

STATEMENT OF RECOGNITION

1. BELIEVED TO BE (BTB) IDENTIFIED DECEDENT

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d. I HAVE PERSONALLY VIEWED THE REMAINS BTB IDENTIFIED ABOVE. RECOGNITION IS BASED ON:
Birthmark and mole, left collarbone below line of amputation.

1. SIGNATURE

TS SIGNED

PRESENCE



A Scenario for *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game*

EYES ONLY

THE MOTHER OF MOONS AWAKENS

A lethal cord of cause and appalling effect connects the Vermont hills and a haunted woman a thousand miles away.

When a young woman in Alabama turns up in New England in an instant, Delta Green sends your Agents to learn how and why. Learning that her vanishing was the work of some strange and fearful gift is the Agents' first step on a journey of terrible revelations. To save her and others, they must follow a trail of horror into night-black woods and vertiginous hills where silence drowns all hope.

Presence is a complete scenario for *Delta Green*, the role-playing game of Lovecraftian horror and conspiracy. It is playable with the full rules in *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game* or the quickstart rules in *Delta Green: Need to Know*, a free download from Arc Dream Publishing. Learn more at delta-green.com.

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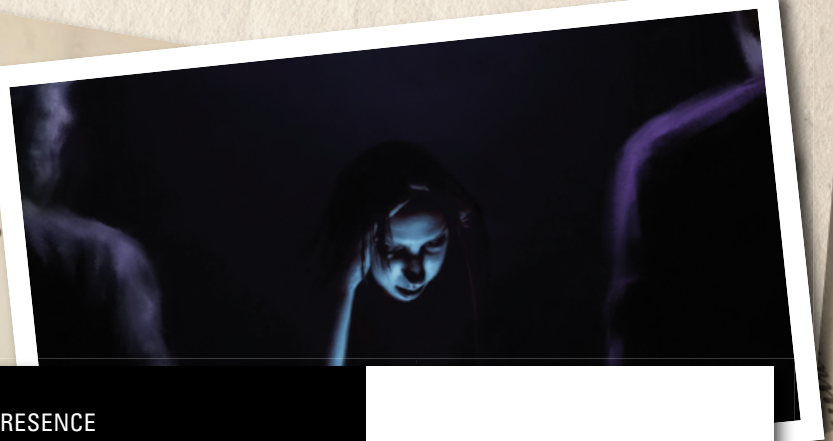
CATULLUS.

Tenerumque vidit Attin prope marmora pelagi,
Facit impetum: ille demens fugit in nemora tera
Ibi semper omne vitae spatium famula fuit.

90

Dea magna, dea Cybelle, dea domina Dindymi,
Procul a mea tuus sit furor omnis, era, domo:
Alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos.

MAGNA DEA



DELTA GREEN: PRESENCE

MSRP \$19.99

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Sold by Studio 2 Publishing

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This is a work of fiction.

Deseritur Scyros, linguunt Phthiotica Terrae
Pharsalus

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Presence

A Delta Green Scenario by Shane Ivey

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Introduction

Sidney Valdez, 13, is slowly dying of the same cancer that killed her father and sister. Her mother, Karen Valdez, spent years seeking cures from traditional sources. When she ran through her savings, she turned to then the strangest of esoterica. At last, in the wildest hills of Vermont, when her daughter was too weak to move, she found possibilities in magic.

Spirits haunting the woods whispered ancient secrets and promised healing. Karen Valdez saw them as indistinct lights glowing in deepest night. She never saw them clearly, but she had conducted rites to placate a power called the Mother of Moons, a syncretism of countless mythical powers: Cybele the mountain mother, the huntress Artemis of healing and plagues, three-faced Hecate, every ancient goddess she could discover. A classics enthusiast, she called the glowing spirits *hyleoroi*, watchful nymphs of the forest and mountains, and they never contradicted her. They said they could come anywhere she called. She gladly remembered the ritual sacrifices and prayers that they demanded. Thus, she turned her daughter over to the primal fecundity of Shub-Niggurath.

Sidney began to change into something strange, a spiderlike chimera that could infest the brain of another. The greater the psychic capacity of the victim, the longer the infestation. Karen decided this was the gift of the spirits, life for her daughter in another body. She sought victims who believed strongly in magic and psychic phenomena.

She has become desperate and increasingly careless.

Days ago, Karen found a potential victim 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 car in a disused alley with phone and ID locked inside. But she overlooked a hybrid smartwatch that Bullock wore, seeing its physical hands move and thinking it a simple mechanical watch.

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 a place called Indian Rocks, on the Vermont hill where Karen first met the *hyleoroi*. 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, or where she went, but it was clear that this young woman had enough power to save her daughter's life.

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CATULLUS.

Tenerumque vidit Attin prope marmora pelagi,
Facit impetum: ille demens fugit in nemora tera:
Ibi semper omne vitae spatium famula fuit. 90

Dea magna, dea Cybelle, dea domina Dindymi,
Procul a mea tuus sit furor omnis, era, domo:
Alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos.

MAGNA DEA LXIV.

Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus
Dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas
Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeetæos;
Cum lecti juvenes, Argivæ robora pubis,
Auratam optantes Colchis avertere pellem,
Ausi sunt vada salsa cita decurrere.

The Briefing

Just after 10:00 a.m. Eastern time, each Agent receives a priority message in whatever code or euphemisms the Handler likes. The upshot is to drop everything and go to Customs and Border Patrol Office F at Bradley International Airport, north of Hartford, Connecticut. The briefing begins at 4:00 p.m. Agents who can't make it by then must catch up as they can.

The Case Officer

The Agents meet Hannah Gruner, a Program case officer. She is a white woman 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), Gruner generally is good at keeping her PTSD and heavy opioid use away from agents' eyes. The Department of Homeland Security reserved Office F for her use for 36 hours.

Gruner believes this might be a rare opportunity to stop an unnatural incursion before it kills anyone.

Gruner says NSA algorithms picked up something strange last night. A smartwatch, with its own SIM card and cell service, received a text message in Alabama at 2:03 a.m. Eastern time (1:03 a.m. Central time in Alabama). The same watch received a network roaming alert at 3:07 a.m. Eastern time. It was then in south Vermont. The Delta Green 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 follow-up.

At 7:36 a.m., a golfer at Vermont's Stratton Mountain Golf Course called 911 to report that a distraught-looking woman had wandered onto the course. A police officer responded and found her uncommunicative. The officer took her to the emergency room at Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital in Townshend, Vermont, a drive of about 30 minutes. He checked her in at 8:51 a.m.

By that time, the Program's analyst had sent the event to a senior intelligence officer, who sent it to Operations for further investigation, who assigned it to Gruner. Gruner quickly determined—with social media and a few phone calls pretending to be with Bullock's school—that Robyn Bullock had been in Alabama around midnight the night before.

The Op

It's possible that Bullock found her way to a private jet heading from Alabama to New England in the small hours of the morning. But it's unlikely enough to warrant a closer look.

