

Presence

A Delta Green Scenario by Shane Ivey

A lethal cord of cause and appalling effect connects the Vermont hills and a haunted woman a thousand miles away. Can your Delta Green agents save her?

Published by Arc Dream Publishing in arrangement with the Delta Green Partnership. The intellectual property known as Delta Green is ™ and © the Delta Green Partnership, which has licensed its use here. The contents of this scenario are © 2021 Shane Ivey, excepting those elements that are components of the Delta Green intellectual property. Special thanks for playtesting and advice: Jake Cook, Jason Fritz, Kevin Ham, Max Nestorowich, and Charles Ulveling, and Rachel K. Ivey. This is a work of fiction. Updated 18 NOV 2021.

Introduction

Sidney Valdez, 13, is slowly dying of the same cancer that killed her father. Her mother, Karen Valdez, spent years seeking cures from traditional sources and then the strangest of esoterica. At last, in the colonial ruins and wildest hills of Vermont, she found possibilities in magic.

Rituals invoking a spirit called the Daughter of Darkness promised healing but only postponed Sidney's death. Sidney began to change into something strange, a spiderlike chimera with a stinger to let her mind infest the brain of another. The greater the psychic capacity of the victim, the longer the infestation. Karen sought victims of greater and greater potential.

Karen fears Sidney will change into something entirely other than her daughter. She has become desperate and increasingly careless.

Days ago, Karen found a potential whose body and mind her daughter might inhabit forever. Last night she drugged and abducted the victim, college student Robyn Bullock. She left Bullock's phone and ID behind, as with other victims. But she overlooked a hybrid smartwatch that Bullock wore, seeing its physical hands move and thinking it a simple, mechanical watch. Later, the horror and pain of Sidney's sting awakened Robyn's power and she vanished, following trails of intent and cause from the Valdez home to the Vermont hill where Karen first met the Daughter of Night. Bullock's disappearance and sudden appearance far from home attracted the attention of Delta Green.

Karen Valdez did not know how her latest victim disappeared, but it was clear that this was a young woman with the power to save her daughter's life. The Agents aren't the only ones looking for Robyn Bullock.

The Call

NSA programs intercept and process text messages, network roaming alerts, and missed-call alerts across the U.S. Intelligence analysts with Delta Green—the Program—use algorithms to sift those vast troves of data for hints of unnatural danger. One hint came through last night.

A smartwatch in Alabama received a text message at 2:07 a.m. Eastern time. The same watch received a network roaming alert at 3:03 a.m. Eastern time, just over an hour later. It was then in south Vermont. The analyst who caught the case investigated the smartwatch and its owner, a 19-year-old Black college student from Alabama named Robyn Bullock, and flagged her name and details for possible investigation.

At 8:36 a.m., a golfer at Stratton Mountain Gold Course called 911 to report that a woman had wandered onto the course and looked distraught. A local police officer responded. He found her uncommunicative. The officer took her to the emergency room at Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital in Townshend, a drive of about 30 minutes. He checked her in at 9:51 a.m.

At the hospital, a nurse checking Bullock heard the smartwatch ping with a new text message. That was the first she realized it was more than an old-fashioned wristwatch. She experimented with possible fingerprint and facial recognition cues until the watch recognized Bullock and unlocked. The nurse found contact information for Bullock's sister, Emily, and called to discuss Robyn's situation.

By that time the Program's analyst had sent the data to a senior intelligence officer, who sent it to Operations for further investigation, who assigned it to a New England case officer, who called in the Agents.

Just after 10:00 a.m. Eastern time, each Agent gets a priority message in whatever code or euphemisms the Handler likes. The upshot is to drop everything and go immediately to Customs and Border Patrol office F at Bradley International Airport, north of Hartford, Connecticut.

Agents based in New England or New York are likely to reach Bradley in 1D4+1 hours. Agents coming from farther out might take 2D4+2 hours instead.

Briefing

The first Agent to arrive meets Hannah Gruner, a Program case officer: white female in a charcoal business suit, average height and weight, dark brown hair with gray roots cut short, age 53, a retired CIA operations officer (not that she says so to the Agents),

excellent with tradecraft but middling at drumming up resources. She generally is good at keeping her PTSD and heavy opioid use away from her Agents' eyes. The Department of Homeland Security reserved Office F for her use for 36 hours.

Gruner proceeds with the briefing with only the first Agent. This might be a rare chance to stop some unnatural incursion before it kills anyone. The case officer sends the first Agent to arrive directly to Townshend. Summarize the details from the first few paragraphs of this section as her briefing.

Gruner has no cover investigation the Agents can use as a pretext for their actions. If they can invent some federal crime worth pursuing and can sell it to the local U.S. Attorney's office, all the better. Until then, they go in as civilians and keep their heads down.

She meets the next Agents at Bradley and instructs them to wait there for the rest of the team. They are to travel together to Townshend and follow the first agent's lead.

Townshend

Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend, Vermont is a drive of a little less than two hours from Bradley International Airport. Interstate 91 crosses Massachusetts into Brattleboro, then Vermont Highway 30 runs northwest along the West River and through the occasional covered bridge to Townshend. Vermont hills rise left and right over highway and river, thick with summer trees and shadows. Black Mountain, once called Dark Mountain and now a protected area, overlooks the highway and river south of Townshend. There are hiking trails but pets are not allowed.

Townshend, population 1,291, covers about a kilometer at the crossroads of Highway 30 and Highway 35: shops, houses, a couple of small schools, and Grace Cottage Hospital.

Timeline

- 02:07 Robyn Bullock's cell service logs her watch receiving a text in Alabama.
- 03:03 Robyn Bullock's cell service logs a network roaming alert for her watch in Vermont.
- 03:21 A Program algorithm flags the conflicting locations of Bullock's watch.
- 04:09 A Program intelligence analyst flags Bullock's details in case of further events.
- 08:36 A golfer in Stratton, Vermont calls 911 about a young woman in distress.
- 08:49 Patrolman Jason Revett of the Winhall Police Department responds to the 911 call, calls in Robyn Bullock's information from her driver's license, and takes her to the hospital.

08:56	A Program algorithm alerts an analyst to Bullock's new information.
09:07	The Program's Intelligence directorate refers the Bullock case to Operations.
09:40	The Program's Operations directorate assigns the Bullock case to a New England-based case officer using the alias Hannah Gruner.
09:51	Revett checks Bullock into Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital in Townshend, Vermont.
10:05	Gruner alerts the Agents to a priority briefing at Bradley International Airport, Connecticut.
10:10	Staff at Grace Cottage check Bullock, give her a bed with IV fluids, and let her sleep.
11:33	A Grace Cottage nurse notices Bullock's smartwatch receiving a message. She uses Bullock's fingers to unlock it and finds contact details for Bullock's sister, Emily Bullock, in Alabama. Emily plans to take the next flight to reach Townshend.
13:00	The earliest a New England-based Agent is likely to meet Gruner at Bradley.
15:00	The earliest an Agent is likely to arrive at Grace Cottage Hospital.
16:19	Bullock wakes but remains incoherent. Doctors suspect lingering effects of hallucinogens.
18:00	The latest a New England-based Agent is likely to arrive at Grace Cottage.
20:33	Emily Bullock arrives from Alabama to meet her sister, Robyn.
21:30	The likeliest arrival time at Townshend of Agents based outside New England.

Grace Cottage Hospital

A small, rural hospital, Grace Cottage has a staff of about 40 including about a half-dozen physicians. About a quarter of those are working when the Agents arrive, including the doctor who runs the emergency department: Embla Haugen, a Norwegian dual citizen, age 55.

Bullock wore a lightweight sundress but was dazed and disheveled from a long night stumbling through woods and steep hills. The officers who brought her in said she had walked out of a thick, deep forest in the steep hills just northwest of Stratton Mountain Resort. Those woods are mostly used by loggers. They are too close to the ski resort and golf course to be favored by hunters.

If the Agents talk to Doctor Haugen, she says teens and college kids like to find new spots in the hills to gather and party. Occasionally they overdo it and someone gets lost for a day or two.

The Hospital's Findings

Hospital exam found no serious harm. No sign of sexual assault. Mild effects from dehydration and exposure. Abrasions consistent with spending hours in the woods without dressing for it. Pupil response and elevated heart rate suggested lingering effects of drugs. They took a blood draw for testing, checked her in for observation, gave her IV fluids, and let her sleep. The blood tested positive for benzodiazapine, probably midazolam (best known as Versed), a powerful sedative that typically lasts a few hours and prevents formation of new memories.

No one at the hospital gives that information to the Agents unless the Agents produce a search warrant. Without a search warrant, a player who spins a compelling story could bullshit it out of a nurse with a **Law** or **Persuade** roll, depending on their approach.

Bullock's Condition

When the first Agent arrives that afternoon, Bullock is awake but still in shock, still upset. Haugen thinks she is still under the influence of drugs taken late last night, even though it's not common for such marked effects to linger so long.

When Bullock was unresponsive, Haugen had a hospital clerk use Bullock's identification to find family or friends by social media. They eventually reached her older sister, Emily, age 22.

Emily is flying up on behalf of the family today to take care of Robyn. She's expected to land at Bradley at 5:36 p.m. and to reach Townshend about 8:00 p.m. The Agent in Townshend has that window to deal with Robyn and the hospital staff without the complication of a caring, responsible sister.

