

The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary;
men alone are quite capable of every wickedness.
– Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes



THE HARVESTERS

An adventure for the World of Darkness
using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by Stephen Michael DiPesa Developed by Eddy Webb Edited by Genevieve Podleski
Layout by Jessica Mullins Art: Sam Araya, Jim Pavelec, Brian Leblanc, Justin Norman, Costas
Harritas, Mark Poole, Cyril Van Der Haegen, Jim Cole, Andy Trabbold, Jason Manley

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

MENTAL	●●●○
PHYSICAL	●●●○
SOCIAL	●●●○

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING, INC.
2075 WEST PARK PLACE
BLDG SUITE C
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary;
men alone are quite capable of every wickedness.
– Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes



THE HARVESTERS

An adventure for World of Darkness
using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by Stephen Michael DiPesa Developed by Eddy Webb Edited by Genevieve Podleski
Layout by Jessica Mullins Art: Sam Araya, Jim Pavelec, Brian Leblanc, Justin Norman, Costas Har-
ritas, Mark Poole, Cyril Van Der Haegen, Jim Cole, Andy Trabbold, Jason Manley

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM		
SCENES II	MENTAL PHYSICAL SOCIAL	XP LEVEL 0-34



© 2008 CCP hf. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and one printed copy which may be reproduced for personal use only. White Wolf, Vampire and World of Darkness are registered trademarks of CCP hf. All rights reserved. Vampire the Requiem, Werewolf the Forsaken, Mage the Awakening, Promethean the Created, Storytelling System and Parlor Games are trademarks of CCP hf. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by CCP hf. CCP North America Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of CCP hf. The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned. This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content. Reader discretion is advised.

Check out White Wolf online at <http://www.white-wolf.com>

The stink of stale sweat and human waste is saturated into the walls, and the only light she can make out leaks through the tiny space between the reinforced steel door and the cold concrete floor. She flexes her fingers and toes to try to get some feeling back into them, but her pallid flesh remains numb with the pervasive chill. Her hair was caked in blood and filth, but all she could do was stare at the door and that thin ray of light.

She'd start crying, but that didn't solve anything the last ten times. She'd scream, but there's no one to hear. She'd struggle in her shackles, but the bruises already circling her wrists and ankles prove how futile that is. If she had a way to kill herself, she'd probably have used it days ago. She heard a conversation between two of the men, awhile back, somewhere far down the hallway. They talked about "moving the product," which she assumed meant her, but it didn't sound like where she was going would be anywhere better than this.

It won't help anything, but she starts crying again anyway.

Introduction

Everyone just *knows* that the roads aren't safe these days. Psycho killers stand along the edge of obscure routes, searching for prey as they thumb for a ride, while carjackers stalk the back roads in fake cruisers and stolen uniforms, more than willing to part honest folks from their vehicles. It's a sick, convoluted tapestry, woven out of countless miles of asphalt; as dark, strange and twisted as anything that happens among the labyrinthine alleys of any crumbling metropolis, or within the walled palatial estates of the jaded rich.

Along certain stretches of road, people occasionally go missing. Often they're the sorts whom no one misses: runaways and prostitutes, transients and criminals. Perhaps the monsters that infest the shadows take them, whether to drink their blood or to feed on their souls, or perhaps some alien consciousness seeping up out of the land itself desires them. Most of the time, though, it's just mundane human evil that makes people disappear.

This scenario presents that human evil, infected by a touch of the paranormal. The story can be readily worked into the events of an existing **World of Darkness** chronicle, or it can serve as the launching point for a new chronicle detailing the characters' explorations of the world behind the curtain.

This scenario is broken down into three sections:

In this **Introduction** you'll get the background of the story to come, the full write-ups of the Storyteller characters and some other general notes.

The **Scenes** of the story are the heart of the action. Because of the way in which storytelling games can flow, these scenes are modular and provide you with a framework upon which you can improvise, rather than locking you into rigid patterns.

The **Scene Cards** at the end of the scenario are a quick-reference resource for you to use as the Storyteller. If you don't have the option of printing up the entirety of **The Harvesters**, you can just print up the scene cards instead and use those to get the overall gist of the story.

ABOUT THE STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, though, we haven't included a lot of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller or an old hand, be sure to read the **free SAS Guide**, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Treatment

In **The Harvesters**, the characters are pitted against a group of kidnapers: monsters who torment their prey before selling them off to the highest bidder. But what at first appears to be a perfectly normal (if monstrous) crime begins to show the involvement of something unnatural, revealing to the characters a glimpse of the strange and terrifying things that lurk in the shadows.

The story begins with the characters needing *something*; something indispensable, without which their journey cannot continue. What this object is, precisely, is immaterial, so long as it's difficult to obtain while in the middle of nowhere. By doing a little bit of digging, the characters learn of a contact in the area that's willing and able to supply them with whatever it is that they need, but who wants to meet with before handing over the item.



After this initial meeting, the contact agrees to arrange for a time and a place where commodities will be exchanged, but shortly before the appointed hour, the characters instead receive a cryptic text message pleading for their help. The fixer has been set up and believes that she's in immediate danger. The characters are left with only a nebulous lead, pointing to a certain stretch of forlorn road, with a cheap motel on one side and a rest stop on the other.

From there, the characters must do some digging, first to learn the nature of what's going on here and then to trace these acts back to their source.

Along the way, the characters realize that they're in hostile territory and that even the law is against them. Worse, something unnatural may be moving subtly behind the scenes, perhaps motivating this evil or perhaps merely inspired and sustained by it. As the characters search, con, investigate, and fight their way through the kidnappers' operation, it begins crumbling under the weight of scrutiny, and the characters have to make some heavy decisions about how they intend to deal with these criminals. A light hand isn't likely to produce anything but scorn and will leave the enemy's numbers strong for a final confrontation, but the alternatives could be extreme. Are the characters willing to murder these monstrous men in order to end the threat, or do they believe that doing so lowers them to the kidnappers' level? The question of morality versus expediency will prove difficult to answer.

Moving from location to location as the bigger picture finally comes into focus, the characters come to understand the scope of the corruption. It's not disorganization that's opened this operation to their inquiries, but rather the kidnappers' bad luck in choosing the wrong victim. These men are organized and utterly amoral, and they have no hesitation about doing what needs to be done to preserve their profits and save their own skins. In the end, no matter how they choose, the characters will have to face the architect of this nightmarish idea and a restless ghost who wants both to aid him and to destroy him.

The scenes of **The Harvesters** are arranged to take place in a prologue, three rough "acts," and a short epilogue, but your story may move in directions other than anticipated. You shouldn't hesitate to do whatever produces the best possible story for your troupe. These scenes are basically "snapshots" that impact one another, dependent upon the order they're pursued and what the characters choose to do within them, so a number of very flexible variables come into several of them (Did the characters kill the sheriff when he confronted them? If so, then he obviously won't be at the encounter at the rest stop).

The events of this scenario can easily be woven into the ongoing story of a chronicle taking place on the road. In fact, **The Harvesters** is written specifically to provide a jumping-off point for a chronicle inspired by the nomadic setting presented in **World of Darkness: Midnight Roads**. It can also be inserted into just about any nomadic chronicle, given the "vignette friendly" nature of chronicles that take place on the long road (though you might want to scale up the threat level for more experienced characters).

If you choose to expand upon the events of **The Harvesters** and make them an ongoing part of your chronicle, you may end up wanting to give a more in-depth treatment to some of its characters and other elements. If all you're looking for is a vignette, then you don't need to worry too much about where the story is set; if the characters are heading from east to west roughly along I-90 in a chronicle with a continuous plot, however, you'll need to give a bit more thought to where the scenario is set.

Acts and Scenes

The action of **The Harvesters** specifically builds from a relatively mundane task (acquire a needed commodity) into events that compel the characters to wander into the shadows of the World of Darkness.

Because it's impossible to predict the needs of each individual troupe, the scenes encapsulate Storytelling agendas and tools comprising the framework upon which the scenario as a whole hangs. It's up to you, as the Storyteller, to keep the action moving and to keep each scene interesting for the players. If things slow down, introduce a complication or bring the scene to a head and the move on to the next phase of the story. Don't hesitate to do whatever keeps the game exciting, so long as you can keep things plausible and transition smoothly from one part of the story to the next. If you make a mistake, don't worry too much. Take a break if you need to and figure out a few quick ideas for putting things back on track if you end up straying into territory with which you're unhappy. If the players seem to be enjoying themselves, though, consider just running with whatever you've got going. Having fun with the stories that you tell is far more important than making sure that every little detail is perfect.



Everything that happens, however, should keep the story moving. If events seem to be stagnating, then characters won't have much to do and the players will get bored. Remember that *anything* you throw at the characters could potentially be important and can spark thought and roleplay, which keeps the game interesting. While you might *know* that there's nothing particularly important about the cleaning lady dropping by at midnight to see if she left her purse at the motel, the players (and, thus, the characters) have to wonder if her appearance is in some way significant. And who knows? If the players come up with a sound theory that you feel could advance the scenario in a meaningful way, you can always incorporate their speculations into the story.

Pacing and Dramatic Tension

The acts of **The Harvesters** are not broken up in the usual linear fashion that you might find in a play at the theater. Many of the scenes in the story may be performed entirely "out of order," following the series of events that works best for *your* game, rather than the sequence in which they're presented here. If the characters confront Garrett MacGruder before they ever go anywhere near Sheriff Ostler, that's just fine. The biggest impact will be upon the type and amount of information that they possess at any given juncture, as well as the resources that they (and their enemies) will be able to bring to bear: If Burt Vick is killed at the rest stop, for instance, then he can't possibly show up in a later conflict, while talking to Fredrick Walker before meeting Adam Chen allows the characters to go into that meeting knowing Chen's name.

Rather than breaking down the acts into a set progression through time and events, they're better understood as three overarching phases: Discovery and initial investigation, pursuing knowledge and resources, and the final confrontation. These categories are somewhat flexible: the characters might take Adam Chen out of the picture early on, or they might fight with Cole and Vick after encountering Laura Pritchard's ghost, but the overall direction of the action conforms to this structure. No matter which scene you're running, though, remember that the later it transpires in the course of the scenario, the more dramatic tension should be attached to it. If the characters talk to the sheriff early in the evening, it's not likely to be as inherently anxious an encounter as it would be if the meeting with him comes later in the night.

You'll also notice that the scenes are more or less presented as encapsulated encounters, rather than progressions that neatly lead from one scene to the next. Because the characters have the freedom to go wherever they like within the story, there's no way to predict how

they'll move from one objective to the next. In many cases, the transitions between scenes can be handled with short descriptions ("Having destroyed the ghost's physical remains, you climb into the hotwired car and make your way toward the place where Christie is supposedly locked up..."), though you're certainly encouraged to throw complications in the characters' way if doing so enriches the troupe's experience with the scenario. Thus, you might have the characters run across a few local teenaged stoners hanging out on the back of a pickup truck or stumble upon a car accident on a back road. These "extra" encounters don't even necessarily need to directly advance the adventure, so long as they provide compelling story for the players.

Keep in mind that time and circumstance are both against the characters in **The Harvesters**. The story starts out on a low simmer and the pressure continues to mount throughout. While the occasional lull period is good (allowing the characters to regroup and consider their options), the players should continually feel that a sense of urgency is building even when everything around them is still and silent. In a rare quiet moment, the ticking of a character's watch may be the only audible sound, or the cry of a wild animal in the distance sounds remarkably like a human scream. Don't push things so hard, though, that you go beyond your ability to sustain the fever pitch, or beyond either the characters' or players' ability to cope with the frantic pace. After a certain point, people go numb and you lose the impact of a buildup of dramatic tension.

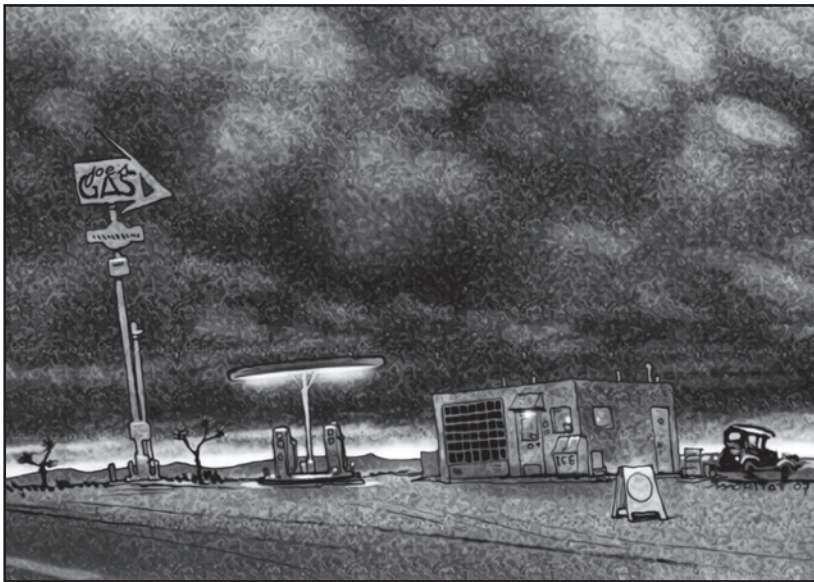
You want to keep the characters on-edge, sharp, and focused, the players invested in the action and the story progressing. Remember that action isn't strictly necessary to achieve this. Serious conversations about what to do next are still advancing the story, and so are heated arguments about the ethics of the course of action. It's only when the majority of characters are out of the loop in the roleplay that the story starts to grind to a halt for their players. At that time, you might want to move the characters to the next scene, throw a curveball at them, or do something else to get everyone involved in the game again.

If you find yourself ramping up the tension too much, you can always throttle back and adjust. The players will be happier with little tweaks than with trying to keep up with a game that seems to have jumped off of the tracks. The trick when things inevitably *do* get a little bit out of hand, to recognize the signs, keep your head and take steps to get things back to a manageable tempo. As you find your own style and your own voice as a Storyteller, this will gradually become easier and you'll learn how to improvise skillfully when the players throw something at you that you don't expect.

Geography

Rather than setting in stone the layout of the town in which this scenario takes place, **The Harvesters** presumes only a very few things. The motel and rest stop, for instance, are roughly across the street from one another, while the town itself is miles off of the highway and basically in the middle of nowhere. Certain locations are a nebulous “few miles” from the motel-rest stop area that kicks off the events of the story, but no specifics are given.

This lack of absolutes gives the Storyteller the ability to make the choices about how you want to see the story unfold. If the characters’ sole mode of transportation breaks down and they fail to acquire a new one, then the distances between places become a much graver consideration than they otherwise would be. If you’re more interested in moving expediently from scene to scene, then you might minimize the role of the town’s exact layout. Storytellers looking to emphasize the moral dilemma of embracing the lesser evil might make the distances a meaningful factor in the characters’ calculations, perhaps forcing the characters to steal a car in order to save Christie.



Evocative Descriptions

To bring **The Harvesters** to life, you’re going to be called upon to describe the locales and individuals that the characters encounter in a manner that draws the players in and immerses them in the story’s environment. Samples of this are given in the character descriptions and scene descriptions below, but you’re going to have to go deeper than that. You know far better than we do what details the members of your troupe will tend to focus. Do they dwell on the room in the gulag where prisoners are kept? If so, you’re probably going to want to enhance the level of detail for that chamber. Are they hung up on Sheriff Ostler’s grotesquerie? Perhaps, then, you want to outline it in a little sharper detail than is given by the scenario.

