

A Keeper who is interested in complicating the investigators' lives can introduce red herrings to distract them. Red herrings should be used judiciously in order to not cause the scenario or drag or make it too challenging. Three options are provided, but the Keeper should consider creating some that are tailored for his or her players.

The neighborhood is the occasional home of a forty year old homeless transient, Clovis Squire. Termed a "hobo" or "tramp" by the locals, a few reports on him can be found in police records. He has been cited for loitering twice by Officer Christianson.

The detectives might suspect he may have good information. Clovis is mildly irrational and abuses liquor. He lives off handouts and petty theft, spending most of his funds on cheap wine and gin rather than food or lodgings. No paranormal phenomena have yet occurred in his presence. Since he associates with no one in the neighborhood, he is unaware of its "cursed" reputation. If interviewed, he will concoct whatever lies he believes will either keep him out of prison or get him a handout. It will not occur to him to tell the truth. His lies will be fairly subtle. Lie detecting Psychology rolls fail unless they succeed at 20% of normal.

Local children are also a good red herring. They are likely to be the most prominent source of the "neighborhood curse" legend. At this point, they are circulating all sorts of stories that have little or no basis in fact. The details of these tales are in the Keeper's hands.

An additional element of uncertainty can be provided in the form of morgue attendant Henry Gerk (age 20). Henry works in the city morgue to help put him through college. He is in pre-med at the University of Maryland, but has not taken any of Dr. Brecht's classes. Henry believes he knows a lot more than he actually does. At the Keeper's discretion, he might approach the detectives and make comments critical of Dr. Brecht's conclusions. His comments might sound convincing, particularly to one not well versed in the medical sciences. Ultimately, his conclusions are wrong, largely because he is not directly involved in any of the autopsies. Henry is simply a know-it-all who doesn't know it all. Nevertheless, until he is debunked, the detectives might doubt Dr. Brecht's abilities. Verifying the pathologist's correct conclusions can waste precious time.

## Franklin Wott

On June 1, 39 year old Franklin Wott had the misfortune of venturing into the sewers underneath Rebecca's neighborhood. A veteran sewer worker, he was performing a routine inspection of the tunnels. He was last seen by two co-workers, Amos Silandy and Charles Haffner, descending into the sewers two blocks east of the Model T accident scene.

Frank's fate was to be violently rammed up a small drainage pipe by Rebecca's psychokinetic powers. This has caused backups in several rowhouses that are served by that pipe. A search of the tunnels below the Forester residence previously mentioned will almost certainly reveal the corpse. In answer to the obvious question, it is indeed physically impossible to

ram a body into such six inch diameter pipe without massive mechanical assistance. Discovering Frank's putrefying remains causes 1/1D6 SAN loss.

The disappearance was reported to the police department by the water department on June 2. Frank's wife, Olivia, has contacted the police every day since then for more information. Since this was not a homicide case, it is not known to the detectives until they start looking for such reports.

## Unconventional Consultants

Once the investigators begin to suspect the paranormal is involved, they might attempt to bring in outside consultants. This might be a genuine scholar (folklorist or anthropologist), religious figure (minister or priest), or occultist (psychic or parapsychologist).

None of these outside consultants can provide much headway in the investigation. Except perhaps for clerics, most are likely to recognize the telltale signs of poltergeist activity. Some may absolutely conclude a poltergeist is responsible and will consider no other options. More prudent people will suggest a poltergeist is one possibility, but will also correctly state that poltergeist-like phenomena has been documented in situations where poltergeists aren't involved. The most cautious will advise the detectives to seek mundane explanations for the phenomena such as hoaxers. Some might suggest the neighborhood is built on unstable soil. This might explain cracked walls, misaligned doors, etc. Consulting the City Engineer will debunk this. There is no credible evidence to suggest the neighborhood was built on unstable geology.

Bringing in outside consultants presents the Keeper with two options. First, it is an opportunity to introduce a non-law enforcement character. Second, it is a means of introducing a red herring. A convincing consultant can mislead the group with bogus hypotheses and might even level accusations (subtle or not-so-subtle) at one or more innocent neighborhood residents. Most consultants will have no ill intent, but it is possible for one to be a huckster trying to gain fame or fortune at the expense of the investigation. The Keeper should be prepared to create detailed NPCs to support any subplots of this nature.

## Zeroing In

The scenario's principal challenge is to determine the source for the unseen power that menaces the neighborhood. Initially, the detectives will probably begin to perceive the seemingly disparate incidents and observations associated with the area around the accident scene. Ultimately, as more bodies begin to turn up, they should dismiss any suggestions of coincidence.