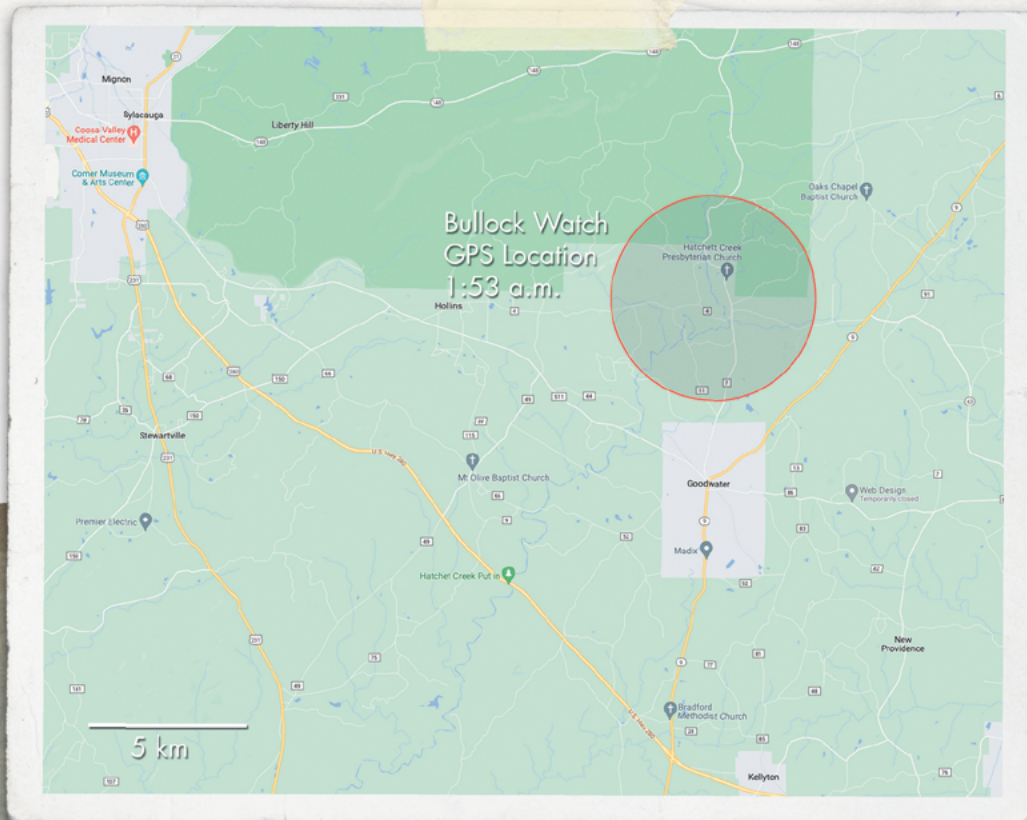
Gruner asks the Agents to investigate. She turns over cursory background information on Robyn Bullock: state driver's license and photo, county vehicle registration, social media feeds, names of immediate relatives, Social Security Number, and tax returns. If the Agents turn up a threat, they are to neutralize it and cover it up. If there is no threat, they are to stand down and let Gruner know. She gives the number for her burner phone for either case.

If the Agents are FBI, investigating Robyn's case as kidnapping or sex trafficking provides a useful pretext for their investigation. Otherwise, they go in as civilians and keep their heads down.

Townshend

Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend, Vermont is about a two-hour drive 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, overlooks the highway and river south of Townshend.

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



Timeline (EST)

- 02:03 Robyn Bullock's cell service logs her watch receiving a text in Alabama.
- 03:07 Robyn Bullock's cell service logs a network roaming alert for her watch in Vermont.
- 03:21 A Program algorithm flags the sudden change in locations of Bullock's watch.
- 04:09 A Program intelligence analyst flags Bullock's details in case of further events.
- 07:36 A golfer in Stratton, Vermont, calls 911 about a young woman in distress.
- 07:49 Patrolman Jason Revett of the Winhall Police Department responds to the 911 call and takes Robyn Bullock 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 summons 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. She expects to arrive about 20:30 Eastern time.
- 16:00 The Agents receive their Briefing.
- 16:19 Bullock wakes but remains incoherent.
- 19:00 The Agents arrive at Grace Cottage.

Grace Cottage Hospital

A small, rural hospital, Grace Cottage has a staff of about 40, including about a half-dozen physicians. About ten members of the staff are working when the Agents arrive, including the doctor who runs the emergency department: Embla Haugen, a Norwegian dual citizen, age 55. The nurse who examined Bullock is Kylee Hoffman, age 37.

Confidentiality

The Agents need a convincing pretext and a little luck to talk the doctor or nurses into sharing details on their patient Robyn Bullock. Simply flashing badges does no good. Here are a few possibilities.

They could obtain a search warrant from the district court judge in Brattleboro, a drive of about half an hour. That requires embellishing the details to make it look like a kidnapping or human trafficking and succeeding with a **Law** roll. A fumble draws scrutiny from the Brattleboro district attorney's office and, if that goes poorly for the Agents, the FBI.

They could pretend to be friends of the family desperate to confirm Bullock is all right. That requires a **Persuade** roll. It's at a -20% penalty if there are more than two Agents.

They could claim to be private investigators hired by the family and authorized to review Bullock's records. That requires a **Persuade** roll. It's at a -20% penalty unless they mock up an authorization form with forged family signatures, which in turn requires success with **Criminology** or **Law**.

They could claim to be federal agents hoping to rule out a possible kidnapping, taking the somewhat shady step of asking for information off the record, unsuitable as evidence if it becomes a prosecution. That requires either a **Law** or **Persuade** roll, and failure raises suspicions.

The Agents could skip talking to hospital staff altogether if they steal Bullock's clipboard chart with **Stealth** or call it up on a hospital computer with **Computer Science**.

Whatever route they take, the Agents must move quickly. Any success soon falls apart if hospital administrators have time to talk to each other about the strangeness of the case.

The Hospital's Findings

Hospital nurses or Dr. Haugen can tell the Agents that teens and college kids like to gather and party in the hills. Occasionally they overdo it, and someone gets lost for a day or two. They figured that was Bullock's situation.

Bullock wore a lightweight sundress and was dazed and disheveled from a long night stumbling through woods and steep hills. The officer who brought her in said she had walked out of a thick, deep forest in the steep hills just northwest of Stratton Mountain Resort. The resort has no record of her as a visitor and she appears on no security video there.

The initial exam found no serious harm. There was no sign of sexual assault, and only mild effects from dehydration and exposure. Bullock had abrasions consistent with spending hours in the woods without dressing for it. Pupil response and elevated heart rate suggested lingering effects of drugs. Blood was drawn for testing. Bullock was checked in for observation, given IV fluids, and allowed to sleep.

Bullock's blood tested positive for benzodiazepine, probably midazolam (best known as Versed), a powerful sedative that typically lasts a few hours and prevents formation of new memories. It is typically used during stressful medical procedures. Under the circumstances, it seems more likely it was administered in a syrup as a date-rape drug.

The hospital identified Bullock with her watch. A nurse heard it ping with a new text message. That was the first she realized it was more than a typical wrist-watch. 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, 22-year-old Emily, and called to discuss Robyn's situation.

Emily is flying up 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

When the Agents arrive, Bullock is awake but still in shock and upset. The Agents could examine her themselves if they convince her that an Agent is a doctor with the hospital. She is disoriented enough that it takes only a **Persuade** roll. Otherwise hospital staff interfere and potentially call police.

An Agent who examines Bullock with a **Medicine** roll or **Medicine** skill at 50% or higher finds something the earlier exam missed. Bullock 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 the puncture was haphazardly done. 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.

Bullock’s smartwatch is in a clear plastic bag with her clothes and other effects in her room. It has an elegant black face with copper hands and minute-markers. Stealing it can help with the cover-up. An Agent can pilfer it if someone distracts Bullock or with a **Stealth** roll if Bullock is watching them. Making a **Computer Science** or **SIGINT** roll while examining

data on the watch confirms her movements as described in **TIMELINE** on page 3, and gives more details from a GPS log. At 12:05 a.m. she left the Hunt nightclub and traveled southeast on Highway 280 past crowded suburbs and into the deep country. At 1:24 a.m. she turned onto a few back roads, moving northeast. At 1:53 a.m., she arrived at the vicinity of the unincorporated communities of Brownsville and Hatchett Creek. Between inherent GPS inaccuracy and strong rainfall, her destination after so long a drive can be narrowed down only to an area about six kilometers across. See **GPS MAP** on page 3. Unfortunately, the data does not center the target area well.

Interviewing Robyn

Robyn Bullock still suffers from her contact with Sidney Valdez. 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. 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 **Persuade** roll or **Psychotherapy** at +20% to calm her before a nurse or doctor orders the Agent to leave.

Digging Deeper

Succeeding at that **Persuade** or **Psychotherapy** 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 appeared somewhere else.

Last Night

The Agent can coax Bullock to remember meeting a woman at the club last night. Her memories are vague and muddled. She was with friends 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, in her words, "A blank space. Kind of shaky. Like a nightmare you're glad to forget."

