblast, Nightmare, Red Sign of Shudde M'ell, Resurrection, Send Dreams, Shrivelling, Stop Heart, Summon/Bind Byakhee, Wither Limb, Wrack.*

Escape!

Each surviving investigator—and Winter too, if he survived—should now make a Luck roll. If more rolls succeed than fail, the fire has not yet cut off the main stairway. If the successes and failures tie, the Keeper should decide if the stairs are open, based on how tough the investigators have had it thus far. If more of the Luck rolls fail, the survivors must seek another exit—most likely the fire escapes. In any event, by the time the investigators have finished with Mater Tenebrarum, the fire has spread to the fourth and second floors, and smoke is filling the rest of the building. While they decide their escape route, call for CON x5 rolls, failure indicating 1D6 damage from smoke inhalation during the first few minutes of their escape; success still indicates a loss of 1 Hit Point.

If the stairways are ablaze and the investigators try to race through them anyway, they lose 1D6+2 Hit Points due to fire and smoke inhalation for each of the fourth, third, and second floors they try to pass. If they backtrack, they are injured again for each additional level they pass. This damage can be halved for each investigator who uses a fire extinguisher to blunt the effect of the flames. Once they reach the ground floor, they're safe—almost.

If the stairs are blocked and the investigators seek another route, the fire escapes are accessible from all the fifth floor apartments. Unfortunately the windows opening onto them are sealed shut with heavy plywood. These barriers have to be forced open (STR 30), or hacked open. Investigators must inflict 35 HP of damage to chop a man-sized hole in one. Axes do full damage, any other tool's damage is halved.

The fire has engulfed the south side of the building, including the fire escape on that side—the north side is also endangered, but not yet engulfed.

If the Keeper desires, another calamity may befall investigators fleeing via the fire escape, perhaps in conjunction with an appearance by Mater Tenebrarum (see below). As they pass an apartment, Maddie is glimpsed though the window. At that point, the fire escape jerks loose of its mooring and collapses sideways into the street if a south side fire escape, or onto the roof of the building next door if they are using the north side escape. Anyone

on the fire escape falls, suffering 1D6 points of damage for every floor above ground they fall. Those on a north side fall to the neighboring building's roof, which is one story above ground. Anyone making a Jump or Dodge roll can maneuver themselves to brace for the impact, and thus reduce the damage taken by 1D6.

Bloody Maddie

Regardless of the escape route, two additional problems remain for investigators. One is Mater Tenebrarum, in Maddie's bloodied form. She appears one or more times during their flight, glimpsed down the hallway through the flames as they bolt down the stairs, or inside an apartment through the window as they race down the fire escape. Seeing her dead, unsmiling form calls for a loss of 0/1D4 Sanity points, for the first such sighting only.

Any investigator who was previously targeted, taunted, and tempted by her may need another successful Sanity roll to keep from going into the flames to join her, perhaps closing the window on his friends as he goes to his likely death.

Zombie Lilah

The second problem is more serious. At some point during their flight the survivors encounter the once-dead Lilah Starrett. They may find her standing at the bottom of the stairs, or blocking their way in some manner, or she may reach out a window and grab a fleeing investigator's leg as they descend the fire escape. Sanity loss for seeing the dead, blood-spattered, possibly charred harridan is 1D3/2D4+1. Zombie Lilah tries to grab a character—Kurt or an investigator—and drag him into the fire with her, but she won't leave the building to do so. If a captured character has not freed himself within two rounds of being grabbed, he is dragged into the flames and killed.

Zombie Mrs. Starrett

STR 15 CON 20 SIZ 12 INT NA POW 7
DEX 11 APP 2 EDU NA SAN 0 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Bite 25% 1D4+db, Grab and Drag 25% STR vs. STR to break her grasp.*

Armor: *None, but impaling weapons do only 1 point of damage. All other weapons do half damage.*

By the time the investigators reach the street, the fire department has arrived and is fighting the blaze from all angles. They ask the surviving investigators if anyone is left in the building.

Sifting the Ashes

Surviving investigators undoubtedly have some explaining to do. The police are surely suspicious of their involvement in yet another calamitous event. Luckily their story is once again corroborated by several other witnesses, notably the wounded Todd Beach and any residents they might have rescued. No charges are filed against them, but the cops are curious to know what happened to Lilah Starrett (and perhaps Mary Morangelo), probably the only casualty of the blaze. Wait, what about Maddie Mercier,

the investigators ask? No trace was ever found of her. Lilah is posthumously—and flimsily—suspected of setting the fire for insurance purposes; authorities are also looking into her possible involvement in the death of Jerry Nagel, and photographer Robert Dorder as well. Poor Lilah—for once the investigators have the perfect fall gal.

Much of the information above assumes the investigators braved The Three Sisters inferno to save Winter and the other residents. If they did not do so, each of them loses at least 2D6 points of Sanity for their cowardice. They may also lose 1D6 points of Credit Rating if word of their abandonment of The Three Sisters residents spreads outside the city. There may be other such deleterious effects, as the Keeper desires. For example, the cowardly investigators may suffer nightmares in which the Three Sisters residents—possibly including Kurt Winter—appear to them, engulfed in flames and crying out to those who abandoned them. Perhaps Maddie Mercier is among them, laughing—Mater Tenebrarum has collected their souls. Regardless of whether it's caused by their own guilt or the machinations of the Mother of Darkness, this psychic residue of their failure costs them 1D6 Sanity points, and may occur more than once.

On the other hand, assuming they manage to save at least some of the building's residents, each gains 2D6 points of Sanity for their heroism, and 2D3 Credit Rating points as word of their deed spreads. If they don't manage to save Mary Morangello, reduce the Sanity reward by 1, to a minimum of 1 point. Saving Kurt Winter from his strange fate is good for another 1D6 Sanity, and is also very important in the overarching storyline of this campaign. If Winter dies in this adventure, the Keeper needs to do some refitting of the campaign epilogue, "The Final Cut".

For destroying, or appearing to destroy Mater Tenebrarum, each investigator gains 2D6 points of Sanity. Any investigator who was tempted, or targeted, by the Mother of Shadows should decide whether or not he deserves the full reward, half, or none of it. If he decides to limit his bonus, reward him or her in some other way: +1 to POW, or 1D6 additional points in Occult, Cthulhu Mythos, etc. If such an investigator surrendered to Mater Tenebrarum and was actually lost, his companions lose 1D6 Sanity. If a targeted investigator survives this scenario, the Keeper may wish to have him or her contemplate suicidally joining Mater Tenebrarum each time he or she goes insane in future adventures. Also, investigators who go insane during this adventure may exhibit symptoms of misogyny (hatred of women) or gynophobia (fear of women) as a result of their experiences.

Any player who notes that Maddie Mercier, Lilah Starrett, and Elizabeth Salmon might have formed some sort of maiden/mother/crone motif should be awarded with 1D6 points to his or her investigator's Occult skill. If the investigators are afraid they were supposed to meet and destroy three different entities in the House of Shadows, but that they might have missed one—say, Elizabeth Salmon—the Keeper may wish to withhold 1D4 of the Sanity points they would have gained at the end of this scenario.

Finally, the investigators may have met a pair of very useful contacts. Kurt Winter, in particular, is intended to be a regular

Some Notes on Mater Tenebrarum's Powers

As stated above, while she is within the Three Sisters building, the Mother of Shadows has an enormous supply of Magic Points to draw upon to fuel her spells; these Magic Points were those stolen from sleepers during decades of night hag attacks. Outside of The Three Sisters, Mater Tenebrarum's Magic Point total is limited to those from her personal POW of 35. Her personal total is also used in all POW vs. POW or Magic Point vs. Magic Point contests.

Note also that some of Mater Tenebrarum's spells differ slightly from their descriptions in the Call of Cthulhu rulebook. Her Grasp of Cthulhu, for instance, doesn't sap the STR of its targets. She can cast Dampen Light without the use of pipes, at a cost of 1 Magic Point per 2 yard radius of darkness.

Mater Tenebrarum uses other powers in this scenario which are neither listed nor described here. The most obvious of these is her Night Hag attack, which can be assumed to be virtually automatic, unless the Keeper wants to give an intended victim a POWx1% chance to break the paralysis before the hag appears, thus causing her to break off the attack without appearing. It's also assumed that the dreams and nightmares suffered throughout "House of Shadows" are either deliberately sent by Mater Tenebrarum or triggered by close proximity to her. The other hallucinations, appearances, disappearances, and shadow manipulation are also left largely unspecified herein.

In short, as it's stated in the Introduction to this book, the rules for governing Mater Tenebrarum and her sisters should be considered elastic at best, and non-existent for the most part. The Keeper should strive to do whatever creates a good story, or a good scare, or both, so long as it's fair to the investigators: don't, for instance, create some powerful illusion or spell that kills a character outright.

contact throughout the rest of this campaign, as he plays an integral part in the epilogue. Assuming he survives, Winter can be used a source of information-gathering by the investigators. If they deliberately use him this way as a method of keeping him busy to defray his depression, reward them with another 1D3 Sanity points, and a like amount to their Psychology skills. Winter is going to need such help, as he as now lost his best friend, Frank Ryder, his girl, Maddie, and all his possessions in the fire, to say nothing of the terrible truths revealed to him about the world of the supernatural.

Paranormal author Richard Ahern is another good contact

for the investigators. He too can be used as a source of information in the Keeper's campaign, and he also plays a somewhat important role in the "Lachrymarum" chapter, "River of Tears". Investigators may turn to Ahern or Winter to fill in the blanks in their research, at the Keeper's discretion.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE - A KEEPER'S TOOL

THREE SISTERS RESIDENTS

Frank Ryder/Franz Reuter, deceased science fiction/mystery author, age 74
Kurt Winter, journalist, age 25
Maddie Mercier, nursing student, age 19 (Mater Tenebrarum avatar)
Todd Beach, building superintendent, age 49
Bill Duke, retired railroad worker, age 66
Connie Duke, secretary, age 61
Leo Boyd, university maintenance worker, age 34
Carla Boyd, bookstore employee, age 34
Jeff Waller, foundry worker, age 24
Tonya Brownlee, hospital cook, age 27
Bridget Wills, waitress, age 32
Naomi Wills, strange little girl with invisible friend/"Gramma", age 8
Mary Elizabeth Morangelo, religious spinster, age 77
Robert Dorder, lecherous photographer, age 46
Walter Park, meat cutter, age 33
Danny Fitzgerald, college student age 20
Joshua Place, college student, age 20
Ben Schlatter, college student, age 19

INTERESTED PARTIES

Susan Simon, driver who kills Ryder, age 31
Lilah Starrett, owner of The Three Sisters building, descendant of builders' family, age 56
Archie Starrett, Lilah's husband, age 58
Todd Venable, book dealer, age 36
Jerry Nagel, unscrupulous book dealer, age 57
Julia Nagel, booksellers's wife, age 55
Richard Ahern, paranormal author, age 39

POLICE

Sergeant Ron Parris, police detective, age 39
Officer Len McTighe, police officer, age 41

MYSTERIOUS DEATHS IN THE THREE SISTERS BUILDING

Imogen Nolotski, age 69, died in fire, 1913

David J. Harris, age 56, died in fire, 1913
Mary-Anne Harris, age 55, died in fire, 1913
William Dodge, (child artist) age 8, illness, 1921
Katherine McCully, age 31, suicide by razor, 1931
Sanford Jones, age 22, murdered his wife, 1938
Judith Jones, age 17, murdered by husband, 1938
Dustin Woodley, age 39, suicide (hanging) with strange circumstances (missing hand), 1959
Mario Pignatelli, age 54, accident or suicide (fall from roof), 1960
Oliver Curran, age 82, natural causes (heart failure), 1964
Dewey Kilbey, (not a Three Sisters resident), age 22, murdered outside building, 1977
Amy Hiebert, (not a Three Sisters resident), age 18, murdered outside building, 1977
Corey Plainton, age 21, murdered by rival drug dealers, 1993
Lorna Kingerey, age 99, natural causes, 1993

VARIOUS HISTORICAL PERSONAGES

The Three Sisters:

Elizabeth Salmon, commissioned building, died unmarried, 1817-1899, avatar of Mater Tenebrarum
Christine (Salmon) Wolfe, commissioned building, died circa 1900?
Deirdre (Salmon) Frey, commissioned building, died circa 1900?

Elizabeth Salomon, English witch, executed 1717 (false lead)
Louisa Potts, English witch, executed 1717
Margaret Banner, English witch, executed 1717
Gilbert Potts, accused witch's husband, executed 1717
Ruth Hatherley, Potts' accuser, died 1717
John Foley, Salomon's chief accuser, died raving mad 1717
AFTER the witches' execution
Magistrate Hines, judge in the Potts/Salomon/Banner case

Book Two:

DESERT OF SIGHS

Suspiriorum



"That desert is old, and it catches men's dreams. And sometimes when men wander into it they see things they THINK they've lost, and they get themselves lost out there trying to get those things back. And when those men die out there, well, the desert takes their dreams and uses them to lure other men just the same."

In the second of The Sorrows scenarios, the investigators are called upon to help search for a group of young hikers lost in the Mojave Desert, near the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona. A favorite aunt of one of the investigators calls upon her nephew—and his friends—to help some dear friends of hers whose son is among the missing. The couple offers to pay the investigators' expenses along with a very modest reward (they are not wealthy people) for help finding their son.

The area in question—the so-called “Sighing Desert”—has a strange reputation: travelers have been disappearing within its expanses for over a century, and reports of bizarre mirages, spectral figures, and various electronic and mechanical anomalies and failures are widespread. This desert is also a favorite spot for New Age seekers, who venture into the eerie empty wastes on quests for spiritual enlightenment.

Keeper Information

The Desert of Sighs, or at least one corner of it, is coterminous with some of the loneliest places on Earth, and it is here, where only the lost can find her, that Mater Suspiriorum, the Mother of Sighs, dwells. Driven by their hopelessness the lost, the lonely, and the outcasts sometimes find themselves wandering the desolate streets of the nameless city that lies within the desert. Some come here in their dreams, others stumble upon it physically, and still others seek it out searching for some kind of meaning in their troubled lives. Beyond the lost desert city lies a vast cemetery stretching as far as the eye can see. Lovingly tending the billions of graves is a silent, brooding woman—the Mother of Sighs.

Mater Suspiriorum's current form was taken from a Hualapai Indian woman in northern Arizona in the 1940s. Named Belinda Echevarría, the woman had several years earlier offended her family and tribe by marrying a young Mexican–American man named Juan Carlos Maria Echevarría. Marrying outside the tribe, she was largely shunned by them, even after she bore a son, Enrique. When the Second World War broke out, Juan enlisted, leaving his wife and son to live with her family until he returned.

At home, Belinda found the reception chilly, even after news of Juan's death on the beaches of Normandy came. Scorned by her family and her people, her husband lost, Belinda Echevarría took her seven-year-old son and wandered into the desert to die. She had nearly succeeded when she stumbled upon a mirage—city of lonely ruins. Near death, Belinda and her son passed through the silent shadowy streets into the vast cemetery beyond. Here she found a strange, silent, woman kneeling among the countless graves. The old woman's eyes offered peace, and Belinda succumbed. Little Enrique was taken as well, replaced by a servant of Mater Suspiriorum.

Enrique Echevarría

For decades now Enrique Echevarría has been writing of his experiences within the Sighing Desert. Of how he and his mother reached a city lost in the desert wastes, and how his mother's death from exposure made him find the strength within himself to leave her and come out of the desert alive. He has returned to the desert

many times, and has come to believe the city may not have been real, merely a construct of his own mind designed to help him accept his mother's death and escape her fate with his newfound inner strength.

Echevarría's writings have resonated with others, inspiring them to do the same. Many have sought the city in the Desert of Sighs, but only an unlucky few have found it. For there, in the heart of gloom, Mater Suspiriorum waits, like a spider in a web. Only the lost and lonely reach her, and when they find her, are offered eternal peace. Those who refuse rarely return to civilization, due to exposure or the vengeful attacks of Suspiriorum's other servants—stunted nightmarish things like wingless bats.

The Fate of the Lost Hikers

Now five college students have disappeared while hiking in the Sighing Desert. Led by Nick Karras of nearby Kingman, Arizona, the group fell afoul of Mater Suspiriorum and her servitors. Unconsciously led toward the lost city by two of their number—Chad Mancina, a deeply lonely jokester from a broken home, and Nick's girlfriend Ann Delaney, who struggles with the guilt of an abortion—most of the hikers met bitter ends. Jessi Mohrman becomes separated from the others and, rejecting Mater Suspiriorum's favor, is left a mummified husk, lost in the dunes. Reaching the lost city, the rest also meet Mater Suspiriorum, and again their rejection is answered with horror. Nick faces a gorgon-like aspect of the eldritch entity, and is turned to stone. Chad surrenders to a more benevolent facet, and becomes one of the favored lying amid her garden of sand and bone. Having lost his girlfriend Jessi, Jeremy Brenton valiantly tries to protect Ann Delaney, but is nearly killed by The Fury, a bloodthirsty and deadly avatar of the Mother of Sighs. Having seen most of her friends killed, Ann lapses into a dream-like existence in the lost city, brooding in the empty nursery of her childhood home as she ponders Mater Suspiriorum's offer of unconditional, eternal love and forgiveness. Jeremy Brenton alone manages to escape the desert nightmare, albeit with terrible wounds.

Jeremy's parents hire the investigators to find their son, but as the adventure begins Jeremy is found, alive. Ravaged by thirst and exposure, and driven mad by all he has undergone, Jeremy is too far gone to tell anyone what happened to his friends. His few cryptic mutterings aren't much help, so the search continues. Ann Delaney's wealthy parents also offer a hefty reward for the return of their daughter, likely enticing the investigators to join the search.

In addition to Enrique Echevarría, other characters may aid or hinder this search. Anna Rainbird is a widowed white teacher who lives and works with the Hualapai Indians. Desert expedition–outfitter Paul Springfield saw the lost city nearly forty years ago. Joseph Two Knives is a Yaqui Indian diablero, or sorcerer, with a sinister reputation. All of them can help the investigators to one extent or another, but some have dark motives.

Investigator Information

This scenario begins when a favorite aunt of one of the investigators calls and asks her favorite nephew for a favor. Aunt Jane's friends, the Brentons, have a son named Jeremy who is among the group of hikers lost in the Mojave Desert in northern Arizona. Aunt Jane wants to know if her nephew and his clever friends can help find the Brenton boy, or at least call or meet with the parents to see what they can do.

The Brentons

John, a construction worker, and his wife Marilyn, a hairstylist, live in Fort Wayne, Indiana, but are currently staying in Kingman as they search for their son. They telephone at the investigator's convenience. They say that Jeremy was visiting a college friend who lives in Kingman, who offered to take Jeremy and his friends out hiking before spending some time in Vegas the next weekend, but their second day out exploring, the five friends vanished.

Asked about Jeremy, the Brentons say he was working toward a degree in hotel management. If they are asked what he's like, they say he was popular with girls, he liked to party but not *too* much, and he was mostly a good, quiet kid. The authorities and volunteers have searched the area—about 1600 square miles—by air, horse, jeep, and on foot, but other than the hiker's vehicle, nothing has been found.

They've been missing for six days now, and the situation is looking bleak. The Brentons don't really understand why Aunt Jane thinks the investigators can help, but they are desperate and welcome any assistance they can get. If pressed, Marilyn Brenton and her husband offer to pay for the investigators' airfare to Vegas, and their expenses for a short time, perhaps up to a total of \$2000, and another \$5000 if they actually find Jeremy. If the investigators bargain, they can add \$1000 and \$2000, respectively, to those figures, but Aunt Jane later upbraids her nephew for such churlishness. The Brentons purchase tickets for the investigators to leave for Vegas the day after they agree to help.

Missing Hikers in the News

The search for the lost hikers has been in the news the past week. Library/Internet searches turn up dozens of news stories, including video interviews with parents, local authorities, and searchers. Below is the information that can be gleaned from these researches.

1. The missing hikers are Nick Karras, 22, from Kingman, Arizona; Ann Delaney, 21, from Louisville, Kentucky; Chad Mancina, 21, from Ann Arbor, Michigan; Jeremy Brenton, 21, from Fort Wayne, Indiana; and Jessi Morhman, 19, from Willimantic, Connecticut. All five are students at the University of Michigan, where they met and became friends. Ann is Nick's girlfriend, Jessi is Jeremy's girlfriend.

2. Nick Karras invited the others to visit him in Kingman, with the idea that he would pick them up in Vegas, spend a couple days showing them his favorite desert haunts and eventually the Grand Canyon, then they would spend a long weekend partying in Vegas

before returning home.

3. The students disappeared some time during their second day of exploring the Mojave Desert northeast of Kingman. Nick's Jeep Cherokee was found on a trail about thirty-five miles north of Kingman, near the Hualapai Indian Reservation. These reports often mention that without water, the students could not last more than a day or two in the desert. It has been six days since their disappearance.

4. Mohave County Sheriff Tom Gus has conducted searches of the Hualapai Valley, the Grand Wash Cliffs and the Music Mountains, the Hualapai Reservation, the northern reaches of the Peacock Mountains, and other locations within the area sometimes called the Sighing Desert. Searches by air and on the ground have found no trace of any of the lost students.

5. Jack and Sharon Delaney, the parents of one of the lost hikers, have offered a \$50,000 reward for finding their daughter. An additional Library/Internet Use roll reveals that Jack Delaney is one of the largest auto dealers in the Appalachian states. Other parents include Paul and Victoria Karras, Tom Mancina and Kim Polling (divorced), David and Wendi Mohrman, and John and Marilyn Brenton.

The Mojave Desert and The Sighing Desert

The easternmost corner of the Mojave Desert extends from California through Nevada and into northeastern Arizona. The Mojave is even more forbidding than the vast Sonoran Desert to the south. In Arizona the Mojave gets less than five inches of rain per year. The Mojave is home to the creosote bush and the distinctive Joshua tree, the former a hardy shrub, the latter a majestic yucca plant that can grow as high as thirty feet.

The portion of the Mojave northeast of Kingman is sometimes called the Sighing Desert. A successful Library/Internet Use roll finds that it gets its name from the way the wind sighs and moans as it crosses the desert and through the passes between the low mountains. If the roll is less than half the normal skill level, the name is said to be a corruption of the Hualapai name for the region, which originally meant "Place where the desert sighs with no wind," rather than "Place where the desert sighs." Note that searches for the phrase "Sighing Desert" bring up many entries concerning Michael Moorcock's Elric series, which features an area of that name.

More Library/Internet Use rolls discover there have been several disappearances in the area over the past half century or so.

1944: An Indian woman named Belinda Echevarría and her seven-year-old son Enrique wander off the Hualapai Reservation and into the desert. Only the young boy survives, emerging from the desert a week later.

1962: Two sightseers, Jeffrey King and Mitch Vargas, become lost

southwest of the Grand Canyon and are never seen again.

1970: Four truth seeking hippies go into the desert to drop acid. Alex Eckhardt is found dead of exposure, Vincent Snyder falls from a cliff to his death. Stan Ballent survives, raving and covered with wounds he claims were inflicted by invisible creatures; Ballent dies soon afterward. The fourth man, Jim Stiles, is never found, and it is suspected that he and Ballent fought and Stiles was killed somehow.

1971: Two vacationing families apparently become lost north of Kingman while travelling. Both sets of parents—Jim and Suzy Bierack and Daniel and Janice Howard, and the two youngest children, Kenny and Leah Howard—are found dead of exposure, but no trace of the two teenage children, Stuart Bierack and Tanith Howard, is ever found.

1975: When several high schoolers throw a party in the desert, Donnie Veitch and Stephanie Walters disappear and are never seen again, though it is rumored they eloped.

1980: Stephen Bell, Brenda Williams, and Patty Cassell and their Hualapai guide Daniel Horn are lost while exploring the Grand Wash Cliffs. The guide survives, claiming a sandstorm separated him from the others.

1983: A so-called New Age priestess named Sephora Moon leads a young couple, Augie Zvoncheck and Lou Ann Hartman, into the desert to perform a cleansing rite. None are ever seen again.

1995: Steven Sicks and Tim Guzman were apparently trying to smuggle marijuana into Las Vegas via backroads when their truck breaks down in the desert north of Kingman. The two men die of exposure after they abandon the truck and its illegal cargo.

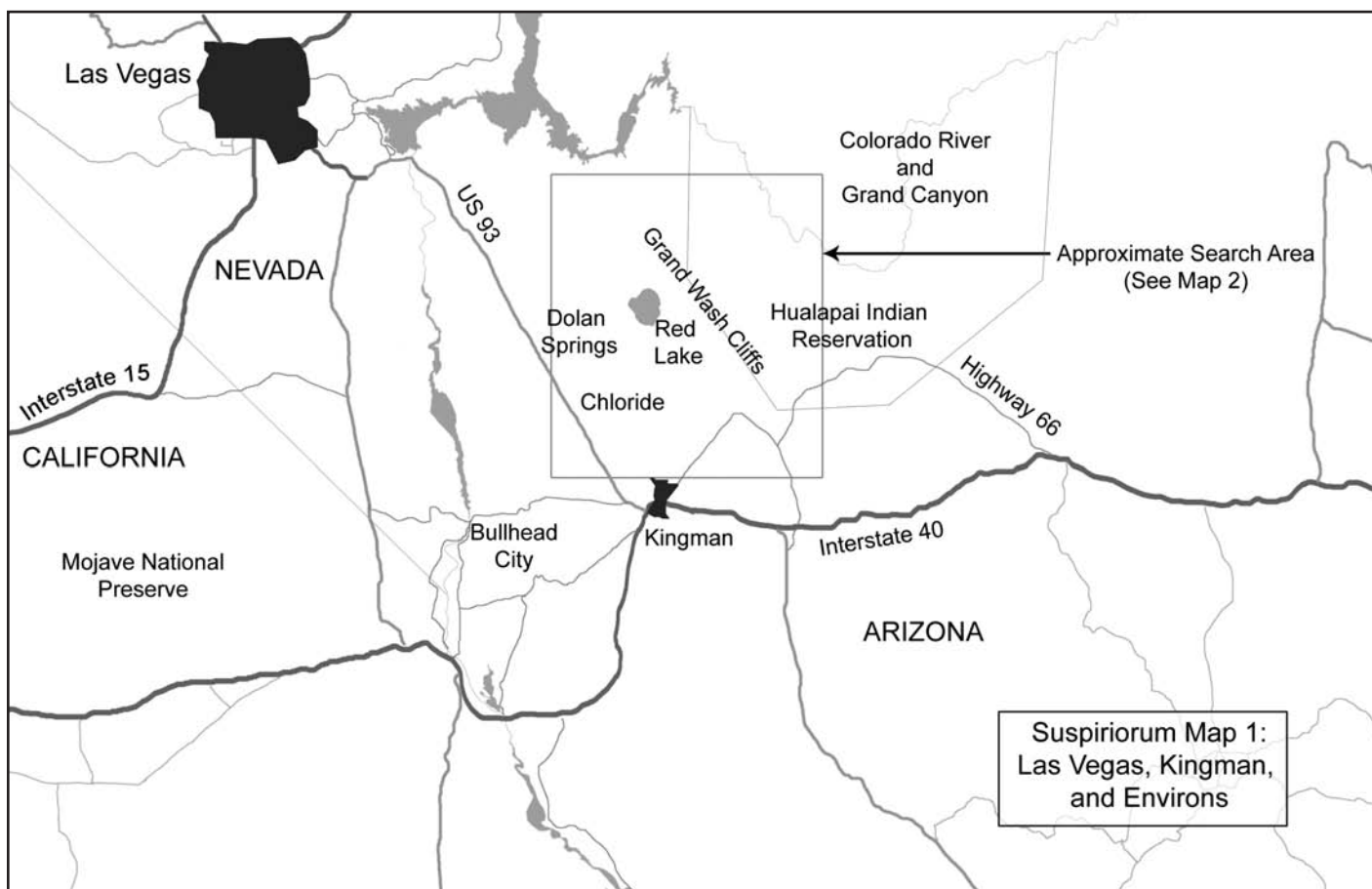
2005: Three high school friends go into the desert to “drop acid and trip out like in those Oliver Stone movies.” Ryan Smith and Joseph Pope survive frightened but unharmed, but Christopher Ely vanishes and is never seen again.

If the investigators scour their Cthulhu Mythos tomes or other occult volumes for references to the Desert of Sighs, the Keeper should bear in mind that this is an extremely obscure topic. Unless otherwise desired, an investigator needs to roll his POW or less on D100 to find either of the following passages (Suspiorum Papers #1). If the volume consulted covers topics related to the Dreamlands, the Keeper should raise this chance to POW x3.

If the investigators don't pick up on it themselves, the Keeper might want to allow a halved Idea roll to have them recall that Thomas De Quincey's story “Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow” spoke of a Mother of Sighs who dwelt in the isolated places of the world; such a clue does give away the nature of the scenario's antagonist, however, so this should be carefully considered before use. In a similar vein, a halved Idea roll might also predict that Mater Suspiorum's preferred targets may be outcasts, the scandalized, the poor, the downtrodden, and the socially or economically or even physically “lost.”

Arrival

Using the plane tickets purchased for them by the Brentons, the investigators arrive in Las Vegas in the afternoon. Kingman is a couple hours' drive south along Highway 93, so a car rental is



Suspiriorum Papers #1

obscure references to The Sighing Desert

Passage #1, specifically from a volume containing Dreamlands-related information

“Alone, Ryobann found himself lost in the Desert of Sighs. And though thirst plagued him, he shunned the city he came upon therein, for there was something he disliked about that place. Perhaps it was the way the wind moaned as the city swam up out of the mirage before him. Or perhaps it was the way the buildings there shimmered, vanished, and reappeared before him in different configurations. No, thought the young spice merchant, my thirst is not so great that I would risk becoming so insubstantial myself. And so Ryobann gave wide berth to that place...”

Passage #2

“At the Edges of Dream, there is a Desert, and that Desert Sighs and Moans. And within that Desert of Sighs there is a City, and that City adjoins all of the saddest places on Earth and its Dreams. And beyond that City there is a Garden, and that Garden is made of bone and sand, for all those who surrender to loneliness and despair eventually find themselves here. For this is the last resting place of the lost and the self-damned.

Legend has it that the City is guarded by Dwellers in the Mirage, fierce creatures whose countenance none have seen clearly and lived to speak of. And legends also say there is One who watches over the Garden of Lost Souls, One in whose eyes no one can help but find peace.”

probably in order.

At some point in their travel, either while they're in an airport somewhere, or on the road to Kingman, the investigators hear shocking news (or possibly on CNN in the terminal): the lost hiker Jeremy Brenton has been found—alive!—near the Hualapai Indian Reservation forty miles northeast of Kingman.

The Brentons don't answer their cell phones for a few hours, but eventually they return the investigators' calls. They don't know much yet, but Jeremy is indeed alive, but suffering from exposure and shock. He hasn't said anything yet, and doctors say it may be twenty-four hours before they know anything more. If specifically asked if Jeremy is injured, John Brenton says his son has a number of wounds the doctors believe were caused by falls or cacti.

John Brenton apologizes for wasting the investigators' time, and offers them return tickets and \$500 each for their trouble. This means if the investigators wish to search for the other hikers, they have to pay their own expenses. With a sizable reward still on the table, and their own special skills as yet unapplied, it's assumed the investigators continue the case.

Kingman, Arizona

Kingman is a city of about 17,000 people in the northwest corner of Arizona, situated in the midst of such popular tourist destinations as Las Vegas, Lake Havasu, and the westernmost reaches of the Grand Canyon. The city lies just within the easternmost edge of the Mojave Desert, a few miles southwest of the Hualapai Indian Reservation.

Most of this adventure deals with events outside the city, in the Sighing Desert. The Keeper should stage a couple of minor incidents in town which may seem odd but inconsequential. First, shortly after their arrival, the investigators spot a coyote wandering somewhere in town, probably after dark. The creature may be crossing a busy street, hanging around in an alley near a restaurant, or padding across the parking lot of their hotel. It's just a trivial encounter, and most residents know that these desert scavengers are growing increasingly bold and increasingly dependent on man for food.

A second minor encounter occurs later in the scenario. Each day, have a random investigator attempt a halved Spot Hidden roll. If successful, he or she spies a long-haired Amerind motorcyclist somewhere nearby—in traffic, or at a gas station or convenience store. An Idea roll notes they've seen the biker elsewhere in Kingman during their stay. The rough looking Indian never seems to notice the investigators, but they may spot him several times throughout the investigation. This is Joseph Two Knives, a drug-dealer described later in the adventure (see Interested Parties).

The Survivor: Jeremy Brenton

Confined to the hospital, Jeremy is not allowed visitors until the end of the day of his rescue. Officially, he is said to be resting. Jeremy's parents tell the investigators their son is in shock and largely unresponsive. In addition to dehydration and bad sunburn, Jeremy is also suffering from a number of wounds—terrible welts and cuts that look like claw marks—and the three outer fingers of his right hand have apparently been bitten off. According to John and Marilyn Brenton, the doctors have no idea what made the welts, but they're assuming he was attacked a large coyote or maybe a mountain lion. They also state Jeremy has been unable to tell the authorities what happened to him and his friends. Only with the Brentons' permission are the investigators allowed to see Jeremy.

Jeremy is confined to his bed, with bad sunburns on his face and arms, and bandages covering parts of his wrist and shoulder. The bandages must be removed to examine his wounds—something Jeremy's parents and hospital personnel vehemently protest. Besides, they say, the police took photos of his injuries (see next section).

With a successful Psychology or Psychoanalysis roll, an investigator can briefly rouse Jeremy from his shock. If this initial roll fails, no further progress can be made that day.

If roused to consciousness and asked what happened to his

companions, he says, “Gone.” Only by asking about the hikers individually do the investigators gain any further answers. Nick is “Dead,” Jessi and Chad are “Gone,” and Ann “Went home.” Asked what happened to him, Jeremy doesn’t reply, but if asked what made the claw marks or what bit off his fingers, he says, “Didn’t see them.” Asked about the welts, Jeremy says, “The whip.” This is all the information Jeremy can supply for now, and soon falls asleep.

The Mohave County Sheriff

The Mohave County Sheriff’s Office in Kingman has been swamped the last week with reporters from all over the country, so officers’ patience is slim. Sheriff Tom Gus has had to release regular progress reports to the press to keep them off his back.

Sheriff Gus is in his late thirties, of average build, with close cropped sandy hair. He succeeded his former boss in the job when he retired two years ago, and is finding it to be a little more than he can handle. Between organizing multiple search parties, being interviewed on CNN, and having to issue twice daily press releases, Sheriff Gus is feeling more than just the usual Arizona heat.

Sheriff Gus currently has four sergeants—Walt Bayer, Finn Lawrence, Elliott Miro, and Chris Morrison—and several deputies working for him, in addition to a variety of dispatchers and jailhouse personnel. They have a patrol car and four SUVs in their carpool, and access to a small helicopter and small plane at the local airport.

When the investigators visit the Sheriff’s Office, a Law or halved Credit Rating is necessary to see Sheriff Gus. Failing this, one of the sergeants discusses the case with them—but only if the investigators can prove they’re working for one of the lost hikers’ families. Whether it’s Sheriff Gus or one of the sergeants, the investigators gain little information. The officers can show the route the students were apparently going to be taking, along with where Nick Karras’ vehicle was found, as well as the area Jeremy Brenton was discovered by three Hualapai Indian travellers.

The public doesn’t know anything about Jeremy Brenton’s wounds or his mental state. The officer says that Jeremy’s wounds were made by a mountain lion or coyote. If asked to see the photos of these wounds another Law roll is required. A successful Zoology or halved Natural History roll notes the claw marks aren’t deep enough to be those of a big cat like a mountain lion, and the bite marks on the fingers show signs of worrying—shaking the head to saw through the bone. A mountain lion would have no trouble severing fingerbones with its powerful jaws. A coyote then, says the sergeant, though he obviously doesn’t believe it either.

If the investigators have talked to Jeremy and gotten him to talk about the individual fates of his friends, they have information the sheriff doesn’t. All the Sheriff was able to get out of Jeremy was that the others are “Gone.” Sheriff Gus and his men may be open to working with the investigators if the party can consistently come up with useful information like this.

As far as other details of the case, the Sheriff and his men swear they searched the area where Jeremy was found—several

times. All they can figure is that Jeremy must have holed up in a cave or ravine somewhere and stumbled out when he got too thirsty.

Members of the Sheriff’s Department warn the Sighing Desert is tricky to travel. Instruments sometimes malfunction or fail, probably due to some magnetic anomaly or heavy iron deposits in the nearby mountains. The place is also prone to mirages and other weird illusions due to the everpresent heat haze rising off the desert. Travellers are urged to be *very* careful out there.

Mohave County Sheriff Tom Gus, 37

STR 12 CON 12 SIZ 13 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 10 APP 11 EDU 14 SAN 55 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: 9mm automatic pistol 65% 1D10, 12-gauge pump shotgun 55% 4D6/2D6/1D6, Fist 55% 1D3+db, Grapple 45%.

Skills: Credit Rating 60%, Dodge 30%, Drive Auto 65%, Law 65%, Library/Internet Use 55%, Listen 55%, Navigate 65%, Psychology 30%, Spot Hidden 55%, Track 45%.

Languages: English 65%.

Typical Sheriff’s Deputy, 25-45

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 13 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 11 EDU 12 SAN 55 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: 9mm automatic pistol 55% 1D10, 12-gauge pump shotgun 40% 4D6/2D6/1D6, Fist 65% 1D3+db, Grapple 55%.

Skills: Dodge 35%, Drive Auto 55%, Law 55%, Library/Internet Use 40%, Listen 45%, Navigate 50%, Psychology 25%, Spot Hidden 45%, Track 40%.

Languages: English 60%.

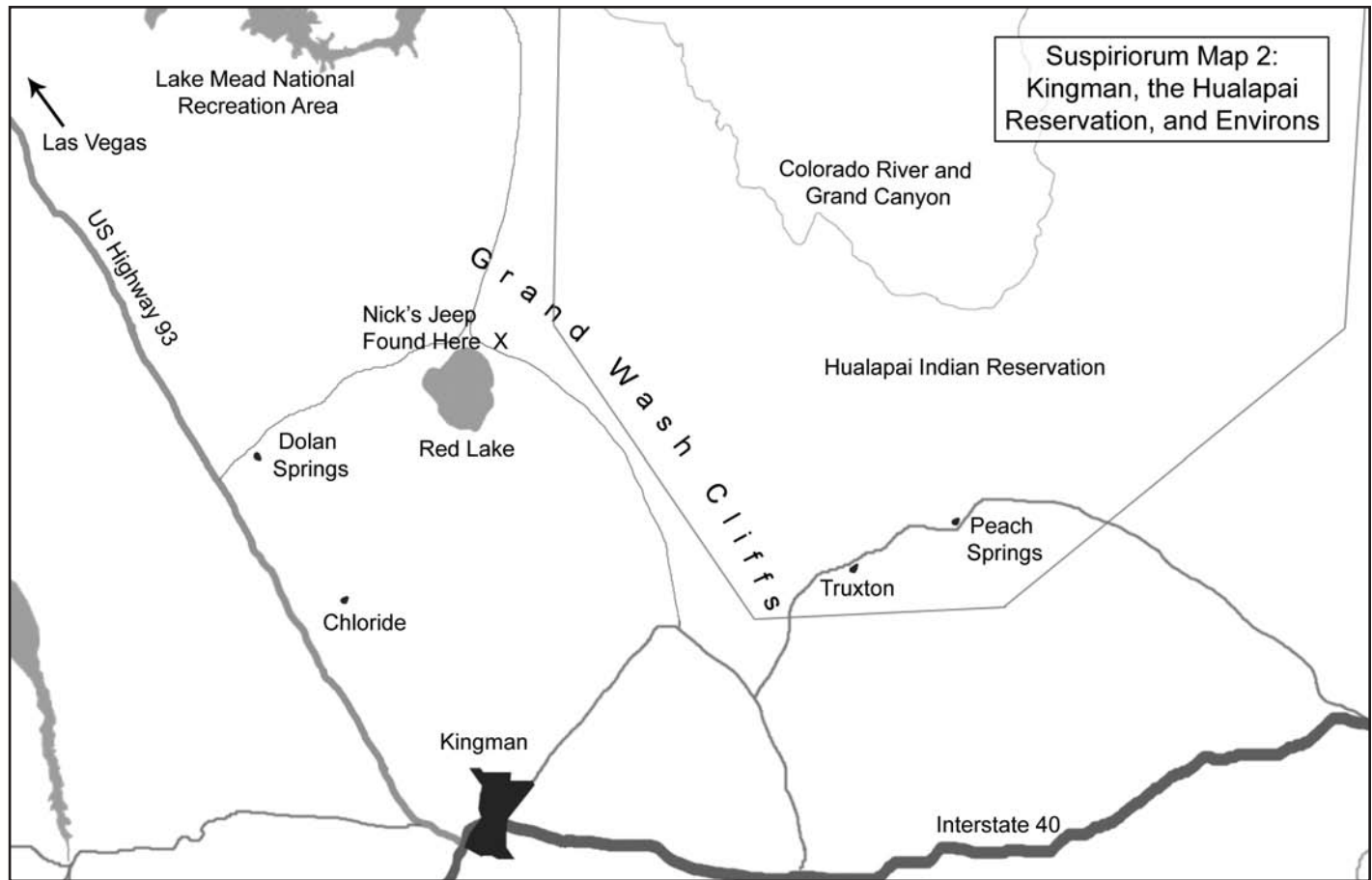
The Families

The Brentons can tell the investigators the names of the other students’ parents if they haven’t already learned them. Kim Polling (Chad Mancina’s mother), and David and Wendi Mohrman are staying at the same hotel as the Brentons, but the Delaneys are staying at a fancier establishment. Marilyn Brenton has the addresses of the Karrases and the Delaneys’ hotel.

Kim Polling

Kim, forty one, is heartbroken over the apparent loss of her only son. A pretty woman, Kim’s eyes have dark circles under them that belie a hard life even before her son’s disappearance. Tom Mancina, Chad’s father and her ex-husband, was here briefly, but flew back to Michigan to return to his job as an auto mechanic. The pair divorced just before Chad graduated high school.

Chad’s a good boy, Kim says, the first in the family to go to college. He’s always laughing and having a good time and she just can’t imagine him lying out there dead somewhere. If she is pressed for any problems Chad might have had, a Psychology roll



gets her to admit she has had some minor trouble with Chad since the divorce. His grades aren't the best, he drinks and parties too much, and she's found marijuana in his room a couple of times. Kim Polling, a secretary, has no money to offer the investigators for help finding Chad.

David and Wendi Mohrman

The Mohrmans, both in their mid-forties, are realtors in Willimantic, Connecticut, and seem to be pretty well-off. Jessi is the youngest of their three daughters, a pretty girl studying fashion design. She was smitten with Jeremy Brenton, and a Psychology roll reveals the Mohrmans blame Jeremy for their daughter's disappearance. If pressed, Wendi Mohrman may offer a reward of as much as \$10,000 if the investigators can rescue their daughter. Wendi's husband David is shocked at the offer, both at the amount and the investigators' crassness asking for it.

Jack and Sharon Delaney

The Delaneys have rooms in a slightly nicer hotel in downtown Kingman. Jack and Sharon have travelled here with Jack's younger brother Danny; Danny, thirty-six, is a partner in Jack's multi-state string of auto dealerships. It is the slick, well-dressed Danny who initially deals with the investigators, shielding his brother and sister-in-law from press and curiosity seekers. Danny has no new information to offer, other than confirming the \$50,000 reward for Ann's safe return. With a Credit Rating roll or proof of some kind of law enforcement background, Danny allows the investigators access to Ann's parents.

Jack Delaney is forty-seven, stocky, bluff, and well dressed, even in the Arizona heat to which he is unaccustomed. Sharon, forty-one, is tall, fashionable, and defers to her husband while maintaining a quiet confidence. If the Sheriff recommended the investigators to the Delaneys, they are impressed. Nevertheless, they don't know what Jeremy Brenton could have meant by Ann being "Home." Sharon Delaney anxiously calls and has someone check their home, and also Ann's dorm room, but she is nowhere to be found.

Jack is dismissive toward the investigators if they start talking about the supernatural. If the investigators persist, he throws them out and has nothing further to do with them.

If asked about their daughter, the Delaneys say she's a good, quiet girl, a typical college student. A Psychology roll notes they're holding something back, and if pressed they admit only that Ann had some trouble with grades last year, and dropped out for a semester. She got her head straight and went back this year, and she's doing much better this time. The Delaneys like Nick, and think he has been good for her. Jack and Sharon have nothing further to add concerning their daughter's past, stating that it has nothing to do with her being lost in the desert.

If the investigators take Danny Delaney aside and ask him for more details, a Psychology roll and their sworn promise never to repeat what he tells them convinces him to reveal that Ann dropped out of her first year in college because she'd gotten pregnant. Danny Delaney says Ann was just a mixed up girl. She dropped out of school, went back home, and her parents gave her hell, and she ended up doing something stupid. "Annie got an

abortion,” he says. She thought if she made it go away she’d make her folks happy and get herself back on track. She knows now it wasn’t the thing to do, but she did manage to get herself back together. If the investigators don’t get this information from Danny Delaney, they might be able to learn it by contacting some of Ann’s other friends or classmates.

If the Delaneys are asked about the reward, Jack confirms it: \$50,000 for the safe return of their daughter. With law enforcement credentials or other experience finding missing persons, and a successful Bargain or Persuade roll, the investigators can convince the Delaneys to put them on a retainer of \$1000 a day for the next three days. A further Bargain or Fast Talk roll gets Jack to agree to pay for expenses such as vehicle rental and helicopter flights. It’s quite clear the Delaneys expect results for their money, however, and given their frequent press appearances and their constant drubbing of the local sheriff, it’s also clear they aren’t afraid to publicly criticize those they consider to be in their employ.

Paul and Victoria Karras

The Karrases are fairly well off for Kingman. Paul, forty-six, is a plumbing contractor, while Victoria, forty-five, works in the Post Office. Nick was going to graduate this year with a degree in business management. The parents describe Nick as a good student, tall, athletic, well-liked, and responsible. They liked Ann Delaney,

noting she was quiet, but very sweet. When the other kids were here last week, they met the whole gang. Chad Mancina, they say, was a little shy, but had a sharp sense of humor. Jeremy Brenton seemed like a nice boy too, very friendly, boyishly good looking and always smiling and respectful. His girlfriend, Jessi Mohrman, seemed a little spoiled, and it seemed she liked to drink too much, but she was very pretty and seemed very attached to Jeremy.

Paul, an avid golfer and outdoorsman, as well as a mean fisherman and grill cook, lets Victoria do most of the talking when it comes to Nick and his hiking—it was too much walking up and down boring, dusty hillsides for Paul. Victoria at least showed an interest in Nick’s hiking stories. The couple have joined search parties over the past several days without finding anything, even though they used Nick’s old GPS device to follow the trails he usually took. If the investigators ask, they are told when Nick vanished he was using a new GPS he’d had for a few months. Victoria has the old GPS, still programmed with Nick’s favorite trails and landmarks. If the Karrases know the investigators are working for the Brentons or Delaneys, they loan the device to them to help find their son.

Scanning the GPS device’s stored data, the investigators come across entries such as “Finger,” “Injuns,” “Maze,” and “Shrooms,” all apparently located within the Sighing Desert northeast of Kingman. Victoria can identify some of these. “Finger” is a tall outcropping that Nick thought looked like a giant middle finger. “Injuns” is a group of three rock outcroppings that are usually called “The Three Sisters,” as they look like three women sitting in a rough circle. Nick thought they looked like three Indians. The “Maze” was a strange little maze-like path in the sand, some of it bordered by stones, that Nick found. Since then he has found more of these throughout the area, and Nick says there have been reports of others all over the Southwestern U.S. The “Shrooms” is a large group of strange man-sized boulders shaped like toadstools. Victoria again reminds them that she used this GPS to follow Nick’s trail, but they found no trace of Nick or his friends.

Sighing Desert Survival

Wear light clothing that covers all the skin to avoid sunburn, and a hat of some kind to avoid heat stroke. And use sunblock on exposed parts of the skin.

Good hiking shoes or boots are a must.

Dehydration comes fast in the 100+ degree heat, so carry plenty of water at all times.

When on foot, walk slowly to keep from wearing yourself out and hastening dehydration.

A four-wheel drive vehicle is a must for travelling in the area, as the roads are neither paved nor gravel, merely packed earth, and are treacherous at best; most roads aren’t maintained and may be only a single lane.

Four-wheel drive doesn’t mean invincible. Don’t drive offroad if you don’t have to, or drive too fast even on the roads. Getting stuck or breaking down are deadly realities.

Inform someone of where you expect to be and how long you expect to be gone, in case you become lost.

Into the Desert

Sooner or later the investigators must venture forth into the desert to search for the lost hikers. They’ve undoubtedly been cautioned about how to travel there by the Sheriff’s department or others who’ve searched the area. See the boxed text nearby.

There are a number of ways the investigators can search the Sighing Desert. With the proper licenses, they could rent a light plane or small helicopter, or lacking licenses, hire a pilot to fly them over the area. This method has been used throughout the search, however, and it should be obvious that a ground search would be far more productive and less expensive. Nevertheless, such a reconnaissance flight may serve to show how forbidding and desolate the terrain is. Investigators flying over the area can get a general idea of the major roads and landmarks, and also the locations of the landmarks on Nick Karras’ GPS. Investigators who fly over the area gain a 10% bonus to their Navigate skill

Sighing Desert Phenomena

Every time investigators enter the Sighing Desert, each should roll against their current Sanity score. If the roll is successful, there is no effect. If the roll fails, however, he or she experiences one of the following odd events, some of which may also be witnessed by other investigators.

The Eagle

A Listen roll hears the call of a desert eagle, which a Spot Hidden roll then spies sitting on a rock, tearing at some small desert animal. A halved Idea roll by anyone who was present recalls hearing and seeing just such a raptor during their investigation of The Three Sisters building not long ago. This calls for a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity for anyone who took part in that scenario. The eagle watches for a few moments before flying off with its prey. It may be seen again on subsequent trips.

Insane GPS Readings

As they follow Nick Karras' trail, or mark their own, the GPS device becomes indispensable. Unfortunately, as the Sheriff and others have warned, the Sighing Desert has a reputation for occasionally playing havoc with instruments of all kinds. In this case, a mundane consultation of the GPS may return a reading indicating the investigators are in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, the Arabian Desert, Mongolia, Antarctica, or some similarly desolate spot. The next reading then returns to normal; for now, at least.

Other Instrument Snafus

Similarly, a compass may be considerably off one moment

(north is now east), and accurate the next. Watch or camera batteries may go dead—until the owner leaves the desert, at which time they mysteriously revive.

Voices on the Wind

An investigator making a Listen roll hears what sounds like voices, though coming from which direction is uncertain. As all stop to listen, only the sighing of the wind is heard. An investigator who may become Mater Suspiriorum's target is particularly susceptible to this event. In fact, they may hear their own name whispered upon the sighing wind, calling for a loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

Dwellers at the Edge of Sight

An investigator who experiences this event sees a figure moving out of the corner of his eye. The most likely explanation for this is the everpresent heat-haze coming off the desert, but the rugged terrain may also play tricks, with figures disappearing behind boulders, or turning out to be a stunted Joshua tree. At least once, however, the investigators should see a lean coyote padding after them, hoping to scavenge some edible scraps off the intruders.

Maze

These events are exactly like the one described below under "Following Nick's Trail." The Keeper can use mazes such as these to point the way toward other events and discoveries, such as the body of Jessi Mohrman. Alternately, those who successfully traverse the maze may get a hazy glimpse of the lost city before it is swallowed up in the haze.

while searching the Sighing Desert.

Renting a 4-wheel drive SUV suitable to the task costs around \$400 a day. A halved Idea roll reminds the investigators that Nick Karras' Jeep Cherokee was found in the desert—has the Sheriff released it to Nick's parents? And would they loan or rent it to the investigators to aid in finding their son? More adventurous types may want to rent a dirt bike or all-terrain vehicle so they can go exploring offroad. Dirt bike rentals start at \$100–\$150 per day, with a \$1000 security deposit, while ATVs run \$150–\$250 per day, with a \$1500 deposit. Trailers to haul two or three of these vehicles rent for about \$50 a day. The largest desert travel outfitter in Kingman is Desert Sojourns.

Desert Sojourns

Paul Springfield owns and operates the Desert Sojourns Outfitters in Kingman. Springfield is a tall thin man in his early sixties, and from his laid back appearance, attitude, and voice, it's clear he's obviously an old hippie. His long gray hair is tied back in a ponytail, and the sleeveless shirts he usually wears show off the many

colorful tattoos wrapping his arms—Mexican señoritas, dancing dolphins, smiling cacti and marijuana plants, skull-headed motorcyclists, and beautiful desert sunsets.

Springfield can rent the investigators ATVs and dirt bikes to use in searching the Sighing Desert, and also sells hiking boots and clothing, as well as camping equipment. Springfield has already been renting vehicles to search parties at special "3 for the price of 1" rates, and has led a few such trips himself. Springfield runs the shop with his son Jeb, twenty-four, and daughter-in-law Laura, twenty-seven, and a couple of part-time employees. His wife left him several years ago and ran off to California.

Springfield knows a lot about the Sighing Desert, and can easily identify the landmarks from Nick Karras' GPS, except for "The Finger," which he laughingly says he would like to see. If asked, he says he's been trekking in the surrounding deserts for decades now, and while he understands how people can get lost out there, it's not a problem he's ever had. Not since his first trip out there, at least.

Pressed for further details, Springfield says he first came out to Kingman in 1969 with a couple older guys, riding their motor-

Heat Stroke and Dehydration

The bulk of this adventure takes place in the punishing heat of the Sighing Desert, and investigators who don't take the proper precautions run the risk of heat stroke, among other things.

Any character whose skin is unprotected from the sun will take 1D3–1 damage or more per day from sunburn, depending on how much skin was exposed, and for how long.

After spending twenty-four hours in the desert without water, an investigator takes 1 point of damage. Each day thereafter he or she takes 1D6 points of damage. In addition, after the first day without water the character must roll his or POW x5 or CON x5, whichever is less, on D100 to avoid suffering from one or more hallucinations due to heat stroke. Later in the adventure desperate investigators may deliberately try to induce heat stroke in one or more if their company in order to follow the missing students' trail beyond the edge of this world.