Examining Robyn

An Agent who examines Bullock with a **Medicine** roll or **Medicine** skill at 50% or higher finds something the earlier exam missed. She has a lumbar puncture mark and bruising consistent with a spinal tap to draw a sample of cerebrospinal fluid. The bruising is unusually deep, suggesting a haphazard job with the puncture. The Agent knows cerebrospinal fluid is produced by the choroid plexus and absorbed into one of the membranes that protect the human brain: the arachnoid mater, the "mother in the image of a spider." Robyn has no other injuries except abrasions from hours stumbling through thick overgrowth and mountain.

Examining Bullock that thoroughly can only be done outside the hospital without hospital staff interfering and potentially calling police.

Interviewing Robyn

Robyn Bullock still suffers from her contact with Sidney Valdez and, though her, the Daughter of Darkness. She is filled with terrors that she cannot face. In the right circumstances, those fears are contagious. They are exacerbated by the close interest of law-enforcement officers of any kind.

She recoils from eye contact and from touch other than the purely professional contact of a doctor's exam. She is terrified of closeness, emotional or physical.

She is just as terrified of talking about two issues: what really happened to bring her from Alabama to Vermont and her very real psychic powers. This is not the first time Bullock has done an inexplicable "walkout."

Interviewed, Bullock says she does not remember the night before. Confronted with the fact that she's in Vermont and not Alabama, she says she flew up a few days ago to meet some friends. An Agent with **HUMINT** at 30% or higher or who makes a roll at +20% can see through that lie. So can anyone who bothers to check her social media accounts. Last night at 10:32 p.m. Central Time (11:32 p.m. Eastern), she posted a selfie from The Hunt, a Birmingham nightclub where she was dancing with friends.

Confronted with the lie, she becomes agitated. She says she wants to leave. She whimpers for help. At first she's too quiet for hospital staff to hear. If the Agent refuses to leave her alone, she grows louder and more distressed. It takes a **Psychotherapy** or **Persuade** roll to calm her before a nurse or doctor orders the Agent to leave.

Digging Deeper

Succeeding at that **Psychotherapy** or **Persuade** roll allows the Agent to question her more fully about one of the two things that she does not want to discuss: either the event that brought her to Vermont, or times in the past that she has vanished from one place and suddenly been somewhere else.

Last Night

An Agent who rolls successfully can coax Bullock to remember meeting a woman at the club last night. Her memories are vague and muddled. She was at the Hunt, an LGBT club with a diverse clientele and a fun reputation. Robyn and her friends often go there. She started talking to the woman. She remembers absolutely nothing about the woman's appearance, only impressions. She seemed nice. Interesting. Artsy. Kind of sad. That was from just before her memory stops altogether. It doesn't pick up again until the morning. In between is a blank shaky space like a nightmare you're glad to forget.

Walking Out

Has she vanished before and found herself elsewhere? The Agent with a successful roll could get her to admit that she has. She calls the episodes “walkouts.” She doesn’t like talking about them because people think she’s either crazy or lying. The two that happened before weren’t as dramatic as suddenly being a thousand miles away.

One time she was high on mushrooms and meditating on a blue apatite crystal to instill clarity, perception, and memory for upcoming finals. They say apatite can unlock energy and creativity, and maybe that’s what it did. Two days later, she was struggling in a hopeless chemistry test, desperate to be done with it and gone, and then she was in her car. She didn’t black out. The time on her phone showed it was only a couple of minutes after she last looked at the wall clock. After she calmed down, she had to run back and talk the teacher into letting her finish the test.

It happened a few months later at a party. Her friends later said she must have been on the acid that one of them brought but she wasn’t even drinking. Just dancing. Getting blissed. Then she was gone. Up on the roof, all alone, like a freak. At least no one could hear her scream. She went home to calm down.

She looked around on some threads and groups online to see if anyone else had that kind of thing happen, or anything that weird. There were a few stories but they sounded like bullshit. She knew how it felt, and she was too scared to just brag about it like people were pretending to do.

But neither time was as weird as this. Neither time left her blacked out for hours. Or stuck with this horrible feeling she can’t describe.

In the Black

Unfortunately, succeeding at that **Psychotherapy** or **Persuade** roll to get Bullock to open up has its own risks. After Bullock has spoken for a while, the Agent catches her eye and is lost in a deep liquid blackness. What happens next depends on the Agent’s stats and skills.

- An Agent with **POW** 14 or higher, or with **HUMINT**, **Occult**, **Psychotherapy**, or any **Art** skill at 70% or higher, or **Unnatural** at 10% or higher, loses 1/1D6 **SAN** from the unnatural. If more than one Agent is present, only one has this experience. The Agent experiences intense visions of cannibalism, transformation, a kind of physical communion with some unseen presence that creates, extends, and destroys life, especially Bullock’s life and the Agent’s. Temporary insanity awakens a psychic power in the Agent. See **AWAKENINGS** on page XX.
- Any other Agent loses time in her stare. It could be minutes or hours that go by in a drifting blackness like sleep. The Agent loses 0/1 **SAN** from the unnatural. Succeeding at the SAN roll means vague but sure discomfort. Failing it means

coming around in a panic as if waking from an extreme nightmare. The details are forgotten.

The Agent comes around after only a few seconds have actually passed and Bullock is screaming, shrieking, clinging to the hospital bed as if to keep from being pulled away. Hospital staff rush to sedate her and order the Agent out.

Interviewing Bullock in other circumstances goes about the same. The Agents could wait and meet her after she checks out of the hospital, or even wait until she flies home to Alabama. Her sister is with her by then, of course, and is livid if the Agents evoke that terrifying a reaction. She quickly complains to the Agents' bosses, whoever she thinks those are, threatens lawsuits, and demands that they leave Robyn alone.

Awakenings

In the throes of temporary insanity, the Agent's new power activates without needing an Activation Roll. The Agent now has that ability like having learned a new ritual. After its first appearance, using it requires an **Activation Roll**.

What power emerges depends on what skill or stat awakened it in the Agent. **POW**: either Levitation or Teleportation. **HUMINT** or **Psychotherapy**: either Intrusion or Assault. **Art**: either Divination or Pyrokinesis. See **PSYCHIC RITUALS** on page XX for details.

The Sister

Emily Bullock, age 22, has always looked out for Robyn and their younger sister, Autumn. She has not told their parents, on the verge of divorce and already under tremendous stress, about the day's strangeness.

Emily is suspicious of strangers and police, but she answers questions if the Agents convince her that it's in her sister's best interest. She fights fiercely if she thinks the Agents are mistreating her sister.

Emily knows about Robyn's past vanishings, at least what Robyn told her. She can fill in details the Agents might not have gotten from her sister. She doesn't think Robyn's lying. Or crazy. But it's too weird to be the truth. She worries that Robyn has been taking drugs too heavily and too often, but Robyn hasn't had any recent changes in behavior. Emily doesn't know what to think.

Emily and Robyn texted back and forth the night before Robyn's vanishing and reappearance. Emily worried when Robyn stopped replying. The last messages Robyn sent said she and friends were at The Hunt and it was a slow night. She had been talking to a "kinda hippy woman" there, maybe their mother's age. She sent a picture of the club with its small crowd. The photo did not show the strange woman. And that was it.

What mostly worried Emily was that a few women in some of Robyn's "weird occult" circles had reported disturbing events recently. Three of them over two months turned up in different parts of town after having been drugged, their memories blank for hours before. They were all otherwise unmolested and unhurt but it was scary. Emily doesn't know any of their names but she points the Agents to a social media group where they gather. See **ROBYN ONLINE** on page XX for details.

Emily can also describe their family, detailed in **THE BULLOCKS** on page XX. None of them knows about Robyn's walkouts. Only Emily.

Officer Revett

Winhall, population 769, is the nearest municipality to Stratton and provides police service to the community and resort. Patrolman Jason Revett, age 46, found Robyn Bullock. He doesn't have anything to add to what the Agents could have learned at the hospital. But he can fill in blanks if they forgot to ask something there.

And there is more that he does not want to say. An Agent can tell with a **HUMINT** roll. He opens up slightly about it if an Agent empathizes with him as a current or former fellow law enforcement officer: You see some strange things on the job. Revett says Bullock was talking crazy for a few minutes. Weird names. Foreign. Creepy.

Revett wears a body camera with his uniform. A sympathetic Agent could get him to show footage of his encounter with Bullock by making a **CHAx5** or **Persuade** test. Otherwise, getting the footage requires Law or Bureaucracy and a compelling pretext to badger the department into showing it.

In the body-cam recording of Revett's encounter with Bullock, he asks what she's doing out in the woods. She briefly seems to half-awaken from her heedless staring and speaks in a way that seems stilted and wholly out of character:

"The Favored Ones raised me up. We glowed like souls in the red sunlight. We saw the goddess in the sea, black and feeding. Giving life and taking it back. She reached out. Arachnoid mater. All her arms reaching like tentacles or branches, or seaweed a mile long. Reaching and hungry. She tastes us."

An Agent with **Unnatural** skill can attempt a roll. With failure they feel a shiver of terror at that name, costing 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness. With success they know that countless weird and disturbing myth-cycles describe Great Old Ones lurking in the sea. Some hint at Old Ones or a single Old One of particularly terrible scope as the source of life itself. The associations that come with those remembrances cost 0/1D4 **SAN** from helplessness. A critical success further raises suspicion of Shub-Niggurath, called the Black Goat of the Woods with a thousand young, beloved of the Million Favored Ones who reigned on Earth long epochs before humanity. That costs 1/1D6 **SAN** instead. Temporary insanity leaves the Agent raving and clawing at their own flesh: *"Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Mother lives within us all!"*

The video flickers and then goes blank as if the camera had been turned off. It resumes with a timestamp of 10:03 A.M. when Revett realized it was off and turned it back on. He genuinely does not know why it switched off.