Bullock's Car

Bullock drove to The Hunt from her apartment. She doesn't remember driving home again and does not know where she left her car, a recent-model red Nissan Altima. Agents with government credentials

can easily ask Birmingham police to see if it's at the club or apartment. It's not. If they ask police to be on the lookout for it, a patrol officer finds it about 12 hours later in an alley between two boarded-up shops about one kilometer from The Hunt. The car is locked with Robyn Bullock's keys, phone, and ID inside. It has no trace evidence to indicate anyone but Robyn recently drove it. Karen Valdez was careful. She drove away and put Bullock in her own car first, hid Bullock's car, wiped it down, then walked back to hers and drove home.

Walking Out

Has Bullock vanished before and found herself elsewhere? The Agent with a successful roll could get her to admit that she has—twice. 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 on the other side of the country.

One time she was at her apartment, high on mushrooms and meditating on a blue apatite crystal to instill clarity, perception, and memory for upcoming final exams. Bullock had heard apatite can unlock energy and creativity, and maybe that's what it did. She found herself at one of her favorite spots, high atop Red Mountain overlooking the city. She didn't black out or lose any time. After she calmed down and came down from the high, she made up some story about a date ditching her and asked a friend to give her a ride home.

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.

Bullock looked around online to see if anyone else had experienced something similar. She even posted obliquely about it at a local social media group for seekers interested in psychic and occult powers, "Bham Bell & Shadow." See **ROBYN ONLINE** on page 12 for details.

But neither episode 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** 13 or higher, or with **HUMINT**, **Occult**, **Psychotherapy**, or any **Art** skill at 70% or higher, or with **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 7.
- » 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 requiring a roll. The Agent now has that ability as if 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** or **Unnatural**: either **Apportation** or **Levitation**. **HUMINT** or **Psychotherapy**: either **Psychic Assault** or **Psychic Intrusion**. **Art** or **Occult**: either **Divination** or **Pyrokinesis**. See **ABOUT PSYCHIC RITUALS** on page 31 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 especially police, but she answers questions if the Agents convince her that it's in her sister's best interest. Unless the players make an especially good case for it, that requires a **Persuade** roll. She fights fiercely if she thinks the Agents are mistreating Robyn.

Emily knows about Robyn's past vanishings; Robyn told her about both incidents. 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 Robyn seemingly vanished from Alabama and appeared in Vermont. 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 Robyn's "weird occult" circles had reported disturbing events recently. Three of them over two

months turned up far away from home 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 their names; however, she points the Agents to a social media group where they gather. See **ROBYN ONLINE** on page 12 for details.

Emily can also describe the other members of her family, detailed in **THE BULLOCKS** on page 11. None of them knows about Robyn's walkouts.

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. If the Agents have government credentials, succeed at a **Persuade** roll with a convincing pretext, or just buy him a case of beer, Revett happily talks about it. If the **Persuade** roll fumbles, Revett starts to wonder if the Agents themselves might have been involved. He doesn't say that aloud but he quickly gets careful and quiet and starts trying to get information on them.

Revett has nothing to add beyond what the Agents could have learned at the hospital. But there is more that he does not want to say. An Agent can tell with a **HUMINT** roll. Revett 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. He assumed she was on drugs.

Revett wears a body camera with his uniform. A sympathetic Agent could get him to share footage of his encounter with Bullock by making a **CHA×5** 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 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 **Foreign Language** skill in Greek or Latin at 20% or higher translates "arachnoid mater" as "mother in the image of a spider." One with **Medicine** at 20% or higher recognizes the term as a name for a spidery membrane that protects the brain and spinal cord. In either case, a skill roll at +30% or simply looking it up online finds the same information.

An Agent with **Unnatural** skill can attempt a roll. Familiarity with a ritual or tome dealing with Shub-Niggurath gives the Agent a bonus of +20% or +40%, at the Handler's discretion. With failure, they feel a shiver of terror and vague recognition, 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 0/1 **SAN** from helplessness. With a critical success with **Unnatural**, the Agent understands that Bullock's speech refers to 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** from helplessness instead. Temporary insanity leaves the Agent raving and clawing at their own flesh: *"Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Mother lives within us all!"*

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

Indian Rocks

Asking Revett, or any local, 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 Mountain Golf Course known as Indian Rocks, overlooking a pond. Cops and doctors assumed she had been with kids there, got a little too high, and wandered out.

Searching the Internet for “Indian Rocks” leads Agents to 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. An Agent with **Occult** at 50% or higher or who makes a roll finds tales that it’s home to Pukwudgies: little gray-skinned goblins with magical powers, mischievous 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 types 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 7 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 Agent who succeeds at 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. The Agent gains 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, 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 Agent closest to having the necessary skill or POW feels the imminence and the immanence 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.

In the next set of home scenes between operations, an awakened or exposed agent begins to dream of Black Mountain, Vermont, and feel a profound impulse to climb it in person and explore the depths of its woods and ancient stones. Following that impulse with the "studying the unnatural" pursuit may lead to an encounter with one of the mi-go, an accidental journey through a stone gate into a mi-go mine beneath the mountain, or harassment by mi-go cultists. The Handler can determine the details and results.

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: a Standard expense 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.

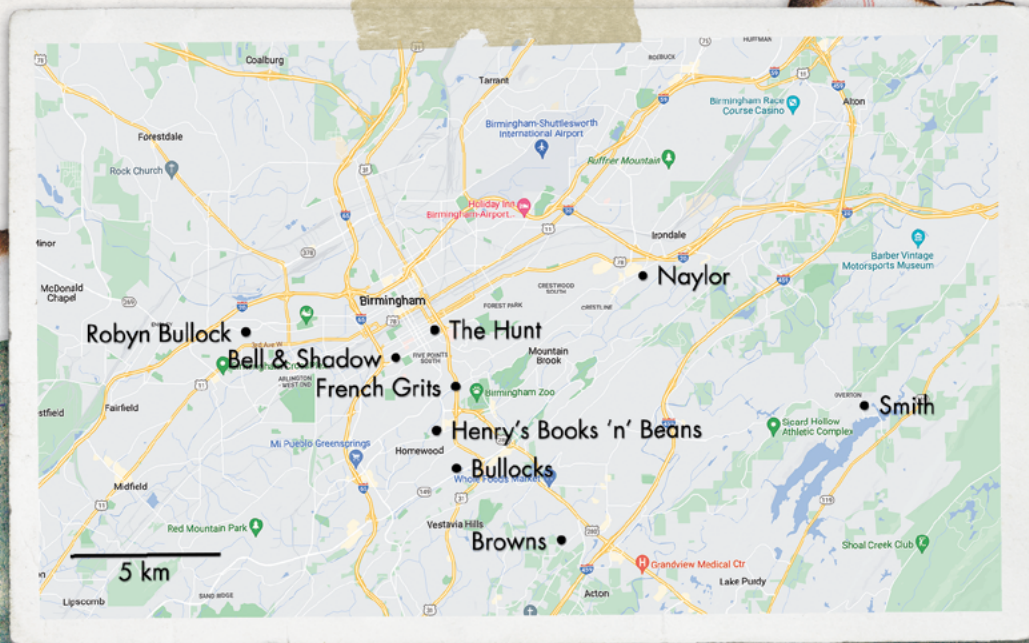
The Bullocks

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 "walkouts" (see **WALKING OUT** on page 6).
- » The Bham Bell & Shadow community (see **ROBYN ONLINE** on page 12).
- » Other recent apparent abductions (see **ABDUCTIONS** on page 12).

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. 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. She lives with her parents in the interim. 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 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 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 its aggressive moderators to approve new members as safe.

Robyn used the group to carefully sound out her “walking out” experiences: “Has anyone here had a GENUINE magical experience? Something happened TO YOU that you could never explain?” Many members claimed to have had supernatural experiences during meditations and rituals. It was impossible to tell which if any might be genuine. She abandoned that goal. Three of them had abduction experiences like Robyn’s. See **ABDUCTIONS** on this page.

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 provide in the application, or by using Robyn’s credentials if they steal them or convince her to help.