Hit Points lost to heat stroke and dehydration may be restored at a rate of 1D3 points per hour if the sufferer is given water and rest.

cycles. They were camping out in the deserts the whole trip, smoking a lot of pot and drinking a lot of wine. One night he stumbled out of camp to take a leak and got himself lost as hell. He couldn't even find the campfire in the dark, and the next day couldn't find any landmarks he recognized at all. "Like I said, we were smoking *loads* of dope." Paul wandered for hours, he says, until he started hallucinating in the heat. If asked what kinds of things he was seeing, he answers: "I dunno. Like I was followed by shadows, or mirages or something."

That was when he found the doll. He points out the small well-worn wooden doll in the glass case next to the cash register. An Anthropology or Archaeology roll guesses it to be of Hopi or Navajo origin. See The Three Talismans section below if Springfield allows the investigators to examine it closely. Springfield found the doll beside a boulder and picked it up. As he did so, he had yet another hallucination. Far off in the distance he saw a mirage of a city of some kind, and he almost started running toward it, but something about it struck him wrong so he turned back the way he came. Within a couple hours his friends found him and they all laughed about it. As for the doll, Springfield figured it brought him good luck, so he takes it with him every time he goes out into that part of the desert. "Just in case, you know?"

If the investigators ask to borrow the doll, Springfield is reluctant. It really ought to be in a museum, but he just can't part with it. If they rent some vehicles from him, or buy a lot of gear, he might "rent" it to them for the \$250 a day—the price of an

ATV rental. If they lose it, he'll keep their security deposits. "I'd hate to lose that little guy, whatever his name is," he explains. He might accompany the investigators on a search of the desert, but he's more likely to be busy running the shop. If he does go with them, he takes his good luck kachina, so they are unlikely to get close to the lost portions of the desert, and probably won't encounter any of the more bizarre desert phenomena either.

Paul Springfield, outfitter, 61

STR 11 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 13
DEX 10 APP 10 EDU 16 SAN 45 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Accounting 20%, Climb 60%, Credit Rating 45%, Dodge 35%, Drive Auto 50%, Drive ATV 65%, Drive Motorcycle 55%, Geology 15%, Hide 10%, Listen 40%, Mechanical Repair 45%, Natural History 45%, Navigate 65%, Pharmacy 25%, Spot Hidden 45%, Track 35%.

Languages: English 70%, Spanish 40%.

Following Nick's Trail

Using Nick Karras' GPS device, the investigators can follow the route he intended to take with his friends, a trail that leads north out of Kingman on an old dirt road. Investigators without a four-wheel drive vehicle must make a Drive Auto roll every 20 miles or suffer a punctured oil pan, broken axle, flat tire, or similar mishap.

Not far from town, the investigators pass an old Indian man stoking a large bonfire beside the road. The old man is friendly, but not much help. He asks for a cigarette, which if given he lights with a stick from his fire, thanking them in Spanish. The next time the investigators pass this spot, whether returning from their first trip or whatever, the old man is gone. In fact, there is no sign he or the fire were ever here—no ashes or embers anywhere. A Spot Hidden roll, however, discovers two things—a cigarette butt, and a feather; a Zoology or halved Natural History roll identifies it as a golden eagle feather. The feather is a talisman, a minor magical item, as a halved Occult roll divines, at the Keeper's discretion. Exactly what it does is unclear, but may be revealed when or if the investigators show it to the Hualapai (see The Hualapai Indian Reservation).

Nick's path takes them past the lower reaches of Mount Tipton, where a successful Navigate roll spies the first of Nick's landmarks: the rude rock outcropping he called "The Finger." The trail continues on to a stopping point northeast of the dry reservoir of Red Lake. There the trail leaves the road, leading east into the Grand Wash Cliffs.

As they make their way on foot, investigators might now learn how the desert gets its name: the wind sighs and moans eerily as it twists through the cliffs and canyons.

Soon, with a successful Navigate roll, the investigators come across another of Nick's landmarks. "Maze" is just that: a series of irregular winding paths delineated by borders of dirt scooped away from the pathway, here and there outlined by stones. The

design is roughly circular, and about fifteen yards across. Anyone who attempts to follow the maze must make an Idea roll to reach the center. Failure indicates he or she finds a dead end instead. Any investigator who reaches the center on his first attempt should roll D100 and if the result is their POW or less they glimpse, from the corner of their eye, a hazy, distant figure, pointing southeast. The figure instantly vanishes in the heat haze coming the desert floor, leaving the viewer to wonder if it was really there. See the end of this section if the investigators follow this lead rather than sticking with Nick's trail.

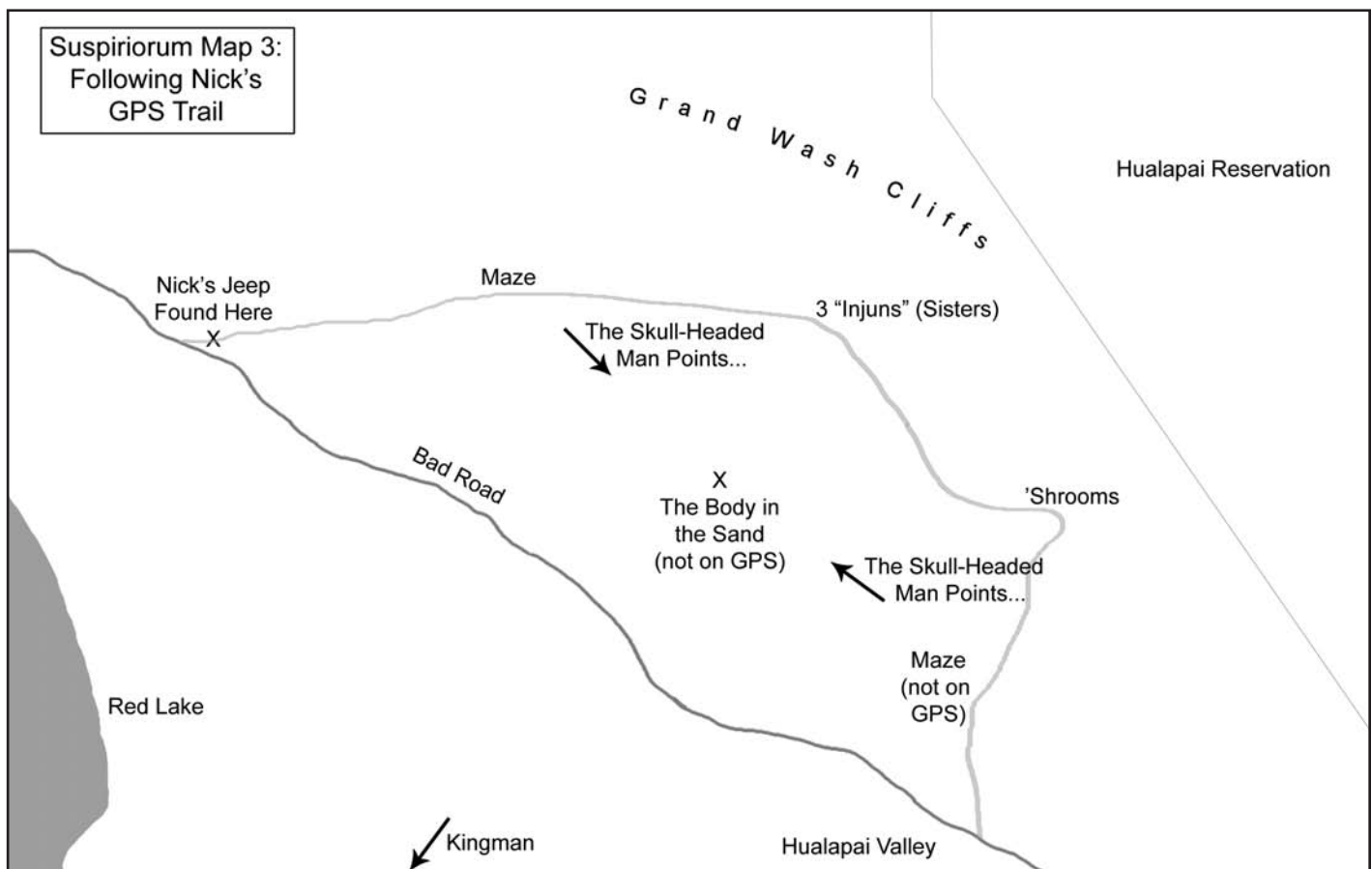
Nick's trail continues east, toward the border of the Hualapai Indian Reservation. Another Navigate roll and the use of the GPS discovers yet another of Nick's landmarks. Here three great stones, each twice the height of a man, loom above the trail—Nick's "Injuns," which his mother said were commonly called "The Three Sisters." An Idea roll notes the full chests of the "Sisters," and an Idea roll shouldn't be necessary to remind the investigators of their involvement in the case of The Three Sisters building. Close examination of the stones notes a stain of some kind flowing down the "face" of one. Geology or Chemistry guesses it's some kind of rust caused by rainwater reacting with part of the stone.

Continuing on Nick Karras' trail, the investigators turn southeast along the edge of the Hualapai Reservation border. A Navigate roll finds Nick's "Shrooms," a small sheltered canyon filled with hundreds of chest-high stones, all shaped like toadstools. There is an eerie feel to the place, with its hundreds of places for enemies to hide.

From here Nick's trail turns due south. If a random investigator makes a Luck roll, all investigators should be allowed a Spot Hidden roll, success indicating another maze has been seen. This one is much larger than the last, nearly thirty yards across. As before, anyone attempting to follow the maze needs an Idea roll to reach the center. Failure indicates he or she finds a dead end. If an investigator reaches the center on his first attempt and rolls his POW x5 or less, he or she gets a brief glimpse of a distant hazy city somewhere far to the northeast, past the Grand Wash Cliffs and the Music Mountains, perhaps within the Hualapai Reservation itself. If the POW roll is less than his or her POW x1, the investigator clearly sees a large man wearing nothing but a loin-cloth, with a cow skull for a head, standing just outside the maze, perhaps even near a fellow investigator. Sanity loss for seeing this sinister figure is 1/1D4, but only the maze traveller sees it. The skull-headed man points to the northwest—and fades from view.

If the investigators miss the above maze, or continue south, they soon come upon a packed earth road leading northwest/southeast. An Idea roll posits their vehicle is probably parked along this road to the northwest.

If the investigators see the bizarre skull-headed man, and follow his pointed directions from whichever maze, call for a Luck roll from a random investigator. If successful, they come across a patch of untrodden sand some fifty yards across, with something barely visible, partially buried in the sand near the center. There, to their horror, the investigators discover a set of skeletal remains, the skull gaping at the pitiless sun, the bony hands clutching to escape the burning sand. This calls for a Sanity loss of 0/1D3



points. A Biology or Medicine roll guesses the body has been here for weeks, at least. Searching the body requires clearing away some sand, at which point the victim's short blond hair is noted, and the following discoveries are made.

An Idea roll guesses, from the clothing and the small stature of the body, that the victim is female.

A small gold ring is found on the right hand, with no inscription or other distinguishing marks.

The woman wears a necklace with a tiny silver cross.

She also wears a dried-out rubber wrist bracelet which a halved Know roll recalls was a bauble sold through a popular cable comedy show for charity purposes, and known as a Stephen Colbert WristStrong bracelet.

In a pocket of the victim's shorts is a small digital camera.

An Idea roll surmises that the body may be that of Jessi Mohrman, as photos of the missing girl showed her hair to be the right color and length. The investigators can either take the remains with them or mark them on the GPS. They may lose a few points with the Sheriff's Department if they move the body, but they might gain a few if they had the foresight to photograph the area before they spoiled the crime scene.

The Body

Once the authorities take custody of the dessicated corpse, they first try to establish its identity. The Sheriff sees the body's similarity to Jessi Mohrman, but states that she's only been missing a week—nowhere near enough time for this degree of decay. Nev-

ertheless, he takes the jewelry to show Jessi's parents, and they confirm them to be hers. Within a day or two dental records confirm that the mummified body is that of Jessi Mohrman. The medical examiner has no idea what could have caused such accelerated tissue dessication.

The Camera

If the investigators kept the camera they can study the photographs at their leisure, and if they left it for the Sheriff to find, they are still allowed to view them, since they—hopefully—aided in discovering the body in the first place.

There are dozens of pictures on the memory chip. The first few feature Jeremy Brenton, usually mugging for the camera, but sometimes hugging or kissing Jessi Mohrman. A couple show Jessi looking fetching in a small black bikini. The next few were taken in airports, featuring Jeremy, Chad Mancina, and Ann Delaney, and the last ones with Nick Karras as well.

The next several pictures show the friends at Nick's parents' house, eating, drinking, and goofing off. Next are a couple of the gang loading up Nick's Jeep, followed by a couple shots of them in the car, with Nick driving. The next few shots show the gang—minus Jessi—in the desert at the foot of "The Finger," all giving their own finger to the camera. The next shot shows a grinning Jeremy leaning against a sign that reads "Red Lake", while Chad stands scratching his head with a mock-quizzical look on his face, gazing out across the empty desert.

The next few photos are of one of the mazes, the first show-



ing the design alone, the others with Nick and Ann following the path, then the others, and so forth. A halved Spot Hidden roll while studying these pics notes a blurry human-like figure in the distant background of one shot—it could be just a Joshua tree.

The next couple of pics are from “The Injuns.” The friends are shown leaning against the stones, with Chad looking up into the “face” of one. Several photos of “The Shrooms” follow. Again, the hikers are shown sitting on the toadstool-shaped stones, hiding from each other among them, and so on. A Spot Hidden roll again notices a strange blurry figure in the background of some of these photos, and in one it even appears the figure has a horned head or helmet of some kind. At times the figure is so close to the students it seems impossible they could have gone unnoticed—at least by the photographer if no one else.

The last half-dozen or so pictures show the hikers at various unknown spots in the desert. One is a group shot, minus Jessi, and a second similar shot shows Jessi, but Nick is missing. In the first of these photos, near the top of a small rise behind them is the strange blurry horn-headed figure, and in the second this *thing* has moved to within a few yards behind the group. It is clearly a tall man wearing only a loincloth, with a cow’s skull for a mask. Viewing this calls for a loss of 0/1D2 Sanity points, both for the strangeness of the figure, and because there’s no way the photographer could have not seen it.

Also among the last few photos are some very dark shots apparently taken inside a natural cavern. These scenes are lit by flashlights, and show a large Native American painting on the walls of the cave. Spot Hidden rolls make out what appear to be tall modern buildings amid primitive domed huts and wickiups, with strange hunched indistinct figures scattered among them. Another portion of the painting depicts a large open area scattered with dozens of human figures all lying prone. A single dark, featureless figure stands among the fallen. A History or American Indian Lore roll identifies the design as probably Hualapai or Yuma, and perhaps as old as the 17th century.

If the Sheriff’s Department has access to the photos, there is hushed talk of an Indian spree— or serial—killer. Nothing in their database matches up with the facts of this case, nor the bizarre mummification of one of the victims. None of them recognize the cave painting either. Ultimately, they are spooked, but baffled.

Dreams and Nightmares, Part One

Once the investigators have made their first foray into the desert, one or more of them may begin to experience disturbing dreams. Roll D100 for each investigator, and if the result is their POW x3 or less, he or she has one of the following dreams. The first dream, Disgrace, is intended specifically for investigators who may be possible targets of Mater Suspiriorum, while the rest of the dreams can be experienced by any investigator.

Disgrace

Before beginning this campaign, the Keeper should have discussed

each investigator’s background with his or her player. In particular, they should have determined if the investigator has ever committed any act which caused him shame or embarrassment, or scandalized him or his family, or in any other way made him feel like an outcast or outsider. At least one such outsider should be chosen by the Keeper as Mater Suspiriorum’s target in this scenario. It is this scandalizing, shameful, or otherwise alienating act which that investigator dreams of now, regardless of how many years ago it transpired, and whether or not any ramifications of still worry the character. Recalling this low point in the investigator’s life calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity, perhaps more if the deed was especially upsetting.

The First Dream of the Crossroads

In this dream the investigator (and any others who dream this night) find themselves driving in a car at night. The road they’re on comes to an end at a T–intersection, where a streetlight illuminates a billboard advertising a “Buy 3 Get 1 Free” sale at a tire store.

As their car pulls up to the rain slicked intersection, the investigators see a woman in a long overcoat walking on the sidewalk nearby, leading three large dogs on leashes. She walks past them, and if hailed she stops to talk to them. She is dark-haired and attractive, and unafraid of the investigators. If asked where they are, she answers, “You’re not here yet.” Asked where she’s going, she replies, “Just passing by.” Who is she? “I don’t give my name to strangers.” What’s with the dogs? “I *like* dogs.”

The conversation is frustratingly cryptic for the investigators. After a few questions they all hear a distant howling and barking of dogs, and on a hillside in the distance they suddenly see what looks like a few flickering torchlights ascending the hill. Asked what that’s all about, the woman says “Who knows? Maybe you’ll find out one day.”

She smiles and walks away into the dark with the hounds. This dream may seem meaningless until the epilogue chapter, “The Final Cut”, which it foreshadows. The woman is the goddess Hecate, and is described in that final chapter.

The Visitor

There is no actual dream recalled here, but the investigator in question wakes up with the strong impression that *someone* was just in the room with him or her. This reminds him or her somewhat of a night hag attack from the Tenebrarum book. If an investigator seems unduly alarmed by this dream, assess a loss of 0/1 points of Sanity.

The Hikers

This nightmare is particularly likely for anyone who has seen the photos found on Jessi Mohrman’s camera. The dreamer finds himself treading those forlorn desert landscapes, occasionally stumbling upon the mummified remains of each of the missing students. Eventually he or she looks up to see the entire desert floor strewn with similar skeletal remains, all straining to free themselves from their dusty graves. This dream calls for a loss of 0/1D3 Sanity points.

The Cave

This dream also assumes the dreamer has seen the photos taken by the lost hikers. In the dream, it is the investigator and his companions who are exploring the dark cave, shining their flashlights about as they examine the ancient artwork. However, rather than the Native American designs from the photos, the dreamer sees the painting has been done in an archaic Middle Eastern style. An Anthropology, Archaeology, or History roll postulates it might be Assyrian, perhaps a thousand years BC.

Modern buildings—some topped with minarets—rise from among the ancient huts and hovels, and the curious blurry human-like figures are clothed in tunics and skirts. The solitary dark figure still stands amid the multitudes of fallen. Here, however, the figure is crowned with a halo. Between the parts of the painting showing the city and the fallen figures, a bird flies across the sky.

The dream ends when the investigator and his companions have examined the entire length of the large painting. This dream only costs 0/1 point of Sanity if the dreamer seems unduly spooked by it.

The Skull-Headed Man

This dream begins with the investigator in the desert, near the first maze noted by Nick Karras. On the opposite side of the maze stands the loinclothed man with the cow skull head.

If the investigator moves toward the figure, the scene swirls, leaving the investigator standing amid the “Shrooms” formations. Again, the strange figure stands a few yards away, and again, moving toward it shifts the scene. Now the investigator is standing in the midst of The Three Sisters formation, with the skull-headed man but a few feet distant. He holds out his hand, palm open, revealing several withered objects that look like small furry sacks, almost like animal ears.

A Botany or halved Natural History roll identifies the objects as peyote buttons, powerful hallucinogenic plants used in southwest Native American religious ceremonies. The skull-headed man then points back over the investigator's shoulder. There in the distance, shimmering in the desert haze, is a mirage city, wavering in and out of view before finally disappearing. When the investigator turns, the strange figure is gone, but the peyote buttons are scattered on the ground where it stood. This dream costs the investigator 1/1D3 points of Sanity.

Hualapai Indian Reservation

The Hualapai Reservation covers over 1500 square miles along the southwestern rim of the Grand Canyon, along with a tiny isolated spot around the town of Valentine. Most of this country is unspoiled forest and wilderness. The Hualapais—the name means “pine-tree people” or “people of the tall pine”—earn their living

through tourism, raising cattle, or cutting timber. The tribal capital is at Peach Springs, at the southern tip of the reservation, not far from the site of the students' disappearance. There are a few other very tiny settlements, also mostly along the southern edge of the reservation, well away from the Canyon. There are few roads in the reservation, most of which are gravel or dirt. Route 66 passes through the southern tip, through Peach Springs, and Highway 18 skirts the southern and eastern edges.

Peach Springs—population about 1300—is a tiny settlement, barely a wide spot in the road, with a few craft shops, a small school, a grocer, trading post, and a small brick building whose new looking sign reads “Hualapai Nation Tribal Police Department.” Only a few residents are visible—a couple children at play, jewelry—festooned sellers in the craft stalls, three old women weaving rugs in another stall, etc. All are Native Americans.

This might be a good opportunity to have the investigators see the Amerind biker Joseph Two Knives, or perhaps recall seeing him here once they learn about him later.

The Hualapai Nation Tribal Police Dept.

Law enforcement on the Hualapai reservation is under the jurisdiction of the Tribal Police Department, established in 2002 and consisting of Police Chief Dave Youngblood, Deputy Chief Steven White, and a dozen patrolmen. The Department uses four four-wheel drive SUVs, six horses, and four off-road motorcycles to patrol the reservation lands from the pine forests along the Canyon to the desert wastes in the southwest. There are a couple of small holding cells in the back of the building.

Chief Dave Youngblood

Dave Youngblood is *very* young, barely thirty years old, tall, and broad-shouldered, with hair cut short. He's been on the job for less than a year now. The affable chief and his men spend most of their time dealing with tourists, generally ones who are either lost or have committed some minor offense. The few problems they have among the Hualapai tend to be minor disputes or alcohol-related misdemeanors. As such, and knowing the importance of tourist dollars to the Hualapai, Chief Youngblood is almost always willing to help outsiders. While not overly spiritual himself, he nevertheless respects the beliefs of his people.

When the hikers disappeared near the reservation, Chief Youngblood sent his men to help search both inside and outside Indian lands along the Music Mountains, coordinating with Mohave County Sheriff Tom Gus. Youngblood says folks get lost in these deserts and reservation lands all the time, and he knows about the Sighing Desert's peculiar effect on instruments. He also knows about the “gurus” who go off on pilgrimages or vision quests or what have you, and who usually end up sunburned and dehydrated but not terribly enlightened. Even the Hualapai don't treat the Desert of Sighs lightly, they stick closely to roads and trails they know.

If asked about the skull-headed man or the mirage city, Youngblood says he hasn't heard of them, but that a local called "Old Tom" may have. Old Tom is not a medicine man, just a wily old Hualapai who loves to tell stories to tourists. Old Tom can usually be found hanging around the back of the grocery store, ogling the old spinner-women. Chief Youngblood also doesn't recognize the cave painting from the hikers' photos, stating that it might come from somewhere down in the Grand Canyon somewhere.

Like most people, Chief Youngblood warns the investigators not to become involved with Joseph Two Knives. Two Knives is a drug dealer and a thief, Youngblood says, and is not to be trusted. Youngblood also says Joseph has a reputation as a diablero, or sorcerer, but he thinks that's just window dressing to make him seem scarier. Still, he's not to be messed with.

If the investigators break the law on Hualapai land, Youngblood has them at least detained and fined, or arrested and taken to Kingman for holding if the matter is more serious.

Tribal Police Chief Dave Youngblood, 32

STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 15 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 14 APP 14 EDU 14 SAN 60 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: .30-06 bolt—action rifle 70% 2D6+4, .45 revolver 60% 1D10+2, Fist 55% 1D3+db, Grapple 60%.

Skills: Anthropology 20%, Climb 50%, Dodge 45%, Drive Auto 45%, Drive Motorcycle 50%, First Aid 45%, History 25%, Law 50%, Listen 70%, Natural History 65%, Navigate 70%, Psychology 40%, Ride 45%, Sneak 10%, Spot Hidden 55%, Track 60%.

Languages: English 65%, Hualapai 65%, Spanish 45%.

Typical Reservation Patrolman, 20-50

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 12 SAN 65 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: .30-06 bolt—action rifle 65% 2D6+4, .38 revolver 55% 1D10, Fist 60% 1D3+db, Grapple 55%.

Skills: Climb 55%, Dodge 45%, Drive Auto 45%, Drive Motorcycle 55%, First Aid 40%, Law 40%, Listen 55%, Natural History 50%, Navigate 65%, Psychology 35%, Ride 55%, Spot Hidden 50%, Track 55%.

Languages: English 55%, Hualapai 65%, Spanish 30%.

Old Tom

If a random investigator makes a Luck roll, Old Tom is exactly where Chief Youngblood said he'd be, flirting with the old weaver-women. If he's not here, they'll have to try looking again some other time. Old Tom is tiny, brown, and withered, of incalculable age, dressed in jeans, beige western shirt, weathered boots, and battered cowboy hat with a rattlesnake rattle attached to the brim. He's pleased to meet new folks—especially if they can spare a smoke or five.

Old Tom doesn't know what to make of those dumb kids losing themselves out there in the desert—it ain't no place to play.

That desert is old, he says, and it catches men's dreams. And sometimes when men wander into it they see things they think they've lost, and so they get themselves lost out there trying to get those things back. And when those men die, well, the desert takes their dreams and uses them to lure other men just the same.

The old Hualapai says the mirage city must be one of those lost dreams, so it's best left alone. As for the skull-headed man, Tom figures that's some kind of spirit, either trying to warn them away from something, or lure them to it. He doesn't know anything about the cave paintings either. Peyote, he says, is a good way to lose your mind to begin with, and combined with that desert, it's a sure way to get yourself lost altogether, just like them kids. Those desert mazes are silly putterings made by them damn vegetarian New Age freaks trying to find mystic energies and get back to Earth and such nonsense. They'd be better off staying home and smoking their dope and getting laid, says Tom, nodding toward the three weaver-women. And don't mess with that Two Knives snake. He'll try to sell you moonshine or dope or whatever, and it'll be watered down tequila or ditchweed that ain't worth half the headache it'll give you afterward.

Shown the eagle feather left by the road, Old Tom nods sagely and identifies it as a talisman. They usually show up in threes, he muses, so if you're lucky there'll be two more. One will get you where you want to go, another will get you home from there, and the third one will protect you along the way. He has no idea what they'll look like—you just know it or feel it when you see one.

He's got one himself. On a leather thong around his skinny brown neck is a well-worn sliver of silver shaped vaguely like a lightning bolt. Tom's talisman and its powers are described below in the section on The Three Taslimans.

What's it do? "Dunno for sure," he chuckles, "but this here rattlesnake," he tips his hat brim, "tried to bite me and locked his teeth in my boot, 'fore I stomped him with the other foot. And I missed the bus to Kingman once, and it went off the road and turned over. And I got the notion to leave Edna Romy's trailer early the night her husband come home sick from work." Where'd he get it? "Found it down a trail in the Grand Canyon yonder." He'll sell the bauble for \$200 cash, chuckling as the investigators leave with it, flashing the bills to the two remaining rug-spinners.

A halved Spot Hidden made while passing or perusing the silver jewelry dealers spots a vaguely similar—but better crafted—thunderbolt trinket for sale there for \$20. Confronted about it, Tom resentfully says his is obviously different, but he'll buy it back for \$50. Now accused, he shuns the investigators thereafter.

Anna Rainbird

As the investigators roam Peach Springs, they eventually see a middle-aged white woman among the Hualapai. Most often she is seen near the school, or with Indian children. She is small, slightly plump, with blonde hair turning white, and wearing small wire-framed spectacles. She casually waves at the strangers as they pass. If approached, she smiles and identifies herself as Anna Rainbird, the teacher at the Hualapai school. "Teacher," she beams, "principal, school nurse, and janitor. And that goes for the whole

town sometimes.”

If she likes the investigators, Anna can introduce them to other locals, such as Police Chief Dave Youngblood, or Old Tom. She warns them to take Tom’s stories with a grain of salt, as he’s an inveterate liar. And don’t give Tom or *anyone* on the reservation booze. “There’s too much of that here as it is,” she says bitterly. If asked about this and a successful Psychology roll is made, she says her husband, a Hualapai, used to be a river tour guide, but he ran off the road in his truck one night, blind drunk, and broke his neck. Anna also warns them away from Joseph Two Knives, who’s supposed to be some kind of rogue medicine man. He’s really just a drug dealer and a supplier of illegal alcohol to the Hualapai, she says.

Anna doesn’t know much about the missing hikers or the Sighing Desert, only that her husband used to say there were places in that desert where compasses didn’t work, that animals shied away from, and even the canniest Indians avoided. That desert, he told her, is bigger than it looks and seems, and there are things in it that only fools would look for.

Anna is happy to walk and talk with the investigators whenever they visit Peach Springs. At some point during one of their meetings Anna comes across an older Hualapai boy sleeping in the shade of a tree near the school; an Idea roll notes the youth is dead drunk. “Come on, Jimmy,” Anna says, “time to go home.” Anna helps the youth to his feet, and may ask the investigators to help her get him home, a few hundred yards’ walk. Anna is clearly angry and upset with the young man, but also sympathetic to his disease. “We killed their people, took their land, and destroyed their way of life. In return we gave them back a fraction of their land, tax exemption, their own government—and alcoholism.”

While not sinister in and of herself, Anna Rainbird can be useful as a red herring since she is one of the few female characters in this story. Her phrase “Time to go home” is repeated by other characters throughout the rest of the scenario, and should raise questions about her.

Anna Rainbird, white schoolteacher, 63

STR 9 CON 12 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 15
DEX 12 APP 11 EDU 15 SAN 70 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Anthropology 40%, Art (Painting) 45%, First Aid 60%, History 55%, Library Use 45%, Listen 35%, Natural History 40%, Psychology 50%, Ride 30%, Spot Hidden 35%.

Languages: English 75%, Hualapai 55%, Spanish 35%.

Interested Parties

The following are important wild card characters the Keeper may introduce to the scenario as he or she sees fit. Enrique Echevarría in particular is very important, and his name may crop up several times before the investigators finally meet him. He is constantly being interviewed on the news in connection with disappearances in the Sighing Desert, and is himself a known survivor of such a

tragedy. The Yaqui Indian Joseph Two Knives is a sinister figure who shadows the investigators before approaching them with an offer to take them into the haunted desert in search of the missing students.

Enrique Echevarría

By the time they begin their investigation in Arizona, the investigators have already heard of Enrique Echevarría. News stories and interviews often feature the dignified old Mexican–Indian gentleman, not only because he writes and paints about the area in question, but because he survived being lost in the desert himself when he was a mere seven years old. Ecchiavara’s childhood survival story is another way his name probably comes to the investigators’ attention, likely before they even set foot in Arizona.

Public knowledge of Enrique Echevarría is that he was the son of a Mexican–American named Juan Carlos Maria Echevarría and a young Hualapai Indian woman. Juan Echevarría enlisted in the army in 1942, and his wife and son went to stay with her family on the Hualapai Reservation. When Juan was killed in Normandy in 1944, Belinda Echevarría was apparently overcome with grief. She took young Enrique and walked into the Sighing Desert to die.

According to Enrique, the two walked until they were lost and delirious, finally stumbling upon a dark, ruined village in the wastes. Unable to find water, Enrique stayed with his mother until she died, eventually wandering out of the dilapidated village and back into the desert. Six days after he and his mother had disappeared, Enrique was found by one of his mother’s tribe and rescued. No one ever found the village where he had left his mother’s body.

Enrique went to live with his father’s family, and when he grew up he wrote about his experiences in the autobiographical book *The Sighing Desert* (1962). At first he was uncertain whether or not the city was real, but he has now come to believe it was a hallucination or false memory, some trick his mind played upon him to get him to leave his dead mother behind and save himself. This ability of the mind to delude itself in order to protect itself was the subject of Echevarría’s second book, *From the Desert of My Dreams* (1983).

Echevarría’s books have created a minor cult of people who believe that by stripping away the trappings and safety nets of civilization, they can focus on their inner selves and overcome external stresses. This belief has led some to recreate Echevarría’s fateful journey into the desert—with sometimes tragic results. Several excerpts from Echevarría’s books are included nearby.

Echevarría is also a renowned artist, his vivid desert landscapes often selling for thousands of dollars. He also privately teaches painting in his home city of Las Vegas. Echevarría has been married and divorced three times; a halved Library/Internet Use roll finds that each of these divorces appeared amicable.

If the investigators wish to talk with Echevarría, they can find him fairly easily—his studio is listed in the Las Vegas phone directory. The investigators can leave a message with Echevarría’s assistant, and if they mention their reason for contacting him, he’ll



return their call within twenty-four hours. They can interview him via phone, or if they make an appointment, they can visit him at his home in Las Vegas.

In the latter event, they find Echevarría's modest ranch style house in a middle-class residential neighborhood. Echevarría himself answers the door (he apparently lives alone) and graciously offers the visitors non-alcoholic refreshment (he doesn't drink alcohol). The house is sparsely but tastefully furnished and decorated, with a few of his paintings on the walls, and a few Native American *objets d'art* displayed here and there. One of the paintings depicts a plain-looking Indian woman of indeterminate age, her eyes piercing, her expression unguessable. If asked, Echevarría says the painting is of his late mother, as best as he can recall her.

Enrique Echevarría is seventy-one years old, tall and stocky, with handsome Amerind features, and wizened brown eyes. His long thin light brown hair is shot through with gray and worn shaggily long. Echevarría usually dresses in a fringed buckskin shirt decorated with Navajo designs, jeans and tennis shoes. His voice is calm, his attitude just as serene.

The old desert artist is terribly sorry about the missing hikers, but says he can't be much help. He doesn't remember much about his own experience, and even now he thinks he probably imagined much of it. While he's been back to the Sighing Desert a few times, he's never again felt the tremendous sense of isolation he felt when he found the lost city with his mother. And now he's sure that city was a hallucination. He can't even remember enough

of it to try to paint it; he's tried and failed to do so many times. The bizarre mix of modern skyscrapers and primitive Indian dwellings he thought he remembered seeing—surely it was a troubled child's imagination at work? Ultimately, Echevarría warns the investigators to avoid the Sighing Desert, as there's definitely something strange—and dangerous—about it.

As mentioned earlier, Echevarría isn't really Echevarría anymore. The real Enrique died in the lost desert city with his mother over sixty years ago. In his place, Mater Suspiriorum sent back a changeling, one of her servant "dwellers of the sands," magically altered to permanent human form. The false Enrique would then lure others to seek answers in the desert wastes, and thus lead them home to Mater Suspiriorum.

Echevarría is largely a wild card character in this scenario. The investigators should probably meet or speak with him within the first few days of their arrival in Arizona, and perhaps again toward the middle of the case. For example, after Jessi Mohrman's body is found. Finally, they may wish to consult Echevarría before they make their most concerted effort to penetrate the Desert of Sighs, seeking advice as to whether they should use Two Knives' peyote plan, or simple heat stroke and delirium to show them the way. Of course, that won't be the last they see or hear of Echevarría either.

Enrique Echevarría, artist and author, 71

STR 12 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 16
DEX 11 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 55 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: All at base percentages. However, in combat Echevarra can use the attacks of a sand dweller: Claws (x2) 30% 1D6; if both claws hit, Bite next round at 45% 1D6.

Skills: Art (Painting) 65%, Art (Writing) 55%, Credit Rating 65%, Dodge 40%, History 45%, Listen 45%, Natural History 55%, Navigate 45%, Persuade 45%, Psychology 55%, Sneak 35%, Spot Hidden 50%, Track 50%.

Languages: English 65%, Hualapai 35%, Spanish 45%.

Joseph Two Knives

The sinister Yaqui Indian Joseph Two Knives is tall and broad, with long shaggy gray and black hair. He looks to be in his forties, at least. He dresses in worn jeans and dusty denim vest, usually over a black t-shirt featuring some kind of heavy metal rock band like Disturbed, Sevendust, or Marilyn Manson. He also favors black Ray-Ban sunglasses and three silver chains around his neck. His face is slightly pitted, and his gray eyes and slightly reptilian smile give him an even more sinister appearance.

Two Knives gets his name from the fact he reportedly always carries at least a couple knives at all times. There is a simple Barlow pocket knife in his jeans pocket, a double-edged "Arkansas toothpick" in his right rattlesnake skin cowboy boot, his ornate

belt buckle is actually a small double-edged punch dagger, and there are usually a couple of additional blades hidden somewhere on his motorcycle. He also owns an old .44 Remington revolver, but rarely carries it. He has no permanent address, but lives in various motels to throw off potential police pursuit.

Joseph Two Knives deals drugs in Kingman, Bullhead City, and on the Hualapai Indian Reservation. He also supplies alcohol to the latter, since it is frowned upon by the tribe. Two Knives usually travels around on his bike setting up deals, then pays intermediaries to transport and deliver the goods for him. His ever changing circle of flunkies would never cheat or betray him, as Joseph Two Knives is supposedly some kind of sorcerer. Rumor has it that he has somehow murdered people who were in custody and ready to testify against him. At the Mohave County Sheriff's Department, a couple of Law rolls made while researching Two Knives' record reveals no such cases or fatalities, however.

Two Knives has no apparent ties to the missing students, but nevertheless at some point he may approach the investigators and offer to help them find the missing hikers. This should come after the investigators have seen the mysterious Indian in various places: hanging around their hotel, restaurant, or elsewhere in Kingman, following them on his motorcycle, or on the Indian Reservation.

Two Knives is a smug and slimy character, always smiling. He says, "Those kids got lost out there in the desert because it's bigger than it looks," and only he can show the investigators how to

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excerpts from Enrique Echevarría's books *The Sighing Desert* (1962) and *From the Desert of My Dreams* (1983):

"...I was too young to know, of course. My mother's people did not appreciate that one of their women would not necessarily want to marry a member of the tribe. So when she chose another—a Mexican—her parents and the rest of the tribe were livid. They shunned her. Sometimes there is no more virulent a racist than one who is himself a minority...

...It was several days after she told me that my father was not coming back from the war, that she took my hand and told me we would go for a walk. She had been crying, I could see. But as we passed her mother and other members of the tribe, she wiped her eyes and looked forward. She did not look at them. And so we went into the Sighing Desert...

...I do not know how long we walked, for sometimes I slept and she carried me. I remember sleeping at least one night in that softly moaning wasteland. I remember this, for I recall searching for the constellations my father had taught me to find. And in my hazy recollection, none of those figures were among the stars in that desert's night sky...

...I do not remember much of the city. I believe I was dying then. Nothing is clear about it. I remember thinking the city was a mirage, like heat boiling off the desert. There were weeds and ragged buffalo hide tents and crumbling adobe huts. But there seemed to be houses too, and great skyscrapers. But I must have been dreaming, or delirious, or dying. What great city in any desert has buildings such as these, but not a living

inhabitant within it?...

...I have no recollection of leaving her. I do know she was dead, and had been for some time. I don't know what made me leave her. As an adult, today, I don't know that I would, or could. But whatever it was that sent me from her side in that place, sent me from certain death out toward a chance at survival. I would like to think it was her spirit, releasing me from a child's instinct to stay by his mother's side...

...I have dreamt of her again since then, of course. I do not see the sad woman who led me into the desert. I see her smiling, I hear her singing. I know that she is with my father somewhere, and that they are happier now than they were ever allowed to be in life...

...In some of my dreams I am again that child, curled up next to his mother's dead body. In the dreams that child awakens to find his mother standing, smiling. "You must go," she tells him. I can't. I'm afraid. I'm alone. "No," she says, "you will never be alone. I will always be with you."

...I am asked all the time whether or not I believe the city is really out there. Many lives have been lost seeking it, and for this I am profoundly sorry. But is it real? And will finding that place change others as it changed me? I don't know. For me the city was—at least briefly—real. No one has been able to find it. But I know I can always find it, in my memories and in my dreams...."

go where those kids went. If they want to go with him, they have to agree to his terms: \$5000 up front, or \$1000 per person, if there are more than five investigators—no cops before or after the trip, they follow his orders, and no guarantees they find the kids—alive or dead. They can Bargain to get him to accept half up front and half when they return. The bizarre journey with Two Knives is described in Two Knives' Quest, below.

If the investigators try to trap Two Knives or turn him in to the Sheriff, and a random investigator makes a Luck roll, Joseph is caught and taken into custody. By the end of the scenario, however, Joseph Two Knives vanishes from his cell and is never seen again.

Like Enrique Echevarría, above, Two Knives is actually a servitor of Mater Suspriorum, a particularly intelligent and dangerous sand dweller given permanent human form.

Joseph Two Knives, Yaqui drug dealer, 41

STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 14 INT 13 POW 16
DEX 15 APP 9 EDU 13 SAN 35 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: .44 Revolver 50% 2D6, Fist 65% 1D3+db, Grapple 65%, Kick 45% 1D6+db, Knife 75% 1D3 (Pocketknife) 1D6 (Arkansas Toothpick) 1D4+2 (Bowie Knife).

Skills: Bargain 55%, Dodge 60%, Drive Auto 40%, Drive Motorcycle 75%, Fast Talk 55%, Hide 55%, Listen 55%, Navigate 45%, Pharmacy 55%, Psychology 55%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Languages: English 45%, Haulapai 35%, Spanish 40%.

The Survivor Vanishes

Some time after the investigators have discovered the body of Jessi Mohrman, or at least after they have tried searching the desert even if they didn't find the body, there is another bizarre development in the case. Jeremy Brenton, thus far the only surviving hiker, disappears from his hospital room. If the investigators are on good terms with the sheriff's department, the authorities call them in for help. Failing this, a frantic John and Marilyn Brenton telephone them.

At the hospital, the parents and sheriff's personnel tell investigators what little they know. A little after nine p.m., the night nurse checked on Jeremy, whose condition hadn't changed since he was found. He was apparently sleeping. When she came back at one a.m., Jeremy was gone. His clothes, bedclothes, and IV were undisturbed in the bed, so at best he would have escaped in his boxers or naked, unless he stole some clothes somewhere. No one saw him leave his second floor room, and he almost certainly would have been seen by someone in the halls or at the exit; at least six to eight people were working in that part of the hospital, nurses, janitor, EMTs, and so forth.

As the investigators discuss the disappearance with the Sheriff, parents, and hospital employees, in or near Jeremy's room, a voice calls out from the room across the hall. Rod Wengner, a young construction worker, was brought in for an emergency appendectomy last night. He says he was trying to sleep after his

operation, but heard voices across the hall. It was dark, says Wengner, but he heard someone with a soft, whispery voice say, "Come on, it's time to go home." Then there was a sound like a moan or a whimper or something, but Wengner couldn't see anything, and fell back to sleep. The nurse says Wengner must have still been suffering the effects of the anesthesia, as no one else saw or heard anything.

In Jeremy's room, there is no sign of the young man. Last night, Mater Suspriorum came to reclaim him.

Dreams and Nightmares, Part Two

The following dreams occur later in the scenario, after the investigators have met Anna Rainbird and Joseph Two Knives, and after Jeremy Brenton's second disappearance. The best choice to have the first dream would be Mater Suspriorum's investigator-target. The Keeper can randomly determine which investigator has the second of these dreams.

Time to Go Home

This dream recreates several instances where the investigator hears someone say "Time to go home" or "It's time to go home." Anna Rainbird says it to a drunken youth. David Mohrman says it to his wife Wendi when their daughter Jessi's body is positively identified. The patient across the hall from Jeremy Brenton's room hears it said by some unseen person the night Jeremy disappears again. The dreaming investigator witnesses each of these utterances, then hears a woman's voice speak those words to him. Turning, the investigator finds himself in the desert, and the man with the cow skull head stands facing him—Sanity loss is 0/1D4 points. Cow skull points across the desert, where a distant city materializes out of the shimmering heat haze.

If the investigator does nothing, cow skull and the city fade from view, and he or she wakes up. If the investigator starts toward the city, he can attempt to reach it, but if he ever looks back the skull-headed man has vanished—and so has the city. If he never looks back, the city eventually fades anyway. Once the city has faded, the dream ends, and the investigator must make a Sanity roll, for a loss of 0/1D3 points of Sanity. Also, if the roll fails, he or she is haunted by the thought that he has lost something very precious.

Two Knives

An investigator has this dream sometime after meeting the shift Indian, Two Knives. In the dream, the investigator sees Two Knives walking away, down the sidewalk outside the investigators' hotel. Following Two Knives, the Indian rounds the corner of a building. When the dreamer reaches the corner, Two Knives is nowhere to be found, but a short ways down the alley a lean coyote stands staring at his pursuer for a few moments before turning and loping off. The dreamer awakens at that point.

An Anthropology, Folklore, or Occult roll recalls that the

Miscellaneous Desert Events

The Keeper should introduce the following events as desired, though the The Cave Painting event is highly recommended. These two events can be used any time during the investigators' attempts to lose themselves in the Desert of Sighs, but should be introduced before they reach the City of Gloom.

The Sandstorm

This event can be used any number of ways, whether it's to cover Joseph Two Knives' escape from the party (see below), to drive the investigators toward a specific landmark (e.g. the Three Sisters formation or the cave painting), to confuse the investigators' sense of time and/or location, or to separate the party (for instance separating a chosen investigator from his companions, allowing him to reach the City of Gloom before them). The exact use is up to the Keeper.

The storm begins with a vast sighing sound rolling out over the desert floor. The investigators see clouds of dust boiling across the wasteland toward them. If they don't stick closely together, some of them may become lost in the storm, perhaps ending up elsewhere, at the Keeper's discretion. If Two Knives is with the investigators, he tells them to tie a cloth across their face and head for the nearest shelter, whether it's a boulder or a hillside, or an arroyo or a cave in a nearby cliff. If Two Knives isn't with them, a successful roll of a skill such as Navigate or Survival or a halved Idea roll suggests this course of action. When the sandstorm strikes, the wind blown sand tears at their clothes and exposed skin, nearly choking them. Investigators who failed to cover their mouth and nose suffer 1D3–1 points of choking damage.

The sandstorm lasts for 2D10 hours, during which time visibility is a few yards, at most. Investigators who try to move during the storm are certain to become lost, which may be exactly what they want. Those who wait out the swirling sands may become distraught if it lasts more than a couple of hours. If anyone seems overly aggrieved by the storm's duration, assess a loss of 0/1D3 points of Sanity. When the storm is over, the investigators may discover they are lost, or that some of their party are missing, or they have come to a familiar landmark, or that they have come to an endlessly twilight wasteland (see The City of Gloom). Again, the exact use of the sandstorm is left for the Keeper to decide.

The Cave Painting

Exactly how the investigators discover this cave is left for the Keeper to determine. They may be forced to

enter it as the sandstorm approaches, they may see it from a distance, or a shy coyote may slip into it (and subsequently vanish). Optionally, if it's seen from a distance witnesses may be drawn to it by the many white and brown human handprints around the opening of the cave. An Anthropology roll recalls that leaving handprints like this was a custom of some southwestern American Indians during pilgrimages to holy places. They believed the spirits would see these marks as proof of the pilgrims' passing and treat them more favorably.

Once inside the cave, anyone who dreamt of the cave painting recognizes the passage that winds into the darkness. Soon enough the investigators come to a large open chamber whose ceiling seems impossibly high overhead for the terrain in which it's located. Ahead, a section of wall over twenty-five feet in length is covered in an extremely crude series of paintings. An Anthropology roll reveals these designs are vaguely similar to Paleolithic cave paintings found in Europe dating back over 20,000 years. Again, the images are startlingly familiar. At one end, a city rises from the earth. Here wattled huts stand next to buildings that look shockingly like modern A-frame houses, and there a series of tall gray towers studded with black windows rise above them. Several strange small hunched man-like things with rat heads are depicted moving around the city. In the gray sky a lone bird flies between the city and the expanse of supine stick-men strewn across the remainder of the landscape. Amid the fallen stands a black featureless figure, its right arm upraised, and somehow the viewer has the creeping feeling that the figure is watching him at this very moment. Drugged investigators may see the figures in the city moving about, shimmering in and out of view, but the fallen figures and the standing figure never move. Viewing the painting calls for a loss of 1/1D4 points of Sanity, due to its disturbing similarity to—and yet bizarre differences from—the hikers' photo and their own dreams of this place.

The investigators can stay and explore the dead end cavern all they want, but there is nothing more to find. If they linger too long, an investigator chosen by Mater Suspiriorum may hear his name sighed by the winds outside the cave. Alternatively, the chosen may hear his name whispered from within the cave as he and his companions leave. Either event calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

coyote is a common trickster figure in American Indian lore, a creature known as much for his mischievous traits as for his frequent heroic deeds.

The Three Talismans

As the Hualapai storyteller Old Tom hinted, these three trinkets are slightly magical. There is virtually no way the investigators can learn exactly what they do, beyond Old Tom's vague description. One will get you where you want to go, another will get you home, and the third, apparently Tom's, will protect you along the way. The investigators should be able to guess the nature of each item, given that the ones held by Old Tom and Paul Springfield are strongly hinted at. The exact powers of each item are described below.

The Eagle Feather: Discovered at the site of the mysteriously disappearing bonfire outside of Kingman, a Zoology or halved Natural History roll identifies it as a golden eagle feather. Its purpose is to direct the bearer to the lost city where Mater Suspiriorum awaits. To use it, it must be dropped on the ground within the Sighing Desert. If this is done, the quill end of the feather always points toward the city.

Note that due to the otherworldliness of the desert and the city, these directions may seem contradictory at times, but if the user trusts and follows the feather's directions, he or she can find the city—doubtless to his regret.

The Silver Bolt: The “silver” bauble worn by Old Tom is, as a Geology roll notes, actually a sliver of meteoric iron in the shape of a lightning bolt. And Tom was right about its protective properties. The bearer of this item adds 10 to his POW in any POW vs. POW resistance table conflict. He or she also only fails a Luck roll if the D100 roll is 96–00. In addition, any time the wielder has not attacked a foe who wishes to attack him, the attacker must succeed in a POW vs. POW roll in order to perceive the holder of the bolt. If the holder succeeds, then he or she and anyone in physical contact with him or her is basically invisible to that attacking person or creature. The effect is broken if the wielder or a protected person make an attack.

The Kachina Doll: An Archaeology or Anthropology roll identifies the ancient weathered wooden doll found by Paul Springfield as of Navajo origin, from the early 19th century. The features are so worn down the exact identity of the spirit depicted is impossible to guess, but as Springfield's experiences hint, its purpose is to lead the holder to safety. This process is more subtle than the previous talismans', as the kachina allows its carrier an occasional Idea roll which, if successful, subconsciously tells him or her the direction they need to travel to reach the nearest “safe haven”—whatever that may be. Note that this item only works in the deserts of the southwestern United States.

Into the Desert, Part Two

As the investigators learn more about the legendary elastic nature of the Sighing Desert, they'll probably want to try to venture “off the map” in an effort to find the lost hikers. They may already have discovered that dehydration and heat stroke might be one method of becoming as lost as the students. Of course getting lost is no guarantee they'll find the lost city. Another possibility is the eagle feather talisman found in the desert. Though they won't exactly know what it does, Old Tom's statement that one of the talismans will “take you where you want to go” should seem promising. The dream of the skull headed man offering the investigator peyote seems to hint at another method. Finally there is the claim by Joseph Two Knives that he can lead the investigators to where the kids went—but can he be trusted?

The investigators may want to ask their various contacts for advice on these methods of penetrating the desert's secrets. If they haven't figured it out yet themselves, an Idea roll should suggest that a good step toward leaving the real desert behind is to become lost themselves. This can be achieved any number of ways, from having someone blindfold them and leave them in the desert, or drive them out in the dark. Any of their informants can suggest this.

While their contacts strongly advise against it, dehydration and heat stroke might also result in loss of direction and possible hallucinations. Those consulted suggest that at most one or two of the party subject themselves to such torture, and that the others stay close and carry extra water in case this insane idea goes too far. Finally, if the investigators ask about using peyote or other mind altering substances and going on some sort of vision quest, they are again strongly warned against such a course. Hopefully they aren't stupid enough to ask the Sheriff for advice in such matters. Not only are such substances illegal, they're also dangerous, say their consultants. Combined with the harsh desert climate, they could result in psychological damage, or even serious injury. If you're fool enough to try such a thing, they say, for God's sake have just one person take the drug and have the others follow him very closely.

Unlike all of the others consulted for advice, Joseph Two Knives doesn't warn against the more drastic of these actions. In fact, if asked, Two Knives' plan involves having one or more investigators ingest peyote while he and the others follow the hallucinating ones as they wander between the worlds.

If the investigators agree to his plan, he lets them choose who takes the drug, and then has those individuals spend the next twelve hours fasting. They are to leave the following dawn, packing camping gear, food and water for a long journey. They'll start their ceremony at the point where Nick Karras and the others left the road, north of Kingman. If they accept, he wants his money up front, or half up front and half on return if an investigator

makes a successful Bargain roll.

Two Knives' quest is described in the next section, while events surrounding the other methods are discussed in *Piercing the Veil of the Desert*, below.

Two Knives' Quest

If the investigators have agreed to Two Knives' plan to use peyote to transcend the normal borders of the Sighing Desert, he arranges to meet them before dawn at a convenience store a few blocks from their hotel. The grinning Yaqui is driving a battered old Ford pickup, and has the investigators follow him north out of town, on the old dirt road into the Hualapai Valley. They drive into the eerie darkness to where Nick Karras' Jeep was found abandoned. Here, Two Knives hops out of his truck and grabs a duffel bag and large flashlight from the truckbed. If the investigators attempt to bring anything larger than a pistol with them, the Yaqui balks. He'll go no further with such guns. This matter dealt with, in the quiet darkness before dawn he leads the trekkers into the craggy hills.

The Ceremony

Finally, beside the site of the first maze marked on Nick Karras' GPS, Two Knives tosses down his bag and starts gathering up brush and wood for a fire. As they build the fire, the Yaqui has the peyote ingesters stand apart from the others, where he has them face north, pick up a handful of earth and let it fall, repeating the process for each of the cardinal directions.

No face- or body-paint, no chanting, they may ask? "You assholes ain't Indians," he grunts, pouring water and a gritty powder into a small coffeepot and setting it on the fire. "What is it?" they may ask. "Peyote tea, should be 'bout 500 milligrams' worth. Stiff dose," grins Two Knives. "Might make you sick. Does most people. Don't worry 'bout it, just drink it and ride it out." After several minutes he produces styrofoam cups for the ingesters. "Bombs away, dream-babies," he chortles as he pours the thick, boiling muck.

