

God's Teeth

by Caleb Stokes

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Sredni Vashtar went forth,

His thoughts were red thoughts and his teeth were white.

His enemies called for peace, but he brought them death.

Sredni Vashtar the Beautiful.

–Saki

Disclaimer

This fictional campaign concerns violence against children. It pulls from real-world examples of child abuse and neglect. It is an attempt by the author to exorcise real-world experiences into the fiction of Delta Green, a game about nihilism, horror, and despair. Sometimes, fiction must enforce the logic of a story upon the random, boundless tragedy of reality. This is the only way some of us stay sane.

However, we understand that the depiction of such subject matter causes anxiety for many. We also understand that the artistic interpretation of real-world trauma may not be appreciated by some readers and players. In such instances, we encourage avoiding this content. Groups must discuss their feelings about this disclaimer, ensure they are all comfortable with the contents of the narrative, and establish boundaries before play begins.

The author has included further explanation about the book's themes for those who wish to read it (see page XX), but suffice it to say we sympathize with those who wish to go no further due to the subject matter.

Go Forth

“Take hope from the hearts of men and you make him a beast of prey.”

–Ouida

Introduction

It is 3 FEB 2001, and Agent Clove of C-Cell tasks her only Delta Green cross-cell contact with a wet-work mission at Cornucopia House: an orphanage located on a remote farm east of Zion, Maryland.

This cross-cell contact is to gather a team of fledgling Delta Green recruits, they are to enter the orphanage at night and kill every adult they find there. She frames the assassination mission as a recruitment test when, in fact, these Friendlies are a random assortment of people only vaguely affiliated with the unnatural.

A-Cell does not support Clove’s mission...or even *know* about it. Because the rest of C-Cell was all but wiped out in an ill-planned action against a strange, Russian cult called the Skoptsi the previous month, Clove is desperate. She can’t stomach the idea of leaving those that killed her cell alive, and perhaps dozens of at-risk children, in their clutches. The targets have to die.

But that is not even the greatest secret. Neither Clove, the cross-cell contact, nor the Friendlies making up the rest of the wet-work team have any idea their mission is actually being manipulated by an unnatural force (see **THE SECRET SYNCHRONICITY** on page xx for more details).

Background

Agent Clove is Dr. Marie Noella née McBride, a criminologist at Wilmington University under contract as an FBI adviser. Her work focuses on the utilization of international sex trafficking by global terror networks as a funding source.

Her initial consultations regarding the Italian mafia in the early 1990s were a ruse by her recruiter, FBI Agent and Delta Green member Gary Hall, to test her field work. She was approached by Delta Green in 1995 and deputized into the FBI. Each “consultation” since has been a cover for Delta Green operations with C-Cell where she acted mainly in a support capacity as Agent Clove. Because of her limited exposure to the horrors of Delta Green, Dr. Noella managed to maintain a healthy relationship her husband Charles (a professor at Wilmington University who has no idea about her Delta Green activities) and Timothy, her four-year-old son.

While investigating international trade in occult artifacts at the Smyrna Airport in Delaware, Dr. Noella cultivated sources among the staff. Through them, she learned of off-the-book overseas flights chartered by Natalia Chermeninko, a suspected member of the Russian mafia listed as an Interpol person-of-interest.

Baggage handlers observed Chermeninko meeting near Smyrna’s private hangers with a man known as Fedor Berezhkov, allegedly handing off a box to the elderly man. Dr. Noella’s C-Cell peers identified Berezhkov as an ex-SMERSH asset under CIA protection.

Her interest piqued, Dr. Noella received permission from A-Cell to surveil Chermeninko and Berezhkov. She hoped to recover Cambodian artifacts thought to have been smuggled through Smyrna Airport.

At the time of the operation, no one in Delta Green knew anything about the cult known as the Skoptsi, or its hunt for holy relics for their inhuman god, the Magna Mater (see **THE SKOPTSI** on page XX for more details) or the smugglers whose movements they were following: a CIA front-turned-unnatural organization, called Tiger Transit (see **TIGER TRANSIT** on page XX for more details).

On 14 JAN 2001, after Berezhkov had a short meeting at the hangers, C-Cell tracked the elderly man to a taxi garage in Holland Point, Maryland. C-cell leader Gary Hall decided it was a good time to intercept Berezhkov for interrogation. Two armed members of C-Cell entered the garage. Dr. Noella remained outside as lookout.

Though no one entered the garage from the street save the elderly Berezhkov, the building contained multiple, armed members of the Skoptsi. Berezhkov, had no luck finding new icons in his latest venture with Chermeninko. Instead, his journey to the Coachman Taxi Garage was

to console himself with entertainment — the sadistic sexual torture of underage children. As the agents of C-Cell entered, a group of men toting pistols, vodka, and a bound teenage prostitute emerged into the room from a hidden tunnel in an oil change pit.

Dr. Noella has no idea what happened except there was a flurry of gunfire. By the time she reached the door, the garage was already on fire. Agent Hall, suffering from multiple gunshot wounds, met her at the door. He passed her a black book of addresses, and a half-burnt cartoon cat folder, sputtered “run,” and stumbled back into the building, firing into the smoke.

Hall’s disappearance was noted by the FBI but, luckily for Delta Green, not connected to the fire. The conflagration was blamed on an improperly maintained gasoline pump. The roof collapse buried the bodies in a charred sinkhole of cracked concrete. Due to the instability of the site, and no people reported missing or working there, the bodies were never discovered.

Dr. Noella’s panicked attempts to contact A-Cell were fruitless. The other surviving members of her cell, Curtis and Charlie, also failed to respond. Overnight for Dr. Noella, contact with Delta Green had ceased. She had no one to turn to but her cross-cell contact — an anonymous, unknown-to-her contact used only in case of emergency.

Dr. Noella plans to trick her cross-cell contact to carry out her revenge against the Skoptsi without A-Cell approval. While the cross-cell contact arranges the task, Dr. Noella plans to leave the country as an emergency replacement for Wilmington’s sister university in China, keeping her and her family as far away from Cornucopia House as possible.

Disinformation: The Lead Agent

The player that takes the role of Clove’s cross-cell contact should understand that Clove is a stranger to their Agent. The Agent doesn’t know her real name or recognize her. They have never worked together. All the Agent knows is that “Clove” is a member of the group and is their sole contact outside the cell. No one should possess the Agent’s contact information or codes save her, so the person present at the meeting *must* be Clove.

If this makes the Agent uncomfortable, good; it’s only going to get worse.

Disinformation: The Secret Synchronicity

The truth in this campaign, beyond the cult and Delta Green, is that a near-omniscient unnatural force beyond space and time has secretly taken an interest in the player's Agents.

This force, sometimes called Bast (see **BAST** on page XX), can — by manipulating tiny events — cause strange synchronicities throughout reality. Through this power, it can cause lesser beings, like animals (including man) to enact its will to fulfill its unknowable, alien, goals. Its army of servants...most of whom have no idea they serve, unconsciously obey this remote power.

The Agents, whether they like it or not, are one example of such servants.

The Meet

At 2 AM on 3 FEB 2001, the cross-cell contact (an Agent controlled by a player determined by the Handler), pulls into a rural gas station off highway 95 in Maryland. It's snowing and there is only one other car in the lot. The Agent was alerted to the meet via a hidden beeper kept plugged in at all times, hidden in a closet.

The attendant nods as the Agent enters, indicating the small closed kitchen in the rear by the restrooms. The counter is shuttered. The only lights visible from the side door come from three security monitors displaying the station's exterior. Switching on the lights, a middle-aged black woman is revealed, standing still among the scattering roaches. Arrayed in front of her on an unlit stove are a Glock pistol, a regular manilla folder, and a filthy pink folder with a cartoon cat on it.

In the Field: A Note on Synchronicity

Throughout *God's Teeth*, setting descriptions called "Synchronicities" are provided for the Handler. Individually, they may appear to be superfluous, sometimes unsettling set dressing. However, to the players, the details can add up; communicating the secret nature of the unnatural force (see **BAST** on page XX for more details).

