

SUPERNATURAL

Role Playing Game



CHOKE HOLD

AN INTRODUCTORY
SUPERNATURAL ADVENTURE

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CHOKER HOLD

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INTRODUCTION

Choke Hold contains not one, but two stories: the story of a murder and the story of an investigation. The first story, that of the crime, ends before the second begins. The second story, the story of the investigation, is a story of brave Hunters and of both malevolent and benevolent supernatural creatures. It's a story of courage and wisdom in the face of mortal danger.

This is an introductory Supernatural adventure. If you want to be a player in *Choke Hold*, read no further. The information in this document is for the Game Master (GM) only. Players who read on will ruin the adventure for everyone involved.

In this Adventure a group of Hunters find themselves entangled in a murder mystery, a complex, plot-driven variety of the detective story in which the puzzle is the main feature of interest. The Hunters are provided not only with false leads and red herrings, but also with clues from which both the identity of the preternatural killer and the vicious creature's motives may be deduced before the solution is revealed in the final pages of this adventure. Can the Hunters hunt down the supernatural murderer in time? These are the challenges that must be faced in *Choke Hold*.

PREPARING TO PLAY

Each player should first spend a couple of minutes selecting and customizing a Player Character (PC), found at the end of this document.

You may also use characters from your campaign, but the script that sets the story up assumes that you use the pre-generated PCs given in the appendix. *Choke Hold* combines situations that require a mix of skills to succeed. The group needs PCs with *Covert*, *Influence*, *Lore*, and *Perception*, as well as the more common combat skills.

As GM, you should read and become familiar with *Choke Hold* before attempting to run it. Players may choose to stray away from pre-arranged plotlines, and the only way to respond to such circumstances is to know the adventure thoroughly.

ADJUST THE ADVENTURE

If need be, you, the GM, may adjust *Choke Hold* to match the level of your particular group of characters. Keep in mind that this adventure is designed for five Rookies with a good mix of skills. If you have fewer PCs, you may need to scale down the encounters accordingly. If your players have particularly powerful Hunters, you may need to scale up the encounters to offer sufficient challenges.

START THE ADVENTURE

The first scene takes the PCs back 16 years. They are about to relive the most severe blow fate has ever dealt to them: the violent deaths of two of their relatives.

You, the GM, should ask the players to turn their character sheets over. This scene emphasizes plot and character interaction over game mechanics. The PCs are still children who know nothing about combat, for example. If, contrary to expectations, one of the PCs wants to

do something that would otherwise involve a Skill roll, you should ask the player to convince both you and the others why it is both probable and keeping within the PC's traits to successfully perform that feat.

THEN

Read the following passage out loud or paraphrase it.

On the late evening of March 16, 1991, you found yourself timidly walking up the rising, damp slope which led to the little, old house that was almost hidden deep in the dark woods that surrounded your home town. Legend had it that the isolated, time-battered unpainted wooden house had squatted upon the grassy slope for more than two hundred years. At school, they said that its former owner, Lorraine Wilcox, had been burned as a witch. You didn't really believe that, of course.

As you approached the eerie log cabin, you noticed that the small-paned windows were blackened with dirt, but still seemed to stare at you hauntingly and you lost a bit of your courage.

"Don't be a scaredycat!", whispered Lily, Jack's older sister, "You said you would stay in the haunted house for one night. Are you going to back out now?"

Allow the players to take on their new roles. If one of them talks about school

or the PC's favourite television program to bolster the rest of the group, toss the player a Plot Point or two.

When the PCs come to a stand on the mossy rock that served as a doorstep, read:

You glanced at the closest windows and noticed that they were not broken, however dirty they had seemed. Lily anxiously tried the rusty latch and found the door unlocked.

Inside was a small low-ceilinged chamber with walls from which the plaster had fallen off in many areas. A thick, undisturbed layer of dust lay on the floor and the bare, primitive furniture. Apart from the table and several chairs, you noticed a large fireplace.

"All right", said Lily, "Let's make ourselves comfortable!"

As the players describe how their PCs unpacked their sleeping bags, savory snacks, sweets, and flashlights, describe the brisk night wind that begins to howl outside of the house and made the branches of the surrounding trees knock against the small windows. When the PCs have nervously settled in, read:

Suddenly, the window shutters slammed shut and the large table began to jerk. The very next moment, it rose from the floor as if by magic and flew over to the door at a great speed. There it slammed down again, blocking your only exit from the room.