The tea is thick, oily, gritty, bitter, and tastes of alkali. Two Knives has them alternate drinks of the tea with water from a canteen. Any ingester who fails a CON x2 roll is sickened by the foul concoction, and vomits into the dust. Two Knives gives them water and has them drink more tea. This time a CON x4 roll is needed to keep it down. The Yaqui has each ingester drink a cup and a half of the tea, then snatches their cups away and tosses the remaining contents into the flames. Those who drank the peyote mixture half-glimpse demonic figures dancing up from the sparks that fly when the tea hits the fire. Two Knives then pours some of the tea into a cup and quaffs it himself, grinning. Then he pours the rest of the pot into the flames, dousing the fire and leaving them in the vague pre-dawn twilight.



“This is where they started,” he says, “so this is where we begin too.”

Dawn and Rebirth

About an hour later, as the sun begins to climb over the horizon in a stunning display of color, any psychonaut—that is, anyone who has ingested the peyote tea—that makes a Sanity roll finds himself walking the path of the maze. At the center of the labyrinth, he or she sees the sun rising through a cleft in the rocks, and realizes this is the way the party is meant to go. If none of the investigators make this discovery, Two Knives points them toward it. Note that Two Knives never suffers any of the visions or effects described below for the other imbibers.

Two Knives lets the drugged investigators lead the way toward the cleft in the hills. These investigators are now feeling the effects of the drug. They feel almost weightless, the way ahead seems filled with light, and it seems very dark in their peripheral vision. They are seeing colors they’ve never seen before, some of which express themselves as much through sound as through vision.

As the sun rises toward early morning, the travelers notice the cleft they’re approaching is narrower than it initially seemed. At the far end of the narrow trail that leads through the cleft, a psychonaut making an Idea roll turns and sees the passage they have just left looks exactly like the female sex organ. The viewer is elated by this discovery, for it means they’ve been born into a new world. Those not under the influence see merely a narrow passage, which in no way resembles a vagina. However, their watches have stopped, and anyone checking a GPS finds it has also stopped working. A compass needle just slowly spins.

By now the peyote is taking full effect. Those who ingested it must make a Sanity roll. If the roll fails they lose 1D6 points of Sanity, and at some time during the quest they suffer some type of harmful hallucination. For some, the display of alien colors can be beautiful, but in the case of a bad trip the tripper may be overwhelmed by them, or suffer serious tunnel vision. The users may also see blurry figures moving about in the surrounding desert. This may cause paranoid delusions, as a bad tripper believes he and his companions are being stalked by horrible creatures, perhaps even Cthulhu Mythos entities. If this individual is armed, he or she may start shooting at these figures—or anyone else nearby. A more straightforward bout of paranoia might have the drugged investigator convinced his companions intend to do him or her harm out here in the desert. Another form of bad trip may arise if the ingester is actually feeling too good. He or she may try to strip off his or her clothing and run willy-nilly across the desert, oblivious of terrain. Unless such a tripper is kept on a short leash, he or she may injure themselves, perhaps even try to take flight from a cliff. In all such cases of bad trips, the hallucinating investigator can be calmed down if one of his sober companions can make a successful Psychology roll.

The Three Sisters

With an Idea roll, an investigator realizes they must be close to the Three Sisters—Injuns rock formation—surely an auspicious site for more visions for the peyote imbibers. Nevertheless, they spend the next 2D3 GPS-less hours vainly searching for signs of the rock formation they may have visited before. Though a Know roll guesses it shouldn’t be much later than early afternoon, it begins to darken as if dusk were approaching.

A GPS check puts them within a mile of the site. As they wander into the small valley where the three stones loom, the psychonauts see they are indeed three women—Indian women—in plain dark colored robes. The eyes of one are closed and she is cold and gray. Across from her, tears flow endlessly down the face of another sobbing figure.

It is the third figure which grips them, however. Her eyes are a deep golden brown, filled with such pity and love and sadness and forgiveness the peyote users must make a Sanity roll when they see her. Those making their roll can’t hold that gaze for long, and lose 1 point of Sanity, while those failing their roll are stricken with a loss of 1D6 points, and find themselves stumbling forward to fall at her feet, weeping and begging her forgiveness.

Sober viewers of this scene lose 0/1D2 Sanity when they see their companions blubbing before lumps of stone. Anyone chosen by Mater Suspiriorum loses twice the Sanity points listed above, and if this causes insanity, they now realize they are in danger of losing their mind and soul to this entity. If anyone asks where they should go from here, everyone who has lost any Sanity in this place now hears a low voice on the wind saying: “Follow my dead sister’s gaze.” If they don’t think of it on their own, an Idea roll guesses this must mean going in the direction faced by the cold, gray, sightless figure.

Two Knives warns that it’s getting dark, and the drug should be wearing off very soon—they should camp. He has more peyote, if necessary. The ingesters feel their heads clearing quickly, and are very tired and thirsty. These psychonauts each get an Idea roll, which, if successful, tells them they’re close to...something. Let the investigators decide what they want to do.

The Fire and The Watcher

If the investigators decide to continue on, darkness closes in fast, though it still seems as if it should be late afternoon. In the dark, the peyote-riders spy a large fire in the distance. Those who didn’t take the peyote don’t see the fire.

Two Knives does, however, and a Psychology roll discerns an uncharacteristic change in his usually smug manner. He is frightened. In fact, he refuses to go any farther. “This is as far as I can take you,” he says, shifting his pack. If they argue or threaten him, he is adamant. “Shoot me if you want, but I go no farther. I can feel it, that fire. It burns on the Other Side. Keep the rest of your money. Shoot me in the back if you want. But I’ve brought you where you wanted to be. Goodbye, and good luck.” He has his .44 revolver hidden in his pack, and may draw it out to cover his flight. The investigators can shoot it out with him, or let him go,

but Two Knives will not go near the fire.

If the investigators head toward the distant bonfire, the psychonauts among them see a figure standing motionless next to the flickering flames—a tall figure naked but for a loincloth, his burly arms crossed, and a cow's skull where his head should be. The sober investigators still see no fire, no figure. This realization costs all of them 0/1D3 Sanity points.

The skull-headed man never moves, only staring at the investigators through empty eye sockets. Up close, the psychonauts see that either the skull fits perfectly over the man's entire head, or the skull *is* the creature's head. Anyone who can see the man's head is actually a cow skull for loses 0/1D3 points of Sanity.

As they reach the fire, Cow-skull turns to them, and the peyote ingesters hear a dry crackling whisper on the wind. "You must decide now. Turn back, and you may never reach this place again. Continue, and you may be lost."

Let the investigators—the ones who can actually see the creature—ask whatever questions they wish, but the thing is mostly silent, adding only: "Some may be lost. Some may be found." If they attack Cow-skull, he shimmers like a mirage, disappears, and reforms on the other side of the flames. In any event, after a few moments the fire begins to die down, and the skull-headed man becomes less and less distinct in the growing darkness. "You must not shed blood in the garden," he whispers as the flames wink out, leaving the investigators in total darkness. Afterward there is no trace of the fire or its attendant.

If they decide to camp rather than press on in the dark, Two

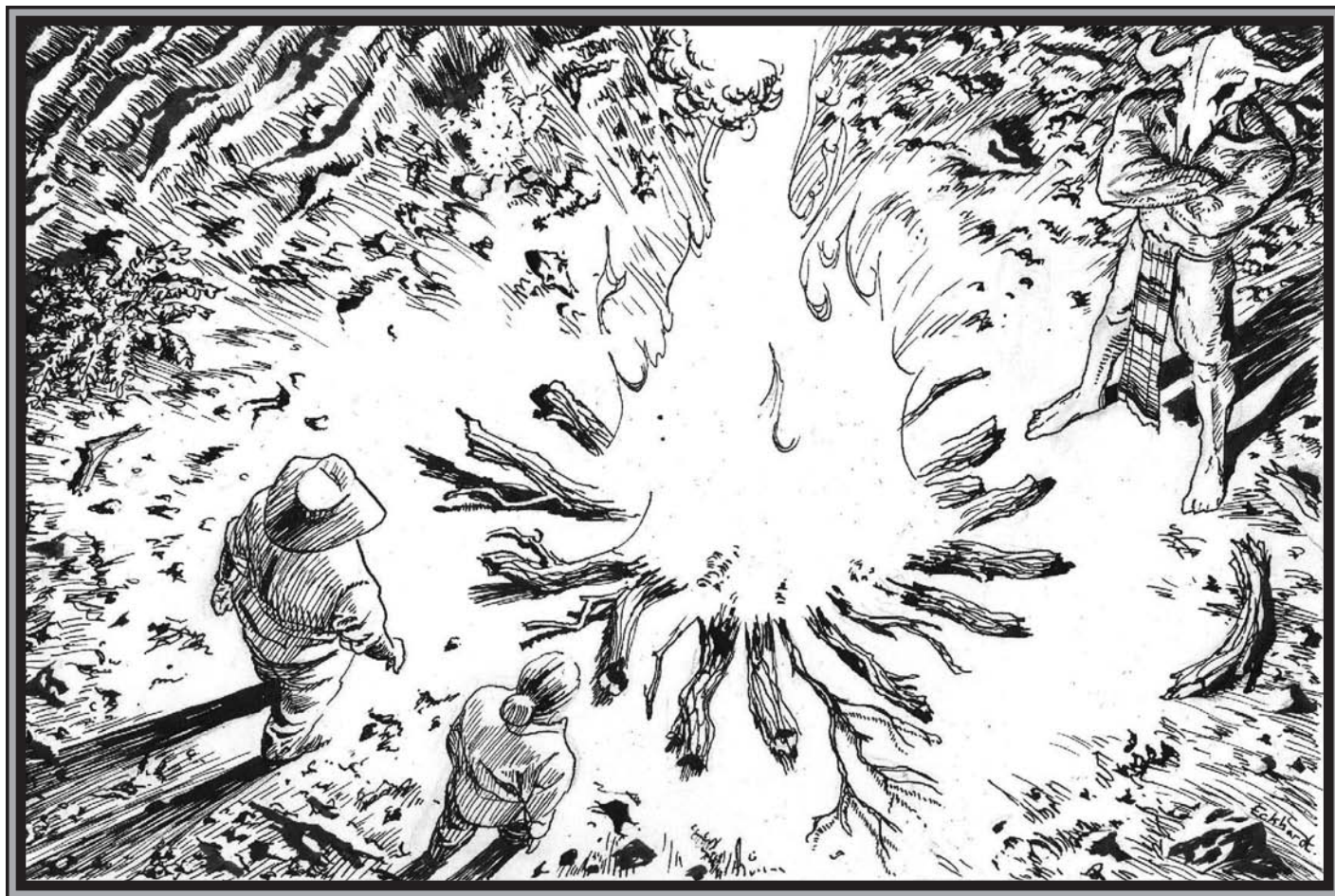
Knives builds a fire, and they eat canned food heated over the fire. Later they gather more firewood, and Two Knives suggests they post watches. The Yaqui takes the second watch. When his replacement awakens for his watch, he finds the Indian gone from the camp. Even if someone tried to stay awake to watch the suspicious Yaqui, he or she drowns for a few minutes, and Two Knives vanishes with all his gear.

It is still dark, and the peyote ingesters notice another fire burning in the distance. Investigators who didn't take the peyote do not see this fire. The scene plays out as described above.

The New Dawn

The investigators are now left in the dark desert without their guide. They can make another camp here, but if they try to return to the one they may have made earlier, they find no trace of it. Any gear they may have left is also gone. From here on, the investigators are limited to whatever they carried with them to the bonfire. GPS devices now put their location in areas as far flung as Afghanistan, Antarctica, Ethiopia, and Mongolia.

Finally, the long night seems to come to an end. Seems to—for the sun never really rises the next morning. Instead, the desert is bathed in a dim, unchanging twilight, like the hour the sun rises or sets, a realization that costs investigators 0/1 points of Sanity. With no other direction in mind, hopefully the investigators recall the stone sister's admonition to "Follow my dead sister's gaze." If they checked a compass, they know which way to go, otherwise an



Idea roll points it out.

A couple hours' hike across the flat, open desert brings them to a massive maze marked out in the sand and stone. It is a perfect circle nearly 100 yards across, and within it stand a few man-sized stone menhirs, some marked with curious designs. Closer examination shows that these are handprints, most human or human-like. A halved Idea roll guesses that while some are faded white paint, others are a rusty brown, likely dried blood. An Anthropology roll recalls that leaving handprints like this was a custom of some southwestern American Indians during pilgrimages to holy places. They believed the spirits would see these marks as proof of the pilgrims' passing, and treat them more favorably.

If an investigator who took peyote attempts to travel the maze, he or she needs a successful Luck roll to reach the center. The same is true for any investigator who has been chosen as a target by Mater Suspiriorum. Failure indicates he or she reaches a dead end. Any other character must roll his INT x1 on D100 to reach the center. Regardless of the route taken, travelers always pass by several of the menhirs. Any investigator who passes a menhir may mark his passing as previous pilgrims have done. This requires some ink or paint, or slashing themselves for 1D3–1 points of damage, in order to lose enough blood to mark one or more stones.

Any investigator who reaches the heart of the labyrinth sees a mirage rise up out of the desert, a hazy city in the distance which he may point out to his companions. If the first investigator to reach the center did not mark one or more of the stones as he passed, he or she sees the mirage city, and may point it out. But within a few seconds of reaching the center he or she fades completely from view. His fellow investigators lose 0/1D3 points of Sanity when they realize he or she has completely vanished. This character has been transported to the lost city, as described in the section *The City of Gloom*.

Whether or not they have lost one of their number, the investigators now see the lost City of Gloom hovering mirage-like at the edge of the desert.

Piercing the Veil of the Desert

If the investigators choose to decline Two Knives' offer to lead them into the desert, they can try to make their own way. The likely options: allowing one or more of their number to suffer enough through dehydration and heat stroke, then hallucinate and lead them out of the real world desert; allowing themselves to become lost to try and recreate the students' misguided journey; or using the feather talisman to lead them out of this world and into the otherworldly desert. Whatever the method, this journey should have many of the same elements as those described in Two Knives' Quest, above. If the Keeper desires, it may take the investigators more than one attempt to cross the barrier between the worlds. The Keeper should also remember to use the two Miscellaneous Desert Events detailed in boxed section above.

Crazy from the Heat

Using the heat stroke method, the investigators need an Idea roll to decide their suffering friend should be denied water several hours or even a day before they enter the desert, so the effects begin quickly. If this is done, after 1D3+1 hours in the desert without water, he or she may begin to feel weak and start having brief hallucinations. Perhaps the first such hallucination is of a blurry man-like figure at the edge of their vision, pointing toward The Three Sisters rock formation.

Travelling there, the sufferer receives a brief vision of The Three Sisters in the flesh, as the peyote-ingesters saw them in Two Knives' Quest. One is gray and dead, the second crying tears down her stony face, and the third with such melancholy eyes the viewer is pained just looking at her. The suffering one loses 0/1D3 Sanity points from this brief hallucination, and if the roll fails he is momentarily stricken and unable to go on. As the investigators start to leave, the water deprived victim hears a soft voice on the wind: "Follow my dead sister's gaze."

If they travel in the direction given, several hours pass, during which time the sufferer may see flitting shapes shadowing the investigators' path. Soon, dusk approaches. Do they make camp here? Do they allow their suffering companion some relief? Regardless of their choices—assuming they camp in the desert—in the night their thirst-maddened companion awakes to see the bonfire in the desert exactly as described in *The Fire and the Watcher*, part of Two Knives' Quest. Only those who were made to suffer dehydration see and hear the fire and the watcher. Regardless of whether or not anyone is made to suffer further, the rest of the adventure proceeds as in Two Knives' Quest.

Lost

This method assumes the investigators are deliberately going to try and lose themselves in the desert. Exactly how this is done is up to them to figure out. Does one of the party blindfold the rest and lead them out into the Sighing Desert, where he then follows their lead? Or do they have some other person, such as Paul Springfield, Joseph Two Knives, or one of the missing hikers' parents blindfold the lot of them then take them out and leave them to find their way? Investigators may want to carry a GPS device, but if they're smart they won't use it, since that would defeat their purpose.

Again, this should play out much like the previous examples. They discover one of the desert mazes first, and briefly spot the hazy man-like shape pointing off into the desert. Let them travel a few hours in that direction. Perhaps they see a large predatory bird circling in the hills ahead. A Natural History roll identifies it as a golden eagle, which they may have seen previously. It circles and wheels above The Three Sisters rock formation.

At the formation any investigator who may be chosen by Mater Suspiriorum feels a sense of unease worth a loss of 0/1 points of Sanity, and as they leave the area, he or she hears the sighing wind whisper: "Follow my dead sister's gaze." Turning, a targeted investigator gets a brief flash of The Three Sisters as the psychonauts and the heat stroke victims have seen them. One gray and dead, the second weeping tears down her stony face, and the third with painfully sad eyes. This vision costs the investigator 0/1

Sanity points.

As before, the investigators travel for several hours in the direction indicated by the voice on the mysterious sighing wind, and night soon approaches. They make camp, eat, and sleep, and one of Mater Suspiriorum's chosen eventually awakens to see the distant bonfire that only the chosen ones can see.

Talisman

This method is the least dangerous to the investigators, but also perhaps the least obvious. If they have guessed the purpose—if not the actual function—of the eagle feather talisman, they can use it to try to pierce the veil of the desert and travel beyond this world. All they have to do is figure out they must go into the desert and drop the feather and follow the direction pointed out by the quill end. Once they do this, the feather points them toward the same landmarks that other methods would. The only difference is, there are no hallucinatory scenes.

The talisman, for instance, first points them toward the maze. At least one person must traverse the maze before the feather will point in a new direction. Until someone passes through the maze, the feather lands point down in the sand, every time.

From the maze the feather leads them to The Three Sisters, where again those chosen by Mater Suspiriorum feel uneasy in their presence, losing 0/1 Sanity points. But they see and hear nothing out of the ordinary.

Then the talisman leads them out into the desert, mile after mile. They make camp as night falls. And in the night *all* the investigators see the bonfire and its bizarre attendant.

The Eagle

One final means of reaching the otherworldly desert has been hinted at throughout the scenario—the golden eagle familiar of the Mother of Sighs. The creature has followed the investigators and occasionally led them to certain sites. The eagle—or some other bird—is depicted in the cave paintings which the investigators may have dreamt of or seen. The eagle feather talisman may also suggest to them they need to seek out and follow the raptor. If the Keeper desires, he can use the eagle familiar to lead the investigators along the paths of discovery described above.

The City of Gloom

Once the investigators have traveled the large circular maze, the mirage-city they seek appears in the desert. As they cross the eerily twilight waste, Spot Hidden rolls occasionally detect blurred movement around them, usually fifty to a hundred yards distant. The movers appear to be human-like creatures, but smaller. Their features are indistinct, as they are hazy and mirage-like. A Cthulhu Mythos roll likens them to the creatures known as sand dwellers, but their hazy appearance and flickering movement are not normal for that species. Whatever they are, the creatures blink in and out of view, but do not approach the investigators. Everyone see-

ing this loses 0/1D3 points of Sanity. The dwellers exist in both the real world and the alternate desert dimension, and their flickering reflects this dual reality nature.

As the investigators near the city, its features swim in and out of view. The outskirts of the city seems made up of ragged tents, rude huts, and dilapidated shacks. Here and there a saltbox house sits next to a large tent made of hides, and beyond it tin-roofed shacks sag in the weeds next to a white adobe hut. There are no roads or sidewalks, just paths through weeds, and mud, and dusty earth. But all of this wavers and changes.

Further into the gloomy city, larger buildings rise up. Modest houses, some with tiled roofs, stand next to familiar American ranch-style homes, and beyond them Gothic mansions rub shoulders with white brick minarets. And deeper within the sad, silent city, higher towers and skyscrapers stand like blind watchmen in the endless dusk, their unlitten windows black like empty eye-sockets. This is obviously the city depicted in the bizarre cave paintings the investigators may have seen.

Entering the city, the investigators hear only the sounds of their own footsteps and the whisper of the wind. The intensely lonely atmosphere and the mutability of their surroundings unnerves them enough to cause a loss of 0/1D3 Sanity points. And still, at the edge of their vision, their strange pursuers follow at a distance—only now the creatures seem more solid.

Have each investigator roll Spot Hidden, and any who roll less than half their skill percentage get a clearer glimpse of one of the things. It is slightly smaller than a man, thin and wrinkled, and crusted with sand. It is naked, pale, and covered with a very fine fur. Its fingers end in bony talons, and its face looks like a bat's, with a flat, pulled-up nose, small eyes, large pointed ears, and a mouth brimming with vicious, sharp teeth. Even though the creatures still don't approach, such a clear view calls for a loss of 0/1D3 Sanity points. A Cthulhu Mythos roll now definitely identifies them as some subspecies of sand dwellers.

Allow the investigators to explore the city and its buildings as much as they want, though they may need to get some rest after their travels. Initially, the buildings all seem empty of inhabitants. Cobwebs, dusty furniture and decayed foodstuffs are everywhere, but no sign of any residents. Floorboards creak, and some items of furniture crumble to the touch.

Sand Dwellers

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
STR	11	8	10	15	11	10	9	7
CON	15	14	12	14	13	11	16	14
SIZ	5	11	14	12	6	7	10	11
INT	11	9	8	13	12	11	14	7
POW	11	11	6	11	13	4	16	11
DEX	8	12	13	10	7	10	11	15
HP	10	13	13	13	11	10	13	13
DB	-1D4	0	0	+1D4	0	0	0	0

Weapons: *Claws* (x2) 30% 1D6. If both claws hit, *Bite* next round 45% 1D6.

Skills: *Hide* 60%, *Listen* 50%, *Sneak* 70%, *Spot Hidden*

55%, Track 65%.

Armor: 3 points of sand—encrusted hide.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 points to see a sand dweller.

The Ghosts

At some point during their explorations, the investigators hear a sound like distant voices on the wind, just the vaguest of whispers. After a few minutes, they start to see the ghosts. Just brief glimpses of them, moving about in the desolate dwellings or along the dusty paths between them—men, women, and children, of all races. An Idea roll notices they do not smile or laugh. Another Idea roll notes that with few exceptions the ghosts appear to be of the lower classes, in cases where such distinctions can be made among the near-naked or tattily-dressed.

None of the ghosts acknowledge the investigators in any way. In fact, they may walk through them as if they aren't there. Seeing these phantasms causes a loss of 0/1D2 points of Sanity. These sightings go on for an hour or so, then gradually stop. The ghosts reappear and disappear like this every few hours throughout the investigators' wanderings in the town.

More Encounters

The following encounters are left for the Keeper to use as desired.

The Vanished

If an investigator vanished from the maze as described in Two Knives' Quest, he was transported to the city, where he may be found by his companions. This character has spent perhaps a day exploring the desolate city, and has seen the ghosts and the sand dwellers. He or she should make a Sanity roll, and if successful they lose 1D4+1 points. If the Sanity roll fails, or the successful Sanity roll results in insanity (5 points lost), he or she believes it has been several days since they vanished from the maze. The failed Sanity roll costs him or her 2D6+1 Sanity points.

His companions may find the missing investigator asleep in a building, wandering the streets, or they may call out as they search the town. If the Keeper desires, the vanished investigator may have to make another Sanity roll to see if he believes his friends are real, rather than some hallucination or creature in disguise.

The Gallery

Continuing their explorations, the investigators soon come upon an area where the streets are paved with stone bricks, with many of the houses and other buildings also made of stone. There is a deathly quiet, and it is here they find the first of the statues.

Standing near a building, the statue is man-sized, and totally lifelike, and apparently carved of some type of pale gray marble with an odd soapy feel to it. The subject of the carving is a young woman dressed in jeans and blouse, apparently cringing in terror from something. The statue is disturbingly lifelike, and between the fear fraught features, the soapy feel of the stone, and the dead silence, the investigators lose 1 point of Sanity with a failed roll.

Around the corner they discover another statue, and down the street still another. They are of all ages, races and walks of life:

here an Arab youth, there an old Eskimo male, and further still a homeless man sprawled across the pavement. All are carved from the same weird stone, and their expressions of utter terror. If they don't think of it themselves, an Idea roll may remind the investigators of the legend of the gorgons, whose gaze turned men to stone.

Seeing these statues—there may be dozens in this part of the city—calls for a loss of 0/1D3 Sanity.

As they wander the gallery of lifelike statues, each investigator should roll D100, and if the roll is less than an investigator's POW (or less than half his normal Spot Hidden roll, if no one rolls their POW or less) he or she does a double take while passing one of the statues.

The investigators have seen countless photographs of the missing hikers, so they recognize the tall, thin, goateed features of Nick Karras, the Kingman native who led the students on their hike. The likeness is perfect, down to the buttons on his shirt, the pockets on his jeans, and the wide and terrified look in his eyes. Those who see Nick's petrified form lose 0/1D4 Sanity points. The investigators can roam the paved area as long as they wish, but are perhaps wise to leave it once they have guessed the nature of the statues.

Home

Wandering the quiet desolation of the city, one of the investigators chosen by Mater Suspiriorum eventually spies something he thought he had forgotten: a street corner he used to play near when he was a child. If he or she chooses to check this out, among the mostly unrecognizable homes he sees one he remembers. Continuing on, he sees another familiar house, and another, and then the whole neighborhood from his fondest childhood memories. And there, finally, is his own childhood home. If any of the investigators seem spooked by this event, call for a Sanity roll for a loss of 0/1 points.

Everything is exactly as the chosen investigator remembers it inside his boyhood home: furniture, carpet, photos on the wall, his father's favorite chair, and so on. Everything is dusty but intact. The target investigator loses 0/1D3 Sanity points as a flood of memories and emotions engulfs him. If the chosen investigator goes to his own room, he again finds things just as he remembers them: toys, books, comics, clothes, everything. This calls for another loss of 0/1D3 Sanity. If the investigator loses more than 5 points inside the house, or if he or she has gone insane at any other point in the scenario, the Keeper should take the player aside and remind him of the scandalous act in this investigator's past which made him a target of Mater Suspiriorum.

The investigator thinks of that event again now, and realizes that in this place he needn't be ashamed of whatever it was he did, that regardless of all the mistakes he's made, here he'll always be welcome, safe, comfortable, free from guilt. He'll always be home. Call for another Sanity roll; if successful the investigator shakes free of his guilt and loneliness. If the roll fails, tell the player the investigator feels a strange sad relief, like he has come home. He can do as he wishes, and if the other investigators want, they can attempt Psychology rolls to determine their friend's state of mind.

Of course, in this situation, anyone would be feeling somewhat sad or nostalgic, and only a very low roll notes the afflicted investigator's sad acceptance of all that has occurred. What they can do about it—who knows? Perhaps on-the-spot Psychoanalysis to cheer him up?

Survivor

As they wander through the city, each investigator should attempt a halved Idea roll. If successful, one or more of them spot a street sign that jogs something in their memory: Keenan Heights. Allow a second Idea roll to recall where they've seen that street name before. When Ann Delaney's parents gave the investigators one of Jack Delaney's business cards, the Delaneys' home address was 1920 Keenan Heights, Louisville, Kentucky—or they may have found the address while researching the victims' backgrounds. The homes here are larger and nicer, but no less vacant. If the investigators look for 1920 Keenan Heights, it is easily found by checking the addresses along the phantom street.

1920 is an impressive three-story house with a gated driveway and a huge garage alongside the main home. A carved wooden sign hanging beside the front door reads

The Delaneys

Jack and Sharon

Katie, Mary, Ann

Inside, the house is furnished beautifully and expensively, but a thin film of dust covers everything. There is no answer if the investigators call out in the dark gloomy place. Eventually, by searching every distressingly normal room, they do find one occupant. In one of the smaller bedrooms, sitting in a highbacked wooden chair next to an empty baby's crib is Ann Delaney. She is alive and awake, but severely dehydrated and malnourished, and apparently in shock. She drinks and eats what she is given, but only responds to questioning if an investigator makes a Psychology or Psychoanalysis roll.

Ann Delaney, surviving hiker, 21

STR 11 CON 11 SIZ 11 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 14 EDU 14 SAN 37 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: *All at base percentages.*

Skills: *Accounting 55%, Bargain 40%, Computer Use 35%, Dodge 35%, Drive Auto 40%, History 40%, Library/Internet Use 55%, Psychology 35%, Swim 45%.*

Languages: *English 55%.*

Ann's Story

Ann can tell them they were hiking, with Nick leading the way, and they kept finding these mazes in the desert, and they kept walking them, and before they knew it they were lost. The GPS wasn't working, their watches had stopped, and the compass needle stopped moving altogether. They wandered back the way they thought they had come, but found no road, no Jeep, nothing.

That night they had to sleep in the desert, even though they didn't have camping gear.

Sometime during the night Jessi Mohrman disappeared, and though they looked for her for several hours she was nowhere to be found. Now they were scared, for they were out of water, and hopelessly lost. Jeremy wanted to keep looking for Jessi, but if they did, they might not find the way home themselves.

Finally, Chad found another maze, walked it, and vanished into thin air. They never saw him again. But while Chad was walking the maze, Ann saw what looked like a hazy city in the distance, and she and Nick and Jeremy set out for it as fast as they could go. When they got closer they saw it was abandoned, and even larger than it looked from afar.

In the city, Jeremy thought he heard Chad's voice, and ran after it, losing Nick and Ann in the process. Though they called after him, they couldn't find him, and eventually they came upon a place where there were all these scary statues. And while they were examining them, an Indian woman came out of one of the buildings, smiling at Ann. She didn't say anything, but Ann knew the woman didn't want to hurt her. Nick got between them and tried to protect Ann, but then the Indian woman stopped smiling, and Nick screamed. The next thing she knew, Jeremy appeared out of nowhere and grabbed her and they were running from the area with the statues.

They kept seeing other shadowy figures flitting between the houses after them, and finally Jeremy pulled out his pocket knife and told Ann to run and keep running until she got out of this place. She wanted to stay, but he kept screaming at her to run, run, run. So she ran. And she thought she might have heard him scream, but she's not sure. Then she saw the street sign, and something told her she might be safe here. So she came here. And she's been here ever since.

Another Psychology roll tells an investigator that there's something more to the story. If they ask Ann about the crib she begins crying. "I was going to have a baby," she mutters. "I didn't mean to get pregnant, and Daddy was so pissed at first. He made me drop out of school, and he wanted to make me have it, and he was going to have me work at the dealership. He was *so* pissed. I'd let him down, him and Mom. My sisters had done so well, and I'd fucked up so bad. So I thought...I thought...if I could just make it go away...I didn't know! I just didn't know!" She begins sobbing uncontrollably. A Psychology roll may calm her down.

If the investigators ask Ann to leave with them, she wants to know where they're going, how they're going to get out of the city. She's unsure. "It just seems safe right here." Hopefully the investigators insist on her accompanying them. Who knows if they'll be able to find their way back here in the dim, desolate, ever-changing city.

In the Garden of Sand and Bone: Mater Suspiriorum

The investigators have found one of the remaining students, perhaps the only survivor. Now the question is: how do they escape the twilit city? They may think of finding a tall building and looking out across the city, easily accomplished. If they reach a high enough vantage point, they can see out over the abandoned city. Below them, it shifts and contorts beneath the mirage-like haze, a mind bending sight that calls for a loss of 1/1D3 Sanity points. Still, if their eyes and the endlessly-changing city's outer reaches can be trusted, there does seem to be a flat plain extending away from one side of the city.

If they don't think of such a possibility, one of Mater Suspiriorum's chosen targets may "have a strange feeling" that a certain direction is the way to go. If they go in the opposite direction, they become lost, otherwise they finally reach the dilapidated outer reaches of the city. The same is true if they followed the route suggested by the bird's-eye view.

At the edge of town the buildings once again dwindle down to mere huts, shacks, and ragged tents, and the wind again sighs across the desert and through the weeds. Finally the investigators leave the last of the rundown dwellings behind, and enter the still-twilit wasteland. Behind them the city wavers in the haze.

Graves

Stumbling on in the gloom, perhaps exhausted by their seemingly endless trek, a random investigator trips over a stone in the dusty earth. No, not a stone, but a half buried human jawbone. And attached to it the rest of the skull, and along with it, bony hands sticking out of the earth like a drowning swimmer. Before this can sink in, the investigators see another a few yards off. And another, and another—dozens, hundreds. As far as they can see in the gloom, skeletal human remains lie partially buried in the dusty red earth. Sanity loss is 1/1D4 for this grim, grim vista.

Examining one of the graves closely, a small, flat, square stone the size of a notebook page is found, with some form of writing on it. A successful History roll, or skill in the proper language, identifies it as Sumerian cuneiform, a written language used over 4000 years ago. An Idea roll guesses the inscription to be a name.

The other graves have them too, written in English, Chinese, Latin, and dozens of others, including several that no investigator can identify. The inscriptions are indeed names. Thousands of them, as far as the eye can see.



As they cross the garden of graves, each investigator—and Ann Delaney, assuming she is with them—should try to roll their POW x1 or less on D100. If successful, then at some point during their travel through the vast graveyard—before or after they meet Mater Suspiriorum—they spot the grave of either Chad Mancina or Jeremy Brenton. If two characters roll their POW or less, they each find one of the graves. Ann automatically loses 1D4 Sanity per grave found, if she sees them. The investigators lose 0/1D3 Sanity per grave.

The Woman with the Inescapable Eyes

After at least an hour of trudging across the dusty red desert with its hundreds of thousands of silently screaming dead, the investigators see a dark figure ahead. As they move forward, at the edges of their vision, several small mirages waver in the twilight desert. Several of the small bat-faced humanoid figures materialize a few hundred yards away from the investigators, surrounding them. They do not move closer, merely shadow the investigators' progress. There are about a dozen of them, but the distance and the poor light makes it difficult to judge exact numbers.

Soon the investigators are close enough to see that the figure ahead is kneeling on the ground, with its back to them. They may be extremely wary, bearing in mind Jeremy Brenton's wounds and the gallery of statues found in the city. As they approach, the figure rises to its feet, walks a few yards further away from them, and again kneels. They now realize the figure is kneeling beside one of the countless graves. Any investigator who saw the childrens' drawings in Tenebrarum now, with a successful Idea roll, recalls the drawing there of the woman kneeling within dozens of crosses. Recognizing this eerie coincidence calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity point. They may also recognize this scene from the cave paintings.

If the investigators decide to avoid the strange figure, Ann argues with them: she wants to see her, for Ann believes this the Indian woman she saw in the gallery of statues. As they argue about this, the figure seems to hear them, rises to its feet, and approaches them. It is indeed the woman Ann saw with the statues; an Idea roll may recognize her as well, as this is the face of the woman in one of Enrique Echevarría's paintings—his mother! If they haven't already guessed the woman's identity, the realization calls for a loss of 0/1D4 Sanity points. If the meeting begins in this manner, see the section below on A Mother's Embrace. Alternatively, if the investigators recognize Mrs. Echevarría at a distance and discuss this revelation among themselves, this may be an opportunity to have Enrique Echevarría approach from across the wasteland, as described below.

Assuming the investigators proceed toward the seemingly unsuspecting figure, they can creep to within a few yards of her without disturbing her. Again, she rises to her feet and moves to kneel at the next grave. Though she hasn't faced them, the observers can see she is an American Indian woman, apparently in her thirties, though her age is difficult to guess. She is dressed in a long, dark brown, dust-stained dress, simple moccasins, and a

black scarf tied about her long black hair.

The investigators can walk right up next to the woman without disturbing her, perhaps leading one or more of them to think about executing her. They can easily get within point blank range and shoot her from behind. If anyone attempts this, Ann bolts forward and tries to stop them, unless restrained. If Ann is allowed to scream, Mater Suspiriorum, without rising, turns to face her would-be killer.

Any investigator not targeted by her is free to do as he pleases. A chosen investigator who tries this loses 1D10 Sanity as he gazes into her eyes and is wracked with guilt and shame. He has one chance to shoot her now, or he will *never* be able to hurt her—the choice is his. If they do try to kill the woman unawares, see the section below, If Blood is Shed in the Garden.

Enrique Echevarría

Before anyone gets a chance to pull the trigger, a voice calls out from behind them. "Wait! You mustn't! Please!" It is Enrique Echevarría, trotting across the red wasteland. He is unarmed, and out of breath by the time he reaches them. The ensuing conversation may go something like this:

How did he get here? He's always known the way. What's he doing here? He wanted to make sure they got here safely, and that they didn't hurt her. But she killed all these people! No, they came to her for relief. So she killed them? And what about those poor bastards turned to stone in the city? And all those ghosts there? They came to her because they had lost their place in the world, and sought release. Some, once they arrived, resisted her. But they are all *here*, and he motions to the millions of graves around them. She loves them all, and they are safe and welcome here with her. She's your mother, isn't she? She's the mother of us all, and he again motions toward the investigators—and toward the bat-faced things that have now crept to within fifty yards of the party. How do we get out of here? Some of you have come here, and have a choice to make. What choice? Whether or not you'll join *her*. Screw that, I'm shootin' her. No! I told you before, you mustn't shed blood here! (An investigator making an Idea roll here doesn't recall Echevarría making this warning—but the skull-headed man did.) Why not? Because if you spill blood in this place, you'll disturb the dead—*all* these dead—and there will be...consequences. Besides, you can't kill her. Mater Suspiriorum will always be here. Okay, then how do we get out? He points to Ann Delaney and any chosen investigators: You must make your choice, then you will all be free to find your way home. Bullshit! How did *you* get out of here all those years ago? How did I—? Ah, I see. I need to show you something. Follow me.

If they follow Echevarría, he walks through the silently screaming dead, leaving the Indian woman to return to tending her garden. After a few minutes' walk, he stops. "I told you she was my mother, and that I've always known the way back to this place. But I still don't think you understand me yet." He points to the grave at his feet. There are two skeletons entwined within it, one female, the other much smaller—a child. The dusty marker beside it reads "Belinda Echevarría & Enrique Echevarría." As the investigators' startled gaze returns to their guide, they see his form

waver. He is Enrique Echevarría, he is Joseph Two Knives, he is the old Indian man at the bonfire outside Kingman, he is the man with the cow skull head, he is one of the bat-faced servitors.

The revelations of what happened to the Echevarías, what came back in Enrique's place, what has been leading the unwitting to their deaths for several decades, and what has been leading the investigators on in a variety of guises calls for a Sanity roll. If successful, the loss is 1 point. If the roll fails the loss is 2D4 points.

Asked what he is, Echevarría replies, "I am her son, just as *they* are," he points toward the sand dwellers still lurking in the gloom. "Just as you, in your way, are." Echevarría doesn't interfere with the investigators for the remainder of the scenario, but defends himself or Mater Suspiriorum if attacked. If he is attacked, the other 4+1D4 sand dwellers rush to his aid, but they flee after losing half their number, or when The Fury appears.

In the latter case, as he lays dying, Echevarría grimly tells them, "I warned you not to shed blood here. Now Tisiphone comes..." A Folklore, Occult, History, or Anthropology roll identifies Tisiphone as one of the dreaded Furies of Greek mythology, a creature bound to avenge blood crimes with whip and talon. See *If Blood is Shed in the Garden*.

A Mother's Embrace

Once the investigators have reached the point where they have alerted Mater Suspiriorum to their presence, she rises to face them—in particular Ann Delaney and any investigators she has targeted. Echevarría speaks for her unless he hasn't yet arrived, in which case Ann Delaney speaks for the Indian woman. "She...she's been waiting for us. It can all be over now. All the worry, all the regret, the guilt. The pain. She can take us back. She knows what's brought us here, and she doesn't care. All we have to do is accept her, embrace her. Embrace her, and she'll take away all our suffering. And we'll never be alone again. We can, finally, be home."

Ann and any chosen investigators must now make a Sanity roll. If the roll succeeds, the character is able to make his own decision about his fate. If the roll fails, however, he or she feels the weight of guilt, or shame, or loneliness, or whatever it was that brought them to the garden of the Mother of Sighs.

Those failing the roll decide to accept Mater Suspiriorum's gift of love and absolution. In turn, each of these tearful penitents steps forward into the open arms of the Indian woman, laying their head upon her shoulder as she embraces him or her. And even as she kisses the victim's forehead, he or she begins to lose



1D10 from *all* characteristics each round. In her arms her children quickly dwindle to skeletal remains, which she then gently lowers into the waiting earth. The bodies sink until only traces remain. She then uses a fingertip to carve out a stone in the ground and inscribe it with the name of the dead. Finally, she kneels and kisses the forehead of the skull.

Anyone witnessing this scene loses 1D2 Sanity points with a successful roll, and 2D4 if the roll fails. If the embrace is interrupted, all statistic loss is permanent, as the victim's mind and body have shrunk and calcified.

If the other investigators wish to intervene before Ann or their friend can accept Mater Suspiorum's embrace, they can try to talk them out of their sacrifice—or try to knock them out or otherwise incapacitate them. To try and talk them out of it, the other investigators must make a successful Psychoanalysis or halved Fast Talk roll. For each solid point made against surrendering to the Mother of Sighs, the arguing investigator may add his or her POW x1 to the chance of success. Solid points include the “collateral” deaths of the other innocent hikers, Jeremy's sacrifice of his own life to save Ann and the waste it would be for her to give up now, the victims' loving and waiting family, the fact that they have productive lives awaiting them out there, that their past failures shouldn't call for their early deaths, and so forth. If these pleas fail to convince the penitents, they sacrifice themselves as above.

If the investigators try to physically prevent a victim from seeking the Indian woman's embrace, Mater Suspiorum attacks the interlopers, as outlined in the following section.

Mater Suspiorum, as Belinda Echevarría, 32

STR 18 CON 30 SIZ 11 INT 25 POW 40
DEX 13 APP 11 EDU NA SAN NA HP 21

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist* 65% 1D3+db, *Throw Victim* 65% 1D6+db, *All others at base percentages.*

Skills: *Cthulhu Mythos* 100%, *Dodge* 65%, *Listen* 80%, *Occult* 80%, *Psychology* 100%, *Spot Hidden* 90%.

Languages: *All Languages* 90%.

Spells: *Mater Suspiorum's Embrace* (see scenario text), *Summon/Bind Byakhee*, *Summon/Bind Fire Vampire*, *Contact Sand Dweller*, *Contact Nyarlathotep*, *Resurrection*, *Shrivelling*, *Voorish Sign*, *Black Binding*, *Cloud Memory*, *Clutch of Nyogtha*, *Create Window*, *Dampen Light*, *Death Spell*, *Enthrall Victim*, *Fist of Yog—Sothoth*, *Grasp of Cthulhu*, *Implant Fear*, *Mesmerize*, *Mindblast*, *Nightmare*, *Power Drain*, *Red Sign of Shudde M'ell*, *Send Dreams*, *Soul Singing*, *Wither Limb*, *Wrack*.

If Blood is Shed in the Garden

If at any point the investigators physically intervene against the Mother of Sighs—possibly restraining one of her chosen from accepting her embrace—the Indian woman lashes out against them. She is not much of a physical threat, but she has vast amounts of magic at her disposal. When first attacked, her initial

response is to cast a spell such as *Fist of Yog—Sothoth* (5 magic Points' worth, so 5D6 STR) to knock out a powerful opponent, followed in the next round by an attempt to *Mesmerize* an opponent into attacking his friends. Later attacks may include spells such as *Shrivelling* (worth 15 points) and *Wither Limb*. Note that Mater Suspiorum has access to an unlimited number of Magic Points here in the garden, thanks to the billions of souls interred here. Use her POW of 40 in POW vs. POW struggles.

As soon as any investigator or creature is injured and blood falls to the earth in the garden of sand and bone, there is a terrible rasping sound as the billions of dead in this vast cemetery begin to choke out a vast chorus of death rattles from vocal chords long atrophied. Anyone hearing this terrible ragged gasp loses 1/1D6 Sanity points, and anyone failing a Luck roll is too awestruck to act for that round. The gasps turn to sighing moans that continue until either all the combatants are dead, or The Fury has risen.

Once blood has been spilled, Mater Suspiorum lashes out at the attacker or attackers, whether human or otherwise. If they are the targets of her wrath, the sand dwellers try to flee from her. If the Mother of Sighs is herself attacked, the sand dwellers shamble forward to protect her, tearing with tooth and nail and fighting until either they or Mater Suspiorum are dead. If the investigators shed no blood, they can avoid her wrath, but as soon as they attack her she turns relentlessly against them.

Despite her great magical power, the Mother of Sighs is not invincible, and it's very likely the investigators can kill her, especially if they shoot her in the back. If she is killed, she collapses to the earth. Any remaining sand dwellers, including Enrique Echevarría, stop advancing or attacking, and start to edge away. Echevarría too starts to run, calling “I warned you not to shed blood here! Now Tisiphone comes!” A Folklore, Occult, or Anthropology roll identifies Tisiphone as one of the dreaded Furies of Greek mythology, a creature bound to avenge blood crimes with whip and talon.

If the investigators are wise, they too flee, though the nearest cover is in the now distant city. There is no place to run, though if someone is carrying Paul Springfield's kachina doll, a successful Idea roll at least suggests the proper route to exit the twilight desert.

As they run, the investigators hear a ragged screeching cry like some enormous bird of prey. Looking back, they see the corpse of Mater Suspiorum quivering and contorting. A taloned arm emerges from the shredded brown dress, followed by a terrible blood-caked face. The ghastly, vaguely female thing crawls to its feet, naked and blood-soaked, again screeching. It sniffs the air for its prey and, spying the investigators, shoves one taloned fist into its midriff and begins yanking out a length of intestine. Finally, it bites off a length of some twenty-five feet of its own gut and snaps it like a whip. This entity and its horrific birth costs 1/2D4 Sanity points to behold.

The Fury Tisiphone, yet another avatar of Mater Suspiorum, leaps into the air in pursuit of her murderers. She is immune to all non-magical attacks, so it's unlikely the investigators can defeat her. The best they can hope for is to either split up so that perhaps some of their number can escape, or that they can stay

together and rely on Old Tom's talisman to protect them somehow. If the Keeper is feeling merciful, The Fury may be satisfied with killing only the actual slayer of the Mother of Sighs or anyone who successfully attacked her, rather than slaughtering the whole party.

Tisiphone, blood avenger

STR 26 CON 50 SIZ 12 INT 12 POW 40
DEX 15 APP 2 EDU NA SAN NA HP 31

Move: 8/10 flying

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Whip (range 20 feet) 75% 1D6+1, Claws (x2) 75% 1D6+db. She can attack once per round with her whip, or with two claws.

Skills: Detect Blood—Criminal 80%, Screech Horrifyingly 95%.

Armor: None, but she is only affected by spells and magical weapons.

Spells: None.

Sanity Loss: The Fury has no wings but can fly, gliding and hovering in the air at will. It costs 1/2D4 Sanity points to see the Fury.

Escape

The climax of this scenario sets up a rather difficult situation, where an apparently defenseless woman is the villain and an easy target. All she wants is peace for those who have sought her out—even if she has lured them in and slain countless others in the bargain. Still, the investigators have plenty of warning there may be consequences to the obvious answer of just blowing Mater Suspiriorum's brains out. So what do they do? Just leave her to keep drawing in outcasts and loners and guilt-ridden souls? It's an awfully tough choice.

And once they've dealt with Mater Suspiriorum and her servants, through whatever means, they must still discover a way out of the endless desert cemetery, perhaps while being pursued by The Fury. With the kachina doll, within a day's hike they find their way beyond the cemetery and into a hazy desert. Without the doll this takes 1D3 days, by which time they may be suffering from dehydration.

Once they reach the desert they regain 1D6 Sanity points, as the endless twilight they've lived with for several days now gives way to a blazing afternoon sun. If they still have them, a Luck roll allows a GPS device to tell them they are within the Hualapai Indian Reservation, not far from the southern rim of the Grand Canyon, but still some distance from any habitation. The kachina won't tell them where they are, but indicates the direction they need to go.

Either way, a few hours' hike brings them to a gravel road, still a long way from any towns. If they still have the kachina, its use directs them off the main road, up what looks like a path into the mountains. Following it, inside of an hour they come upon a cabin where a middle-aged Indian couple—Carl and Tora Rey—offers them food, water, and shelter. The next day, Carl rides his horse down to Peach Springs, and by that evening the investiga-

tors and Ann Delaney, if she survived, are returned to civilization on the reservation. The following day they're taken to Kingman where anxious parents, relieved search parties, and an army of media are waiting.

As Ann Delaney's parents lead her away, the investigators overhear her mother say, "Come on, hon'. Let's go home."

Grains of Sand

The endgame of this adventure hinges on whether or not the investigators save Ann Delaney and any of their own number who may have been targeted by the Mother of Sighs.

If they did not witness Ann's acceptance of Mater Suspiriorum's embrace, or were unable to find her, each of them loses 1D4 Sanity points. Failure to save a fellow investigator from this fate also costs 1D4 Sanity. On the other hand, if Ann was saved from Mater Suspiriorum each gains 1D6 Sanity. A like amount is gained if a fellow investigator was also saved from her clutches. In addition, anyone who escapes the Sighing Desert both alive and sane gains another 1D6 Sanity points.

If the investigators can think of some way to convince the families of the other missing hikers that their children are dead—without the possibility of their bodies ever being found—each gains an additional point of Sanity per family. Thoughtful investigators may also try to concoct a story to deter future hikers from delving too deep into the Sighing Desert. If this is accomplished, the Keeper may award up to an additional 1D6 Sanity points, depending on the viability of the story.

Other Sanity rewards may accrue for the destruction of certain characters and creatures herein. Award 1D6 points of Sanity to the investigators if they killed three or more of Mater Suspiriorum's desert-dwelling servants. If they killed Joseph Two Knives, they get 1D4 points of Sanity each, unless they realize Two Knives and Enrique Echevarría were the same creature, in which case they gain nothing. If Echevarría was killed, each gains 1D6 Sanity, or 1D8 if they understood that Echevarría had multiple identities, all of whom were engaged in steering victims toward the Mother of Sighs. If the investigators killed Mater Suspiriorum, each survivor receives 1D10 Sanity points. Unfortunately, this means they also summoned The Fury Tisiphone, but if they somehow managed to destroy her as well, they gain 2D4 points of Sanity.

On their return the investigators find themselves ensnared in a media frenzy. Regardless of their success or failure in finding and rescuing any of the hikers, their mere involvement in a national news event like this results in an increase of 1D4 points to their Credit Rating scores. If one of the investigators died or disappeared in their desert quest—particularly during their last foray—this development nets the survivors a bonus of 1D3 Credit Rating points, due to their overcoming these tragic circumstances.

If Ann Delaney was rescued and survived, the investigators get another 2D3 Credit Rating points, as Jack Delaney and his family go out of their way to thank them for their brave service. The Delaneys also gratefully pay the investigators the promised \$50,000 reward, and also pay for any medical or funeral expenses they may have incurred. Hell, Jack may even give them a comp car

to drive the next time they're working in the neighborhood of one of his Appalachian state dealerships.

On the other hand, if Ann doesn't come back from the desert, the Delaneys are among the few to speak less forgivingly of the investigators' inability to find the lost hikers, resulting in a loss of 1D3 Credit Rating points.

The Mohrmans are quietly grateful for the discovery of their daughter's remains. If the family knew the investigators were involved in finding the body, Wendi Mohrman sends them a check for \$10,000.

There may be other monetary or Credit Rating rewards or penalties stemming from the families' dealings with the investigators, but these are left to the individual Keeper to determine. The investigators may also be liable for any lost gear rented from local outfitters: ATVs, offroad motorbikes, camping equipment, etc.

Surviving investigators automatically receive bonus checks against skills such as Survival and Navigate, and Drive ATV, Drive Motorcycle, and any other appropriate skills, if applicable. This means that players should roll for normal increases in those skills if used successfully, and then again for a possible increase of another 1D6 skill points.

The law enforcement communities in Kingman and the Hualapai Reservation are both grateful for the investigators' service trying to find the missing students, especially if any of the kids were found, alive or dead. If the investigators found Jessi Mohrman's remains and reported it to the authorities, they may

add 1D3 points to their Law skill, from the connections developed at the grateful Mohave County Sheriff's Department and the Hualapai Nation Tribal Police Department. A like amount is gained if Ann Delaney is rescued, for similar reasons.

As they recover, either in Kingman or in Las Vegas, the investigators hear a few interesting bits of news. Joseph Two Knives has vanished, from a jail cell if the investigators turned him in. Neither the local authorities nor his network of delivery personnel have seen him for several days. And from Las Vegas comes word of the mysterious disappearance of acclaimed desert artist Enrique Echevarría. The elderly artist apparently vanished from his home the day before the investigators were rescued. No foul play is suspected. He is never seen again.

Coda

But, as the investigators fly home from Vegas, one of their number, preferably one chosen by Mater Suspiriorum, dozes and dreams. In his dream, he or she is again standing in the vast twilit desert cemetery. And there, a few yards ahead of him, a figure kneels at the base of a grave. She turns. It is the investigator's mother. Her eyes are sad and accusing and—

—the investigator awakens with a start, losing 0/1D3 Sanity. If mom is alive, a phone call finds that everything is all right with her. Otherwise...?