Disinformation: Synchronicity in the Gas Station

- A cardboard advertisement for pizza sits near the kitchen's entrance. It's a large photo of a young girl's face, tilted back to bite into a slice of pizza. The image has been vandalized: the eyes blacked out, a stitched scar added to the cheek, and the phrase "TOO WHITE" written across the girl's enormous teeth. Each pepperoni has the word "MEAT" written across it in all-caps.
- The gas station's hot dog machine's squealing obscures possible attempts to record conversations. The stench of burned meat accompanies the dental-drill squeal of the metal rollers.

Agent Clove (aka Dr. Marie Noella) (aka Crystal Killian)

Terrified criminologist and Delta Green Agent, age 35

STR 10 CON 10 DEX 10 INT 15 POW 14 CHA 13

HP 10 WP 14 SAN 68 Breaking Point 56

Skills: Alertness 55%, Anthropology 20%, Bureaucracy 50%, Criminology 70%, Dodge 35%, History 40%, Occult 20%, Unnatural 2%,

Attacks: Glock 35%, damage 1d10

Briefing

Agent Clove is 1.5 meters tall, a squat 70 kg, and middle-aged. She looks sleep-deprived but alert. Her position in the room is tactical, with clear lines of sight to the fire exit, kitchen entrance, and security monitors. She greets the Agent by code-name and wastes no time.

"A-Cell tasked me with contacting you. You've been given a list of friendlies to vet for entrance into the group. They've already had credentials reviewed. Your mission is a Soviet style loyalty test. Their names are in the manilla. You've got a conference room set up at the Holiday Inn

Express in Sykesville for tomorrow morning...a Criminology lecture. You're supposedly training law enforcement and government personnel on domestic abuse.

Intel seized in a recent op indicates Cornucopia House, a children's residential facility located on a farm near Zion, Maryland, is a threat. This job needs to be done. Finish it while vetting potential talent. Two-birds-one-stone kind of thing.

Secure unregistered firearms, mask up, head up there at night after the kids are asleep, and *kill every adult you find there*. Don't let the targets speak if you can help it. Tell the recruits whatever you need to; just make sure they're willing. If they need a push, show them what's in the cat folder. It'll get them on message. After, secure any bodies and evidence for disposal.

When you're done, call me on the number on the burner phone. Before you ask, I can't help you. I'll be out of town on another op."

Questions

It is likely the Agent has a number of questions. Clove's scant answers are as follows, along with relevant rolls for additional information. Unless the player asks to check a statement with a roll, leave it. Clove's delivery is matter-of-fact.

Why the unusual cross-cell contact?

"The situation is fluid. It's above your pay grade."

HUMINT: On a failure, she's telling the truth about some sort of danger to the group. A success, gets the same result as a fail plus the suspicion that Clove's lying via omission.

What situation?

"If you don't already know, you aren't supposed to. The assholes funding this hellhole, for one. Let that suffice."

HUMINT: On a failure, she honestly believes there is a credible danger to the group taking active measures. On a success, the same results as a failure, but it's clear that she has no idea what the threat actually is.

Why can't I utilize my regular Cell?

"Like I said, it's high priority enough to need doing, but not so high to occupy an entire team. Make do with what you have and see if we can get some replacements in the process. They've been selected specifically for this job, so assess them as if it's their time to shine."

Bureaucracy 25% or above: This doesn't make a lot of sense. Why loyalty test all the Friendlies together, where they can cross-contaminate? Why not have whoever vetted them in the first place run the op? On a failure, it's clear to the Agent this is a reckless way to organize (but it's government work, so it isn't too unbelievable). On a success, the Agent knows enough to realize these friendlies were selected without any consideration for the gravity of the task.

In The Field: What If The Lead Agent Insists On Informing Their Cell?

Handlers can rule that the Agent doesn't have reliable methods to contact peers within the cell. In their previous missions, they may have just shown up at a dead-dropped location and begun work, contacting each other through long abandoned burner phones.

Still, other Agents may be better prepared. If so, there's nothing really stopping the Agent from doing just that, or in calling their cell in as backup, if need be. After all, if the Agent's cell is wiped out or injured in this operation, Clove would theoretically have no way of knowing.

"Where will you be?"

"I'm out of the country on a mission with the group. I tell you where to start; you call and tell me where it ends up."

Psychotherapy 30%/HUMINT 40%: On a failure, this work appears to demoralize Clove; she seems to crave the field work rather than serving as a messenger. On a success, the Agent realizes that the sorrow in her voice hovers around the words "my group."

“What did these people do?”

“Enough.”

If the Agent pushes, Clove adds, “Look, you don’t have to believe me. The cat folder is there for you too. If you have to know why, look. But don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Any Skill: Let the player roll whatever they want to check that statement. Whatever the result, she *absolutely* means it. Objectively, Clove is assured of the justice of her cause, apparently due to contents of the cartoon cat folder.

“Why can't we allow them to speak?”

“Because you want to stay alive, that’s why. Fuck knows what’s rattling around in their heads. Put a bullet in them. Vent the poison before they spit it at you.”

Occult or Unnatural: On a failure, it sounds like she knows enough to know that nobody wants to understand more. On a success, the Agent realizes that she has no knowledge of what the targets are capable of, but she’s seen other operations go bad.

“How do I get the Friendlies on board?”

“You know the remit. Say whatever it takes. Let them know its off-the-books just so they keep their mouths shut, but they’ve all held something back for us in the past. And there’s always the cat folder. If you can look in there and not be ready roll...fuck...you probably are the mission, if that shit doesn’t get you off your ass.”

Any Skill: Again, she absolutely means it.

The Manila Folder

The manila folder contains the names and contact information of the Friendlies to be used for the operation (everyone Clove managed to scrounge together from Gary Hall’s little black book).

The folder also contains email printouts between the Friendlies and cut-out email identities, arranging to meet on 3 FEB 2001, at 10 AM in the small conference room of a Holiday Inn Ex-

press in Sykesville, Maryland. For those in law enforcement or adjacent fields, the conference is pegged as “Domestic Abuse Intervention and Response Professional Development Seminar 2B” and is mandatory. For those with occupations outside the cover logic, the emails refer to previous work the Friendly did for “the group” and openly informs them that the seminar is cover for a clandestine briefing.

Criminology/Bureaucracy of 30% or more makes it clear that including these emails is terrible op-sec. Successful rolls with either skill also reveal that the people on the list have almost nothing to do with one other. The criterion for selecting them for the mission appears entirely incidental.

Behind the emails, the Agent finds a Mapquest printout of Cornucopia House and the surrounding area. There’s also copies of the EIN number and 501C3 tax forms for a non-profit charity called Families Without Frontiers which apparently owns and operates Cornucopia House.

Finally, there is a Nokia cellphone. It has twenty minutes of call time and one number on the contacts page, presumably Clover’s burner.

The Cartoon Cat Folder

Looking at the contents of the folder causes 1/1D4 **SAN** loss from the unnatural. Further viewings assault SAN through violence and helplessness (in that order) and for the same 1/1D4 amount. Remember that adaptation merely causes a roll to succeed, it does not negate SAN loss, and no one can become adapted to the unnatural.

Viewing the cartoon cat folder is not necessary. Clove has provided all the intel she has managed to gain from it, but, as she suggests, looking inside removes all doubt about the motivation of the mission.

Upon first viewing, the Agent does not perceive the contents so much as *experience* a disembodied reaction to it. This should be described by the Handler regardless of the success/failure of the sanity check.

In The Field: How To Describe The Folder

Handlers should never — **never** — describe the specific contents of the cartoon cat folder.

The first reason the Handler never directly describes the contents of the cartoon cat folder is because to do so would be harmful. Actual child abuse is as close to sanity-blasting unnatural knowledge as we get in the real world. Keep everyone safe at the table with the provided indirect descriptions. That way, players stay in control of their Agent's actions while acknowledging the fact that they cannot control what their Agents feel when confronted by such nightmares.

The second reason serves a vital purpose for the campaign: the folder is a Pandora's box of motivation. The operation looks wrong from the start because it *is* wrong. Any sane Agent would refuse. But no one who looks at the folder is sane. The blood-stained, charred, cartoon cat folder is the "same page" the players *must* meet on, regardless of what their Agents would do under normal circumstances. Everyone should be uncomfortable with the situation. The cartoon cat folder is the reason they're going to shut-up and plow through anyway.