The descriptions that you offer are the characters’ eyes and ears in the world. They see and hear (and smell, taste, and touch) only what you reveal to them. The richer and more elaborate the details, the more fully realized that world is.

Alternate Uses

If your chronicle takes place in a set location, rather than all over the map, you can still make use of **The Harvesters**, though you may want to tweak some things about the scenario to maximize its usefulness for your setting. David D’Angelo and his ring of kidnapers could just as easily have set up shop in a bad section of town, or even along a lonely stretch of road just outside of the city. Of course, in a more settled chronicle, you might already have Storyteller characters in mind that can replace one or more of those presented here. Perhaps, rather than Christie Reese, a character’s runaway younger sister manages to send a panicked and cryptic message to her brother just before she’s taken. Or, maybe a corrupt local night-shift police officer that you’ve already introduced can fill Sheriff Ostler’s role. Don’t feel constrained by what’s written here; if something that you’ve created for your story can improve your players’ experience and make their characters’ world more realistic and consistent, then, by all means, go for it. Of course, **The Harvesters** was written with mortal characters in mind, and the extraordinary capabilities of supernatural creatures – even inexperienced ones – will probably make short work of the kidnapers and their plans, unless the scenario is radically altered to account for their paranormal powers.

Background and Set Up

The characters are, for whatever reason, out on the road – specifically, one of those long stretches of road between two distant points of civilization. For the purposes of setting the stage, this scenario assumes that the characters come to need something on short notice, something vital to their continuing progress; perhaps a critical part for a vehicle, a paranormal artifact, or something else entirely, depending upon the needs of your chronicle.

It doesn't really matter where the characters are going, or even if they have a destination of any sort in mind, at all. What's important is that they're far from anywhere particularly urban when they have to stop. If the car breaks down, they're pretty much stuck until they can make arrangements for its repair. If they're looking to acquire something rare, then their search has led them to this area.

This locale is sleepy and somewhat isolated. Sure, it's got highways and routes, but it's the sort of place that people either live in and never leave or pass by on their way to somewhere more important and never give a second thought; even the local rest stop rarely sees more than a handful of customers in a day. It's the kind of place that's so boring, it must be safe. The fence to whom the characters go, Christie Reese, operates in this general area (anything within several hours' drive), but she doesn't really know this town. She has a place where she likes to conduct business here – a donut shop, where the occasional small bribe buys the owner's silence – but she has no

idea that there's a local organized criminal element. The kidnapers are too well-organized and too small-time for either party to have caught wind of the other. This mutual ignorance effectively sets the stage for what follows.

A PATRON

For the sake of ease, *especially* if you're just starting out as a Storyteller, it can be helpful to create a "boss" for the characters, someone who can send them wherever your story needs to go. This person can be a mentor, an employer, or a trusted older friend or relative of one or more of the characters. This individual's relationship with the characters can be as simple or elaborate as you like and it's something that can always grow and evolve with the needs of the story. If you're kicking off your chronicle with **The Harvesters**, this individual might be the one who's sent the characters to meet with Christie Reese.

If used cleverly, the character's patron can even become a source of the ongoing mystery of your chronicle. As they peel back the layers of occlusion that surround them in the World of Darkness and begin to peer through its illusions, the characters may also come to learn that their benefactor might not be all that she seems....

Backstory

About six years ago, a man by the name of David D'Angelo got away with the kidnapping, rape, and murder of a young woman, Laura Pritchard. His antisocial personality invigorated by the indulgence of this abhorrent power fantasy, D'Angelo began to conspire ways to again experience the rush that he felt from the violation and destruction of human life. D'Angelo quickly realized that his initial success was more due to luck and the apathy of the authorities than any real skill on his part, and came to the conclusion that he would help to carry on without making one sort of irrevocable mistake or another. For a little over a year, he carefully studied the locals, looking out for signs of his own kind. Finally, he made his pitch to Sheriff Louis Ostler.

D'Angelo had kidnapped another victim – this time, an unlucky teenaged hitchhiker – and, after a bit of convincing (and a bit of bribery), got the sheriff to accompany him to the abandoned old house in the woods where he had chained her up. D'Angelo knew the gamble was risky, but it was common knowledge that Ostler was corrupt, and instinct told him that the sheriff was more twisted than





he looked. Just in case, though, D'Angelo also knew that he could put two slugs in the back of the bloated lawman's brain before Ostler's hand got within six inches of his gun.

The sheriff not only went along with the scheme, but brought additional resources to the table: three ex-cons whom he could bully into doing just about anything that he wanted, so long as they profited a bit. Ostler had some thoughts on what they could do with the victims when the "fun" was over, but none of them had quite the right connections to make it all come together. D'Angelo and the sheriff opted not to move until they had a solid plan in place. Ostler used his pull to secure overnight jobs for all three of men at an old rest stop on the outskirts of the county; someplace so out-of-the-way that it rarely saw any kind of traffic, and free of any sort of surveillance equipment.

The last man to come to the party, Adam Chen, had had a run-in with the sheriff over a date rape allegation. Since the woman had previously used a blatantly false accusation of rape in an attempt to get a former boyfriend jailed, and there had been some clerical errors on the part of the police, the case never went to trial, but Ostler knew a guilty man when he saw one. He brought Chen to meet with David D'Angelo. Ostler intimated that evidence could be "found" if things didn't turn out a certain way, and hinted that the rumor of a case had inspired another woman to consider coming forward. On just about any other subject, Chen would have remained clear-headed enough to know the ruse for what it was, but the thought of prison time rattled him. D'Angelo and the sheriff had realized that Chen was probably the only guy in town with enough shady connections to make the venture profitable, presented with a minimal role in the operation and a considerable margin of profit, he was hardly in a position to argue. Five months after the six men of the group had met and were comfortable with one another's methods, they staged their first kidnapping: a couple of teenagers staying at the motel across the street from the rest stop (where Ostler had gotten a job for Chen as the weekday overnight manager). Chen discovered they were running away from parents, drug problems, and other various woes and determined that they wouldn't be missed. A quick check by the sheriff revealed that the two weren't even registered as missing persons, and the team made the decision to abduct them. After three weeks of abuse and torment, they were shipped off to separate locations, to clients unknown even to Chen, through anonymous intermediaries. In the three-and-a-half years since there have been nine more kidnappings and all the victims have been shipped off to distant "interests" in the criminal underworld.

CHRISTIE'S KIDNAPPING

The specific sequence and timing of the events leading up to and immediately following Christie Reese's abduction may become a factor over the course of **The Harvesters**. Here's a breakdown of the events leading up to her abduction:

- Christie drops the item for the characters in a nearby drop spot, and arrives at the motel. After a brief conversation with Adam Chen, she pays cash for a room and signs in under a false name. Chen decides that she is a solid prospect for David and the others. She enters her room and Chen calls Sheriff Ostler, who is already in the area.
- Sheriff Ostler calls Cole and Vick at the rest stop while en route to the motel, and the two men start closing up the store before heading to the hotel. He then calls Garrett MacGruder, who won't be able to get to the hotel in time to assist. Finally, he calls David D'Angelo to let him know the situation.
- The sheriff arrives at the motel and tells the other three men that MacGruder won't be making it and that D'Angelo is on his way. He then heads out back with Cole, Vick, and Chen.
- Christie pokes her head out her room window briefly, and sees a man dressed as a law officer out in the parking lot, with the front desk clerk and two other men, all of whom seem to be speaking quietly. She removes her cellular phone from her pocket and hastily composes a text message. She then hides her cell phone in the toilet tank while D'Angelo arrives outside.
- The kidnapers move. The sheriff knocks and asks to come in. Afraid of the consequences of defiance, Christie complies and is immediately seized and handcuffed. D'Angelo briefly mentions to Cole and Vick that he's bringing the "merchandise" to the gulag and not to bother him tonight. He tells Sheriff Ostler will return in a few hours to clear out the woman's room and get either Cole or Vick to remove her car, so it can be stripped down for parts.
- Sometime after this (the timing depends entirely upon the needs of the story as it unfolds), D'Angelo arrives at the gulag and briefly deposits Christie there, but decides shortly thereafter – perhaps inspired by Laura Pritchard's manipulations – to move her to the farmhouse.

Motivation

Why get involved, at all? Even if Christie is the characters' sole contact in this area, what reason do they have to throw themselves into a life-or-death situation for a stranger?

Genuine human compassion: It's not common, by any means, but the players' characters are *supposed* to be exceptional people, in one way or another. Certainly, many players like their characters to be heroic and to take risks in the name of doing the right thing. Odds are, at least a couple of the characters will want to save Christie because looking out for others is morally commendable.

Hope of reward: Greed is also a powerful motivating factor, and the characters might hope to get something more than the free items that Christie promised them. It's not unreasonable to think that she could be persuaded to part with more compensation once she's been rescued, or that her kidnappers might have resources of their own to take.

Other personal reasons: Maybe, in a character's backstory, his girlfriend was snatched off of the street and later found murdered. Maybe another character's father was thrown in jail by a corrupt cop when she was six. Perhaps Christie is actually an acquaintance of one or more of the characters and, for various reasons, they're unwilling to allow her to remain in hostile hands. Characters' personal histories can do a lot to motivate them when the "right thing to do" and the promise of a payoff can't. Perhaps the characters are themselves criminals, and they want to shut down this operation for selfish reasons; a course of action in which they're quietly encouraged by their shadowy superior.

Order/recommendation from a superior: If you've assigned a patron of some sort to the characters, she can simply require or request of them that they go looking for Christie. This may be due to personal interests in the fence, a professional courtesy, a debt owed, or some other reason. Depending upon the nature of the patron's relationship with the characters, she may not even inform them as to why she's asked this of them.

In the end, the important part is to make sure that the characters intend to pursue Christie and oppose the kidnappers. How you get them to do so isn't especially important for the needs of the scenario, though, obviously, it has a huge impact on the tone of the roleplay.

The Cast

INTERACTIVE LINKS

One of the advantages of an electronic "book" like those in the SAS line is that we can add all sorts of interactivity we couldn't normally offer in a physical product. For example, clicking on the title or picture for a character in "The Cast" will take you to their character sheet (and vice versa). Plus, clicking on a character's picture will take you to that character's writeup in this section. Look around the document for more links like these; anything in blue is definitely a link to either another section of this document or an external website.

Christie Reese, Aloof Fence

Quotes: *"Five hundred bucks is not a polite suggestion. Now, pay up or fuck off. Your choice."*

"I stand by the quality of my product. I don't give my word often but, when I do, it's a guarantee."

"No refunds. We were pretty clear about that up front. Remember?"



Virtue: Prudence. It's always best to assess a situation and then exploit it.

Vice: Greed. The payoff is the most satisfying feeling in the world, and it almost makes up for the loneliness.

Description: Christie is that nebulous sort of average-looking that can be sexy with dim lighting and the right makeup, and mildly unappealing under the harsh light of day. She's tough but a touch desperate, and it shows in the firm set of her jaw, in the way that she leans ever so slightly forward when talking to someone, and in that needy in her eyes.

She constantly smells of cigarettes and fruit-scented shampoo, and has a nervous habit of brushing her long auburn hair out of her face, with one hand. Christie's slightly taller than average and a bit thin, with numerous piercings in both ears and a fake sapphire stud in her right nostril.

Storytelling Hints: Christie uses her aggressive demeanor to conceal her feelings of isolation. She tries not to build up meaningful connections to anyone, since that's a sure way to get hurt, betrayed, and quite probably robbed blind. Christie is shrewd, but her reflexive tendency to withdraw from human contact also means that she sometimes misses subtle tells, which is how she fails to pick up on Chen's true intentions until just before the kidnappers make their move.

When the characters first encounter her, Christie is looking for the best way to make the biggest profit possible off of them. Still, she's got a good head for business and understands that gouging customers isn't good for earning repeat patronage. She'll make it clear, up front, that the characters are paying a fair price for whatever it is that they're acquiring from her. If the numbers are a little bit high, well, necessities are pretty much always a seller's market.

Of course, Christie's presence over the course of much of the rest of the story is felt, rather than seen. She sets the characters on the path and is then at the mercy of their resourcefulness and their willingness to put their lives on the line for a small-time criminal.

Shady Deal (dice pool 6) – Christie isn't the best fence in the world, but she's far and away the biggest fish in this small pond. She's skilled at securing product, setting up the exchange, and closing the deal.

Hardass (dice pool 8) – While Christie isn't particularly physically strong or tough, she's very good at keeping her wits about her when everything's going to hell. She doesn't flinch in the sorts of bad situations in which hesitation, doubt, and fear mean trouble. Part of this stems from a natural emotional remoteness and part of it is a survival mechanism for her chosen vocation.

Fredrick Walker, Wary Handyman

Quote: “Preciate the company. Good to have someone to listen.”

Fredrick Walker is an old man — old enough to consider “Negro” a perfectly acceptable way of referring to himself. He lives in the room down on the far end of the motel (the side furthest from the rest stop) and, between the pittance that he earns on top of his permanent residency, his Social Security check, and his veteran's pension, he manages to eke out a decently comfortable. Fredrick goes to bed early most nights, and is up before dawn to make breakfast on his hot plate and watch the news while he does his morning

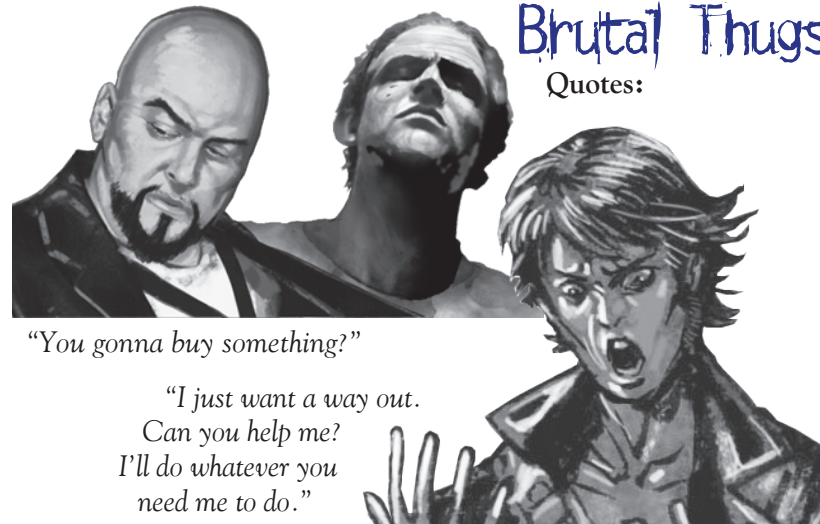
exercises. Rarely does anyone at the motel ever need to call upon Fredrick to fix anything, but that's mostly because of his daily rounds, checking this and that, and otherwise making sure that everything runs smoothly.

Maintenance (dice pool 9) – Fredrick Walker isn't merely a good handyman for his age; he's an amazing handyman, for *any* age. The motel would likely have started falling apart years ago, had he not moved in after the early passing of his wife, Roberta. A few of the employees at the motel wonder just how long the place will last after he finally shuts his eyes one night and joins her.

Reading People (dice pool 6) – Fredrick isn't just good at figuring out how things tick, but also at looking inside people and taking their measure. His gut tells him that Adam Chen is a bad man, as is the sheriff, and the three who work the overnight shift at the rest stop. He *knows* that something is genuinely, deeply wrong with their mysterious friend (whom he sometimes sees coming and going in the small hours of the morning). Unfortunately, he's also pretty sure that no one is interested in listening to an old man's hunches.