DRAMATIS PERSONAE - A KEEPER'S TOOL

THE ECHEVARRIAS

Juan Carlos Maria Echevarría, husband, died 1944
Belinda Echevarría, Hualapai Indian woman, wife and mother, died 1944, avatar of Mater Suspiriorum
Enrique Echevarría, desert survivor as a child, desert author and painter, age 71, servant of Mater Suspiriorum

THE MISSING HIKERS

Nick Karras, age 22
Ann Delaney, age 21
Chad Mancina, age 21
Jeremy Brenton, age 21—parents hire investigators, found as scenario begins
Jessi Mohrman, age 19

THE HIKERS' PARENTS

John and Marilyn Brenton, Fort Wayne, Indiana (construction contractor, hairstylist)
Jack and Sharon Delaney, Louisville, Kentucky (car dealership magnate)
Danny Delaney (Ann's uncle), Louisville, Kentucky (car dealer)
Paul and Victoria Karras, Kingman, Arizona (plumbing contractor, postal worker)
Tom Mancina and Kim Polling, Ann Arbor, Michigan (auto

mechanic, secretary)

David and Wendi Mohrman, Willimantic, Connecticut (realtors)

MOHAVE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Sheriff Tom Gus, age 37
Deputies Walt Bayer, Finn Lawrence, Elliot Miro, Chris Morrison

HUALAPAI INDIAN RESERVATION PERSONALITIES

Chief Dave Youngblood, Hualapai Nation Tribal Police, age 32
Old Tom, ancient talespinner, age 83?
Anna Rainbird, white widowed schoolteacher, age 63
Carl and Tora Rey, Hualapai Indian couple, possible rescuers?, ages 52 and 50

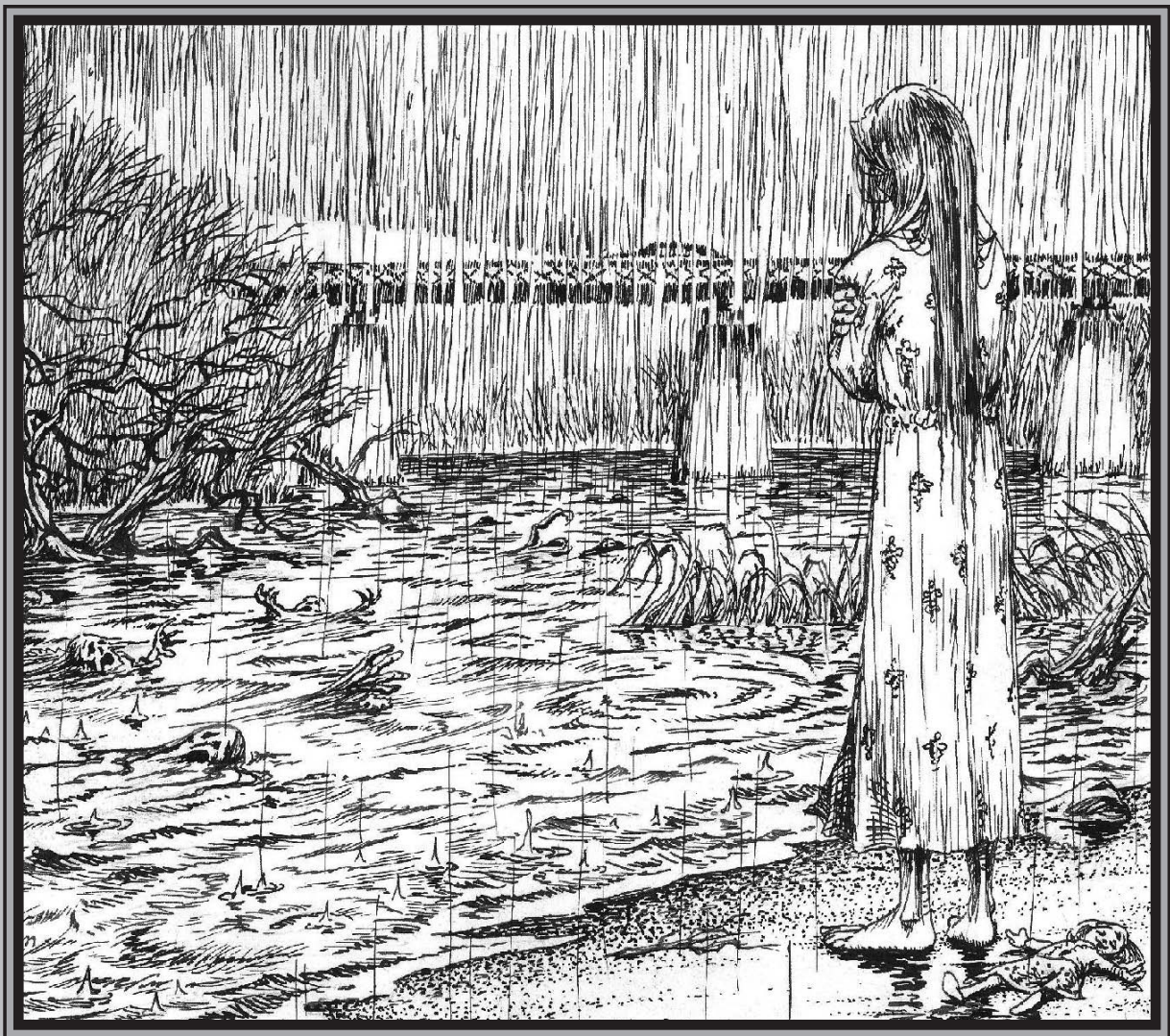
INTERESTED AND/OR INTERESTING PARTIES

Paul Springfield, desert survivor and expedition outfitter, age 61
Jeb and Laura Springfield, Paul's son and daughter-in-law, outfitters, ages 24 and 27
Joseph Two Knives, Yaqui Indian "sorcerer", drug dealer, guide?, servant of Mater Suspiriorum, age 41
Rod Wengner, construction worker, hospital witness, age 24

Book Three:

RIVER OF TEARS

Lachrymarum



"And wherever the Mexican people went, they took her legend with them, the legend of La Llorona, the Crying Woman. And where the legend went, she followed. Even now, today, she is here. We hear her crying at night down by the river. Many have seen her walking these streets. And always she cries, and our people suffer. But now the Anglos suffer too. Maybe when the rain stops and the river subsides she'll go away. But she'll only go away when she's ready, when she thinks we've learned our lesson. Until then, we can do nothing but pray. Pray and avoid the river at night."

The third of The Sorrows scenarios presents the investigators with a unique honor: a ghost has asked for them by name. Paranormal writer Richard Ahern, who they may have met in Book One, calls the investigators from a flood-drenched Illinois town where—for the first time in his career—he has met his supernatural quarry face to face. While investigating recent reports of the Mexican ghost La Llorona among the Hispanic community in Baleford, Illinois, Ahern was confronted by the Weeping Woman herself. And the grim female spectre told him to tell one of the investigators she wanted to see him.

The town of Baleford is one of many midwestern cities and towns along the Mississippi River currently threatened with flooding from record rainfalls. And although sightings of her predate the current flood by a decade, the ghostly figure of La Llorona has been seen more frequently the past few weeks. And as the waters have risen other, stranger, and far more terrible discoveries have been made.

Note that this scenario is ostensibly set in the fictional town of Baleford, Illinois, necessitating a change of the actual Illinois county of Carroll into fictional Vista County. These changes are not etched in stone, nor is the setting. The Keeper can restore the actual county as desired, perhaps moving the action to the nearby city of Galena, Illinois, on which Baleford is partially based. Or the Keeper is free to move the adventure to some other area of the country where flooding is common, either in the midwest, northeast, or elsewhere along the Mississippi River. The scenario can probably be run in another locale with little or no alteration.

Keeper Information

There is more than one entity haunting Baleford, but all of them are facets of the same creature. One such facet is La Llorona, a ghostly figure from Mexican folklore, who either murdered her own children or allowed them to perish as a result of her neglect. This wailing female spectre seems to appear wherever there is a sizable Hispanic community, including the one that sprang up with the appearance of Baleford's meat packing plant twenty-five years ago. In keeping with her murderous reputation, the Weeping Woman has been responsible for a handful of mysterious deaths near Baleford over the years, including two in the past few months.

But La Llorona is merely the most visible of Baleford's hauntings, a mere facet of something greater—Mater Lachrymarum, the Mother of Tears. Though something of her has always dwelt in Baleford, Mater Lachrymarum's current form is that of a dead actress from the 1940s, Frances Liston. Liston was born in Baleford in 1919, but sought fame and fortune in Hollywood in the late 30s and early 40s. Her good looks, clipped voice, and large dark eyes brought her acclaim in several femme fatale roles. Liston briefly fell in love and married a bit player, with whom she had two children. Her new family life stalled her career, however, and the unhappy but still ambitious "dark lady" divorced her husband and tried, vainly, to make a comeback. This failure cost Liston her sanity and her children, as alcohol and drugs exacerbated her

mental instability forcing her husband to take the children and leave Hollywood. Liston quickly found herself alone and forgotten. She died in the 1960s, in a dingy hotel room, bitter, bloated, and deranged.

Frances Liston's fate was directed by the Mother of Tears, and in the end Liston became another of her many forms. Though Mater Lachrymarum has used others to carry out her darkest deeds, Liston's "dark lady" form is the one she has used to haunt Baleford. Like La Llorona, Mater Lachrymarum resents the happiness others derive from seeing their children laugh and play and grow. So every few years, the Mother of Tears occasionally takes one of those children, using either Liston's form or some other poor possessed or supernaturally coaxed proxy. Many of these young victims are never seen again, but the bodies of a few have been discovered, and sometimes the possessed perpetrators of these crimes have been caught.

And with each life destroyed, the Mother of Tears laughs.

Barry Phillips

A few years ago, a young dentist with a penchant for film history moved to Baleford. There, with the unseen prompting of Mater Lachrymarum, Barry Philips learned that Baleford was the birthplace of former movie star Frances Liston. Philips found the house where the actress was born, bought it, and turned it into a museum devoted to Liston and her films, filling it with photos, posters, costumes, and other memorabilia—unknowingly falling under the spell of Frances Liston and the Mother of Tears.

Philips is now another of the dark figures haunting the streets of Baleford. Like others before him, Philips has been preying upon the children of Baleford. Possessed by Lachrymarum, he kills the children and then buries the bodies. Philips has sometimes awakened from a fugue state to find himself wearing one of Liston's dresses, shoes, a wig, and makeup. He believes he is possessed by Frances Liston, and justifies the murders as being hers, not his. Even so, he worships the dead star, and cannot deny her terrible hunger. So far Philips has claimed two young victims.

Now the waters of the nearby Vista River have swollen from the constant rainfall of the past few weeks. As the floodwaters wash away the topsoil, old graves are opened, and the victims of decades old crimes reappear as if to insist their killers be found. La Llorona stalks the flood drenched streets of the city, looking for victims to lure to watery deaths. Barry Philips also stalks the town, looking for smaller, sweeter prey for his dead mistress. As the townsfolk desperately watch the rising waters, they also fear the mysterious killer or killers in their midst. And with the rising fear, old hatreds boil to the surface, as racial animus threatens to explode.

And, behind it all, the Mother of Tears smiles. For she has discovered those responsible for the deaths of her sisters, Maters Tenebrarum and Suspriorum, and soon they will be forced to pay.

Investigator Information

The scenario begins when one of the investigators acquainted with paranormal author Richard Ahern receives a phone call from

the man. Ahern sounds agitated. “That’s either the best or the worst practical joke I’ve ever heard of!” he accuses the investigator. If asked what happened, he says the investigator knows damn well what happened, and that he better not see footage of it show up on YouTube. A halved Psychology roll notes Ahern is both angry and scared, and himself uncertain of the truth. Calming down, Ahern explains:

“I’m in Balford, Illinois. There’ve been a lot of sightings of La Llorona here lately. You know—the Mexican Weeping Woman ghost? I came here to check it out, but until tonight I hadn’t seen anything but flood waters—we’re not too far off the Mississippi and it’s getting bad here. Anyway, tonight it’s raining everything but frogs and stones, and it’s late, and I’m trying to get in my car, and I turn around and there she is, standing right behind me.

him I want to see him.’ And then she just turns and walks away. I yelled at her that she could tell you herself, and that I wanted to see you too. But she just walked out of sight in the rain.”

The investigator, of course, knows nothing of this incident, and once they are able to convince Ahern they had nothing to do with it, the author sounds frightened. Asked to describe the figure, Ahern says she was tall and thin, and what he could see of her face was pale and sneering, with black eyes—just *black*. His sense of panic rises, and if asked what else she said, the line goes quiet for a moment. “My kids . . . Oh shit, she asked about my kids—” The line goes dead.

Attempts to call Ahern’s cell for the next several minutes reach his voice mail. Finally, about twenty minutes later, he answers. “She asked about my kids, man. La Llorona. She *kills*



Looked like something out of a goddamn Japanese horror movie. All wet, hair covering her face. Whoever you had filming it got a good shot of me falling on my ass in the rain. And then she says ‘You. Have you seen my children?’ And I’m still on my ass in the wet, scared to the bone. ‘No?’ she says. ‘What about your children—Sam and Lizzie? Who’s watching them? Why aren’t *you* with them?’ And before I can answer I get a look at her face, and it’s not good, and then she says ‘[investigator’s name]. You know him!’ And now I realize it’s a joke. ‘Yeah, I know the bastard! You can tell him he got me good! Where is he? Are you filming this for him?’ And she reaches down and picks me up. Off the fucking ground. And she says ‘Tell [investigator’s name] you saw me. Tell

kids. I had to call home. They’re... they’re okay. But I’m getting out of here, I’m going home. I swear if this was some kinda joke, I’m going to fucking kill you for this. I’ll call you tomorrow—I’ve gotta get to Chicago to catch my flight.”

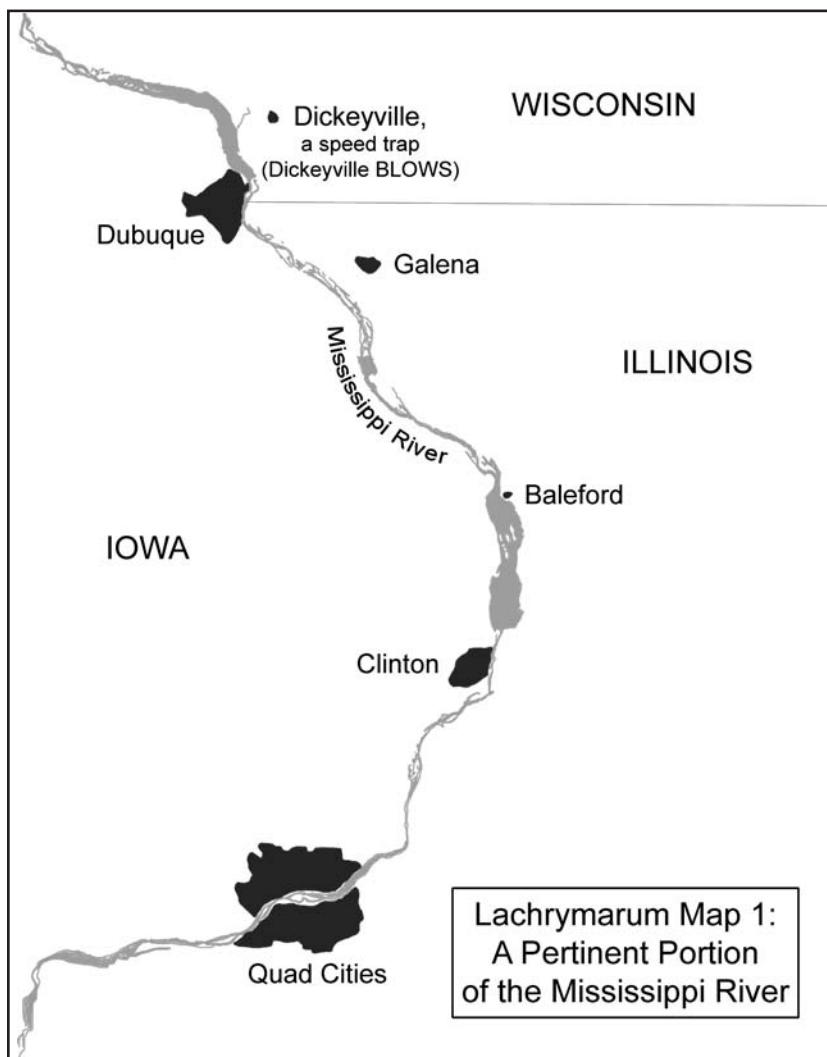
Ahern calls back the next afternoon, unless the investigators are impatient and call him sooner. He’s still uncertain as to whether or not the investigator has fooled him. Unless the named investigator can convince Ahern he had nothing to do with the Balford incident, the agitated writer offers no more information than he has already given. With a successful Fast Talk or Psychology roll, Ahern finally believes the investigator and offers the names of his contacts in Balford, and the names and dates of

most of the murders and disappearances that have plagued the town for the past century. See the Timeline of Past Events for the information Ahern has unearthed. In addition, Ahern names local newspaper reporter Lauraine Sibbett and packing plant worker Esteban Rodriguez as the most useful contacts in Balford. He warns that Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny is something of a racist, but that one of his deputies, Scott Margulies, is a little more neutral. Ahern also urges them to be careful, as the town is under a constant floodwatch these days. And as much as it rains, take raincoats and boots, *not* umbrellas as they're pretty useless in the windy deluge.

If they're interested, the investigators can start making preparations to travel to Balford even before Ahern calls back. After all, how often does one get an invitation from an actual ghost? Of course, having dealt with the Mothers of Darkness and Sighs, they probably won't be surprised to learn that La Llorona is the Weeping Woman. Could this be the Mother of Tears?

Travel Plans

Travelling to Balford entails flying into Chicago and renting a car to drive across Illinois to the tiny town of Balford, near the state's border with Iowa. Alternately, they can fly into Dubuque, Iowa, from Chicago, and rent a car there for a much shorter drive; this would be considerably more expensive, however.



Research

The investigators can also start researching both La Llorona and Balford, if desired. With a successful Library/Internet Use roll or two, they can easily glean the information on La Llorona contained in The Three Sisters appendix. An especially good roll may also find information on the similar legend of the Faceless Woman, also found in that appendix. Doing a combined search for La Llorona *and* Balford, a Library/Internet Use roll brings up a quote, from *Mississippi River Ghosts*, a 1999 book of true ghost stories by prolific midwestern ghost hunter Stan Sailor. See the Lachrymarum Papers #1.

A few Library/Internet Use rolls discover Balford is a small town on the Vista River, not far from the Mississippi. The population of 4600 souls is primarily white (70%), with a sizable Hispanic community (20%), and the remainder primarily African-American. The town economy is driven by tourism. Shops, antique stores, a large golf course and resort, and an annual week-long blues festival in the fall, help attract visitors. The town also benefits from a large meat packing plant that opened in the 1980s. This industry helped attract the sizeable Hispanic population.

If the investigators continue to dig, more Library/Internet rolls turn up the reports of La Llorona sightings and other tragic events that have occurred in the city the past few months. Each of

the articles reproduced nearby may be found with a separate skill roll, most likely on the *Balford Tribune* newspaper's website.

Balford, Illinois

Balford is approximately a four-hour drive from Chicago, probably in a rented car. As the investigators drive across Illinois they see many many signs of the recent heavy rains that have plagued the state. Water stands in fields everywhere, and in some cases the weeds in the ditches are black from muddy waters rising and subsiding. At least one detour briefly takes the investigators off the main highway when a bridge has been partly covered by water.

Nearing the Mississippi River, the country becomes hilly and wooded, and the highway increasingly twisty—and it begins to rain. As they approach the point where Highway 64 meets Highway 84, which leads through Balford, the investigators get brief glimpses of the surging black waters of the Vista River. A few miles down Highway 84, they pass the large fenced-in complex of the Henry Meat Packing Plant. A couple miles further they see a long bridge over the Vista River, and just beyond it the town of Balford.

Balford is a small, sprawling midwestern town, with lots of shade trees and small houses along its rain-choked streets. The main business district is in

Timeline of Past Events

* = listed by Ahern

[] = information not known/available to Ahern or investigators

1919: Frances Liston is born in Baleford, Illinois.

1936: Frances Liston leaves Baleford to seek her fortune as an actress in Hollywood, California. In the next several years she achieves some success as “the dark lady” of early film noir.

1945: Frances Liston marries Andrew Wilder, and in the next two years has a son, Alan, and daughter, Louise, with him. Her film career stalls as she begins her family.

1946: Monty Gibson, 11, disappears in Baleford, [abducted and killed by Bernard Miller; his body is never found -- until 2009 (see below). Mater Lachrymarum psychically guides Miller’s actions.]

*1948: Jennifer Nolan, 9, is strangled to death by Miller, who is quickly caught and eventually executed in Joliet Prison.

1948: Frances Liston launches her big comeback over the next several months. Sadly, it is unsuccessful. By 1951 Liston is abusing alcohol and drugs, and her husband takes the children and leaves Hollywood. Liston continues her slide into oblivion.

*1960: Billy Wilson, 13, is found stabbed to death in Baleford, [murdered by Nathan Kirke, again at the unseen urgings of Mater Lachrymarum.]

1962: Frances Liston dies alone in a dingy hotel room in Hollywood.

*1968: Margaret Findley, a black teen aged 15, is found raped and strangled in Baleford. [Her killer,] Nathan Kirke, is strongly suspected, but soon moves to Louisiana, where in 1970 he is apprehended for a similar crime. He hangs himself in his cell while awaiting trial.

*1970: Jeff Williams and Mike Daniels, both 13, disappear one night; friends say the duo were going to investigate a haunted abandoned house on the edge of Baleford. [Mater Lachrymarum herself killed the hapless boys.] The house is searched, but nothing is found. The house is torn down within the year.

*1976: in September, Baleford holds the first of what would become its annual Blues Week Festivals.

*1976: during the Blues Fest, Maria Michaelson, 34, and her daughters Isabel and Chloe, ages 9 and 11 respectively, disappear from Baleford. Rumors of domestic abuse surround her husband [-- she fled with her children to escape his cruelty.] The case is still marked unsolved.

*1981: Mark Whittaker, 4, disappears in Baleford, [kidnapped and murdered by Ruth Ellis, again at the urging of Mater Lachrymarum. Ruth wraps the child’s body in plastic tape, places it in a suitcase, tapes the suitcase shut, and places the suitcase inside a steamer trunk in her attic.]

*1983: the Henry Meat Packing Plant opens in Baleford.

Within a few months, Hispanic and black workers move into the area to work at the plant.

1988: Jack Varese, 27, drowns in the Vista River while partying one night with friends - [seduced into following La Llorona, who dragged him beneath the water.]

1993: Jennie Davis, 8, disappears during the serious flooding that occurs during the spring. While she is believed to have been swept away by flood waters, she was in fact slain by Mater Lachrymarum.

1997: Luis Garcia, 16, is found drowned in the Vista River, [taken by La Llorona.] Officially, how he got there is unknown.

*1999: Sean Kieth, 10, is found strangled in Baleford, [killed by an alcoholic ex-railroad worker named Mike Stover. Stover is never caught or even suspected, but dies of a heart attack a few months later.]

*2000: David Frye, 16, is found strangled beneath the Vista Bridge, [slain by La Llorona.]

*2003: a few weeks after Ruth Ellis’ death, the suitcase in which she hid the body of Mark Whittaker is bought at an estate auction and its grisly contents discovered.

2004: Barry Philips, DDS, moves to Baleford to begin his practice. Within the year, film fan Philips learns that Baleford was Frances Liston’s birthplace, and he finds and buys the little house in which she was born.

*2005: Diego Paredes, 7, vanishes from his parents’ home in Baleford, [snatched away and slain by Mater Lachrymarum herself.]

2006: Barry Philips opens the Frances Liston Birthplace and Museum in Baleford.

*2007: Albert Pena, 51, is found in a dumpster behind a local roadhouse, dead of an apparent heart attack, [he met La Llorona, who contemptuously disposed of his body.]

*2008: George Rodriguez, 11, disappears in Baleford, [kidnapped and murdered by Barry Philips, at the urging of Frances Liston/Mater Lachrymarum. He buries the body near the river.]

*2008: Alex Roland, 8, vanishes a few months later, [again taken by Philips, and again buried near the river.] (See Handout #2)

*2009 (NOW): Vincente Larriva, 20, disappears one night while partying on the Vista River - [taken by La Llorona.] (See Handout #4)

*2009 (NOW): Oscar Rios, 15, drowns in the Vista River while hiking with friends, [again taken by La Llorona.] (See Handout #5)

NOW: La Llorona sightings, floodwaters threaten Baleford, and the bodies of three children [Monty Gibson (1946), Jennie Davis (1993), and Diego Paredes (2005)] are washed out of their hidden graves.

the north central part of town. Here the investigators find such important locations as the sheriff's and fire department's building, and the office of the *Baleford Tribune* newspaper, as well as a bank, post office, a tiny public library, a drug and department store, a hardware store, an auto repair shop, two convenience stores, a good-sized grocery store, a small diner, a couple of fast food chain restaurants, a pizza parlor, a florist (Andrea's Flowers, owned and operated by Kathy Philips—discussed in detail later in this adventure), a realtor, and several shops selling antiques and gifts. Outside the main business district are such notable sites as the expansive Seven Hawks Resort, a small motel, and the large Hispanic district on the east edge of town. Any of these locations might be noticed as the investigators make a cursory drive around town.

Sometime during the investigators' first pass or two through Baleford, a Spot Hidden roll notes an older woman behaving strangely by the side of the road. She is walking on the curb next to the rain-swollen gutter, staring down into the running water. Her face can't be seen—her head is tilted down, her stringy wet hair obscures her features. She is dressed in pale blue pants and a thin jacket over a lightweight sweater, oblivious to the falling rain.

She walks slowly, eyes on the water.

If investigators try to talk to her, she is wary. Up close she appears to be in her late fifties or early sixties, small, wispy, with a slow, weak voice. A Psychology roll quickly gathers she is a little simple-minded. Asked who she is, she shyly, warily replies "Abby. Abby Gordon. Who are you?" She doesn't know anything about La Llorona, or missing children, or probably anything else the investigators may eagerly want to question her about.

After a few minutes of chat, she says she has to get home to take her medicine, and watch Oprah on the television. She declines a ride, saying it's not far, and she likes the rain. If the investigators follow her, she enters a small apartment complex a couple blocks from downtown.

Abby is the first red herring suspect the investigators meet in this adventure. She reappears throughout the scenario, as detailed below in the "Interested Parties" and "Events" sections.

Abby Gordon

STR 9 CON 11 SIZ 11 INT 9 POW 10
DEX 8 APP 8 EDU 9 SAN 30 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: None. Will not defend self if attacked.

Skills: Meaningless Small Talk 20%, Wander Streets Aimlessly 75%.

The Baleford Tribune

If the investigators convinced Richard Ahern they weren't behind his La Llorona encounter, he suggested they look up Lauraine Sibbett, a reporter at the Baleford newspaper who has written about the sightings of the Weeping Woman.

The newspaper office is off the main street, a small narrow building which houses its own antique presses in the back. The paper is published once a week, on Thursdays, and has three staff writers, one of whom doubles as receptionist. There is also an advertising agent, and a press operator. If a random investigator makes a Luck roll, Lauraine Sibbett is in the office when they visit. Otherwise the receptionist takes a message and Sibbett calls back later to set up a meeting.

Lauraine Sibbett

Sibbett is short, plump, and red-faced, with large-framed glasses, and short dark hair starting to gray. Friendly, smart, and self deprecating, she remarks how wonderful it is to have such prominent visitors as Ahern and the investigators coming to town to hunt for "our little ghost."

Sibbett has heard of the investigators' exploits, most likely their role in the search for the hikers in the Arizona desert; a Psychology roll intimates she is somewhat starstruck by



them. Lauraine Sibbett can get the investigators up to speed on the numerous mysterious events that have plagued Baleford for decades. If Ahern didn't pass along his research about local disappearances and deaths, Sibbett can dig up the same information in 1D2 days, given that she helped him find most of what he had. She can also relate the information given in the news stories in handouts #2–7.

She also knows a lot about the various legends of La Llorona, having talked to many Latinos and read up on the subject. She has no further details on the bodies exposed by the flooding, but she expects a report from the Sheriff very soon. The last sighting of La Llorona was a couple days ago, northeast of town “near the river, as usual.” With a successful Fast Talk roll Sibbett can be convinced to give the investigators a tour of some of the sites of the disappearances, murders, and La Llorona sightings. See Investigations in Baleford.

Sibbett can also introduce the investigators to Sheriff Czerny and packing plant worker Esteban Rodriguez. The reporter openly dislikes Czerny, and says he doesn't work very hard when it's a Hispanic kid who disappears or dies. He's quick to arrest them for every little thing, though. She hates to think what would happen if Czerny had his way and the immigration services looked too close at the meat packing plant workers. Rodriguez is an older gentleman whom a lot of the workers seem to look up to. “They call him ‘the Mexican Mayor,’” she admits sheepishly. “Whites and Latinos alike.”

If asked, Sibbett says she doesn't know much about Barry Philips, even though he's her dentist. Nice guy, pretty quiet. He's a big film nut, and has a local museum devoted to a woman born in Baleford who became a movie star back in the 1940s; a crazy collection of stuff in there. His wife Kathy runs Andrea's Flowers, downtown. Abby Gordon? Abby's a little slow, but harmless. She delivers papers and runs errands around town for various businesses, and gets some money from her daughter Vanessa Duke, who sells real estate. Vanessa's husband, Les, sells real estate and insurance. They're pretty big money hereabouts.

Lauraine Sibbett's husband is a long distance truck driver. A big beefy man with nicotine-stained fingers, Dale Sibbett sports a perpetual five-o'clock shadow—and a bad temper. 1D3+1 days after the investigators come to Baleford, Dale Sibbett tracks them down. It seems that Lauraine won't stop talking about them, and has been seen talking and laughing with them, and Dale figures one of them must be having an affair with her—so he picks a fight with the richest or best looking investigator. One or both of them are liable to end up in jail before it's over, likely with no hard feelings once the misunderstanding is cleared up. There'll still be a fine for disturbing the peace though.

Lauraine Sibbett is another red herring suspect. Her suspicious actions are discussed in the Events section.

Lauraine Sibbett, local journalist, 47

STR 11 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 10 APP 10 EDU 17 SAN 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *All at base percentages.*

Skills: *Bargain 35%, Computer Use 30%, Credit Rating 35%, Fast Talk 55%, History 45%, Law 20%, Library/Internet Use 65%, Listen 50%, Occult 10%, Persuade 40%, Photography 50%, Psychology 40%, Sneak 20%, Spot Hidden 50%.*

Languages: *English 85%.*

Dale Sibbett, suspicious husband, 47

STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 13 POW 11
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 13 SAN 50 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist 60% 1D3+db.*

Skills: *Dodge 40%, Drive Truck 65%, Mechanical Repair 45%, Navigate 35%, Spot Hidden 40%.*

Languages: *English 55%.*

Vista County Sheriff's Department

This impressive building, again off the town's “main drag,” houses both the Sheriff's Department, with small jail, and the local Fire Department. Many of the deputies and firefighters are helping the City Works employees with sandbagging and other flood-related efforts. With all that's going on in the area, the Sheriff's Department personnel are heavily stressed, and not particularly eager to talk to nosy investigators lacking law enforcement credentials.

There is a 50% chance Sheriff Czerny is present whenever the investigators visit, otherwise he's on a call or otherwise indisposed. Deputy Margulies is in the office 35% of the time. If neither of these men are present, another deputy tells them to come back later to talk with the sheriff.

Sheriff Czerny

Bob Czerny is in his fifties, tall, with a crewcut and a serious disposition. He tolerates Lauraine Sibbett, barely, and Hispanics and other minorities not much at all. As such, one way to get on Czerny's good side is to make disparaging remarks about the local Hispanic population, possibly ridiculing their silly Crying Woman ghost. “From what Lauraine tells me, this Larona shows up wherever the Mexcians go. That doesn't sound like a ghost to me. More like a silly superstition. A what do you call it? Urban legend?” And the local sightings? “They probably saw Abby Gordon, for Christ's sake. She'd scare anybody who didn't know who she was.” On the other hand, anyone who criticizes Czerny's racism, or sides with the Hispanics in any way—including spending time talking to them—finds themselves faced with an information blackout from the Sheriff's Department.

As for the local disappearances and murder: “I'm sure if you looked into the past of any little town you'd find stuff like this. Maybe we do get a bit more of it, but we have a lot of tourists coming through here, people from Chicago and other places and all these surrounding states. I figure a lot of our troubles come from out of town.”

Lachrymarum Papers #1
passage from *Mississippi River Ghosts*

Curiously enough the legendary Mexican Crying Woman ghost, La Llorona, normally found throughout the American Southwest, has also found a home along the Big River. Baleford, Illinois, located on the Vista River just a few miles from the Mississippi, has long been the haunting grounds for the murderous spirit who preys upon children and unwary travellers.

Baleford has suffered a number of unsolved child murders and disappearances going back nearly half a century, but it's only within the past fifteen years that the Crying Woman has actually been seen walking the streets of this sleepy little town. Since then several people have mysteriously drowned in the nearby Vista River, often after the wandering white-clad wraith has been sighted somewhere in town or along the river. The local Hispanic population believes whenever La Llorona wails or is seen, someone will soon die.

Lachrymarum Papers #2
Baleford Tribune article, one year ago

Authorities Search for Child Missing Since Tuesday

Baleford Police are seeking any information concerning the disappearance of eight-year-old Alex Roland, missing since Tuesday. Alex was last seen just before dark, playing in Little Hawk Park across the street from his home. The boy is described as having short black hair, wearing a black T-shirt, tan cargo shorts and red sneakers. Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny believes Alex may have been abducted, and is urging anyone who may have been in the vicinity of Little Hawk Park or the Seven Hawks Resort to report any unusual persons or activity they may have seen.

"Anything unusual may give us a lead," said Czerny. "A car with out-of-town or out-of-state license plates. Seeing someone you didn't recognize, or thought looked out of place. Someone acting suspicious. Whatever you may have seen, please let us know." Sheriff Czerny declined to comment on whether or not the Roland case could be related to the unsolved disappearances of George Rodriguez earlier this year, or Diego Paredes in 2005.

Sheriff Czerny won't discuss the details of any of the recent cases, and a halved Psychology roll guesses this is because he has nothing to go on. If asked about the remains recently exposed by the floodwaters, a successful Law roll gets him to admit that so far tests indicate that while one of the bodies has been identified as Diego Paredes, who disappeared in 2005, the other bodies are much older. One of them at least ten to fifteen years old, and the other much older than that—maybe fifty years or more. All three bodies are those of children. The oldest is male, the more recent one female. So far no discernible cause of death has been determined for any of the victims. Czerny ruefully admits the two oldest victims will probably never be positively identified.

Czerny is hard-nosed, and won't hesitate to arrest the investigators if they break the law. Continued interference in his investigations causes him to sternly suggest the meddlers get the hell out of town. And once they side against him, there's little chance of regaining his favor. He may grudgingly accept their findings if they can back it up with proof, but if they can't, and they've broken the law, God help them.

County Sheriff Robert Czerny, lawman, 56

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 15 INT 13 POW 13
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 16 SAN 60 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: 9mm Automatic Pistol 65% 1D10, 12—Gauge Pump Shotgun 45% 4D6/2D6/1D6, Fist 70% 1D3+db, Grapple 50%.

Skills: Dodge 35%, Drive Auto 60%, First Aid 45%, Jump 40%, Law 75%, Library/Internet Use 55%, Listen 55%, Natural History 35%, Navigate 35%, Persuade 40%, Pilot Boat 35%, Psychology 60%, Spot Hidden 60%.

Languages: English 70%, Spanish 15%.

Deputy Margulies

If the investigators seek out Deputy Scott Margulies, they find him to be a non-descript young man in his late thirties, well-built, with a short blond crewcut. He liked Richard Ahern, as the author seemed really interested in the local people and the ghost that was haunting them. If told about the reason for Ahern's departure, Margulies is surprised. He didn't think experts like Ahern could be scared off like that. Information-wise, Margulies can supply many of the same details as Sheriff Czerny, but each time the investigators speak with him they must succeed in a Law roll to get him to open up to them. Also, if encountered in the field, Margulies works with the investigators unless they are breaking the law.

Deputy Scott Margulies, potential ally, 37

STR 15 CON 13 SIZ 13 INT 13 POW 10
DEX 11 APP 12 EDU 14 SAN 50 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: 9mm Automatic Pistol 60% 1D10 12—Gauge Pump Shotgun 45% 4D6/2D6/1D6, Fist 65% 1D3+db, Grapple 55%.

Skills: Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 50%, First Aid 40%, Law

50%, Library/Internet Use 45%, Listen 45%, Pilot Boat 35%, Psychology 35%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: English 60% Spanish 30%.

Casebook: Miscellaneous Details

Baleford's tiny library doesn't have a great deal to offer, but it does boast the most complete collection of the *Baleford Tribune* in town. A 1920 fire at the newspaper offices destroyed the earliest editions of the *Tribune*, and ever since the paper has been archived in the library.

The archives consist of dozens of huge hardbound compilations of every issue of the *Tribune* dating back nearly ninety years. A successful Library Use roll is needed to find any information that has not already been found by either Richard Ahern or Mrs. Sibbett. If the investigators are lazy, or so inclined, they can try to Persuade Mrs. Sibbett to do some more digging, either with them or in their stead.

Each skill roll represents four hours of searching by a single character. A failed skill roll discovers either nothing or some information already known. There are a few minor items left to find, however.

Item 1: In 1946 Monty Gibson, age eleven, disappears from his home in Baleford. He is never seen or heard from again.

Item 2: In 1948, Bernard Miller is caught and tried for the murder of Jennie Nolan, age nine. Miller, thirty-seven, married, is a local garbage man. Miller pleads not guilty by reason of insanity, and frequently breaks down in tears, seemingly completely devastated by his crime, or perhaps by the fact that he was caught.

Item 3: A 1970 article states that fifty-nine year old Nathan Kirke committed suicide in his cell in a Louisiana prison where he was awaiting execution for the rape and murder of a young black girl. The article goes on to say that not only was Kirke strongly suspected of having committed the similar rape and murder of fifteen year old Margaret Findley of Baleford in 1968, but that he was also suspected of killing a young boy named Billy Wilson in Baleford in 1960. At the time of these murders Kirke had been employed as a school maintenance worker in Baleford.

Item 4: In the 1970 disappearance of Jeff Williams and Mike Daniels, the abandoned "haunted house" is said to have belonged to Willem Thorson and his family until they left town in 1938 or 1939. The way the article reads, Thorson's wife left with him, contrary to stories that it is her spirit haunting the house. The article states that there has never been any reason to believe the house is haunted, other than schoolyard rumors.

Item 5: In 1997, Luis Garcia, sixteen, is found drowned in the Vista River. How he got there is unknown, as he had last been seen riding his bike in town a few hours earlier.

Item 6: When the body of Mark Whittaker, age four, is found sealed in a suitcase inside a steamer trunk in 2003, several articles are published about Ruth Ellis, who owned the house in which the trunk was found. In 1981, Ellis, a local postal worker, was

Lachrymarum Papers #3

Baleford Tribune article, last February 26

The Weeping Woman Returns

Baleford's most famous undead resident has returned to her old haunts again. There have been several calls to the *Tribune* recently with sightings of La Llorona, a female ghost from Mexican folklore. The ghost, who allegedly weeps and wails for her lost children, has been seen on the banks of the Vista River, on the Vista Bridge, and even outside the parking lot of the Henry Meat Packing Plant. The Crying Woman is easily identified by her old white dress, long dark hair, and hidden face.

Readers may recall that every few years there are a spate of Llorona sightings and reports of hearing her unearthly sobbing and wailing. We're still hoping someone will get a photograph of her for publication in the *Tribune*. But be warned: it's believed to be bad luck to see La Llorona, as sightings of her have purportedly been linked to accidents and deaths.

Lachrymarum Papers #4

Baleford Tribune article, last April 2

Local Man Goes Missing

Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny is asking for help determining the whereabouts of Vincente Larriva, 20, missing since early last Sunday morning. Larriva was last seen leaving a party at Sheridan Point, on the Vista River, shortly after midnight. He had allegedly been drinking with friends but was not intoxicated, according to witnesses.

Larriva left the party alone in his white 1979 Ford pickup, which has also not been found. Larriva, who lives with his parents, Robert and Miranda Larriva, apparently did not come home that night, and no one has seen or heard from him since he left the party. Anyone with information regarding Larriva should telephone the Vista County Sheriff's Department at 555-6734.

thirty-three years old and recently divorced when Whittaker went missing. Her husband had apparently left her when she couldn't conceive a child. She died of cancer earlier in 2003, and the trunk was sold at an estate auction to a local antique dealer, Max Fullerton.

Lachrymarum Papers #5

Baleford Tribune article, last May 21

Tragedy on Vista River When Local Youth Drowns

Local youth Oscar Rios, 15, drowned yesterday afternoon while spending time with friends on the Vista River. Rios and five friends had been hiking and picnicking along the river when Rios lagged behind to relieve himself. When he failed to return to the car, his friends went back into the woods to find him. They finally called the Sheriff's Department when they could find no sign of him.

An extensive search by Sheriff Bob Czerny and his deputies discovered the boy's body caught in a logjam on the river. Rios was pronounced dead on the scene, apparently having fallen into the river and drowned. "They said they only left him alone for a few minutes," said Sheriff Czerny, "and in that time he must have gone down closer to the river to do his business. A slip on that muddy bank and the next thing he knows he's caught in that current. It's terrible. Tragic." Authorities are investigating as to whether alcohol or drugs may have contributed to the death.

Lachrymarum Papers #6

Baleford Tribune article, last May 28

Officials Say Vista River May Reach Record Levels

Vista County Conservation Superintendent Walt Jarvis and Baleford Public Works Director Jon Paulovic are both worried that recent rains may swell the Vista River to levels approaching or even surpassing the heights it reached in the floods of 1993.

"We're really starting to get saturated here," said Jarvis. "If we get even just average rainfall amounts in the next week or so, there's going to be trouble." Paulovic added "We should be okay in town, at least. The levees are good, and even in '93 we didn't get much flooding here in town." Jarvis, however, is more cautious. "It doesn't look like much now, but if the Mississippi starts filling up, that'll mean the Vista and the creeks are going to catch that overflow. People need to keep in mind just how quick this can turn."

Dreams & Night- mares

Beginning the first night the investigators spend in Baleford, they are subject to unsettling dreams, just as in previous chapters in this book. The TV dream might be used on the night they arrive, and the others perhaps one per night, in their variations, each night afterward. Some dreams are specifically for an investigator with children of his own, or who has a close relationship with someone else's children. The targets of the other dreams can be randomly determined, if desired. Note that the first Crossroads Dream reappears in this chapter, and may again be had by the investigators during this adventure.

The TV Dream

This event occurs when an investigator has gone to bed for the night. He awakens in the middle of the night, hearing voices in his hotel room. Rising, he finds the television on, even though all doors and windows are locked, and the remote is on the dresser.

If the player asks, the program is an old black and white movie. Using the remote to check the station and program, he finds it's supposed to be an episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*. An Idea roll notes that *Star Trek* was made in color in the past decade, and this movie looks to be something from the 40s or 50s.

If the investigator stays awake until the end credits he can write down the actors' names and try to use the Internet Movie Database to figure out what the movie is. With a successful Internet Use roll they find the film is a non-descript film noir from the 40s. But the researcher will recognize the name of one of the actresses, Frances Liston, when it appears later in the adventure. A halved Idea roll may also remember a similar TV-related event during the "Tenebrarum" chapter. The film even looks to be the same one, perhaps calling for a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity.

Your Children, Part One

This nightmare is suffered by an investigator with children, or one who has close familial ties with someone else's. The investigator dreams he is asleep in the house with the children, and hears the kid or kids crying in the night, calling for him: "Daddy!" Or "Uncle ____!" The investigator rises in the dark, apparently alone in the house with the child or children. No lights respond to switches, the only illumination occasional slashes of lightning from the thunderstorm rumbling outside. The halls of the once familiar house don't lead to where they should, and the dreamer can't find his way to the still-wailing child.

Suddenly the child *screams* the investigator's name, and he or she rushes into the room he finds it empty; the child is gone. The window stands open, the wet curtains thrashed about by wind and rain. There's naught to be seen in the yard outside, but a halved Listen roll hears one last despairing wail, nearly drowned out by the thunder and rain.

The investigator awakens with a cold sweat, the sound of hol-

low laughter ringing in his head. The dreamer loses 0/1D3 Sanity points from the nightmare. If he or she is worried, a phone call home, or to the child's parents, finds nothing amiss. Unless a Psychology roll is made to calm down the parent, he or she is upset with the investigator for causing needless panic.

The First Dream of the Crossroads

In this dream the investigator (and any others who dream this night) find themselves in a car at night. The road they're on comes to an end at a T-intersection, where a streetlight illuminates a billboard advertising a "Buy 3 Get 1 Free" sale at a tire store. As their car pulls up to the rainslicked intersection, the investigators see a woman in a long overcoat walking on the sidewalk nearby, leading three large dogs on leashes. She walks past them, and if hailed she stops to talk to them. She is dark-haired and attractive, and

Lachrymarum Papers #7

Baleford Tribune article, last June 25

Flood Waters Unearth Human Remains

Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny has confirmed reports that rising waters have exposed human remains hidden in the fence row of a farmer's field near the Vista River.

"We're just bringing them out now, so I don't have any details other than there seems to be more than one body, and some of the remains appear to be older than others," said Czerny. Sheriff Czerny refused to comment on the possible identity of any of the remains, pending forensic analysis. Further developments will be reported by the *Tribune*, and on our website.

unafraid of the investigators.

If asked where they are, she answers, "You're not here yet." Asked where she's going, she replies, "Just passing by." Who is she? "I don't give my name to strangers." What's with the dogs? "I *like* dogs."

The conversation is frustratingly cryptic. After a few questions they all hear a distant howling and barking of dogs, and on a hillside in the distance they suddenly see what looks like a few flickering torchlights ascending the hill. Asked what that's all about, the woman says, "Who knows? Maybe you'll find out one day." She smiles and walks away into the dark with the hounds. This dream may seem meaningless until the epilogue chapter, "The Final Cut". The woman is the goddess Hecate, and is described in that final chapter.

The Crying One

The investigator awakes in his hotel room, disturbed by a strange sound. Through an open window, he hears someone crying out-

side. Rising, he or she can't raise any of his companions from their rooms, and if they go to investigate, the hotel desk clerk and staff decline to accompany him. Outside the hotel, a Listen roll hears the sobbing sound again, somewhere to the north, toward the Vista River.

Stumbling in the dark along the muddy, wooded banks, the investigator eventually spies a small figure sitting on the bank, face turned toward the swollen river. The figure is dressed in a muddy dress, has long dark hair, and is holding her face in her hands. From somewhere nearby the investigator hears an eerie wailing cry that sends a cold razor of fear down his spine, costing him 0/1D3 Sanity points.

If he approaches the sobbing little girl she suddenly grabs his hand in a vise-like grip and turns to face him. It is a grimacing adult face which the investigator sees, its black eyes boring into his own. Before he can react, the slim figure grabs him by the shirt-front and dives into the river, plunging them both into the black water. As he gasps for air and struggles to free himself, his attacker presses her face toward his, as if to kiss him.

The dreamer awakens, and if a Sanity roll fails he does so with a scream. He also loses 1/1D3 Sanity points, depending on whether or not the roll was successful. Also, his pillow is wet—from sweat?

Your Children, Part Two

The investigator-parent dreams of a sunny day spent in public with his child, at a park, or carnival, or shopping mall. The dream is at first a series of mundane events: playing catch, or hide and seek, talking with other family members, eating, and so forth. Then the investigator turns away for a moment, and when he looks back for his child he or she is gone. The parent may call for the missing child, and hears a reply, but is unable to see the child. While the investigator grows more frantic, others in the dream seem unconcerned, even laughing.

A Spot Hidden finally sees the child a stone's throw distant. A woman with her back to the dreamer has the child by the hand and they are walking away. The investigator can cry out and try to run, but the figures are briefly lost in the crowd. When they reappear, they are a hundred yards off. The child looks back and smiles and waves. The woman in jeans and loose white blouse does not.

Before the investigator can break into a run he is swarmed upon by a handful of young children, all laughing and grasping at his legs. A halved Idea roll notes that more than half are Hispanic children. As he disentangles himself from the frolickers, he finds the woman has disappeared with his child. They are nowhere to be seen. So are the ones who just mobbed him. The other people he was with are still unconcerned. The child is gone, and no one cares.

The dreamer awakens, losing 1 point of Sanity if a Sanity roll fails. Once again, calling the child's other parent or guardian finds nothing amiss.

Investigations in Baleford

This section details various important sites and personalities in the case. Locations marked with an asterisk (*) are ideal sites for the various types of La Llorona encounters described in the Events section from later in this scenario.

The Vista River*

At its widest point the Vista River is normally only about twenty to twenty-five yards across and about fifteen feet deep, but the flooding has swelled the river to double its normal width and depth. The current in some areas is also deadly, with undertows that drag the unwary to their doom. Add to this the rainslicked riverbanks and the Vista River becomes a watery deathtrap.

Running, jumping, or other physical activity on the riverbanks may call for a DEX x3 roll or less on D100 to keep from slipping and falling and perhaps plunging into the river itself.

The Vista Bridge*

The Vista Bridge crosses the river north of town, connecting Highway 84 with Highway 64. The bridge is about 150 yards

long, with a reinforced guardrail and no superstructure above. Normally the water would be ten to fifteen feet below the road surface, but the waters now lap near the bottom of the bridge. The bridge is two lanes only, with no shoulder; in a pinch, there might be enough room for three vehicles to pass at the same time, provided all made their Drive rolls.

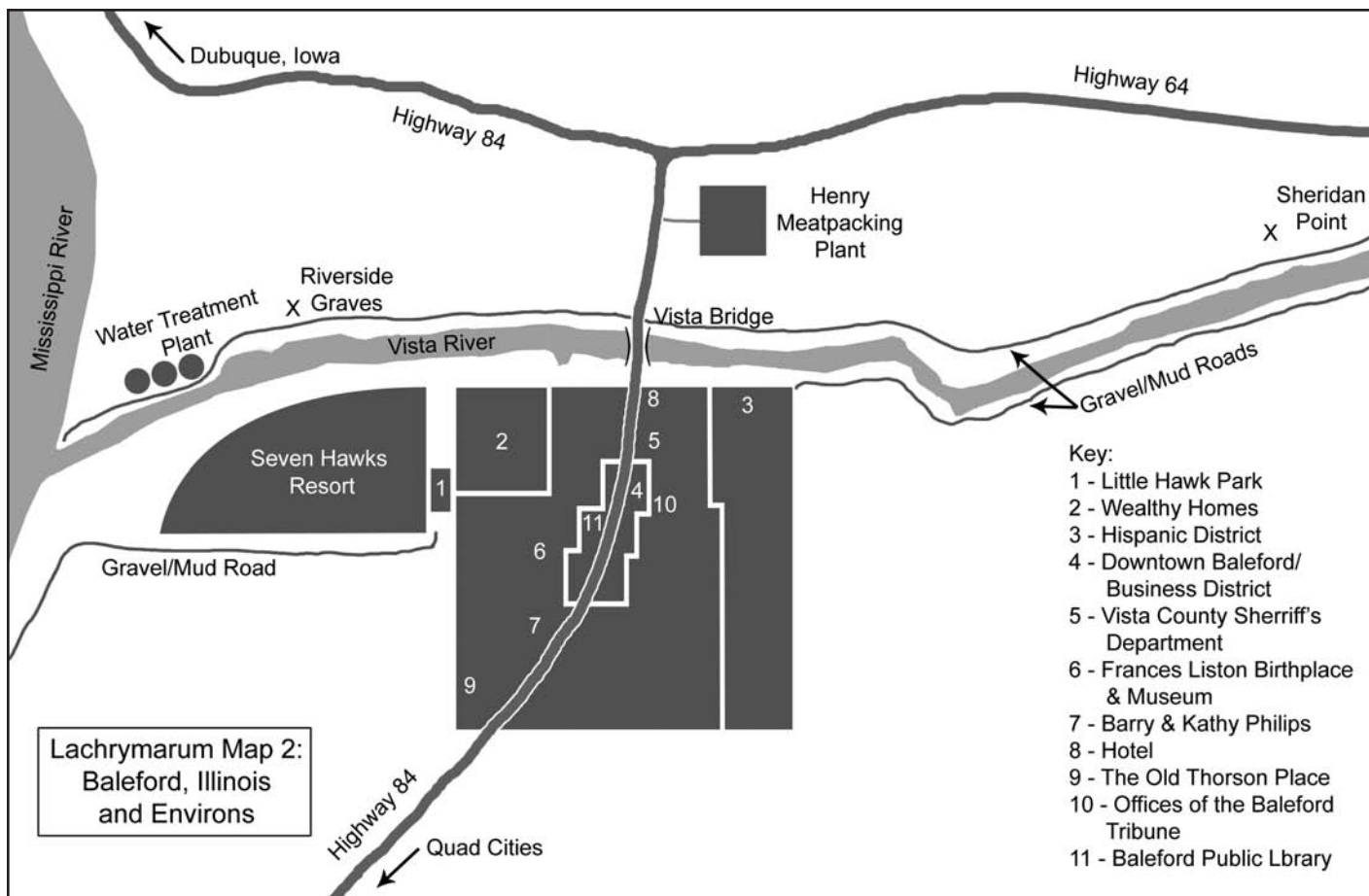
The Water Treatment Plant*

The Baleford Water Treatment Plant is located on a service road on the northern shore of the river. The road is normally gravel, but it is now muddy and rutted from city vehicles passing more and more frequently as they work to keep the plant from being overrun by floodwaters—an event that would leave the town without clean drinking water.

A Drive roll is needed to navigate the mud soaked access road—one roll in each direction. Failure indicates the vehicle is stuck, and must be rocked or pushed free, achieved with a successful Drive roll. If this roll fails, the car must be towed or pulled out by a larger vehicle.

Henry Meat Packing Plant

The Henry Meat Packing Plant opened outside of Baleford in 1983. It currently employs nearly 500 workers, at least 60% of whom are Hispanic Americans. The plant processes beef carcasses for the nationally distributed Henry Meats Company. The Bale-



ford plant is managed by Brian Cliffords, aged fifty-five. Cliffords moved his family from Missouri a little over a decade ago to run the Baleford plant. He is short, stout, with a ruddy complexion, a good businessman, and an even better golfer. If the investigators want to speak with Clifford, a Luck roll finds him in his office. He knows little about any of the strange goings-on in the town, and agrees to let them speak with some of his Hispanic workers, so long as they catch them in the break room or dining area, and investigators don't interfere with their work.

Staking out these areas, the investigators have better luck if they try to do their questioning in Spanish, or if Lauraine Sibbett is on hand to handle introductions. If neither of these tactics is used, all attempts to use Fast Talk, Persuade, Bargain, or Psychology are halved. To get the workers to talk about the recent disappearances and deaths, a successful Fast Talk or Psychology roll is needed to break through their reluctance to speak with strangers. If the investigators specifically seek out Esteban Rodriguez, the so-called Mexican Mayor, he reacts as above, but his trust can be gained if they mention Richard Ahern's name. Rodriguez is fifty years old, soft-spoken and stocky, with silvery hair and a dark moustache. Esteban is the uncle of eleven-year-old George Rodriguez, who disappeared from Baleford last year. Esteban claims he was taken by La Llorona.