The Consuming Sorrow (First Viewing of the Cartoon Cat Folder)

You're back in the car. The folder lays in the seat next to you, alongside the bottle. You don't remember buying the bottle. You must have gotten it before leaving the gas station because you're still parked there. Must have been parked there awhile because the bottle is almost empty. And the sun is starting to crest over the horizon. And Clove is gone, as well as the attendant on shift when you first arrived. Trying to conjure what you saw, you can only imagine flipping the folder open right now, curious as to why you can't hold a memory of doing it before. You are certain that, if you did that, you would find nothing inside except a rectangular portal to a huge, sucking void that draws your vision and body and soul into it like a collapsing star, a hole to a null reality opening in the car seat next to you. The fear that the pages will eat you if you open the folder again is as unquestionable as it is irrational. The only thing more absolute than your terror is the knowledge that she was right. They all have to die. For reasons you cannot bear to think on.

If the Agent — or any of the subsequent Friendlies — look inside the folder a second time, they get the gist of the physical contents. However, lingering over the images with any close attention to detail still causes the mind to reel away in disgust.

The Gist (Second Viewing of the Cartoon Cat Folder)

The cover of the folder is pink with that dancing cartoon cat from Japan on it. The cover is sticky from specks of blood and something black that looks like oil. It smells of gasoline. The top-left corner is scorched where a flame was hastily put out. You regret that the flame was extinguished. Inside, there are the remains of glossy photographs printed from a high-end home photo printer. They are sticky and worn from handling. The images depict men, women, children, and things... Their forms combine in ways that argue against the existence of God. The lighting is amateurish and inadequate for the night in which the scene was filmed. It took place somewhere in the woods or on a farm. In the first picture, a cottage and sign is located in the distance. Clove must have used a magnifying glass to read Cornucopia House on it. You cannot imagine how she managed to look on the images for so long without going mad. Perhaps that's what happened.

Contents

Foolish Agents may want to inspect the photographs in the cartoon cat folder for more details. Keep in mind the rules for handling the folder and the general guideline that the contents should never be described explicitly.

The Pictures

SIGINT or **Computer Science** at 40% or above realizes that, as nice it would be, the photographs *can't* be fake. Technology capable of simulating the poor lighting conditions of the photographs does not yet exist, and the bit-crushed pixelation of the photo printer used to produce physical copies is consistent. Furthermore, a few photos in the folder were taken with an ancient polaroid. The scene depicted is the same from multiple angles.

The faces of adult participants are obscured by shadows or cloth. However, a few tattoos are visible, as is a penchant for the adults to be castrated. The tattoos clearly come from the Russian prison tradition, though they skew closer to Eastern Orthodox symbols. Castration, on the other hand, isn't common in even the hardest gulags. Successful rolls of **History** 80% or **Occult** 60% can correlate the symbols and the tendency towards genital mutilation to legends of the Skoptsi, a long-extinct Christian splinter sect eliminated during a pogrom by Czar Nicolas in the 1870s. There is, however, no record of what the Skoptsi actually believe outside a prima-

ry source from a few monks in the 1830's denouncing the cult's emissary to Moscow, Kondratji Selivanov, as an inhuman sorcerer.

The Blood

Forensics indicates that the blood drops on the folder come from multiple individuals, male and female, dating to a variety of periods. The freshest can be dated to about a month previous. It appears that the folder had droplets of blood on it before Agent Clove gained possession of it.

Identifying the different DNA strands is a process that takes months. If the Agents are using local law enforcement databases, no genetic matches are found. If they have access to FBI labs and information, Agents must make a **Bureaucracy** roll before asking for hits. On a success, they manage to obscure the providence of the information request. On a failure, the results could potentially get them into deep trouble.

One DNA match is found in federal databases: FBI Special Agent Gary Hall. Hall has been missing since the previous month. He left work one night and never returned. His current case load was background research on possible remnants of the Gambino crime family still in operation in Maryland. It was deep background intel to be performed behind a desk. The FBI had so little reason to fear for his safety they even allowed Dr. Noella — a civilian criminologist — to contract with him. Noella was interviewed and had no insights to offer on Hall's location. If Agents are pegged running lab reports on Hall's blood, they can expect FBI attention immediately.

The Residue

Rolling **Forensics** can separate the charring on the paper from a black, organic fluid similar in appearance. Regular success can only identify this as an anomalous genetic material, too damaged by fire to recognize. However, a critical success on **Forensics** (or a regular success on a more specialized medical skill, such as **Science: Pathology**) makes clear that the cells lack other telltale signs of heat damage. Their abnormal shape comes from two factors. Firstly, they are cancerous. Misshapen cell walls still bear enough resemblance to their neighbors to suggest malignant growth. Secondly, the cells are all of different types. Cancerous marrow cells reside next to corrupted red blood cells, next to misshapen semen and tumorous muscled. Human cells of these type have no cause being connected to each other in this black stew, nor is there anything to explain their uniformly cancerous nature. Prolonged investigation

of the black ichor on the folder discovers even animal cells — still dead and cancerous — mixed in amongst the roughly human biology. Studying this genetic slurry causes 1/1d4 **SAN** loss to the unnatural as the Agent struggles to grasp where something so horrible could come from.

Sykesville Seminar

Clove booked a small conference room at the Holiday Inn Express in Sykesville, Maryland, on 3 FEB 2001 at 10 AM, for a meeting she listed as “Domestic Abuse Intervention and Response Professional Development Seminar 2B.” There was no seminar 1 or A, and no real conference. She hopes that the topic remains repugnant enough to deter anyone from looking too hard at the conference. To sell the lie, Clove has paid to cater the room with a small tray of bagels, a coffee pot, and projector running a PowerPoint related to the subject.

The Friendlies arrive before the Agent and are free to discuss things as they wish. Those in law enforcement may think the meeting constitutes just another hoop their job requires them to jump through. Those who couldn't be lured under false pretenses might mention working for Delta Green, or whatever group they misunderstand Delta Green to be. The Friendlies can share their brief, amateurish interactions with the group up to that point. They definitely shouldn't be discussing such matters, but, then again, that's the reason they are only considered Friendlies.

When the cross-cell contact Agent arrives, they need only get the Friendlies on mission. The brief can go down however the Agent wishes: using whatever lies, bribes, or coercion they choose. Other players are free to make HUMINT or other tests to spot lies. If they succeed, it's on the Agent to respond.

If someone has had enough and is ready to leave, the Agent should resort to the cartoon cat folder. As Clove suggested, the folder *always* works. Players of the Friendlies should roleplay their characters' reactions to the contents, making it clear to everyone in the room that they've changed their mind and must complete the mission. Even seeing someone flip the script so quickly might warrant a SAN roll from the other Friendlies that have not yet looked in the cartoon cat folder.

Disinformation: Synchronicity in the Conference Room

- A PowerPoint presentation entitled “A Call for Peace” runs on a projector in the room. It depicts a variety of evidence photos from domestic abuse cases along with relevant citations in the realm of psychology from the early 1990s. The computer in the corner running the presentation freezes on a slide entitled, “Red Thoughts.” Clip-art of a brain sits slightly off center, surrounded by a bulleted list of motives given by perpetrators who committed domestic abuse, listed in order of frequency.

Showing the Cartoon Cat Folder to the Friendlies

Depending on how the Agent goes about briefing the Friendlies they may need to view the cartoon cat folder as well. The following list provides descriptions for subsequent interactions with the folder. Assign them as best fits a the character’s background, or roll a d10 and assign one randomly.

Ten reactions to the cartoon cat folder are provided below to be cut out as cards and handed out. The card is provided only under the player’s understanding that, after looking at the cartoon cat folder, the character is *absolutely* on board for the mission. The card is kept secret so they can roleplay their participation as an actor’s secret, letting it color their Agent’s decisions without ever revealing the terrible insight that changed their mind.

1. The Relief of an Expected Call

Your whole life, you haven’t been sure what to do. You feigned confidence, but deep in your heart — in that space inside that could only speak on the worst nights as you stared at the ceiling in despair — you knew you were a fake. You did things because you were supposed to do them, or you did things because you weren’t supposed to do them. No difference, really. It’s been a life of checking other people’s boxes. Of pretending uncertainty doesn’t constitute the majority of every waking moment. Of faking as if all of this — your whole existence — was actually your idea and instead of something you were born into. Your life is the result of mindlessly bouncing off circumstances, frictionless and out of control: a pinball that pretends itself a player.