Everything went silent. The wind

died and the branches stopped knocking on the windows. Even the sounds of the crickets and nocturnal animals that lived in the woods could no longer be heard. It is as if nature itself held its breath in mute anticipation for what is about to happen.

Give the PCs a few minutes to adjust to the situation and to attempt to escape. When they finally realize that they cannot break out of the haunted house, read:

All of a sudden, the door burst open, sending the table skidding over the wooden floor. In the doorway, you saw a dark looming figure, large and frightening.

"What the hell do you think you're doing here?" it asked in a loud, angry voice.

You breathed again as you realized that it was Brad's, Shawn's, and Hannah's father who had kicked in the door.

Mister Sedgwick entered the cabin and said, "I told you not to..."

He paused for a moment and then cocked his head in a sudden movement as if inhaling deeply.

When Mr. Sedgwick looked at you once again, you noticed that his eyes were darker than usual. A closer look revealed that they were pitch-black and seemed like holes opening to a remote and deep darkness.

Then he spoke. The voice, however, was not Mr. Sedgwick's. It was deep, hollow, and inhuman.

"Guess who's come for dinner", it

said, lunging at the children.

The demon that possessed Mr. Sedgwick tries to capture the PCs who do their best to dodge the clumsy attacks of the strapping man. After a while, however, he manages to apprehend Hannah.

Read:

You felt the warm breath of the thing that had once been Mr. Sedgwick. It lifted you up and sniffed at your hair, taking the scent in appreciatively and sighing with pleasure.

"No!" Lily screamed out, "Leave her alone."

She grabbed a chair, ran to the man, and tried to batter his skull in with it. Mr. Sedgwick hardly moved. He did, however, let go of his prey and turned around quickly, striking at Lily with full force. The girl flew off her feet and was hurled through the room, hitting the far wall, sliding down to the floor and leaving a bloody trail on the wall behind her.

"You fool!" the man said to the lifeless girl, grinning diabolically, "This vessel I have chosen is quite fragile."

He felt the back of his head. Then he looked at his now blood-smeared hand and laughed.

"Mr. Sedgwick is dead" the creature said glaring around at you, "But we, my little friends, will see each other again one day."

Once again, the man cocked his head. This time, however, he screamed as wafts of dark black, billowing clouds streamed out of his

mouth and flew out through the door. When the bizarre and appalling spectacle ended, Mr. Sedgwick dropped to the floor, dead.

NOW

Hand out copies of the adventure script, found in *Choke Hold's* appendix. If you have five players, each player reads his character's part. If you have fewer players, assign additional parts as necessary. Pick up the action with the adventure script as "Brad" begins to read.

WELCOME TO FORT DOUGLAS

As soon as the players finish the script, read the following passage out loud or paraphrase it.

After a journey that seemed to last a lifetime, the brakes of your 1966 Chevrolet Sportvan finally hiss as it comes to a halt on the floodlit parking lot of a video store and a cheap motel ironically called "King's Lodge". The parking lot apparently doubles as this godforsaken town's Greyhound station.

Your van's doors clunk open and you exit into the dreadfully cold night air of the Midwest. As you make your way to the motel's reception, your breath condenses into soft clouds of moist air. You revise your estimates of the temperature downward as you walk. Twenty degrees? Ten? Five, maybe? It's probably not that cold, but there is wind chill and the

wind is hard, steady and continuous, coming down from the Arctic across Canada.

As soon as you've rented two rooms, you're going to make yourselves comfortable and take another look at the short newspaper article that brought you to freezing Fort Douglas, Wisconsin.

After the PCs have moved into their fairly basic and outdated furnished, but surprisingly clean rooms, hand out one or more copies of the newspaper article, found in this adventure's appendix. Tell the players to read it on their own or ask one player to read it out loud.

Once the players know why the PCs have come to Fort Douglas, they should start discussing how to figure out whether something evil that needs to be hunted down killed Daniel Whitley. The very next day, the PCs can visit the *Crime Scene*, the *Newspaper Headquarters*, the *Police Department*, and the local *Library* to check the newspaper archive in order to find out if similar events have occurred in the past. Any *Intelligence + Lore / Appropriate Specialty* rolls made this early are bound to fail because the PCs don't have sufficient information about the alleged crime yet.