Robyn Bullock has no memory whatsoever of what she said in the recording.

Indian Rocks

Asking locals why Robyn Bullock might have been in the hills or Googling what teenagers do for fun around Stratton in the summer gets the Agents the same answer. There's a hangout deep in the woods near the Stratton golf course called Indian Rocks, overlooking a pond. Cops and doctors assumed she had been with kids there, got a little too high, and wandered out.

Looking further into Indian Rocks finds fan sites and threads on social media with photos of spiraling circles of huge stones on a hilltop deep in the woods. Grafitti covers the stones, sprayed aggressively, almost defiantly.

Some threads say the place is spooky. A few say it's haunted by old ghosts or by vampires. Some say it's home to pukwudgies: little gray-skinned goblins with magical powers, michievous or murderous depending on which stories you hear.

Looking around Indian Rocks, the Agents find litter from a party a week ago. By day, the summer sun glitters off the glass of an empty tequila bottle.

For the purpose of their experience at Indian Rocks, there are three kinds of Agents.

- **MUNDANE:** An Agent with **POW** 13 or lower, with **HUMINT**, **Occult**, **Psychotherapy**, and **Art** skills all lower than 70%, and with **Unnatural** lower than 10%.
- **EXPOSED:** An Agent with **POW** 14 or higher, or with **HUMINT**, **Occult**, **Psychotherapy**, or any **Art** skill at 70% or higher, or **Unnatural** at 10% or higher.
- **AWAKENED:** An Agent who experienced an awakening of psychic power while interviewing Robyn Bullock. See **AWAKENINGS** on page XX for details.

An *awakened* Agent, or any *exposed* Agent who makes an **Alertness** roll, or any Agent who deliberately sits and meditates here, feels almost imperceptible hints of awfulness after a few minutes at Indian Rocks. It's a little like trying to recall some terrible but long-forgotten memory.

Another Time

An *exposed* or *awakened* Agent who deliberately meditates, or any who makes an **Alertness** test at night, feels and sees much more. There is a sense of exposure, of

absolute and uncontrollable vulnerability, like lying naked on dead rocks beneath a blazing sun.

The Agent looks around and sees the forested hill as a tiny island in the sunset, one of hundreds in endless warm waters all around. Unfamiliar oysters sift acidic seawater for tiny, hardy shrimp. Spiky, fernlike seaweed sways. The sun glares through air thick with carbon dioxide and methane. An Agent with a **Science** skill such as biology or paleontology recognizes signs of the late Paleozoic, perhaps during the Permian-Triassic Extinction.

Distant shapes in the sky flit and pulse in colors of every hue, glowing like impossibly enormous fireflies. They gather most thickly around and above and within a mountainous living Shape that lurks in the waters like a vast twisting spider or the grasping, hungry tendrils of a sea anemone. The seaweed too seems to sway toward that Shape, disregarding the currents of the sea. The Agent feels a pulse of life-force like a vast heartbeat emanating from the Shape and the life-force of everything else pulsing in response, energy feeding energy, the energy trapped for a time in the complex systems of body and flesh pushing to return to its source. This costs 1/1D8 **SAN** from the unnatural.

An Agent who succeeds at an **Unnatural** roll during the vision instinctively recognizes in the Shape the power that myth calls Shub-Niggurath from forgotten tongues, the cosmic source of all life on Earth, perhaps all life in the universe. The Agent feels a desperate need to commune with it in a joining to make every holy rite of human faiths a pale blasphemy. The vision ending costs another 1/1D10 **SAN**. That adds Unnatural skill points equal to the SAN loss.

The swirling, twisting paths of those flying colors linger in sight like afterimages for a moment after the vision. That costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural and again adds 1 point of Unnatural skill for each point of SAN lost. An Agent failing the SAN roll can see those living, lighted things flying still, serving their great mother still, changing only by their own will and design as the hundreds of millions of years go by.

Then all that is gone and only the Indian Rocks remain, littered with rubbish and garish paint, laid by inhuman pincers and tendrils and sacred millions of years before humans thought to violate them.

Aftermath

After the vision, an *awakened* or *exposed* Agent feels, can almost see and touch a line of connection stretching from Indian Rocks away to the southwest, far beyond the horizon, not to Robyn Bullock but to whoever or whatever tried to claim her.

If no Agent feels the full effects of those visions, then the one Agent closest to having the necessary skill or POW feels the imminence, the emanance of an unthinkable presence trying to break through the boundaries of their consciousness and flower in

impossible awareness and strength. That presence moves toward them along threads of intent, or perhaps the intentions of every living thing move toward that presence, energy flowing toward energy like gravity pulling the mass of matter to itself. This realization costs 1D6/1D20 **SAN** from the unnatural and adds one point of Unnatural skill for each Sanity Point lost. That Agent can feel such a thread beneath them, around them, through them, drawing them south as if toward the place and cause of Robyn Bullock's vanishing.

If They Miss Indian Rocks

If the Agents fail to visit Indian Rocks, adapt its visions to their investigation. An awakened Agent might see it all in a nightmare. Others might hear it from Robyn Bullock's entranced speech when they convince her to look deeper for the truth of her disappearance. The details might even remain opaque until the end, until the Agents come to the home of Robyn's assailant. Watch for moments when revelation feels right.

Birmingham

Burlington, Vermont to Birmingham, Alabama: \$400 to \$600 for a flight of five to seven hours, morning to afternoon or afternoon to night.

When Robyn Bullock returns to Alabama, she stays with her parents for three nights. When it's clear that things have calmed down, she returns to her apartment and tries to resume her normal life and put the shock and fear of her disappearance behind her.

The Agents have a few avenues to investigate the cause of Bullock's vanishing.

The Bullocks

Robyn Bullock's family and closest friends could be sources of details that the Agents did not get from Robyn or Emily.

- Robyn's supposed "walk-out" episodes (see **WALKING OUT** on page XX).
- The Bham Bell & Shadow community (see **ROBYN ONLINE** on page XX).
- Other recent apparent abductions (see **ABDUCTIONS** on page XX).

The Bullocks live in Homewood, a Birmingham suburb just south of downtown. Their home for the past 10 years, when Raymond Bullock made the transition from construction foreman to contractor, has been in a lovely neighborhood with plenty of leafy trees, clean and winding streets, and well-kept homes in a charming variety of styles. The Bullocks, a Black family, are a startling rarity. Their old neighborhood, also in Homewood but a few blocks north, is among the poorest in the city and is

overwhelmingly Black. The family has learned to navigate the suspicions and resentments of their white neighbors, straining efforts at hospitality, their occasional calls to police describing Raymond as a burglar or home invader, with wary goodwill and deep patience.

Raymond Bullock, age 50, oversees commercial construction projects around the city. His wife Victoria Bullock, 51, owns two nail salons in town. Their oldest daughter, Emily Bullock, 22, recently graduated with a political science degree from Birmingham Southern College and is to start law school at the University of Alabama in the fall. Robyn Bullock is their middle daughter, age 19, a sophomore at Birmingham Southern. Their youngest, Autumn Bullock, age 16, attends Homewood High School.

The family has had no significant legal or financial troubles. They do not want attention or controversy. If the Agents approach as federal law enforcement, they cooperate courteously and with a lawyer in the room for every second of every interview. The parents encourage Robyn to share whatever she can to help track down her abductor. If the Agents approach them as private citizens, the Bullocks refuse every request and quickly threaten to file restraining orders to keep them away.

Robyn Online

Robyn frequents a social-media community called “Bham Bell & Shadow.” It connects people who are interested in the benign occultism of New Age, astrological, and modern Wiccan movements. Its active members are mostly local to the Birmingham area and about 80% female. It is a private group and requires the aggressive moderators to approve new members as safe.

Robyn used the group to carefully sound out her “walking out” experiences. A great number of members claimed to have had supernatural experiences or encounters during meditations and rituals. It was very difficult to tell which might be genuine. She soon abandoned that goal.

The Agents can search the community by getting a new login, which probably requires an **Occult** or **Persuade** roll depending on the biographical info they give in the application, or by using Robyn’s credentials if they steal them or convince her to help.

In the last few weeks, the most active community discussions have been about a series of apparent abductions of its members. Robyn Bullock is the fourth. Some are frustrated that the police have not gotten more involved. Others say they should stay far away from police agencies for the risk of being further preyed upon.

An Agent who spends a few hours searching the community finds:

- The names of the victims, which can lead to finding their contact information. See **PRIOR VICTIMS** on page XX.
- The victims are all still alive and part of the Bham Bell & Candle community.

- Before their abductions, the victims all had active social lives and open social media presences. Now all are more withdrawn.
- Before their abductions, all often claimed paranormal sensitivity without explicitly confirming or proving it. Afterward, none have made that claim.
- Each described feeling on the night of the abduction a fun desire to just start driving. That took them southeast into nearby towns. None used mapping software to find a way anywhere in particular. None went anywhere they were familiar with. With each, her memory stops while coming into a town and do not resume until the next morning, wandering the streets.
- Each left her car locked with her phone, driver's license, other identifying documents, and credit cards and money inside. None had anything stolen.

Prior Victims

Having identified the three victims prior to Robyn Bullock, the Agents can track down their phone numbers and addresses with a couple of hours of work online.

All three recovered more quickly than Robyn Bullock. They turned out not to have the psychic gifts that would suit them to Karen Valdez's plan and she released them more quickly. She had to give Robyn Bullock a second dose of midazolam to quiet her, and even so Bullock's power manifested in her panic when Sidney's invasion began.