Cole, Vick, and MacGruder, Brutal Thugs

Quotes:



“You gonna buy something?”

“I just want a way out.
Can you help me?
I'll do whatever you
need me to do.”

Virtue: Fortitude. Just put one foot in front of the other; survive to see another day.

Vice: Envy. Everybody else has got it better: David, Adam, even that bloated piece of shit, Ostler. *Everyone.*

Description: Joey Cole, Burt Vick, and Garrett MacGruder are three of a kind, more or less. Sure, Joey's Nordic blond and wears a diamond stud in each ear, while Burt shaves his head and has

an almost-unnoticeable limp in his right leg, and Garrett tends to be soft-spoken and almost never meets anyone's gaze, but they're pretty similar, in terms of physical appearance. All three are average-looking guys, a little bit broad across the shoulders, but not unusually so. Their clothes aren't flashy nor especially shabby. They blend in, for the most part, though folks occasionally take notice of the casual menace that the three possess when they're in a group.

They swagger a bit (Cole and Vick more so than MacGruder), and project a suggestion of violence without seeming like particularly skilled fighters. They're the kind of men who do best when they've got someone down on the ground in a parking lot, stomping the shit out of him and talking smack while he pleads for mercy. They usually smell of cigarettes and, occasionally of beer or hard liquor.

Storytelling Hints: These are bad guys. They're thugs, bound together by a shared sin and something that only vaguely approximates a sense of community. Certainly, they occasionally go out and grab beers with one another, but they're not really friends. Ironically, the one with the most loyalty to the other two, MacGruder, is also the one likeliest to sell out the entire operation in the hopes of walking away from it entirely.

In the end, these guys are pretty straightforward. Even Garrett MacGruder – the most morally complex of the lot – isn't exactly a complicated guy. They like the money that they make in this line of work, they hate the drudgery of the overnight shift at the rest stop, they live with the general sense of anxiety and isolation common to ex-cons who just couldn't find a way out of the life. They resent Sheriff Ostler for the continual threat that he represents; each instinctively fears that the lawman will throw the book at them to save his own skin and leave them all rotting in a deep, dark hole.

Character Relationships: Cole and Vick



Occasional drinking buddy.



Kind of distant, lately.



Straight-up evil, but he's the boss.



Fucking asshole cop.

Character Relationships: Garrett MacGruder



Decent enough guy.



In the same boat.



The Devil himself.



Biggest obstacle to escape.

The Ghost of Laura Pritchard

Quotes: (Silently scratched onto a concrete wall that was blank just a moment ago) “GO AWAY.”

(Soft, menacing, disembodied voice emanating from somewhere near Laura’s desiccated remains) “You’re not wanted here.”

(Unearthly shriek)
“Leave him alone!
He’s mine!”

Virtue: Hope. There’s always at least a *slim* chance that things can turn out for the best.

Vice: Wrath. Hurt him. Hurt them. Hurt *everyone*, just like you were hurt.

Description: The ghost of Laura Pritchard, when glimpsed in its truest state, appears in the form of a Caucasian woman in her early 20s, almost skeletally gaunt, covered in a patchwork of scratches, bruises, rope burns, and sores, with a slightly skewed nose (from an unhealed break), sunken dark eyes, a few missing teeth, two badly broken fingers on her right hand, and some scabby patches of raw, bare scalp interspersed throughout her thick, matted tangle of light brown hair. She is unclothed and moves with a stiff, disjointed – and yet unnaturally swift – gait. When in this form (whether visible or not), the ghost sometimes exudes a faint stench of stale body odor, seeping infection, dried blood, and human waste.

At times when she’s filled with Hope, Laura’s ghost shows elements of her former beauty, with bright eyes, a lovely smile, and an effortless grace. In this form, the ghost wears close-fitting blue jeans and sneakers, with a black tee shirt, and hair tied back into a loose ponytail. The smell of jasmine perfume sometimes accompanies this version of the ghost. The difference between the two images is so extreme that characters might wonder if they’re seeing two entirely different spirits.

Laura’s ghost sometimes appears in a transitional state between the two extremes. These visuals tend to occur out of the corner of the eye: a haggard figure glimpsed in a pane of glass, limping along in torn and ragged jeans

and tee shirt, for example, or a pretty but badly battered woman, nude and curled into a fetal ball, shuddering with sobs, who appears momentarily in a cloud of dust as a door is opened in a dark and long-neglected basement room. These manifestations may or may not actually be Laura’s ghost; her presence around the area of her Anchors) has gradually “burned” these images into the fabric of reality. It’s entirely possible that even if Laura’s ghost is destroyed, these phenomena will persist for years to come.

Storytelling Hints: The ghost’s entire existence revolves entirely around David D’Angelo. When Laura still lived, he so thoroughly destroyed Laura Pritchard that she developed a dependence on him – a visceral *need* for his presence – equal to the tremendous hatred that she felt toward him. Months of savage beatings, merciless sexual abuse, and a regimen of casual neglect left Laura with a severe case of Stockholm syndrome before death finally claimed her. Now, Laura’s restless spirit lingers solely to simultaneously punish and protect D’Angelo.

Over the years since Laura’s death, her ghost has come to know D’Angelo better than he knows himself. She’s so well-versed in the nuances of his personality that, when she possesses David during his periods of fugue, none of his “co-workers” can tell the difference. Now, the spirit identifies so closely with him, that she subconsciously considers them to be a single, indivisible entity: murderer and murdered, victim and victimizer.

NEW NUMEN: HOST AFFINITY

All ghosts are inextricably tied to the people, places, and things that serve at their footholds in the mortal world. Some however, develop the ability to forge a particularly potent relationship with a specific living person. A ghost with the Host Affinity Numen may not learn the Possession Numen, but gains in exchange a number of special abilities that pertain solely to the chosen “host” (a person who serves as the spirit’s Anchor). Typically, such a ghost has only one person as an Anchor, and it can only ever apply this Numen to one individual, who must be an Anchor.

When in the vicinity of its human Anchor (within 10 yards times its Power Attribute), the ghost gains a +2 bonus to its Manifestation rolls, and may use the Ghost Sign or Ghost Speech Numina to create a number of sentences or (in the case of Ghost Sign) images equal to its Power on a single successful roll, rather than the customary one per use. Also, the ghost is considered to have the Compulsion and Possession Numina, with respect to its chosen host *only*. Should the target of the ghost’s Host Affinity ever die, then the ghost must make a successful Power + Finesse roll, minus the host’s Willpower, or else move on to its final fate, regardless of how many of its other Anchors survive.

David D'Angelo, Heartless Killer

Quotes: "People are product. It's that simple."

(To one of his cronies) "If you ever question me again, I'll slit your fucking throat. Understand?"

(To a prospective victim)
"Scream all you want. I like it better when they scream."

Virtue: Fortitude. Never yield; never back down.

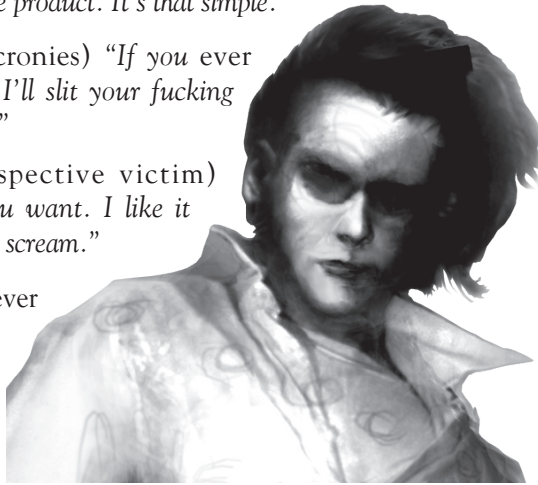
Vice: Greed. It's all about the bottom line. Anything can be bought or sold.

Description: An Italian-American man in his early 30s, D'Angelo blends into a crowd, with his medium-length brown hair, his plain features, and his average height. His subtly stylish clothing hangs well on his lean, athletic frame. Though generally unremarkable, something hard and inhuman shows in his eyes and in the cruel set of his features when he's acting from a position of power or when he perceives the opportunity to acquire something valuable.

When Laura Pritchard is possessing D'Angelo or else actively haunting his immediate vicinity, things sometimes seem a bit... *off*: Shadows might move strangely, half-heard moans or whimpers might be heard, or cold, feather-light touches might be felt.

Storytelling Hints: When D'Angelo is at rest, he seems somehow "blank" or "empty." Even his sadism becomes a hollow ritual for staving off boredom. Essentially, D'Angelo isn't a person so much as he's a series of ingrained processes and meaningless rituals. He has no hobbies, doesn't go to the movies or listen to music, eats when he's hungry, sleeps when he's tired, and obsessively hoards the money and expensive things that he acquires through his flesh trade. He *wants* but is invariably disappointed with all of his many acquisitions.

Thanks to Laura Pritchard's influence, D'Angelo has also become something uncanny. Animals don't like him (unless Laura



has compelled them to), people are intensely uncomfortable in his presence, light seems the *tiniest* bit dimmer, and shadows just a little deeper. It's hard to draw the line between what's a product of the ghost's presence and what's a result of D'Angelo's natural monstrousness.

It's vital to keep in mind that D'Angelo is at this point a broken record: he repeats by rote the actions that grant him momentary happiness and he *absolutely will not stop* , no matter what. He is irredeemable and no longer even capable of feigning the desire for redemption. He can, at best, take a few simple steps to fit in among the dregs of society and it's a poor fit, at that. In short, D'Angelo's is a soul devoured utterly by its own avarice. Removing him from the world would be a profound act of mercy, both to D'Angelo himself and to his prey.

Character Relationships: D'Angelo



Useful slob.



Weak but indispensable.

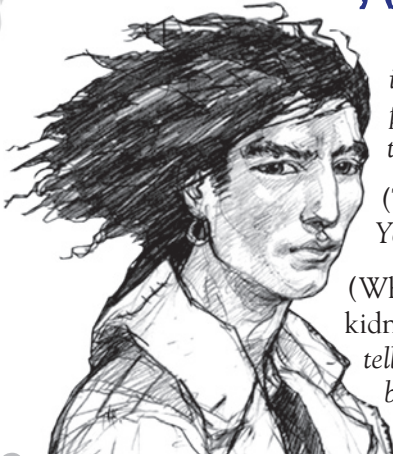


A coward in all things.



Tools, and nothing more.

Adam Chen, Face Man



Quotes: “I don’t normally do this, but it’s already midnight and you seem like a nice person, so I’ll give you the room for \$29 for the night. Deal?”

(To a pretty woman) “You’ve got a great smile. You should smile more often.”

(When confronted about his role among the kidnappers) “Look: just don’t hurt me and I’ll tell you everything that you want to know, but you have to promise to let me walk, no strings attached.”

Virtue: Prudence. Never risk more than you *absolutely* have to in order to get ahead.

Vice: Lust. Decadence is your bread and butter, indulge your driving passion.

Description: Adam Chen is a good-looking man of mixed Chinese and Irish ancestry, with a devilish grin and an easygoing manner. He’s just a little shorter than average and slender — the kind of guy who couldn’t intimidate a grade-schooler. Chen dresses well, but not ostentatiously (since people might start asking how he affords his wardrobe on a motel night manager’s salary), and favors a slightly preppy style. He has fine-boned hands, with narrow, nimble fingers, and tends to touch people in a friendly, disarming manner while speaking to them: momentarily resting his fingertips on another man’s shoulder or taking a woman’s hand in his own for just a second or two.

Storytelling Hints: Chen is an archetypal taker: he sees something that he wants and he conspires a way to have it. He uses wits, charm, and cunning to get his way, which sets him apart from his compatriots, whose methods are often far more crude and direct. Chen scouts out the marks and then passes word along to D’Angelo, Sheriff Ostler, or (rarely) one of the other three, and turns a blind eye when the process moves on from there. He knows little about how that part of the operation works and has no desire to learn. His ignorance helps him to imagine that he’s inherently less culpable in all of this than the others.

Chen doesn’t indulge in the recreational rape and torture of the kidnappers’ victims. In part, this is due to his desire for distance from what he feels is the most illegal facet of the operation and, in part, it’s on account of his distaste for “captive prey”. Additionally, if he avoids being directly party to the worst of the group’s offenses, then he’s somehow morally “better” than those around him. He profits by atrocity, but sleeps better at night by thinking that he’s not really *participating* in it.

Chen can be manipulated through various means (mostly of the “carrot and stick” variety: either the promise of something that he wants or the threat of something that he dreads, like grievous bodily harm or jail time), but he’s a quick thinker and particularly good at extricating himself from bad situations. Also, the approach that’s used to sway him directly impacts his likelihood of turning on the characters at the first available opportunity, unless the numbers tell him that one faction or the other will inevitably come out on top, in which case he’ll automatically align himself with the winning side.

Chen will only throw himself into combat if there’s absolutely no other way out and his physical wellbeing is unquestionably threatened, and he’ll do so *solely* to escape as quickly as possible.

Character Relationships: Chen



Terrifying monster.



Vile piece of shit.

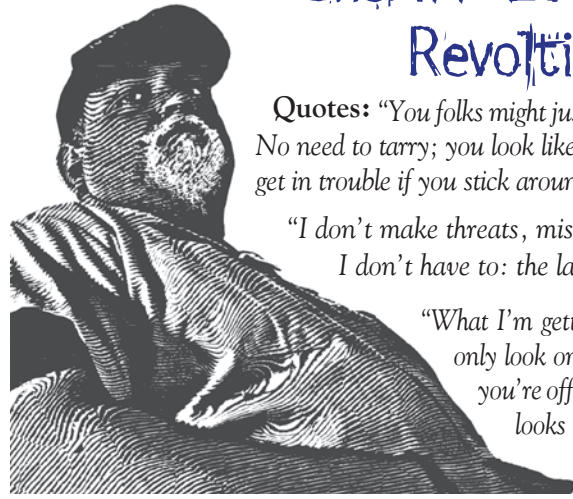


Having second thoughts?



Cheap muscle.

Sheriff Louis Ostler, Revolting Glutton



Quotes: “You folks might just want to be heading on. No need to tarry; you look like the sorts who might just get in trouble if you stick around.”

“I don’t make threats, miss.
I don’t have to: the law’s on my side.”

“What I’m getting at is that a man can only look one way at a time. If what you’re offering with your right hand looks good, who’s to say what your left hand is doing?”

Virtue: Justice. So what if it’s outside of the law? These people are crooks, junkies, and burdens on society. They *deserve* this.

Vice: Gluttony. More beer, more food, more bribes, more teary-eyed girls chained up in a dank basement; too much is never enough.

Description: Sheriff Ostler is a big, pale, flabby, balding pig of a man in his late 40s. He’s tall, but would stand taller if his prodigious gut didn’t stoop him into a perpetual slouch. His callused hands are large and thick, with stubby fingers. He perspires quite a bit (often through the back, chest, and underarms of his short-sleeved light brown uniform shirt) and habitually licks his lips hungrily whenever he’s looking at something that he wants, whether that’s a swig of whiskey, a heaping plate of onion rings, a roll of \$20s, or a pretty young woman.

Most times, Ostler smells of sweat, beer, fried food, and flatulence, half-masked with a quick slap of decent aftershave on each doughy cheek. His breathing is a faintly audible wheeze that worsens considerably whenever he has to exert himself. Those who have the misfortune of shaking the sheriff’s hand come away with a film of greasy sweat for their troubles.