Rodriguez and other workers, such as Victor Paez, Robert Larriva (father of the missing Vincente Larriva), and Tomas Ibarra, can tell the investigators little they don't already know. About half those spoken with, including Ibarra, think the deaths and vanishings are just bad luck, or crimes committed by racist whites. Others, including Rodriguez and Larriva, however, believe that the Crying Woman is responsible. Their version of the La Llorona legend appears nearby. Most of the men think the Sheriff isn't trying very hard to solve the crimes that plague the Hispanic population of Baleford. They claim he is a racist, and that when a white child disappears, the whole town flies into a frenzy of searching and consoling the family. But when that child is brown, and lives on the east side of town, only the other brown people search and mourn.

Many of the workers scoff at this tale, especially the non-Hispanics. Others mutter prayers and curses in Spanish. Each investigator who makes a Luck roll finds a witness who has seen or heard La Llorona somewhere in Baleford, and has a tale to tell. One such tale has it that fifty-one year old Albert Pena, whose body was found in a dumpster behind a local tavern a couple ago, saw the Crying Woman and died of fright. Another relates how in 2005, little Diego Paredes disappeared from his house, with his parents and sister asleep in their rooms nearby. The sister supposedly told one of her schoolmates she heard a woman's voice talking to Diego, but the boy's mother denied speaking to him during the night.

None of the men know how to fight La Llorona—maybe an exorcism by a Catholic priest? They all fear her too much to confront her themselves. If the investigators don't belittle the Hispanics' stories here, they may find them more willing to listen and help later in the scenario. Esteban Rodriguez in particular is a valuable ally to have in the Hispanic community.

Esteban Rodriguez, the Mexican Mayor, 50

STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 14 POW 12
DEX 11 APP 12 EDU 12 SAN 55 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist* 60% 1D3+db, *Grapple* 40%, *Meat Cleaver or Cutting Knife* 55% 1D6+db.

Skills: *Dodge* 25%, *Law* 15%, *Listen* 55%, *Natural History* 45%, *Occult* 25%, *Persuade* 20%, *Psychology* 35%, *Spot Hidden* 40%.

Languages: *English* 45%, *Spanish* 55%.

Robert Larriva, father of missing man, 46

STR 13 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 12 SAN 50 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist* 65% 1D3+db, *Improvised Club* 40% 1D6+db, *Meat Cleaver or Cutting Knife* 55% 1D6+db.

Skills: *Dodge* 35%, *Listen* 40%, *Occult* 15%, *Pilot Boat* 45%, *Spot Hidden* 50%.

Languages: *English* 35%, *Spanish* 50%.

The Hispanic District

Most of Baleford's Hispanic residents live on the eastern edge of town, in poor or lower-middle class residences. This area is hit harder than most by flooding, since much of it is on lower ground than the downtown area. The curbsides are cluttered with furniture, carpet and other belongings that have been ruined by water entering the basements here. Water stands everywhere in the yards and in the gutters where the storm drains are clogged, sometimes blocking parts of streets. Residents eye outsiders warily, especially if they're non-Hispanic.

The investigators may want to interview family members and witnesses or friends of the missing or drowned. If they are acquainted with Esteban Rodriguez, his name will help open most doors (Luck roll). Speaking Spanish or being accompanied by Lauraine Sibbett may also gain the trust of this insulated community.

Garcia

The 1997 Luis Garcia case was one of the earliest drownings attributed to La Llorona, but few outside the Hispanic district even know of it. Luis' mother Chelo believes the Crying Woman entranced him into following her to the river where he drowned. His bicycle was left several blocks from where he was found, something he would never do. Luis' older brother Guy, now almost thirty years old, thinks some white boys took Luis to the river and threw him in. A Psychology roll notes Guy has an axe to grind with whites.

Paredes

The Paredes family still lives in the house from which seven year-old Diego vanished one night four years ago. The family is still shaken by it, are reluctant to discuss it, and can add nothing more than is already known. A Psychology or Speak Spanish roll

might get Diego's now sixteen year old sister to say that she heard a woman in Diego's room that night, but their mother denied visiting him after bedtime.

Pena

Albert Pena's wife and children moved back to Texas after he was found dead of a heart attack in 2007. Neighbors and acquaintances say Albert was an alcoholic, but a good man nonetheless. Nobody has the slightest idea why, if he died of a heart attack, his body was found in a dumpster. More than one surly interviewee suggests it was some white puta's idea of a joke—throwing out the Mexican trash.

Rodriguez

The investigators may have already met George Rodriguez's uncle Esteban. Esteban can introduce the interviewers to his family, but they have little to add. George was out playing with friends one night last fall, and simply didn't come home. The Rodriguez family seems evenly split on whether the little boy was taken by La Llorona or a white serial killer who preys on Hispanic youths and children.

Simon Rodriguez, at fifteen the oldest of Esteban's nephews, says he's seen La Llorona. One night he and some friends sneaked onto the golf course at the Seven Hawks Resort, and they saw her walking down by the river, dressed in white.

The other family members scoff. What would La Llorona be doing haunting the mostly white resort folks? Esteban rebukes them, however. "She has followed our people across the country, yes. But what makes you think she punishes only the Latinos whose crimes she sees? She is old, and has seen much. Who knows her motives?"

Larriva

The investigators may have met Vincente's thin, chain-smoking father Robert at the meat packing plant. He and his wife Miranda still hold out hope Vincente will return, even though he's been gone for more than two months now. They are certain that he wouldn't have just run off. Everyone said he left the party early so he could go to work the next morning—does that sound like someone who was going to just drop everything and run away?

Robert, at least, realizes the dilemma. They hope Vincente will return, but they know he would not have left like this. If the investigators mention La Llorona, Miranda flinches, and a Psychology roll gets her to confess that Vincente once claimed to have heard the Weeping Woman, and perhaps glimpsed her as well, one night down by the Vista Bridge as he was driving home from work. Robert is unsettled by this. He hadn't heard it before.

Rios

Oscar Rios was with five friends when he mysteriously drowned in the Vista River several weeks ago. Oscar's family is very reluctant to speak with outsiders, and in any case they believe his death to have been an accident.

With a successful Fast Talk or Speak Spanish roll they name the other kids with Oscar when he died: Shawna Telles, fifteen;

Lachrymarum Papers #8

workers' version of the La Llorona legend

La Llorona was originally a proud, beautiful woman who lived in Mexico many hundreds of years ago. No one remembers her name, but she fell in love with a rich and powerful man, and by him she bore two children, a son and a daughter. But the man would not marry her, despite her having his children, and her loving him deeply.

This man began to see another woman, younger and more beautiful than the mother of his children. So the spurned woman, terrible angry, took her children to the river that ran beside their village, and she drowned her son and daughter in the river and let the current take their bodies away. The woman went back to the village, mad from what she had done, and they tried her and found her guilty and sentenced her to death. They hanged her and threw her body in the river.

But either she was too evil to die, or a greater power sent her back to search forever for the children she murdered—and to punish others who neglected their children. She returned from the river, and she found the man who had disgraced her, and she dragged him into the river where he too drowned.

And others in the village died too, men who were unfaithful to their wives, or children who strayed from their mothers. La Llorona preyed on them all.

As tales of her fearful deeds spread from village to village, so she herself followed. And so all across Mexico, mothers locked their children indoors at night when they heard the Crying Woman's wail coming from the river. And men too stayed clear of the river at night, running for their lives when they saw her.

Dressed all in white, or sometimes black, with her black hair covering her face, sometimes dripping wet like she had just crawled out of the river, anyone who saw her face either went mad or died, or was never seen again.

And wherever the Mexican people went, they took her legend, the legend of La Llorona, the Weeping Woman. And where the legend went, La Llorona followed.

Even now, today, she is here. We hear her cries at night down by the river. Many have seen her walking these streets. And always she cries, and our people suffer.

Now she takes the Anglos too. Maybe when the rain stops and the river subsides she'll go away. But she'll only go away when she's ready, when she thinks we've learned our lesson. Until then, we can do nothing but pray. Pray and avoid the river at night.

Juanita Paez, sixteen; Teresa Severin, sixteen; Armando Ferreira, sixteen; and Eric Dominguez, sixteen. All but Oscar and Shawna were in the same high school class. Each can be found with a Luck roll, but none have anything of note to add. Oscar lagged behind

to take a leak, and when he didn't show up they went looking for him. The sheriff finally found him in the water, drowned. They never saw or heard anything strange.

Shawna Telles seems particularly sad and distracted. She says Oscar was her boyfriend and she misses him, but a Psychology roll suggests there's more to it than that. She claims to have seen La Llorona, in the street outside her house the night after Oscar died. She knows the Crying Woman is coming for her—and soon.

The investigators may try to use these contacts to seek out other sightings of the Weeping Woman among the Hispanic residents. They are free to do so, but the results don't seem to suggest any specific area where La Llorona lurks regularly, save the river, which doesn't narrow down the search area much.

The Gravesite*

The site where the children's bodies were exposed lies on the north banks of the Vista River, barely accessible via the access road that leads to the water treatment plant. The bodies were actually seen by tourists walking the golf course on the Seven Hawks Golf Course on the south bank of the river. They saw something strange on the far bank, and reported it to the sheriff. Investigating, the Sheriff's Department found the three bodies partially exposed by heavy rains. They had been buried along a remote fence row.

The access road is treacherously muddy, and without directions from Deputy Margulies or Lauraine Sibbett (Sheriff Czerny doesn't give out this information) the investigators won't find it. A Navigate roll is needed to follow the directions several hundred yards from the road down to the wooded fence row. There is little to find here, but noting the inaccessibility of the site, an Idea roll suggests that whoever buried the bodies must have had some measure of strength, and perhaps a four-wheel drive vehicle or a boat, as the gravesite is some distance from the access road and the river itself. Then again, this does raise several nagging questions: If one of the bodies was buried here over fifty years ago, what sixty-five plus year old person could haul them this far to bury the most recent bodies? Or are multiple killers using the same burial site? Coincidence? Cult?

Sheridan Point*

This spot is popular for young Balford residents for weekend parties, and for motorcycle and ATV riding.

Located down a narrow twisty road along the northern shore of the Vista River, Sheridan Point is named for the farmer who owns the land and allows public access, as long as visitors pick up after themselves. Unfortunately, parts of the road are now underwater, and the Sheriff's Department has posted signs blocking it about two miles from the Point.

This road is even more treacherous and muddy than the access road to the water treatment plant to the west. Worse, this road gets virtually no traffic since the Sheriff blocked it off. Stranded investigators must walk the three miles or so back to Highway 84. To get to the Point itself, the investigators must wade

into waist deep water at several points.

Finally reaching the Point, they find a large open area along the banks of the river, worn bare by many many feet. Signs of old bonfires are everywhere, and bike trails wind off into the woods and hills all around. And not far off, the black river waters roil and churn.

Sadly, there's nothing much to find here other than the occasional empty bottle, used condom, or lost sandal.

The Old Thorson House*

The abandoned house where Jeff Williams and Mike Daniels supposedly disappeared in 1970 belonged to the Thorson family, who left town in the late 1930s. Researching the Thorsons turns up next to nothing, and there seems no obvious reason for their departure—husband *and* wife—from Balford. What the research does indicate, though, is that the house was torn down after the boys' disappearance.

Lauraine Sibbett is one of perhaps only a handful of people in Balford who remember where the house was located, along the southwestern edge of town, back in a wooded area. She vaguely remembers stories about the place.

"Something about old man Thorson chopping up his wife with an axe and skipping town. The wife was supposed to wander around the house, and kids said they saw her standing in the window, all hacked up and covered with blood. Real urban legend crap. Those two dumb boys were a few years older than me, but I remember when they disappeared. Scared the *hell* out of kids. But they searched that house from top to bottom, and nobody ever found anything or saw them again. It was a ruin anyway, so they finally tore it down. There's nothing there."

There really isn't. If the investigators try to find the place without Lauraine, a halved Navigate roll is needed to follow the meager directions. Down a narrow overgrown lane the investigators find a pair of old iron posts next to a large empty space overgrown with waist-high weeds and gnarled oak trees that glower in the twilight regardless of the time of day. The place is lonely and desolate, with nothing more to offer than a grim atmosphere.

Fullerton Antique Emporium

The investigators might want to visit this shop since it was here the corpse of four-year-old Mark Whittaker was discovered in 2003. According to newspaper reports, Max Fullerton bought an old steamer trunk at the estate auction of Ruth Ellis. Inside, Fullerton found a suitcase wrapped in tape, and within the suitcase, the boy's mummified corpse.

Max Fullerton is a fifty-nine-year-old homosexual bachelor, tall, impeccably dressed, with a pot belly, coiffed hair, and eyeglasses with stylish rectangular metal frames. He is friendly, effeminate, and incredibly knowledgeable about his business. If the Keeper desires, Fullerton may have some occult material, or Mythos item or tome among his merchandise. The type of item is beyond the scope of this adventure, and if there is something here it should not have any bearing on this scenario, at least.

Most of Fullerton's items are small pieces of furniture and a

surprisingly wide variety of sculptures, paintings, and books from around the world. Again, the exact nature of these items is left for the keeper to determine, but an investigator who makes a roll of his POW x2 or less may find something of interest to him or her somewhere among Max's goods.

If asked about the discovery of the corpse, Fullerton blanches and tries to beg off discussing it. A Fast Talk or Bargain roll—or a purchase—is needed to get him to talk about it.

It was *horrible*. He bought the trunk blind, hoping there might be something of value in it; the trunk was close to forty years old. Fullerton didn't buy anything else from the auction, as he was called away to another sale by one of his confederates. Fullerton knew Ruth Ellis, however, and says he doesn't know how that body could have gotten there. She surely didn't kill that child. She was only thirty when that boy disappeared—Fullerton looked it up. That scumbag husband of hers had divorced her the year before, and she was working two jobs trying to get by. Then she found out she had breast cancer, too late to do much about it. She hung on, but she had died a long time before. Now she has this shadow hanging over her that she might have killed this child. Nonsense.

Little Hawk Park*

Little Hawk Park is where Alex Roland vanished last fall. The park is adjacent to the Seven Hawks Resort, but is a municipal park owned by the city. The area is expansive, with a playground at one end and several metal grills and picnic tables scattered around. There is also a central shelter house, a roofed pavilion with picnic tables and rest rooms. The softball diamond is used by local school and adult teams.

When the investigators visit there are a half dozen groups of people scattered throughout the park. An Idea roll postulates that even if the park were 50% or even 25% as occupied as it is now, someone should have noticed something when the boy disappeared. Still, no clues present themselves.

Seven Hawks Resort*

Seven Hawks is an impressive property covering an area almost 25% the size of Baleford itself. The resort contains an 18-hole golf course, a large restaurant with reception hall, several condominiums and smaller villas, tennis courts, a swimming pool, gift shops, and a gym. There is also canoeing and river-tubing when weather permits. The resort draws visitors from Chicago and tourists from all over the Midwest. It is still the off-season and the resort has only a few guests, partly due to the flooding. The staff is also down from its normal levels.

The investigators may want to speak with the staff and guests about anyone or anything suspicious in the area recently. With a halved Luck roll, one of the housekeeping staff refers them to another staffer, a young college student named Jennie Determan. Jennie works the night shift during the summer. Staff members say she was frightened by something she saw just a couple weeks ago.

Jennie Determan

If the investigators talk to Jennie, she is embarrassed her coworkers said anything, but explains. It was late, almost midnight, and it was raining, and Jennie was hurrying to her apartment, a few blocks southeast of Seven Hawks. She passed a woman on the sidewalk, dressed in a light-colored dress, strolling through the downpour. Jennie ran past her, but thought there was something strange about the woman, and looked back. By then the woman had stopped walking and slowly turned to face Jennie.

"There was just something *wrong* about her, you know? I don't know what, but she didn't look right. Unreal or something. And scary. She kinda stared at me through all this long wet hair and it was just freaky. I ran the rest of the way home." Jennie says it absolutely wasn't Abby Gordon, as she's seen Abby lots of times, and while Abby's kind of nutty, she's not scary at all. This woman was *scary*, and just plain weird.

Buddy Kruse

As the investigators question others at the resort, a young man cleaning up branches and other debris overhears them and smirks. He says they should talk to Buddy Kruse, the head groundskeeper at the golf course—but don't tell him who told you to talk to him. The youth says Buddy saw a woman disappear down by the river last week, but everyone started making fun of him for seeing the "wetbacks' ghost."

They may have to track Buddy down on the links, but he is easily found. When asked if he's seen anything strange lately, Buddy scowls and says no. If they press the matter, Buddy wants to know who told them to bother him about this. Buddy won't say a thing unless the investigators tell him who told them. If they're conscientious about it, they'll make up a likely candidate, otherwise the smirking young man might lose his job.

Once Buddy learns who squealed on him, he says he was mowing the back nine last week, down close to the river. He thought he saw a woman down on the bank, so he hopped off the mower to go warn her that part of the bank was slick as hell. He saw her as he was trotting toward the bank, but when he got there she was gone. He was sure he had seen someone, and almost thought she had fallen in the river—but there were no tracks in the mud. When he told a couple of his groundskeeping crew about it they laughed and said he must be seeing the Mexicans' ghost-lady. Buddy's not sure. He still swears he saw someone, but the lack of tracks baffles him.

Frances Liston Birthplace & Museum

Each day the investigators spend in Baleford, a random investigator should roll for Luck and, if successful, he or she hears someone mention the Liston Museum. If asked about it, the speaker says, "It's that movie place west of downtown." More knowledge-

able townsfolk may add that it's a little house where an old movie actress was born. It's owned by Barry Philips, a local dentist.

The museum is in a quaint little two-story house in a middle-class neighborhood a couple blocks from downtown Balford. The house is nicely painted, with small evergreen bushes out front, and a shaded arbor on the side. A sign in the front yard reads:

FRANCES LISTON BIRTHPLACE & MUSEUM

Barry Philips, DDS, proprietor

Open Mon–Thurs 6 PM–9 PM

Fri 1 PM–9 PM

Sat 10 AM–5 PM

Closed Sun

If the investigators arrive during open hours, they find Barry Philips present 65% of the time, his wife Kathy 25% of the time, and both of them 10% of the time. Admission is \$3 for adults, children under twelve free. One of the two proprietors conducts a tour of the museum for the visitors, recounting the life of the actress from her family background in Balford to facts about her many films, her life in Hollywood in the 1940s, her tragic descent, and her lonely death. Along the way they also point out the various furnishings and items they've collected for the museum. The Philipses are also quick to point out the items for sale in the gift shop, and to mention their weekly Saturday matinees in the screening room.

The couple have accumulated dozens of posters and photos, a couple of gowns actually worn by Liston in her films, several reproductions of her costumes, a collection of antique dolls (in period interviews Frances said she had an extensive collection when she was a child), and a painted portrait of Liston commissioned by the Philipses. The house itself has been restored to how it would have looked in the 1920s, when Frances would have been growing up.

The Philipses added a movie room in the basement, equipped with a large screen on which they can project images from a DVD or from an actual 35mm film projector. They host screenings every Saturday afternoon, featuring Hollywood classics, film noir, westerns, horror, and various other genres in addition to at least one Frances Liston film per month.

The Frances Liston House

The Frances Liston house sits on a lot with a small open front yard and parking, and a shaded side yard and backyard. All are immaculately tended. The house is kept locked when not open to the public.

Every room in the house contains furniture, decorations, and accoutrements appropriate to the 1920s and 1930s: loveseats, simple art prints and paintings, doilies, lace curtains, and high-backed wooden chairs. The keeper should assume that all the rooms are fully furnished, but only the most distinctive features are detailed below. Embellish these descriptions as desired.

The Ground Floor

The ground floor features a long enclosed porch running across the front of the house. Inside the porch visitors find a full-size mannequin dressed to resemble Frances Liston's nervy reporter role in the film *The London Game*. Like all the mannequins in the museum, this one is complete with black wig mimicking Liston's character's hairstyle in the film.

The Living Room: A mannequin dressed in a fashionable black gown stands in the corner of the living room, and a large painting of a coyly smiling Liston hangs above the mantel.

The Study: This room contains an antique rolltop desk, atop which lie some old 1930s and 1940s newspapers opened to various stories about Frances Liston and her films.

The Dining Room: Another mannequin stands in the dining room, dressed in the actual torn blouse and skirt worn by Liston in the western, *Renegade's Trail*. There is a door to an empty closet in one corner.

The Kitchen: The house's kitchen has been commandeered to serve as a gift shop. Here visitors can buy DVDs of *Renegade's Trail*, *One Last Kiss Goodbye*, *Nightmare Street*, and *The London Game*, for \$25 each. Various photoprints of Liston are available for \$5 each, and small poster reproductions for \$10 each.

From the kitchen a door leads to the back hallway, where other doors lead to the backyard, a small water closet, and the basement.

The Upstairs

The Master Bedroom: The master bedroom belonged to Frances Liston's parents. Modestly furnished, the dresser bureau displays framed photos of Neal and Margaret Liston.

The Nursery: This small room was used by Margaret Liston as a sewing room.

The Sitting Room: At the top of the stairs is a large airy sitting room with several chairs.

The Bathroom: A period bathroom, complete with massive claw-footed bathtub.

The Playroom: Several toyboxes contain vintage toys such as capguns, toy soldiers and similar boys' fare, most in poor condition. The small bed displays several old dolls, and more dolls line the shelves above the bed. Some are quite old and valuable. Some of these dolls are nearly the size of small children, and rather eerie looking.

If an investigator counts the number of dolls here, and subsequently returns after a child has vanished or been murdered, he or she finds the number of dolls has increased by one. Lachrymarum adds a new doll for each victim she takes.

The Brothers' Bedroom: The Liston brothers' room contains two small beds and framed photos of Nicholas and Michael Liston, Frances' two brothers.

Frances' Bedroom: Her small child's bed is still here. Several framed photos of Frances at virtually every age clutter the walls and dresser-tops. Two mannequins stand against the far wall, one a child in a simple dress resembling the one worn by Frances in a nearby photo, the other an adult dressed as Frances is in a very early publicity photo, also nearby.

Frances' vanity table is also in place, complete with mirror,

Frances Liston 1919-1962

Frances Liston was born to coal deliveryman Neal Liston and his wife Margaret in Balford, Illinois on October 20, 1919. Frances was their first child. Her brother Nicholas was born the following year, and brother Michael in 1922. Frances was very mature at an early age, and helped raise her brothers even as a young girl. She also excelled in school, and would have graduated high school a year early had she not left her family in 1936 and gone to Hollywood hoping to become an actress.

Unlike many others with the same dream, the headstrong Frances persevered, and with her dark good looks, precise diction, sharp wit, and driving ambition she soon became a contract player with RKO Studios. There she forged a place for herself playing femmes fatales and similarly strong female roles in such films as *In League With the Night* (1938), *Strong Medicine* (1938), *Renegade's Trail* (1939), *One Last Kiss Goodbye* (1940), *The Beckoning Fair One* (1941), *Miss Jennifer* (1941), *The Devil's Eyes* (1941), *The Poisoner's Tale* (1942), *Nightmare Street* (1943), *The London Game* (1944), *Prince Rhandi* (1944), and *Guilty of Love* (1945).

While making the occult thriller *The London Game* in 1944, Frances fell in love with a co-star, expatriate Englishman Andrew Wilder. The two married in early 1945, and later that year the couple welcomed a son, Alan. The following year daughter Louise was born. During these two-plus years Frances made no films, and Wilder's marginal success waned. At Frances' insistence, they exchanged roles, with Andrew raising the children while Frances launched her comeback.

She featured in brief but pivotal roles in *The Lion Tamer* (1949) and *Gretchen Walker, RIP* (1950), but failed to regain the degree of success she once had. In 1951 she appeared in a small independent horror film called *Still Life*, the intended comeback of silent film legend

Theron Lysander. As the film was being edited, Senator Joseph McCarthy accused Lysander of Communist sympathies. The film was suppressed and all known copies destroyed. Lysander was ruined, and Frances Liston's last hope for a comeback came crashing to an end.

As her expected return to glory stumbled, Frances began taking Seconal and drinking Scotch to help her sleep. Her once crisp delivery became slurred and uncertain, her piercing dark eyes rheumy and baggy. Unable to curb her need for booze and pills, Frances lashed out at her husband and children, blaming them for her fall. As *Still Life* imploded, Andrew Wilder left Hollywood with Alan and Louise, taking them back to England with him. Ruined and now alone, Frances Liston tumbled further into depression and oblivion, reduced to roles in Z-grade western and crime films, and the occasional guest role on television. She turned more and more to Scotch, and finally gin as her finances eventually thinned.

Frances Liston died in a cheap hotel room in Hollywood in 1962. Years of drug and alcohol abuse had left her bloated and with a bad heart. That heart may have been broken in 1951, but it finally stopped in 1962. Her husband and children did not attend her funeral, as Wilder hadn't let her see the children since he left. Few remembered her at the time of her passing, and even today only the most fanatical of film buffs recall the dark-eyed, chisel-voiced femme fatale who for a time reigned a corner of the film noir world of the 1940s. This information is available through various film biographies, the Internet Movie Database, other sources print and online: 2-3 successful Library/Internet Use rolls should be sufficient to find it all.

hairbrushes, and makeup. A small sign on the table claims this vanity table and mirror were purchased from a dealer in Los Angeles, and had actually belonged to Frances Liston.

Any investigator who gazes into the mirror should roll D100, and if the roll is less than their POW x1 they get a fleeting glimpse of a raven-haired, middle-aged woman whose dark eyes briefly bore into their own. This costs 0/1 point of Sanity, and it happens so fast it *might* have been just a freak reflection of one of the photographs or posters in the room.

The Basement

The Screening Room: The main feature of the basement is the screening room, with a wall-sized screen and seating for thirty-five people. A 35mm projector stands at the back of the room, and in one corner is yet another mannequin made to look like Frances Liston, this one the young, provocatively dressed cigarette- and revolver-wielding temptress from *In League With the Night*, her first significant role. The gun is a squirtgun.

The walls are covered with film posters and photographs featuring the star, some of which may be quite valuable. Just outside the screening room is a small concessions area where the Philipsses

sell candy and drinks to filmgoers.

Storage Areas: Elsewhere in the basement are various storage and work rooms, containing lumber, furniture, more movie memorabilia, and mannequin parts. One contains a small restroom open to the public.

One part of the basement is kept locked (the doors are STR 16). Inside are various tools, furniture parts, memorabilia, clothing on hangers, and wigs on stands. Three mannequins stand in one corner. One has short dark hair, and wears jeans and a sleeveless black T-shirt. The next has long black hair and wears a long brown dress whose cuffs are embellished with southwestern American Indian designs. The third has long dark hair worn to mask most of her face, and wears a simple white dress.

If the investigators don't recognize the mannequins outright, with an Idea roll an investigator notices the first one's resemblance to Maddie Mercier, the second to Belinda Echevarria, and the third the reported appearance of La Llorona. Finding these mannequins calls for a Sanity roll for a loss of 1/1D3+1.

If the Philipsses are asked about these figures, they are furious the investigators forced their way into this room. The mannequins are simply extras, they claim, still wearing the clothing they came with. Kathy Philipss is angry enough to call the police if the inves-

tigators don't apologize and leave the premises immediately.

Barry Philips

Barry Philips is an average looking man in his early thirties, with short dark hair and a shy smile. He is quite businesslike in initial conversations, but eventually turns talkative, almost embarrassingly effusive if the conversation is about movies.

He plays golf and tennis, usually on Friday and Sunday afternoons. He also enjoys watching films from every era and genre, though he has a soft spot for 1960s westerns and spy movies—and of course Frances Liston's films. He admits to knowing nothing about her until he came to town, learned about her past here, and her brief triumph and sad end in Hollywood. "It's the classic Hollywood tragedy, isn't it? Small town girl goes to Hollywood and becomes a star, but fulfilling her dreams ends up destroying her life. How many times have we heard that story?"

Barry works at the dental office from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Fridays. When not working Barry is usually either at the Frances Liston house, or golfing, playing tennis, or relaxing at home. He has a vast collection of movies on DVD and VHS, and even a few on 35mm film. His and Kathy's home has only a few film-related furnishings, most notably a poster for Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Barry's all time favorite film.

Born in Wisconsin, Philips and his wife moved to Baleford five years ago after he finished dental school. Barry has a growing practice, having been groomed for a year to take his predecessor's place when the older man retired. Philips, a long time film fan and occasional memorabilia collector, soon learned that 1940s film actress Frances Liston was born in Baleford. Philips found the little house where Liston grew up and decided to buy it and open a museum dedicated to the forgotten star. For over a year he and his

wife worked at renovating the house and buying furniture and Frances Liston memorabilia.

Unbeknownst to Philips, he has been under Frances Liston's influence ever since he came to Baleford. It was at her unseen urging that Barry and his wife sought out Frances' childhood home and created the museum. And as Barry grew more obsessed with Liston, her grip on him strengthened. Now the dead actress can bend his will to her own, even take possession of him if she wishes. She occasionally forces him to dress in her clothing and walk the

dark streets, either to simply take in the night, or to hunt for young prey.

Driven by her instincts as an avatar of Mater Lachrymarum, Frances Liston and Barry Philips together have begun to abduct and murder children from the streets of Baleford. While Barry is aware of these horrific crimes, he believes them to be the work of the ghost of Frances Liston, and not himself. And if it's a ghost perpetrating them, who would believe him if he were to go to the police? And why should he be punished for something she did?

A successful Psychology roll might imply that Philips is obsessed with Frances Liston, but given his boundless enthusiasm for all things filmic it's hard to say exactly how deep that obsession may be.

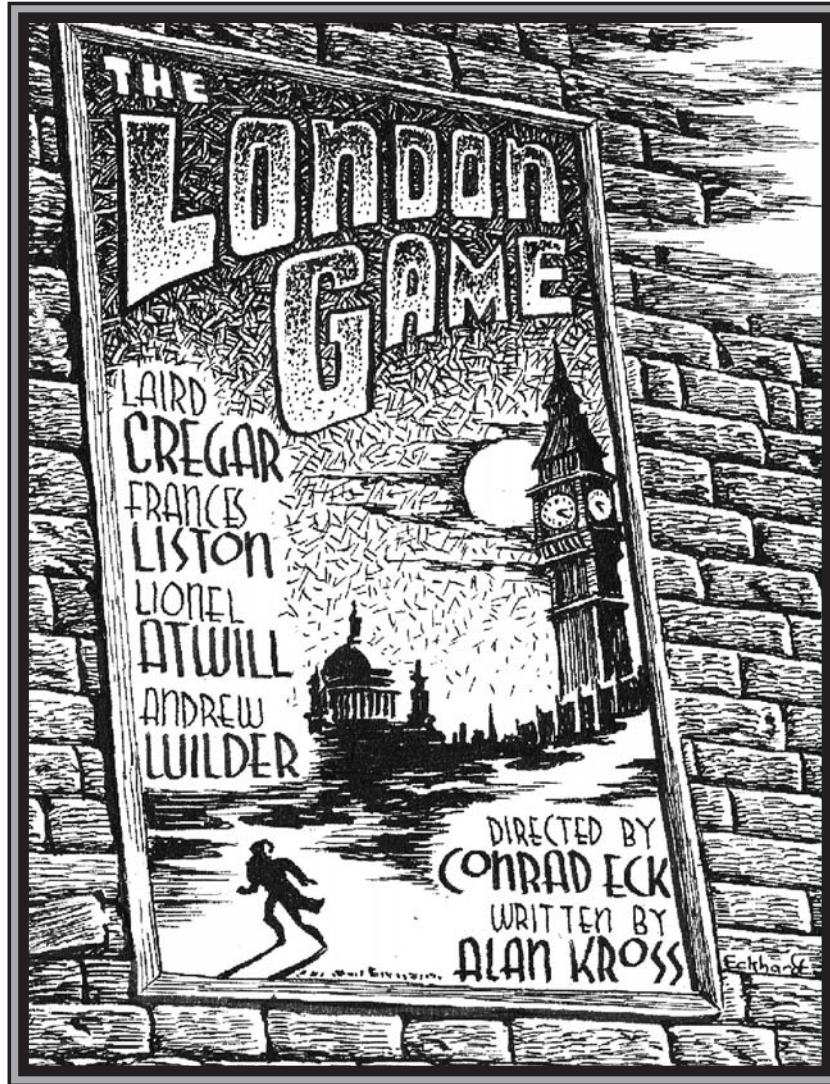
Regarding the La Llorona ghost and the various drownings and disappearances, Barry claims he has heard about them but

knows nothing other than what he's seen in the papers. If the investigators suggest that the ghost might be that of Frances Liston, a halved Psychology roll notices Barry briefly flinch. Pressed on the matter, he says he never thought about it that way, but with all the Liston items he owns, wouldn't she eventually come to haunt him? "It's a good thing I don't believe in ghosts!" he adds with a nervous laugh. If Kathy Philips is present, she is perturbed by these speculations, and quickly shushes Barry.

Barry Philips, possessed film fan, 33

STR 12 CON 12 SIZ 13 INT 15 POW 12
DEX 13 APP 13 EDU 20 SAN 0 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4



Weapons: *Fist* 55%, *1D3+db*, *Improvised Club* 25% *1D6+db*.

Skills: *Accounting* 35%, *Art (Film Lore)* 65%, *Credit Rating* 60%, *Dentistry* 70%, *Dodge* 35%, *First Aid* 45%, *Hide* 45%, *History* 35%, *Library/Internet Use* 50%, *Listen* 45%, *Medicine* 30%, *Persuade* 45%, *Psychology* 45%, *Sneak* 35%, *Spot Hidden* 55%, *Swim* 40%.

Languages: *English* 85%, *Spanish* 20%.

Kathy Philips

Barry's wife Kathy is small, perky, and chubby-faced, with blonde hair cut boyishly short. Kathy Philips is very outdoorsy, and loves to garden and play golf with her husband or girlfriends. She and Barry met and bonded because of their love for movies, though she isn't as fanatical about them as her husband. Still, she can hold her own when discussing movies with other people. Her real passions are gardening, sewing and cooking. She owns and operates Andrea's Flowers, downtown. Kathy bought the shop from Andrea Woolson when she retired, and decided to stick with the established name even though there's no Andrea there anymore. Kathy also spends time at the Frances Liston house, and she created or helped create several of the facsimile costumes displayed there.

Kathy Philips is friendly, but if the investigators start asking around town about her or her husband, she sours toward them. Discussions with her are afterward brief, cold, and unhelpful. Kathy can hold a grudge indefinitely if she thinks someone is talk-

ing behind her back.

The Keeper should subtly encourage the investigators' mistrust of Kathy Philips. She knows a great deal about Frances Liston, and unlike her obsessed husband, Kathy is female. If asked about the sightings of the Crying Woman's ghost and the recent disappearances and drownings, Kathy says she's not superstitious; she doesn't believe any of those ghost stories, and she thinks the drownings are usually drunken kids, and the disappearances could be the work of some Mexican serial killer. "Who knows who they're hiding in that part of town? Those silly ghost stories are probably just a way to cover up what's really going on."

Kathy knows nothing of the terrible force that has corrupted her husband, and would defend him against such charges unless presented with the irrefutable evidence. She believes his occasional nocturnal absences are spent at the Museum, cleaning or watching movies or what-have-you.

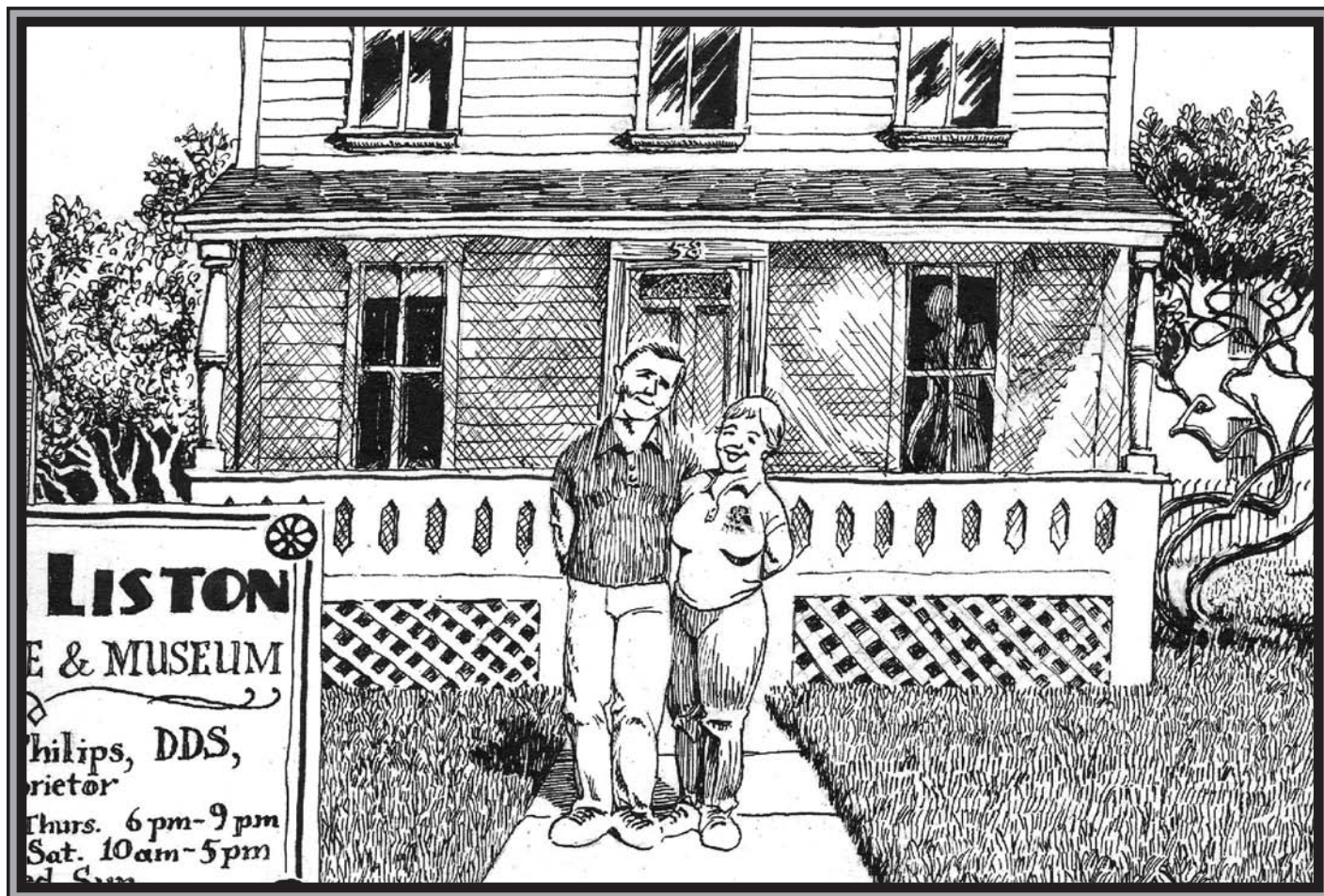
Kathy Phillips, devoted and loyal wife, 36

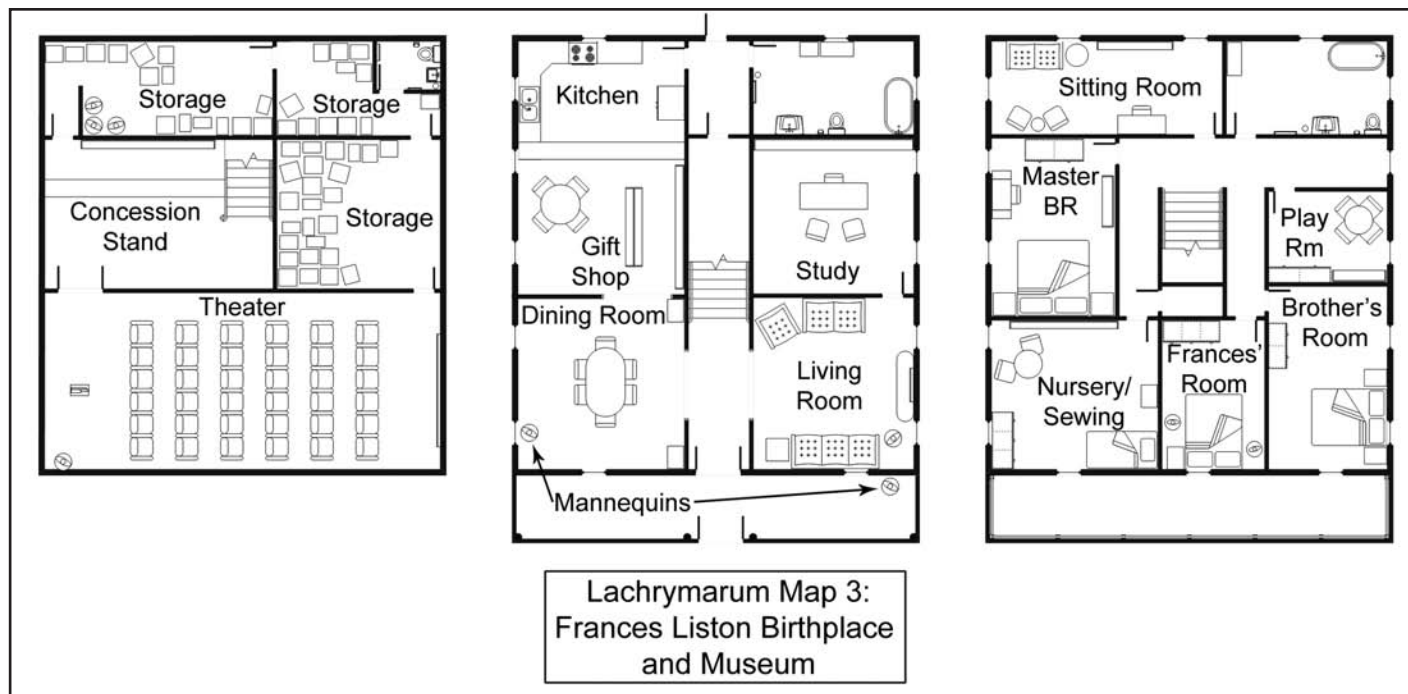
STR 11 CON 12 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 12 APP 11 EDU 16 SAN 55 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: *Fist* 55% *1D3+db*, *Kick* 40% *1D6+db*, *Improvised Club* 30% *1D6+db*.

Skills: *Accounting* 35%, *Art (Film Lore)* 40%, *Botany* 55%, *Craft (Sewing)* 40%, *Credit Rating* 35%, *Fast Talk* 35%, *Law* 15%, *Listen* 45%, *Natural History* 35%, *Psychology* 40%, *Spot Hidden* 35%.





Languages: *English* 65%, *Spanish* 25%.

Other Interested Parties

The following characters, as well as the previously described newspaperwoman Lauraine Sibbett and florist/film buff Kathy Philips, are intended to be introduced as possible suspects. The investigators should see Abby Gordon on their first drive through town, but her daughter only appears when the investigators begin asking around about the dotty old woman, or harassing her.

Abby Gordon

Abby Gordon is the slow-witted wisp of a woman the investigators saw walking in the rain on their first day in Baleford. Each day they spend in town, a random investigator should make a Luck roll. If it succeeds they see Abby at some point that day.

Abby walks the streets every day, rain or shine, running errands for her daughter Vanessa, and for other businesses, delivering newspapers, flowers, and such. She always walks, and never accepts rides from anyone but her daughter. Abby is sixty years old, but looks much older. She dresses drably, and is simple minded and timid.

If an investigator fails a Psychology roll while talking with her, she breaks into tears and a Fast Talk roll is needed to calm her down. Once the investigators have upset her, the word soon gets back to her feisty daughter, who tracks the investigators down and berates them for harassing her simple minded mother. If the investigators don't seem repentant enough, or they continue to pester Abby, Vanessa calls the Sheriff, who has them picked up and charged with harassment. A Law roll may extricate them from such charges, but unless a Persuade roll is made along with it, Sheriff Czerny and even Deputy Margulies end all cooperation with them.

Abby's constant perambulations about town should give the

investigators shocks and fits, as they try to separate sightings of the poor woman from those of the murderous ghost.

Vanessa Gordon Dukes

Vanessa Dukes is a beautiful woman in her late thirties, with long blonde hair, a slight but curvaceous build, and striking blue eyes. Vanessa works as a realtor in Baleford, and is married to Lester Dukes, the very wealthy owner of the Dukes Real Estate and Insurance Agency. They have a nine-year-old son, Nathaniel.

Vanessa is a very proud, forceful, even haughty woman. She is Abby Gordon's only child, and while she loves her mother and tries to watch out for her, she's also a little ashamed of Abby's dotty street-person image. Vanessa isn't above sending the sheriff after those who bother her mother, and she's feisty enough to push around or actually strike offenders if she thinks she can get away with it. She's not one to be taken lightly. Nevertheless, she is less argumentative and even deferential to anyone with a Credit Rating of 70% or higher.

Abby and Vanessa and Vanessa's son figure prominently in the events leading up to this scenario's conclusion, as described below.

Vanessa Gordon Dukes, fiery realtor, 39

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 11 INT 13 POW 13
DEX 14 APP 16 EDU 15 SAN 65 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: All at base percentages.

Skills: Accounting 45%, Bargain 45%, Credit Rating 55%, Fast Talk 45%, Law 25%, Library/Internet Use 35%, Listen 30%, Persuade 45%, Psychology 35%.

Languages: *English* 65%.

Events

This section outlines a number of incidents that befall the investigators as they research various cases and leads in rain drenched Baleford. The keeper should use these events and scenes as desired. They are presented here in order from most common and least malefic, to most dangerous.

Rain, Rain, Rain

There is a 70% chance of rain every day the investigators are in Baleford. The rain may range from a series of light showers to a raging torrent preceded or followed by hailstones. Thunder and lightning would be more common than clear sunny days.

To roughly determine the type of precipitation, roll D100: the higher the result, the more fierce and plentiful the rainfall. A roll of 34, for instance, might indicate a series of light showers, while a 78 could be a series of thunderstorms that start in the evening and don't let up till dawn.

Obviously all this rain should lead to more flooding, more water in basements, more ruined and muddy belongings on curbsides, more water in the streets—perhaps blocking off some areas—and more strain on the residents.

The Shadow

The investigators may begin their inquiries into Baleford's ghosts with the aid of local reporter Lauraine Sibbett, but within a day or two they're probably doing most of their own legwork. Lauraine, however, liked the excitement of "gumshoeing" with the ghost-hunters. She also relishes the idea of writing a story or two about these intrepid men and women. So when she has free time she may follow the investigators around town, usually cruising around looking for their rental car and then staking it out down the block or around the corner.

When this occurs, have the investigators make a group Spot Hidden roll (use the highest skill level, but award no skill check) which, if successful, notes either the vehicle or its owner lurking nearby. Confronted, Lauraine says she's merely getting material for a story. A failed Psychology roll may raise suspicion about her motives, but she's really just excited to be on the hunt.

If asked to stop, she agrees to not follow them anymore. Within a day or two, however, she's back to her tricks. "Just in the neighborhood," she says, "and thought I'd see how you guys were doing. What *are* you doing?" The second time she's caught she might back off, or, like the woman scorned, she might turn her efforts toward spreading less than flattering stories about her ungrateful former heroes.

Visitations

This is a series of very minor oddities designed to fray investigator nerves. For instance, an investigator may wake one morning to find a long dark hair or two in his sink or bathtub. But whose? The second or third time this happens the Keeper may want to call for a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity as the investigator ponders

who or what might have left the hairs.

Other unnerving possibilities include the investigator waking to find his pillow, bed, or the floor inexplicably wet. With all the rain and flooding going on, dampness may be expected, but these cases seem to be areas free from such leakage. The same thing may happen to an investigator's car: wet seats or floorboards even though the windows are all closed.

Another possible visit might cause an investigator to awaken in the middle of the night, certain he is not alone in the room. A dark figure stands silhouetted in the window. Switching on the light, they find no one there. Again, if the investigators seem spooked by these trivialities, assess a 0/1 point Sanity loss.

The Damn TV Again

Once again, the television in an investigator's room comes on in the middle of the night. This should be an investigator who was present when one or more of the two previous Sorrows, *Maters Tenebrarum* and *Suspiriorum*, were encountered and—presumably—slain. The program shown is again a black and white movie, which a halved Know roll guesses was made in the 1930s or 1940s.

Anyone who has seen photos of Frances Liston recognizes her as the lead actress in the scene. In it, Liston's character smolders with rage, glaring straight into the camera—straight at the investigator—as she holds a man at gunpoint. "I brought you here, Jeffrey. I tracked you down and lured you here. It was me. Because I know it was *you* who killed my sister. And now you're going to die like the dog you are, Jeffrey. I'm going to make you suffer." She shoots him in the stomach, and as he falls, groaning, she stands above him, smiling cruelly.

The television shuts off abruptly just as Liston's character looks up from the writhing victim to glare straight at the viewer. Turning the TV back on, the program is nowhere to be found, and a check of local programming shows nothing like it on the schedule. Viewing the mystery scene calls for a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity.

A successful Library/Internet Use roll finds the scene was from the movie *The Devil's Eyes*, in which Liston played a vengeful woman on the trail of the men who led her sister into a sordid life before she was eventually murdered. Liston's character starts the film as a heroic character, but her cruelty escalates until she kidnaps the final victim's son to lure him to his death. She kills the main villain, but is herself gunned down by the police. Learning the nature of the scene and the movie it comes from may trigger another loss of 0/1 Sanity, if the investigators seem unnerved by it. This episode was of course orchestrated as a taunt and a warning from *Mater Lachrymarum*.

Sightings

All through this adventure the investigators catch brief glimpses of the female spectres haunting the Baleford area, usually the white-clad, long-haired ghost La Llorona. There should even be a few daytime sightings. Many of these sightings will be fleeting glimpses that leave the witness uncertain about exactly what they saw. The following are examples the Keeper can use, ignore, or

alter as he or she sees fit.

1. As the investigators are driving, one of them sees what looks like a bedraggled figure in a white dress or similar outfit. The viewer loses sight of the figure when they pass behind a building. They may not see the figure again when they attempt to find it. Or it may turn out to be Abby Gordon.

2. In a torrential downpour, an investigator sees a hazy figure in the distance. It may vanish when they seek it out, or it may again turn out to be Abby Gordon.

3. Crossing over the Vista Bridge, an investigator sees a long-haired figure on the riverbank slowly walk into the waters and sink into the river without a trace. This may call for a Sanity loss of 0/1 points.

4. Similarly, in some area where the floodwaters are nearly waist deep, the investigators see the familiar white-clad phantom wading into the waters, slowly dropping out of sight. Searching the waters finds no trace of the figure. Again, this may call for a Sanity loss of 0/1 points.

5. An investigator entering his hotel bathroom, or perhaps using a public restroom somewhere, is shocked to see a grim figure reflected in the mirror, standing behind him. The awful shade wears a long white dress, and her long dark hair hangs wet and stringy, partly hiding her pale, ghastly face. Whirling, the investigator finds no one in the room with them. Optionally, when they turn back to the mirror the apparition is still there, now reaching out for the hapless investigator. She may disappear if the investigator turns around again, or she may growl some threat before departing. For example: “Where are your children?” This calls for a Sanity loss of 1/1D4 Sanity points.

6. In some wooded area, the investigators catch sight of the woman in the pale dress moving among the trees. The ghost may appear only once, or lead them a merry chase through the wet woods, appearing and disappearing, perhaps attempting to get them lost or lead them into a physical confrontation on a slippery riverbank. This might call for a Sanity loss of 0/1 points.

Encounters with La Llorona

Unlike previous chapters, where the Sorrows sisters sought to tempt individual investigators into surrendering their lives to them, Mater Lachrymarum seeks only to cause the suffering and death of her sisters’ murderers. She has lured the investigators here to drive them mad and kill them, but her nature dictates that she must deal particularly cruelly with unwary children and negligent parents. If an investigator has children of his own, this makes her hate them all the more—she’ll go out of her way to torment them with threats against the children.

Strangled

One possible physical encounter is a variation on the bathroom scene described above. Instead of a mere reflection, however, La Llorona actually physically attempts to strangle the investigator. If a strangled investigator is brought to 0 or fewer Hit Points, they pass out, regaining Hit Points at the rate of 1 per hour until healed of the strangling damage. Their throat bears black bruises

from La Llorona’s deadly grip. Alternately, she may merely grab him for a moment or two and whisper in his ear “Where are your children? I can see them, you know. And I can do more than that,” before vanishing. In any event, the only traces left of her visit are faucets left running and water pooling on the floor.

Drowned

Another possibility occurs in some place with deep standing water. As the investigators wade through or around the deep water, La Llorona rises from the pool, silent and dripping, perhaps right behind an investigator. A halved Listen roll may detect her coming, otherwise she gets an initial strangling attack at +25% to her skill level. Again, she may relax her grip before the investigator is dead, or linger just long enough to utter some threat or oath. Or she may simply grab hold of her victim and, smiling malevolently, begin sinking into the water, dragging her prey down with her. Other investigators can add half their STR (the water handicaps their efforts) to the victim’s STR to break her grasp, otherwise he or she begins Drowning on the second round of the attack. Note that even if the Mother of Tears is slain by the investigators in one of these preliminary skirmishes, she isn’t truly dead, and in fact her body sinks into the waters and vanishes.

Confrontation

La Llorona may also try to lead the investigators into a confrontation on the slick banks of the Vista River. This might start with a report of a sighting along the river, or it may result from a chase during such a sighting, or it may happen when the investigators join a search party for a recently vanished victim. The Crying Woman may step out from behind a tree, leap down from a higher bank, or crawl up out of the river. She may try to strangle an investigator, knock him into the river to drag him down and drown him, or she may cast spells such as Tears of Death on her enemies.

Reduced to her last few Hit Points—even 0 or less—Mater Lachrymarum makes one last strike against her foes. She makes two final claw attacks, but instead of inflicting damage each success gives her a 30% chance to successfully hurl her and her target into the river. The investigator’s resistance to this attack is in the form of a negative modifier to her success, equal to the lower of either his STR or DEX. If she misses with both her attacks, she throws only herself into the black waters, but if at least one claw hits she has a 30% chance, minus the investigator’s STR or DEX, of taking them with her. If the investigator goes into the river he begins making Drowning rolls next round, and the mocking skull of the Mother of Tears silently laughs at him as they sink. Each round the investigator must roll STR vs. STR to break free, and if he succeeds a Swim roll is needed to reach shore.