Abductions

In the last few weeks, the most active community discussions have been about a series of apparent abductions of its members. There were three before Robyn Bullock. No one else in the group knows of her vanishing. 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.

The three victims posted about their experiences. An Agent who spends a few hours searching the community learns the following information.

- » The names of the victims, which can lead to finding their contact information. See **PRIOR VICTIMS** on page 12.
- » The victims are all still alive and part of the Bham Bell & Shadow community.
- » None knew each other or Robyn Bullock outside the online group.
- » Before their abductions, the victims all had active social lives and open social media presences. Now all are more withdrawn.
- » Before their abductions, all repeatedly 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. 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 Karen Valdez sought and she released them more quickly. She had to give Robyn Bullock a second dose of midazolam to quiet her. Even so, Bullock’s power manifested in her panic when Sidney’s invasion began.

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

Melissa Naylor (“mellymoon205”)

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

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

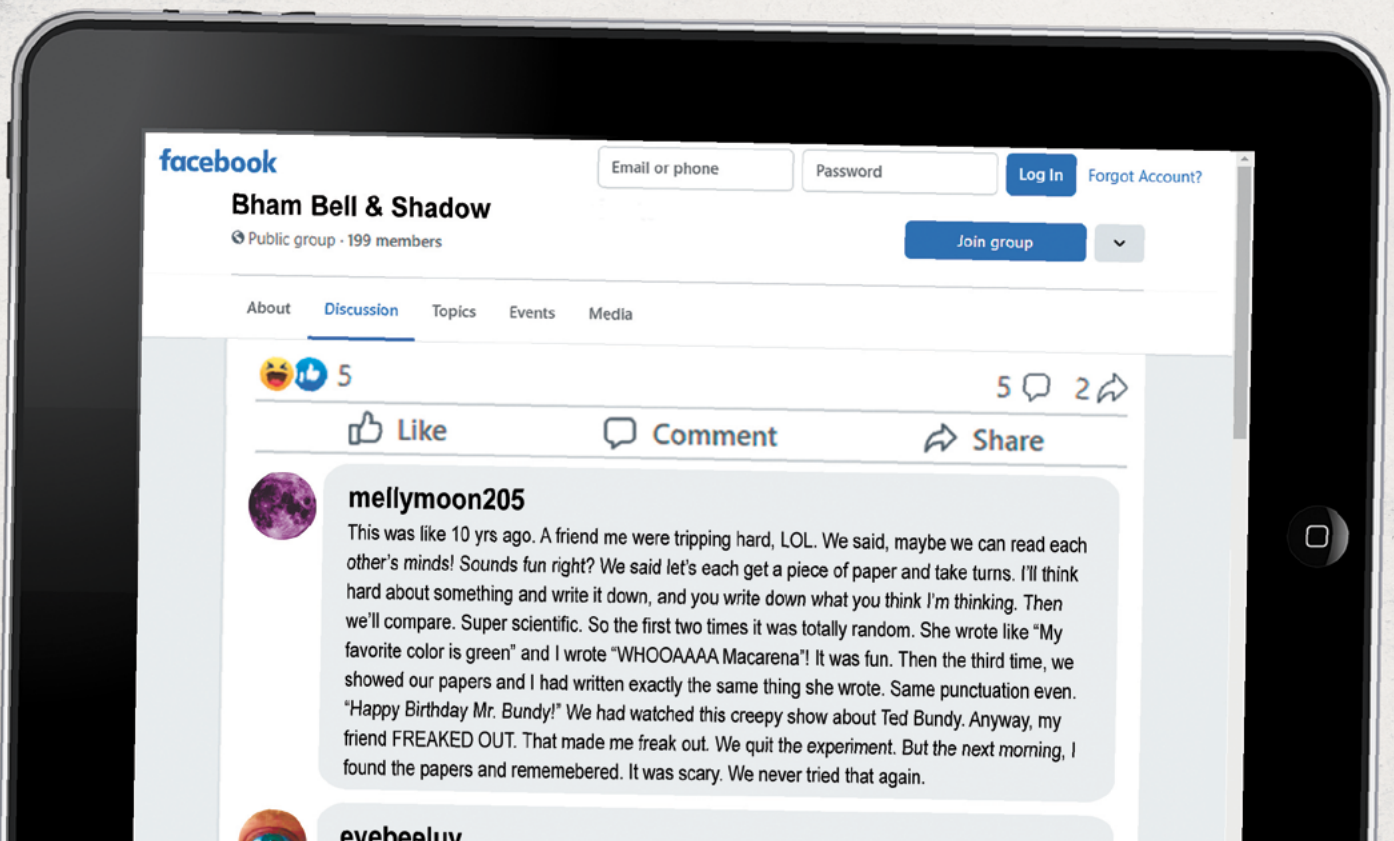
If asked whether she experienced anything odd or talked to anyone strange just before the abduction, Naylor says that’s a strange thing. Her friends later said she did. But she remembers nothing of it. Naylor’s friends told her she had a conversation at the bar of the French Grits restaurant with a woman. None of them knew the woman but Naylor seemed to. They were at another table, and the friends didn’t meet the woman or learn her name. Naylor’s friends told her the woman was a white lady in her late 40s, maybe 50 years old.

According to her friends, Naylor went to the bathroom, and the woman left. Then 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 told them she knew the woman from a New Age shop 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, she was just driving and singing and having fun. After an hour or so, she passed the sign marking the Sylacauga city limits. Then her memory stops again. After a gap of about 17 hours, she found herself on the outskirts of Sylacauga. Police helped her find her car. It was at a motel. She had left her keys, phone, and ID in the car.

Over the next few weeks, Naylor remembers having disturbing dreams of a dying girl. In her dreams 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. The girl is so sad, so sorry about it, but she can’t stop drinking Naylor’s blood. 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.)



Naylor was one of the Bham Bell & Shadow members who claimed a psychic experience when Robyn Bullock asked about it online a year ago. If the Agents ask about it, she confirms the story.

Eileen Brown (“eyebeeluv”)

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 was examined after her lost night, a particularly thorough emergency room

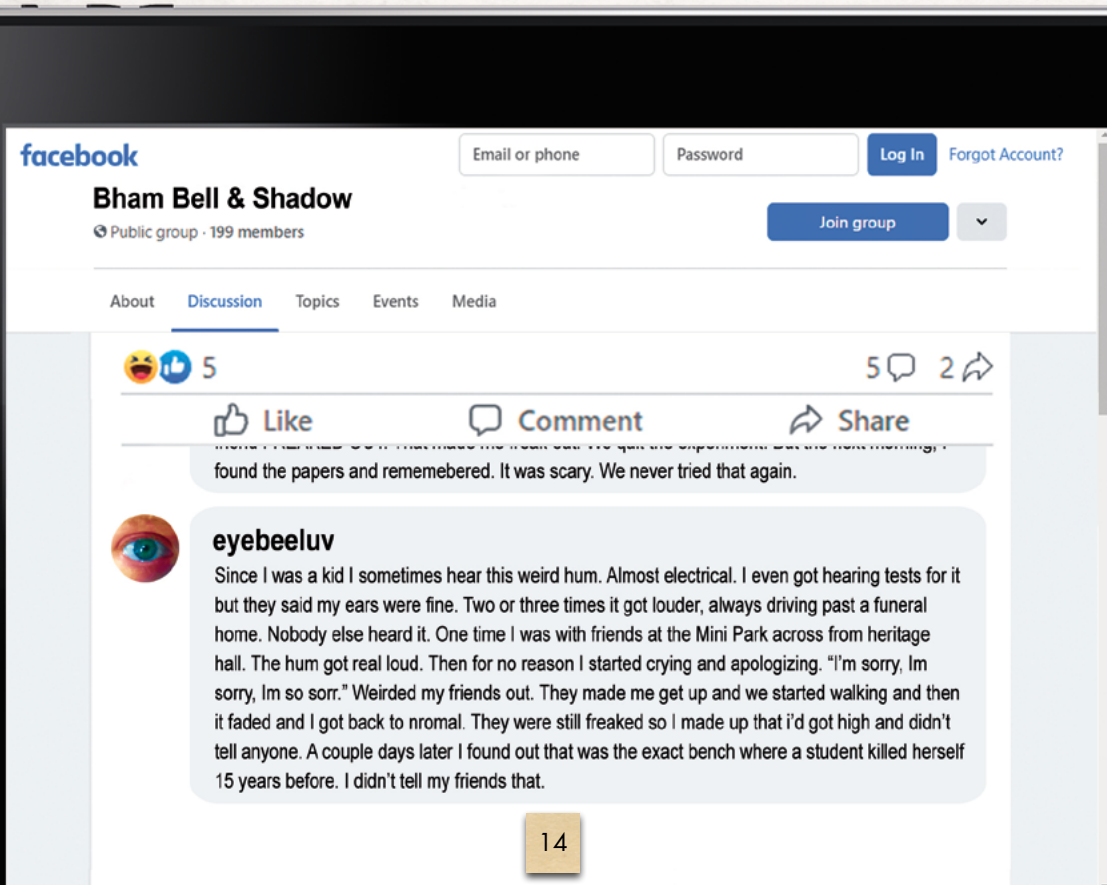
intern noted a mark on her lower back like from a spinal tap, which was scary because Brown has never had one. But she didn’t develop any new symptoms, so she has tried not to think about it.