Storytelling Hints: Ostler is a selfish, weak-willed man who would much rather stuff his face, line his pockets, and wet his wick than do his job. He finds ways to dress all of it up in his deluded imagination so that he can believe that he’s still serving justice: those bribes he gets are money that won’t end up in the hands of pimps and pushers, while the transients that he helps to kidnap are all welfare cases, small-time hookers, dope fiends, and

thieves. He’s told himself these lies so often and so convincingly that no amount of contrary logic will get him to believe otherwise anymore, because then he’d have to confront the horrific reality of what sort of creature he’s allowed himself to become. He’s managed to keep his job only because no one else wants it, and a lot of the locals are glad to have a lawman that leaves them be and will gladly look the other way for a few bucks.

Sheriff Ostler is full of bluster, but it’s important to keep in mind that he’s neither stupid nor a coward; he’ll back up his threats in any way that isn’t likely to expose him to retaliation from the law beyond his little fief. If what it takes is a few bodies in an unmarked grave, deep in the woods; well, *that* can be arranged, too. He isn’t exactly *eager* to kill, but he’s well aware of the fate that awaits him if the secret of this little operation ever gets out, and so whatever frail voice of conscience might be left in him is easily silenced by practicality. Still, he can be swayed through appeals to his undistinguishing palate: he’s unlikely to turn down a free beer or three, or the attentions of an attractive woman who sincerely seems interested in him.

Character Relationships: Ostler



Beneath notice.



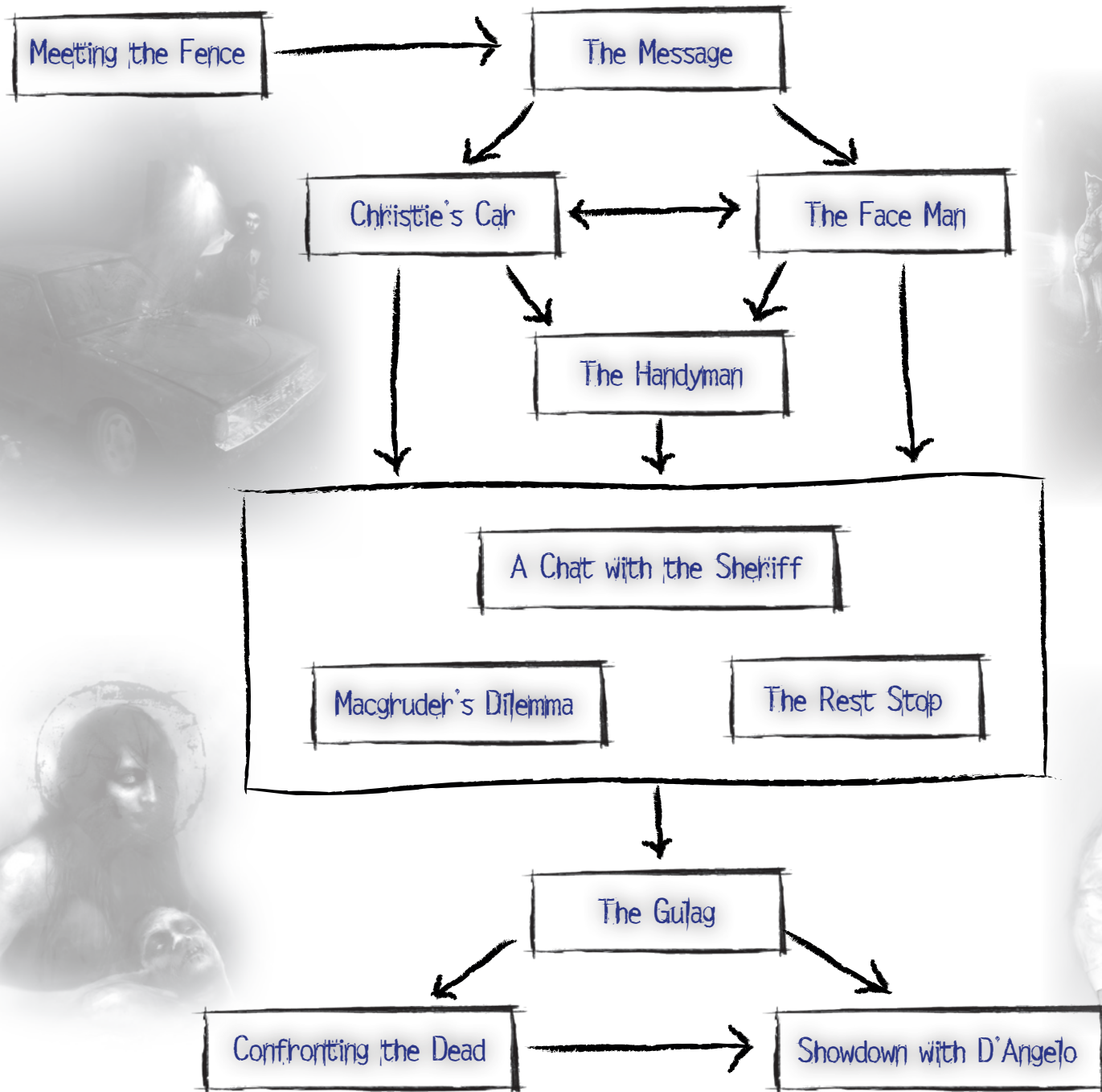
The weak link.



Bloodthirsty
psycho.



Beneath notice.



Meeting the Fence

MENTAL • PHYSICAL – SOCIAL ••

Overview: This scene begins with the characters needing to procure something vital to their continuing progress and cutting a deal to meet up with the fixer, Christie Reese, later on in the evening. Unless things go seriously awry, the characters shouldn't run into any trouble in this scene; it's just the setup for things to come.

Description: Christie Reese first meets the characters in a sleepy little donut shop where she knows the owner and occasionally slips him a \$50 to keep him out of her business. She's waiting for the characters when they arrive, sipping from a cup of coffee, munching on a chocolate cruller, and occasionally glancing down at her pack of cigarettes, clearly wishing that she could light one up in the shop. She looks up at the characters when they enter, studies them for a moment, and asks, "Are you them?"

Provided they answer in the affirmative, Christie invites the characters to sit with her. Her booth accommodates three more people, but she won't actually allow anyone to sit next to her, so anyone beyond the first two to slide into the opposite side of Christie's booth will have to find other seating.

"You people seem like the real deal, so it's worth my time to at least meet with you. I've heard enough to have a good idea of what you're looking for and, if my guess is right, I can help you, but it's going to cost. My prices are fair. I don't gouge for more than what something is worth, but I get every penny of its value. If you can live with that, then we can deal. Otherwise, the door is that way and I wish you luck in finding someone else within two hundred miles who get you what you need."

Storyteller Goals: Depending upon whatever it is that the characters need, Christie may truly be the only source for it, at all. For example, if the characters are after an arcane text or strange relic, then Christie might have the lead on the only example of the item in existence. Regardless, it should be made clear to the characters that Christie is their only chance to get what they need in any kind of acceptable time frame and for an even remotely fair price. The more expensive the item, the better, as Christie will later offer it to the characters for free in exchange for her rescue.

Once the characters accept Christie's offer, then she'll move on to the next phase of the exchange. She won't conduct an actual sale in the donut shop and doesn't have the item on her, though she *will* accept any good-faith deposit that the characters offer up-front. If she senses that they'll go for it, she might request as much as 25% of the item's asking price now. If the characters don't go for it, Christie doesn't seem to take any offense; she's getting paid sooner or later. Christie will then select the location for the exchange: a motel along a quiet stretch of road, several miles from the highway, with a rest stop just across the street from it. She's passed by the place a number of times and been thinking of using it as a place of business for a few months, figuring that it's the sort of place where no one cares what goes on. If the characters argue with the location, Christie will assert that it's the best place around for this sort of thing, since it's cheap, out of the way, and virtually abandoned most of the time. Ultimately, they don't have a lot of options; Christie's the one who's got what they want. After Christie gets the phone number of at least one of the characters, she lays out the next step (meeting up at her room at the motel around 12:30 AM the next day) and tells them not to visit the exchange site before then. Christie then departs, leaving the characters the rest of the day to figure out what to do with themselves.

Character Goals: The characters' goals for this scene are pretty straightforward: talk to Christie, reach an arrangement, and go. While the characters may have other designs at this point, Christie isn't intending to stick around to hear them, since she's got work to do in order to make the meeting later on. The characters may have some time to explore town if they're interested, but there really isn't anything to see.

If the characters actually have anything important to do before the meeting, this downtime should be sufficient for them to take care of it. Otherwise, don't worry about filling time; you can just skip to the next big event.

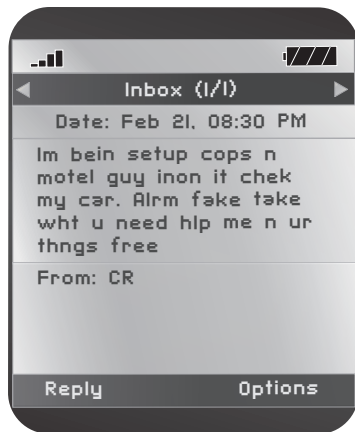
Actions: The characters can make some social rolls with Christie and maybe a few mental rolls, but there isn't much for them to gain here by successful dice rolls. The best they can hope for is to make a good impression on Christie (which won't cause her to drop her asking price, but might set the foundations for a good working relationship in the future) and maybe learn a little bit about her habits.

The Message

MENTAL • PHYSICAL – SOCIAL –

Overview: At 12:13 AM, Christie Reese manages to get a quick text message out to one of the characters, just before the kidnappers get a hold of her. Realizing that she's in some kind of serious danger, but uncertain of the specifics of what awaits her, she can only send a vague plea for help and hope that her new clients will accept her offer and save her.

Description: One of the characters receives a text message just before the meeting is to take place. Odds are a good that the characters are en route to the motel when the message arrives.



This hasty message translates to: *I'm being set up. Cops and motel guy in on it. Check my car. Alarm fake. Take what you need. Help me and your thing's free.*

If you want – and the players themselves don't immediately decipher the text – you can have them make Intelligence + Composure rolls to quickly slog through the misspellings and bad grammar. Whatever the case, don't make this too hard for the characters, as understanding Christie's message is necessary to advance the scenario.



Storytelling Goals: This scene basically takes care of itself. Christie sends out her message and the characters won't have a chance to act on it until they arrive at the motel. Of course, they can decipher the text and makes plans as to what to do when they get there, but that's it.

If the characters have a patron of some sort and contact her at this juncture, she'll encourage or even require them to go after Christie and save her.

Character Goals: Any goals the characters had are thwarted from the outset and they're now forced to adapt to an unknown situation. The characters may decide to delay their arrival or they may rush ahead. Regardless, Christie Reese is gone by the time they get there, having had just enough time to drop her cell phone into the toilet tank in her room.

Christie's Car

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL .. SOCIAL -

Overview: Christie Reese's car is still parked in the lot around the back of the motel. Although there aren't any clues in the vehicle, investigating it may still prove useful.

Description: The car is a beat-up beige sedan, about five years old. It's parked in a dark patch of the lot, directly under a broken light.

Christie's car is parked in darkness. A quick glance up confirms that the light directly above is missing its bulb. The battered sedan is nondescript, except for the blinking red alarm light set into the dashboard.

Storyteller Goals: This scene can put some much-needed equipment and cash in the characters' hands and give them a vehicle with which to complete the rest of the story.

Character Goals: The characters want the same things out of this scene as the Storyteller does: resources with which to advance the scenario.

Getting into the Car

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny + equipment

Action: Instant

Christie's car is beat-up and shows patches of rust in places. While the hinges and locks are a bit stubborn as a result, the car is pretty easy to break into. A few quick seconds of work with any kind of lockpick suitable for use on a car is apt to yield results, so long as the character has any clue as to what she's doing.

Christie proves true to her word: the "alarm" in the car is just a blinking red light in the dashboard, intended to ward off would-be car thieves.

Obstacles: Cold weather (-1), working under stress (-2)

Assets: A good flashlight (+1), a spray can of metal lubricant (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Whatever equipment is being used to jimmy the lock breaks and the car remains locked.

Failure: The character doesn't get into the car.

Success: The lock opens.

Exceptional Success: As above.

Investigating the Car

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + equipment

Action: Extended (5 successes)

Christie's car is a mess inside, and deliberately so. Hiding under weeks' worth of Styrofoam coffee cups, fast food wrappers, discarded cigarette packs, and half-crumpled magazines are several little cleverly-hidden cubby holes

Obstacles: Character is mildly distracted (-1), character isn't wearing her glasses (-2)

Assets: The full moon is out (+1), the character's own car is similarly messy (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character completely misses anything of significance inside the car and they're spotted during the break-in.

Failure: The character makes no appreciable progress in their search.

Success: The character finds something useful.

Exceptional Success: As above, though a single exceptional success allows the character to find everything at once (as it only takes five successes to fully investigate the car).

Consequences: A thorough investigation of Christie's car turns up some stuff that could be useful to the characters in the conflict to come:

- Two handguns (a 2L six-shot revolver and a 3L pistol with a 19-shot magazine)
- A foot-long heavy steel flashlight (which doubles as a 2B club in a pinch)
- Two disposable, pre-paid cell phones with an hour apiece on them
- \$265 in small bills

Of course, the car itself might also be of use to them. Hotwiring it should be simple for anyone who can break into the car in the first place (requiring nothing more than a simple Dexterity + Larceny roll, or just a brick through the window if the characters aren't worried about being subtle).

The Face Man

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL •

SOCIAL •••

Overview: Adam Chen is almost certainly the first link in the characters' search to find Christie Reese. Her quick text message implicates him in her kidnapping and he happens to be easier to locate than the nebulous "cops" specified in her missive.

Description: The front desk of the motel is the kind of quiet, depressing place that most people are thrilled to deal with and leave behind, as quickly as possible.

The fluorescent lights overhead buzz audibly, lending a sickly greenish cast to the beige walls and ceiling of the front desk area. The brick-red vinyl upholstery on the two uncomfortable-looking love seats in the small waiting space is cracked and peeling. A faded landscape paintings adorn the walls. The magazines on the side table are years out of date and contribute to the musty smell of the place. The "front desk" is just a window-sized opening into a cramped office.

Chen isn't at the desk when the characters first come in. He's in another office in the back, watching television. If people can't figure out to ring the bell for service, then he really doesn't care whether or not they get a room for the night. Once the bell is rung, Chen takes his sweet time sauntering in. At least two or three minutes elapse before he gets around to meeting with the characters, longer if he's in the middle of watching something interesting. He'll apologize with a smile and disarmingly mention "taking care of something out back" if anyone mentions anything about the wait. If they complain, he'll offer to knock a few bucks off of a room rental.

Of course, the characters probably aren't interested in a room. While they might feign a desire for a bed, they need to get Chen talking about something a little more significant than the amenities that they can expect in a double twin room. Chen, however, is the canniest of the kidnappers when it comes to social interactions, so the characters need to be extremely careful with what they say to him and how they phrase it.

Storyteller Goals: This is almost certainly the characters' first encounter with any of the kidnappers. They have the chance to take an early advantage; don't be afraid to let them. Chen is a resource



that can be used and reused over the course of the story. He'll happily change sides however many times he can get away with, so long as he believes his prosperity or survival to be on the line. He'll stoop to any low, underhanded bit of trickery that he can reasonably employ to get the characters to be sympathetic toward him, to relax their guard, or release him.