Melissa Naylor

A medical transcriptionist for an insurance company. White female, age 28. Divorced with a young son. Abducted 28 days before Bullock.

Naylor is at first reluctant to talk to anyone about her experience, but the Agents can convince her with only a little effort. She repeats the things they may have learned from scouring the Bham Bell & Shadow group online.

If asked whether she experienced anything strange or talked to anyone strange before the abduction, she says Naylor says that's a strange thing. Her friends later said she did but she remembers nothing of it.

Naylor's friends said she had a conversation at the bar of the French Grits restaurant with a woman. None of them knew her but Naylor seemed to. They were at another table and didn't meet the woman or learn her name. They said the woman was a white lady in her late 40s, maybe 50 years old.

According to her friends, Naylor went to the bathroom, the woman left, and Naylor rejoined her friends. One of her friends was laughing because he saw the woman steal the glass Naylor had been drinking from. She just put it in her big purse and walked out. The friends said Naylor said she knew the woman from a New Age shop that she

likes called Bell & Shadow, and the woman had cancer or something, so they should be nice. The friends said Naylor started acting loopy and high, so they took her home to sleep it off.

A couple of nights later, Naylor got the urge to start driving. She drove southeast on Highway 280, which is usually the last way you'd want to drive just for fun because it's so busy for the first few miles. But she wasn't thinking much about it, just driving and singing and having fun. After an hour or so she passed the sign marking the Sylacauga city limits. That's where her memory stops until the next day.

Police helped her find her car. It was at a motel. They opened it for her so she could get her keys and phone and ID from inside.

Over the next few weeks, Naylor had disturbing dreams of a dying girl. They have a link, like sisters but deeper, like how twins are supposed to have a deep, unspoken connection. But the girl turns out to be a vampire. She drinks Naylor's blood and life away. The girl is so sad, so sorry about it, but she can't stop. Naylor knows she could fight it, could break the connection, if only she were stronger. She begs the girl to stop. The girl starts to listen, and Naylor can feel her sorrow, but it's too late. Naylor dies and awakens. (If the Agents fail to ask Naylor about it, they might hear a version of the same dream from Eileen Brown or Robyn Bullock.)

Eileen Brown

A junior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. White female, age 19. Single, no children. Abducted 17 days before Bullock.

Brown is still frightened and traumatized by her abduction and loss of memory. She asks her mother to join her when she speaks to the Agents.

Like Melissa Naylor, Eileen Brown does not remember the night she met Karen Valdez. She pieced it together later. She told her mother that she was going to Henry's Books 'n' Beans, a coffee shop and bookstore, to study. A few hours later, she came home with no memory of where she had gone.

When her urge to drive came, she drove all the way to Alexander City, over an hour and a half from Birmingham. She lost memory there and came around the next day.

At the hospital where she got checked out after her lost night, a particularly thorough emergency room intern noted a lower back mark like from a spinal tap, which was scary because Brown has never had one. But she didn't develop any new symptoms so she has tried not to think about it.

Danielle Smith

Homemaker and part-time psychic medium doing business as Dani's Divination. White female, age 23. Married, no children. Abducted nine days before Bullock.

Smith lives with a pushy boyfriend, air conditioner repairman Mark Horton, in a trailer in a semi-rural area just outside Birmingham. Horton dislikes police of all kinds and is deeply suspicious of anyone else trying to question his girlfriend. Especially after that night she was “abducted.” Agents can hear the sarcastic way he says it, “abducted.” He suspects Smith made the whole thing up because she was sleeping with someone else. And the week before that, somebody broke into the trailer, ransacked it, and stole their stash of money. Nearly \$2,300.

Smith did not encounter a strange woman in person. But she says a woman named Darla Williams phoned a few times trying to arrange a private reading. At first Smith wasn't taking new readings for a while because she had lost the sublease on the little strip-mall room where she did the work. She said she had a sick little girl and needed to know what was going to happen. She started crying and got angry at being told no. When the woman kept calling, Smith got impatient and frustrated and kept refusing. After a few days, the calls stopped.

When her urge to drive came, she drove to a tiny town called Ashland, an hour and a half away. She'd never been there before and it's not easy to find, but she just felt like exploring. Almost like something was calling her there. Her memories stop when she was nearing the town. Deputies found her car at the town's one, tiny motel.

A Suspect

If the Agents search for Darla Williams on Bham Bell & Shadow they immediately find her profile. An Agent with **HUMINT** 30% or higher or who makes a roll at +20% can tell it's a shallow profile and possibly fake. The listed names of family lead nowhere and the listed friends have no friends in common with each other. No women legally named Darla Williams match. But it's at least a genuine photo of someone, not one stolen from some other website.

Showing that photo to Naylor, Brown, Smith, or Robyn Bullock fills them with sudden terror, but they do not know why and do not recognize the woman.

Henry's Books 'n' Beans

If the Agents go to Henry's and show a photo of Eileen Brown, the barista recognizes Brown as a regular and remembers working a night Brown came in and acted strangely. She was doing homework on her laptop and started talking to a woman sitting at a little table nearby, a woman the barista doesn't know. She remembers the woman had ordered a latté earlier and gave the name Darla. A middle-aged white woman. Brown and Darla talked for a while. Darla joined Brown at her table. The conversation didn't stand out until at one point Darla started crying. It didn't last long. Brown comforted her. Pretty soon they stood up, Brown gave Darla a comforting hug, and Darla left. Brown returned to studying. She fell asleep for a while, then she got more coffee and eventually she left.

If asked specifically whether the woman took something Brown had been drinking or eating from, the barista suddenly remembers something. When she busied the tables that Brown and Darla had used, she found only one coffee mug, not two. She doesn't remember which was missing.

Henry's Books 'n' Beans has security cameras inside and outside and keeps footage for 90 days. The front-door camera has clear footage of the woman the barista remembers as Darla coming in and later leaving.

What's more, the front-door camera shows the left edge of the license plate of her car. The first numerals are "17." An Agent who looks up Alabama license plate codes learns that indicates a car registered in Clay County, Alabama. The car is a navy blue SUV. An Agent who succeeds at a **Driving** roll or who spends a few hours comparing photos of SUV models recognizes the corner shape as a Kia Sorento.

French Grits

The restaurant French Grits has security cameras inside. The owner copies over recordings that are more than 31 days old. If the Agents ask within three days of Robyn Bullock's disappearance, the recording is still there from the night of Melissa Naylor's encounter with the strange woman. There is never a very good look at her. An Agent who makes a **HUMINT** roll suspects the woman is deliberately trying to not be clearly seen by the cameras. She matches what little description they have from Naylor.

Bell & Shadow

The online group Bham Bell & Shadow began as a forum for dedicated customers of Bell & Shadow, an occult shop that sells Wiccan and New Age books and paraphernalia and hosts meetings in an open chamber upstairs. The owner, 57-year-old hippy Reid Miles, is part true believer and part womanizer who quietly enjoys having a mostly female clientele.

Miles is suspicious of police or federal agents and cooperates with them only to the minimal extent that keeps him out of legal trouble. He is more open with Agents who come in without badges and without dressing or acting like investigators.

Shown a photo of Karen Valez, Miles identifies her by name. He points to a collection jar on the counter: "Help Sidney Fight Cancer!" A photo shows a smiling girl maybe 12 years old. Karen has not been around much in the last six months but she was a regular before that. Miles doesn't know her well but keeps the donations in a lockbox for her, just in case. Sidney is Karen's daughter. Miles doesn't know what kind of cancer she has.

If he likes the Agents, Miles adds that Karen is a believer. She knows that magic is real. Good magic, powerful magic. Not just tricking yourself into thinking you were talking to

God or some spirit. “She is really into it.” But Karen always said was not easy and didn’t always work. She said the hardest is trying to heal someone if they’re really sick.

Identification

An Agent who makes a **Bureaucracy** roll or has the skill at 50% or better can get help from a clerk at the Clay County Tag and Title Office. And an Agent with a job in law enforcement can get access to the camera network that read license plates in Birmingham and cross-reference results with a state database. That requires no roll.

There three blue Kia Sorentos registered in Clay County. The Agents can get names from the clerk and further details by looking online. The owners are David McNatt of Ashland, age 67, widower; Tammie Fugatt of Lineville, age 25, cosigned by her 60-year-old mother Shelly; and Karen Valdez of Goodwater, age 50, widow.

If one of the Agents is a federal agent, they can ask to run a photo of Karen Valdez through the recognition database at the FBI’s FACE Services Unit. That requires a **Bureaucracy** roll. If the roll fails, the result comes back in 1D4+1 days. If it succeeds, it comes back in 2D12 hours. The photo matches Karen Teresa Valdez of Goodwater, Alabama, age 50.

The Valdez Family

Karen Teresa Valdez lives at 1 Hatchett Trace, Goodwater, Alabama. With her name and address, Agents can find details about her family.

The Valdez family has owned a four-bedroom, two-story house at 1 Hatchett Trace for 13 years. Current occupants are Karen Valdez and her daughter, Sidney Carla Valdez, age 13. Past occupants were María Verónica Rivera Valdez, Karen’s mother-in-law, who died nine years ago at age 63; Antonio Angél Valdez, Karen’s husband, who died six years ago at age 42; and Silvie Marie Valdez, Karen’s second daughter, who died three years ago at age nine.

Karen Valdez was a pediatrician at Goodwater Health and Medicine for 15 years until two years ago. Asking staff at the clinic, the Agents could learn that she quit almost a year to the day after her daughter Sidney died. She had never been the same after the death, increasingly erratic.

Antonio Valdez, third-generation Mexican-American, was self-employed as a construction worker, plumber, and repairman with several professional certifications.