But that’s okay. Those moments brought you here. You may have never had control, but that doesn’t mean you didn’t have a purpose. This has to be it. These people must die. You must do

it. It is a biological reflex, like gasping for air when you're drowning or kicking out when they strike the nerve. It is a crusade that will wipe away your previous sins. There is not one iota of doubt in its monstrous order. The certainty that results in finally knowing your purpose relieves a pain you just now realize you've always felt.

2. The Insistent Details

You'll need guns. Something without registration so you can ditch it. Probably a car too, or at least new tires. The snow could make tire tracks an issue. But then again, maybe a gun isn't the right way to go. A blade would be quieter. Quieter is good. Plus, you'll get to see the looks in their eyes — the haunting realization that the tables have turned. There's something bigger than them now; it has come to play with them for its enjoyment and there's nothing they can do. So, yeah, blades but also ropes, because fuck it; let them scream. Let's do it loud and long and slow. Let's get poetic. So, we'll need a location. Something sound-proof and isolated. Somewhere we can take our time. You know it won't be actually enjoyable and that you'll never return from the experience whole. You don't exactly want to do it. The pleasure you feel at the thought is shameful, but it can't be helped. A bullet is too quick. Objectively. You wonder how long you can get off work. Do you know anyone that can provide you an IV drip and some blood packs?

You're not exactly sure when, but somewhere along your mental checklist on how to murder these people, you realize you never once stopped to consider whether or not you should. This oversight is, worryingly, not that distressing, and you find yourself eager to get back to the logistics.

3. The Joke

You want to laugh. Holding it in is actually painful. It's hilarious in a surreal sort of way that you couldn't explain to anyone if they asked, so you have to keep it together. Still, the joke is obvious, right? Someone saw those...those things, those kids, and a camera...and their first thought was "Let's do this with them." If that insane leap of logic isn't humor, what is? What could be? What else in the world could possibly be funny, if this isn't funny?

Of course, you hope it's fake. Obviously. You're not a monster. But doesn't that make it even more hilarious? Some uber-weirdo, working on computers to concoct these fantasies as if any human on the Earth would want to see them. What an idiot! What an alien. Might as well be a little green man from cartoons. And those kids? Can you imagine being those kids? You're born

into the world just so you can leave it? Like this? It's absurd in its cruelty. You have to laugh. You just have to laugh when you see shit like this. What's the alternative?

4. The Romance of Becoming Broken

You suspect two fantasies haunt the minds of every American: winning the lottery and going to prison. They are flip-sides of the same coin. What if I could live in a world comprised of nothing but myself? On good days, you imagine being granted the ability to escape your job, your responsibilities, and your stress with a deus ex machina lotto ticket, one capable of building a personal heaven on Earth. More often, you imagine securing isolation through punishment, by snapping and destroying all those things in a single act of rage. You still get your wish for simplification, but not without the guilt of knowing that, with this very fantasy, you are taking reality for granted. On the worst days, you imagine being locked up wrongfully, a dream to satisfy the self-pity, persecution complex that makes you want to leave the world behind in the first place.

Now, after having seen the folder, it's more than a fantasy. You know that you could be happy enough locked in a cell for the rest of your days. It won't be ideal, but if given the choice between life in prison and doing nothing...it's not a choice. You will do what it takes and get your wish. Think of all the reading you'll get done in there. Many great books have been written in prison...

5. The Narrative Shield

You remember reading or seeing something about the NASA Glenn Hypersonic Test Facility. They use it to test aircraft traveling faster than the speed of sound. You think it's in Ohio, right? You're not sure how you could get in. Maybe that's something the group could help with? If you could get in with the prisoners, you could strap one to a fuselage or piece of test scaffolding. You could retreat to the control room where you've tied down the rest. You could make them all watch as you turn the thing on full blast. You could watch as the skin is cut away by knives of atmosphere. You could watch as the blood and fat aerosols in winds faster than Mach 5. You could all watch the structural integrity of the body decay until the meat goes flying against the safety grating and is instantly cubed. Then, you could grab the next one and put them inside. You could watch the look in their eyes as they look back through the glass, waiting for you to press the button again.

Hey, you know its impractical. You know that's not how this goes down. You'll help however you can, no matter what is decided. Still, you keep imagining anyway. It's the only story horrible enough to keep the insistent reality of what you've just seen from springing to the front of your mind.

6. The Religion of Revenge

It's not necessary to relish in the bloodshed to come. It's not even necessary to believe the killing can do any good. It doesn't matter because, when that folder opened, you were converted to a religion deeper than faith, a spirituality that requires swift, bloody action as worship. The new faith's God won't grant you any boon. It's so real and everywhere and inscrutable...it doesn't have to bribe you. You must see the devils in those photos dead, or you must suffer the sin of a life where you did nothing. You can't be sure when or how, but you're certain on a bone-deep, biological level that the trespass of standing still could never be forgiven, by you or anyone else. The punishment for seeing and pretending to stay blind is a curse that will haunt you into the grave. It has to be done. By you. Now. It is not a decision; the images before you are a commandment, a prophecy written into your flesh before you were born.

You've learned that your heart has always carried murder. The children in those photos reached into your chest, ripped it out, and showed it to you. Their pleading eyes look down at the blackness pulled from you, and then back up. They ask, "Why have you not put this to use? Why did you not save us?"

7. The Drought of Tears

You used to cry. Not often. Never when you were supposed to cry, or at least it felt that way. It has always been a secret affair. A few weak moments in an airport bathroom. A diversion into the garage to "get more drinks" at that friend's party. There never existed rational reasons for it besides general stress or, on even rarer occasions, sorrows that would make anyone weep. Understandable breakdowns. But no longer. You understand nothing anymore. Not after looking in that folder. The embarrassment of your periodic, secretive tears burns like an ember compared to the total, forest-fire rage you feel towards yourself at the stone-blind privilege which enabled you to think anything that has ever happened in your life has been worth tears.

All the world's sorrow should have been saved and expended in the moment that camera flashed. Those that lose limbs instinctively know that there exist sensations they can never feel

again, and the remorse manifests into a tangible, phantom pain. Like the amputee, you also can sense the ability to indulge your pitiful melancholy slipping away from you forever. It will never return. Tears will never seem worthy again, and — because you know they will never again grace your face — the phantom sensation of the drops streaming down your cheeks refuses to stop.

8. The Act of Self-Defense

“How dare they?” That’s all that runs through your mind. How dare they? How? You never asked to see that. You’re angry at those who saw it first, but you can understand why they showed you. Who would want to be the only person to have seen those pictures? The weight of it...it would kill you. No. NO! You can understand spreading the fucking misery around...forgive it even. But making something of it? Creating with it? Like that! How DARE they? How fucking dare they?! What they’ve stolen...the thing seeing those images took without your god-damn consent? That alone would be worth the killing.

That could be it, and the blood would be justified. But that’s not it, is it? Not the only crime by a damn sight. No, they did that to people, and then made sure the blasphemy could worm its way through the world on millipede legs and burrow into your eyes and make a nest in your mind and you can’t get it OUT because it bites at you as you reach in to yank it free. It lives there now, inside you, forever. For that, they must die.

How dare they?

9. The Sound of Colors

Synesthesia isn’t something you thought you had. You had a friend in school who claimed she could taste words, but you never gave it much thought besides thinking it might be cool to try sometime. However, after seeing the folder, you must reconsider. You realize that you’ve always been able to hear pictures and photographs. If it was cartoonish scribble of a child’s imaginary friend, your brain provided a little chirp of what the creature must sound like. If you see your friends vacation pictures, you ever-so-briefly can hear the waves drowning out their whispered conversations on the beach. You can imagine catching a whiff of sea breeze. The sensations were so brief and obviously confabulated that you didn’t even register them as existing, not to mention suffering from synesthesia.

But now you know they were always there, because the stuff in that folder is disturbing for many reasons, but the one you can't help but fixate on is the sound of those images. Inventing what such images must have sounded like is a symphony of madness. You would stab out your ear drums to make it stop. Perhaps if the ones responsible are put down and burned with the blasphemous files, you can again return to blissful silence.