Character Goals: The characters have only a perplexing text message from their now-missing contact. If they're to get anywhere, it pretty much has to start with Chen. Obviously, they're going to want to squeeze as much information as they can out of him, without tipping off any of his compatriots. To accomplish this, the characters may resort to any number of strategies, though odds are very strong that they're eventually going to have to say enough for Chen to realize that they know far more than they should about what's going on here.

Actions: Social rolls are the likeliest to come into play in this scene, as the characters try to finagle information out of Chen. Some mental rolls can be employed, as well; particularly if anyone is able to get into the back offices. If the characters want to take a direct, physical approach with Chen, that's also doable, though he's slippery and apt to escape any situation in which he's not confined or physically incapacitated. Investigation rolls will turn up the fact that there is no surveillance equipment on the premises, so the characters' need to exercise caution really only extends to avoiding the direct scrutiny of their enemies.



If any physical harm is threatened, Chen will quickly capitulate to the characters' demands, though he'll act as though he has no idea what's going on and that all of this must be some sort of terrible mistake. He'll push this line on the characters right up until they can present him with some shred of evidence for which he can't immediately concoct a convincing explanation. At this point, he'll play for sympathy, trying to convince the characters that he's an unwilling participant in all of this, pushed into it by fear of his co-conspirators and now, tragically, bound to their evil work through fear of retribution.

Consequences: What happens to Chen and where he goes from here is entirely in the hands of the characters. If they make a strong showing and seem to have their shit together, then Chen will be loath to return to David and the others with news. After all, if they die and he manages to slither away, then he'll have gotten about the best resolution that he could've possibly hoped for, given David's increasingly unpredictable temper. If, however, the characters don't seem strong or savvy enough to take the others down, and he has a chance to do so without exposing himself to any kind of danger, Chen will tip off Sheriff Ostler and allow the lawman to coordinate the group's response from there. If things look like they could go either way, then Chen will simply sit this round out and allow the chips to fall where they may.

What Chen can reveal:

- *The names, professions, and/or locations of the other kidnapers.* Chen knows that Vick and Cole are both working at the rest stop across the street tonight, after having taken a few minutes to come to the motel and helping to kidnap the woman who recently checked in. He knows that Sheriff Ostler will likely be back through the area later, to make his customary post-abduction once-over of the crime scene, to remove all evidence of the action. He knows that Garrett MacGruder headed back home after the incident, to his trailer several miles (and, thus, only several minutes by car) away along the back roads. He also knows David D'Angelo's name (and that the man terrifies him like no one else he's ever met), but has no idea where he might be found; he's never worked up the courage to ask David any personal questions and, for his part, David apparently never felt like sharing.

- *The generalities of the victim's eventual fate.* Those who are abducted are locked up, used to satiate the brutal lusts and sadistic fantasies of their kidnappers, and then sold off to interests elsewhere. Chen set up these connections a few years back, though he's no longer directly involved with the exchanges and knows only that a few different groups of guys transfer the money for the product, and that none of them are the same ones that he remembers from the beginning. He doesn't know who the clients are or why they want human beings, nor does he care to know.
- *MacGruder is the weak link.* Chen is aware that MacGruder is having second thoughts about the whole operation. The man's never said as much, but Adam's good at interpreting the subtle signs in a person's eyes, in his expression and his body language. The work is beginning to grate on Garrett and it shows; at least, to someone who possesses a long familiarity with identifying and exploiting emotional weakness.
- *Cole, Vick, and MacGruder are ex-cons.* Chen is aware that Sheriff Ostler made these three an "offer that they couldn't refuse," and that Cole and Vick have always been perfectly comfortable with the work. He's also aware that all three men resent the other three in the equation (D'Angelo, Chen, and the sheriff) for what they perceive to be more freedom to simply walk away if things get too dangerous.
- *The existence of at least two locations to which prisoners are brought.* While he has no interest in knowing the visceral details of the operation, Adam has least heard of two sites, in particular: "the gulag" and "the farmhouse." He has no idea, however, whether these names are merely codes or are to be taken literally.
- *Something is deeply, terrifyingly wrong with David D'Angelo.* D'Angelo scares the living shit out of Chen. He's inhuman, horrific and his presence makes Chen think of nothing other than the desire to escape. He's reasonably certain that David could kill someone without so much as flinching at the blood spray.

Of note is the fact that Chen doesn't know Christie Reese; not by name, face, or reputation. While they all run in criminal circles, Christie's associations are of a decidedly different character than the kidnappers'. Chen simply made a bad judgment call when he determined that Christie seemed like someone who wouldn't be missed.

The Handyman

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL –

SOCIAL •

Overview: The characters have the chance here to learn something about the enemies that they're soon going to be forced to face, if they keep an old man company for a little while. If the characters choose not to look into the desk clerk when they go to the motel, this scene still allows them to pick up the kidnapers' trail.

Description: Fredrick Walker's room down at the far end of the motel is tucked away near the trees that hem the property in on all sides. There are no lights down at this end of the parking lot. Walker claims that it's because he needs new parts to fix it up, but it's really because the lack of illumination allows him a better view of what goes on down near the front office at night, as well as across the street at the rest stop.

The peeling stucco is barely visible here, since the light overhead seems to have died out. The door before you looks to have had its number plate removed, and only two dark holes in the door mark where it once rested. Faintly, you can hear the sound of a conversation from within, or maybe just the noise from a television. As you approach, the door opens, and an aged man stands before you, the dark brown skin of his face heavily creased with wrinkles.

"New folks around here are always bad news. We need to talk. Come on inside, I'll put on some coffee."

Storyteller Goals: With this scene, you have the opportunity to put enough information in the characters' hands that they can start piecing together what has to happen before they can successfully rescue Christie: the number of men in D'Angelo's group, the fact that three of them work across the street at the rest stop and that the local sheriff is in on it. While Walker doesn't know precisely what D'Angelo and his crew are doing, he's sure that they're *extremely* bad men and that they're up to something horrific. The old timer senses that something is deeply wrong with D'Angelo himself (whom he doesn't know by name and can only identify as "an average-looking man, maybe 30 or so,"). Walker can't say why, for certain, save to tell the characters that he get a queasy feeling about the stranger, like he's somehow "sick in the soul."

Perhaps just as importantly as a vehicle for information, however, Walker is a sympathetic ear for the characters, an ally in otherwise hostile territory. When everything seems set against them, the characters can turn to Walker as a sounding board for ideas (giving you, the Storyteller, the ability to gently nudge them back onto track if they get stuck on some aspect of the scenario).

Character Goals: The characters are probably going to want to get every bit of information that they can out of Walker. After all, the old man is willing to volunteer what little he knows, as well as all of his observations for nothing more than the price of a few moments' company and a promise to shut down whatever kind of evil operation the front desk night manager is involved with. If they're particularly good to Walker or strike him as especially upright sorts, then they'll have an ally in him, *especially* if the characters share what they now know about Christie Reese's kidnapping.

Actions: The characters might need to make a few rolls, here or there, but this entire scene can easily (and probably should) be handled entirely through pure roleplay.

Walker has the following information:

- *Anything about the motel itself.* Walker's knowledge of the physical environs of the motel is all-encompassing; if he doesn't know about it, it isn't there.
- *Adam Chen, the night manager, is a shady character.* Walker just *knows* that Chen is hiding something; the ingratiating desk clerk gives him a bad feeling.
- *The number of men that were in the group that probably took Christie Reese and who most of them are.* While Walker didn't see the kidnapping, he's willing to bet that any wrongdoing on the premises involved Chen's three friends from the rest stop across the street, as well as Sheriff Ostler, and that *other* fellow. He can give rough physical descriptions of all six men.
- *The general location of the farmhouse.* This probably won't come up, unless the characters have to later return to Walker because they've killed or driven off anyone else who can guide them to the final confrontation with D'Angelo.

He also has some equipment that he can loan them (like the pistol that he keeps for security purposes – a 2L weapon – and his 1L 6" utility knife), though getting those from him might require a quick social roll or two.

A Chat with the Sheriff

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL ••

Overview: There are a lot of different ways that the characters could choose to play this. Sheriff Ostler's standard-issue intimidation tactics will come into play here and characters can try to charm him, buy him off, out-think him, menace him, appear to give in to his threats, or even attack him outright. It's all in how they want to approach the situation.

Description: Depending upon the actions that the characters take, either they will have to track down the sheriff or simply wait for him to come to them. No matter the circumstances, Ostler is sure to have his pickup truck close by and will doubtless be found with a face full of food and drink.

The pristine gold pickup truck before you smells slightly of exhaust. The seal of the county sheriff is blazoned clearly upon the driver's side door, while the man who laboriously heaves his bulk out of the driver's seat is dressed in shades of gray and black. He stands tall, with a broad build that sags with fat. He's sucking powdered orange cheese from his thick fingertips and slurping a can of beer. His short-sleeved shirt is soaked through with sweat at the underarms and chest. He smiles, revealing bits of corn-puff between his bright white teeth.

"Hello there, folks. I suspect that you and I need to have a little bit of a chat."

Storyteller Goals: There are two things of critical importance in this scene. First, the characters should get a feel for how loathsome the sheriff is and how easily he can be controlled through appeals to his vast appetite. Second, Sheriff Ostler will end up tipping his hand in the hopes of scaring the characters off; feel free to drop some of what the sheriff knows, but only if the information might intimidate.

Character Goals: Learning information from Ostler, as well as decreasing the magnitude of the threat posed by the kidnapers. Whether by appealing to the sheriff's Gluttony or just taking the lawman out of the picture, as long as the characters play things smart they're going to gain some advantage in the confrontations to come.

Actions: Almost any sort of action might prove appropriate during the course of this scene. A character who wants use her good looks to flirt with the sheriff and maybe learn some of what he knows about all of this

might use Manipulation + Persuasion. Another character might instead use Strength + Brawl to plant her fist between his eyes, bind him with his own handcuffs and stick him somewhere out of the way until all of this is over. A particularly observant character might even make a Wits + Medicine roll to notice that Sheriff Ostler is probably a half-dozen donuts shy of a coronary – knowledge that just might come in handy down the line.

Consequences: The end result of this exchange is that the sheriff is either out to get the characters, willing to entertain the characters' offer (if one is convincingly made), or out of the picture.

What Sheriff Ostler knows:

- *The names, professions, and/or locations of the other kidnapers.* Ostler knows everything that Chen knows (see p. 19), and also knows where David D'Angelo lives.
- *The victims' eventual fate.* The lawman intends to "get his turn" with the new acquisition, though D'Angelo, as ever, has "dibs," and he's sure that Cole and Vick will get their turns with her. He also knows that MacGruder hasn't "visited" the last two abductees, though he hasn't considered the implications of that too carefully. Ostler will be part of the exchange in a week or so when the agents of the outside interests come to pick up the merchandise.
- *Cole, Vick, and MacGruder are ex-cons, and Chen narrowly dodged jail time.* As the man who bullied Cole, Vick, and MacGruder into compliance, and who drew Chen into the organization, Ostler is well aware of their criminal proclivities.
- *Where D'Angelo's first victim was killed.* When D'Angelo brought the sheriff out to the old farmhouse, he told Ostler that it was the site of his first murder.
- *D'Angelo is a dangerous psychotic.* Sheriff Ostler isn't quite afraid of D'Angelo, but instead sees him as a pit bull straining against a leash that's probably sturdy enough to hold him. He's well aware that D'Angelo is the most dangerous of all of them and treats him with a healthy respect.
- *Where the prisoners go.* The sheriff knows the location of the gulag, D'Angelo's house, and the farmhouse. He doesn't know to which of them Christie was brought, though. On the other hand, he knows that D'Angelo may have mentioned the location in front of Vick and Cole. He knows that D'Angelo keeps the remains of his first victim in a tightly locked room in the gulag.

MacGruder's Dilemma

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL •••

Overview: The characters have the opportunity to make an appeal to Garret MacGruder and to potentially sway him over to their side, or at least to get him to turn his back on D'Angelo and the others. On the other hand, the characters might just decide to deal with MacGruder while he's home alone, leaving the kidnapers one man short.

Description: MacGruder's trailer is out at the end of a long dirt road in the woods. The place evokes a sense of loneliness and regret.

The trees slouch over a relatively new and spacious trailer that seems as though it's been carelessly dropped into a small clearing at the end of a slightly overgrown, gravel-strewn path: too nice to fit in among the other mobile homes in the area, and yet too "white trash" to earn a place among the old houses glimpsed from the distant streets. It's a forlorn, forgotten little refuge.

Storyteller Goals: The characters should be given a chance to damage MacGruder's relationship with his fellow kidnapers, or even ruin it outright. He's been having second thoughts for quite some time, but he's caught between a rock and a hard place: as Sheriff Ostler has threatened to send him back to jail if he tries to back out. If MacGruder could be presented with another option – with very nearly any sort of out – he'd be seriously tempted to take it. Still, it's going to be a hard sell for the characters. Garrett enjoys the money that he makes, has something like a friendship with Chen, Cole, and Vick, and is desperately afraid of what either D'Angelo or the sheriff will do to him if he tries to walk away. Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is the struggle between MacGruder's selfishness and the frail voice of conscience that tugs at him. Those who wish to turn him need to play to *both* of these conflicting elements in just the right ways. If the characters decide to deal with MacGruder in a more violent manner, he'll put up a fight, but probably won't prove a match for the characters on his own.

Character Goals: Likely, the characters want to try to get MacGruder over to their side. The most that they're likely to get is for him to spill a bit about what he knows and to stay out of it. If they're extraordinarily convincing, however, it's just possible that the ex-con will choose to change sides, in the hopes of securing a small measure of redemption.

Alternately, the characters may not have learned enough to know that MacGruder can potentially be turned (or, of course, they just might not care) and want to take this opportunity to take him out of the equation. In such a case, the characters might not have talking in mind.

Actions: The characters can attempt various social rolls with MacGruder, in an attempt to manipulate his stance. They can look around while they talk to him, to investigate his residence and learn something about him from it. They can even use this surprise meeting as an opportunity to ambush MacGruder.

Swaying MacGruder

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy + equipment (to read MacGruder) and Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment (to appeal to him)

Action: Contested

MacGruder opposes this roll with either Wits + Subterfuge (for characters attempting to read him) or Resolve + Composure (for those trying to sway him from D'Angelo's service). The first character to obtain successes equal to the other's Willpower dots wins the contested action. If the player character wins, then MacGruder will become more open to the character's entreaties. If MacGruder wins, his fear of retribution and misplaced loyalties will hold out.