The Flood

As the situation with La Llorona escalates, weather related events may also cause difficulties for the investigators. Talk in the town turns to streets impassable due to standing water, and the increasing likelihood that the water treatment plant may be overrun and

be contaminated by the floodwaters. If this happens, the town's water supply is rendered undrinkable, and bottled supplies in the stores quickly run out.

Investigators driving in town may need to make Drive Auto rolls to keep from stalling in the deeper waters, or they may need to make wide detours, or even be forced to wade or even boat to some sites. Residents in low lying areas such as the eastern and southern parts of town, and the Seven Hawks Resort, may be advised to evacuate. While many of the Hispanic residents won't leave or can't afford to, some families who might have information about previous cases may evacuate to stay with relatives elsewhere. As the scenario's climax nears, there is ominously hushed talk of the town levees breaching.

One minor benefit of the encroaching flood is that response time from local law enforcement is somewhat slow, as they have their hands full with other problems, and the streets are a mess. Unless it's an emergency, it could be several minutes before a Sheriff's deputy arrives at the scene of any trouble. Of course, this could also be a serious problem, if something like medical attention is needed.

More Victims

The Mother of Tears and her avatars may seek further victims after the investigators' arrival in Baleford. La Llorona may try to capture and drown an unwary adult, and Frances Liston may again possess Barry Philips and attempt to abduct and murder a young child.

La Llorona

The night before La Llorona takes a victim, several Hispanic residents hear her eerie wailing cry up and down the eastern reaches of the Vista River. At least one non-Hispanic confesses to the investigators that he or she also heard it, perhaps Lauraine Sibbet, Deputy Margulies, a member of the hotel staff, or a worker from the meatpacking plant.

An investigator staying at the hotel near the river hears it in the night if he or she makes a halved Listen roll. It is a weird moaning call that sounds like a woman wailing and crying. Hearing the Wailing Woman's cry calls for a loss of 0/1D3 Sanity points. If the investigators have spoken with the residents in the Hispanic district or the Latino workers at the packing plant, one or more of them contact the investigators to report the sound and warn that it means La Llorona will strike again soon.

The investigators may decide to patrol the northeastern part of town to meet La Llorona's attack. In this case, if a random investigator succeeds in a halved Luck roll, they are in the vicinity when the attack comes. The victim is 75% likely to be Hispanic, 75% likely to be male, and 50% likely to be an adult. Each investigator needs to make a successful Dodge roll to reach the spectre and her victim before she can reach the river. This reflects slogging through water and slipping along the muddy banks. If all the Dodge rolls fail, the investigators arrive in time to see La Llorona walk into the swirling waters hand in hand with her enthralled prey, or perhaps carrying a child victim. They may dive in to try

and save the victim, but predator and prey have both disappeared in the muddy water.

The body is found somewhere along the river 1D3 days later, dead by drowning. Witnessing this tragedy causes a loss of 1/1D4 Sanity points. If they arrive in time, the investigators can confront La Llorona, who abandons her victim and turns to deal with the meddlers with a spell or two, or possibly a brief physical attack before diving or wading into the river. As in the Encounters section above, even if brought to 0 Hit Points she is not slain, and her body slips into the waters and disappears.

La Llorona may try to take more than one such victim during the investigators' stay, but if she is thwarted by them her next target may be in a different part of town, or she may try to kill an investigator.

Barry Philips

Mater Lachrymarum's crime comes with no warning. Somewhere in town in the early evening, Barry Philips, dressed in Frances Liston's clothing and wig, finds a child left unattended for just a moment, and in that moment he mesmerizes the child and walks away with him or her.

The child is 1D6+2 years old and almost certainly caucasian, with even odds of a boy or a girl. If a random investigator rolls his POW or less on D100, someone saw a strange looking woman with long dark hair in the area, possibly walking with the child, otherwise no one sees anything strange in the area. Within 2D4 x10 minutes all of Baleford has heard the sirens of the Sheriff's vehicles and knows at the very least that a child is missing. Small bands of volunteers begin searching the area where the child vanished.

Meanwhile, Philips knows he can't risk getting caught driving to his riverside burial site with the missing child, so he strangles the still-dazed child and dumps the body in pool of standing water in one of the town's southern residential districts. The body is found 1D6+2 hours later. Due to the watery dump site, forensic trace evidence is unlikely to be useful if even possible.

From abduction to return to the Liston Museum, Barry Philips has been gone less than thirty minutes. If the investigators suspect Philips, his wife, or Frances Liston, and hurry to the Museum, they find Barry Philips there, with the usual 25% chance Kathy is present as well. Barry has changed clothes in the car, quietly entered the museum by the back door, and gone down to the basement to hide Frances' clothes and wig in the locked storage room.

If here, Kathy has no idea how long Barry's been there. Barry claims to have been here for a couple of hours sorting some photos in the basement. A Psychology roll notes that Barry seems nervous, and if asked about it he hems and haws, but finally admits he's just been in contact with a movie memorabilia dealer in Los Angeles, and he's scored a nice copy of the original one-sheet movie poster for Frances Liston's first film, *In League With the Night*, for a price of \$1200.

If Kathy is present, she is furious, and an argument ensues. If Kathy isn't here, Barry says she's going to kill him when she finds out. If the investigators don't believe the story, allow a halved Psy-

chology roll to detect the false pretenses. With a few days' research, a successful Library/Internet Use roll, and quite a few phone calls, they find no traces of anyone selling such an item—at any price. Afterward, Barry won't discuss the issue, citing the row it started with Kathy. It suffices to say, they won't be buying the poster, whether or not the investigators believe him or not.

If they accuse him or Kathy or Liston's ghost of killing the child, Barry angrily asks why they're looking for a ghost here when the Mexicans already have one that goes around killing people as it is. "How many ghosts do you think this town has, anyway?" Such accusations almost certainly cause Kathy to report the investigators' harassment of her family to the Sheriff.

The Storm

The remainder of this scenario outlines the events that transpire once the Keeper decides to bring the adventure to a close. The investigators should have been given enough time to meet the various characters, research the murders and disappearances, suffer a few smaller scares, encounter La Llorona, nominate a few suspects, and perhaps investigate a new drowning or disappearance. Now, in one final day, all Hell breaks loose in Baleford. All Hell and two levees, that is.

The final day begins before dawn, as a tremendous thunderstorm bombards the region. The rains are heavier than ever, and the lightning and thunder crashes. Local radio news reports warn that the levees are in serious danger, and that residents along the river and in low lying areas need to evacuate now. A sandbag effort has begun north of the hotel, and city workers and volunteers rush to reinforce the levee in the downpour. The investigators might make a few points if they go help out with this effort. Each volunteer may add his or her POW x1% to any communication skills used later in the adventure.

In any event the streets are now impassable in many areas, and several residents don hip boots and waders to get around. In other areas, boats and canoes haul passengers and supplies in or out of homes.

The First Victim

Late in the morning, as the investigators either aid the sandbagging effort or continue their inquiries, shocking news trickles through town: Lester and Vanessa Dukes' little boy Nathaniel is missing. The investigators may get more details from contacts such as Lauraine Sibbett or Deputy Margulies, or with a visit or call to the Sheriff's Department and a successful Law roll. The boy was apparently playing in the fenced-in yard of the Dukes' home near the Seven Hawks Resort, and when his mother went to look for him he was gone. The Sheriff has sent a couple of deputies to organize search parties in the area of the resort, especially with the levees almost certain to be overrun.

The investigators barely get within a few blocks of the Dukes' home before the streets turn to rivers, forcing them to wade the

rest of the way. A few blocks later they find a parked Sheriff's vehicle, and here and there men and women searching yards, alleys, and storm drains.

At the Dukes' house, Lester Dukes' mother Norah is holding down the fort, fielding phone calls and messages. She says Les and Vanessa are out looking for the boy. She only knows that Nathan is missing, nothing more. If the Keeper wishes, the investigators can join the search party and perhaps even meet and confer with the Dukes, but sadly they have no information, and in any case, everyone is looking in the wrong place.

Vanessa's poor dotty mother, Abby Gordon, came to see her grandson this morning, unannounced, and together the two of them went back to Abby's apartment for the lunch Vanessa had agreed to several weeks ago but had forgotten in all the current excitement. Abby and Nathan show up later, but not before their absence has caused more trouble for the town.

When the Levee Breaks...

A little after noon, the eastern levee is breached and floodwaters pour into the northeastern and eastern parts of Baleford. Car travel in the eastern half of town is now impossible, as water levels range from knee- to chest-deep. Homes are ruined, cars are submerged, and residents both caucasian and Hispanic find themselves wading and boating to safety. Two local churches in the southern part of town set up refugee shelters, and while hundreds make use of them, dozens and dozens of others load up what they can and flee southward out of town. Local news radio now urges all residents to consider evacuating as soon as possible, as more storms and rain are coming.

If the investigators seek a Hispanic witness whom they've previously spoken to, they'll need a halved Luck roll to find him or her in one of the shelters, otherwise he or she has left town. Esteban Rodriguez, however, remains in the Hispanic district, coordinating evacuation efforts from a borrowed canoe.

The Museum

If the investigators suspect the Dukes boy may have been kidnapped by Barry or Kathy Philips, a visit to the Frances Liston Museum finds Barry's car parked outside but the place is locked. Banging on the door eventually raises a perturbed Barry, who claims to be moving things out of the basement and off the first floor.

If the investigators push their way in, they find Barry's telling the truth: several posters and other items from the screening room are scattered in the kitchen and dining room. Barry is angry and threatens to call the Sheriff as the investigators search the place.

In the basement, water has begun to trickle in along the walls. The three mannequins dressed as The Sorrows are now gone, but other than this and the items moved upstairs, nothing has changed. Nathaniel Dukes is not here. Asked his wife's whereabouts, Barry says Kathy is preparing for the flood down at the flower shop. If they call or go down there, the place is empty, there is no answer.

The Second Victim

Late in the afternoon, the storm again worsens, and thunder, lightning, and hail pummel Baleford relentlessly. The day prematurely darkens to dusk. The desperate search for Nathan Dukes continues, as does the evacuation of the city. A little after 5 p.m. an investigator known to Esteban Rodriguez receives a cellphone call badly chopped up by static. “My friend...has come again...orona...Veronica Ferrara has...family...Please help us. I’m at Lincoln Stree...and Seven...need a boat or canoe...one waiting for...” Neither caller can hear the other, but an Idea roll recalls Lincoln Street passes through the center of the Hispanic district.

Car travel is impossible in the eastern half of town, so unless the investigators can commandeer a boat from someone’s yard, they’ll have to wade several blocks to get to the Hispanic district. If they walk, each investigator should roll his POW x4 to avoid stumbling or stepping on some submerged object that sprains an ankle or gashes a calf or some similar mishap. Damage for failed rolls is 2D3–1. If they look for a boat or canoe to steal, allow the lowest POW investigator a halved Luck roll, and if successful they find some sort of suitable vessel. Roll D100 and consult the following table.

- 01–10 = a jet ski that carries two people
- 11–35 = a canoe that can carry four people
- 36–75 = a flat hulled fishing boat with room for four
- 76–00 = a high powered cruiser that holds six

A Navigate roll is needed to reach the rendezvous point indicated by Esteban’s call. Each failure adds fifteen minutes to the time required to get there. A successful Pilot Boat roll is also needed to reach the rendezvous. Failing such a roll ruins a jet ski and the second such failure leaves a canoe or fishing boat swamped, while a third failure leaves a larger craft with a disabled motor.

For every failed Navigate roll, the investigator with the lowest Spot Hidden roll should attempt his skill roll. Allow one roll even if all their Navigate rolls have succeeded. If the Spot Hidden is successful, the investigator sees a bedraggled wet female figure walking with a child a block or so distant. Moving to investigate, they find Abby Gordon and her grandson Nathan Dukes walking hand in hand, skirting deep puddles, on their way back home after their day-long lunch date. A quick call to the Sheriff brings help in 2D3 x5 minutes. There is a 50% chance it is either Sheriff Czerny or Deputy Margulies, and if the investigators have alienated either of them earlier, they have now redeemed themselves. They are free to continue to Lincoln Street.

When the investigators finally arrive at the rendezvous point, they find Robert Larriva instead of Esteban Rodriguez. Esteban has gone looking for the missing Ferrara girl, Veronica, age ten. Larriva says La Llorona has taken her. Rodriguez has left Larriva and a canoe to guide them in their search.

Blackout, and Deep Trouble

As they begin their search for the missing Ferrara girl, the city suddenly goes totally dark as the power fails and all the lights in town wink out. The investigators and their fellow searchers are now left in blackness as the lightning slashes the night above them.

If they haven’t found Abby Gordon and Nathan Dukes yet, allow a random investigator a Spot Hidden roll to catch a brief lightning–strobed glimpse of two figures struggling along the dark, water choked street. If they investigate the sighting, they find Abby and Nathan, and can call for help, as described above.

If the Spot Hidden roll fails, instead of Abby and her grandson the investigators come across two search parties, one white, one Latino. Neither side knows if either victim is still missing. Each group has 2D3 members and 1D2 boats, and they are shouting threats and curses at each other as they jostle each others’ vessels. Even in these harrowing circumstances, when all are suffering the same tragedies, human hatred boils to the surface.

Unless the investigators somehow intervene, the two groups spill into the water and begin flailing at each other, each side blaming the other for the disappearance of their own. Oars and fists flail about in the water—a knife flashes. If the brawl is allowed to continue at least one person is killed, and others are badly injured. An investigator firing a gun gains their attention, otherwise a successful Fast Talk is needed to halt the melee. Don’t forget to add an investigator’s POW x1% if he or she helped in the sandbagging detail earlier.

Typical Search Party Members

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
STR	15	12	13	14	9	14	13	10
CON	14	13	12	13	14	9	12	12
SIZ	12	14	12	17	13	11	13	14
INT	11	12	13	11	16	14	12	14
POW	11	6	13	10	11	9	11	9
DEX	8	15	10	10	12	12	13	10
HP	13	14	12	15	14	10	13	13
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	0	+1D4	+1D4	0

Weapons: *Fist* 60% 1D3, *Improvised Club* 35% 1D6, *Boat Oar* 25% 1D8, *Knife* (#s 3 and 8 only) 35% 1D6.

Skills: *Pilot Boat* 45%, *Spot Hidden* 35%, *Swim* 45%.

If the investigators still haven’t found Abby and Nathan by now, the pair are located by other search parties on the other side of town.

La Llorona at Last

As the investigators search for Veronica Ferrara, they again receive a phone call from Esteban Rodriguez. A search party reports they have seen La Llorona carrying a child on the north end of town, far from where Esteban is searching along the Vista River. The investigators are closer, and perhaps more qualified to deal with the spectral abductor. They can take their watercrafts only so far

into the downtown area before the waters grow too shallow. Only canoes can be dragged through the shallows.

As they cross the dark, deserted downtown area, they see a white clad figure in the gloom, the burdened creature crossing a flooded parking lot. If they shout or otherwise draw its attention, the creature drops motionless Veronica Ferrara into the water and turns to face them.

In the brief flashes of lightning and whatever other light sources they have, La Llorona is a terrifying figure—a dead, drowned thing in a mud streaked white dress. Her skin is as pale and mottled as a frog’s belly, her stringy black hair shrouds her grimacing face, and her eyes reflect a solid black. Seeing her calls for a loss of 1/2D3 points of Sanity, and anyone failing their roll loses their first round of action as those dead black eyes glare straight into his or her soul.

Each investigator should also make a halved Spot Hidden roll, and those succeeding sense something not quite right about her—she seems strangely familiar. Such musings are irrelevant at the moment, as La Llorona strides forward to attack. “You’re going to drown,” she growls at an investigator who has children. “And then I’m going to drown your child.”

If attacked, La Llorona uses spells against her foes, notably Tears of Death. She is unaffected by firearms and takes only half damage from most other weapons, but full damage from magic and magic weapons. She may well kill an investigator or two before she falls, and if the Keeper decides the combat is going too badly for the investigators, La Llorona may “give up the ghost” when she has taken more than 75% of her Hit Points. In any case, when she is defeated, she collapses into the water and begins to sink. If an investigator wishes, he can try to grab at the submerging body, but all he grabs is a handful of hair—which pulls away easily. It is a wig.

La Llorona, ghost of Mexican folklore, 27

STR 20 CON 30 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 30
DEX 16 APP 13/7 EDUNA SAN NA HP 21

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Fist/Claw* (x2) 65% 1D4+db, *strangle* 65% 1D8 per round, *Grapple* 75%/ La Llorona may try to grapple a victim and sink into the water to drown him or her STR vs. STR contest to break her grip each round, or the Drowning procedure begins on the second round of the attack.

Skills: Dodge 55%, Hide 55% 90% in water at least knee deep, Listen 55%, Psychology 70%, Spot Hidden 75%, Swim 100%.

Languages: Spanish 100%.

Armor: La Llorona takes no damage from firearms. Fire and all other non—magical attacks do half damage. Magic weapons and spells do normal damage.

Spells: *Tears of Death**, *Wail of La Llorona***, *Contact Mater Lachrymarum*, *Create Zombie*, *Deflect Harm*, *Grasp of Cthulhu*, *Mesmerize*, *Power Drain*, *Send Dreams*, *Wrack*.



Sanity Loss: *It costs 1/2D3 Sanity points to see the drowned Crying Woman, La Llorona. Note that she can also appear as a normal, if strangely detached—seeming young woman with APP 13.*

****Anyone hearing La Llorona's eerie wail loses 0/1D3 points of Sanity.**

Little Veronica Ferrara is unconscious but alive. If the investigators didn't find the black wig while groping for La Llorona's corpse, when they wade in to rescue Veronica one of them feels something wrap around his submerged hand—Sanity loss is 0/1. It's the wig, of course.

However they find it, an Idea roll recalls the large number of black-haired wigs in the Frances Liston Museum. And this triggers another realization: La Llorona looked strangely familiar because she looked very much like the aged Frances Liston. If they don't think of it themselves, give them another Idea roll to wonder whether or not they should go check on the Museum to make sure the bitch is really dead. Robert Larriva can take care of the little girl if the investigators decide to go to the Museum.

Because this show's not over yet. Frances Liston has one last role to play—Mater Lachrymarum.

Curtain Call: Mater Lachrymarum

The storm continues as the investigators go to check on the Liston Museum. The front door is locked (STR 18), but the back door is ajar, and rain is pooling on the floor in the back hallway. It's pitch black inside, and the power is still out. A trail of wet footprints leads through the hall, into the kitchen, the dining room, the front hall, up the stairs, through the upstairs hallway and into Frances Liston's room. All along the way Spot Hidden rolls note wet handprints—some tinged with blood—on the doorframes and walls. Throughout the house, the various Liston mannequins watch balefully as the investigators follow the wet trail.

Upstairs, in Frances Liston's room, a dress-clad figure sits hunched over at the vanity table, head in hands, a pool of bloody water accumulating beneath them. It is Barry Philips, his face streaked with mascara, his ragged form oozing blood from several wounds. He is wearing the same dress La Llorona was wearing when she fought the investigators not long ago, and his wounds are the same ones investigators inflicted upon her.

Realizing the dentist was somehow La Llorona costs 1/1D4 Sanity points. He doesn't answer to the name Barry, insisting his name is Frances, and that they should leave him alone. It shouldn't take a Psychoanalysis roll to see he's now totally insane. A Medicine or halved First Aid roll, however, notes that Philips is very badly injured, in fact dying before their eyes. Another Medicine or halved First Aid roll saves his life for now, but he needs serious medical attention soon. Barry doesn't resist, regardless of what the investigators do to him. If an investigator tries to speak with him and makes a successful Psychology roll, Barry has a brief moment of lucidity. "Her face. You'll never be

able to stop her as long as she can see her own face."

As they ponder the devastated Philips, each investigator should attempt a Listen roll. Those who fail hear nothing but the battering storm outside. Those rolling less than half their skill hear running footsteps somewhere on the second floor. Anyone with a normal success hears voices coming from downstairs, including the phrase: "Leave him. He's finished."

Checking the upstairs rooms they find almost nothing out of order. A Spot Hidden roll notices that some of the dolls seem to have been moved from where they were on previous visits. If the investigators are clever—or very paranoid—they might trash the dolls and prevent their later animation by the Mother of Tears. If they do, they find concealed beneath the dolls a couple pairs of scissors and several knitting needles. This unnerving discovery calls for a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity. They may also think to destroy the mannequins as a further pre-emptive measure. As they destroy the dolls and mannequins, the voice from below—for now they know it comes from the basement—chides: "That's low even for you."

The investigators may also decide to act on Barry Philips' cryptic statement about not being able to stop Lachrymarum as long as she can see her face. There are countless photographs and posters of Frances Liston throughout the museum, and the investigators may think to systematically destroy each and every one of them as they pass through the house. Or they may remember the large oil painting of Liston in the living room downstairs.

As they carry out this wholesale vandalism, the voice from below calls: "Heathens! Animals! Have you no respect? You'll pay for that!" and so on. Unfortunately, none of these photos, poster images, or paintings are really her face, merely others' depictions of it. Barry was referring to the only place where Frances Liston could actually see her own face—the vanity mirror in her bedroom. If the investigators break that mirror, Mater Lachrymarum's physical form becomes vulnerable to all weapons, weakening her as she is forced to take that form as a last resort. When they break the mirror the voice from below warns: "That's bad luck, you know. And you certainly don't need any more of that."

"Come on, I'm waiting," the voice eventually snaps.

The Voice in the Basement

Anyone who has heard Frances Liston's voice recognizes the perfect diction, the commanding tone. "You murdered my sisters, and now it's Judgement Day." A halved Idea roll realizes these are all lines from her different films, which calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity points.

In the basement, a flickering glow emanates from the screening room. Inside, the film projector throws its black and white magic against the screen. An Idea roll recalls that the power is out all across the city—so how is this possible? Again, call for a Sanity roll for a loss of 0/1 point.

Note that as soon as the investigators enter the basement, Mater Lachrymarum casts the Seal House spell, described later in this adventure. This prevents anyone from leaving the house—or entering it—via the ground floor, at least, for a number of minutes equal to Lachrymarum's POW. The Mother of Tears has fifty minutes to dispatch her cornered foes. Note also that Mater Lachrymarum's animation of intact dolls and mannequins costs her no Magic Points while



in this stronghold. The only Magic Points she expends are those she uses to reform ruined mannequins and dolls, and to cast spells, including Seal House.

On the screen, the angry form of Frances Liston paces back and forth, glaring at the investigators, her form and attire constantly changing as images from all her films play seamlessly together. Even the dialogue is looped from various sources. Viewing this bizarre manifestation, and understanding the nature of the entity behind it, costs each investigator 1/1D4 Sanity points.

"It's good to finally meet you," Liston says from the screen. "None of you will leave this house alive. You murdered my sister in the Three Sisters Building. You murdered my sister in the Garden of Sand and Bone. And now I have brought you here to die. And die you shall."

Liston begins casting attack spells from the screen, an all out murderous assault. With the death of her first victim she shouts "For Mater Tenebrarum!" The second: "For Mater Suspiriorum!" The third: "Por La Llorona!" Fourth: "And this one was mine. And their children shall be mine. For I am Mater Lachrymarum, the Mother of Tears, and all children belong to me!" Mater Lachrymarum adds the POW of each slain victim to her Magic Points.

The investigators can attack the screen, but it has no effect, as the image is still projected on the wall behind the torn surface. The obvious solution is to destroy the projector, done easily enough by pushing it over sideways or shoving it off the table on which it stands. Note, however, that anyone passing in front of the projector for even a second is struck by its beam and loses 1D6 points of permanent POW. When the projector crashes to the floor, the beam winks out, leaving

the building once again in utter, silent darkness for several moments.

"And now I'm free," purrs the voice, followed by a peal of laughter that chills everyone to the bone. Sanity loss is 1/1D3, and—assuming the investigators haven't destroyed the mannequins and dolls upstairs—Listen rolls hear the patter of many footsteps on the floor above.

If the investigators linger in the basement they are attacked by two mannequins from the screening room and storage area behind the concession stand. The Mother of Tears can only animate one such figure at a time, attacking with it until it is destroyed, then sending another against the investigators. If the mannikins in the basement are destroyed and the ones upstairs still intact, Lachrymarum sends them down, one after another, attacking the investigators. If the investigators have already destroyed all the mannequins and dolls upstairs, Mater Lachrymarum can repair and reanimate one at a cost of 4 Magic Points for a doll, or 11 Points for a mannequin. She may wait to do this until the investigators come upstairs, and when she does she may have the reconstituted figure lie motionless where the investigators left it. Lachrymarum can then cast more spells at the investigators, undetected unless a Spot Hidden roll notes the faint glow in the mannequin's eyes from Mater Lachrymarum's animating spirit.

Seeing the first animated doll or mannequin costs 0/1D3 Sanity points.

Animated Doll

STR 6 CON 6 SIZ 4 INT 7 POW 1
DEX 10 APP NA EDU NA SAN NA HP 5
Move 8

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Grapple and Trip 35% 1D3—1, Knitting Needle 45% 1D3—1, Scissors 40% 1D4—1.

Armor: Half damage from impaling weapons.

Animated Mannequin

STR 9 CON 10 SIZ 11 INT 7
POW 1*
DEX 7 APP NA EDU NA SAN NA HP 11
Move 8

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: Strangle 35% 1D4 per round (STR vs. STR to break free).

Armor: Half damage from impaling weapons.

***Spells:** Mater Lachrymarum can cast her spells through any mannequin that hasn't been destroyed.

Mater Lachrymarum, Mother of Tears, 43

STR 20 CON 35 SIZ 13 INT 25 POW 50
DEX 15 APP 7 EDU NA SAN NA HP 24

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Fist/Claw (x2) 65% 1D6_db, Strangle 65% 1D6 per round. Throw Victim 70% 1D4+db, Any weapon at 50%—60% as desired, damage as per weapon.

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 100%, Dodge 45%, Hide 55%, Listen 75%, Occult 100%, Persuade 85%, Psychology 90%, Spot Hidden 95%.

Languages: All Languages 90%.

Armor: The Mother of Tears takes no damage from firearms. Fire and all other non-magical attacks do half damage. Magic weapons and spells do normal damage.

Spells: Tears of Death*, Seal House*, Alter Weather, Breath of the Deep, Cloud Memory, Contact Mater Suspiriorum, Contact Mater Tenebrarum, Create Zombie, Deflect Harm, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Grasp of Cthulhu, Implant Fear, Mindblast, Nightmare, Power Drain, Send Dreams, Shrivelling, Wrack.

Sanity Loss: It costs 1/1D6 Sanity points to meet Mater Lachrymarum, if her true nature is known.

There may come a standoff moment when the Mother of Tears has run out of Magic Points. Powerless until she regenerates her Magic Points, she may be unable to do anything more to her enemies. The investigators, meanwhile, are trapped in the house until her Seal House spell wears off. Since she only sealed off the ground floor, they can escape through an upstairs window, perhaps dropping off the front porch roof. The maddened Lachrymarum, however, has one last option available to her, and she uses it if it looks like the investigators may escape.

Mater Lachrymarum's physical form is that of the bloated, rheumy-eyed harridan that was Frances Liston late in life. It is this form which steps forth from the shadows in one final bid to avenge her murdered sisters. It is the drowned version of this form that has been haunting Baleford for decades, as La Llorona.

When Lachrymarum finally appears, all seeing her lose 1/1D4 points of Sanity. If the investigators broke her vanity mirror, she is vulnerable to all weapons. Otherwise she takes no dam-

age from firearms, half damage from fire and most other weapons, and full damage from magic and magic weapons.

Lachrymarum claws, strangles, and hurls her opponents around the house in a frenzied battle to the death. If Mater Lachrymarum is destroyed, her physical form flickers into black and white static then vanishes, leaving the survivors panting and bleeding in the dark house.

Moments later, there is a loud pounding on the front door. Outside in the storm, Kathy Philips is hammering on the door, unable to enter because of the Seal House spell. She is shocked, even frightened, when she sees the investigators. She screams at them, asking where Barry is, and what they've done to him. She gets out her cellphone and calls the Sheriff, never taking her eyes off the investigators. 2D4 x5 minutes later two boats carrying Sheriff Czerny and three deputies show up. By then the Seal House spell has worn off, and the investigators can leave if they wish. When they open the door Kathy rushes in to look for her husband. If the investigators tried to treat his wounds, he may have survived to this point. Whatever she finds, it won't make her happy.

The investigators and Kathy Philips are handcuffed and taken into custody by the Sheriff. Barry Philips, if he survives, is taken to a nearby city for medical attention. All are considered persons of interest in the recent disappearances and murders.

Baleford is still in the grip of the flood. But the nightmares it suffered through La Llorona, the ghost of Frances Liston, and the Mother of Tears are over. With the coming dawn, questions are going to be asked, mysteries solved, and terrible truths revealed.

The Days After

Kathy Philips claims the investigators are responsible for her husband's wounds or, if he dies, his murder. To avoid prosecution, the investigators need to convince authorities that Barry Philips was responsible for at least some of the recent murders and disappearances in Baleford. If Barry survived, he still claims to be Frances Liston, and his mental state is a huge mark in favor of the investigators' claims.

The investigators can bring in Robert Larriva to confirm their claim they fought off someone or something trying to abduct Veronica Ferrara. If they called the Sheriff at that point, and left the wig with Larriva as proof, this is further evidence against Barry or someone from the Liston Museum.

Other points in the investigators' favor might include finding Abby Gordon and her grandson on that fateful night, assisting the sandbagging efforts, saving an earlier victim from La Llorona, or if any of their own numbers were slain by one of Baleford's bizarre horrors.

Let the investigators make their case, but keep in mind that other than the wig, there is no physical evidence which links Barry Philips to any of the crimes. If the Keeper desires, however, some trace evidence may be found either on Veronica Ferrara's clothes, or at the earlier victims' riverside gravesite, or another disposal site which links Philips to the crimes, confirming the investigators' claims.

*Two New Spells

TEARS OF DEATH: This combat spell is known to Mater Lachrymarum and some of her avatars and followers. The spell occurs in two stages. To begin, the caster takes two rounds concentrating on the spell's intended victim, who must be in sight range; at the end of these two rounds, the caster expends 2 Magic Points and pits his POW vs. the victim's on the resistance table; if the caster loses this contest, the spell fails. If the caster wins, however, the second stage begins. The caster decides how many Magic Points he wants to put into the spell: every 2 Magic Points expended cause the spell to last for 1 round, inflicting 1D3 damage on the target. Note that the caster is free to perform other actions after the first 2 rounds of concentration. **EXAMPLE:** If the caster put 6 Magic Points into the spell, the target would take 1D3 Hit Points of damage during each of the next 3 rounds. While the spell is in effect, the target is involuntarily wracked with sobs, and cries tears of blood; all his or her skills are at 25% of their normal levels. In addition, each time 3 points are indicated for damage there is a 10% chance of permanent blindness in at least one eye. The target loses 1 Sanity point per round affected, and witnesses lose 0/1D2 for seeing the agony-wracked victim.

SEAL HOUSE: This powerful spell magically prevents anyone—including the caster—from entering or leaving a building of some kind.

The caster must be inside the building, and must have some very strong tie to the building in question, either having lived there for several years, been born there, or more likely having died or been buried within it. (It is left to the individual keeper's discretion as to how large a dwelling can be affected by this spell.) For each level of the house he wants to seal, the caster spends 1D6+1 rounds concentrating on closing the doors and windows on that level. At the end of that time the caster expends 2 Magic Points for each side of the building on which there is at least one window, and an additional 2 points for each side containing at least one door. **EXAMPLE:** Mater Lachrymarum wants to Seal the ground floor of the Liston Museum, which has four sides with windows (4x2 Magic Points) and a front and a back door (2x2 Magic Points), so she must put 12 Magic Points into the spell to close the ground floor, and another 8 if she wants to Seal the upstairs floor as well. The spell lasts for a number of minutes equal to the caster's POW, and the House stays Sealed even if the caster dies before the spell expires. As long as the spell lasts, no one can enter or leave the house. Doors and windows not only won't open, they can't be broken or hacked through either—attacks against them bounce off. Seeing an axe bounce off a door, or a bullet ricochet off a window may call for a loss of 0/1D2 Sanity, if the keeper wishes.

Regardless of what happens to Barry in a criminal case, Kathy Philips sues the investigators in civil court for their brutal assault on her husband. The outcome of the criminal case against Barry should play a big role in how the civil case is judged. Still, the civil case against them darkens their reputation enough to cost each investigator 1D6 Credit Rating points.

The investigators may also find themselves in hot water over their appropriation of watercraft during the flood. Each borrowed vehicle they damaged costs them another 1D3 points of Credit Rating, in addition to any monetary damages.

Rewards

On the other hand, each investigator should be awarded 2D6 points of Sanity for destroying Mater Lachrymarum, and another 1D6 points if they killed La Llorona. They receive another 1D6 Sanity if they realize they have saved Baleford after decades of predation by the Mother of Tears in her various forms. If they managed to save a victim from La Llorona (other than Veronica Ferrara), their heroism nets them an additional 1D4 Sanity points.

The investigators also receive 1D3 points of Sanity for saving Barry Philips' life. Each also gets 1 point of Sanity if they destroyed one or more of Mater Lachrymarum's animated dolls, and 1D3 points for destroying one or more animated mannequins. If they were clever enough to destroy the dolls *before* they could be animated, award them 1D4 points of Sanity instead.

The investigators may also receive a few rewards for more mundane acts: +1D3 Credit Rating points for helping the sandbagging effort, +1D3 Sanity for stopping the racially charged brawl during the flood before it turned lethal, and another +1D3 Sanity for finding Abby Gordon and the missing Dukes boy.

If the investigators are involved in a legal action, either against

Barry Philips or themselves, the Keeper might wish to give them a bonus of 1D3 to their Law skills. The Keeper may also give them a bonus check to their Pilot Boat skill, even if their skill rolls failed. The same holds true for their Spanish skill. Finally, those the Keeper deems deserving of it should receive points equal to their EDU or INT, whichever is higher, in a new skill called Film Lore, or half that many points to any similar skill already used in the Keeper's campaign.

Vengeance

Finally, there is one loose end the Keeper may want to bring back to haunt the investigators later. Kathy Philips is furious with the investigators for what they did to her husband, particularly their role in exposing his horrific crimes and ruining her life in the process. She is a very strong-willed woman, and if the Keeper wishes, she may return to stalk the investigators later.

This could be even more frightening if Kathy Philips comes under the spell of Mater Lachrymarum, and becomes yet another agent of the Mother of Tears. Since the investigators took Kathy's husband from her, perhaps Kathy and her new partner will take their repayment in the form of an investigator's child.

Coda: Vista Bridge

Assuming the investigators have cleared their names in the Barry Philips case, they are free to go, though they'll probably have to return to testify against him. As Baleford struggles to recover from the flood, the investigators leave town. Unless they specifically state otherwise, it's assumed they leave the way they came, across the Vista Bridge.

As they drive across the bridge, everyone in the car should make

a Spot Hidden roll. Regardless of success or failure, the lowest such roll spies a figure in a dress, standing on the bank on the Baleford side of the river. Another Spot Hidden identifies it as Abby Gordon, waving at the traffic crossing the bridge. If none remember it on their own, any investigator who saw the children's drawings in the House of Shadows and who makes a successful Idea roll now recalls a picture of a woman standing and waving beside a bridge with cars passing over it—with the waterline drawn *above* the bridge and cars. Recalling this, and now understanding the point of view is from under the water, costs an investigator 1/1D3 Sanity points.

If the investigators hesitate, they cannot escape the disaster about to occur. If they realize their danger, they can try to either pull over and brace themselves, or accelerate through two-lane traffic to get off the bridge. If they accelerate, the driver needs to make two successful Drive Auto rolls: one to speed up enough, the other to avoid an accident as he or she weaves through traffic. Failing the second roll, the car side-swipes an oncoming vehicle, causing 1D6 damage to all occupants of both cars, plus an additional point of damage for every 5 points by which each occupant fails a Luck roll. Both damaged cars spin to a stop, and do not escape the bridge disaster. If the driver makes both Drive rolls, the car speeds to safety on the other side of the bridge.

If the investigators don't make it off the bridge, they are still on it when the weeks-long pressure of the floodwaters weakens the supports, causing it to collapse into the Vista River. Anyone driving across the bridge plunges into the rushing waters, taking 2D6 points of damage. This damage is halved if the victim rolls less than his STR, CON, POW, or DEX (whichever is highest) x5 or less on D100. The damage is halved again if the investigators stopped their car and braced

themselves for a catastrophe.

The cars are now sinking into the river and a Swim roll is needed to get to the surface. Failure begins the Drowning process. Only one successful Swim roll is needed to reach safety, unless an investigator seeks to rescue other drowning victims. There are probably 2D4 other victims in the water with them, at least 1D3 of whom may need assistance. If an investigator rescues a non-investigator victim, he gains 1 point of Sanity and 1D3 points to his Credit Rating skill per rescued victim, as news of the heroism is reported.

This disaster ultimately costs the lives of 2D3 persons whose vehicles were too distant for the investigators to reach. Once they recover from their ordeal, they may want to go back to Baleford to see whether or not they didn't leave another avatar of Mater Lachrymarum behind—Abby Gordon. Questioning her, if they make an Occult or Cthulhu Mythos roll, or more than one Psychology roll, they determine she doesn't seem to be anything more than the slow-witted woman they met when they first came to town.

So the bridge collapse appears to have been merely another tragic result of the summer flooding. But how can the investigators be sure that somewhere, somehow, the Mother of Tears wasn't responsible for this one last attempt to send them to a watery grave?

DRAMATIS PERSONAE - A KEEPER'S TOOL

AN INTERESTED PARTY

Richard Ahern, age 29, rattled paranormal author

BALEFORD, ILLINOIS PERSONALITIES

Lauraine Sibbett, age 47, newspaper reporter, snoop, star-struck investigator-fan

Dale Sibbett, age 47, suspicious husband, truck driver

Vista County Sheriff Robert Czerny, age 56, slightly racist cop

Deputy Scott Margulies, age 37, sympathetic cop

Abby Gordon, age 60, strange but simple local character

Vanessa (Gordon) Dukes, age 39, realtor, Abby Gordon's feisty daughter, mother of Nathaniel

Lester Dukes, age 42, wealthy realtor and insurance agency owner

Nathaniel Dukes, age 9, young scenario "victim"

Barry Philips, age 33, dentist, film fanatic, Frances Liston Museum owner, possessed victim of Frances Liston/Mater Tenebrarum, child murderer

Kathy Philips, age 36, devoted wife, florist, film fan, grudge-holder

Max Fullerton, age 59, antiquarian

Brian Cliffords, age 55, Henry Meat Packing Plant manager

FROM THE HISPANIC DISTRICT

Esteban Rodriguez, age 50, factory worker, Hispanic community leader, "the Mexican mayor"

Robert Larriva, age 46, factory worker, father of Vincente (vanished 2009)

Chelo Garcia, age 50s, mother of Luis (drowned 1997)

Julia Paredes, age 16, sister of Diego (vanished 2005)

Simon Rodriguez, age 15, La Llorona witness, brother of George (vanished 2008)

Miranda Larriva, age 41, mother of Vincente (vanished 2009)

Shawna Telles, age 15, La Llorona witness, girlfriend of Oscar Rios (drowned 2009)

Juanita Paez, 16, Teresa Severin, 16, Armando Ferreira, 16, Eric Dominguez, 16, friends of Oscar Rios (drowned 2009)

Veronica Ferrara, age 10, La Llorona's final victim?

THE ANTAGONISTS

Mater Lachrymarum, Mother of Tears

La Llorona, avatar of Mater Lachrymarum (sometimes = Frances Liston/Barry Philips)

Frances Liston, avatar of Mater Lachrymarum (possessed Barry Philips)

Barry Philips, occasionally possessed by Frances Liston and/or La Llorona

Book Four

EPILOGUE

The Final Cut



"This one belongs to us. This is not in dispute. He has always been ours, and tonight we claim him. Tonight he dies. Not by our choice, but by his. This is as much our failure as his, mind you. We did not choose this for him. We sought to make him something different, someone special, but it was not to be. He has broken rather than flown. So tonight he WILL die. And you... You have slain our sisters, and for this too you must pay. By all rights, you belong to us. And OH... we would so LOVE to collect on that debt. But we are merciful. We shall give you a choice..."

The finale of The Sorrows campaign takes place some months after the events of the “Lachrymarum” chapter, perhaps as much as a year and a half later. “Lachrymarum” occurs during the summer, whereas “The Final Cut” takes place in the late fall/winter months.

Keeper Information-Kurt Winter

As the campaign progresses, the Keeper should be occasionally bringing up the character of Kurt Winter, the troubled young journalist introduced in “Tenebrarum”. After the catastrophic events of “House of Shadows”, Winter moved back to his home town of North Fork, Pennsylvania, where he took a job at the local newspaper.

Winter should have stayed in touch with the investigators, or vice versa, becoming a useful researcher, sounding board for odd theories, and perhaps even a friend. As the campaign progresses, however, Winter becomes less and less communicative and reliable. Anyone who meets or speaks with him and rolls a successful Psychology, realizes his depression has worsened.

In the months just before and after “Lachrymarum”, email sent to Winter begins to bounce back. Winter claims he is changing internet providers, but never passes on a new address (in fact, he has left the internet altogether). A month or two later, calls to his cellphone number find it out of service. A Library/Internet Use roll finds the number for the newspaper where he works, and a call there finds him still employed. He’s had to cut back on expenses, he explains, and has only a landline now, and gives investigators the number. Calls to that phone usually get an answering machine message. Psychology rolls (halved if made during phone conversations rather than face to face) now find Winter sounding more and more tired and depressed. He claims, half-jokingly, to be overworked and underpaid, and losing sleep from stress—nothing to worry about, really.

If the investigators visit Winter in person, they find him living in a small house in a decent neighborhood. He looks tired and disheveled, and his rooms are as cluttered and unkempt as they were when they first met him. Allow Winter a Fast Talk roll to allay the investigators’ fears about his welfare. If the roll fails, then allow the investigators to make Psychology rolls to realize Winter is becoming more and more insular. Confronted with such a diagnosis, he claims he is seeing a psychiatrist, and is dealing with it. Continuing to dwell on the matter angers the young journalist, perhaps even leading him to tell the investigators to quit pestering him, or even throwing them out of his place. He may later apologize for his outburst, claiming he really is doing fine. Really.

Allow a few weeks or a month or two between communications from Winter, preferably while the investigators are busy with another case. Sometime during this case, or even a month or two before, the investigators should have The Second Dream of the Crossroads, described below. Then, as their previous case comes to a close, the investigator who is the closest friend to Winter receives the telephone call from the hospital, as outlined below. The Sorrows have one last card to play.

The Second Dream of the Crossroads

Some time after the events of the “Lachrymarum” chapter, preferably during some other adventure in the Keeper’s campaign, each investigator who has faced one or more of The Sorrows has the dream described below. All who have the dream have it on the same night, but when it is over, only those making a successful Idea roll recall the dream. Those who fail their rolls have only a vague but disturbing recollection of something about a church in the desert.

In the dream, the investigators are driving through the desert. Their normally designated driver is at the wheel or, if they have none, randomly determine the driver. The vehicle is large enough to hold all the investigators, with room for at least one more. A Know roll identifies the desert as somewhere in the southwestern United States, as cacti and familiar scrub abound. The lonely, deserted road is two lanes, paved, but seemingly old. No one recognizes the surrounding area. If the driver decides to thumb his nose at fate, and turns the car around, he still ends up at the destination described below.

After a few minutes’ driving, a pale-colored building is sighted directly ahead. As they approach, it turns out to be a small old mission-styled church with adobe walls, exposed oak beams, shuttered windows, and a small bell tower at the rear. The road they are on ends at a road passing in front of the church, forming a T-intersection. There are no people or vehicles in sight, and the view stretches for miles. As they pull up to the T-intersection, a voice in the rearmost seat says “This is it.” It is Kurt Winter, and as the car slows or stops, he opens his door and gets out. If the investigators stay in the car, they can watch as Winter walks up through the dust and enters through the church’s front doors, heedless of his friends’ questions or cries. If the investigators get out of the car to follow Winter, they find he has vanished. If the investigators churlishly drive off without exploring the church, the dreams ends.

Allow the investigators to reconnoiter the building if they wish. On either side of the heavy front doors is a window covered by a wooden shutter. Peering in between the shutters or by opening the door a crack, the interior seems dark and empty. There are four more shuttered windows along each side of the building, and a small locked door (STR 12) at the back. There are no other outbuildings, nor any indications the place has been used recently.

If the investigators choose to linger outside, after several minutes, perhaps an hour or more, a figure is seen slowly walking down the road toward them. It is dressed head to foot in a shapeless brown monk’s robe with the hood pulled up to obscure its face and head. Unless disturbed, the monk continues his walk, past the investigators and up to the doors of the church, where he turns and says “You should hurry. The service is about to start.” A Spot Hidden roll recognizes the elderly man as the late author Frank Ryder, from “Tenebrarum”. Sanity loss for seeing the deceased old man is 0/1 points. If the investigators walk with the monk, and ask him questions, he says he is merely a penitent, on his way to the service, which is just about to start—and that they should come too. If asked what he’s doing here he says “My penance.”

The topic of today's service? "The Sanctity of Motherhood."

When the investigators finally do enter the darkened interior, the door closes behind them and the church is bathed with light. It is enormous inside, a cathedral as opposed to the barn it appeared from outside. Huge two-story stained glass windows adorn the side and rear walls, their beautifully ornate designs depicting various mythical female triads (see below if they are examined closely). Three sections of pews extend nearly a hundred yards ahead to the pulpit on the dais at the back of the church. The pews seem sparsely occupied, with several children sitting near the front, and a few adults behind them. At the pulpit stands a figure in a priest's cassock, with long brown hair tied in a pony-

tail. As she speaks, it becomes obvious the priest is a woman. She ignores the investigators, except as indicated below.

If the investigators entered via the rear door of the church, they find themselves in a small room with stairs leading up to the bell tower. They can ascend to the tower without incident, and nothing is found other than the heavy bell itself. No matter what they try, they cannot get the bell to chime. From within the church they can hear a female voice speaking. Peering through the other door leading from the bell tower, they see a woman dressed as a priest standing at the pulpit of the church's cathedral-sized interior. If they enter the room behind the priestess, she briefly turns to them, smiles, and motions for them to take a seat among the array of open pews. Then she resumes her sermon, ignoring them.

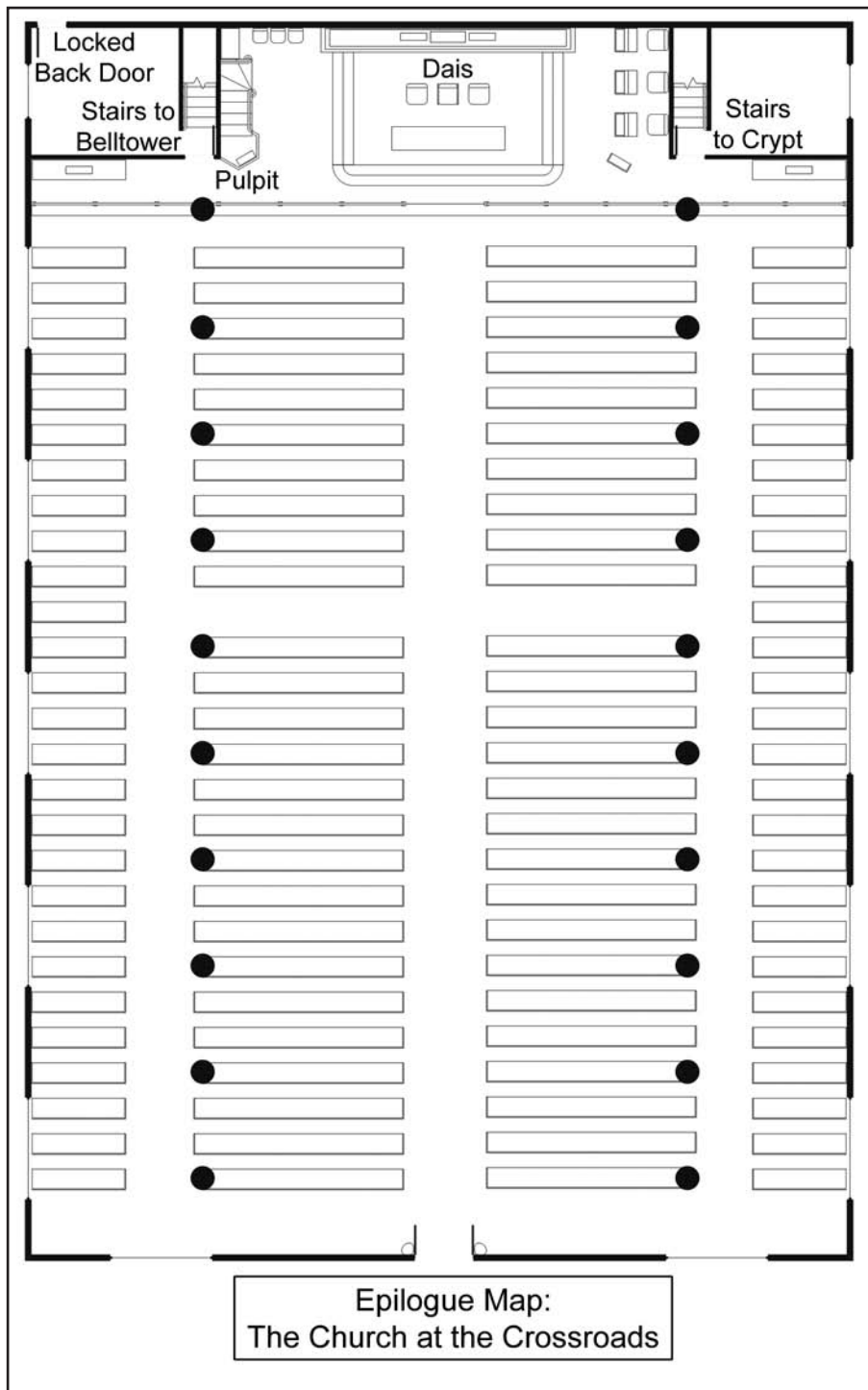
Near the rear of the church, another small door opposite the bell tower opens on a set of stairs to the crypt—see below.

The Sermon

The priestess' sermon is already in progress when the investigators enter. The Keeper can embellish the following description as desired, but—barring any interruption—the sermon should last as long as the investigators are inside the church. If any investigator pays more than a few minutes' attention to the sermon (including debating her), allow him or her a Spot Hidden roll, which, if successful, takes note of the priestess' dazzling green eyes.

The priestess is speaking fervently of Eve, the mother of us all. She speaks of how human sin was not born of the mother Eve, but of her son Cain, who murdered his brother Abel. And born also of Lilith, Adam's first wife, who was spurned by Adam and his God, turned out into the wastes beyond Eden, where she consorted with the forces of darkness and spawned monstrous beings—beings whom the angels then slew. And how, much later, Mary bore the child Jesus, whose sacrifice saved all of mankind. Mothers all, the priestess cries. Mothers of good, mothers of evil. Motherhood is the most sacred and profane of all of God's gifts to Man.

There are some, however, who spurn this gift. And it is they whom God punishes most harshly. The woman who slays her own children is not only mad, she is an abomination to her God and her gift. Such a woman may drown her children, as did Lady Montesclaros, or Susan Smith, or Andrea Yates. They are all accursed, like La Llorona of legend. Forever will they rue their blasphemy. They will walk the Earth forever in its loneliest places, and they shall never rest, and their crimes shall



serve as a lesson to others.

An Occult or Folklore roll recalls that the name Montesclaros is sometimes given as the name of the woman who was the original La Llorona. A Know roll remembers the names of Andrea Yates and Susan Smith, famous recent murderers who killed their young children, Yates by systematically drowning several of her children in a bathtub, Smith by leaving them in a car which she drove into a lake.

But there are other mothers too, mothers of legend. Clytemnestra, wife of the hero Agamemnon, and the mother of Orestes, Orestes who murdered his mother, and who was pursued by the Furies, the ancient avengers of legend. For the murder of a mother by her child is the most vile crime imaginable.

Here the priestess turns to look at the investigators, if they are present—Sanity loss is 0/1 point.

And then there are the Mothers of Us All—The Sorrows. They are not to be feared, for it is their duty to guide Man on his journey between the gates of Life and Death. They are here to inspire him, to move him to greater things, to mourn him and his failures. They complete his existence.

If the investigators interrupt the sermon, perhaps to argue with the priestess' statements, they are free to do so. If they attempt to physically interfere with the priestess or a member of her congregation, all vanish. On the other hand, if they argue, the congregation listens to their protestations, but unless a Persuade roll is made they soon turn their attention back to the priestess. A contest may result, with each side attempting a Persuade roll until one or the other fails. The priestess' skill is 90%. If the investigators prevail, the priestess nods in acceptance of her defeat and departs through the back door, where she disappears. The congregation now also fades away. If the priestess wins the contest she resumes her sermon and henceforth she and the congregation ignore the investigators unless they try to attack or physically interfere, as above.

If the investigators interrupt the sermon and win the debate with the priestess, award each of them 1D3 points of Sanity, and allow them an opportunity to increase their POW as if they had overcome someone's POW on the resistance table.

The Congregation

As the investigators wander the interior of the church, they may be interested to see who is in attendance at the strange service. A halved Idea roll recognizes one or more of the children in attendance as the Hispanic and Caucasian victims of La Llorona in Baleford, Illinois. An especially low roll may recognize faces decades old. Sanity loss for this recognition is 0/1D3 points.

Other faces require no roll to recognize. Lilah Starrett is here, as are Robert Dorder, Jeremy Brenton, Nick Karras, Ann Delaney (if she survived her ordeal), and Kathy Philips. None pay any heed to the investigators, and vanish if accosted. Seeing these faces requires a single Sanity roll against a loss of 0/1 points. As the sermon progresses, figures in monks' robes move about the main floor. Among them Frank Ryder, Enrique Echevarría, Ann Delaney (if she surrendered to Mater Suspiriorum), Barry Philips, Kurt Winter, and, shockingly, any investigators who perished at

the hands of The Sorrows. These disturbingly familiar faces cost a total of 1/1D3 Sanity to view, and an additional -2 if an investigator is among the dead or doomed faces viewed.