10. The Theater of Strength

You've seen worse. Yep. Must have. This isn't your first clown fuck. That's why the group — whatever it is and whatever it is called — is circling you. They know talent when they see it. Others don't understand because they haven't seen the things you've seen. They regard your humor as offensive and your coping mechanisms as "maladaptive"...whatever the fuck that means. But for people which, apparently, have to deal with the stuff in that folder every day, the only skill that matters is being able to look without blinking. And that's exactly what you're going to do, because you've seen worse. You've definitely seen worse. You have to have, right? Certainly? You decide to think of every terrible thing that's ever happened to you, then every terrible thing that you've ever seen, then every terrible thing you'd even tangentially heard about or saw in movies.

You stack the horrors high, trying to blot out the one you just witnessed, hoping to bulwark yourself from it by fortifying your soul through sheer mass of scar tissues. You keep stacking and stacking, but the folder still looms impossibly large against the grand total of your life's combined suffering. It is so ominously, hugely awful that you're having trouble finding a perspective in which you can view and contain and delimit the repugnance oozing off the pages. No matter how high you climb, you can't seem to get above the tsunami of despair that flooded the room when the folder opened. But you keep stacking. You keep focusing on everything awful in the world except...except that. You have seen worse. You will stay strong as long as you can convince yourself of that lie.

Chipping the Teeth

For the remainder of this operation the Handler must find ways to isolate and scar the Agents...literally. While the unnatural force called Bast works in mystery, as it selects and reshapes destinies to serve its appetites, it identifies all its pawns with a "love bite." It manipu-

lates causality to physically mark those who shall serve as its teeth, and it is by these marks the Teeth may be recognized by its faithful.

The Agents have not been selected by Clove so much as fate, and the climax of the chapter “Go Forth” involves realizing this incomprehensible truth. “Chipping the Teeth” should be accomplished before Agents enter the guest bedroom in the cottage located at Cornucopia House. Therefore, the Handler needs to call for a scene with each Agent that accomplishes the following before that time:

- The Agent is isolated from their peers.
- An animal or animal carcass displays odd behavior.
- The Agent is physically damaged by the creature in some way, resulting in the loss of 1 HP.
- The Agent is asked where on their anatomy the wound was taken.

The steps are vague so that the Handler can adapt them to fit the direction of the game. The illusion of freewill still exists; the point is to make the Agents realize that their own choices have already been accounted for in the grand, secret, plan. For help, this section includes example encounters that can occur at various phases in the operation to “Chip the Teeth.”

In The Field: Avoiding Fate

Players may attempt to meta-game after the first few “chipping” encounters in an attempt to avoid their fate. If Agents takes steps to avoid such encounters, the Handler’s job is to remind them that such a thing is not possible. In fact, the further Agents go to avoid an animal attack, the more unlikely the encounter that scars them becomes. SAN loss due to these increasingly improbable situations should be increased accordingly.

For example, during a playtest, one of the players went to extreme lengths to avoid animal contact until the raid on Cornucopia House. The avoidance was effective until, during a fire-fight, the Agent found himself staring down the barrel of a shotgun. The shell went off, but as the flash cleared, the Agent saw the cultist writhing on the ground, her face blown off due to catastrophic firearm failure. The Agent found he’d only suffered 1 HP of damage due to the

severed head of a mouse, lodged teeth first into his cheek by the force of the shotgun blast. The mouse had been living inside the shotgun barrel. The materials of its nest effectively acted as a squib load, saving the Agent's life. The Agent now had a scar on his cheek from a mouse "bite" as well as the unshakable certainty that he was marked by fate.

During Research

If at any point an Agent needs to go home to get supplies or erect a cover for the unexpected mission, the Handler should ask if they or any of their Bonds have pets. A beloved family dog or disinterested cat savagely tearing into the hand of the Agent before returning to normal is a good way to start.

Investigating Clove or Families Without Frontiers at a library or similar archive sees the Agent retrieving documents that at first glance seem fine, but on closer inspection, writhe with caterpillars and moths. One of the creatures bites the Agent as it flies up from the half-eaten pages. If a specimen is retrieved and studied with **Biology** 30% or **Science** 50%, the species identified is *Calyptra minuticornis*, a vampire moth indigenous to Southeast Asia. It has no business in Maryland. Its presence is an utter mystery.

During Preparation

The parking lots of America harbor all sorts of creatures. Crows, pigeons, or seagulls peck scars into flesh in bizarre mid-flight collisions. Sick raccoons and possums bite at ankles from the underside of cars. An ancient piece of roadkill, unnoticed, sends jagged teeth and ribs through the soft soles of shoes.

Pet departments still exist in many big-box department stores in 2001. An accident with a terrarium could leave a snake loose in the building, free to strike from nearly any shelf of goods.

A stray dog stands in the street, seemingly trying to get hit by a car. Attempts to rescue it or end its pain after being struck cause it to lash out before dying.

During Armament

Rural gun shows often provide booth space to those selling jerky as well as firearms, catering to the game meat market. These products are seldom held to FDA standards. An Agent coerced into buying jerky chips a tooth on a bone fragment left in the mystery meat.

Gun shows and police departments often have service dogs on site. An Agent gets lightly mauled by a German Shepard trained for years to avoid such wild behavior.

Police lockers can contain exotic animals for temporary storage until they can be entered into evidence for animal hoarding/smuggling cases. Nearly anything could be inside while officials wait for animal control to come fetch it. An Agent is assaulted by a beast while attempting to steal untraceable arms from the locker. Terrifyingly, after the brief attack, the chimp/crocodile/boa constrictor/tarantula (or whatever the Handler may choose) docilely returns to its cage of its own volition.

During Transportation

Vehicles long kept in impound or driven rarely can develop infestations of spiders, wasps, bees, and other pests. Agents seeking easy pickings for a stolen car find their skin pricked by dozens of swarming insects while driving away. However, after the initial attack, not a single specimen can be found. It's as if they filed out uniformly once the damage was done.

During Scouting

The guard dogs at Cornucopia House don't behave like trained attack animals. Instead, they approach Agents docilely, never once barking. Once close enough, they bite the Agent, but then immediately lie down and expose their belly. They do not bark or move even after the damage is done. Even if the Agent puts them down, they remain hauntingly still while being slaughtered.

At The Cornucopia House

As a semi-functioning dairy farm, the fields around Cornucopia House contain cows. Agents sneaking to get to the main compound need to move some of the dumb beasts out of the way. One of the milk cows inexplicably bites or kicks. If the Agent dodges that surprise attack, send in the bull.

The children at Cornucopia House also maintain a zoo of mistreated pets. Releasing them can lead to a menagerie's worth of injuries.

Preliminary Investigations

Clove emphasized speed during the briefing, but Agents may seek to investigate the *why* before the *how*. This is fine so long as it doesn't turn become a grind. Preliminary investigation provides the Handler time to "Chip the Teeth," and lets the player's get into the heads of their Agents before roleplaying those personalities in extreme conditions. However, don't let the background research take long, after all, the cartoon cat folder and its flashbacks don't bode well for the health of any children at Cornucopia House.

Agent Clove

Agents may wish to investigate Agent Clove. **Criminology** at 60% or a successful roll recognizes Dr. Marie Noella based on her academic work alone. A successful **Search** as she leaves the gas station catches her sipping a bottle of water as she drives off. Getting the clerk to show the credit card receipts reveals her identity through the water bottle purchase, so long as the Agent can access a financial database and make an **Accounting** roll.

The same information can be gleaned from her license plate, but it's a rental and the Agent must first convince Hertz Rent-a-Car to give up the records under false pretense.

Knowing Dr. Noella's identity isn't much help. Nothing in her files indicates her role in the group, though reading her work does reveal an under-appreciated mind. Once she's made, Noella's address is easy to find. Surveilling the house reveals that she has a husband and young son. **Stealth** is required to do this without being made by the extremely paranoid Dr.

Noella. If she spots a tail, she immediately loads her son and husband into their Range Rover and speeds off. From there, it's an opposed **Drive** test to see if she loses the tail. If she's pulled over, she comes out with her hands up.

Those that covertly observe the Noella family find that they appear to be having marital trouble. After sleeping in, Marie gets into a loud argument with Charles. Agents with a directional microphone or other surveillance equipment, hear an increasingly angry man protesting his wife's sudden acceptance of a faculty position in China. A child — 4 year-old Timothy — can be heard crying in the background.