Obstacles: Characters act in an accusatory manner toward MacGruder (-1), characters threaten MacGruder (-2)

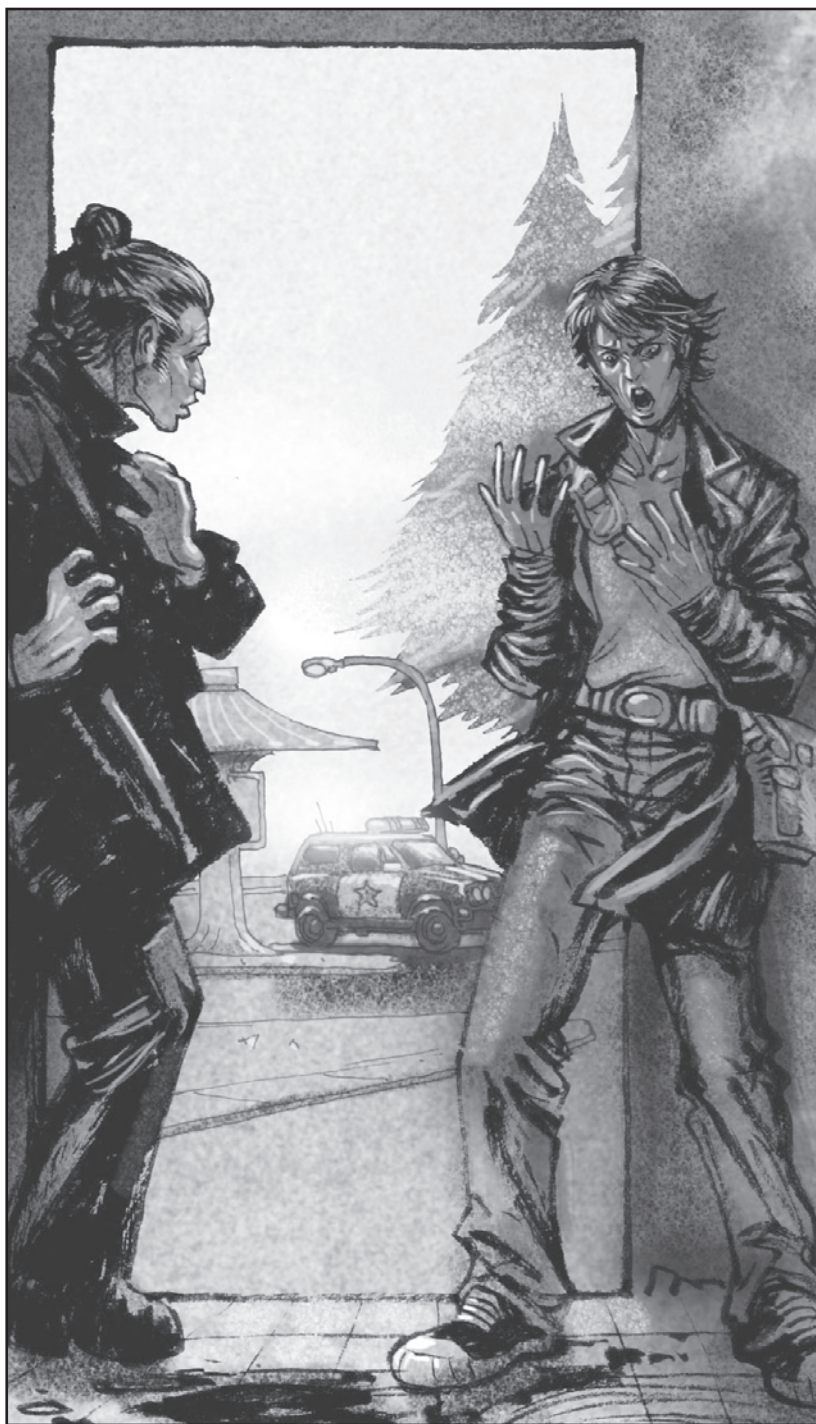
Assets: Character shows genuine compassion to MacGruder (+1), character offers MacGruder a reasonable "out" (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: MacGruder grows sick of this attempt to manipulate him and either attempts to attack the characters or flee, so that he can tell D'Angelo and the others.

Failure: The character doesn't make any progress in getting through to MacGruder.

Success: The character accrues one or more successes and gains some ground.



Exceptional Success: As above, but the character also gains a bonus die to all subsequent social rolls made against MacGruder.

Consequences: If the characters manage to do the bare minimum, then MacGruder will sit the fight out and maybe give them a handful of pointers (primarily aimed at getting Christie out, alive and unharmed, rather than hurting or killing his fellow kidnapers). On the other hand, if they really manage to appeal to the nagging voice of his better nature, MacGruder might actually prove willing to take a stand and to turn his knowledge of the operation against D'Angelo and the others. If he goes this route, MacGruder may well throw himself in the path of danger, even unto his own death, in the hopes of finding some measure of redemption. If the characters can't convince him, then he'll almost certainly react with threats and violence. Depending upon their actions, they may have to incapacitate or even kill MacGruder, or risk him getting away and revealing everything to D'Angelo and the others.

What MacGruder knows:

- *The names, professions, and/or locations of the other kidnapers.* MacGruder knows what Sheriff Ostler knows. (See p. 21)
- *The victim's eventual fate.* MacGruder's knowledge of this situation is the same as the sheriff's, though he no longer participates in the rape and torture of the captives.
- *Cole and Vick are ex-cons, like himself.* The three thugs commonly drink together at the local dive bar and talk about the shared misery of their situation.
- *D'Angelo is a dangerous psychotic.* MacGruder is terrified of D'Angelo and knows that everyone else is, too, with the possible exception of the sheriff. MacGruder also has an uncertain sense that D'Angelo's monstrosity is more than merely human; he has seen and heard inexplicable things in David's presence. He's kept these fears to himself, so far, to avoid mocking from the others.
- *The location of the gulag.* MacGruder is well aware of where the main "storage facility" is. He also knows that captives are occasionally brought to an abandoned farmhouse or D'Angelo's house. (He's been to the former twice and can give rough directions, but he's never been to D'Angelo's place and has taken steps to actively remain ignorant of where it is), depending upon how D'Angelo feels at any given time. He also knows that there is a locked room in the gulag that no one can get into, and he doesn't ask about it.

The Rest Stop

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL ••

Overview: The characters confront at least two of the kidnapers at the rest stop: Joey Cole and Burt Vick, in order to learn where Christie Reese has been taken. Depending upon how circumstances have progressed, they may also be facing Sheriff Ostler. Needless to say, the terrain favors the locals, though the characters – if they’ve done the proper legwork – certainly have had opportunities to level the playing field quite a bit.

Description: From a distance it seems like a half-dead thing, festooned in flickering neon and lit from within by dim halogen bulbs. Upon closer inspection, the rest stop seems alive with a simmering menace. The rows of shelves and the long counter have become obstacles to navigate, and the door leading to the freezer in back an ideal spot for an ambush. The building and its environs buzz with the sense of impending violence.

The gravel from the badly pitted asphalt crunches softly underfoot. The acrid smell of gasoline hangs heavily in the air. The promise of danger seems to sharpen all of your senses. You are aware of the irregular buzzing of a sputtering neon sign and the faint reek from the dumpster out back.

Storyteller Goals: The antagonists’ objective here depends largely upon the characters’ approach. If they come in and try to talk rationally, then they’re likely to find themselves in a pitched battle. If they walk in and stick guns in the kidnapers’ faces, then they might be able to get the information they want and waltz out the door unscathed. The more violence that the characters seem willing to employ, the more apt Cole and Vick are to roll over for them. This is a good job for them, but they’re not willing to die for it. That said, if the thugs think they can frighten off, hurt, or even kill the characters, they’ll try. **Character Goals:** Most of all, the characters want to know where Christie was taken. All of their actions are wasted if she can’t be saved. Also, they can significantly impact the strength of the kidnapers’ operation here, provided they are willing to do what is necessary to remove Cole and Vick.

Actions: The characters may attempt to reason with the kidnapers present at the rest stop, outwit them, attack them, or take any other action that seems appropriate. If they play their cards right, they may not have to fire a single shot; on the other hand, however, they might *want* to hurt or even kill the men behind these heinous crimes, so the choice of what to do



to using numbers and superior strength to overpower the helpless, not waging a pitched battle with those with the means and the will to fight back.

If it comes to that, the fight will unfold within the rest stop’s small convenience store, with the kidnapers entrenched in defensible locations, such as behind the counter or among the refrigerator units. Remember to make use of the rules for aiming, cover, concealment, going prone, shooting into close combat, and firearms and close combat (**The World of Darkness**, pp. 159-64). If the kidnapers run out of bullets, for example, or be somehow noticeably disadvantaged by the use of firearms, they will switch to hand-to-hand tactics. They will try to engage as many opponents as possible at any given time, though they won’t take the time out to finish off a fallen foe with a killing blow (**The World of Darkness**, pg. 168) unless no other target is available. Also, at no point will the men willingly fight to the death. If clearly defeated and the option for surrender is both available and apparently sincere, any one of the kidnapers will take it; getting away with it (by killing or otherwise disposing of the enemy) is preferable to surrender, but surrender is preferable to dying.

Consequences: If the characters have taken the proper steps, then Cole and Vick are out of the picture. Otherwise, they’ll probably head directly to D’Angelo to report on what’s happening. If the two men believe that these outsiders might be able to take the dangerous ringleader out, they’ll flee the scene, but won’t involve themselves further.

Cole and Vick know everything that MacGruder knows (see p. 23), as well as the fact that D’Angelo said he was bringing the prisoner to the gulag. (While D’Angelo did bring Christie to the gulag, he only kept her there very briefly, before Laura Pritchard’s ghost compelled him to relocate her to the farmhouse).

is entirely up to them. Remember that Cole and Vick aren’t particularly bright. They’ve got a bit of low cunning working for them, but they’re not very inventive when it comes to fighting. They’re used

The Gulag

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL •

Overview: The site where the kidnappers' victims are commonly stored while they await their final fate (and flippantly dubbed "the gulag" by Sheriff Ostler), this site is, in many ways, the heart of their operation. The characters pursue their leads to the place, only to find that they've not quite reached the end of the road. In their explorations they may have an encounter that swings the balance of this conflict.

Description: A subterranean concrete structure, the so-called "gulag" was originally built as a warehouse for various state public works projects and expanded for use as a fallout shelter during the early 1960s. From the outside, it's nothing more than a rusted heavy steel door attached to a box made of mortared cinderblocks about five feet wide, seven feet high, and ten feet long sitting along a seldom-used dirt road, near some disused railroad tracks.

Everything out here is overgrown. Weeds cling to the walls of the tiny building, obscuring it almost completely from sight. The road is nothing more than two grooves of dirt among the undergrowth. A rusty chain link fence surrounds the area, sporting a badly faded sign that declares: "NO TRESPASSING – POLICE TAKE NOTICE."

After the characters manage to overcome the heavy padlock sealing the gulag, they are assaulted by the heavy scent of musty air. Stairs descend into shadow, with a battery-powered light dangling from a hook mounted in the ceiling, just at the top of the stairs. Rusty patches of water stain spread from hairline cracks in the walls, and the sound of dripping echoes faintly in the distance.

The small battery-powered lantern overhead does nothing to dispel the sour sensation here: sour air, sour feelings, sour memories. The condensation leaks slowly down the walls, as though the water itself is struggling to sink its grip in deeply enough to tear the place up by the roots. The distant dripping is omnipresent, and other, stranger sounds lurk just on the edge of perception. You half-expect to hear sobs of despair or cries for help, but instead there is only the dripping and that unpleasant feeling of desperation. The barking of dogs echoes up from the depths of the place.

Within, the structure looks rather unexceptional: concrete and light steel doors, covered in flaking and rusty dark green paint. Two of the four doors are open, leading to smallish rooms full of junk. There's no evidence of any of the kidnappers staying here for any appreciable length of time. The place has no amenities of any sort, they typically only come by to entertain themselves at the prisoners' expense and to perform basic upkeep, like bringing food and water to the dogs and their victims, and cleaning the place up a bit.

After reaching the bottom of the staircase, two doors are visible about eight feet down the dark gray corridor, one on each wall. Another few feet beyond that and the corridor turns 90 degrees to the right, vanishing into darkness. An overhead light, identical to the one at the top of the stairs, hangs from a hook drilled into the ceiling about halfway down the hall.

The barking of D'Angelo's pit bulls is omnipresent. The animals snarl and snap from the far side of the locked metal door at the very end of the corridor.

The barking and snarling of dogs is clearly audible on the other side of the metal door, one of two within this complex to actually be padlocked. The animals scabble at the door, their claws making a faintly metallic scraping. Occasionally one of the dogs will lunge into the door, clanging it loudly within its frame.

After the dogs are dealt with, the characters are free to open the door leading to the chamber in which prisoners are normally kept, across from the guard dog room. Christie, however, is not there.

The room in which you expected to find Christie is, unfortunately, empty. In one corner sits a massive concrete block, easily several hundred pounds in weight. Emerging from narrow grooves in the bottom of the block are four thick, stainless steel chains, each of which is secured to a heavy adjustable manacle. The floor slopes downward slightly, toward the very center of the room, to a small drainage hole that seems to pass for a toilet. The concrete block the walls and floor bear scratch marks. Some are simple hatches, as though from the counting of days, while others are crude attempts to convey messages to those who, presumably, would come after.

Storyteller Goals: The most critical thing to illustrate here is that the gulag is a horrific place, somewhere hope goes to die. Before now, the characters might have heard of the kidnappers' exploits and taken stock of how terrible their work is, but this is the physical manifes-

tation of their inhumanity. Above all else, drive home that reality. Pleas for mercy are etched into the stone, as are dying confessions, the frantic inscriptions of those driven insane by relentless abuse, and messages that will never be read by the loved ones to whom they are addressed. Half of a human tooth lays next to a small, rust-colored stain on one edge of the concrete block. Stains of blood, sweat, and more are ground into the rough, cold floor, where helpless victims were repeatedly violated, and the outlines of writhing bodies and scuff-marks in the shapes of hands and knees are half-visible.

Character Goals: The characters' primary goal in coming here is, unfortunately, unachievable: Christie Reese isn't here to save. However, they can still make some meaningful discoveries in the gulag and learn more about their enemies. Perhaps just as importantly, they will leave knowing more about why the monsters behind these acts have to be brought to justice. In order to get to where Christie is supposed to be, however, the characters will have to bypass D'Angelo's dogs, which will almost certainly involve killing them.

If the characters didn't engage Cole and Vick at the rest stop, then the two of them may be present here if you wish to make this scene more dangerous for the characters. Depending upon how events have unfolded up to this point, the two kidnapers may be perfectly aware that their operation is being targeted or they could be taken by surprise. If you choose to involve Cole and Vick in this scene, the pacing of the characters' explorations of the gulag will change somewhat, but everything that would normally be there is still present.

The characters may also (knowingly or otherwise) break into the room containing Laura Pritchard's remains. By doing so, they gain the ability to interact with her, which could significantly sway the outcome of the story.

Actions: In terms of their direct mission to rescue Christie, the characters don't have too many choices as to what to do at the gulag. They can look into its open rooms (there's not much to find: a card table and a couple of old lawn chairs, an empty Styrofoam cooler, a few sports magazines, and other useless junk), deal with the guard dogs, and investigate the chamber where prisoners are usually kept. If you like, you can have the characters make one or two Wits + Survival rolls to locate the gulag in the first place, since it's a bit tricky to find, even with directions.

The characters may also pursue the lead of Laura Pritchard's corpse, to see if there's any particular reason why D'Angelo has enshrined the body in this place. In doing so, they have the potential to learn far more about the situation and gain an advantage in the confrontation to come.



Getting into the Gulag

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny + equipment (to pick the lock on the door) or Strength + Stamina + equipment (to either break the door down or snap the lock)

Action: Instant (the quality of the padlock levees a -2 penalty on a character's Dexterity + Larceny roll) or extended (against a metal security door; see pg. 135-6 of **The World of Darkness**)

The characters can pick the padlock securing the rusty metal security door, they can batter down the door, or they can break the lock. Any option works just fine, since no one is actually in the facility at the moment and there's no one for miles to hear any commotion.