Brown was one of the Bham Bell & Shadow members who claimed a psychic experience when Robyn Bullock asked about it online a year ago. If the Agents ask about it, she confirms the story.

Danielle Smith (“DaniDivines”)

Homemaker and part-time psychic medium doing business as Dani’s Divination. White female, age 23. Single, 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 and is deeply suspicious of anyone attempting to question his girlfriend. Especially after that night she was “abducted.” Agents can hear the sarcastic way he says it. 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 does not remember encountering 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. Williams 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 in her car at the town's one, tiny motel.

Smith was one of the Bham Bell & Shadow members who claimed a psychic experience when Robyn Bullock asked about it online a year ago. If the Agents ask about it, she confirms the story. She even gives the name of the client. But it falls apart if

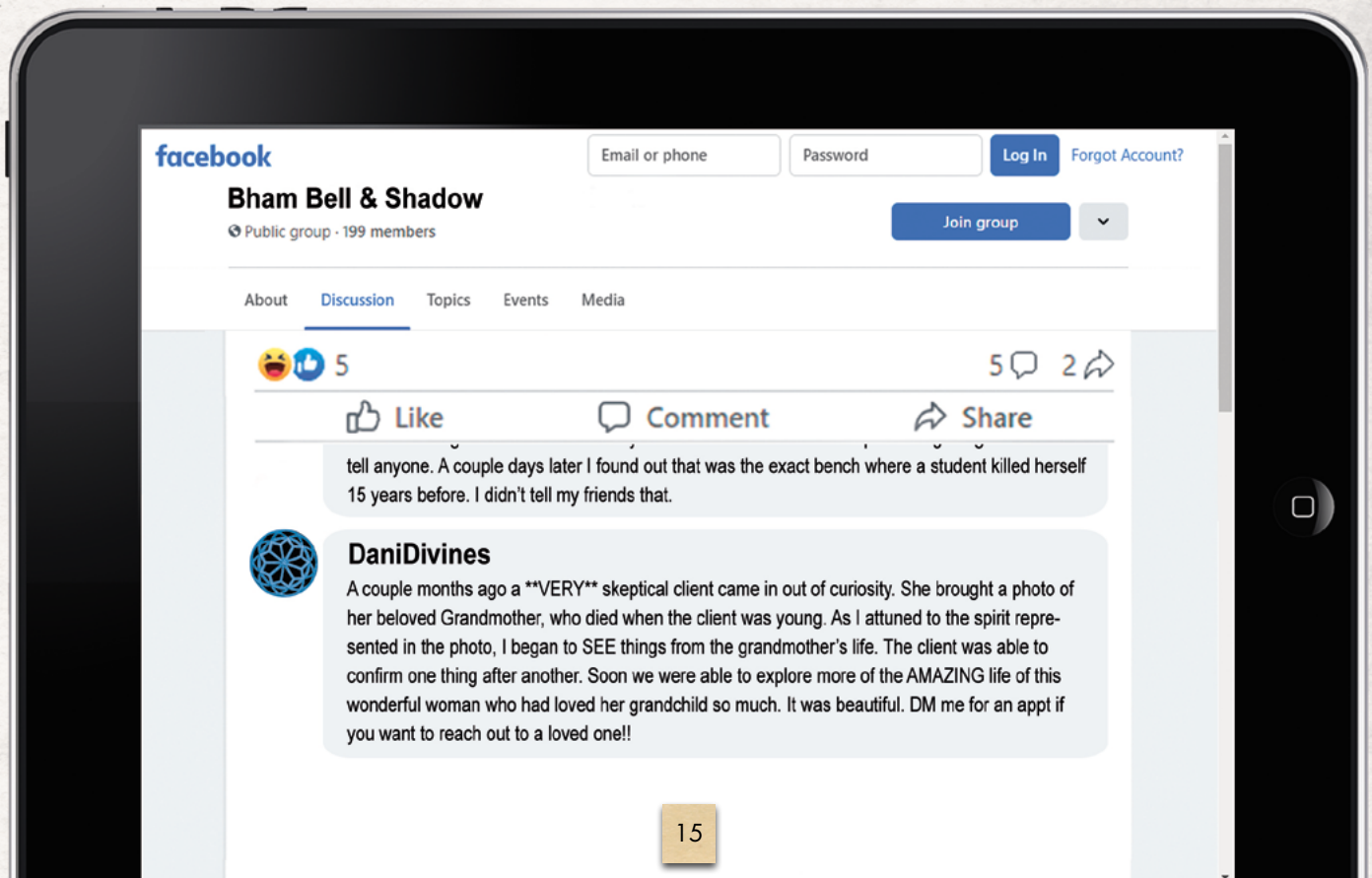
the Agents look into it at all. Smith made it all up to recruit new clients.

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. The photo was grabbed randomly from the Internet.

The Hunt

The nightclub The Hunt is owned and managed by Eddie Star and Luther Moore, a married interracial gay couple. They joke that if one of them turns out trans, they'll win "Alabama outrage bingo." They have absolutely nothing to do with law enforcement officers, local or federal, on-duty or off, unless one shows up with a warrant or they know and trust each other personally. If shown a search warrant, they call their lawyer and comply to the minimum extent the lawyer calls necessary. The lawyer, Sara Golding, is a



third-generation civil-rights attorney. She is familiar with every trick pulled by the FBI against minority groups in Alabama going back to her grandfather's earliest work in the 1950s. The more the Agents push and threaten, the more she smiles and digs in for a fight.

If the Agents approach The Hunt under some convincing pretext unrelated to government but meant to protect The Hunt's patrons—it likely takes a **Persuade** roll—they may find Moore and Star willing to help. Outdoor security cameras show Robyn Bullock's arrival and her later departure, confirming her story's details. She departed with a woman wearing loose, layered clothes and scarves, careful to face away from the cameras: a white woman, average height, average build, brown hair in a short bob. If the Agents compare the footage to a photo of Karen Valdez, it's almost certainly the same woman.

Moore and Star both know and like Robyn Bullock. Moore remembers seeing the other woman that night, mostly because she spoke with Robyn for a while. He had never seen her before and hasn't seen her since. If the Agents have a photo of Karen Valez, Moore identifies her as that woman.

Henry's Books 'n' Beans

If the Agents go to Henry's and show a photo of Eileen Brown to the staff, the barista recognizes her 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 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 bussed 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 of a Kia Sorento.

French Grits

The French Grits restaurant 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 Valdez, Miles Reid 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. Sidney is Karen's

daughter. Miles doesn't know what kind of cancer she has. 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.

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 it was not easy and didn't always work. She said the hardest is trying to heal someone if they're really sick.

Miles and the Abductees

Miles has heard about the abductions of three members of his community in the past month. He finds it horrifying. But speaking candidly to the Agents, he isn't sure what to make of it. What kind of abductor lets a victim go, unharmed, apparently trusting to some roffie drug to keep their secrets? He has never heard of anything like it. He would never say that any of the women are making it up, but it doesn't make much sense.