Marie's justifications waffle from mid-life crises to claiming the trip is necessary to save the marriage (which Charles did not know was in trouble). Midway through the afternoon, professional movers arrive and start packing up the house. They work into the night, directed by the couple that are no longer speaking to each other. Around 11 PM, the movers finish loading, the family packs bags into their vehicle, and everyone heads to the Baltimore–Washington International Airport. The moving vehicle continues to international baggage handling while the family spends the night at Motel Six. The next morning (4 FEB 2001), they enter the airport at 6:30 AM, boarding a 8:45 AM Air France flight to Paris. Using credentials to obtain ticket information reveals the flight eventually connects to Hong Kong International.

If Agents manage to subdue and isolate Dr. Noella without encountering law enforcement, she realizes the game is over and reveals what is actually happening. She's insistent that the only thing she made up was her mandate from the group, and she only did so because she has legitimate reason to fear there is no one left to provide it. The task still needs to be done.

Contacting A-Cell

Attempts to move information up the chain about Clove don't work. The Friendlies don't have anyone to ask for help in the first place, and the cross-cell contact Agent has no way of pushing the matter if A-Cell does not answer.

No amount of emailing, calling, or dead dropping seems capable of rousing A-Cell. This isn't terribly unusual, but the more emphasis the Agent puts into reporting Clove, the more deafen-

ing the silence. If the issue is pressed, 0/1D4 **SAN** checks against helplessness may be called for. It eventually becomes clear that either A-Cell doesn't care or can't care.

Families Without Frontiers

Clove's limited security clearance allowed her to pull basic information about Cornucopia House's parent company, an ancient non-profit organization dating back to 1948 called Families Without Frontiers. The EIN and 501-C3 status of Families Without Frontiers is included with the documents.

Access to a government database and any skill in **Accounting** reveals more details. According to an inconclusive audit performed in the 1980s, the organization's focus is the adoption, acculturation, and placement of orphans from Eastern Europe in the US. The property is listed as a hobby dairy farm: but its profits are not enough to even pay the property taxes. In 1998, the farm sold 150 acres of its property to Maryland for development of a new state prison.

The organization was founded by and remains the sole property of Yelena Kalamatiano. According to the records she is the only employee of Families Without Frontiers. It's almost certain that Kalamatiano has other employees off the books based on the sheer amount of work to maintain a hobby dairy farm and orphanage.

Financial Deep Dive

A successful **Accounting** reveals more perplexing findings. The organization is supported almost entirely from businesses located in an unincorporated section of Eastern Chesapeake Bay. While there are a few personal donations from individuals with Russian names, all support seems to come from a series of jewelers or taxi companies.

These businesses have been making donations like clockwork every year for decades — sometimes donating over 50% of their year's reported profit. Whenever one of these corporate supporters folds, it is replaced by another company owned by the same persons; however, over the years the list of donors has dwindled. Families Without Frontiers appears to be in financial distress. According to the expenses list, flights from Eastern Europe stopped in 1997 after years of decreasing frequency, and it appears they have pivoted to local adoptions.

Agents that are aware of Coachman Taxi Garage and that roll a critical success correlate the list of donors with the recently destroyed Coachman Taxi Garage in Holland Point. The building burned in a mysterious fire the previous month.

Cornucopia House Farms

Knowledge of the charity's finances can be combined with a roll in **Anthropology** or **Archeology**, if the skill is above 0%. Success suggests something odd about the dairy farm's expenses. Unless they are throwing out all their milk, they purchase far, far too many cows to report dairy earnings so low; livestock makes up the majority of the adoption agency's expenses. Furthermore, a few receipts suggest some of the cattle aren't from milking breeds, and the farm reports no earnings from their slaughter. With a life expectancy of 4-6 years, there should be enough cows packed on the 25 acres of Cornucopia to support a small industrial milk operation. They also should have grazed such a small plot of land into a mud puddle.

Agents can also roll **Bureaucracy** at the public records office to pull up survey records of the land, providing a basic map of the property.

Yelena Kalamatiano

Yelena Kalamatiano (76 YOA) appears to be an ideal, tax-paying citizen dedicated to the welfare of children. However, if paranoid Agents travel to the J. Edgar Hoover Building archives in Washington and succeed at a **Search** roll, they find that prior to WWII, a Yelena Kalamatiano was suspected in a series of kidnappings in Los Angeles. Because the majority of victims were Mexican-American, the FBI decided "to allocate resources elsewhere." The ancient file indicates the Russian Orthodox community to which Yelena belonged had mostly left Los Angeles by the time, after the 1926 murder of a church elder. The priest's murder was ascribed to racial tensions, but one unnamed man interviewed about Yelena is noted to have claimed "that fucking little bruja did it, just like before. I know it."

If asked, no law enforcement agency has any interest whatsoever in reopening the case and no amount of skill checks can convince someone to reopen an eighty-year old, racially charged whodunit.

Maryland State Adoption Agency and Child Protective Services Unit

All adoption agencies, group homes, and juvenile residential facilities in Maryland are under the joint administration of the Maryland State Adoption Agency (MSAA) and Child Protective Services Unit (CPS) of the Department of Social Services. Any skill above base in **Psychotherapy**, **Bureaucracy**, **Law**, or **Criminology** can reveal the basics of these agencies.

Disinformation: Synchronicity at MSAA or CPS

- In the lobby of both departments, a public service poster dominates a wall. It reads “Every child wants a pet, but Toxoplasmosis is no fun! Cats can spread disease that infect your child in the womb! (Paid for by the Maryland Department of Animal Control)”. The photo depicts a young boy and a puppy huddling in fear as they face an enormous, frightening house cat with giant green bacteria crawling amongst its slavering fangs.

The Maryland State Adoption Agency (MSAA)

The MSAA tracks the placement of children in permanent homes, residential facilities, and foster homes. Budgeting and staffing issues often mean that after a child’s placement, follow-ups get outsourced to private companies. Many of these organizations are accredited through recognized medical institutions, but, as private entities, anyone an insurance company is willing to rubber-stamp (read: the lowest bidder) can be contracted. This has led to states delegating the work of child welfare to questionable or harmful organizations: teen boot camps, evangelical conversion therapy, and juvenile detention centers. This situation is not unique to Maryland; it is the norm for most states in 2001. In short, the MSAA is likely to have records of all Maryland adoptions carried out by Families Without Frontiers, but those documents may not reflect what is actually happening on the ground.

FAMILIES WITHOUT FRONTIERS OF “FWF”: There are significant obstacles in gaining to MSAA records on Families Without Frontiers. The confidentiality of adoption records is one of the most legally binding protections provided under Federal law, and since 1947 all Maryland adoption records are sealed by state law. To unseal these documents, a judge must pass down a warrant finding that officials have good cause to unseal it. Failing that, what is needed is the

signed consent of all involved parties: the adopted child, the adoptive parents, the birth parents, and the agency.

Traveling to the MSAA HQ in Bethesda allows Agents a **Law** or **Bureaucracy** roll to see the legal paperwork ordering the records sealed. This courtesy is provided only to characters with law enforcement backgrounds; private citizens are told the MSAA can neither confirm nor deny the existence of any adopted children. They are then politely asked to leave.

Confidentiality documents refer only to the adoption agency by name; all other parties are referred to by case numbers kept in a protected ledger. According to the seal, Families Without Frontiers has taken additional steps to protect its records. In the case of many international adoptions, the consent requirement for unsealing is waived for birth parents (since they are located in other countries). However, in every instance, this common waiver for international adoption has been rejected by Families Without Frontiers. This means the records can never be unsealed without a court order, and the Agents are unlikely to get that warrant without an elaborate deception that would take far more time than they have. Agents with **Law** can forge the warrant as long as they know the name of at least one child involved, but such a tactic will likely result in legal blowback.

The safest way to gain access to the records is to break into the MSAA archives. It is a government building with a basic alarm system and CCTV. Agents that manage to sneak in undetected may roll **Search**. On a success, they glimpse a horrifying clue only visible across multiple files. In addition to adhering to the required paperwork for international adoptions in only the most minimal capacity, Families Without Frontiers appears to be laundering the origin of children in their care. Every adopted family listed is one of the donors responsible for the charity's finances. All live in the "little Moscow" neighborhood on the Eastern Chesapeake Bay.