Obstacles: The character is using substandard tools (-1), the door is frozen shut (-2)

Assets: The character has the same sort of padlock for securing her own things (+1), the character goes all-out to batter down the door, with no concern for the commotion (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character either breaks whatever she was using to pick the lock or hurts herself by beating on the door, suffering a point of bashing damage.



Failure: The character either simply fails to pick the lock or else makes no appreciable progress in damaging the door or its lock.

Success: The character either successfully picks the lock or exceeds the door's Durability and makes progress in beating it down.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect.

Consequences: After bypassing the door, the characters are able to descend into the gulag itself. Depending on the method that they used, they might also have a heavy, high-quality padlock which could, theoretically, come in handy.

Investigating the Gulag

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + equipment

Action: Extended (8 successes)

The gulag is a small underground complex, consisting mostly of a single, long, bending corridor and three smallish cubical rooms. At the far end of the corridor is a room with another room behind it. All of the rooms are sealed up with light steel doors, able to be fitted with padlocks, though only the two doors on the chambers at the end are actually secured. The entire place is wet and moldy, lit only by hanging battery-powered lanterns like the one up at the top of the stairs. A simple system of vents (now mostly choked with dirt and rotting vegetation) allows a little fresh air to filter down from above. Regardless of how much noise the characters make coming in, they will alert the two large pit bulls in the first of the two connected rooms at the very end of the corridor. Use the dog template from **The World of Darkness**, pg. 203 for the pit bulls, who are roaming freely in the small room. The animals have been effectively conditioned by Laura Pritchard's repeated use of her Animal Control Numen, so that they have become savage killing machines, able to be calmed only by D'Angelo's presence. Due to Laura's ghostly manipulations, these animals have two bonus dice to resist all attempts to sway them with Animal Ken.

Obstacles: The characters are distracted by the barking of the dogs (-1), an overhead light is out (-2)

Assets: The characters somehow manage to calm the dogs down (+1), a flashlight (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character completely misses any possible clues in the place and doesn't find Christie's message, making it considerably harder to find her before it's too late.

Failure: The character rolls no successes and makes no progress toward further investigating the site.

Success: The character accrues one or more successes and makes some progress toward successfully investigating the gulag.

Exceptional Success: No further reward.

Consequences: The characters are able to assess the area fully and discover Christie's directions, allowing them to confront D'Angelo at the farmhouse.

A sampling of some of the things scratched onto the concrete in the actual prison room:

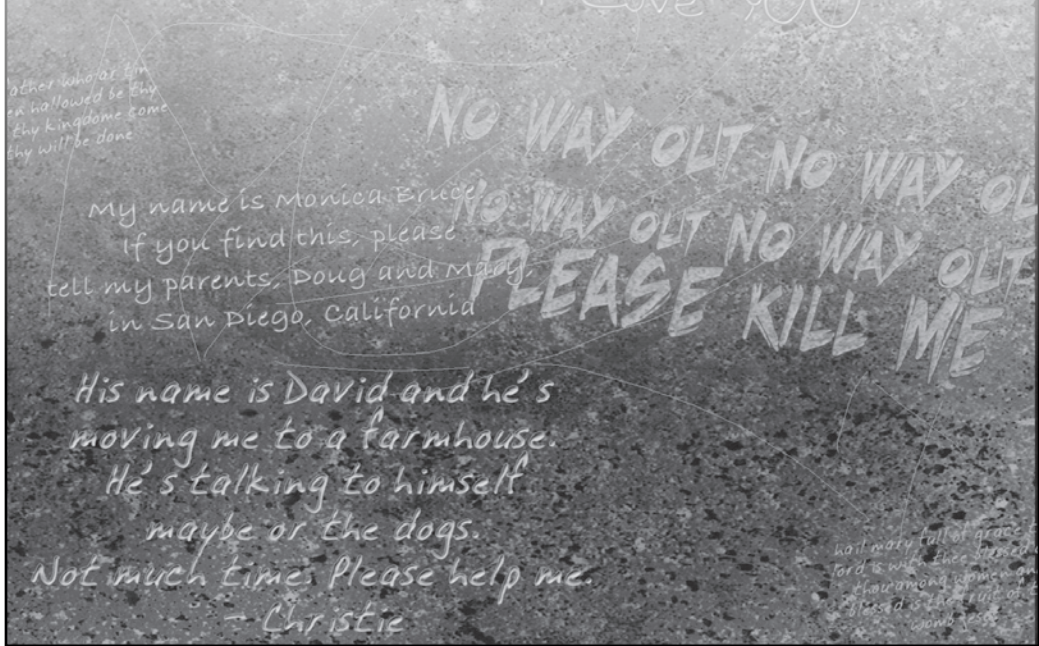
"MOM I'M SO SORRY I LOVE YOU"

"My name is Monica Bruce. If you find this, please tell my parents, Doug and Mary, in San Diego, California."

"No way out no way out no way out no way out please kill me"

A few prayers mar the concrete, as well as some unintelligible marks, crude (and indeterminate) images, and one other thing, scratched in a calm, even hand:

"His name is David and he's moving me to a farmhouse. He's talking to himself maybe or the dogs. Not much time. Please help me. -Christie"



Confronting the Dead

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL •••

Overview: The restless shade of Laura Pritchard is now inextricably bound to David D'Angelo – her murderer and her obsession. Through a confrontation with the dead woman, however, the characters may be able to damage her tie to D'Angelo, or perhaps even turn her against him. Particularly knowledgeable and resourceful characters may be able to banish her from this world entirely.

An important note: If the characters go the conversation route, Laura's ghost won't be too talkative, unless the characters manage to really engage her with their words; remember that the use of Numina costs Essence, and the shades of the restless dead do what they can to conserve that vital resource. Still, ghosts tend to think with their emotions, rather than their heads, so it's certainly possible for the characters to get the spirit talking – whether peacefully or in anger – and give themselves a strong advantage in the fight to come, even if they don't end up winning over Laura's ghost.

Description: Laura Pritchard's desiccated remains are stored in the other locked room in the gulag. They're essentially enshrined, with her leathery, emaciated form curled into a fetal ball. The room itself is small and unexceptional.

Unlit candles surround a human corpse, as well as "tokens" from what are, presumably, various other victims: a torn-off fingernail, a vial of dried blood, several clippings of hair, a few necklaces hanging from a metal hook in the wall. Rambling passages of text – tens or even hundreds of thousands of words, in all – are written on the walls and floor. Some are penned in what appears to be paint marker, while others seem to be lightly etched into the concrete. All look as though they've been written in the same hand, and they alternately refer to "David" and "Laura" in the first or third person; sometimes changing back and forth repeatedly within a single passage.

You have not yet taken all of this in when a disembodied female voice hisses at you in a husky rasp, "Leave me alone. Get out."

Storyteller Goals: First and foremost, you want to scare the living hell out of the characters. This is a ghost that they're dealing with, something dead and yet conscious, with its own goals and desires. This is something that reaches out of the shadows of the unseen side of the world to set its unnatural touch upon the living. Even if the characters have had some prior experience



with the restless dead, such encounters should terrify them, because they're violations of the natural order. Perhaps Laura whispers softly in a character's ear, murmuring threats in the tone that one might use to address a lover, or maybe an injured character winces as the ugly bruising on his torso manifests crude reddish-purple characters spelling out the word, "LEAVE." Another character might see Laura's ghastly visage emerge from the shadows just behind another, her movements disjointed and almost reptilian.

If the characters don't explore the entirety of the gulag and you still want to give the players the opportunity to explore this scene, you can always have D'Angelo set the scene for the confrontation. After attempting to contact one or more of his compatriots while at the gulag and failing to get through, he follows a hunch – unwittingly encouraged by Laura's ghost – and breaks her corpse up into pieces (each of which

still serves her adequately as a single Anchor), hiding the pieces away in locations that he believes might be visited by the enemies that he senses are now pursuing him. Alternately, if one or more of the other kidnappers contacts D'Angelo directly to warn him, he can also set up this situation. If you choose to use either of these alternatives, however, be aware that the characters no longer have the option of destroying Laura's corpse, unless they somehow track down and pulverize *all* of it.

Character Goals: Either damage the one-way relationship between Laura Pritchard's ghost and David D'Angelo, or somehow weaken or destroy Laura's spirit.

Actions: Getting into the room requires the same sorts of rolls that got the characters into the gulag in the first place (see p. 26). Beyond that, this encounter will almost certainly involve a few dice rolls of every type as the characters try different approaches to get the best possible results. Of course, those with more experience with the supernatural may actually have a solid game plan when they go into this scene.

Destroying Laura's Remains

Dice Pool: Strength + Weaponry + equipment (attempting to completely pulverize Laura's corpse with hands or a firearm is pretty much an exercise in futility; a blunt weapon of some sort is required)

Action: Extended (special; see below)

Laura's brittle flesh and dry bones can be broken relatively easily, but the destruction of a ghost's Anchor requires more than the mere breaking of the object that ties it to this world. Laura's remains must be reduced to nothing more than ashes, miniscule scraps of leathery flesh, and perhaps a few tiny bone shards. While the Durability of Laura's body would normally be quite low, for the purposes of its utter decimation, the corpse is treated as having a Durability of 3. Any attack made on the body must exceed three points of damage just to have a meaningful effect upon its integrity as an Anchor for Laura's spirit. With the body's Size of 5, a total of eight health points of damage must be done to the remains before they are pulverized beyond the point of sustaining the ghost's connection to the realm of the living.

Obstacles: Character is distracted (-1 to -3, depending upon the intensity of the distraction)

Assets: Laura's ghost is otherwise occupied (+1 to +3, depending upon how pressing the distraction is)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Instead of damaging Laura's corpse, the character somehow breaks whatever implement he was using to attack the body.

Failure: The character does not accrue sufficient successes to overcome the corpse's effective Durability and no damage is done to it.

Success: The character accrues at least as many successes as are needed to overcome the body's Durability and manages to inflict some damage upon it.

Exceptional Success: No further effect.

Consequences: With the destruction of her dead body, Laura's ghost immediately vanishes from the location where it was stored (as she no longer possesses an Anchor in that area). Further, the spirit's overall strength is temporarily sapped by the metaphysical trauma that she has sustained: her Attributes all drop by one (which also drops her Defense and Corpus by one, and her Willpower, Initiative, Speed, and Numina dice pools by *two*.) This will make the spirit a less potent asset in the fight against David, and may result in her being unable to take actions (through her Animal Control Numen, and her Compulsion and Possession abilities with respect to David D'Angelo) to adequately prepare for that confrontation. As an additional note, this action also makes of Laura's ghost an utterly implacable foe toward the characters; they have shown their willingness to extinguish her from the Earth, and now she's more than happy to repay the favor.

Abjuring Laura's Ghost

Dice Pool: Special (see below)

Action: Contested (special; see below)

To abjure Laura's ghost (see **The World of Darkness**, pp. 213-4 for a full explanation of the process), a character must pit her Resolve + Composure (with bonuses and/or penalties based upon certain of her other traits) against the spirit's Power + Resistance. Whichever party scores the most successes wins the contest.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is spiritually exhausted, losing a point of Willpower from the struggle, and she cannot attempt another abjuration for at least a full day.

Failure: The character either fails to accrue any successes or else accrues fewer successes than Laura's spirit, and the ghost may remain in her presence if it so chooses.



Success: The character accrues more successes than the ghost of Laura Pritchard and the spirit is forced to flee her presence. The ghost may not manifest in the character's presence for at least a day.

Dramatic Success: The character accrues both the most successes and at least five successes. As "Success," above, but the ghost may not manifest *anywhere* for at least a full day.

Consequences: Win or lose, the characters will have made an enemy of Laura Pritchard's ghost with this action. If they succeed, however, they will have decidedly altered the odds for the inevitable encounter with D'Angelo. If they fail, then Laura's unquiet shade will almost certainly flee to D'Angelo, both to defend him and herself.

Reasoning with the Spirit

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy or Persuasion or Subterfuge (depending on the characters' approach) + equipment

Action: Extended (and possibly contested)

If the characters are careful as to how they approach the ghost, then they might find her willing to listen. After all, if they don't seem to want to hurt D'Angelo (or, depending upon her mood, seem to want to hurt him just enough, and in just the right ways), then she has no reason to cut the conversation short. Under such a circumstance, reasoning with Laura's spirit is an extended action, requiring successes equal to her Willpower.

If, on the other hand, the characters attempt to drive a wedge between the ghost and D'Angelo, or their intention is clearly to kill David and thus permanently end his horrific crimes, she will not want to listen to reason. In this case, the roll becomes both extended and contested, with Laura's ghost rolling Willpower in an attempt to block out any appeal counter to its current wishes. Rational entreaties are of essentially no use in this, as ghosts are motivated far more by passion than by reason. Instead, appeals to the shade's other desires may come in handy, as will a willingness to hear her out and empathize (or at least *appear* to empathize) with her plight.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character completely botches the attempt to win the good favor of Laura's ghost, which flees the scene immediately. Depending upon the specific nature of the discussion to that point, the spirit may start using its Numina to prepare D'Angelo for a coming confrontation.

Failure: In the case of a normal extended roll, the character accrues no successes and makes no headway with the spirit. (Remember that each failure levees a cumulative -1 penalty to future rolls, which may

eventually lead to a dramatic failure). In the case of a contested extended roll, the character scores no successes to add to his total.

Success: The character scores one or more successes and moves closer to establishing a bond of trust with Laura's ghost.

Exceptional Success: Not only does the character accrue a number of successes in the attempt to make a connection to the spirit, but he also gains a +1 modifier to his next attempt to sway the ghost by means of conversation.

Consequences: This is the option with perhaps the greatest possibility for a wide variety of outcomes. Depending upon how well the characters do, they will convince Laura's ghost to take some manner of stance in the showdown between D'Angelo and themselves; ranging from sitting it out (if they've managed to confuse the ghost to the point of not knowing what it wants), to lashing out at D'Angelo (if they've driven home the horror of what was done to Laura in a way that incites her Wrath), to doing all she can to kill them (if they *really* screwed things up). It's anybody's guess, and it all comes down to the rolls and the roleplay.

If the characters can convince the ghost to talk and are able to trick her or actually befriend her, she knows pretty much everything that can be known about the story and its back story.



GETTING TO THE FARMHOUSE

Odds are strong that the characters have thus far focused on the gulag. Everything they've learned has pointed them in that direction and you might now have to deal with the fact that they never stopped to get directions to the farmhouse. Fortunately, six characters in **The Harvesters** can point to the site to which D'Angelo has taken Christie Reese: Cole, Vick, and MacGruder all know where it is (Cole and Vick have a rather more recent memory of the directions, however), as does Sheriff Ostler. Also, Fredrick Walker knows of a wide swath of overgrown land on the far end of town, where several old farmhouses, almost of them now long since abandoned, are to be found. Lastly, the ghost of Laura Pritchard can set the characters on the right path.

Some of these characters have better and more helpful input on the situation, but all of them can get the characters on the right track.



Showdown with D'Angelo

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL •••

SOCIAL ••

Overview: This is the battle with the devil himself, so to speak. David D'Angelo finally makes his presence felt, goaded by his own monstrousness and the ghostly counsel of his victim into a violent confrontation.

Description: Driven by both the ghost's compulsions and his own insanity, D'Angelo has returned to the abandoned farmhouse where he killed Laura Pritchard.