The house and Hatchett Trace itself do not appear on any maps, paper or digital, unless the Agents physically go to the Clay County Courthouse to look through deeds and elevation maps filed in the archives.

Searches for online information about the Valdezes turn up a *Clay Times-Journal* story from three years ago, “Goodwater teen fights cancer,” describing Silvia Valdez’s

sudden onset of pancreatic cancer, the same disease that had killed her father three years before. A desultory fundraising page is still online with photos from before Silvia's death.

If the Agents have access to NSA tools and succeed at utilizing them by making a **Bureaucracy, Law, or Computer Science** roll, they can get reports on the recent web search history at 1 Hatchett Trace: traditional medicine, cancer treatments, esoteric cancer treatments, weird and even disturbing occult healing rituals, and increasingly frequent searches on electrical wiring, booby traps, and creating explosive devices.

On the Hunt

From her home in Goodwater, Alabama, Karen Valdez watches the news and the Internet for signs of Robyn Bullock's return. Bullock keeps quieter than usual online, but when she innocuously hits "Like" on a friend's funny meme on social media, Karen sees it. Every other day or so, she drives by Robyn's apartment and then her parents' house and Robyn's sister Emily's place, watching for Robyn's car. Nobody notices unless the Agents specifically devote time to staking out any of those places for four days or more, looking for this kind of snooping. If they do, let a random Agent taking watch shifts roll **Alertness**, opposed by Valdez's Driving roll. If the Agent succeeds, they notice Valdez driving by, looking at Robyn Bullock's car, and realize this is at least the second time they've seen her.

Left to her own devices, Valdez moves against Robyn on the ninth day after Robyn's return. She waits until Robyn is home in the early evening. She knocks on Robyn's door and calls out, "Amazon delivery." She takes a step to the side so as not to be seen through the peep-hole. When Robyn opens the door, she steps in and demands silence from behind her aimed revolver. She closes the door. She drugs Robyn again. Then again every few hours. She waits til three in the morning to bring a folded wheelchair up from her SUV, bundle Robyn up into it in comfortable blankets, and bring her down again. She takes Robyn to her home and keeps her drugged unconscious until Sidney finishes the invasion infestation that will awaken her mind inside Robyn's. That will begin a struggle that slowly drives Robyn insane and eventually, perhaps after Sidney's original body has died, ends in Sidney's new self taking full control.

Closing In

With the name of their suspect and at least a rough idea where she lives, the Agents can track her down. First they need to learn where exactly to find 1 Hatchett Trace in Goodwater, Clay County, Alabama. Getting to Goodwater from Birmingham means a drive of about 90 minutes southeast on Alabama Highway 280, then ten minutes north on Alabama Highway 9.

Clay County

Clay County is rural with a handful of tiny towns. Population 14,236 in 5,670 households over 1,570 square km (604 square miles). About 82% white (non-Hispanic), 15% Black or African American, 2.9% Hispanic or Latino of any race, 1.7% from two or more races, less than 2% combined from all other races from U.S. Census forms. About a third of the population and more than a third of the Black population live in the two largest towns, Ashland and Lineville. Clay County is famous for being one of three Alabama counties to have no U.S. highways within its borders and for sending more people per capita to fight in the 1991 Gulf War than any county in the nation.

Like most of Alabama, Clay County is unofficially but deeply segregated. The 85 or so African American households have little to do with the more than 4,600 white households. Alabama racism is so ingrained as to be utterly invisible to most whites. Hints of accusation rouse them to defensive anger. African-American Agents face pejoratives like “Yankee” and “Democrat,” and “Fed” if the Agents look or act like government agents. Those vituperative slurs stand in for racial epithets that are out of fashion in mixed company and that some well-meaning grandmothers shush as “mean.” After 2016, old prejudices and resentments have a powerful new sense of public affirmation. Far worse racial slurs, always lurking behind warily hostile eyes, come out more quickly.

Most policing is handled by the Clay County Sheriff’s Office: a chief deputy, two patrol sergeants supervising six deputies, a lieutenant, an investigator, the elected sheriff, and two civilian office personnel. One deputy and both office workers are women. All sheriff’s office employees are white. Another eleven corrections officers and two administrators run the county jail in Ashland, four of them women and two Black.

Most Clay County police have exactly the same attitudes and prejudices as the rest of the population. If the Agents approach as FBI, the deputies cooperate warily. If the Agents seem to be private investigators, they question the Agents suspiciously and discourage them from bothering anyone. They warn the Agents that people in the country around here like to keep to themselves.

Deputies help the Agents find the Valdez house only if the Agents made a good impression on them. One deputy texts another who has been out there. See **ON HATCHETT HILL** on page XX for details. If the Agents did not make a good impression, a deputy says only that he thinks the Valdez house is in the Brownsville area. See **BROWNSVILLE** on page XX.

If the Agents made a good impression, deputies also warn that violently anti-government dominionism is common. The deputies know which houses are not safe to approach. The worst is named Jimmy Swope. “Didn’t he go over to that Valdez house a few times after Tony Valdez died? Did some construction work or something.”

The deputies are usually spread thin. It takes them 1D8x5 minutes to respond to a 911 call.

Jimmy's House

Despite warnings, the Agents may try to ask Jimmy Swope what he did for Karen Valdez. See **JIMMY SWOPE** on page XX for Swope's description and how that might go.

Brownsville

The Valdez mailing address says Goodwater, Alabama, although the city limits of Goodwater (population 1,261) are about 5 km south. The house stands in an unincorporated part of Clay County, Alabama, traditionally called Brownsville. Brownsville is not a town but a church surrounded by a few sparse farms carved out of the woods. It was built in the 19th century by settlers from Cape Fear. When the grist mills failed, so did the stores and school as people moved on. Now it's known mostly for Hatchett Creek Presbyterian Church and Brownsville Cemetery, historic landmarks.

Sparse forest or deep woods stretch over the horizon. The trees stand skeletal in winter and loom close and claustrophobic in summer. Some young stretches of forest are still growing after clear-cutting. Farms are spaced about every kilometer or so along two-lane roads. Unpaved roads and tracks lead off from the roads into the woods, many with signs warning that trespassers will be shot.

Finding Valdez

The Agents have a few ways to find the Valdez house. If they have the name, the easiest is to ask the delivery driver at the Goodwater post office. She can describe the route in detail if the Agents convince her they have a good reason to be asking. The Handler can be the judge of that. If they don't, she says she's not allowed and doesn't have time to keep talking.

The exact location of the house can be found in Clay County court records, in maps and descriptions attached to deeds from its sale 13 years ago. All were handled on paper and none were digitized or recorded online.

They can get clues from locals around Brownsville. Again, they need to give a convincing reason. People around there are suspicious of strangers. They are twice as suspicious of federal agents if the Agents flash badges. This is Trump country and "everybody knows" the FBI was in on the fraudulent Biden victory in 2020.

The Agents can get the first clue if they have a photo of Karen Valdez. After one or two stops, some local recognizes her. Or if they just say last name. Hispanics are rare enough around Brownsville that saying "Valdez" is enough to point Agents in the right direction:

“That’s ’at Mexican family, ain’t it? Boy used to build sheds and whatnot. Hard worker. Most of ’em are. Cain’t say that against em. Don’t know where his house is, though. Ole Jimmy Swope knows, up off Sargent Street, half a mile up Sargent from Bull Gap. I saw Jimmy at the Tractor Supply and he said he did some work up there a while back. I said good luck. Snaggin’ a widow might settle him down some. We laughed on that. Jimmy’s all right, just a little high-strung. You don’t go up on his property uninvited. Jimmy’s all right, but he’s even bigger on that castle doctrine than the rest of us.”

See **JIMMY SWOPE** on page XX for details on Swope and what happens if the Agents approach him without warning. A **CHAx5** or **Persuade** roll can get Swope’s phone number from the buddy who talked about him. The Agents can try a **Luck** roll once a day to see if Jimmy answers his phone. It’s a landline and it rings without going to voicemail. Given Swope’s personality, it may be unlikely that the Agents can secure his cooperation. He considers himself something of a guardian to Karen and Sidney Valdez after he helped Karen install lethal protections at her house. He could tell the Agents exactly where to find the Valdez house, but whether the Agents get anywhere is up to the Handler. He is just as likely to give them directions to a road that ends in a swamp or a notorious meth lab defended by a biker gang.

After the Agents have a run-in with Swope or abandon him as crazy, continuing to ask around eventually points them to Goodwater Presbyterian Church. Its groundskeeper also tends the grounds at Hatchett Creek Presbyterian Church and Brownsville Cemetery. The Hatchett Creek church has not been active since 2000, but former members and their descendants use it for reunions and special functions. Groundskeeper Joseph Carmichael, white male, age 65, has family all around the region. He points east of the church and cemetery:

“The Valdezes are on Hatchett Trace, there, up on Hatchett Hill. Off by itself a bit. Don’t want no visitors, I guess. Ain’t seen them or even heard about ’em in a while.”

On Hatchett Hill

To reach Hatchett Trace, the Agents drive a few minutes north of Goodwater on County Road 7, aka Brownsville Street, until they find Hatchett Creek Presbyterian Church on the right. Hatchett Trace is an unmarked dirt road leading east from the Presbyterian church up the gentle slope of Hatchett Hill. The Valdez house is about two km east of the church.

After a few minutes on Hatchett Trace the drive soon seems strange, though it takes an **Alertness** or **Driving** roll to recognize why. It feels like the car is driving too easily up the hill. The engine is not having to work at it. Switching the car to neutral, it coasts slowly uphill. Water poured on the ground rolls uphill.