All the information given below should only be revealed if the players explicitly state that their characters check the listed item.

THE CRIME SCENE

No roll is required to find the crime scene which is located on the corner of Elm Street and 6th Avenue. To the PCs

possible surprise, Daniel Whitley did not die in a creepy back alley. The rear of Gates Hotel actually faces the lightly trafficked 6th Avenue and thus faces a church called St. Paul's. Unfortunately, the crime scene has long since been cleaned up so that the PCs cannot find any evidence.

The PCs can, however, enter the more or less time-honored hotel which is situated in one of the oldest half-timber buildings of Fort Douglas, supposedly a visitor magnet and cultural center for more than one-hundred years, and interview the receptionist, Miss Norma Perkins. It's an EASY (3) feat (*Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty*) to persuade the attractive mid-twenty something, brunette to answer the PCs' questions. Perkins tells the PCs smilingly that the homeless person who was found dead behind the hotel not long ago has been the topic talk of the last few days. While she personally did not witness anything, she knows more than her fair share about the incident because she has conversed with Jason Myers, the night porter who had called in the police, about it at length. More importantly, she is more than willing to share that knowledge with anyone interested in it. Perkins tells the PCs that Jason had slipped out for a cigarette break at the delivery entrance at round about half past three in the morning when he heard a muffled thud around the corner. When he went to see what had happened, Jason noticed a large, rather heavy-set figure hurry away across the street with great, lumbering strides. A moment later, he saw the homeless person, whose name has temporarily slipped

Perkin's mind, lying motionless in a puddle of quickly freezing water. Jason tried to apply first aid, but the old, probably drunken man had fallen backwards and hit his head violently on the cold, empty street. When the ambulance arrived a few minutes later, all the paramedics could do was pronounce the poor tramp dead. Unless stopped, Perkins will go on about the incident in great detail although the PCs have already heard everything they need to know.

If they wish to pay the night porter a visit, the PCs wake up the bleary-eyed Jason Myers who lives in a grubby bachelor flat on 23 Hunter Creek Road. He cannot tell the PCs much his colleague hasn't already told them, though. It is, however, an AVERAGE (7) task (*Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty*) to make Myers tell the PCs something they don't know already. On a Success, Myers says that, much to his surprise, he was interviewed by Officer Mike White only briefly. Joe Ryan, Chief of the Fort Douglas Police Department, made a short appearance as well, but did not seem to be interested in the possible homicide at all. He even ordered White to drive back to the police station immediately. On an Extraordinary Success, Myers even tells the PCs that the large, rather heavy-set figure he saw rushing towards St. Paul's Church with great, lumbering strides seemed to be carved from stone. He thought he saw a winged humanoid creature with demonic features such as horns, a tail, and talons. Then again, it was not only very dark that night, but Myers was also very sleepy. His

confused, tired-out mind had probably played a trick on him.

THE NEWSPAPER HEADQUARTERS

No roll is required to find the newspaper headquarters on 132 Park Street. The Fort Douglas Chronicle, founded in 1876, is a daily newspaper with one of the biggest circulations within the north-western Wisconsin area, proudly boasting a circulation of an average of more than 7,000 copies a day. The run down building is a small newspaper plant which houses an out-of-date printing press with which the Chronicle is printed daily, regardless of whether there's something important to tell or not. The PCs have no trouble whatsoever finding Phillip Wilkes, the balding, pudgy, and grouchy journalist who has written the article that made them come to Fort Douglas. It is an AVERAGE (7) feat (*Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty*) to get the man who is in his late forties talk about a subject that has been covered in the newspaper he writes for and which, as far as he is concerned, the PCs might just as well have bought instead of bombarding him with questions now. While he more or less willingly recaps what Norma Perkins has already told or, depending on the chronology of events, is going to tell the PCs, Wilkes does not know whether similar events have occurred in Fort Douglas' past before.