The neighborhood canvass can (and hopefully will) lead to the investigators mapping various incidents. Three deaths (Edgar and Marjorie Sumpter and Roger Cateley) occurred within a short distance of each other. It is reasonable to suspect these are at or near the epicenter of the problem. This provides something of an anchor from which the group can

concentrate their efforts.

A stakeout is an excellent tactic. This will most likely be done in a parked automobile at night. A far less likely option is to convince some local resident to allow the investigators to occupy a front room at night. This would require the detectives to succeed in a series of Persuade rolls combined with a particularly good argument voiced to the Keeper by the players.

From a suitable vantage point, the detectives can gradually witness or even directly experience weirdness associated with Rebecca's powers. How frequently this occurs is up to the Keeper. This can be left up to group Luck rolls or the Keeper can carefully craft the timeline of events for purposes of plot pacing. Phenomena that can be viewed includes:

1. car windows/doors/tops spontaneously open
2. trash cans are disturbed
3. windows/doors in rowhouses open/close spontaneously
4. disembodied whispers from shadows
5. lights turn on/off spontaneously; includes lights in houses and car headlights
6. in morning, some people will complain to neighbors about drained car batteries, moved/emptied trash cans, etc.
7. child's ball left on a stoop spontaneously bounces down the street

Most, but not all, weirdness occurs at night when Rebecca sleeps. More disturbing phenomena might be worthy of minor SAN loss.

At times of the Keeper's choosing, some more obvious or alarming phenomena may occur. This includes:

1. power outage affecting the neighborhood—an electrical transformer on a nearby street can be heard to burst with a resounding "boom"
  - electric company repairmen will soon arrive, but may be subjected to Rebecca's psychokinesis
  - the power to the lamp in Rebecca's room is not shut off; the lamp continues to be powered by Rebecca
2. at night, the light in Rebecca's room comes on and the form of a young girl can be seen silhouetted through the windowshade; this should not be possible since she is comatose and there are no other girls known to be in the house
3. while interviewing a local resident, the investigators briefly turn away, but find he is gone when they turn back
  - Rebecca's psychokinesis shoots him skyward at an alarming velocity; the victim is rendered unconscious by the dramatic shift in g-forces
  - the victim lands on a rooftop as much as a block away and dies on impact
  - the body can be seen, but might not be noticed until after sunrise

Pacing is important. Further, it is important to provide motivation to the investigators. This is as simple as demonstrating that the deaths are an ongoing problem. Once the investigators are isolated the area (and especially if they suspect

Rebecca), more deaths must occur. The problem will not solve itself and the investigators must be shown this is the case.

It is also important to provide sufficient clues that point to the Dorners and, more specifically, Rebecca. Commentary about poltergeists and how they usually appear around children going through puberty is one means of linking the events to Rebecca.

## The Innocent Victim

Rebecca is not conscious of anything, least of all that her psychokinetic powers are both active and potent. The phenomena are random and confined to the general area around her. The investigators are almost certain to assume that some intelligence is behind the killings. This is absolutely not the case. The Keeper should avoid presenting phenomena in such a way as to allow patterns to be discerned. Victims are unconnected and die in unusual and even bizarre ways. However, despite a general theme of crushing and smashing, there is little rhyme or reason behind the "attacks."

Investigators who want access to Rebecca can get it so long as they ask permission of the Dorners. They will permit a reasonable medical examination, but this must occur in the Dorner home. Photographs may be taken. Note that photos of Rebecca, but not of the area around her, will appear to be overexposed. This is a side-affect of her power.

Any examination of her home will reveal it is in good order and that Rebecca is well cared for. She is rarely alone during the day, but is left to sleep at night. Knowing this, it should come as something of a revelation if movement is (or has been) seen in her room at night.

Rebecca's principal caregiver is her mother. A few neighbors and several friends from outside the area also help. No onewho is interviewed will suspect Rebecca is anything more than a helpless girl.

## The Terrible Decision

During the scenario, the Keeper should gradually present sufficient information to lead any reasonable investigators to conclude that Rebecca is the source of the mayhem. Further, it should be obvious that to do nothing will result in a ceaseless string of deaths.

Short of simply walking away, there are two possibilities for dealing with the problem. The first is the most obvious: kill her. Sneak into her house and smother her with a pillow. Shoot her. Stab her. End her life. As cruel, heartless, and cowardly as it seems, this is legitimate. To permit her to live will condemn countless others to death. Sneaking into the Dorner house is easy. They don't lock their front door and no one is with Rebecca at night. Barring a series of failed or fumbled Sneak rolls, intruders should be able to get into her room unnoticed. Smothering her with a pillow is best since it is unlikely to leave obvious evidence of a homicide.

However, the investigators are presumably decent, law abiding citizens. To talk about killing an innocent girl is one thing. To actually do it is something else entirely. Once the

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