Agents with at least 40% in **Occult** or **Science (Physics)** or who succeed at a roll of either skill say that it’s an optical illusion caused by a change in the very slight gradation of the hill, that they came over an unnoticed crest and are looking down at a

lower crest. If the Agents test that with levels or level apps in their phones, they find it is not an illusion. The hill pulls them up toward the house at its broad height. Realizing that costs 0/1 **SAN** from the unnatural, or 1/1D4 **SAN** for a character with **Occult** or **Science (Physics)** at 40% or higher.

Hatchett Hill does not have a reputation as a so-called gravity hill. This phenomenon began only recently, when Karen Valdez began to awaken her daughter's psychic connections. It could make the place famous with teens and ghost-hunters in the future.

The House of the Living and the Dead

The Valdez house has become the kind of place to spawn haunted-house stories for decades to come. The hilltop is overgrown with tall, thick, hollow stalks of burnweeds and kudzu lying over briars so thick it would take a backhoe or skid loader to clear them. The driveway winds through the growth around to the side of the house. It will take another couple of years of neglect for the foliage to fully engulf the walkways around the house and then the house itself.

Signs warn, "NO TRESPASSING" and "NO SOLICITORS."

No one responds to car horns, hails from outside, or knocking at windows or doors. Blackout curtains cover all windows.

Cameras are mounted on the house corners and nailed to a power pole to watch the driveway and all sides of the house.

Outside

Motion sensors mounted near each camera trigger floodlights when anything larger than a housecat comes within about 10 meters. When motion sensors trigger the floodlights, they also sound a beeping alarm inside the house. An Agent who makes an **Alertness** roll hears the beeping from outside. If Karen Valdez is home, she turns the beeping off after a minute or two.

There is one safe path inside from the driveway. That leads not to the front door but around to a side where sliding doors open more easily wide enough for a wheelchair to be pushed in. Careful inspection by an Agent who makes a **Search** roll notices that the other entries have seen no traffic in months, maybe years.

All approaches are planted with explosives buried in shallow divots in the nearby undergrowth, with tiny antennae exposed. An Agent who walks the perimeter slowly can attempt an **Alertness**, **Search**, or **Demolitions** test to spot one. Looking for others

is then at a +20% bonus. Valdez worked with Jimmy Swope, a particularly crazy anti-police neighbor, to help her set up this “self defense” system. See **JIMMY SWOPE** on page XX for his details.

If Agents trigger the floodlights and the alarm that beeps inside, Karen Valdez goes to monitors and watches through the cameras. If strangers start looking for ways in, she gives a warning through a speaker that crackles loud near the front door: “Go away! Go away! I won’t tell you again!”

And she doesn’t. She begins a final ritual to invoke the Daughter of Darkness, begging that horrid power to complete the transformation that will keep her daughter alive forever.

The buried bombs are wired to burner phones that she changes every couple of months. She has each on speed dial on another burner phone inside: “Front,” “Back,” “Natural Gas Tank,” “Septic Tank,” “Upper Driveway,” and so on. If an intruder is within about 10 meters of one of those sites, Karen hits its speed-dial button during her chanted ritual. The Agent can make a **Luck** roll. If that succeeds, the burner phone’s battery died or the bomb wasn’t wired quite right and nothing happens. If it fails, the bomb explodes with Lethality 15% and a Kill Radius of 10 m.

Inside

The house is dark from the blackout curtains and its air thick with a foul ammonia stench of old waste. The air is in fact choked with spores and tendrils that cannot be felt nor seen by naked senses. In the green light of night-vision devices, they blaze in strange hypnotic patterns of beauty and distressing, distracting allure. A bright near-ultraviolet light would reveal them, too. Seeing them costs 0/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural.

Old furniture and hoarders’ boxes lean and tower everywhere. There are no cameras mounted inside the house.

The front door opens to a living room. Beyond it is a dining room. To the right is the kitchen. Doors in the dining room and kitchen lead to a hall with stairs that lead up. Sliding doors from the kitchen open to the back porch.

The back porch, kitchen, and stairs are safe.

Living Room

An Agent who opens the front door finds the entry obstructed by a rusty old wheelchair. The wheels are rigged with fishing line to trigger a pull-device flashbang when someone moves it. Inspecting the wheelchair closely spots the lines. If an Agent moves the wheelchair, an **Alertness** roll hears a distinct “click,” buying the Agent a split-second to react. What do they do? If the answer is something like “dive for cover,”

they get a **Dodge** roll to lurch back outside and halve the duration of the flashbang's penalties. If the blast sends them staggering near a bomb outside, Valdez sets it off. If they stagger inside, they meet the fish hooks.

Throughout the living room, fish hooks hang at neck and face level. An Agent who enters without specifically taking a moment to look for trouble can roll **Alertness** to notice them. Failure gets a couple of hooks hung on flesh. That requires a **DEXx5** test to instinctively go very still before thrashing into more hooks. Failure inflicts 1 damage. Removing them inflicts 1 damage unless a **First Aid** roll succeeds. A fumble with **Alertness** or **DEXx5** catches a hook in the eye, partially blinding the Agent in inflicting a –20% penalty to all tests that require sight. After a successful **Surgery** roll, later, the Agent recovers. If the Surgery roll fails, the Agent can try **CONx5**. Failure means the eye is lost and the Agent suffers a –10% penalty permanently.

Dining Room

Tripwires run through the dining room. A player who specifies looking for them can roll whichever is better, either **Alertness** or **Military Science (Land)**, to spot them. Otherwise they roll whichever is worse. An Agent who trips a wire triggers an explosive device for 10% Lethality with a Kill Radius of 3 meters.

Hall

Three motion sensors are active in the south wall of the ground-floor hall. Valdez activates them on by flipping a circuit breaker upstairs. Each is indicated by a tiny, flashing red light, easily seen in the darkness. The Agents recognize them as motion sensors. Coming within one meter of one triggers a shaped charge hidden behind drywall: 10% Lethality with a Kill Radius of 1 meter. After the first blast, an Agent who comes near the other sensor gets a **Luck** roll to see if its bomb was dislodged and fails to go off. Walking closely along the east wall from the kitchen to the stairs is safe.

Upstairs

The first bedroom at the top of the stairs is locked. It was Silvie's room. The simple button-lock inside the doorknob can be opened with a screwdriver or even the straightened wire of a coat hanger. The room is as blackly dark as the rest of the house. No lights come on. It stinks of must and old, old rot. A young girl's corpse rests on the bed, carefully tucked in. A few months after Sidney Valdez took ill, her mother exhumed the body of her sister and laid it to rest in her old room.

The room on the opposite corner is Sidney's, outfitted more like an intensive-care ward than a girl's bedroom. See **SIDNEY CARLA VALDEZ** on page XX for her description and what may happen when the Agents find her.

The master bedroom in between has become Karen Valdez's study. Here are the monitors that she uses to spy on the property outside, the circuit breakers where she enabled the motion-sensor traps, and the microphone for the front-door loudspeaker. Walls and table are cluttered with crazed, rambling writings and pieces and printouts of weird occult books and countless medical texts.

Even a cursory examination of the scrawled and stained documents gives a sense that Karen Valdez was desperately seeking some way, however outré, to save her daughter's life. A successful **Search**, **Occult**, or **Unnatural** roll finds references to techniques by which the essence of Sidney Valdez might be preserved in a healthier body. It requires a gruesome series of transformations and invasions. Success would supposedly be most likely in a host with psychic or magical powers. She learned a ritual to hypnotize a potential host so deeply that she could be brought back completely unaware.

Another roll of **Search**, **Occult**, or **Unnatural** identifies Valdez's most important resource, a thick old tome entitled *The Daughter of Darkness*. See its description on page XX.

The Agents likely find Karen Valdez in her room, singing softly over a circle and a series of sigils and unrecognizable, smelly shapes crafted by hand from wax and human fat. Unless all came up the stairs with successful **Stealth** rolls, she is ready. She has already finished her invocation to the Daughter of Darkness. She attempts to use the Fascination ritual to subdue the intruders, one at a time, once per turn until they kill or restrain her. If the Agents all come on her undetected, she is still attempting the invocation. Killing or restraining her prevents Sidney Valdez's final transformation. Either way, Karen screams in sorrow and insane fear and rage in the instant before the confrontation.

The Tinderbox

Should the Agents set fire to the Valdez house, it burns swiftly. A fire takes about five minutes to spread across one room, another five minutes to consume half a floor, another five minutes to consume the rest of a floor, and another five minutes to consume the rest of the house. Makeshift bombs in the lower-floor hallway walls occasionally explode. Given warning, Karen Valdez invokes the Daughter of Darkness with the sacrifice of her own blood and life. That completes Sidney Valdez's transformation. Her hideous new shape crawls screeching from the flames, pained from a couple of points of damage but certainly not crippled, and lurches toward the forest for freedom and what promises uncountable years of continued feeding and growth until in some black future she joins fully with the Daughter of Darkness at last.

Sanity Rewards

Stopping Karen Valdez from victimizing any other women or further harming Robyn Bullock earns each Agent 1D4 SAN. Killing Karen Valdez earns each Agent 1 SAN. Destroying Sidney Valdez earns each Agent no SAN before her final transformation or 1D4 SAN after her change.

Characters

Robyn Bullock

Bullock's psychic power of apportation is quite advanced although not well controlled. Attuned to the power of Shub-Niggurath as she was in the Valdez house, her range was potentially limitless. The power simply followed some unseen and unfathomable string of causality and intent that ran from Karen and Sidney Valdez to the Vermont hills where the mi-go taught mortals the secrets of the Daughter of Darkness long ago.