It's a HARD (11) task (*Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty*) to get Wilkes to talk about the unverified reports he quoted in his article. If the roll

is successful, Wilkes reveals that his informant was an individual working in the Executive Branch. If the roll is extraordinarily successful, Wilkes even entrusts to the PCs that Officer Mike White told him that Daniel Whitley had apparently not only been brutally battered, but also drowned to death. If the PCs ask Wilkes whether they may use the Chronicle's newspaper archive, they've pushed their luck. Wilkes is not some kind of tour guide and asks the PCs to leave, politely at first and then more forcefully if necessary.

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

No roll is required to find the Police Department which is located directly behind the County Courthouse. When the PCs enter the reception area, they are greeted by Police Chief Joe Ryan himself. The Police Chief is a burly, broad-faced man with features hidden behind thick bushes of facial hair, a powerful presence and a voice to match. After he has eyed the PCs piercingly, Ryan asks them if he can help them. As soon as it becomes apparent that the PCs are investigating Daniel Whitley's death, Ryan becomes annoyed. He barks that the PCs should keep their noses out of police business. Even if he wanted to help them, which he doesn't, he could not comment on an ongoing investigation. Then he bundles them off without answering any more questions.

THE LIBRARY

No roll is required to find the castle-like stone building which houses the Barker

Memorial Library that was built in the 1870s by John Barker, a local farmer who had come into a fortune. Inside there are old pine shelves on which countless books rest. It's not a secret that Diane Christensen, the forbidding librarian, wants to tear the insides out and modernize, but the Barker Memorial Library is on the register of historic places.

Once the PCs enter the library, the bespectacled Christensen, whose grey hair is tied into a firm ponytail, eyes them suspiciously, purses her crimson-colored lips and asks them pointedly if she can help them. It is apparent that she is very much in favor of reading in general, but readers in particular seem to get on her nerves. If the PCs tell her that they are looking for the newspaper archive, she reluctantly points them in the right direction, towards the basement in which the Fort Douglas Chronicle archive is located.

It's an AVERAGE Complex Action (35 vs. *Alertness + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty or Lore / Appropriate Specialty*) to rummage through all the old, yellowed newspapers. Each roll represents half an hour's work. Finally, the PCs learn that there have been two more incidents similar to the one that occurred a few days ago. On October 19th, 1943, the retailer Timothy Long was found dead, possibly drowned, behind the Gates Hotel, while on October 25th, 1877, the farmer's daughter Mildred MacDonald died under the same mysterious circumstances on the corner of Elm Street and 6th Avenue. The Gates Hotel, however, had not been opened yet and neither death was ever solved.

Once the PCs have gathered most of the information given above, award the players with 2 to 4 Plot Points and proceed to the next scene.

UNEXPECTED HELP

When the PCs walk back to their motel to ponder over the information they have gathered, for example, read:

A dark car passes you, stops, and reverses in a foggy cloud of exhaust fumes. Seconds later it finally comes to a halt beside you. Your first, automatic instinct is to make a quick getaway as you notice that the emblem of the Fort Douglas Police Department is proudly displayed on the front door.

After the front-seat passenger window has slid down automatically, the haze and steam from the car's interior mixes with the exhaust and surrounds the car.

"You're the guys that are snooping around about that hobo's death, right?" asks the young cop inside cautiously.

Despite the PCs' initial reaction, it's an EASY (3) feat (*Alertness + Perception / Empathy*) to figure out that Officer Michael White is there to help. The tall, skinny kid who seems to be barely out of his teens offers the PCs to drive them to their motel. If the PCs mistrust the good-natured, but rather simple-minded Officer, he is willing to beg to be heard because he has something very important to tell them. He normally wouldn't trust strangers, either, but

somebody needs to look into Daniel Whitley's death and that somebody obviously isn't Police Chief Ryan. In short, Officer White is talking to the PCs because he's been ostracized and, being so young, is desperately in need of validation.