In recent years, families that have adopted children from Cornucopia House have given up custody of their *own* children to the agency, just so those children can be adopted by *different* Russian immigrant families that have also given up children in the past. It appears as if a collection of thirty families are incestuously trading the possession of their kids.

Providing US Birth Certificates long after infancy is required in international adoptions, but immigration paperwork requires copies of the birth records from the parent country. Until 1995, Families Without Frontiers provided this information. After that, an increasing number of Delayed Certificates of Birth were granted without indication of former citizenship. These forms

are provided to US natives only if they are born to luddite communities from isolated religious sects, such as the Amish.

The records suggest nearly every child currently housed in Cornucopia House was born to some isolated commune and never provided a social security number. That...or Families Without Frontiers is stealing these children and getting them new identity documents after the fact.

MCPS and Kerry Houghton

The Maryland Child Protective Services Unit (MCPS) is exclusively staffed with accredited social workers and administrators and is officially tasked by MSAA to do follow-ups on adoption placements. However, social workers remain heinously underpaid despite having to record, process, and investigate every report of child abuse across the entire state. Cases related to adoption constitute a fraction of their responsibilities, and the result is a small stable of over-worked professionals carrying impossible caseloads at poverty wages.

Turnover amongst social workers is extremely high. Furthermore, MCPS has no law enforcement arm. Upon discovering impropriety in household, social workers can, at best, advise local law enforcement. Regardless of the severity of the crime and action advised by social workers, local law enforcement retains prosecutorial discretion and has little to no legal responsibility to follow through on MCPS recommendations.

ABOUT FAMILIES WITHOUT FRONTIERS: Using **Persuade** to chat up the administrative assistant at MCPS reveals the following: The Families Without Frontiers caseload was, for a time, considered cursed. The last two social workers assigned to the case both ended up hanging themselves, and the one before that ended up quitting. However, Kerry Houghton has been assigned for about three years and appears to be doing fine...or, as the receptionist says, “as fine as any of us are doing.”

Kerry Houghton is in her office when Agents arrive. She is 25, but looks ten years older. Photos on her desk show a woman who a few years previous was young, vibrant, and about half her current weight. Now, Kerry looks like the caricature of a DMV employee. She is unmarried, and her office is in such a disarray as to make sitting impossible due stacked file folders. Despite her appearance, Kerry is happy to talk to anyone with a reasonable explanation as to why they might be interested in her work.

She is careful to maintain confidentiality and asserts that, according to Federal law, she can't reveal any information about her cases without a court order. The only exception are instances where she feels the welfare of a child is under direct threat, at which point she must coordinate with local law enforcement. Of course, she says, if that was the case, she would be at the police station right now.

Kerry Houghton

Ensoceled social worker, age 25

STR 12 CON 12 DEX 12 INT 10 POW 12 CHA 14

HP 12 WP 12 SAN 60 Breaking Point 48

Skills: Alertness 40%, Bureaucracy 40%, Dodge 40%, Navigate 25%, Psychotherapy 45%, Stealth 20%

Attacks: None

Straws and Camelbacks

HUMINT rolls during Houghton's conversation notices that, though she is being honest about what she can and cannot share, every mention of the name Families Without Frontiers causes a wrinkle of stress across her forehead. Agents that pick up on this discomfort can hammer on the name, at which point Kerry assures them that not only can't reveal anything legally, that it's not even her case to manage! At this point, Kerry promises to get the Agents in touch with the person they need to talk to. She finds the reference number for Families Without Frontiers, and makes the rounds. She knocks on doors, asking if they handle case #121. The response is the same from everyone she asks: "I thought that was your case?"

Psychotherapy 30% or higher detects increasing levels of mania as Kerry discovers the entire office believes the case to be her responsibility. At this point, Agents can **Persuade** Kerry to check into the filings for Families Without Frontiers. They don't have to look directly; she can just check and tell them what she sees. If pressed, Houghton breaks confidentiality to perform this check — if only because she is desperate. It's plain to see Kerry undergoing a psychotic break as she frantically riffles through pages. Suddenly, she demands the Agents leave, she's

feeling ill and needs to go home. She abruptly leaves, causing a stir in the office as she passes through it in tears. During this commotion, it is easy to swipe the Families Without Frontiers file on her desk unobserved.

For the past three years, the home-visit notes for Cornucopia House orphanage have scored 3 on a 4-point scale in every category for every year. The notes page on the form reads as follows: “Sanitary conditions and chore load for children are acceptable and adhere to the rigors of farm life. Children appear happy, playing often and engaging in many educationally enriching activities. Interviews reveal that the children love their ‘Babushka.’ Much to do was made about her homemade cookies.” The notes page on all the forms contain that exact same statement, in a variety of handwritings, dated back to 1982. For the last three years, it is Kerry Houghton’s signature.

If Agents follow Houghton home, she remains too distraught to let them in, calling the police if pressed. If they gain access to the duplex when she isn’t home, they find that her home is a hoarding nightmare. Years old trash lie in corners. A dead cat can be found beneath the sofa. The kitchen is filled with filthy dishes and the stove singed. The stench of all of this appears not to have bothered Kerry, and her life appears to be proscribed to a few feet devoid of trash around one side of her bed. Succeeding on a **Search** at -20% reveals Kerry’s diaries (NEW REFERENCE PAGE XX). They reveal nightmarish conditions at Cornucopia House reminiscent of the photos contained in the cartoon cat folder. Later entries also depict Kerry’s worry about her failure to remember making such entries or visiting Cornucopia House. This distress continues until, one day, the entries begin parroting the text from the Families Without Frontiers home visit reports. Verbatim. Day-after-day. A little more than a year ago, Kerry appears to have lost the diary in the chaos of her filthy duplex and stopped recording her thoughts altogether.

In The Field: Showing Kerry The Folder

Even inexperienced Friendlies should know this is a terrible idea, but that’s never stopped Delta Green before. Kerry finds the atrocities depicted in the folder familiar — a bone-deep sensation of déjà vu — but has no ability to recall when she would have seen such awful abuse or why she wouldn’t have reported it. This provokes a 1D20 **SAN** loss, likely sending Houghton into some sort of psychotic break. Depending on how they deal with the raving social worker,

showing Kerry the folder also provokes a **Luck** test later in the game. If it fails, Kerry shows up to Cornucopia House while the Agents are there.

Pointing out the holes in Kerry's memory complicates things immensely, and Agents should come to regret not leaving well enough alone.

Preparation

Regardless of the story used to motivate the Friendlies, it's clear by viewing the cartoon cat folder's contents that the mission is wholly illegal. The first priority of Delta Green is always *don't get caught*. As Agents with law enforcement backgrounds know, anything brought to the scene of a murder needs to be securely discarded after the fact. That means drop pieces, un-registered vehicles, and clear entrance/exit plans.

Planning a Murder

Whether they call it a deniable operation or a scheme doesn't matter, the group must plan a series of killings. The Handler is encouraged to let players come up with their own ideas. However, if they get stuck or dither about details, skills can provide guidance.

Criminology, Firearms, or Law 40% knows that a good murder weapon requires two out of three things: a lack of trace evidence, a broken chain of custody, and/or an inability to find the weapon. If authorities can prove you owned the gun (chain of custody) and that gun was used in the crime (found weapon), it's still possible to get you into court, or perhaps even secure a conviction, even without physical evidence. Even if the authorities find a mystery gun with no DNA or fingerprints, you won't be drawn into a courtroom. Worst-case scenario, forensic evidence puts you at the scene, but a murder weapon of unknown origin tanks the case before trial. The best option involves all three: ditching a clean weapon you never owned in the first place.

In Maryland, this likely means securing a private sale of firearms under fake credentials. Failing that, a riskier option involves stealing a weapon or falsifying 4473 forms at a gun show. Once the gun is sourced, if possible, a completely separate person should buy ammo. As little time as possible should be spent handling the weapon, and then only with gloves after the weapon

has been wiped down. Tape should be wound around points of contact so it may be removed after the fact and make trace evidence difficult to lift. Used weapons should be destroyed, if possible, or hidden in a place impossible to find: burials or sinkings in locations far from typical routes.

Any level above base for **Forensics** or **Criminology** understands that criminals that pull off successful crimes, quarantine the crime scene. Clothes, weapons, and equipment should be bought with cash for the sole purpose of the act, across the widest time span and geographic area as possible. Criminals should be clad in masks, gloves, hairnets, and long-sleeved clothing, all of which should be burned with the rest of the equipment afterwards at a separate location. This includes phones, though it is best to leave all electronics behind while the deed is done.