Asked for details about the women, Miles says he knows some better than others. He has spoken to Melissa Naylor the least. He knows she is divorced and has a young son. He sees Danielle Smith often. She recommends his shop to clients and he recommends customers to her for readings. She lives with her boyfriend. Miles does not know the boyfriend. Smith never talks about him. Miles lights up when he talks about 19-year-old Eileen Brown. He calls her an old soul, wise and sensitive, and says she has a real gift for the psychic world. He has met Robyn Bullock but has seen her the least. As for their claims of psychic powers, he claims to believe it absolutely with Eileen Brown and Danielle Smith. He doesn't know Melissa Naylor or Robyn Bullock well enough to say.

An Agent who succeeds at a **HUMINT** test while talking to Miles about the abductees picks up more than Miles wants to let on. First, he is truthful in believing Eileen Brown has a psychic gift. He thinks Danielle Smith makes it all up but he would never say that aloud. If it's a con, after all, it's a con that makes

him money. Second, he privately regards every one of them through the lens of romantic entanglements. He tried to spark a relationship with Melissa Naylor but it went nowhere. He expects to date Danielle Smith if she ever leaves her boyfriend. He's currently sleeping with Eileen Brown. That is a secret both of them hold very close to avoid trouble with her family.

Late at night, after the shop closes, Miles sometimes investigates young women who have caught his eye at the shop. He finds a woman's home and drives by to get a feel for how they live and what angle he could take to win them over. He files that away with whatever he gets in conversation about where they go and what they like to do. Sometimes he arranges "accidental" encounters to spark a connection. It doesn't often work out, but an occasional success is enough. Watchful Agents might spot him spying on Robyn Bullock, hoping to step in as a comforting presence.

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, a block from the courthouse. And an Agent with a job in law enforcement can get access to the camera network that reads license plates in Birmingham and cross-reference results with a state database. That requires no roll.

There are 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. It also matches the dummy social media account of "Darla Williams."

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 Silvia Marie Valdez, Karen's second daughter, who died three years ago at age nine. The Valdez family buried their dead in a corner of their own property.

Karen Valdez was a pediatrician at Goodwater Health and Medicine for 15 years until two years ago. If the Agents asking staff at the clinic about Karen Valdez, they could learn that she quit almost a year to the day after Silvia died. Perhaps it was for the best that she quit. She was never the same after the death and was 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 examine 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 girl 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 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.

Valdez Tries Again

From her home in Goodwater, Alabama, Karen Valdez watches the news and the Internet for signs of Robyn Bullock's return. Even after replacing her phone, 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, 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 roll **Alertness**, opposed by Valdez's **Driving** roll. If the Agent succeeds, they notice Valdez driving by Bullock's car and realize this is the third time they've seen her.

Left to her own devices, Valdez moves against Robyn on the ninth day after Robyn's return. 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. When Robyn opens the door, she steps in, points her pistol, and demands silence. She closes the door. She drugs Robyn again. Then again every few hours. She waits till three in the morning to bring a folded wheelchair up from her SUV, bundle Robyn into it, and load her into the car. She takes Robyn to her home and keeps her drugged unconscious until Sidney finishes the infestation that will awaken her mind inside Robyn's. That begins a struggle that slowly drives Robyn insane and eventually ends in Sidney's new self taking full control.

If the Agents know what to look for and put out an alert for Valdez's SUV, a Clay County deputy pulls her over before she gets home. Give the Agents a **Luck** roll. If it succeeds, the quick-witted deputy stops Valdez from using the Fascination ritual on him, arrests her, and wins accolades for saving Robyn from her abductor. That puts Valdez in county jail while the slow wheels of prosecution begin to turn. How the Agents deal with her and her daughter is up to them. If the **Luck** roll fails, the ritual works. The deputy stands motionless by the road for 45 minutes until a careless driver kills him.

Closing In

With the name of their suspect and at least a rough idea where she lives, the Agents can track her down. Getting to Goodwater from Birmingham means a drive of 90 minutes southeast on Alabama Highway 280, then ten minutes north on Alabama Highway 9.

Clay County

Clay County is rural and contains a handful of tiny towns: a population of 14,236 in 5,670 households over 1,570 square kilometers (604 square miles).

Like most of Alabama, Clay County is unofficially but deeply segregated. Racism is so ingrained as to be invisible to most whites. Calling out such racist attitudes or behavior, however gently, likely rouses defensive anger in most white residents. Black Agents face pejoratives like “Yankee” and “Democrat” (and “Fed” if they look or act like government agents). Those slurs stand in for racial epithets that are out of fashion in mixed company and that some well-meaning grandmothers shush as “mean.” Far worse racial slurs always lurk behind warily hostile eyes.

Most policing is handled by the Clay County Sheriff’s Office: eleven deputies, 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.

Most Clay County police have 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 warn that people in the country 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 **HATCHETT HILL** on page 21 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 20.

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 1D8×5 minutes to respond to a 911 call.



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Jimmy's House

Despite warnings, the Agents may try to ask Jimmy Swope what he did for Karen Valdez. See **JIMMY SWOPE** on page 27 for Swope's description and how that encounter might go.

Brownsville

GPS data can pinpoint Robyn Bullock's location before her trip to Vermont within a 5-kilometer radius in Clay County. But no one there knows a thing about her or has ever seen her. No one has any information about abductions or occult strangeness. Only identifying Karen Valdez can take the Agents to her.

The Valdez mailing address says Goodwater, Alabama, although the city limits of Goodwater (population 1,261) are about 5 kilometers 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 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, which are 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.

The Valdez House

The Agents have a few ways to locate the Valdez house. The exact location of the house appears 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.

Asking locals around Brownsville can lead the Agents to the Valdez house. They may also learn that Karen Valdez recently hired a dangerous local man to work on her house. Again, they need to give a convincing reason. People 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.

Many locals know Karen Valdez from her work a couple of years ago as a pediatrician in Goodwater, the nearest town with doctors’ offices. Others recognize her photo or name. Hispanic names are rare around Brownsville.

“Yeah, Doctor Karen. She was married to that Mexican. Used to build sheds and whatnot. Hard worker. Most of ’em are. Can’t say that against ’em. Don’t know where the 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 awhile 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 is big on that castle doctrine.”

If they have the Valdez name, perhaps the easiest way the Agents can find the house is to ask the letter carrier at the Goodwater post office. She can describe the route in detail if the Handler decides the Agents convinced her they have a good reason to be asking. She saw Jimmy Swope, a paranoid survivalist, working on the Valdez house a couple of months ago.

See **JIMMY SWOPE** on page 27 for details on Swope and what happens if the Agents approach him without warning. A **CHA×5** 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.

Asking around about the Valdez house can lead the Agents to Goodwater Presbyterian Church. Joseph

Carmichael, the groundskeeper, also tends the grounds at Hatchett Creek Presbyterian Church and Brownsville Cemetery and knows the Valdez family. The Hatchett Creek church has not been active since 2000, but former members and their descendants use it for reunions and special functions. Carmichael, white male, age 65, has family all around the region. He points east of the church and cemetery:

“Them Valdezes’s 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.”

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 kilometers 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 as though the car is driving too easily up the hill. The engine is not laboring. 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 that spawns 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.

In one corner of the property, a copse of trees shade a handful of family graves: María Verónica Rivera Valdez died nine years ago at age 63, Antonio Angél Valdez died six years ago at age 42, and Silvia Marie Valdez died three years ago at age nine. An Agent who rolls **Forensics** recognizes that Silvia's grave was exhumed not long after it was dug.

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 undergrowth, with tiny antennae exposed. An Agent who walks the perimeter can attempt an **Alertness**, **Search**, or **Demolitions** test to spot one or **Survival** to spot the faint trails where

Valdez maintains them. Looking for others is then at +20%. She worked with Jimmy Swope, a particularly crazy anti-police neighbor, to set up this "self-defense" system. See **JIMMY SWOPE** on page 27 for his details.