A few minutes later, both the PCs and the blonde Officer enter one of the PCs' motel rooms and make themselves as comfortable as is physically possible in the crowded room. Then the rookie cop tells the PCs that he has been in the force for a little over a year. He mightn't be an expert yet, but he thinks that Police Chief Ryan is not investigating the possible homicide properly. For example, the fatigued Ryan surprisingly showed up on the crime scene almost twenty minutes after the emergency call had been made and more than fifteen minutes after White's arrival. The paramedics had already pronounced Whitley dead without having been able to determine whether he had died of a natural or unnatural cause. Since the cause of death was unknown, the paramedics were obligated to report it to Officer White who, despite the lateness of the hour, eagerly brought it to the attention of the Medical Examiner Dr. Neil Heinzelmann who in turn ordered a forensic autopsy in order to assign the manner of death as either accident or homicide. Ryan nearly went ballistic when he heard that the medical examiner had been notified. He almost yelled at White when he told the Officer that he was just wasting time and money on an autopsy that had now to be performed on a drunken bum that bumped his head too hard. Ryan told

White to drive back to the police station immediately which meant that the Officer had to stop interviewing the only witness, the obviously confused night porter, who had just said that he had seen a figure that was carved from stone, a winged humanoid creature with demonic features, running towards St. Paul's Church. The very next day, Ryan seemed to be in no rush to transfer the body to the Fort Douglas Forensic Institute. If White didn't know better, he would say that Chief of Police Joe Ryan is trying to obstruct justice.

Although White gladly answers any questions the PCs might have, they now know everything useful the Officer can tell them.

It is an AVERAGE (7) task to know (*Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty*) that Fort Douglas' Medical Examiner, Dr. Heinzelmann, is both an appointed official and a physician who is responsible for investigating deaths, particularly those that happened under unusual circumstances, and determining the cause of death by performing a medical procedure that consists of a thorough examination of the corpse. A so-called forensic autopsy is carried out when the cause of death may be a criminal matter. It is highly likely that an external examination of Whitley's body did not suffice. That means that the homeless man's internal organs were inspected for evidence of trauma or other indications of the cause of death. Once the internal autopsy was completed, the body was reconstituted by sewing it back together.

If the PCs don't know that because they failed their rolls, Officer White willingly tells them what they need to know. The PCs have two more leads now. They can either visit Fort Douglas' *Forensic Institute* or *St. Paul's Church*. Once the PCs have decided where to go next, award the players with 1 or 2 Plot Points and proceed to the according scene.

THE FORENSIC INSTITUTE

Entering Fort Douglas' Forensic Institute, a modern, flat-roofed building located on 443 Bridge Avenue that elicits some discomfort in the PCs, in order to get hold of the medical examiner's report is not going to be child's play because the PCs are not authorized to inquire into Whitley's death. They may try to persuade Dr. Heinzelmann, a tall, balding, and rather likeable fellow in his late forties, to tell them everything he knows, but all attempts to do that are doomed to fail unless proper preparations are made. Although imaginative players may devise another plan, the PCs can, generally speaking, choose between two different, less than legal approaches: They can either set out immediately to break into Fort Douglas Forensic Institute in the following night, thus committing *Burglary*, or wait until the next day and pretend to be authorized officials such as federal agents, thus committing an *Unauthorized Assumption of Authority*, in order to read *The Autopsy Report*.

Burglary

Picking one of the forensic institute's locks which, fortunately, are not

alarmed, is a HARD (11) feat (*Agility + Covert / Open Locks*). Finding the medical examiner's report is a HARD Complex Action (55 vs. *Alertness + Perception / Search*). Each roll represents one minute's work. Every minute you roll one six-sided die. If the roll yields a 1, the only night guard, an old, grey-haired, and unarmed man, approaches and the players must make *Alertness + Perception / Appropriate Specialty* rolls to become aware of the watchman in time and to determine how much time the PCs have to hide away. Consult the following table to determine how many Turns the PCs have left until the guard arrives.

Difficulty	Number of Turns
EASY (3)	1
AVERAGE (7)	2
HARD (11) or more	3

Each turn beyond the first grants a +1 step Skill bonus to the *Alertness + Covert / Stealth* rolls made not to be noticed by the guard. A successful roll against a HARD Difficulty, for example, grants a +2 step *Covert / Stealth* bonus. Once the guard enters the room the PCs are trying to hide in, you make the guard's *Alertness + Perception* roll. Roll d8+d8. If the result is equal to or higher than the lowest result the PCs acquired, the guard has noticed that something is wrong. If a PC botched or the guard is extraordinarily successful, however, the PCs have been spotted right away. In case of an ordinary Success, the guard only sets out to investigate, making another *Alertness + Perception* roll against the same Difficulty. This time, however, the guard is alert and gains a +1 step Skill bonus. Roll d8+d10. If the