If possible, bodies should be removed from the scene and bloodstains bleached or obscured; the longer it takes to turn a missing person's investigation into a homicide, the better. It's preferable to sink a dead body than to bury it, though doing so requires opening the thoracic cavity and weighing down the corpse. If it's impossible to move the bodies, they should be burned at the scene. Cars used in the crime should, ideally, be stolen and unreported. Afterwards, they should be burned or sunk, preferably at a separate location from the body or other evidence.

Perfect crimes don't have witnesses, just victims. Failing that, bystanders should never be allowed to see the suspect's face or one iota of skin; even a glimpse of eye color can be identifying. Bystander's vision should be obscured and they should be corralled in a central location. No names, no accents, and no unique diction. Preferably, no speaking at all.

Finally, organizing all of the above requires tactical and logistical awareness. **Military Science** 40% can plan entrances, exits, and rendezvous points provided the area of operations is scouted beforehand. Successful **Navigation** rolls can at least find local, remote locations for the removal of evidence if no one has tactical experience.

Armament

Agents can use any personal armaments they wish, though they should be prepared to answer to the loss of valuable property or, worse, service weapons. If they take the time to acquire weapons safely, here are their options.

Personal Sale

Kyle Chapman is a firearms collector in the Maryland area. He has been under investigation by the ATF on multiple occasions, but so far, charges have yet to stick. Kyle owns a chain of successful Gun and Pawn shops in the state and every historical gunsmith license available. In the past, these credentials have been enough to justify his armory. Kyle was an early adopter of Ebay and now makes as much of his money through selling parts and accessories online. He lives alone in a gaudy McMansion outside Baltimore. The decor of the interior waffles between tasteless suburban blandness and hunting paraphernalia, while the basement is nothing but gun safe after gun safe.

There, in his “man cave,” Kyle flies his true colors with enough decorations on the wall to fill a casual restaurant...provided the eatery was dedicated to libertarianism, misogyny, and Nazis. He wears a plaid shirt tucked into high-water corduroys. His Sig Sauer pistol and cellphone bulge from where his gut pushes them out.

When purchasing guns from Kyle, only the lightest deception is necessary. Short of filling out the forms in crayon, Kyle has no intention of checking them. It's a man's god-given right to do what he likes with his property. The Agents making the purchase roll **Firearms**. On a success, they get whatever legal semi-automatic weapon they ask for. On a failure, choose one of the following results.

Loser: The agent lost badly in negotiations with Kyle and paid way too much for the weapons, to the point that the expense causes damage to a Bond as the excessive spending is noticed and difficult to explain.

Upsell: Kyle convinced the Agent to purchase something wildly impractical for the task: a crossbow, a Desert Eagle, etc. On a fumble, both occur due to the Agent's lack of firearm knowledge.

Disinformation: Synchronicity At Chapman's McMansion

- A firearm purchased from Kyle Chapman was personalized by a former owner. Along the barrel, an etching reads, "Bring Only Death." If asked, Chapman refuses to betray the privacy of a client, though he assures the purchaser that the weapon has been "tested in the wild."

Gun Show

The Rosaryville Annual Gun Show is being held at the Rosaryville Community Center. Falsifying 4473 forms is a serious Federal crime and any Agents in attendance can expect to be recorded by CCTV. However, so long as no weapons purchased there are connected to crimes, little chance of discovery exists. Again, Agents making the purchase should make a **Firearms** roll to gauge the quality of purchased weapons. The Agent also needs a successful **Criminology, Law, or Bureaucracy** check to convincingly forge or steal identification documents to be copied during the purchase. Failure means that the sale is refused by the seller. A fumble might mean the law becomes involved.

Disinformation: Synchronicity At The Gun Show

- Gun shows feature booths by accessory companies appealing to the hunting and fishing crowd. In one, an emaciated old man sells exotic jerky from a table of cheap Tupperware, each labeled in an illegible hand. The shoddy, hand-painted banner above the table reads "APEX PREDATOR MEATS" in red paint. The man barks at passersby, asking them "Are you truly an apex predator? Do you know the taste of a feast at the top of the food chain?" The jerky ranges from the typical to the truly questionable: lion, elephant, wolverine, and a number of other protected species. Handlers note: the jerky is a sneaky method by which they can "chip" one of the teeth.

Stealing Weapons

Terrible idea. If you get caught: mission over. Even if you succeed, the weapons get reported missing. Still, it may be all the Agents can think of under stress.

Stealing from a private residence without being seen, running into the homeowners, or picking a house with an alarm system or safe, requires a **Criminology** check. Handlers make the roll for the players and choose a failure state from the list if the roll is failed.

Once inside, a **Luck** roll is required. On a success the house contains guns. Then, a **Search** roll is required to find the weapon. If that succeeds, make another **Luck** roll. On a failure, the gun is impractical (a single barrel shotgun, an elephant gun, etc). On a fumble, it's *wildly* impractical (a musket, etc). On a critical, the gun is powerful and highly illegal, equivalent to an Unusual requisition (a full-auto submachine gun, a heavy rifle, etc). The **Search** and **Luck** rolls can be bypassed if the Agent knows the victim, but they better succeed with **Criminology** to avoid major consequences.

Stealing from a retail shop requires **Stealth** to get in unseen and **SIGINT** to bypass alarms and CCTV. Failure of either roll alerts the authorities. Once inside though, the criminals have access to any firearms and ammunition a chain store could legally carry.

Stealing from an evidence locker requires a **Law** or **Bureaucracy** roll to concoct a legitimate excuse for adding the Agent to the chain of custody. Once the guns are removed from the locker, **Stealth** is needed to remove them from the premises and to bring them back unnoticed. A suspension and internal investigation are the likely results of any failure. If successful, any discovery that can be traced to firearms used in crimes might result in the wrongful conviction of others.

Disinformation: Synchronicity During Burglaries

- **Home Invasion:** The owner of the home has a ball python that has escaped from its terrarium and roams free about the house (Handlers should note the opportunity here for “Chipping the Teeth”). Otherwise, the snake is remarkably passive, observing the crime in progress or perhaps playfully curling itself around an Agent’s leg.
- **Retailer Burglary:** A giant banner advertising a sale in the firearms section proudly announces “The Hunt Begins!”
- **Evidence Room:** Note the opportunity here for “Chipping the Teeth” with animals held in temporary storage for animal hoarding cases or on-sight service animals.

Transportation

Nearly 30,000 vehicles were stolen in Maryland in the year 2000. Baltimore alone contains many neighborhoods where it is shockingly easy to steal a car. Access to license plates from police impound lots make theft even easier to hide.

Agents with **Criminology** 30% or higher know neighborhoods where the theft of a vehicle is likely go unreported. If the Agent wishes to try, they can roll that skill and find a seldom used vehicle unlikely to go reported in the next few days; failure on the roll, however, should be met by the Handler with alarms, bystanders, or the police.

Drive 50% or a success on an equivalent skill test (**Heavy Machinery** or **Science**) means the Agent knows how to hot-wire a car. It's unlikely for *any* thief to be caught before getting at least some time to change the plates. Anyone with a sufficient law enforcement background can be granted access to police impound lots, where the theft of plates would be trivial.

Disinformation: Car Theft Synchronicity

- On the road, a murder of crows circles a dead possum. They do not move when approached by cars. If Agents investigate, the crows take flight...only to later land in another circle with the Agent at the center.
- During the car theft, no matter how carefully they cased the scene beforehand, the Agent is surprised by an elderly homeless woman. The woman is blind. She walks past the crime, shouting to herself, "Beautiful! Beautiful!"

Scouting

The easy access to Cornucopia House is a lengthy gravel road off the side of Highway 274. The rear of the property abuts the corner of Crothers Rd and Northeast Creek. The government property purchased from Families Without Frontiers begins there, but it sits undeveloped due to funding shortages and a NIMBY (not in my back yard) campaign by local farmers against the proposed prison. Someone parked on the side road could walk a half-mile through the fallow fields and unkempt forest, approaching the house from the rear. The house sits atop a small hill, but its barn and a copse of trees prevent casual observation towards the Northeast.