Robyn Bullock

Distraught keeper of weird talents, age 19

STR 11 **CON** 10 **DEX** 9 **INT** 14 **POW** 16 **CHA** 13
HP 11 **WP** 17 **SAN** 65 **BREAKING POINT** 51

DISORDER: Depersonalization disorder.

SKILLS: Accounting 21%, Art (Sketching) 40%, Athletics 43%, History 25%, HUMINT 36%, Occult 39%.

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4-1.

APPORTATION: See **APPORTATION** on page XX, except that Bullock can teleport up to 100 m in ordinary circumstances.

Jimmy Swope

"Jimmy" how he's named on his birth certificate, not "James" or "Jim." Scruffy, fat, and often short of breath, Jimmy supplements a mostly cash income repairing cars and air conditioners with hunting deer and small game for feed and for trade. He usually can be found in old denim overalls and a greasy baseball cap. He glares at every stranger, suspecting an enemy about to strike.

Jimmy Swope believes. He believes that America was founded by Christians to be a Christian nation governed by Christians under Christian laws and traditions. He believes that "Christians" means evangelical Protestants who believe exactly as he believes. He believes the holy word of the Bible and the course of American history taken together prove that white Christian men are the ordained leaders of the nation.

He believes that any assertion to the contrary is an explicit rebuke of the word of God, inspired by the very real Satan that lurks in Hell and in the the depths of every fallen human soul.

He believes that the “expatriation” document that he filed with a gullible county clerk legally removed his U.S. citizenship in favor of citizenship of the state of Alabama. He believes that being a citizen of the state but not the United States legally exempts him from federal law and taxation. He believes that being a citizen of Alabama and not merely a resident exempts him from state taxes. He believes that upon his property he is sovereign and subject to no outside authority. He believes that the tree of liberty must from time to time be nourished with the blood of patriots. He intends to nourish it well if strangers, calling themselves police or anything else, intrude upon his land.

Clay County deputies avoid Jimmy Swope’s place like the plague. Half of them think he’s right but none of them wants to get shot.

Swope’s yard is rigged with tripwires to set off flashbangs around its outer perimeter, meant to discourage intruders and warn him of their approach. Signs hammered in the grass warn “DANGER” with painted skulls and “TRESPASSERS WILL BE SHOT.” The inner perimeter is rigged with tripwires attached to a dozen pipe bombs and hand grenades. Only the driveway is safe. It leads straight to his house across 60 yards of empty field and he has clear sighting on it from the sandbagged shooter’s nest in his attic.

Faced with intruders, Swope first yells through a bullhorn from a the doorway for them to get off his property. They can leave a note in the mailbox if it’s that important. He says that’s his final warning. If they keep coming, he heads up to the attic and fires a warning shot with his rifle. Then he shoots to kill. If it escalates into a shootout, he switches to the machine gun.

Jimmy Michael Swope

Deranged dominionist and sovereign citizen, age 58

STR 12 CON 7 DEX 9 INT 8 POW 7 CHA 8
HP 10 WP 10 SAN 35 BREAKING POINT 28

ARMOR: 5 from a reinforced kevlar vest.

SKILLS: Alertness 45%, Bureaucracy 31%, Craft (Mechanic) 52%, Demolitions 68%, Firearms 48%, Heavy Machinery 50%, Heavy Weapons 39%, History 18%, Law 9%, Navigate 40%, Ride 40%, Stealth 43%, Survival 60%.

ATTACKS: *Browning M2HB machine gun* 39%, Lethality 20%, Kill Radius 1–3 m, Armor Piercing 5.

Remington 783 .30-06 hunting rifle with telescopic sight 48%, damage 1D12+2, Armor Piercing 3.

AK-47 assault rifle 48%, damage 1D12+1 or Lethality 10%, Armor Piercing 3.

Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 revolver 48%, damage 1D12.

Improvised explosive device, Lethality 15%, Kill Radius 10 m.

Tripwire flashbang, stuns targets within 5 m (10 m indoors) and incurs a –40% to all actions for 1D6 turns.

Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4–1.

TELESCOPIC SIGHT: Swope’s hunting rifle’s base range doubles from 150 m to 300 m if he spent the previous turn taking the Aim action.

Karen Teresa Valdez

A middle-aged white woman in disarray. She accents jeans and bright blouses with crystals and scarves.

Karen Valdez was a pediatric doctor in Goodwater until her husband died three years ago. She had spent three years before that quietly deteriorating after the death of her younger daughter, Silvie. Her attendance was erratic. She barely kept up with continuing education. She studied more and more dangerously esoteric forms of healing. The clinic kept her on and the nurses and other physicians made up for her shortcomings. But when Antonio died and her other daughter was diagnosed with the same cancer that killed him, Karen left medicine altogether.

The three years since then have been busy. She devoted herself to occult healing practices and rituals with all the rigor she had once applied to medical school. She followed countless spurious leads until she found a true answer: The Daughter of Darkness, the one book she found with hints of true power. Its study opened her mind to the mental emanations of the Favored Ones, the “spirits” that served the Daughter of Darkness: the mi-go. Her communions with them led to deeper revelations.

Even the powers of solace and healing that she found in these researches and meditations could not fully cure her daughter. That would require a more extraordinary technique. She could not save her little girl’s body, but she could preserve her mind. It required only finding just the right host for her daughter’s mind and soul to supplant.

Confronted outside the house, Valdez desperately flees. Confronted at home, with her daughter vulnerable upstairs, she instead pleads with the Daughter of Darkness for Sidney to be saved in any form at all, pulls the revolver from her purse, and opens fire. She hopes to slow the Agents and offer her own death at the Agents’ hands in sacrifice to the darkness that claims her little girl.

Karen Valdez

Rendered cruel by desperation, age 50

STR 11 **CON** 15 **DEX** 9 **INT** 17 **POW** 14 **CHA** 6

HP 13 **WP** 16 **SAN** 29 **BREAKING POINT** 26

DISORDER: Obsession with keeping Sidney alive; paranoia; adapted to violence; adapted to helplessness.

SKILLS: Accounting 21%, Alertness 41%, Bureaucracy 46%, Demolitions 45%, Firearms 30%, First Aid 67%, HUMINT 50%, Medicine 60%, Navigate 41%, Occult 72%, Persuade 64%, Pharmacy 75%, Psychotherapy 40%, Science (Biology) 60%, Search 53%, Stealth 50%, Unnatural 20%.

ATTACKS: Unarmed 40%, damage 1D4-1.

Snub-nose .38 revolver 30%, damage 1D8.

RITUALS: Healing Balm, Meditation Upon the Favored Ones, Rite of Reunion, Soothing Song, Whispers of the Dead (The Daughter of Darkness).

Sidney Carla Valdez

Sidney Valdez should have died months ago, maybe years ago. Her mother's extraordinary efforts in medicine and magic have kept her clinging to life but withering away, body and mind and soul. Her inner organs have mutated into hearty masses that would baffle and terrify any sane biologist. Blackened, chitinous stingers sometimes extrude from her torso, dripping not venom but something more like cerebrospinal fluid cloudy with genetic potential. Her mother keeps the sheets covering all that for the last vestiges of her daughter's comfort.

Sidney rarely recognizes her own sickroom. She often finds herself in the personality of one of the young women her mother has given to her embrace to be injected with the girl's own persona. Other times she merely stares, drifting comfortably in near catatonia.

If Sidney's SAN hits zero, or if she or her mother are physically attacked, or if her mother enacts the Whispers of the Dead ritual to invoke the Daughter of Darkness, Sidney will complete her transformation. She then arises as a huge, ropy, spiderlike thing with the girl's eyes replicated in countless blinking sockets and a changeable number of limbs drawing her to height, dragging her along surfaces or flinging her into the air. Transformed, she tries to steal an Agent for later nourishment and then retreats into the surrounding biomass of forest and earth and worms to feed and grow in the endless cycles of life and death of the cosmic mother of all.

Sidney, Mostly Human

Girl without hope, age 13

STR 2 CON 3 DEX 4 INT 10 POW 18
HP 3 WP 16 SAN 8 BREAKING POINT n/a

DISORDERS AND ADAPTATIONS: Anxiety disorder; depersonalization disorder; depression; dissociative identity disorder; adapted to helplessness.

ARMOR: See **UNNATURAL FLESH**.

BRITTLE CONNECTION: Karen Valdez has built a deep connection between Sidney and the Daughter of Darkness. Sidney's lingering reluctance makes the connection strangely brittle. Any Agent who awakened in Vermont to a psychic power feels the

connection without recognizing what Sidney is connected to, and feels instinctively that the connection is vulnerable. Either they can break it or by psychic contact they can convince Sidney to break it. The Agent's particular ability does not matter. If the Agent in any way deliberately tries to reach out and break the connection, they can attempt a **POW×5** roll opposed by Sidney's POW×5 roll. Karen Valdez gets an Alertness roll to recognize what is happening. If she does, she desperately tries to kill the Agent. If the Agent succeeds, Sidney loses 1D6 WP. If the Agent fails, the Agent loses 1D6 WP. If the Agent reduces Sidney's WP to zero, Sidney breaks her connection to the Daughter of Darkness. The horrid changes in her body, unsupported by unnatural power, kill her within a few minutes.

BITTER CONSCIENCE: An Agent who tries to talk Sidney into stop preying on others can attempt a **Psychotherapy** roll or **Persuade** at -20%. Karen Valdez desperately tries to kill the Agent. If the Agent survives and the roll succeeds, Sidney comes around enough to hear. She weeps, screams in anger and guilt and despair, and breaks her connection to the Daughter of Darkness. The horrid changes in her body, unsupported by unnatural power, kill her within a few minutes.