result is equal to or higher than the lowest result the PCs acquired, the PCs have been spotted and Initiative is rolled. It is a HARD (11) feat (*Strength + Unarmed Combat / Appropriate Specialty*) to knock the guard down before he can raise an alarm in the following Turn which could result in a chase scene which will not be detailed here because the PCs best and only true option is to beat a hasty retreat. Once the PCs have found the medical examiner's autopsy report that is filed in a cabinet in Dr. Heinzelmänn's office and left the building with it, award the players with 1 or 2 Plot Points and proceed to the scene called "*The Autopsy Report.*"

Unauthorized Assumption of Authority
To pass for federal agents, for instance, the PCs not only need suits and badges, but also to assume the roles of said agents. Provided that the PCs can get hold of the required materials appropriate to the badges being forged, creating an authentic-looking symbol of authority is a HARD (11) feat (*Intelligence + Covert / Forgery*). If the players can't make the roll themselves, the PCs have got to find someone who can by making FORMIDABLE (15) *Willpower + Covert / Streetwise* skill rolls and paying dearly. Regardless of whether the PCs fake their own badges or find someone who does it for them, the players should record the skill roll result. It will be opposed by those who examine the badges to check their authenticity. If the examiner's *Alertness + Covert / Forgery* skill roll is equal to or higher than the original roll,

the badges are determined to be fraudulent.

Once the PCs have acquired their badges and entered the forensic institute, they have to act their roles out in a believable way. Their *Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty* or *Performance / Appropriate Specialty* rolls are opposed by the medical examiner's *Alertness + Perception* skill roll. Dr. Heinzelmänn suffers a -2 step Skill penalty because he wants to believe the PCs. Roll d8+d2. If the result is equal to or higher than the lowest result the PCs acquired, Dr. Heinzelmänn calls the police immediately which could result in a chase scene which will not be detailed here because the PCs best and only true option is to beat a hasty retreat.

No roll is required to make Dr. Heinzelmänn hand over his autopsy report. Once the PCs have gotten hold of it, award the players with 1 or 2 Plot Points and proceed to the scene called "*The Autopsy Report.*"

The Autopsy Report

Understanding the gobbledygook Dr. Heinzelmänn wrote his report in is an HARD (11) feat (*Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty* or *Medicine / Appropriate Specialty*). If at least one roll is successful, the PCs learn that Daniel Whitley suffered blunt force trauma due to numerous blows dealt by an extraordinarily strong assailant. The hematoma, abrasions, and avulsions indicate that a blunt instrument without a sharp point or edge was used. Based on the microscopic residue found in some, but not all of Whitley's wounds, it immediately suggests itself that the

weapon was made of stone; basalt, to be exact. In view of the wounds' shapes, the stony weapon seems to have been shaped like an enormous clenched fist. While the brutal blows could have killed Whitley, he died from asphyxia caused by a liquid that entered his lungs and prevented the absorption of oxygen leading to cerebral hypoxia and myocardial infarction. He drowned. Given the transparent and odorless liquid's exact composition only one conclusion can be drawn: Daniel Whitley drowned in rainwater.

Considering that the PCs already know that Jason Myers saw a large, heavy-set creature that was carved from stone run towards the building for public Christian worship that is dedicated to Paul the Apostle, they should now know where to go next: *St. Paul's Church*.

SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH

St. Paul's Church is an excellent and well-preserved example of Georgian church architecture. The 19th-century church, located at 297 6th Avenue, is one of the Midwest's oldest parishes. It was established in 1801. The first church at the site was a small, square, wooden structure built in 1841. The present day church was built in 1899 after the original building had burnt down under mysterious circumstances.

When the PCs have stepped up the porch steps and knocked on the entrance, Father Patrick MacManus, an elderly, portly, and bald man whose remaining hair is as white as snow, opens the massive wooden front door slightly. Father MacManus has served two terms

at St. Paul's Parish. First, as assistant priest to Monsignor J. W. Peddle who died five years ago and again as Parish Priest, the position he currently holds. He eyes the PCs suspiciously, greets them with an obviously faked smile and finally asks them warily if he can help them.