If Agents trigger the floodlights and the alarm that beeps inside, Karen Valdez goes to monitors and watches through the cameras.

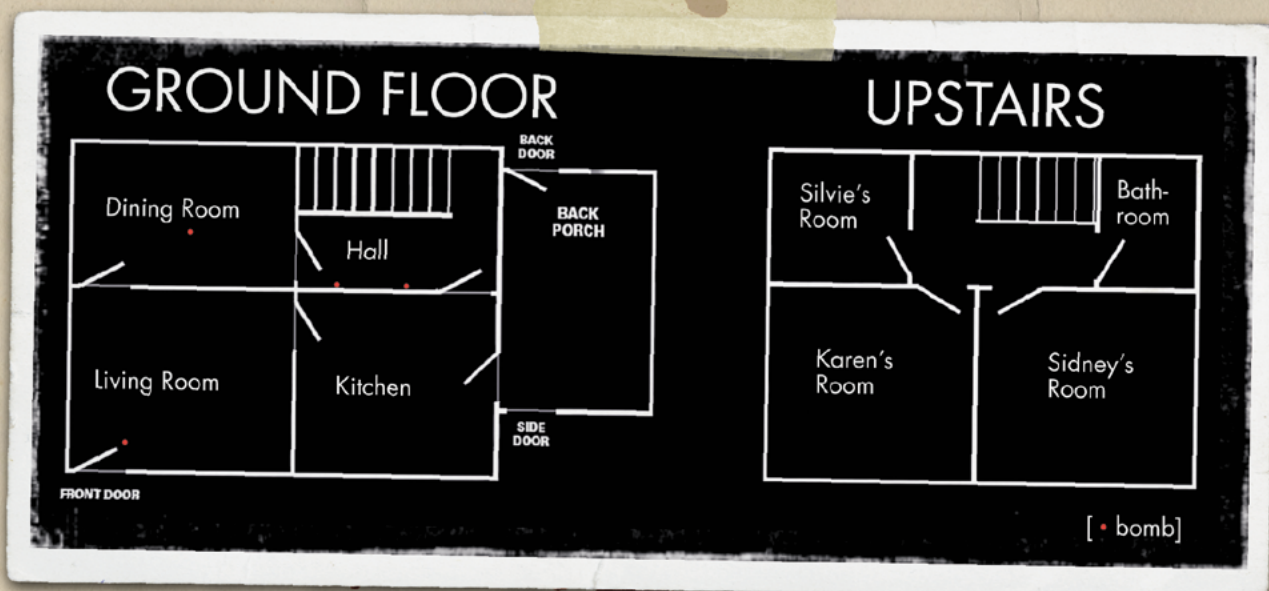
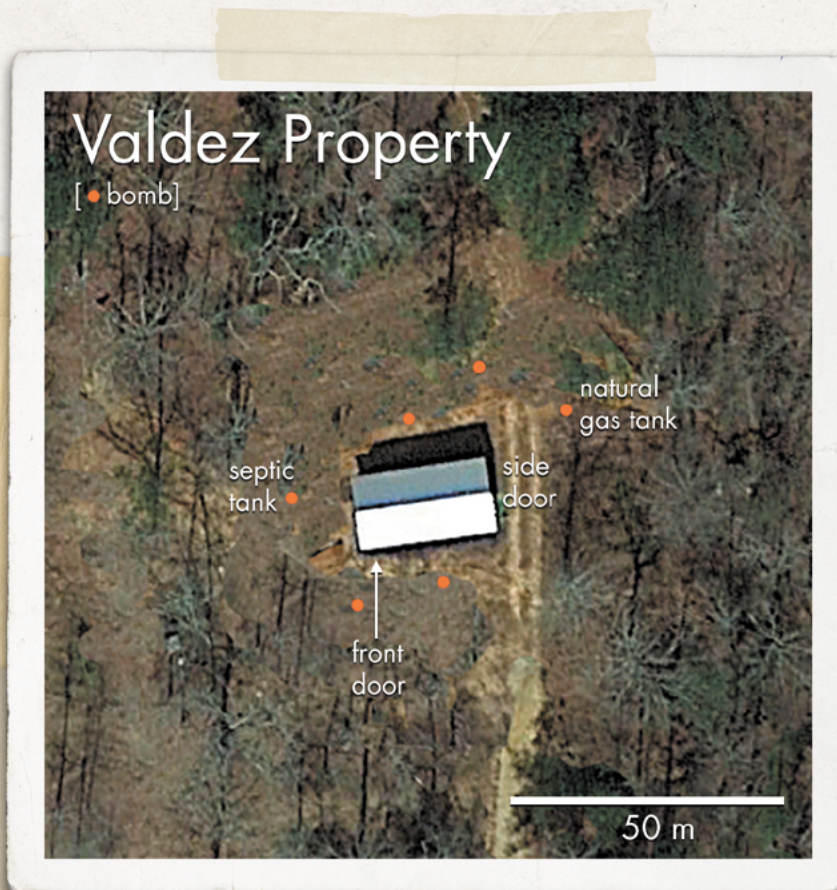
Negotiations and Approach

There is no response at first to car horns, hails from outside, or knocking at windows or doors. If the Agents persist for a few minutes or start looking for a way in, Karen Valdez gives a warning through a speaker that crackles loud near the front door: "Go away! This is private property. You're trespassing. You have no authority here. Get out."

The Agents could try to talk Valdez into surrendering or sending her daughter out for safety. That could open up a conversation about what Valdez is doing and why. And it could let the Agents recognize the obsession and paranoia that drive her. The shape of the negotiations is up to the players. Every few minutes of talking and trying to form a connection for communication allows a **HUMINT**, **Persuade**, or **Psychotherapy** roll. If two of those succeed, the Agents think it's unlikely Valdez will come out or allow her daughter to come out. If all three succeed, they know it for certain.

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 10 meters of one of those sites, Karen calls its number. 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 meters. A cellphone jammer neutralizes the bombs.

If the Agents reach a door that leads into the house, Valdez warns them again: "Go away! I won't tell you again." And she doesn't. She begins a final ritual to invoke the *hyleoroi* and the goddesses she thinks they serve: Cybele and Artemis, mother and



maiden, Hecate of magic and the moon, names from myth interspersed with imprecations from no human tongue. A horrid power that hides within old myths completes the transformation that will keep her daughter alive forever.

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 the naked eye. 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, a successful **Alertness** roll means they hear 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 have other problems.

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 means a couple of hooks pierce flesh. That requires a **DEX**×5 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 on the **Alertness** roll or **DEX**×5 test results in a hook in the eye, partially blinding the Agent and 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 **CON**×5. 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 **Demolitions** or **Military Science (Land)** at +20% or **Alertness**, to spot them. A player who does not specify it rolls 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 by flipping a circuit breaker upstairs. Each is indicated by a tiny, flashing red light, easily seen in the darkness. The Agents recognize what they are. Anything larger than a Golden Retriever that comes within 1 meter of a motion sensor 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 another 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

A simple hallway overlooks the stairs and connects the upstairs rooms.

Silvia's Room

The first bedroom at the top of the stairs is locked. It was Silvia'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 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. If Karen Valdez has time to abduct Robyn Bullock again, the Agents might find Bullock in this room, sedated, with a corpse for company while she awaits her fate. Finding the body costs 0/1 SAN from violence.

Sidney's Room

The room on the opposite corner is Sidney's, outfitted like a bloody pagan altar in an intensive-care ward. Monitors click and beep. Dried branches of a bald cypress stand like an arch over the bed, woven around with dry green vines of wormwood and sagebrush, crowned with antlers from some hunter's proud kill.

A small black bear lies curled at the foot of the bed in an unnatural prostration, as if bowing to the dying girl. Any attention reveals that it is only the taxidermied head, pelt, and claws of a bear wrapped around a Black child. Checking more closely finds the child days dead, castrated, his body encrusted with a hundred cuts whose violence flung blood across the shrine. The find costs 0/1D4 SAN from violence.

Sidney Valdez wears a hand-woven crown of laurel. She 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, mind, and soul. Sheets cover all but her face and crowned head.