UNNATURAL BIOLOGY: Sidney's changed physiology would baffle any biologist. Making a called shot for "vitals" or another apparently vulnerable area inflicts normal damage, with no special game effect.

UNNATURAL FLESH: Sidney now takes only 1 HP damage from any unarmed attack, melee weapon, firearm, explosive, acid, electrical charge, or flame with a Lethality rating lower than 15%, and no damage whatsoever from toxins. She takes full damage from hypergeometry.

SAN LOSS: 0/1D4 from the unnatural for seeing the resilience of her unnatural flesh.

Sidney, Transformed

Spidery spawn of darkness, age irrelevant

STR 15 CON 22 DEX 16 INT 10 POW 18
HP 19 WP 16

ARMOR: See **UNNATURAL FLESH**.

SKILLS: Alertness 40%, Stealth 70%, Unnatural 30%.

ATTACKS: Grapple and feed 80%, damage special (see **FEEDING**).

 Infective injection 50%, damage special (see **INJECTION**).

FEEDING: The turn after grappling, the realized Sidney may suck blood from a pinned target with one of its horrible, befanged mouths. That reduces the victim's STR by 1D6 and adds the same amount to the Sidney-thing's HP or WP, whichever it prefers.

INJECTION: The Sidney-thing recognizes if an Agent has had psychic powers awakened. It attacks that Agent exclusively. The turn after grappling that Agent, Sidney attempts to inject them with a barb that extrudes from her spidery midsection. If the attack succeeds, the Sidney-thing flees. The Agent's memories of the last few hours dissipate like smoke. About 24 hours later and once every 24 hours afterward, the victim begins experiencing memories from Sidney Valdez's short and difficult life and from the lives of her past victims. That costs 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness. The injection

replaces 2D4 of the victim's INT with INT from Sidney. About once every further 24 hours, the victim must attempt a **POW×5** roll opposed by the Sidney-thing's POW×5 roll. Each success reduces the amount of Sidney's INT in the victim by 1D4. If that reduces Sidney's INT in the host to zero, the host recovers fully. Each failure adds 1D4 to Sidney's invasive INT. If the host accumulates all 10 points of Sidney's INT, the nightly rounds of POW tests and debilitating alien memories stop but Sidney's mind takes a permanent place in the host's brain. The next time the host hits the Breaking Point, the disorder they develop is a version of dissociative identity disorder. The alternate identity is not a fragment of the host's mind but Sidney's complete identity, that of a 13-year-old girl driven to zero Sanity Points by suffering and her mother's horrifying efforts to save her. The Handler and player can decide how to play that out going forward. No amount of psychotherapy can cure the disorder or the insanity of the girl's personality.

NON-TERRENE: The thing Sidney has become is at home in nearly any environment. Radiation, pressure, cold, vacuum, and other inimical environments have no negative effects on it.

STENCH: Every unprotected breather near this final form of Sidney must make a **CON** test. Each who fails suffers -20% to all tests until they escape the stench.

UNNATURAL BIOLOGY: Sidney's changed physiology would baffle any biologist. Making a called shot for "vitals" or another apparently vulnerable area inflicts normal damage, with no special game effect.

UNNATURAL FLESH: Sidney now takes only 1 HP damage from any unarmed attack, melee weapon, firearm, explosive, acid, electrical charge, or flame with a Lethality rating lower than 15%, and no damage whatsoever from toxins. She takes full damage from hypergeometry.

SAN LOSS: 1D4/1D10 from the unnatural.

Tomes and Rituals

The Daughter of Darkness

A tome in English. Study time: months. Occult +8%, Unnatural +4%. SAN loss 1D6.

Dubious New Age and Wiccan occultism reinterpret 18th-century witchcraft through excerpts from the infamous *Book of Eibon*. Every margin is cramped with Karen Valdez's crazed, handwritten expositions inspired by communion with the apparently alien or insane life-goddess called the Daughter of Darkness and the unseen "Favored Ones," spirits that supposedly serve Her.

RITUALS: Healing Balm, Meditation Upon the Favored Ones, Rite of Reunion, Soothing Song, Whispers of the Dead (The Daughter of Darkness).

About Psychic Rituals

Agents who empathize too deeply with the distressed psychics in *Presence* may develop distressing powers of their own. See **AWAKENINGS** on page XX for details.

Activating one of these rituals requires a turn of intense concentration and a **Ritual Activation** roll. The activation roll has a +20% bonus if the operator has lost SAN within the past 24 hours or is under the otherwise debilitating influence of some hallucinogenic drug or fungus.

These powers come with terrible risks that the Agents don't know about until they discover them.

With a successful **Ritual Activation** roll the Agent flares for an instant in near ultraviolet light. The more WP spent, the brighter the flare. Birds, insects, and fish recoil from the unexpected flash that only they can see.

With a critical success, the flare is in much more powerful extreme ultraviolet. It is beyond the senses of animals but may appear as a strange shadow in the reading of an X-ray machine and other scanning device. Every few months after that, such as during each Home scene between operations, the Agent gains a point of POW (up to a maximum of 18) and loses one stat point as tumors sprout and slowly spread. Roll 1D4 for the stat lost, either CON, DEX, INT, or CHA. Each further critical success with the **Ritual Activation** roll adds another point of a random stat lost but does not increase the POW gained. No amount of medical treatment can stop this disease. Detailed examination of the tumors finds strange and unaccountable vitality in them. An Agent who studies them or hears them described can attempt a skill roll. If the one roll succeeds at both **Unnatural** and **Medicine**, the Agent recognizes in the propagation of the tumors patterns that ancient and disturbing myths describe in the growth of Shub-Niggurath when summoned upon the Earth. That realization costs 1/1D4 **SAN** from the unnatural or 1D6/1D20 for the afflicted Agent.

Fumbling the **Ritual Activation** roll connects the Agent's mind to realities and powers beyond the illusions of space and time. The connection costs 1D6/1D20 **SAN** from the unnatural and adds 1D6 points to the Agent's **Unnatural** skill. Pick one or two favorite aspects of Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, or Shub-Niggurath to give to the player to describe the Agent's sudden mad ravings. If the episode reduces the Agent to zero SAN, it culminates in the Agent vanishing altogether. If the others are lucky, they never see the stricken Agent again.

Rituals

Apportation

Simple psychic ritual. Study time and costs: *special*. Activation: *one turn; 1D4 WP, 1D4 HP, 1 SAN.*

The operator suddenly vanishes and reappears at a location of their choice up to about 10 m away and within sight of the naked eye with nothing in between.

Assault

Simple psychic ritual. Study time and costs: *special*. Activation: *one turn; 1D4 WP, 1D4 HP, 1 SAN.*

The operator causes agony like a sudden, thundering migraine or even a mini-stroke in someone they can see, no more than about 10 m away and within sight of the naked eye with nothing in between. It stuns the victim and inflicts 1 damage. An operator with POW 17 or higher can try to cause death instead, stunning the target and inflicting 2D10 damage. The costs are far steeper: 2D6 WP, 2D6 HP, and 1D8 SAN on top of the SAN loss for killing.

Divination

Simple psychic ritual. Study time and costs: *special*. Activation: *one turn; 6 WP, 1 SAN.*

The operator knows what's going to happen a few minutes in the future like recalling a memory. It's up to the Handler to describe it and carry it through, but the Handler can be as vague or specific as they want. Seeing something terrible costs SAN during the divination and then again in the actual event.

Intrusion

Simple psychic ritual. Study time and costs: *special*. Activation: *one turn; 1D4 WP, 1D4 HP, 1 SAN.*

The operator may plant thoughts in the mind of someone they can see, no more than about 10 m away and within sight of the naked eye with nothing in between. If an opposed POW test succeeds, the operator can make the target think the thoughts are their own, however unwelcome. Otherwise the thoughts are alien and terrifying, like a sudden episode of schizophrenia. That costs the target 0/1D4 SAN from helplessness, even if the target is warned ahead of time and does not object to the intrusion.

Levitation

Simple psychic ritual. Study time and costs: *special*. Activation: *one turn; 1 WP, 1 HP, 1 SAN*.

The operator may slowly raise a meter or so off the ground. The operator may keep the power active for multiple turns without another activation roll. For each turn the power is maintained, the operator may rise another meter or drift horizontally a meter in any direction. The ritual's costs must be paid each turn.

Pyrokinesis

Simple psychic ritual. Study time and costs: *special*. Activation: *one turn; 1D4 WP, 1D4 HP, 1 SAN*.

The operator instantly causes something flammable within about 10 meters to burst into flame. It must be within sight of the naked eye with nothing in between. The fire begins about the scale of a lit torch or a tiny campfire but can swiftly spread if unchecked.

Rite of Reunion

Complex ritual. Study time: *days; 1D6 SAN*. Activation: *about an hour; 6 WP, 1D4 SAN*.

The operator must possess some sample of the target, such as bodily fluids or hair. Anything with DNA will do. During a lengthy prayer invoking the Daughter of Darkness (or Shub-Niggurath under another name), the operator mixes the sample into a potion crafted with alcohol, various roots and minerals of occult significance, and a tiny sample of fungus from a mi-go or the excretions of a haedus nigratia. At the end of the ritual, the operator drinks the potion. If the Ritual Activation roll succeeds, the target experiences a profound and agreeable compulsion to go in the direction of the operator without knowing why or what is there. This lasts 2D4 hours. Afterward, the target remembers the compulsion but has no explanation.