The dead monks may briefly speak with the investigators, welcoming them to the fold. They believe the investigators are soon to join them. They are at peace, having returned to the bosom of their Mothers. They soon turn from their questioners, and if accosted further, they turn back to the investigators—just mummified skulls in dark robes—then vanish. Only Kurt Winter reacts differently, anxiously stating "I'm not supposed to be here!" before vanishing in front of the investigators.

The Windows

Huge stained glass windows adorn each wall with the exception of the front face of the church. The one on the right side shows three female figures engaged in spinning a silver thread. One, the youngest, spins the fibers. The second, mature figure is shown weaving these fibers into a thread. The third, the oldest, a hideous crone, is shown preparing to cut that thread with a pair of shears. A Folklore or Occult roll recognizes these as the Fates of Greek mythology, and the silver thread as the thread of Man's life.

The windows on the back wall of the church also depict three women—maiden, mother, and crone, all dressed in a gray shapeless robe from which their combined figures issue. On the left, facing left, a smiling blonde maiden holds a human infant in her arms. In the center, facing forward, the mother holds a small luminescent human form in her open palms, and a teardrop of blood flows from her left eye. Finally, on the right, facing right, a scowling, gray-haired crone holds a human skull in her withered hands. Below them, a scroll-like roll of parchment reads "*Dominæ Dolorosae Nostræ*." A Latin roll translates this as "Our Ladies of Sorrow."

The stained glass windows on the left-hand side show several sets of figures. Three winged feral female figures armed with whips and torches pursue a young man. A Folklore or Occult recognizes them as the Furies of Greek mythology, avengers of blood crimes. A second set of figures shows three women with serpents in their hair, one of whom holds her severed head in her hands. Again, a Know roll recognizes them as the Gorgons, whose gaze turned men to stone, and whose sister Medusa was beheaded by the hero Perseus. A third figure stands alone among these triumvirates. She is shown at a crossroads, her back to the viewer, her hair a tangle of serpents and oak leaves, with three dogs on a leash beside her. An Occult roll recognizes her as Hecate, a Greek Titan connected with the underworld, necromancy, black magic, the moon, and the night.

The Crypt

The cobwebbed stairway leading down from the back of the church enters a torchlit crypt deep beneath the building. A maze of passageways lead off from the bottom of the stairs, and tittering laughter is heard from somewhere in the distance. Skulls and gnawed bones litter the floor here. "Come," whispers a voice from the depths. As the investigators blunder in the dark, they hear a choir singing far above them. An Idea roll guesses it to be a chil-



dren's choir, singing a hymn in Latin. A Latin roll realizes it is a hymn to Our Ladies of Sorrow.

Eventually the crypt delvers come upon a naked, ancient hag crouched next to a bonfire at a site where several passages meet. From the high ceiling hang vines festooned with skulls and bones. The eerie scene costs 1/1D4 Sanity points from those who make it this far. The cackling creature truthfully but cryptically answers any question she is asked, but each question costs 1D6 Magic Points of the asker. With each question, the speaker becomes slightly transparent, eventually vanishing altogether when he or she runs out of Magic Points. If asked who she is, she replies, "Antaia" or "Einoidia" or, finally, "Hecate." (See the Hecate entry in "The Three Sisters" appendix of this book.) Asked what she wants, she replies, "Only what is due me," or "Souls," or "Recognition." Asked how to defeat The Sorrows, she laughs and says, "How would you defeat the moon? Or the seasons?" What do The Sorrows want—"Their due," or, "Who knows? Perhaps what De Quincey gave them." (A Literature or halved History roll recalls that Thomas De Quincey, who wrote "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow," was a lifelong drug addict, but lived a long and full life.) The Keeper should bear in mind that the hag is an avatar of Hecate, and thus of The Sorrows, or vice versa. She is thus at best capricious in her answers. Any questioner reduced to 0 or fewer Magic Points vanishes and awakens from the dream. As they question her, allow each investigator a halved Spot Hidden roll, which, if successful, notes the peculiar green of the hag's eyes. If the Keeper tires of the questioning, the hag eventually moves into the shadows and vanishes, once again leaving the investigators alone in the dark.

Outside

If any of the investigators decide not to enter the strange little church, he or she is eventually hailed by a young woman driving by. If none of the investigators entered the church, she is particularly haughty toward them.

The young woman appears on the road behind the investigators, driving a black Mustang convertible. She is a beautiful brunette, wearing dark sunglasses, a black blouse, and jean shorts. A Doberman Pinscher sits in the back seat, glaring at the investigators. "Impressive, isn't it?" she beams, nodding at the desolate church. If the investigators haven't entered, she urges them to do so. "It's a lot more interesting on the inside than it looks from out here." Asked who she is, she says, "Just passing by." Is she one of...them? "Sure. Who's...them?" Asked what's inside, she smilingly replies, "Probably some answers you're looking for." She is, of course, another form of Hecate. She is here to be cryptic, to offer a few vague answers, and perhaps to get the investigators to enter the church. If she or the Keeper tires of the investigators' questions, she shakes her head, smiles gorgeously, and tears off in the Mustang. The investigators' car doesn't start at all.

Waking

The dream ends when an investigator either runs out of Magic

Points while questioning the crypt hag, or when he or she leaves the church with the intent to get in the car and leave. If the investigators didn't enter the church at all, the dream ends when the convertible driver peels off, provided they still have no desire to go inside.

If the investigators compare dream tales, they realize they all shared a single dream. This, combined with all the imagery reminiscent of their encounters with The Sorrows, costs those who remember the dream 0/1D3 Sanity points. An Occult roll recognizes not only the stained glass window depicting Hecate, but also the fact the strange church was located at a crossroads, a site sacred to Hecate. A further Occult roll notes Hecate is often depicted with three faces or heads, and with Artemis and Selene is a triple goddess. A Cthulhu Mythos roll infers that Hecate's reputation as a goddess of the moon, darkness, night, black magic, and necromancy would seem to equate her with Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos.

The Phone Call

The finale of The Sorrows campaign takes place in the late fall or winter months, a few weeks after the investigators have the second crossroads dream. Again, the investigators may be just finishing up another case, or simply sitting idle or working normally between investigations.

The investigator closest to Kurt Winter receives a telephone call one morning. The female caller identifies herself as Dr. Katrina Hackett, an emergency room doctor at Seven Saints Hospital in North Fork, Pennsylvania, the town where Kurt Winter now lives. Dr. Hackett is calling to inform the investigator that Kurt Winter attempted suicide the night before, and is in stable but critical condition in the hospital. Dr. Hackett says that the investigator is listed as the person Winter wanted to have notified in case of emergencies.

The doctor states that Winter is stable right now, but his survival may hinge on whether or not he really wants to live, so the more friends he has around him, the better his chances. "This young man really needs a friend right now, especially since he apparently doesn't have any surviving family," says Dr. Hackett. If asked for details, she says Winter apparently took an overdose of sleeping pills two nights ago, and when he didn't show up for work they sent someone around to check on him and found him near death. If the investigator says he'll come, Dr. Hackett says she'll leave word with the desk so he or she can get in to see Winter.

If the investigator is suspicious, a call to the Seven Saints Hospital finds that, yes, Kurt Winter was admitted, but they can't give out details about his condition to anyone but family. The hospital doesn't know anything about the investigator supposedly being the person Winter wanted to have notified in case of emergencies.

If asked about Dr. Katrina Hackett, the switchboard operator says there is no one on the staff with that name—the emergency room doctors are Drs. Clay Wetton and Megan Miller. An Internet Use search also finds no Dr. Katrina Hackett in Pennsylvania.

A call to the North Fork Police Department and a successful Law roll eventually finds an officer who informs them that Winter did indeed suffer an overdose a few nights ago, and that he is in the hospital in stable condition.

The investigator is now left to ponder their options, the most obvious of which is to go to North Fork to see if Winter can be helped. Hopefully the investigator calls in his companions, some of whom may also know Winter. Who the hell is Katrina Hackett, anyway? Why did this person want the investigator to know about Winter's condition? Was it a warning—or a lure?

North Fork Pennsylvania

The flight to Pennsylvania is a rough one, as seasonal storms buffet the country. North Fork is a town of about 15,000 people located about an hour's drive northeast of Pittsburgh. Sleet and rain hamper driving, so by the time the investigators reach North Fork it is late afternoon. Call for a Drive Auto roll as they drive through town, failure indicating a bad skid on the ice that does no damage, but leaves the driver's and passengers' hearts beating a little faster.

A few minutes later they reach the hospital. Asking at the front desk for the room of Kurt Winter, the young man on duty does a quick search and tells them he checked out this afternoon. The man can't disclose any details, but if asked the name of Winter's doctor, he directs them to Dr. Megan Miller, in the emergency room.

Dr. Miller turns out to be a pretty young blonde in her late twenties, tired looking and very busy. If the investigators wait 1D6 x5 minutes, she has time to talk with them. She says Winter was brought in yesterday morning, unconscious and near death from an overdose of sleeping pills. They pumped his stomach and he made a quick recovery. Winter claimed the overdose was accidental, and wanted to go home this afternoon. He was well enough to be released. There's nothing more Dr. Miller can tell them.

(Note that if the investigators telephoned the hospital before going there, Winter checked out after they called.)

Calling Winter's phone gets only his answering machine. If the investigators want, they can call the police and have them meet the investigators at Winter's house—if they can convince the cops Winter is still suicidal. Unfortunately, the police somehow write down the wrong address, or send the patrol car to the wrong address, or otherwise mysteriously bungle the call.

At the Crossroads

The investigators will likely be in a hurry to see what has become of Winter. Outside, a mix of rain, sleet, and snow makes driving still treacherous.

As they make their way through the evening traffic, the inves-

tigators' vehicle is suddenly struck on the passenger side by a speeding car. This car ran a stop sign at an intersection and T-boned them solidly. Each investigator takes 1D10 points of damage from the brutal crash, halved if he or she was wearing a seatbelt. Both cars end up stopped in the middle of the intersection. The area is well lit by streetlights, and a large billboard facing the intersection advertises a "Buy 3, Get 1 Free" deal at a local tire store. With a successful Idea roll, any investigator who had the first dream of the crossroads, earlier in the campaign, now recognizes this intersection as the setting of that dream, right down to the same billboard; this realization calls for a loss of 0/1 Sanity point.

The other car's horn blares continuously as the battered investigators stagger out of their vehicle. The driver is slumped over the wheel, and his passenger is screaming, alternating between "Oh God! My baby! My baby!" And "Troy? Troy?! Oh God Troy no!" As they survey the scene, the investigators see the man at the wheel wasn't wearing his seatbelt, and has suffered head and chest injuries. His female passenger was wearing her belt, and other than a few bruises she is unhurt—but very very pregnant. Both are in their mid-twenties, barely out of college at best.

A Psychology roll calms the woman down long enough to learn her name—Ellen Carver—and that she is in labor. She begs to know how her husband is. A First Aid roll reveals her husband, Troy, has a concussion, but a Medicine roll is required to stop his bleeding.

As the investigators sort out the situation a pretty young jogger crosses the street and asks if anyone is hurt, or if she can help. She says she saw the whole thing, that the other guy just blew through the stop sign and nailed them. Calls to 911 say they'll have someone there in a few minutes, but even now Ellen Carver's contractions are starting to come faster and faster. Let the investigators decide how they're going to deliver a baby out here.

Luckily, they'll have some help. The first car traveling down the street pulls over and a middle-aged black woman jumps out and rushes to the car. A Spot Hidden notes she is dressed in hospital scrubs, and she immediately assesses the situation and takes charge. "My name's Abigayle, I'm a nurse. You're gonna havta help me here, gentlemen. We got two problems, and neither one can wait."

Abigayle prepares Ellen to have her baby in the back seat of the car, then has the jogger and an investigator watch the girl while she has the other investigators gently lay Troy flat out on the street; she decides he has no internal bleeding, but posts an investigator to watch him and let her know if he starts to have trouble breathing.

"What should I do?" grunts a voice from behind the cars. A dirty, wet, troll of a woman has rolled a shopping cart in front of the investigators' car. Inside the cart are pop and beer cans and bottles, a baseball bat, and bags from fast food restaurants. Abigayle shakes her head and turns back to the now shrieking woman about to give birth. "Watch for the ambulance," she mutters.

The street woman wanders closer, smiling at the bloodied man on the ground. "You'll be fine, dear," she tells him. Then she frowns at the investigators. "You...maybe not so much." She

doesn't elaborate, and warns them not to mess with her stuff. Suddenly the night is split by the howling of a dog. The old woman smiles warmly. "Children of the night," she comments. She turns back to the investigators. "She's coming..."

An Occult roll recalls that the crossroads was a sacred site for Hecate, whose appearance was often accompanied by the barking and howling of dogs.

But Ellen's screams intensify, and Abigayle urges her to push, and seconds later, a new life enters the world. Abigayle hands the still-corded infant to the nearest investigator. "Hold her. There's a problem."

Bleeding. Too much blood. The tiny, wriggling, bloodslick creature croaks at her holder, maybe costing the investigator 0/1 Sanity if that person is squeamish or easily spooked. Abigayle cuts the cord, takes the child, and lays the infant on her coat, on the ground. She again asks the investigator's help to hold a compress.

Meanwhile, other dogs have joined the howling chorus, and the mad streetwoman does a weird, slow, twirling dance in the street, smiling all the while. If the investigators seem disturbed by these developments, charge a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity.

Before anyone can stop her, the madwoman drifts over, picks up the now quiet baby and holds her aloft, smiling. "Lezare," she says. Abigayle and probably others take the child from the acquiescent street lady. "Levar?" sneers the jogger. "Uh, granny, it's a girl."

A Latin roll defines the word "lezare" as "raise aloft." An Idea roll from any investigator who has read De Quincey's "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" recalls this Latin word is mentioned there as the origin of Levana's name. A halved Occult roll recalls that Levana was the Roman goddess of childbirth, and the investigators may find themselves wondering which, if any, of the women here might be that divine personage. Assess a loss of 0/1 point of Sanity if they seem especially distressed by this situation.

The dogs stop howling, the mother and her child are safe and healthy, and the husband is stable for the moment. The situation seems well in hand. The girl jogger hangs around comforting Ellen Carver, while Abigayle checks on Troy's condition. The old woman continually leers at the investigators. If asked what her problem is, she says, "Not my problem, boyo. Nosir. *Yours*. Your problem. Big problem. Lots of 'em." Asked to elaborate, she winks. "What do I know? I'm *crazy*." If threatened, or asked if this has anything to do with Kurt Winter, she hisses, "Leave me alone. You've wasted too much time here as it is. You're going to be too late." Abigayle tells them to stop bickering, and the old lady shrugs the investigators off and goes to her cart. As she wobbles off down the dark end of the street, she looks back over her shoulder and sings, "A time to live, a time to die..."

The investigators may wait for the police and ambulance if they wish. Given that they're part of a serious accident, they are legally obligated to stay. But every minute they wait leaves Winter alone, and who knows what he may intend to do. If they leave the scene, they'll be charged with leaving the scene of an accident, a relatively minor offense, especially considering they have witnesses to the fact the other driver ran the stop sign.

On the other hand, if they wait for the cops, they show up

within ten or fifteen minutes and begin taking statements. If the investigators tell the police their fears concerning the possibly suicidal Winter, the police promise to send a patrol car to check on him. The questioning and report filing takes about fifteen to twenty minutes more, during which time nothing is heard from the patrol car sent to check on Winter. The investigators are free to go, or they can wait for news. If they wait, it's another fifteen minutes, and still nothing heard. Winter's house is less than ten minutes away. Nothing is ever heard from the cops as, again, the order is mysteriously never given or received.

Winter's House

The investigators eventually make it to Kurt Winter's home, a tiny two-story house near the top of a hilly, wooded lane. If the investigators have brought the police with them, the cops have them stay with the cars while they look over the house. A middle-aged woman answers the policemen's knock, and after a few minutes of conferring with her the officers seem satisfied and return to the cars. They say Winter is okay, his mother is staying with him.

Any investigator who knew Winter from the *Tenebrarum* chapter recalls that he said his parents were both dead. If they tell the cops this, they all go back up to the house. The woman again answers the door, and the investigators get a good look at her. She is no more than fifty years old, medium height and build, with short dark hair shot through with grey. A Spot Hidden sees the family resemblance to Kurt. She says her name is Teddy. Learning that Winter said his parents were dead, she shakes her head and says he has a poor sense of humor sometimes. She produces not only a Pennsylvania driver's license confirming her identity as Theodora Winter, but also a framed photo from inside the house, showing her and Kurt, apparently at his college graduation.

Grilled by the investigators, with or without the police, she answers flawlessly, as far as they can tell. She quickly becomes indignant, wanting to know who the strangers are, and if told, she softens, remarking that Kurt often spoke highly of them. Kurt, she says, is resting; he's had a very rough couple of days. The patrolmen are satisfied after a few minutes' interrogation, and leave the investigators with Mrs. Winter, who invites them in.

If the investigators come without the police, their knocks are answered by the woman described above. The conversation goes much as described, except she answers only a question or two before asking who the strangers are. A Psychology roll notes her fear and suspicion of the investigators until they identify themselves. She then invites them inside, informing them Kurt is asleep upstairs after his ordeal. As she makes coffee for her guests, she promises to check on Kurt later to see if he's well enough to see them.

The investigators are free to nose around the ground floor if they wish. A Spot Hidden quickly finds more photos of Kurt and his parents, including the woman claiming to be his mother. An investigator making a Sneak roll can slip upstairs. If the roll fails, Teddy asks the investigator to please not disturb Kurt, that she'll check on him in a few minutes. If the investigator goes ahead, she rushes after him, begging them not to disturb him. If restrained, she threatens to call the police if they don't leave her and Kurt alone.

If the investigators are civil with Teddy Winter, she thanks them for coming so far to be with Kurt. She doesn't know why the hospital didn't mention she brought Kurt home with her this afternoon, nor why anyone would telephone them saying he wanted them to be contacted if anything happened to him. As for claiming his parents were dead, well, his father's been dead a long time, and sometimes she and Kurt didn't get along. She wanted Kurt to find a girl and make Teddy a grandmother, and Kurt didn't like to be pushed. After several minutes of small talk, Teddy goes to check on Kurt, returning a few minutes later and motioning them to come up. "You can see him, but he's asleep. I just want you to see he's okay. Maybe you can come back tomorrow."

Kurt is indeed asleep. A Medicine roll notes his breathing is shallow, and he is very pale. He should be in a hospital, in fact. If the investigators tell Teddy that, she says this is what he wanted. He doesn't want to go back to the hospital, she says. My baby is going to die, she says sadly. If they argue that he should be hospitalized, she says it doesn't matter. He's going to die. He knows it, and she knows it. Nothing can stop them, she says. Who? You know—*Them*. They've got their hooks in him, and he knows it, and he knows he can never get away from them. You know who they are, she says, staring at the investigators. They want you, too. At this point, the investigators suddenly realize Teddy Winter has green eyes. If they don't recall it themselves, an Idea roll remembers the green eyes of the priestess and the hag in the second dream of the crossroads. As they make this recognition, Kurt's "mother" smiles, the light in the room quickly fades to black, until only those green eyes show in the darkness. Then the eyes wink out, and the investigators are in total darkness.

The Hill, And the Choice

Each investigator now finds himself alone, in the dark, in some wooded outdoor area. Each loses 1/1D3 Sanity points from this rough transition. Somewhere very close by, dogs are barking savagely. The investigators have the choice of either staying where they are, hiding, moving in a flanking direction around the hillside they are on, or moving to higher ground. If they do anything but move up the hill, they hear the dogs barking and snarling even closer than before, perhaps ahead of them now if they tried flanking their pursuers.

If an investigator persists in doing anything but moving uphill, there is a 90% chance the hounds pick up his scent, and he is confronted with 1D3 black hounds with blazing orange eyes. The hounds take turns attacking until the investigator flees or more than half the pack is injured. If the hounds flee, a few moments later there is a new chorus of frenzied barking and snarling from the direction of their flight. And now there is torchlight approaching as well.

Hecate's Hell-Hounds

STR 13 CON 13 SIZ 7 POW 11 DEX 13

Move 12 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0.

Armor: 1 point fur.

Skills: Spot Hidden 70%, Track by Scent 90%.

Sanity Loss: It costs 1/1D3 to see the blazing eyed black dogs of Hecate.

If the investigators move up the hill, they do so by only the dimmest of starlight, filtered through the leafy canopy above. Stumbling through the blackness, they still hear the dogs behind, and now they may also glimpse a torch moving in the forest below.

An investigator may think to climb a tree and pick the pursuing hounds off with a handgun, if he was so armed when he entered Winter's house. A Climb roll finds a suitable perch, and as the dogs approach, the investigator hears a dry whisper from a few feet away. "It won't work." Whirling, the climber finds himself face to face with a mummified corpse propped in a fork of the tree next to him. The desiccated thing mutters, "You'll get a few of the dogs, but she'll blow your heart out and you'll never see her. That's what she did to me. Run, brother, *run!*"

The thing never moves, but the bizarre warning still costs 0/1D3 points of Sanity. If the investigator stays, there is a 90% chance he is treed by 1D6+1 hounds; because the creatures are dark themselves, and the investigator is in the tree, his chances to hit are halved. Again, if he manages to wound half of the pack, they flee into the darkness. If he remains in the tree, moments later there is a shuddering of the earth, and unless he makes a Jump roll he is caught in the tree when it topples to the ground. "Told you," grunts the now shattered mummy. If the investigator successfully Jumped, he takes no damage, but if he is caught in the tree or fails the roll, he takes 1D6+1 damage, and his Move is halved from a sprained ankle or twisted knee.

The safest thing to do is to head for higher ground, and after a few moments of running in this direction, an investigator sees light up ahead, apparently at the crest of the hill. He also notices part of a stone pillar lying amid the undergrowth, and there another, broken off but still standing. A History or Architecture roll guesses it to be Greek, and as the investigator continues, additional ruins are found. Behind him, in the woods, the hounds rage and the torch looms. And there, further around the dome of the hillside, another torch is spied. Unseen lurkers crash through the underbrush beside and below each investigator.

The investigators reach the top of the hill in order of DEX, highest to lowest, with hobbling investigators halving their DEX. From different sides of the hill, they each stagger out of the brush into a mostly cleared area where a few bushes push through the mossy flagstones. In the center of the clearing is a small circle of pillars ringing a black altar stone a little over six feet long and three feet high. Again, a History roll identifies the small open-air temple as Greek. Burning braziers hang from chains suspended from the stone crosspieces between the pillars.

Lying motionless on the altar is Kurt Winter, dressed in sweatpants and T-shirt, just as he was when they saw him in his bed earlier tonight. As they move to check his condition, they see



the last of their companions stumble out of the forest. Winter is unconscious, and cannot be roused. Lying on the altar beside his head is a curved silver dagger with a black onyx handle—damage 1D4+2.

Allow the investigators a few rounds to assess their situation. From the summit they now see that there are three torches ascending from different sides of the hill, each accompanied by a pack of hounds. The investigators have whatever weapons they carried with them into Winter's house, plus the silver dagger from the altar, and perhaps a small improvised club or two taken from the nearby shrubs.

The torches loom closer and closer, and finally the fiery eyes of the hounds are seen in the nearby brush. Then the hounds step into the clearing, one, two, seven, a dozen, from every point on the compass. They take only a few steps before stopping and glaring at the investigators. Dozens more eyes gleam in the brush. Suddenly the night is torn by the howling of countless dogs, one after another, blending into an awful shriek. Each investigator

loses 0/1D3 points of Sanity. If attacked, all the hounds slip back into the woods, where attempts to hit them are at 20% of normal skill level due to darkness and distance. There must be dozens of them out there.

Finally, the torches approach the clearing, held aloft by figures in dark hooded robes. They stop while still amid the brush. "We mean no harm," the three figures claim, their female voices speaking simultaneously. "We would confer with thee." A Listen roll notes that while two of the figures seem to have said "we," one said "I." If the investigators insist the figures not come closer, they say "We would have you see our faces while we speak, so that you may have faith in the truthfulness of our words." Again, a Listen roll notes that some say "we" while a different one now says "I." The investigators may still wish to hold back the dark figures, who with sad reluctance accept this condition.

Allow the investigators to ask the hooded creatures whatever they want, most likely starting with "Who are you?" or "What do you want?" The three figures are, for all practical purposes, a single entity,

the dark goddess Hecate, Queen of Darkness. But they answer in the various names of The Sorrows and their avatars: Tenebrarum, Suspiriorum, Lachrymarum, Stheno, Euryale, Medusa, Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos, Tisiphone, Alecto, Megaera, Morrigan, Nema, Macha, Artemis, Selene, Hecate, Urd, Skuld, Verdandi, and so so many others. What they want is merely what they are due. The investigators have slain them and their sisters, and for that they must make amends. “What kind of amends?”

The three figures slowly step forward into the clearing, their faces still concealed by their hoods. They make no menacing moves, merely moving toward the temple. They ignore any and all attempts to attack or hinder them, unless they are attacked with silver or magic, which enrages them into merciless retaliation.

They gather around the altar stone, where Winter still lies unconscious, and turn back to the investigators. Now their faces are visible within the hoods, as are the hands that clutch the torches. One face is young and beautiful, the second is middle-aged and plain-looking, the third is old and withered, with a face like a shrunken apple. The faces are always changing so that while no two are ever the same, one is always a young woman, one a middle-aged woman, and one a crone. All have dazzlingly beautiful green eyes. The wrists of all three are encircled with gold bracelets, and this squamous jewelry sparkles and twists in the torchlight. As the conversation continues, the faces within the hoods switch, so that the young one is now the hag, the hag now the mother, the mother the maiden, and back again. And now, when they speak, they definitely alternate “we” and “I.”

This one, they say, belongs to us. This is not in dispute. He has always been ours, and tonight we claim him. Tonight he dies. Not by our choice, but by his. This is as much our failure as his, mind you. We did not choose this for him. We sought to make him into something different, something memorable, but it was not to be. He has broken rather than flown. So tonight he will die. And you...you have slain our sisters, and for this you too must pay. By all rights, you belong to us. And, oh... we would so *love* to collect on that debt. But we are merciful. We shall give you the choice. Give Winter to us, and your debt is paid. Refuse this simple request, and your lives belong to us.

Asked what they mean by, “Give Winter to us,” they state the obvious. “Sacrifice him, of course. Take the knife, take his life, and you will be free of us.” If the investigators balk, the figures remind them “He will not survive the night, regardless of your course of action. Slain not by us, nor by you, but by his own hand. He is already dead. You can either slay him to save your own lives, or let him die and face the consequences yourselves. And those consequences will make his death, Ryder’s, all of them, look like child’s play. We will hound you and yours until you beg us to rip your soul from you.”

Let the investigators think on this a bit. They may ask the trio for their word the investigators won’t be harmed or haunted if they do as the creatures demand. The sisters gladly give their assent, swearing to it however the investigators wish it to be worded. The investigators’ options seem to be: kill Winter; refuse the sisters’ deal; fight the sisters, and probably their hounds; or think of something else. Each option is briefly discussed below.

The easiest choice, but the most terrible, is to give Hecate what she wants: sacrifice Winter to save their own lives. Anyone examining Winter and making a successful Medicine roll realizes the dark sisters

are telling the truth. Without immediate medical attention Winter will die in the next few hours. But can they live with themselves if they kill their friend?

Hecate insists all the investigators must agree to the plan, or they are all still damned. If the investigators worry whether or not they can kill Winter mercifully, the sisters promise to ensorcell the blade so it slays with a single blow—a statement which may give the investigators a bold new plan.

If they do sacrifice Winter, it is over quickly and painlessly for all involved. A quick stab to the chest and he dies soundlessly. The scores of dogs howl insanely (Sanity loss is 1/1D4), but the sisters merely smile grimly and back out of the rapidly darkening temple as all quickly fades to black, leaving the investigators with the terrible sound of the sisters’ laughter ringing in their ears as they pass out.

If the investigators decline Hecate’s offer, the sisters scowl, and the dogs begin to howl again, calling for a Sanity loss of 0/1D3 points. They ask if the investigators are sure of their choice and, if refused again, the three figures nod, turn, and head back into the brush. One lingers while the other two vanish into the darkness. This one turns, and she is dark and beautiful, nothing like any of the figures or faces seen previously. “Such is your choice. So will you live with it. So will you suffer for it. And so shall you die by it.” If the investigators desperately try to attack the receding figure, she vanishes, all but her eyes. “Oh no. Not so easily will you find your deaths.” And then she is gone. The investigators awaken in Winter’s room.

If the investigators choose to fight the hooded figures and their hounds, they are almost certainly doomed. Hecate’s statistics are given below, and while any damage inflicted on any one of the three sisters is taken by this one figure, it is unlikely the investigators have any weapons that can harm her. Also, 1D3+1 rounds after Hecate is attacked each investigator is attacked by 1D3 hellhounds, and these attacks continue each round until either Hecate or all the investigators are dead.

If Hecate is killed, she falls and her body billows into a cloud of black smoke. The hounds flee into the brush, howling even more madly than before, the temple braziers dim, and the investigators pass out.

Once Hecate is attacked, there is no further discussion—she or the investigators must die. Note that one method which might give investigators a small chance of defeating her is the silver dagger which she intends for them to use sacrificing Winter. If a foolhardy investigator accepts her offer to magick the blade so that it kills Winter with a single blow, they may think of attacking the sisters instead. If the investigator is particularly clever, he may agree to the dark sisters’ offer to sacrifice Winter to save their own lives—and then spring a surprise attack. Such a surprise attack is at +25% to the investigator’s skill, and does normal damage, plus damage bonus. However, Hecate’s unspecified magic also allows a roll of the total damage done times 10%, and if the roll succeeds, the target is killed. This magic is only good for the first successful attack, however, so the wielder had better hope his mad plan succeeds with the first shot. If Hecate kills all the investigators, the campaign is over.

The investigators may try to come up with some other idea to save their lives, and perhaps Winter’s as well. Hecate claims she only wants blood, however. Any investigator who questioned the hag in the

crypt of the church in the second dream of the crossroads may have gotten her to mention Thomas De Quincey, and that perhaps the Sorrows want the same thing De Quincey gave them. If they didn't figure it out before, an Idea roll now may suggest that perhaps they can save themselves by doing what De Quincey did: give Hecate and The Sorrows recognition—depict them in some form of art.

If they suggest this to the hooded sisters, the three fall into quiet discussion, then demand details. What would you create? A book? Novel? History? Painting? Song? Opera? It must be something worthy of us. Which of you would do this? If he or she fails or disappoints us you would all suffer, you know. How long do we give you to complete this work? How would you distribute or publish it?

The sisters may allow up to three years to finish the work, but it must pass their muster or the investigators' lives are still forfeit. If an investigator thinks of it, he or she might try to bargain for Winter's life along with their own. The Keeper can either agree to this condition, or perhaps have the sisters agree to let Winter live until the work is completed, at which time they'll decide on his fate once and for all. If an agreement is reached, the dark sisters trail off down the hillside, the braziers dim to blackness, and the investigators awaken in Winter's room.

Other options are left for the individual Keeper to decide. The investigators may try to summon some other Mythos entity to deal with The Sorrows. Sadly, most such creatures have no quarrel with the Goddess of the Crossroads, nor any desire to start one, and abandon the investigators to their fate. The investigators may also offer to become priests of the Sorrows, though the sisters have never had a cult of their own. They may offer to sacrifice others in place of themselves or Winter, but Hecate probably isn't interested in others—she wants the blood of those who have offended her by killing her sisters. Then again, if Hecate were to accept the investigators as her worshippers, she would require many sacrifices—often bloody ones—and worshipping a goddess of necromancy and black magic would surely lead to many Sanity blasting acts done in her name. Maybe hounded and haunted by her would be better? If the investigators come up with some other option that might be acceptable to an ageless goddess of darkness, death, and magic, it might be interesting to let them try it.

HECATE, Queen of Darkness, age infinite

STR 20 CON 100 SIZ 14 INT 30 POW 100
DEX 16 APP 15 EDU NA SAN NA HP 57

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: *Hurl opponent 85%, damage 1D8+db; Claws (x2) 85%, damage 1D6+db; any others at 70%—90% as desired, damage as per weapon.*

Armor: *Hecate is unharmed by anything but silver, magic, or fire. Normal weapons, cold, electricity, radiation, and poison have no effect on her whatsoever.*

Skills: *Cthulhu Mythos 100%, Dodge 75%, Hide 100%, All Languages 100%, Listen 90%, Occult 100%, Persuade 90%, Psychology 90%, Spot Hidden 90%.*

Spells: *Hecate knows ALL spells, but among her favorites are Bind Enemy, Cause Blindness, Cause Disease, Cloud Memory, Clutch of Nyogtha, Command Animal, Contact Mater Tenebrarum, Contact Mater Suspiriorum, Contact*

Mater Lachrymarum, Contact Ghoul, Contact Rat—Thing, Create Zombie, Dampen Light, Dominate, Enthrall Victim, Evil Eye, Eyes of the Zombie, Grasp of Cthulhu, Implant Fear, Implant Suggestion, Mental Suggestion, Mesmerize, Mindblast, Nightmare, Red Sign of Shudde M'ell, Resurrection, Send Dreams, Shrivelling, Stop Heart, Summon/Bind Byakhee, Wither Limb, Wrack.

Sanity Loss: *It costs 1D3/2D8 Sanity points to be in Hecate's presence if her true nature is known.*

The House

Unless they were all slain by the rampaging goddess, the investigators snap out of their hillside hallucination to find themselves standing in Winter's room, exactly as they were when Winter's mother was revealed as an impostor. Any physical wounds they suffered are now gone, but Sanity losses and any POW or Magic Point reductions remain. Any slain investigators are indeed dead. No time at all has passed since the investigators blacked out and found themselves on the dark hillside.

If Winter was sacrificed during the hallucination, he has died in real life, and attempts to resuscitate him fail. He has no wounds, but has died of heart failure. If the investigators refused to sacrifice him, his condition is as grave as before, and if he isn't taken to a hospital within the next hour or so he dies. Even if he receives treatment, there's still a 25% chance he expires. If the investigators were able to make some bargain with the dark sisters to save Winter along with themselves, he still requires hospital treatment as soon as possible, but his condition isn't as serious.

In the event the investigators sacrificed Winter to save themselves, a particularly ruthless Keeper may wish to let Hecate wreak a terrible vengeance on them by having them snap out of the hallucination to find the dagger protruding from Winter's chest. On the knife the police find the fingerprints of the investigator who committed the sacrifice. Their prints and fiber evidence are all over Winter's house, and there are countless eyewitnesses to connect the investigators to Winter on this fateful night. They're almost certainly all going to prison, and Hecate and her dark sisters are sure to visit them there.

Consequences

The climax of *Our Ladies of Sorrow* really hinges on the life or death of one person, the investigators' friend Kurt Winter. If the investigators manage to save Winter, perhaps by dooming themselves to future persecution by Hecate or The Sorrows, each should be awarded 1D8 Sanity points. This is a noble, if possibly doomed choice for the heroes. Hopefully the investigators make more of an effort to stay in touch with Winter in the future to help him overcome his depression and protect him from The Sorrows. On the other hand, if the investigators cravenly sacrifice Winter in order to save themselves, each should lose 2D6 points of Sanity for their cowardly act. If the investigators refuse to sacrifice Winter and he dies anyway, they still lose 1D6 Sanity for their friend's death.

If an investigator fought and slew at least one of Hecate's hellhounds, award him or her 1D3 Sanity points (one such reward no

matter how many hounds were killed). If the investigators somehow managed to kill Hecate herself, each survivor nets 2D10 Sanity points from this impressive achievement. In addition, anyone present when Hecate was slain should receive a roll to increase his or her POW, as if he or she had overcome a target's Magic Points on the Resistance Table.

The issue of the investigators possibly making a deal with The Sorrows is a tricky one. They are, in effect, accepting a commission to create the equivalent of a Mythos work of art—a commission issued by a dark entity or entities. They are, in fact, working for the bad guys here. If an investigator stops to ponder this fact, and is troubled by it, they lose 1D6 Sanity points for the realization. If The Sorrows' commission is completed, and meets the sisters' approval, the Keeper may award any surviving investigators with 1 point of POW—a gift from the grateful *Dominae Dolorosae*.

If the investigators made some other deal with Hecate in order to save their lives, perhaps offering her sacrifices or agreeing to worship her, they are also moving into dark territory. Frequent uncanny nocturnal meetings with the Woman of the Crossroads to perform rites that are ghastly at best and blasphemous or worse should quickly erode the investigators' Sanity. These meetings should be made at least monthly, perhaps weekly, and each midnight rendezvous should cost the investigators at least 1D6 points of Sanity. There may be necromancy, cannibalism, or necrophilia involved, which might call for considerably greater losses. The damned fools would have been better off letting her haunt them, rather than sinking into such monstrous evil themselves.

If the investigators refused to sacrifice Winter, they earn the wrath of Hecate and The Sorrows. The Sorrows choose their targets as they did during the individual scenarios. *Mater Tenebrarum* singles out investigators who have attempted suicide or who have gone insane. *Mater Suspriorum* seeks those who are outcasts, scandalized, or otherwise isolated. *Mater Lachrymarum* goes after those with children.

The Keeper may have to fashion events surrounding The Sorrows' attacks on each investigator and his family and friends. These attacks may be subtle, or bloody murder, and should take place over a long period of time—The Sorrows have the investigator's entire lifetime to make him pay for their sisters' deaths. During this time the investigators may seek out some way to stop their harrowing at the hands of The Sorrows. Such means are left for the individual Keeper to create, perhaps through some summoning of Hecate or The Sorrows in order to kill or appease them somehow. Alternately, the Keeper may allow the investigators to seek out and utilize powerful but rare Mythos magics such as the Banishment of Yde Etad, or something similar to at least temporarily drive off their persecutors.

Hecate's wrath may also be incurred if the investigators somehow manage to "kill" her. As a goddess, she of course can't really be killed, merely dispelled for a time. Once she has re-incorporated Hecate may make an attempt or two on the life of an investigator or his family or friends, just to let him know she is still out there, and has not, and will not forget them. This, in fact, might make for a good sequel scenario to this campaign.

Throughout this campaign the investigators have spent a great deal of time researching topics on the Occult, Folklore, Literature, and History, among other things. The Keeper should consider allowing each survivor a bonus skill check to increase each of

these skills by 1D6 percentiles.

Further Adventures

Hecate and Our Ladies of Sorrow have an infinite number of forms throughout the world, some human, some spectral, some monstrous, some darkly divine. The investigators could spend the rest of their lives trying to hunt down and destroy all these incarnations. Sooner or later though, the dark goddess would stop playing with them and wipe them from the face of the Earth—probably with all their friends and families for good measure. More likely these entities might create a case for the investigators, lurking deep in the background until their enemies once again stumbled into their web.

The Keeper may wish to use one or more of these other avatars in subsequent adventures, however. Or he may wish to create a direct sequel to one of this book's adventures. The "Lachrymarum" chapter's Kathy Philips, for instance, bears enmity against the investigators for exposing her husband Barry's dangerous obsession with Frances Liston, and destroying her life in the process. She may start with a civil suit against her enemies, but her fury may run deeper than that. Like her husband, Kathy might find herself touched by The Sorrows, who offer her the power to destroy the investigators—provided she becomes an avatar of, say, *Mater Lachrymarum*, or *Mater Tenebrarum*, or Hecate, or Nemesis, the Greek goddess of vengeance. The investigators and their families would be the targets of numerous attacks and accidents, all engineered by Kathy Philips and whichever avatar was driving her.

Another possibility for such a follow-up adventure is Ann Delaney, from the "Suspriorum" chapter. If she was lost to the Mother of Sighs, perhaps Ann becomes the new incarnation of *Mater Suspriorum*. Perhaps, rather than the meek tender of the Garden of Sand and Bone, Ann becomes a wrathful form of the Mother of Sighs, seeking justice for those cast out, or scandalized, or publicly ruined. She might start with her father and family, for triggering the decision she made that sent her spiralling to her doom. Her sisters? Her schoolmates? Who knows who the new *Mater Suspriorum* would vent her wrath upon?

On the other hand, even if Ann did escape the Sighing Desert with the investigators, who's to say that the person they brought back was really Ann? She was alone for days in the City of Gloom. Perhaps she was just waiting for them to rescue "Ann," so that she could return home to wreak vengeance on those whom Ann may yet blame for her terrible choice. The investigators might even begin the case believing they are there to protect Ann from the return of the Mother of Sighs. How many corpses does *Mater Suspriorum* leave behind before they realize their error?

These are just a few possibilities for spin-off adventures from Our Ladies of Sorrow. The various entries in "The Three Sisters" essay may suggest others, as may the entry on Our Ladies of Sorrow in Chaosium's *Malleus Monstrorum*.

Appendices

OUR LADIES OF SORROW

The Three Sisters



“Have you heard of ‘The Three Sisters’?”

“You mean those black singers?”

—Dario Argento’s *Inferno*

This article describes various entities from myth, legend, and folklore which may be other forms of The Sorrows, or may have been inspired by their legends. Many of these beings appear in groups of threes, but a few individual entities are also included because they share characteristics with one or more of The Sorrows or their other identities. La Llorona and the Faceless Woman, for instance, are not only very similar to each other, but also to Mater Lachrymarum, the Mother of Tears. The reader will note many such similar characteristics among these various groups and individuals.

The Keeper may, as desired, use various mythical elements from these capsule descriptions while playing The Sorrows scenarios; several such traits and trappings have already been woven into these adventures, some subtly, some overtly. As the investigators begin to notice and perhaps recognize these characteristics, they may decide to research some of the topics listed below. When they do, the Keeper can either read them the appropriate capsule or give them a photocopy of it. Using sources such as Wikipedia or Google, much of this research can be done on the internet with a few minutes per subject; old-fashioned investigators using a good-sized library could probably find the same information by spending an hour or so per topic.

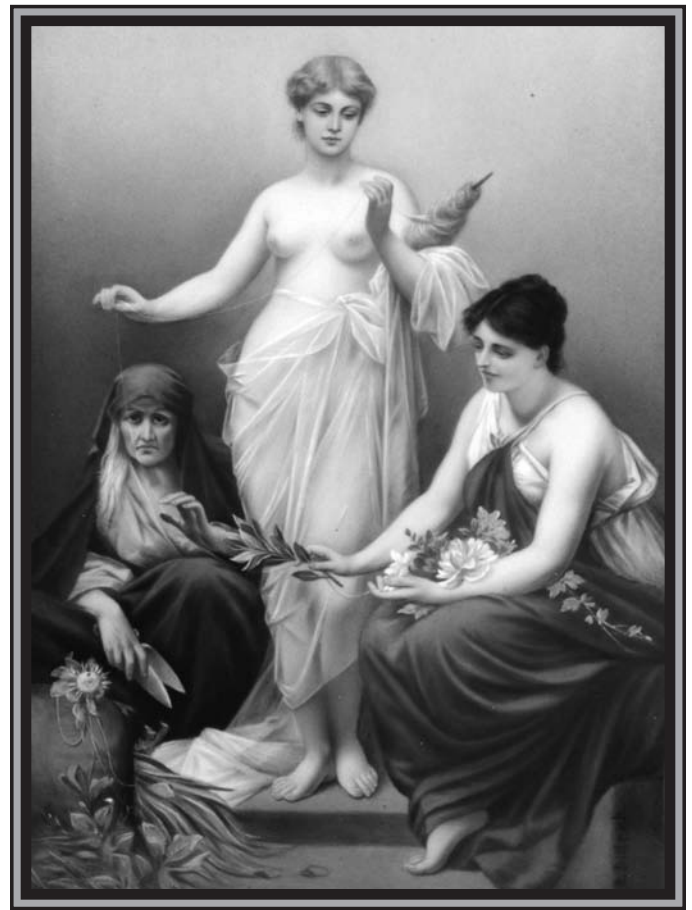
Ultimately, exactly how much of this information is found by the investigators is left to the individual Keeper to decide. Sloppy research, poor die rolls, fatigue, or stress might not unearth all of the details listed here, or the Keeper may wish to deliberately withhold critical information until a key moment in play. In the latter case, when the investigator's player asks "That's so obvious — why didn't I find it before?", the reply should be "Maybe because SHE didn't want you to..."

Our Ladies of Sorrow

These entities are three spirit- or goddess-like sisters who are known variously as Our Ladies of Sorrow or simply The Sorrows. Mater Tenebrarum, the Mother of Darkness, is considered the youngest and most fearsome; perhaps as a result of her own torrid temperament, she dotes on the insane, the morbid, and the suicidal. Mater Suspriorum, the Mother of Sighs, the seemingly meek middle sister, watches over the outcast, the scandalized, the isolated, the hopeless. The oldest of the three, Mater Lachrymarum, is the Mother of Tears; she is the patroness of mourning, grief and loss, especially with regard to the death of a child, and her demeanor ranges from paralyzed anguish to murderous rage. The Sorrows apparently first appeared in Thomas De Quincey's 1845 story "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow," and have since appeared in only a handful of obscure fictional sources, few of which have contributed anything meaningful to De Quincey's descriptions. De Quincey's original story depicts The Sorrows as personifications of various types of grief; other sources usually cast them as bizarre elemental spirits or evil witches.

The Fates

The Fates of Greek myth were also known as the Moirae. They are three sisters, daughters of Night, or of Zeus and Themis, according to various stories. Clotho spins the thread that becomes each man's destiny, while sister Lachesis weaves and measures the thread of his life, and the final sister, Atropos, severs the thread when the man's life is ended. In these familiar forms they are often depicted in art and poetry. In some versions of the legend they do their work at Zeus' bidding, while others say even he cannot affect their decisions. To the Romans, the Fates were the Parcae, and their names were Nona, Decima, and Morta. These three beings corresponded almost exactly to the Moirae above, and in addition Nona and Decima were patronesses of pregnancy and childbirth, while Morta was the bringer of death. Morta also had a reputation as a cannibal.



Other Fate Goddesses: Nemesis and Ilithyia

The Greeks also had other goddesses with ties to the fates of men. Ilithyia was the overseer of childbirth, and thus was present at the birth of each man, woman, and child; once the child was born he or she came under the stewardship of The Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. The goddess Nemesis was an earlier version of the Greek concept of Fate. Another daughter of Night, Nemesis was the goddess of vengeance, her duty to forcefully bring down those who would defy the laws of god and man. She may have some

influence upon her sisters the Fates, and the Furies are often the instruments — usually the weapons — of her will. Nemesis' grim vengeful nature was later softened, and she becameAdrasteia, yet another decreer of Fate.

The Furies

The Furies, or Erinyes, were the awful avengers of Greek myth. Born from the blood spilled when the Titan Cronus castrated his father, the sky god Uranus, the Erinyes' duty was to avenge crimes of murder committed against one's own kin, especially upon a mother. They too were three in number: Alecto, "the endless," or alternately "the perservering anger;" Tisiphone, "the retaliator," or "blood avenger;" and Megaera, "the envious rager," or "the jealous." They are horrible stinking female creatures, nearly insane, with black skin, ichor-oozing eyes, acrid breath, snakes in their hair, and whips and torches in their clawed hands. They speak in grating, barking voices, and torture the damned in Hades. The most famous tale of the Furies is Aeschylus' play *The Eumenides* ("Kindly Ones"), in which they seek vengeance upon the youth Orestes for the murder of his mother Clymenestra, whom he had killed to avenge her role in the murder of his father Agamemnon. Heedless of Orestes' motives and driven by their own sense of duty, the Erinyes pursue him relentlessly, howling their terrible song:

*"Over the beast doomed to the fire
This is the chant
Frenzy and fear, hurting the heart,
Song of the Furies
Binding brain and blighting blood
In its stringless melody."*

The doomed Orestes calls upon the god Apollo for aid, but the Furies ignore even Apollo's appeals, and finally the goddess Athena is brought on to judge the matter. When Athena finds in favor of Orestes, the enraged avengers threaten to defy her and spread terror across the land:

*"I, disinherited, suffering, heavy with anger
Shall let loose on the land
The vindictive poison
Dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground."*

The Furies are only tamed when Athena offers them a temple and worshippers in the city of Athens, where they will be welcomed as protectors. The Erinyes agree, and afterward dwell in a cave beneath the city they guard. They now literally become "the Kindly Ones:" henceforth they are usually depicted as cleancut female goddesses armed with bows.

The Gorgons

The Gorgons are among the most famous of Greek mythological horrors. The three Gorgon sisters were the daughters of Phorcys

and Ceto, and the sisters of the three Graeae (see below). Two of the Gorgons, Stheno and Euryale, were immortal, but the third, Medusa, was not. Most myths state that all three were monstrous women with great tusked mouths and snakes for hair. They are sometimes depicted with wings, but rarely. Some stories say that Medusa was once a great beauty who foolishly compared her beauty to that of the goddess Athena, who then gave Medusa the monstrous looks for which she is known. (Still another tale states that Medusa was seduced by the god Poseidon within Athena's temple, for which the goddess punished her as above.) Anyone who met the gaze of a Gorgon was turned to stone, and the sisters' lair was strewn with the statue-like forms of their petrified victims. All three Gorgons were believed to have lived on the northern or western coast of Africa. To save his mother Danae from the unwanted attentions of King Polydectes, the hero Perseus agreed to the king's request to bring him the head of Medusa; Polydectes assumed Perseus would die in the attempt, leaving Danae alone and unprotected. Aided by Athena and others, Perseus persuaded the Graeae to reveal the Gorgons' location. There he used his polished shield to avoid Medusa's gaze while he chopped off her serpent-tressed head. While the winged horse Pegasus did emerge from the Gorgon's body or blood, Perseus did not use that creature in his flight from the two remaining sisters, instead using a cap of invisibility and winged slippers. Perseus then used Medusa's still-potent head to turn his enemy Polydectes to stone before giving the head to Athena.

The Norns

The Norns are the Fates of Scandinavian mythology. Originally Fate was depicted as a single entity, a giantess called Urdar, but later became yet another female triumvirate of goddesses: Urd, the past; Verdandi, the present; and Skuld, the future. Some sources say they are crone, mother, and maiden, respectively, while others say they are a giantess, elf, and dwarf. They sit at the base of the world tree Yggdrasil, a great ash tree which they guard and tend. They are sometimes served by (and mistaken for) the war-maiden Valkyries.

The Graeae

The Graeae were three sisters — Pephredo, Enyo and Deino — who were also the sisters of the Gorgons, and like them they were monstrous. They were withered and grey-haired at birth, and possessed but a single eye and tooth which they shared among the three of them. Also called the Grey Ones of Hellas, the Graeae were tricked by Perseus into revealing the whereabouts of their sister, the Gorgon Medusa: using a cap of invisibility, Perseus stole the Grey Ones' eye, and only returned it when they told him how to find Medusa.

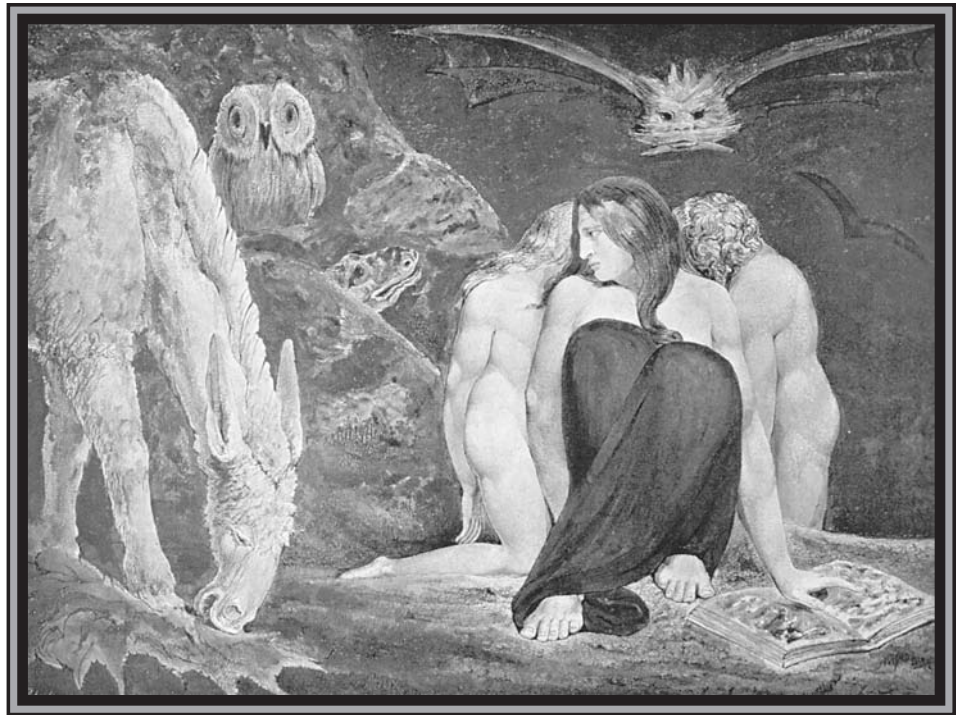
The Muses

The more commonly known nine Muses were originally three in number: Calliope ("beautiful face"), Erato ("beloved one"), and

Urania (“heavenly one”). These nymphs were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. The Muses oversaw the various arts, chiefly poetry and music. When their roles were expanded to nine Muses, they became more specified in their duties: Calliope, epic poetry; Clio, history; Erato, love poetry; Euterpe, lyric poetry; Melpemone, tragedy; Polyhymnia, religious poetry and song; Terpsichore, dance; Thalia, comedy; and Urania, astronomy.

The Goddess/Triple Goddess

The tradition of triple or triumvirate goddess goes back centuries, and from these notes it should be apparent that the Greeks in particular were enamored with the theme. While most of the triad goddesses of antiquity were nearly identical within their group, modern mysticism has seen the development of the triple goddess in the distinct forms of maiden (creation), mother (nurturing), and crone (death). Modern witchcraft in particular recognizes the Goddess in these forms, though also in the form of three moon goddesses harking back to Greek myth: Artemis (the parallel Roman deity Diana is used by contemporary witches) is the virgin or maiden that represents the new or waxing lunar phase; Selene is the mother, indicated by the full moon; and Hecate is the crone that represents the waning and dark of the moon. As discussed elsewhere, Hecate also has numerous triple aspects herself. Modern witchcraft, or Craft, emphasizes the particular power of women as a result of their relationship with the Goddess.