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. Blackened, chitinous stingers sometimes extrude from her torso beneath the sheet, dripping not venom but something more like cerebrospinal fluid cloudy with genetic potential. Her inner organs have mutated into hearty masses that would baffle and terrify any sane biologist. See **SIDNEY CARLA VALDEZ** on page 28 for her description and what may happen when the Agents find her.

Karen's Room

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 successful **Search**, **Occult**, or **Unnatural** roll identifies Valdez's most important resource, a thick old tome entitled *The Mother of Moons*. See its description on page 31.

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 Agents came up the stairs with successful **Stealth** rolls, she is ready. She has already finished her invocation to the *byleoroi* and goddesses. 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 *byleoroi* and goddesses and the power that lurks behind those names. The sacrifice of her own blood and life complete 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 uncountable years of continued feeding and growth.

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 but 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 glowing intelligences that haunted the Vermont hills.

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 31, except that Bullock can teleport up to 100 m in ordinary circumstances.

Jimmy Swope

“Jimmy” is the name on his birth certificate, not “James” or “Jim.” Scruffy, fat, and often short of breath, Jimmy earns a mostly cash income repairing cars and air conditioners and hunting deer and small game. 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 that the Bible and the course of American history 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 depths of every fallen human soul.

He believes that the “expatriation” document that he filed with a gullible county clerk legally revoked 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 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 authority. He believes that the tree of liberty must from time to time be nourished with blood. He intends to nourish it well if strangers—calling themselves police or anything else—intrude upon his land.

If the Agents let Swope talk about all that, he eventually admits to knowing Karen Valdez and helping her build defenses at her house to make intruders wish they’d never been born. If he thinks the Agents are FBI, he says that especially includes the “Foreign Bureau of Invaders.”

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. A huge machine gun is set up behind the closed curtains of his living room window, pointing over sandbags toward the driveway.

Faced with intruders, Swope first yells through a bullhorn from 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 intruders return fire, he switches to the M2.

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 25 BREAKING POINT 20

DISORDERS: Paranoia.

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 a year after youngest daughter passed away. 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 covered for her shortcomings. But after Silvia died, Karen quit her job.

Since then, Karen has been busy. She devoted herself to occult healing practices and rituals with all the rigor she had once applied to medical school. The powers of solace and healing that she found in her research and meditations could not fully cure her daughter. That would require a more extraordinary technique.

Karen found hints of ancient spirits or gods that granted wisdom and power in the hills and deep woods of New England. What she found there did not save her little girl's body but 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 terrible powers 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 19 BREAKING POINT 12

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

SKILLS: Accounting 21%, Alertness 41%, Bureaucracy 46%, Demolitions 45%, Firearms 30%, First Aid 67%, History 65%, 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: Dance of the Hyleoroi (equivalent to Meditation Upon the Favored Ones), Fascination, Healing Balm, Rite of Reunion, Soothing Song, Whispers of the Dead (The Mother of Moons).

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, 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 Mother of Moons, 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—preferring one who experienced dramatic revelations in Vermont—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 Mother of Moons. 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 POWx5 roll opposed by Sidney's POWx5 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 Mother of Moons. The changes in her body, unsupported by unnatural power, kill her within a few minutes.

BITTER CONSCIENCE: An Agent who tries to talk Sidney out of preying on others can attempt a Psychotherapy roll or a Persuade roll 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 Mother of Moons. 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 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 transformed Sidney may suck blood from a pinned target with one of its horrible, fanged 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. Once every 24 hours following injection—even if Sidney herself dies first—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. No amount of psychotherapy can cure the disorder or the insanity of the girl's personality.

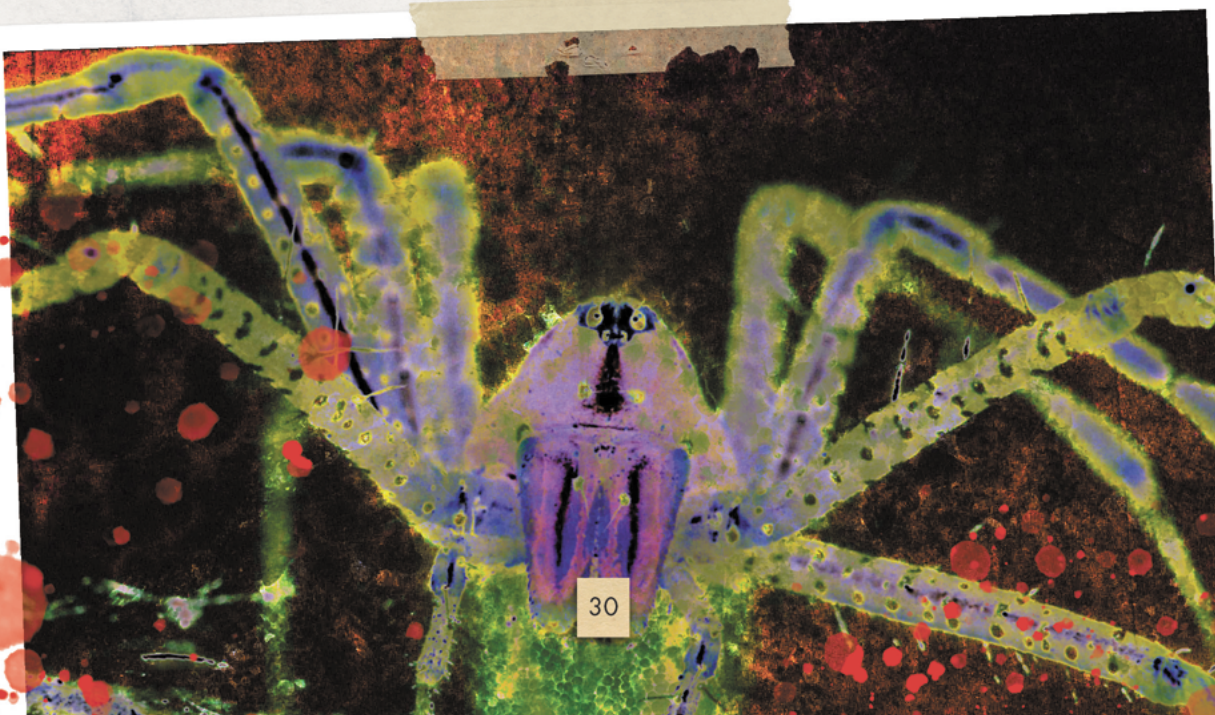
NON-TERRENE: The thing Sidney has become is at home in nearly any environment. Radiation, pressure, cold, vacuum, and other inimical environments have no negative effects on it.

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 from toxins. She takes full damage from hypergeometry.

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



Tomes and Rituals

The Mother of Moons

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 Mother of Moons and the *hyleoroi*, watchful nymphs or spirits of the deep woods, that supposedly serve Her.

RITUALS: Dance of the Hyleoroi (equivalent to Meditation Upon the Favored Ones), Fascination, Healing Balm, Rite of Reunion, Soothing Song, Whispers of the Dead (The Mother of Moons).

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 meters away and within sight of the naked eye with nothing in between.

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 as if 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 when the actual event takes place.

About Psychic Rituals

Agents who empathize too deeply with a distressed psychic in *Presence* may develop distressing powers of their own. See **AWAKENINGS** on page 7 for details.

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

These powers come with terrible risks; however, Agents won't realize that until they attempt to activate them. Similar powers and rituals might be found in other sources with different effects and risks.

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 in panic.

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 to determine from which the stat point lost, either CON, DEX, INT, or CHA. Each further critical success with the **Ritual Activation** roll costs another point from a random stat lost but does not increase POW. 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 and rupturing brain to realities and powers beyond the illusions of space and time. The connection inflicts 1D8 damage, 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 and incorporate them into the description of the Agent's sudden mad ravings. If the episode reduces the Agent to zero SAN, it culminates with the Agent vanishing. If the others are lucky, they never see the stricken Agent again.

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.

Psychic 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 meters 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.

Psychic 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 no more than about 10 meters 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.

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 at 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 Mother of Moons (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.