Everything here is dead: grass, trees, even the house itself, which is rotting and collapsing inward, as though it's being slowly devoured by its own foundation. The wind is still and the sounds of nature are absent. The only scent is a vague whiff of dry dirt. Nothing stirs in this place that feels somehow entirely forgotten by the world.

Storyteller Goals: D'Angelo wants to kill everyone who stands in the way of the unadulterated thrill of violation and murder. He'll happily slaughter even those who work for him, if he thinks they've turned against him. David has no morals and no values of any sort, and he'll act accordingly.

Any surviving kidnappers who are still loyal to D'Angelo – or, at least, too terrified of him to try to make a getaway – may be present, though they'll fight only until it becomes apparent that victory is unattainable, whereupon they'll try to surrender, flee, or otherwise do whatever is necessary to save their own skins.

Character Goals: The characters have to stop D'Angelo, by whatever means necessary. This will almost certainly require his death, as he has no intention of changing his ways and really doesn't care about his own life any more than he does anyone else's.

The characters will also find Christie Reese, bound and gagged in the root cellar of the farmhouse, chained to one of the few remaining sturdy support beams. Her clothes have been taken from her and she is secured in the exact same spot in which D'Angelo kept Laura Pritchard. (In fact, she is bound with the exact same knots that he used on his first victim; a combination of D'Angelo's now-dim memories of those weeks and Laura's increasingly unsubtle influence upon him). Depending upon how long the characters took to find her and the needs of your story, Christie may be completely unharmed (though shaken), or D'Angelo

may have already begun to subject her to his vicious attentions.

Actions: Anything goes in this confrontation. Obviously, the easiest thing for characters to do is to attack D'Angelo directly, but that may not be the wisest course of action; he is a dangerous psychotic with absolutely nothing to lose, and he fights like one. If the ghost of Laura Pritchard is still with D'Angelo and on his side, other measures may be called for.

If, by some miracle, the characters begin to get through to D'Angelo through incredible social rolls over the course of this conflict and Laura's restless spirit is still able to manifest, then she'll possess D'Angelo one last time and force him into an action that will directly cause his death; indulging her self-annihilating longing/hatred for David in a frenzy that will culminate with her banishment from the mortal plane.

Should D'Angelo somehow survive the encounter (for example, if the characters choose to knock him out rather than killing him), they've got a serious question of what to do. Executing him in cold blood when he's a helpless prisoner probably won't sit well with many characters, despite the knowledge of who D'Angelo is and what he does. Unfortunately, the characters – who've been necessarily engaged in one manner of illegality or another since the start of the story – likely can't just turn him over to the authorities without inspiring far too many questions. If David should survive – almost certainly incapacitated in some way – and any of his former compatriots are around and able to do so, one of *them* is liable to murder him, but you may want to consider forcing the characters to make the decision of D'Angelo's final fate, so as to make them confront their own morality.



Aftermath

While the final scene of **The Harvesters** brings the scenario's events to a close, this story can easily have more far-reaching consequences in the wider scope of your chronicle, especially if you're using it as a starting point for an ongoing journey.

- **Christie Reese:** If she's survived the story, Christie might be a future resource for the characters, and might even be willing to come along with them as a Retainer, if they're willing to offer her something better than a life as a two-bit broker and fence on the outskirts of the occult community. If she's been abused, mutilated, or otherwise harmed by David, she might need to be cared for and the characters may choose to take on that role.

- **The Object:** Whatever it is that the characters needed will be retrieved from its hiding place and given to them either by Christie or, if she's been killed or otherwise rendered unable to do so, by one of her associates. Word about what went down will move through the area's shadier element and this associate will be aware that the characters stuck out their necks for Christie when they could've tried to walk away.

- **D'Angelo's Outfit:** The kidnapers may not all have been killed by the time the dust settles. Depending on the characters' actions, they might leave enemies behind, especially Sheriff Ostler, who will almost certainly hold a grudge, provided that he survives and isn't prison-bound). If the characters are *extremely* persuasive and morally flexible, then they might get some future mileage out of either Adam Chen or Garrett MacGruder.

- **The Restless Shade:** The ghost of Laura Pritchard might "survive" the events of **The Harvesters**, though she's unlikely to be of further trouble, unless the characters for some reason bring along her mortal remains (or maybe D'Angelo's, if you decide that such still constitutes an Anchor) with them. If the character are big on follow-up and possess the know-how, then maybe they'll decide not to move on until they've confirmed that Laura's shade leaves this world; hunting down her remaining Anchor and forcibly exorcising her.

On the other hand, maybe they've earned the enmity of a *new* ghost, one with a powerful tie to them and an all-consuming desire to see them suffer and die: David D'Angelo.

- **The Clients:** D'Angelo's gang was selling people to *somebody*, maybe even more than one somebody. The characters may choose to pursue these vile people or else have such a choice thrust upon them. Depending upon the needs of your chronicle, this might drag them into further conflict with the supernatural (maybe vampires in a distant city are

buying feeding stock, for example, or cultists located somewhere out in the wilderness are sacrificing them to otherworldly masters), but it might also just bring them face-to-face with perfectly mundane, human evil.

- **Other Possibilities:** If you *are* interested in expanding upon the events of **The Harvesters**, then you might want to drop some other interesting tidbits into its conclusion. Maybe D'Angelo took a strange book instead of money in payment for one of his "transactions," or a decorative urn that turns out to be a bit more than it seems. The end of this scenario makes for a convenient time to introduce some unusual element into the chronicle that helps to build the story that you want to tell next.

Experience

Playing through the events of **The Harvesters** should take between one and three chapters. At the end of each session, award a single experience point to each player for taking part in the scenario. Also, on pg. 216 of **The World of Darkness**, you'll find guidelines for further experience awards that you might want to give out.

At the conclusion of the story, you may want to give the players further experience for any or all of the following reasons:

- +1 **Success:** If the characters manage to break up the kidnapping ring (with or without lethal force), save Christie Reese, and maybe bring some kind of resolution to Laura Pritchard's story, then they've certainly done enough legwork to earn the players an extra experience point.

- +1 **Danger:** Being a normal person in the World of Darkness can be perilous enough on its own. Still, heroism is in short supply among the cynical and the apathetic, and the characters should have the opportunity to rise above the pervasive "not my problem" attitude embodied in most of the people around them.

If the characters went above and beyond to throw themselves in the path of danger for the sake of doing the right thing, however, then they've probably earned this additional point.

- +1 **Growth:** A big part of the point of storytelling is watching characters grow and evolve through their exposure to the events that unfold around them. If the characters don't change in some way through their explorations of the World of Darkness, then they're missing out on the chance to expand their knowledge and abilities.

Ask each player what her character learned. If meaningful growth, whether for good or for ill, is apparent in the answers that you receive, then you can award one last experience point for the characters' efforts.

SCENE: Meeting the Fence

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None applicable. This scene, along with the next one, sets up the action.

HELP

As with "Hindrances," this scene is simply a vehicle for plot.

STs Establish the character of Christie Reese and the characters' reliance on her.

PCs Set up the deal with Christie.

SCENE: The Message

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

None applicable. Deciphering Christie's text is requisite to advancing the plot.

HELP

Again, this scene exists to draw the characters into the main story of the scenario.

STs Give Christie's message to the characters.

PCs Receive the message and determine a course of action.

SCENE: Christie's Car

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Breaking into the car: Cold weather (-1), working under stress (-2)

Investigating the car: Character is mildly distracted (-1), character isn't wearing her glasses (-2)

HELP

Breaking into the car: A good flashlight (+1), a spray can of metal lubricant (+2)

Investigating the car: The full moon is out (+1), the character's own car is similarly messy (+2)

STs Put some resources in the characters' hands.

PCs Same as the Storyteller goals.

SCENE: The Face Man

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

None applicable.

HELP

None applicable.

STs Give the characters their first glimpse of D'Angelo's operation, as well as a resource for now and later.

PCs Get a lead on Christie's whereabouts and what kind of opposition to expect.

SCENE: The Handyman

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None applicable.

HELP

None applicable.

STs

Give the characters some more information, an ally, some resources, and, if necessary, a base of operations.

PCs

Learn about the immediate environment and a little bit about the opposition, and gather some resources.

SCENE: A Chat with the Sheriff

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None applicable.

HELP

None applicable.

STs

Attempt to intimidate the characters and give them the opportunity to make a meaningful early strike against the kidnapers.

PCs

Begin to move against Christie's kidnapers.

SCENE: MacGruder's Dilemma

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Characters act in an accusatory manner toward MacGruder (-1), characters threaten MacGruder (-2)

HELP

Character shows genuine compassion to MacGruder (+1), character offers MacGruder a reasonable "out" (+2)

STs

Offer the characters a choice as to how to attack the kidnapers' strength.

PCs

Remove one of D'Angelo's resources from the conflict and possibly gain some information.

SCENE: The Rest Stop

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None applicable.

HELP

None applicable.

STs

Treat the characters with aggression inversely proportional to the amount of violence the characters seem willing and able to employ.

PCs

Remove more of D'Angelo's resources from the conflict and possibly gain some information.

SCENE: The Gulag

MENTAL ●●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

Breaking into the gulag:
The character is using substandard tools (-1), the door is frozen shut (-2)

Investigating the gulag:
The characters are distracted by the barking of the dogs (-1), an overhead light is out (-2)

HELP

Breaking into the gulag:
The character has the same sort of padlock for securing her own things (+1), the character goes all-out to batter down the door, with no concern for the commotion (+2)

Investigating the gulag:
The characters somehow manage to calm the dogs down (+1), a flashlight (+2)

STs

Illustrate the horrific nature of the kidnapers' operation.

PCs

Learn where Christie has been relocated.

SCENE: Confronting the Dead

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL ●●●

HINDRANCES

Destroying Laura's remains:
Character is distracted (-1 to -3, depending upon the intensity of the distraction)

HELP

Destroying Laura's remains:
Laura's ghost is otherwise occupied (+1 to +3, depending upon how pressing the distraction is)

STs

Insert supernatural horror into the scenario.

PCs

Deprive D'Angelo of his most potent resource.

SCENE: Showdown with D'Angelo

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

None applicable.

HELP

None applicable.

STs

Draw the conflict to a close.

PCs

Stop D'Angelo and any remaining kidnapers, and find Christie.

SCENE:

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

HELP

STs

PCs

THE HARVESTERS

Name: Christie Reese Virtue: Prudence Faction:
Concept: Aloof Fence Vice: Greed Group Name:

Shady Deal ●●●●●●0000

Hardass ●●●●●●0000

0000000000

0000000000

Notes

THE HARVESTERS

Name: Frederick Walker Virtue:
Concept: Wary Handyman Vice:
Faction:
Group Name:

Maintenance ●●●●●●0000

Reading People ●●●●●●0000

0000000000

0000000000

Notes

THE HARVESTERS

Name: Adam Chen Virtue: Prudence Faction:
Concept: Suave Malefactor Vice: Lust Group Name:

Intelligence ●●●●●	Strength ●●●●●	Presence ●●●●●
Wits ●●●●●	Dexterity ●●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●●
Resolve ●●●●●	Stamina ●●●●●	Composure ●●●●●

Skills

Academics ●●●●●

Computer ●●●●●

Crafts

(Household Repairs) ●●●●●

Medicine ●●●●●

Science ●●●●●

Athletics ●●●●●

Drive ●●●●●

Larceny ●●●●●

Stealth ●●●●●

Empathy

(Personalities) ●●●●●

Persuasion (Seduction) ●●●●●

Socialize (Carousing) ●●●●●

Streetwise ●●●●●

Merits

Barfly ●●●●●

Contacts

(Bars, Black Market) ●●●●●

Language (Cantonese) ●●●●●

Resources ●●●●●

Striking Looks ●●●●●

00000

00000

00000

00000

00000

Health

●●●●●●●●●●●●

□□□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●●●●●●●●

□□□□□□□□□□

Traits

Subterfuge (Con Jobs) ●●●●●

00000

00000

00000

00000

00000

Morality 4

Size 5

Speed 9

Defense 2

Initiative Mod 4

Armor _____

Notes

Derangements: Avoidance (Morality 6), Depression (Morality 4)

Weapon	Dice Pool	Damage
Fist	1	2(B)

THE HARVESTERS

Name: Louis Ostler Virtue: Justice Faction:
 Concept: Corrupt Lawman Vice: Gluttony Group Name:

Intelligence ●●●●●	Strength ●●●●●	Presence ●●●●●
Wits ●●●●●	Dexterity ●●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●●
Resolve ●●●●●	Stamina ●●●●●	Composure ●●●●●

Skills	Merits	Health
Academics ●●●●●	Allies (City Hall) ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●●●
Computer ●●●●●	Allies (Local Business) ●●●●●	□□□□□□□□□□
Investigation (Counter Forensics) ●●●●●	Contacts (Criminal) ●●●●●	Willpower
Medicine ●●●●●	Resources ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Politics ●●●●●	Status (Local Law Enforcement) ●●●●●	□□□□□□□□
Brawl ●●●●●		
Drive ●●●●●		
Firearms (Pistols) ●●●●●		
Larceny ●●●●●		
Survival ●●●●●	Traits	Morality <u>2</u>
Intimidation (Thinly-veiled Threats) ●●●●●		Size <u>5</u>
Persuasion ●●●●●		Speed <u>11</u>
Streetwise ●●●●●		Defense <u>2</u>
		Initiative Mod <u>5</u>
		Armor <u>1/2</u> bulletproof (Kevlar vest)

Notes

Derangements: Inferiority Complex (Morality 5), Suspicion (Morality 3)

Weapon	Dice Pool	Damage
Fist	6	4(B)
Handgun	9	3(L)
Nightstick	5	2(B)

THE HARVESTERS

Name: David D'angelo Virtue: Fortitude Faction:
 Concept: Haunted Sociopath Vice: Greed Group Name:

Intelligence ●●●●●	Strength ●●●●●	Presence ●●●●●
Wits ●●●●●	Dexterity ●●●●●	Manipulation ●●●●●
Resolve ●●●●●	Stamina ●●●●●	Composure ●●●●●

Skills	Merits	Health
Computer ●●●●●	Contacts (Black Market) ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●●●
Crafts ●●●●●	Fast Reflexes ●●●●●	□□□□□□□□□□
Investigation ●●●●●	Fighting Style (Boxing) ●●●●●	Willpower
Medicine ●●●●●	Resources ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●
Occult ●●●●●		□□□□□□□□
Athletics ●●●●●		
Brawl (Boxing) ●●●●●		
Drive ●●●●●		
Firearms ●●●●●		
Larceny ●●●●●		
Stealth ●●●●●	Traits	Morality <u>0</u>
Survival ●●●●●	Intimidation (Torture) ●●●●●	Size <u>5</u>
Weaponry ●●●●●	Persuasion ●●●●●	Speed <u>11</u>
Empathy (Reading Emotions) ●●●●●	Streetwise ●●●●●	Defense <u>3</u>
	Subterfuge (Lying) ●●●●●	Initiative Mod <u>8</u>
		Armor <u>1/2</u> bulletproof (Kevlar vest)

Notes

Derangements: Fixation (Morality 5), Suspicion (Morality 3), Fugue (Morality 2), Narcissism (Morality 0)

Weapon	Dice Pool	Damage
Fist	7	3(B)
Handgun	8	3(L)
Knife	6	1(L)