The Witches of Macbeth

Shakespeare’s *Tragedy of Macbeth* contains what has to be the archetypal image of the witch: three ugly hags gathered round a great black cauldron, into which they place various awful ingredients while they chant their spell. What’s not so well known is that this cauldron ritual is answered by the queen of the witches herself, Hecate. It is these witches, or “weird sisters”, who tell Macbeth the prophecy which leads him to the murderous deed that is his undoing. For as Banquo predicts:

*“And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray’s
In deepest consequence.”*

It should be noted that while the witches do commit their own murderous deeds “offscreen,” they are not ultimately respon-

sible for Macbeth’s evil; they merely present him with an excuse to act on his darkest ambitions. Their prophecies link them to the Greek Fates and the Norse Norns.

Hecate

In Greek myth, Hecate was a goddess of darkness, the moon, the night, the dead, and magic. She is either a minor goddess or one of the Titans, the daughter of the Titans Perses and Asteria, related by birth to Apollo and Artemis. When Zeus and the gods defeated the Titans, only Hecate was allowed to stay in Olympus, where she was given influence over a portion each of earth, sky, and sea. She is said to be the queen of ghosts, accompanied on her nocturnal travels by a host of dead spirits and howling hellhounds;

her approach is said to be accompanied by the frenzied howling of dogs and, sometimes, by earth tremors. Her appearance varies, but is usually said to be terrifying. In human form Hecate has snakes for hair, wears a necklace of testicles, and carries a torch and a whip (see The Furies) or sword. Her statues were often set up at crossroads, a location she also favored; these statues usually had three heads — a dog, a serpent, and a horse — each facing a different direction. Because of her relationship with the crossroads she also has the appellations “antaia” (she who meets), “einodia” (she who appears on the way), and “triodis” (the goddess of parting ways). She can cause nightmares, insanity, and suicide (see Mater Tenebrarum), and can raise the dead, among her other magical powers. The Greek witches Circe and Medea are both said to have been daughters of Hecate. With Artemis and Selene, she is a triple lunar goddess, her aspect being the crone and her influence the waning and dark moon. Legend has it that Hecate was one of the few who heard Persephone’s cries when she was abducted by Hades, and afterward befriended the underworld’s

new queen; this may have been the beginning of Hecate's role as underworld goddess and companion of the dead. Sorcerers are said to invoke her assistance in magical workings, offering her sacrifices of a dog (her favored animal) or a ram. Those fearing Hecate may try to appease her with offerings of food (honey, eggs, onions, fish) left either outside the door or at a crossroads, at the end of the month. Hecate is sometimes said to have as her companions a goblin named Empusa, a poltergeist called Cercopsia, and a ghoul named Mormo. One ritual invoking her reads

"Come, infernal, terrestrial, and heavenly Bombo (Hecate), goddess of the broad roadways, of the crossroad, thou who goest to and fro at night, torch in hand, enemy of the day. Friend and lover of darkness, thou who doest rejoice when the bitches are howling and warm blood is spilled, thou who art walking amid the phantom and in the place of tombs, thou whose thirst is blood, thou who dost strike chill into mortal hearts, Gorgo, Mormo, Moon of a thousand forms, cast a propitious eye upon our sacrifices."

(A similar invocation appears in H.P. Lovecraft's story "The Horror at Red Hook".)

Lilith

Lilith was the first wife of Adam, created from mud or dust to serve the first man. But she refused to submit to man or God, and thus was banished to the wastes outside Eden. There she brooded vengefully, and became the consort of demons, even the wife of the Devil according to some sources; some stories say she returned to seduce Adam as well, spawning a brood of evil spirits. All of her children were unholy monsters, and because of her disloyalty God cursed her to lose 100 of these foul children each day, thus leading her to hate men and human children even more. The preternaturally beautiful Lilith became known as the Queen of the Night, killing children and tempting men into nocturnal trysts which they dared not confess to their spouses, friends, or priests. From these couplings, and from those of other human couples on whom she jealously spied, Lilith stole semen with which she created new monstrous offspring. Hebrew tradition states that she is the first succubus (see Old Hag/Nightmare/Succubus), that she is responsible for all nocturnal emissions, and that men who have had such emissions must recite certain rituals to prevent the creation of a new demon as a result of their sin. Newborn children are supposedly vulnerable to Lilith's murderous attentions for their first week of life, three weeks for baby girls.

La Llorona

La Llorona — the Weeping Woman — is a ghostly female figure from Mexican folklore. She appears as a distraught woman searching for her child, whom legend states that she has either murdered or lost through her negligence. Variations of her tale state that she neglected her child (or children) in order to romance a married man, who eventually abandoned her; her child then either accidentally drowns in a nearby body of water, or is drowned by her, or is otherwise murdered by her in her belief that the child drove

away her love. This deed causes her to walk the night searching in vain for her lost offspring. La Llorona is usually encountered roaming lonely places, especially riverbanks, at night. She sometimes lures lone travellers to such places, where she murders them, apparently as surrogates for the man who jilted her. The Weeping Woman's wailing cries can sometimes be heard in the places she haunts. Some stories say that she wears her hair long to cover her face, which may be bat- or horse-like, or totally featureless (see The Faceless Woman). The legend of the Crying Woman appears to have originated in Mexico, but curiously seems to appear wherever any sizable Hispanic population has gathered. As Hispanic communities develop across the United States, especially in areas with considerable blue collar industrial jobs, La Llorona seems to spread her influence along with them. Like the similar tales of the Faceless Woman, stories of La Llorona have become widespread urban legends, and may have links to the popular "Vanishing Hitchhiker" tales.

The Faceless Woman

The faceless woman is a ghostly figure whose story is told in various forms around the world. She wears her hair long, and is usually seen at first from the rear; when she is spoken to or approached closely she turns to reveal she has no face. Lafcadio Hearn's story "Mujina" recounts a popular Japanese folktale version of the tale: a traveller stops to assist a young woman crying by the roadside one night, her face hidden by her hair; he is horrified when she reveals her facelessness to him, and his flight leads him to recount his tale to another traveller down the road — who also has no face. Similar such tales have become widespread, and have become an urban legend.

Old Hag/Nightmare/Succubus

The "old hag" syndrome is a disturbing nightmare experience which has been documented for nearly 2000 years, at least. Such an "attack" usually begins when a sleeper awakens suddenly, finds himself unable to move, has trouble breathing, and often detects the presence of some unknown entity within the room. The sleeper may also hear approaching footsteps, heavy breathing, or snuffling sounds before or during such an event. As the nightmare progresses, the victim feels a heavy weight on his body or chest, and he or she may see a milky white humanoid outline of the attacking creature; some victims report seeing a more solid dark form of their assailant, or even its ragged eyeholes or glaring eyes. The event usually ends with the "night hag" withdrawing, releasing the dreamer from pressure and paralysis, and he or she awakens; some victims claim to have driven off their attacker with prayer. Modern research has found that approximately 15% of the population have had one or more of these experiences, which may occur only a few times, or over the course of several years. In the second century AD, the Greek physician Galen attributed these disturbing "attacks" to simple indigestion. In the Middle Ages they were blamed on the nocturnal predation of witches, from which the phenomenon has since taken its name. It was believed

that witches — or “hags” — “rode” sleepers during the night, sitting on the victim’s chest and drawing out their strength or suffocating them, sometimes even riding them to death. This explanation also resembles the attack of a succubus, a female demon which sexually assaulted men during the night, often in dreams. Modern explanations for the Old Hag Syndrome include Galen’s indigestion theory, repressed sexuality, various sleep disorders, and attacks by magic spells or demons; a definitive explanation has yet to appear. Protective measures against such attacks include prayer, the cross or other protective talismans, and holding a knife in one’s hands as he or she sleeps (to stab the hag!). The original derivation of the Anglo-Saxon word for “nightmare” was in fact a specific description of attacks such as these. Hag attacks occur in all parts of the world.

Baba Yaga

Perhaps the most famous figure of Russian folklore, Baba Yaga (or “the” Baba Yaga) is a withered witch or hag who flies the night skies in a large mortar and pestle (other stories say a black kettle), searching for her prey. Like most of the hags discussed here, she is a cannibal, snatching her victims (usually children) back to be cooked and eaten in her bizarre abode: a hut perched on giant chicken legs, surrounded by a fence decorated with skulls. Some stories note that she has one or two sisters, identical to her in every way, with identical huts and means of flying.

Badb, Morrigan, Nema, and Macha

The bloodthirsty Celtic war goddess Badb (pronounced “bibe”) sometimes appeared as a witch or hag, but also had three other separate but related forms: Morrigan, Nema and Macha, who took the shapes of carrion crows on the battlefield. Macha and Nema delight in the slaughter of warfare, the latter confusing armies so that they attack their own side; of the three, Morrigan seems less malevolent, granting strength to the Irish hero Cuchulain in battle against the fomorian giants. Some sources classify these entities together under the name The Morrigan, in which case they are a slightly different triad of goddesses: Ana is the virgin, Babd is the mother, and Macha is the crone.

Black Annis

The evil blue-skinned hag Black Annis supposedly lived in a secluded cave in Leicestershire, where she preyed on local livestock — when she couldn’t snatch a human child or two on which to sup. Other sources place her in the Scottish Highlands, which suggests that there may be more than one such blue cannibal hag. Possessed of brutally sharp nails and teeth and but a single glaring eye, she is said to have dug out her cave, called Black Annis’ Bower, with her claws. She also used her claws to skin her victims, those skins then used to decorate her bone-strewn bower.

Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow

by Thomas De Quincey

Oftentimes at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams. I knew her by her Roman symbols. Who is Levana? Reader, that do not pretend to have much leisure for very much scholarship, you will not be angry with me for telling you. Levana was the Roman goddess that performed for the new-born infant the earliest office of ennobling kindness, - typical, by its mode, of that grandeur which belongs to man everywhere, and of that benignity in powers invisible which even in pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it. At the very moment of birth, just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our troubled planet, it was laid on the ground. But immediately, lest so grand a creature should grovel there for more than one instant, either the paternal hand, as proxy for the goddess Levana, or some near kinsman, as proxy for the father, raised it upright, bade it look erect as the king of all this world, and presented its forehead to the stars, saying, perhaps, in his heart, "Behold what is greater than yourselves!" This symbolic act represented the function of Levana. And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare*, to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana, and hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-development of his powers. She therefore watches over human education. Now the word *educio*, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallisation of languages) from the word *educio*, with the penultimate long. Whatever educs, or develops, educates. By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant, - not the poor machinery that moves by spelling - books and grammars, but by that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works for ever upon children, - resting not night or day, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering for ever as they revolve.

If, then, these are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief. But you, reader! think, - that children are not liable to such grief as mine. There are two senses in the word generally - the sense of Euclid, where it means universally (or in the whole extent of the genus), and in a foolish sense of this word, where it means usually. Now, I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But there are more than you ever heard of who die of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton require that a boy on the foundation should be there twelve years: he is superannuated at eighteen, consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief; but that it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than have ever been counted amongst its martyrs.

Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake a man's heart: therefore it is that she dotes on grief. "These ladies," said I softly to myself, on seeing the ministers with whom Levana was conversing, "these are the Sorrows; and they are three in number, as the Graces are three, who dress man's life with beauty; the Parcae are three, who weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom, always with colours sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic crimson and black; the Furies are three, who visit with retribution called from the other side of the grave offences that walk upon this; and once even the Muses were but three, who fit the harp, the trumpet, or the lute, to the great burdens of man's impassioned creations. These are the Sorrows, all three of whom I know."

The last words I say now; but in Oxford I said, "One of whom I know, and the others too surely I shall know." For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters. These sisters - by what name shall we call them? If I say simply, "The Sorrows," there will be a chance of mistaking the term; it might be understood of individual sorrow, - separate cases of sorrow, - whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow*. I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? O, no! mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves there is no voice nor sound; eternal silence reigns in their kingdoms. They spoke not, as they talked with Levana; they whispered not; they sang not; though oftentimes methought they might have sung, for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. They wheeled in mazes; I spelled the steps. They telegraphed from afar; I read the signals. They conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness my eye traced the plots. Theirs were the symbols; mine are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form, and their presence: if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline, or presence it were that for ever advanced to the front, or for ever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, *Our Lady of Tears*. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation, - Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.

Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the eldest, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sat all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring - time of the year, and whilst yet her own Spring was budding, he recalled her to himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over her; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is now within a second and a deeper darkness. This Mater Lachrymarum has also been sitting all this winter of 1844 - 5 within the bed - chamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of the keys it is that Our Lady of tears glides a ghostly intruder into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first - born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of "Madonna!"

The second sister is called Mater Suspiriorum - Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for ever, for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, Madonna, is oftentimes stormy and frantic, raging in the highest against heaven, and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight; Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor of the Pariah, of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in the Mediterranean galleys; and of the English criminal in Norfolk Island, blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far - off England; of the baffled penitent reverting his eyes for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother, but for him a stepmother, - as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against him sealed and sequestered; - every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven - born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients; every nun defrauded of her unreturning May - time by wicked

kinsman, whom God will judge; every captive in every dungeon; all that are betrayed and all that are rejected outcasts by traditionary law, and children of hereditary disgrace, - all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem, and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest walks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads. But the third sister, who is also the youngest -! Hush, whisper whilst we talk of her! Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high might be hidden by distance; but, being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers, for noon of day or noon of night, for ebbing or for flowing tide, may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She is also the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles, and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And her name is Mater Tenebrarum - Our Lady of Darkness.

These were the Semnai Theai, or Sublime Goddesses, these were the Eumenides, or Gracious Ladies (so called by antiquity in shuddering propitiation), of my Oxford dreams. Madonna spoke. She spoke by her mysterious hand. Touching my head, she said to Our Lady of Sighs; and what she spoke, translated out of the signs which (except in dreams) no man reads, was this: -

"Lo! here is he, whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolater, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs! Do thou take him now to thy heart, and season him for our dreadful sister. And thou," - turning to the Mater Tenebrarum, she said, - "wicked sister, that temptest and hatest, do thou take him from her. See that thy sceptre lie heavy on his head. Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope, wither the relenting of love, scorch the fountain of tears, curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace, so shall he see the things that ought not to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again before he dies, and so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had, - to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit."

Bibliography and Suggested Reading/Viewing

** = Primary Source; * = Other Important Sources

F = film/TV, L = literature, CD = music, C = comics/graphic novel

The Sorrows in the Arts

The following sources all feature the Sorrows, in one guise or another, to some extent. Thomas De Quincey's story is of course the primary source of inspiration for this book, and is included herein for that reason. Leiber's award-winning novel is another very important influence. With the arrival in 2008 of *Mother of Tears*, all of Dario Argento's *Three Mothers* films are now available in the US; viewing the first two films, *Suspiria* and *Inferno*, initially inspired me to write this book. (It seems eerily suggestive, to this writer, at least, that both Leiber's *Our Lady of Darkness* and Argento's *Suspiria*, his first *Three Mothers* film, appeared in 1977, and that the second *Three Mothers* film, *Inferno*, in some ways echoed Leiber's book.) Mater Lachrymarum appears in Kim Newman's 1950s-set *Anno Dracula* novel *Judgment of Tears*. The terrible Furies of Greek myth are the dark stars of Aeschylus' play *The Eumenides*; they also pursue a murderous vendetta against Neil Gaiman's Dream King in the excellent graphic novel *The Sandman: The Kindly Ones*, and are after more blood vengeance in *The Sandman Presents: The Furies* graphic novel.

***"Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow,"* Thomas De Quincey (L)

**Our Lady of Darkness*, Fritz Leiber (L)

**Suspiria*, directed by Dario Argento (F)

**Inferno*, directed by Dario Argento (F)

Mother of Tears, directed by Dario Argento (F)

The Tragedy of Macbeth, William Shakespeare (L)

The Eumenides, Aeschylus (trans. by Richmond Lattimore) (L)

A Judgment of Tears, Kim Newman (L)

The Sandman: The Kindly Ones, Neil Gaiman, Marc Hempel, et al (C)

The Sandman Presents: The Furies, Mike Carey & John Bolton (C)

Curse of the Crying Woman, directed by Rafael Baledon (F)

The Gorgon, directed by Terence Fisher (F)

The Black Cat, directed by Luigi Cozzi (F)

Witchcraft, James Robinson, et al, (C)

Suspiria soundtrack, Goblin (CD)

Inferno soundtrack, Keith Emerson (CD)

Mother of Tears soundtrack, Claudio Simonetti (CD)

"The Three Fates," *Emerson, Lake & Palmer* (CD)

Non-Fiction Sources

Most of the sources in this section were used to build the mythological background of the book. Hufford's book on the "old hag" syndrome inspired the frightening nocturnal attacks in the "Tenebrarum" chapter. "Suspiorum"'s Enrique Echevarría and Joseph Two Knives

were inspired by the visionaries and sorcerers found in the Castaneda books. The tragic Hollywood lore in the "Lachrymarum" chapter was derived from the books by Anger and Brottman. John Keel's vaguely Lovecraftian speculations inspired the character of paranormal writer Richard Ahern.

**Man, Myth & Magic (Fate, Furies, Hand of Glory, Hecate)*, edited by Richard Cavendish

The White Goddess, Robert Graves

The Age of Fable, Thomas Bulfinch

**Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits (Faceless Woman, La Llorona, Old Hag)*, Rosemary Ellen Guiley

**Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft (Hag, Hand of Glory, Hecate, Nightmare)*, Rosemary Ellen Guiley

**The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions*, David J. Hufford

**Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, edited by Maria Leach

The Time-Life Encyclopedia of Things That Never Were, Michael Page and Robert Ingpen

The Mothman Prophecies, John A. Keel

Disneyland of the Gods, John A. Keel

The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge, and *Journey to Ixtlan*, Carlos Castaneda

Hollywood Babylon, and *Hollywood Babylon II*, Kenneth Anger

Hollywood Hex, Mikita Brottman

Miscellaneous Sources

The items listed here provided less important or obvious inspirations for The Sorrows. Many are excellent modern ghost stories, notably the superb Japanese *Ring* films and their American offspring. The troubled character Kurt Winter is a tip of the hat to the late, lamented Karl Edward Wagner, horror/fantasy author/editor nonpareil. Straub's novel (and the not-terrifically-faithful but still very watchable film version) may show yet another facet of Mater Tenebrarum. The background mythos of the Blair Witch phenomenon — as put forth in the faux documentary *The Curse of the Blair Witch* and the companion *Dossier* book — is much more satisfying than the film itself.

Exorcisms & Ecstasies, Karl Edward Wagner (L)

"Silted In," Karl Edward Wagner (L)

Ringu, and *Ringu 2*, directed by Hideo Nakata (F)

Ring 0: Birthday, directed by Norio Tsuruta (F)

The Ring, directed by Gore Verbinski (F)

Ghost Story, Peter Straub (L)

Ghost Story, directed by John Irvin (F)

The Mothman Prophecies, directed by Mark Pellington (F)

The Blair Witch Project, and *The Curse of the Blair Witch*, directed by Eduardo Sanchez & Daniel Myrick (F)

The Blair Witch Project: A Dossier, Daniel Stern (L)

Baba Yaga, directed by Corrado Farina (F)

Ghostwatch, directed by Lesley Manning (F)

The Woman in Black, directed by Herbert Wise (F)

Afterword: Now My Ghosts Are Yours

"They telegraphed from afar; I read the signals. They conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness my eye traced the plots. Theirs were the symbols; mine are the words."

—Thomas De Quincey, "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow"

If you're reading this it's because after nearly 20 years of gathering ideas from dozens of sources, accumulating folders and folders full of notes, outlining and re-outlining, starting and stopping, I've finally managed to capture The Sorrows in print. Either that, or I'm dead and you have the misfortune of poring through my disks in search of anything interesting and/or salable. Best of luck, in the latter case.

In the former case, it's no exaggeration that this project has been simmering for close to 20 years. I first saw Dario Argento's films *Suspiria* and *Inferno* some time in the late 1980s, and was quite thrilled by the backstory of the mysterious Three Mothers, as presented in *Inferno*. I was starting to get some of my work published for the Call of Cthulhu game at that time, and I thought it would be fun to try and adapt the Three Mothers mythology — or something like it — for the game. While most of the earlier versions of The Three Sisters/Our Ladies of Sorrow project tried too hard to shoehorn elements of the Cthulhu Mythos into the stories, it's surprising to me that so many other ideas from my original notes have survived to make it into the finished version.

I was also reading Neil Gaiman's incredible *Sandman* comic at this time, and that book's deft mixture of modern fantasy and classical myth also appealed to me, adding another dimension to the development of what would eventually become The Sorrows. And it was about this time that I discovered that I already owned the story which had inspired Argento's films in the first place — Thomas De Quincey's "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow." Once I'd read De Quincey, I felt that Argento had barely scratched the surface of this dark and powerful myth — so De Quincey became the foundation of what I sought to do with The Sorrows. With Argento, Gaiman, and De Quincey in mind, and a subsequent rediscovery of Fritz Leiber's novel-length take on the subject, *Our Lady of Darkness*, the mythology of The Sorrows really began to coalesce in my fevered brain.

And I began inflicting my visions on my fellow writers. The first time I met my good friend and colleague Scott Aniolowski, I told him about The Sorrows. He loved the idea, and offered to help, and I gladly obliged. Other projects kept either of us from proceeding much further, but we decided it would be a good idea for a third party to pick up the third Sister/Mother/Sorrow. A parade of potential collaborators followed. J. Todd Kingrea, Mark Morrison, Richard Watts, Todd Woods, Fred Behrendt, Gary Sumpter. If you've read any Call of Cthulhu books at all, you know their names. But through it all, over the course of a dozen years, in an endless variety of lineups, Scott was always there, but we could never get the damned thing past the planning stages.

Other projects, conflicting ideas, and eventually a growing disillusionment with the game industry always seemed to scuttle The Sorrows project before anything substantial could be achieved. (Though my GenCon tournament scenario "The Dare," published in Triad Entertainments' *Dwellers in Shadow*, was a short, demythologized "warm-up" version of a "Three Sisters" scenario.) The project seemed to be cursed.

And it was driving me a little crazy. Every year seemed to offer new ideas and angles that vastly improved the story of The Sorrows, but I just couldn't seem to get it done. (In addition to the sources mentioned earlier, even items from the news found their way into my visions of The Sorrows. A mummified baby found in an auctioned suitcase. Mysterious mazes found in the deserts of California. A nationwide search for a missing woman. The collapse of a bridge in Minnesota.) By this time I was pushing my ideas on my collaborators so adamantly that all concerned realized that the only way this book was going to get done was if I did it myself. Even Scott had grown weary of all the fits and starts. I couldn't blame him — I was too.

But The Sorrows project — and the coincidences that seemed to accompany it — refused to die, almost literally hounding and haunting me over the years. At one point, a coworker of mine had a couple of disturbing dreams about a strange "witchy" old lady. In the dreams, this apparent madwoman followed and threatened Craig and his son, eventually resulting in a call to the police to haul her away when she was discovered hiding in a closet in Craig's house; when Craig went back into the house he found her floating outside his second story window. While this was eerie enough, it ain't HALF the story. Craig was awakened from one of these dreams when the television came on. In the middle of the night. Of its own accord. (As you may have guessed, I couldn't help wondering what was playing when it came on...) This happened a couple of times before he finally decided that one of his cats must be doing mischief with the TV remote. To make matters even more bizarre, Craig's young daughter also dreamed of a "witchy lady" who climbed up the side of their house, peered in the window, came inside, and sat on the little girl's bed. Now, many adults might get a good rash of goosepimples out of this — given my obsession with The Sorrows, I know I did — but Claire wasn't afraid at all. Craig and his family attributed these dreams to a recent viewing of *The Wizard of Oz*, with Margaret Hamilton spooking the place up with her mad cackle and her horde of winged monkeys. But like any number of other events over the past several years, these occurrences only reminded me of those Three Sisters who still seemed determined to make me tell their stories.

Burdened by visions derived from fiction, film, myth, dream, and reality, I finally decided to try and exorcise the Ladies by writing about them. The research, notes, outlines, and storylines were all there, just waiting to have flesh put on the bones. All I had to do was give in to the Sisters' ceaseless urgings and tell their stories...

In its earliest forms, *Our Ladies of Sorrow* would have seemed very much like a "Cthulhu-fication" of the Argento films: the Three

Mothers would have been powerful witch-like demonic entities — most likely among Nyarlathotep's Million Favored Ones — who used terrible magic and were served by various Cthulhoid monsters and cultists. It didn't take long to realize that De Quincey's story was far more profound and satisfying than Argento's, suggesting a vertiginously deep background for The Sorrows. Three Fates, three Furies, three Graces, three Muses, three Gorgons, three Norns (Norse Fates), three Grey Ones (the monstrous Greek sisters who shared a single eye and tooth), Shakespeare's three weird sisters, the Triple Goddess. Could they all be guises or avatars of the Sorrows? This would make them far more potent than mere Lovecraftian witches, more like dark goddesses of some kind. But what if the Sorrows were themselves merely a mask for something even deeper and darker — maybe Adam's first wife Lilith, who later became a terrible nocturnal predator among men. Or better yet, Hecate, goddess of darkness, ghosts, and black magic, and herself a triple goddess of sorts. And once you're in that deep, it doesn't take much to look at Lilith or especially Hecate and see yet another mask of Nyarlathotep. But I had to stop peeling off masks somewhere, so I quit at Hecate, leaving vague hints that she/they could be Lilith and/or Nyarlathotep.

As the background mythology developed it was looking more and more like The Sorrows would emphasize non-Mythos supernatural horror as opposed to Cthulhoid trappings, something I always used to chide my fellow CoC writers for doing (sorry, folks) but which I now embraced. It seemed the best way to initially present The Sorrows scenarios was as ghost stories, and here De Quincey's unearthly depictions helped immensely. And with the appearance of the frightening Japanese *Ringu* film series, modern ghosts were hip again (though they seem to have given way to sadistic torture porn these days). Films like the *Ringu* and *Ju-on* series perfectly captured the type of subtle, scary, and unpredictable supernatural horror I thought had been neglected for too long, and which I wanted to utilize in The Sorrows. The popularity of these films indicated to me that I was on the right track with my non-Mythos approach to The Sorrows.

Discovering David J. Hufford's book on the "old hag" or nightmare syndrome — dream or dream-like experiences in which a shadowy figure looms over the helplessly paralyzed sleeper — also re-energized my concepts for the "Tenebrarum" chapter. As someone who suffered "attacks" like these many years ago, reading the numerous case studies in Hufford's book scared the living hell out of me. According to the studies, perhaps as many as 15 percent of the population suffer these sinister nocturnal visitations on the borders of sleep. That's one out of every seven people, all having basically the same nightmare. If it's a dream, where does it come from? Some deep ancestral memory ingrained in our psyches? Is it some creature that can only manifest in our dreams? What does it/they want? And if it's not a dream — then what the HELL is it?! All of this fed right into my concept of the "Tenebrarum" chapter, with the dreary apartment building haunted by a mysterious dark lady who might be a ghost or a witch — or something else...

Finally, in early 2008 I decided to just write the damn book, with no concern for whether it would ever be published. And even

as I started writing, things began to fall propitiously into place around the book. For the first time in years, Chaosium welcomed new licensors for Call of Cthulhu, opening up the possibility I might publish *Our Ladies* myself. Then Doc Herber kicked off Miskatonic River Press, and invited me and my sinister trio aboard — the Ladies now had a publisher! And as the book and the year rolled on, more portents appeared. Midwestern flooding in the summer of 2008 echoed the ideas I'd had years before for the "Lachrymarum" chapter, and were fresh in mind (and outside my door!) as I wrote that scenario. And after nearly 30 years Dario Argento also returned to the *Three Mothers*, as the fall saw the US release of the final film in the trilogy, the disappointing *Mother of Tears*. And now, finally, after nearly 20 years, *Our Ladies of Sorrow* is finished.

What I had wanted was a good scary book on a less grandiose scale than most Call of Cthulhu campaigns. There are no cults and only a few monsters here, and very few opportunities for gunplay. These stories aren't about saving the world, but confronting fear and surviving it. The cosmic horror of Lovecraft has long been the focus of the game, but I wanted something smaller and more personal. Something that maybe couldn't be defeated, only survived. Hopefully readers and players of these adventures will find them to be a memorable — and SCARY — experience.

So there you have it. I don't know if I've exorcised them or not, but at the very least now I've shared them with you. Now my ghosts are yours.

Ave Dominae Dolorosae Nostrae!

Kevin Ross
Boone, Iowa
November 2008

Postscript, June 2009

It's very strange to write a book of stories about ghosts and curses and then suggest that such things might have some basis in reality, as I did in the dedication earlier in this book and in the Afterword you've just read. I frankly don't believe in such things. But if there really are such things as curses and ghosts, and *Our Ladies of Sorrow*, then they've had the last laugh on me.

On March 13, 2009, Keith Herber, my friend, mentor, and editor for over 20 years, passed away at his home in Florida. After 15 years in exile, Keith had just gotten back into the Call of Cthulhu field with a couple of very well-received releases from his new company Miskatonic River Press. *Our Ladies of Sorrow* was to be the third release, and it was the project he was working on when he passed away.

So if you believe in such things, now there's another ghost attached to this project. The spirit of Keith Herber can definitely be found within these pages, whether it's his editorial hand, his layout design, or little things like the Colbert wristband (which I had cut out at one point, but he stuck back in because he's such a fan), Doc's in here.

So I'm retracting the dedication from earlier in this book. The Ladies no longer deserve any supplication from me, only malediction. Instead...

This book is dedicated
with admiration, respect, and friendship
to my late comrade in arms,
Keith Herber

RIP, amigo

Handouts

Tenebrarum Papers #1

an article from the local newspaper

Man Dies in Traffic Mishap

Frank Ryder, 74 years old, died in a traffic accident yesterday after stumbling off a curb and into the path of a van driven by Susan Simon.

The elderly Ryder, who walked with the aid of a cane, was described by witnesses as suddenly plunging off the sidewalk directly into the path of the van.

Frank Ryder, a resident of the Three Sisters apartment building at 401 21st Street, was a semi-retired writer who had enjoyed some success writing detective and science fiction novels in 1950s, 60s, and 70s. It is not known if he had any next of kin, and authorities are requesting help locating any relatives of the man.

Police have ruled the death an accident, and no charges are pending against the driver.

From A History of the Three Sisters Apartment Building

The obituary of William Dodge

“OBITUARY—William Eric Dodge 1913–1921

William Eric Dodge, aged 8 years, died Thursday of natural causes at his home in The Three Sisters building, 401 21st Street. William is survived by his parents, Matthew and Caroline Dodge, of the same address, and two younger brothers, Richard, age 5, and Steven, age 2. William Dodge was a bright and creative boy, and a beloved son. Death is believed to have been due to complications from a recent illness. Memorial services are to be held Monday morning at 11 AM at the Crater–Sterling Funeral Home, with interment to follow at Blackwood Cemetery.”

Tenebrarum Papers #2

a passage from *The Terror That Comes in the Night*

The following outline summarizes the initial findings concerning the nature and frequency of the experience.

I. Description

A. Primary features (definitive)

1. subjective impression of wakefulness
2. immobility variously perceived (paralysis, restraint, fear of moving)
3. realistic perception of actual environment
4. Fear

B. Secondary features (reported more than once, most experiences contain at least one, often more)

1. supine position (very common)
2. feeling of presence (common)
3. feeling of pressure, usually on chest (common)
4. numinous quality (common)
5. fear of death (somewhat common)

II. Frequency and distribution

A. Overall: 23 percent of sample

B. By sex: the difference in number of positive reports is not significant

C. Pattern of recurrence

1. once only or once and occasionally, with intervals of months or years (most common)
2. one or more “runs” of frequent attacks lasting one or two weeks (sometimes)
3. frequent chronic attacks over a long period (rarely)

Tenebrarum Papers #7

the rant of Lilah Starrett

“You idiots think you know everything now, but you know NOTHING.

You see only the shadow of the smoke.

Not the smoke itself.

Nor the fire that it comes from.

Nor what fueled the fire.

Let alone who started that fire in the first place.

YOU KNOW NOTHING.”

Tenebrarum Papers #3

excerpts from Richard Ahern's *The Paramental Factor*

You're not going to believe what you read in this book. That's too bad, as each and every story related here is absolutely, indisputably true. I've tried to illustrate some of the similarities shared by these occurrences in an effort to show the truth about what they mean: that there are entities among us who are not human, perhaps not even a part of reality as we currently define it. I call them paramentals—"para" indicating "outside" and "elemental" being a force of nature. Ergo, a paramental is some force from outside our natural reality.

Mothman. Springheeled Jack. Alien abductors. Ghosts. Bigfoot. Old Hag. These are just a few of the masks they wear. They prowl our cities, our backroads, our forests, our skies—even our bedrooms. There's no question they're real—as real as they can be, anyway. The question is: what the hell do they want? Why are they here? Who or what are they? . . .

Personally, I find the Old Hag to be one of the most mystifying and terrifying of the paramentals. Here is an entity—or entities—that enters our homes regardless of locked doors, sleeping companions, time of day, and so forth. Right into our bedrooms they stalk, haunting us—hunting us—when we are vulnerable, and presumably all alone with our dreams and nightmares. Their presence seems to have physical components, or their hallucinatory equivalent: the sound of footsteps, sour smells, heavy breathing, crushing weight on the chest. Strangely, the Hag is formless enough to bypass doors and ignore bedmates, yet able to register on several of the senses. Paramental, indeed. . .

Studies suggest as many as one in every six or seven people have had an Old Hag experience. Think of that, sometime, in the context of your neighborhood, or office, or class, or what have you. Imagine how many people you must know who have encountered the Hag . . .

But consider this: if the Hag is just a dream, why do so many people around the world have the same dream? Is the Hag hardwired into our DNA somehow, an ancestral memory or some Akashic construct? If so, where did it originate? Could the dream-Hag itself be a real, living being? Something that feeds off us and then flees back down the neurons into the collective unconscious? . . .

Tenebrarum Papers #5

story of the witch Elizabeth Salomon

Three women were brought before Magistrate Hines in Bramley, Leeds, on May the 27th, 1717. Louisa Potts and her accomplices, Margaret Banner and Elizabeth Salomon, were accused of numerous acts of witchcraft which had been reported in the area. Several farmers had suffered blighted crops and dead or sickened livestock; a cat was found disembowelled and hung from a tree; and several residents were made ill with debilitating fever and rash. It was also noted that ravens flocked around the homes of the accused in alarming numbers. In addition, seventy-four year old Ruth Hatherley died shortly after publicly voicing suspicion of Louisa Potts' involvement in the local problems. Potts, Banner, and Salomon were all found guilty of witchcraft and hanged, along with Potts' husband, Gilbert, who had protested violently against the charges levelled at his wife. After the hangings the town seemed to return to normal, but three months later young John Foley, aged fourteen, went mad one night and died raving three days later. Foley had been Elizabeth Salomon's chief accuser. Nevertheless, with Foley's death Bramley suffered no further unfortunate occurrences that might be related to Potts and her black dames.

Tenebrarum Papers #4 —passages from Frank Ryder's notebook

...Had the dream again. Started like the other times, like a sex-dream from the old days (oh how I miss those days—even just the dreams!), but then turned into a nightmare. Just a black shape hanging there above me, crushing me, holding me fast while its pale yellow eyes burned through me. Woke in a cold sweat...

...Night hag. Now I remember! A little research at the Temple of Knowledge jogged some dusty brain cells. I'm having night hag attacks—at my ripe old age! Maybe there's a story in this, or even a full-blown novel. Ghosties were never my forte though, and these days I'm afraid jotting down more than a shopping list would require dusting off more brain cells than I have left to me. Ah me! This is more the purview of Mssrs. Campbell and King anyway...

...So Kurt has them too. Not terribly surprising. I seem to recall that 10% of the population have seen the Night Hag at least once. If true, there's probably another "victim" or two here in the Sisters somewhere. Maybe I'll ask Mary to say a prayer for me. But I probably won't, and she probably wouldn't anyway...

...Having read Hufford & Ahern, I'm beginning to wonder—is she real?...

...Talked to Ahern, but all he wanted to talk about was The Oyster Men, rather than the Hag. He told me nothing I didn't already know. Kurt, on the other hand, thinks we're

definitely haunted. This seems to amuse him. Oh to be young and fearless—and foolish!—again...

...Who are these 3 Sisters, anyway? Faith, Hope & Charity? Clotho, Lachesis & Atropos? Stheno, Euryale & Medusa? Old Will's Weird Sisters? They look Greek or Roman to me. Have to ask Mrs. Starrett about them sometime. She'll probably send me a bill for the answer. But the thought remains: do the 3 Sisters have anything to do with the haunting? Have to have Kurt see what he can find out about this place—especially the fire that closed off the top two floors. Did someone die up there and leave a nymphomaniac ghost?...

...I AM haunted. Whispers in the dark. The damned hag. Paranoia. Crazy Mary stares at me. That little Wills waif stares at me. I'm going mad. Need to get away. Away from the Sisters, away from the damned hag. Fresh air. Fresh scenery. I'd go back to Kingsport if I wasn't afraid of what my dreams might be like there, NOW...

...Thom. DeQuincy, Levana & Our Ladies? Something to do with hallucinations or drug-dreams à la Confessions? Must check to see...

...What have I done? What have we done? I should feel alive, renewed. I did feel that way at first, but now... I can't believe I was so stupid. Stupid, stupid old fool. I have undone us. Undone us all...

Tenebrarum Papers #6

various quotes pertaining to The Sorrows

1. From an informally written diary or confessional:

"Once you have met them, they will never let you rest. Seen or unseen, they will dog your steps, plumb your dreams, perhaps even guide you down paths you may not have believed imaginable. Curse them, implore them, try to ignore them, but thereafter your life will play out according to their whims. Pray that you bore them, that they grow tired of you as a child grows tired of an old plaything. Otherwise you may discover why they call themselves The Sorrows."

2. From a source similar to the previous:

"They are three dark sisters, these Sorrows, Maters Lachrymarum, Suspiriorum, and Tenebrarum. Are They fictions, dreams, or spirits? They are all of these, and yet They are none of them as well. They are more."

"I have seen Them. I have heard Their terrible whispers. My own secrets revealed to me, and Theirs as well. All They want, They say, is to be embraced, loved. Known. But to know Them is to lose one's grip on one's own soul."

"They claim to grieve, but Their sorrow is a scourge. They claim to love, but Their love is an abyss."

3. From a more scholarly source, or a more rational one at least:

"The Sorrows, or Our Ladies of Sorrow, are awful spirits from the Dawn of Man, ageless and endless. They may be daughters of Lilith, though they sometimes show a compassion for mankind which the Queen of Night lacks. Or they may be kin of grim Hecate, though they do not shun the daylight as she does. They may be three, or they may merely be one. There are hundreds of legends about them, in their multitude of forms. Which stories, if any, are closest to the truth is anyone's guess."

4. The cryptic legend most frequently used to describe them, from any type of source:

"They wear many forms and many faces. They are known by many names.

When Man first began to dream, *they* were there to plague Him.

"When the last Man on Earth dies, *they* will be there to mourn Him.

"They are The Sorrows, and from the first breath He takes, until the very last beat of His heart,

Their prey is *Man*.

Suspiriorum Papers #1

obscure references to The Sighing Desert

Passage #1, specifically from a volume containing Dreamlands-related information

"Alone, Ryobann found himself lost in the Desert of Sighs. And though thirst plagued him, he shunned the city he came upon therein, for there was something he disliked about that place. Perhaps it was the way the wind moaned as the city swam up out of the mirage before him. Or perhaps it was the way the buildings there shimmered, vanished, and reappeared before him in different configurations. No, thought the young spice merchant, my thirst is not so great that I would risk becoming so insubstantial myself. And so Ryobann gave wide berth to that place..."

Passage #2

"At the Edges of Dream, there is a Desert, and that Desert Sighs and Moans. And within that Desert of Sighs there is a City, and that City adjoins all of the saddest places on Earth and its Dreams. And beyond that City there is a Garden, and that Garden is made of bone and sand, for all those who surrender to loneliness and despair eventually find themselves here. For this is the last resting place of the lost and the self-damned.

Legend has it that the City is guarded by Dwellers in the Mirage, fierce creatures whose countenance none have seen clearly and lived to speak of. And legends also say there is One who watches over the Garden of Lost Souls, One in whose eyes no one can help but find peace."

Suspiriorum Papers #2

excerpts from Enrique Echevarría's books *The Sighing Desert* (1962) and *From the Desert of My Dreams* (1983):

"...I was too young to know, of course. My mother's people did not appreciate that one of their women would not necessarily want to marry a member of the tribe. So when she chose another—a Mexican—her parents and the rest of the tribe were livid. They shunned her. Sometimes there is no more virulent a racist than one who is himself a minority...

...It was several days after she told me that my father was not coming back from the war, that she took my hand and told me we would go for a walk. She had been crying, I could see. But as we passed her mother and other members of the tribe, she wiped her eyes and looked forward. She did not look at them. And so we went into the Sighing Desert....

...I do not know how long we walked, for sometimes I slept and she carried me. I remember sleeping at least one night in that softly moaning wasteland. I remember this, for I recall searching for the constellations my father had taught me to find. And in my hazy recollection, none of those figures were among the stars in that desert's night sky...

...I do not remember much of the city. I believe I was dying then. Nothing is clear about it. I remember thinking the city was a mirage, like heat boiling off the desert. There were weeds and ragged buffalo hide tents and crumbling adobe huts. But there seemed to be houses too, and great skyscrapers. But I must have been dreaming, or delirious, or dying. What great city in any desert has buildings such as these, but not a living

inhabitant within it?...

...I have no recollection of leaving her. I do know she was dead, and had been for some time. I don't know what made me leave her. As an adult, today, I don't know that I would, or could. But whatever it was that sent me from her side in that place, sent me from certain death out toward a chance at survival. I would like to think it was her spirit, releasing me from a child's instinct to stay by his mother's side...

...I have dreamt of her again since then, of course. I do not see the sad woman who led me into the desert. I see her smiling, I hear her singing. I know that she is with my father somewhere, and that they are happier now than they were ever allowed to be in life...

...In some of my dreams I am again that child, curled up next to his mother's dead body. In the dreams that child awakens to find his mother standing, smiling. "You must go," she tells him. I can't. I'm afraid. I'm alone. "No," she says, "you will never be alone. I will always be with you."

...I am asked all the time whether or not I believe the city is really out there. Many lives have been lost seeking it, and for this I am profoundly sorry. But is it real? And will finding that place change others as it changed me? I don't know. For me the city was—at least briefly—real. No one has been able to find it. But I know I can always find it, in my memories and in my dreams...."

Lachrymarum Papers #7

Baleford Tribune article, last June 25

Flood Waters Unearth Human Remains

Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny has confirmed reports that rising waters have exposed human remains hidden in the fence row of a farmer's field near the Vista River.

"We're just bringing them out now, so I don't have any details other than there seems to be more than one body, and some of the remains appear to be older than others" said Czerny. Sheriff Czerny refused to comment on the possible identity of any of the remains, pending forensic analysis. Further developments will be reported by the Tribune, and on our website.

Lachrymarum Papers #1
passage from *Mississippi River Ghosts*

Curiously enough the legendary Mexican Crying Woman ghost, La Llorona, normally found throughout the American Southwest, has also found a home along the Big River. Baleford, Illinois, located on the Vista River just a few miles from the Mississippi, has long been the haunting grounds for the murderous spirit who preys upon children and unwary travellers.

Baleford has suffered a number of unsolved child murders and disappearances going back nearly half a century, but it's only within the past fifteen years that the Crying Woman has actually been seen walking the streets of this sleepy little town. Since then several people have mysteriously drowned in the nearby Vista River, often after the wandering white-clad wraith has been sighted somewhere in town or along the river. The local Hispanic population believes whenever La Llorona wails or is seen, someone will soon die.

Lachrymarum Papers #2
Baleford Tribune article, one year ago

Authorities Search for Child Missing Since Tuesday

Baleford Police are seeking any information concerning the disappearance of eight-year-old Alex Roland, missing since Tuesday. Alex was last seen just before dark, playing in Little Hawk Park across the street from his home. The boy is described as having short black hair, wearing a black T-shirt, tan cargo shorts and red sneakers. Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny believes Alex may have been abducted, and is urging anyone who may have been in the vicinity of Little Hawk Park or the Seven Hawks Resort to report any unusual persons or activity they may have seen.

"Anything unusual may give us a lead," said Czerny. "A car with out-of-town or out-of-state license plates. Seeing someone you didn't recognize, or thought looked out of place. Someone acting suspicious. Whatever you may have seen, please let us know." Sheriff Czerny declined to comment on whether or not the Roland case could be related to the unsolved disappearances of George Rodriguez earlier this year, or Diego Paredes in 2005.

Lachrymarum Papers #3
Baleford Tribune article, last February 26

The Weeping Woman Returns

Baleford's most famous undead resident has returned to her old haunts again. There have been several calls to the *Tribune* recently with sightings of La Llorona, a female ghost from Mexican folklore. The ghost, who allegedly weeps and wails for her lost children, has been seen on the banks of the Vista River, on the Vista Bridge, and even outside the parking lot of the Henry Meat Packing Plant. The Crying Woman is easily identified by her old white dress, long dark hair, and hidden face.

Readers may recall that every few years there are a spate of Llorona sightings and reports of hearing her unearthly sobbing and wailing. We're still hoping someone will get a photograph of her for publication in the *Tribune*. But be warned: it's believed to be bad luck to see La Llorona, as sightings of her have purportedly been linked to accidents and deaths.

Lachrymarum Papers #4
Baleford Tribune article, last April 2

Local Man Goes Missing

Vista County Sheriff Bob Czerny is asking for help determining the whereabouts of Vincente Larriva, 20, missing since early last Sunday morning. Larriva was last seen leaving a party at Sheridan Point, on the Vista River, shortly after midnight. He had allegedly been drinking with friends but was not intoxicated, according to witnesses.

Larriva left the party alone in his white 1979 Ford pickup, which has also not been found. Larriva, who lives with his parents, Robert and Miranda Larriva, apparently did not come home that night, and no one has seen or heard from him since he left the party. Anyone with information regarding Larriva should telephone the Vista County Sheriff's Department at 555-6734.

Lachrymarum Papers #5

Baleford Tribune article, last May 21

**Tragedy on Vista River
When Local Youth Drowns**

Local youth Oscar Rios, 15, drowned yesterday afternoon while spending time with friends on the Vista River. Rios and five friends had been hiking and picnicking along the river when Rios lagged behind to relieve himself. When he failed to return to the car, his friends went back into the woods to find him. They finally called the Sheriff's Department when they could find no sign of him.

An extensive search by Sheriff Bob Czerny and his deputies discovered the boy's body caught in a logjam on the river. Rios was pronounced dead on the scene, apparently having fallen into the river and drowned. "They said they only left him alone for a few minutes," said Sheriff Czerny, "and in that time he must have gone down closer to the river to do his business. A slip on that muddy bank and the next thing he knows he's caught in that current. It's terrible. Tragic." Authorities are investigating as to whether alcohol or drugs may have contributed to the death.

Lachrymarum Papers #6

Baleford Tribune article, last May 28

**Officials Say Vista River May
Reach Record Levels**

Vista County Conservation Superintendent Walt Jarvis and Baleford Public Works Director Jon Paulovic are both worried that recent rains may swell the Vista River to levels approaching or even surpassing the heights it reached in the floods of 1993.

"We're really starting to get saturated here," said Jarvis. "If we get even just average rainfall amounts in the next week or so, there's going to be trouble." Paulovic added "We should be okay in town, at least. The levees are good, and even in '93 we didn't get much flooding here in town." Jarvis, however, is more cautious. "It doesn't look like much now, but if the Mississippi starts filling up, that'll mean the Vista and the creeks are going to catch that overflow. People need to keep in mind just how quick this can turn."

Lachrymarum Papers #8

workers' version of the La Llorona legend

La Llorona was originally a proud, beautiful woman who lived in Mexico many hundreds of years ago. No one remembers her name, but she fell in love with a rich and powerful man, and by him she bore two children, a son and a daughter. But the man would not marry her, despite her having his children, and her loving him deeply.

This man began to see another woman, younger and more beautiful than the mother of his children. So the spurned woman, terrible angry, took her children to the river that ran beside their village, and she drowned her son and daughter in the river and let the current take their bodies away. The woman went back to the village, mad from what she had done, and they tried her and found her guilty and sentenced her to death. They hanged her and threw her body in the river.

But either she was too evil to die, or a greater power sent her back to search forever for the children she murdered—and to punish others who neglected their children. She returned from the river, and she found the man who had disgraced her, and she dragged him into the river where he too drowned.

And others in the village died too, men who were unfaithful to their wives, or children who strayed from their mothers. La Llorona preyed on them all.

As tales of her fearful deeds spread from village to village, so she herself followed. And so all across Mexico, mothers locked their children indoors at night when they heard the Crying Woman's wail coming from the river. And men too stayed clear of the river at night, running for their lives when they saw her.

Dressed all in white, or sometimes black, with her black hair covering her face, sometimes dripping wet like she had just crawled out of the river, anyone who saw her face either went mad or died, or was never seen again.

And wherever the Mexican people went, they took her legend, the legend of La Llorona, the Weeping Woman. And where the legend went, La Llorona followed.

Even now, today, she is here. We hear her cries at night down by the river. Many have seen her walking these streets. And always she cries, and our people suffer.

Now she takes the Anglos too. Maybe when the rain stops and the river subsides she'll go away. But she'll only go away when she's ready, when she thinks we've learned our lesson. Until then, we can do nothing but pray. Pray and avoid the river at night.

FUTURE RELEASES FROM MISKATONIC RIVER PRESS

THE LEGACY OF ARRIUS LURCO

Several years ago a wealthy patrician, one of the owners of the Reds chariot racing faction, vanished in Crete. He was found weeks later wandering aimlessly with no memory of where he'd been or what had happened. Arrius Lurco returned home and tried to resume his life, but then the nightmares began. What starts as an attempt to recover the memory of the time when he was missing soon becomes an epic struggle pitting investigators against sinister cults, inhuman minions and a Great Old One. *The Legacy of Arrius Lurco* is a full four-part campaign for Cthulhu Invictus, set in Rome, Achaea (Greece) and Cyrenaica (Crete).

The Legacy of Arrius Lurco by Oscar Rios
Coming Spring 2010

The Outer Gods

Azathoth! Yog-Sothoth! Shub-Niggurath! Nyarlathotep! These are names out of time that chill the soul. Each of these beings has been known to tear away the mind of the unwary...delve into their secrets despite the inevitable peril.

The Outer Gods is an anthology of four independent, stand-alone scenarios, each based on one of Lovecraft's four major Outer Gods: Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath, and Nyarlathotep. Each scenario is set in the U.S. but can be relocated to suit individual campaigns with a minimum of Keeper fuss.

The Outer Gods
Coming Soon

Shiva, in Silvered Glass

A Campaign of Victorian Occult Adventure
The Adventures of the Trismegistus Club, Volume One

In Victorian London, a seance goes awry, leaving four people dead and two missing. The investigators find themselves embroiled in a bizarre plot involving the mysterious Trismegistus Club: an organization of stage magicians, occult scholars, mystics, mediums, and sorcerers both would-be and otherwise. De-evolution, murder, doppelgangers, a genius doctor who is anything BUT mad, and inter-dimensional aliens abound in this London-based campaign for Cthulhu by Gaslight. Do the Trismegistans stand for good or evil? And what is the terrible secret of the ensorcelled mirrors?

Shiva, in Silvered Glass (tentatively) includes six scenarios and a detailed description of the mystic Trismegistus Club: its leaders, members, membership, and headquarters. Created, edited and co-written by Kevin Ross (*Sacraments of Evil, Our Ladies of Sorrow, HP Lovecraft's Kingsport, Colonial Lovecraft Country*).

Shiva, in Silvered Glass by Kevin Ross and others
Coming Soon

Thrice Damned Dunbriar

Across foggy hills, surrounded by thick forests lies a village called Dunbriar. Nestled on the northern shores of Lake Winandermere (nowadays known as Lake Windermere), it's a place where everyone knows their neighbors, works hard from dawn till dusk and attends mass every Sunday. They bring in their crops, haul in their fishing nets and work in their shops. However, Dunbriar is a place with a sinister past. Not long ago the village suffered a drought, a Viking raid and a plague all in the same year. After so much tragedy the people of Old Dunbriar, those who were left, fled. For three years the village lay abandoned. There were tales of witchcraft, strange creatures stalking the forests around the village, and a Satanic influence over the village, which people took to calling "Thrice Damned Dunbriar." *Thrice Damned Dunbriar* is a Lovecraft Country-styled setting book for Cthulhu Dark Ages.

Thrice Damned Dunbriar by Oscar Rios and Ryan Roth
Coming Soon

Our Ladies of Sorrow was initially printed by Miskatonic River Press in September, 2009, using Garamond and Helvetica type on 60# offset white. The cover is 10 pt. stock with glossy finish. Typesetting and book design by Keith Herber and Badger McInnes.



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Our Ladies of Sorrow

by Kevin Ross

"Macbeth: How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags! What is't you do?"

Three Witches: A deed without a name."

--William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Macbeth

An apartment building haunted by something that taunts, and tempts -- and kills...

A lonely desert where the wind whispers and the borders of reality fade...

A flood-drenched town stalked by ghosts and other, more solid nightmares...

A frightened old man dies in a traffic mishap, chased to his doom by a mysterious old woman whom only the investigators have seen. So begins this series of chilling modern supernatural horror adventures. The dead man's haunted apartment building is the first stop on a fear-shrouded path to confront a creature who is neither witch nor ghost nor goddess -- but some unthinkable combination of all three. Further investigations lead them to search for a group of hikers lost in an increasingly surreal and deadly desert landscape, where salvation and nightmare brood side by side in the lost and lonely wastes. Then another ghost -- this one haunting a flood-imperiled town -- acquaints the investigators with a bewildering array of horrors whose ultimate source seems to be directly linked to their previous encounters.

Finally, as the investigators strip away their foes' many masks, this tale of witches, ghosts, nightmares, spirits, and primal goddesses brings them face to face with an entity that has plagued us since the dawn of man. There a terrible choice must be made, one that could save the investigators' lives -- but leave them forever haunted by their terrible sacrifice...

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