If the PCs ask him in return whether he knows anything about Daniel Whitley's mysterious death, Father MacManus says that he does not. It is, however, an EASY (3) feat (*Alertness + Perception / Empathy*) to know that the Father has just committed the sin of lying. There is no time to confront him because he tries to slam the door shut.

It is a HARD (11) task (*Alertness + Agility*) to stop him from doing so in time and an AVERAGE (7) feat (*Strength + Strength*) to push the door wide open. If the PCs manage to restrain MacManus from closing the door, he immediately turns away and hurries towards another door which he opens quickly and begins to run up the wooden stairs that lead to the belfry and to the top of the church tower where a watch keeps time and three bells cry out the hours. Proceed to the scene called "*The Bell Tower*" immediately.

If the PCs do not stop MacManus from closing the door, it is an AVERAGE (7) task (*Alertness + Perception / Hearing*) to hear that the Father scurries away which should be enough of an incentive for the PCs to either force the door open or pick its lock.

While kicking in the church's massive front door (*Armor 5, Life Points 7*) is an INCREDIBLE (23) feat (*Strength + Strength*), picking its lock is a HARD

Complex Action (55 vs. *Alertness + Covert / Open Locks*). Each roll represents one turn's work. Once the PCs have opened the door, they may make EASY (3) *Alertness + Perception / Hearing* rolls to perceive the sound of the Father's feet running up the bell tower steps. Proceed to the next scene.

THE BELL TOWER

When the PCs have opened the church's front door, call for an AVERAGE (7) *Alertness + Perception / Sight* roll. If successful, the PCs notice that a thin, now broken line of salt has been placed on the door step. If a player wants to close the line that prevents evil from entering or leaving St. Paul's Church, remind the player of Father MacManus' rapidly retreating steps or encourage the player in another way to take up the chase, for God's sake. In other words, the salt ring must remain broken. Once the PCs have climbed the wooden, creaking steps and entered the room in which the church's bells are hung, they realize that MacManus has stepped onto the bell tower viewing platform which overlooks most of Fort Douglas. When they also step outside into the cold air, they notice several carved stone grotesques with spouts designed to convey water from the church roof and away from the side of a building. It's an AVERAGE feat (*Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty or Lore / Appropriate Specialty*) to know that these intentionally ugly statues not only work as a waterspouts and serve an ornamental function, but were used to scare off any evil or bad spirits way back

when the church was built. There is usually a matching pair. It is, however, an EASY (3) task (*Alertness + Perception / Sight*) to notice that one gargoyle seems to be missing.

The very next second, Father MacManus raises his hands in a pacifying gesture, not looking at the PCs, but rather behind them. When they turn around, read:

Your pulses begin to race when you see the gargoyle that is suddenly sitting behind you, perched on its hind legs which resemble a predator's haunches, having well-defined muscles and long, curved claws. The statue's body appears human and has broad, well-muscled shoulders, but its arms are again animal legs that have the same extended claws as the back legs. Out from the back of the intimidating shoulders sprout bat-like wings that are folded across the vile creature's back until each wing touches the other. On top of the abominable neck, the creature's hideously ugly head with its monstrous, nightmarish face rests. Small, curved horns erupt above each long, pointed ear. You know for a fact that this thing is made of stone and that stones don't move. However, your blood seems to turn into ice as this one does. It not only moves, it rises to its full height and attacks.

Because the PCs are exposed to quite a scary situation, call for an AVERAGE (7) *Willpower + Discipline / Appropriate Specialty* check. If a player fails, his

character suffers a -1 step on all *Willpower*-based actions until he is out of immediate danger. If someone botches the roll, the penalty is increased to -2 step and lasts until the PC gets professional help.

Once it has been determined whether the PCs may act normally, roll Initiative. When it's the gargoyle's turn, it tries to grab one of the PCs which requires an *Agility + Unarmed Combat / Grappling* roll. The PC defends using *Agility + Unarmed Combat / Appropriate Specialty*. If the gargoyle succeeds, no damage is inflicted. Instead, the gargoyle starts to spout water in a forceful stream that could drown the unprepared PC who can only resist drowning by holding his breath. He can do so for ten turns with an AVERAGE (7) *Vitality + Vitality* roll. Every ten turns beyond that the Difficulty increases by +4. Once a roll is failed, the PC begins to suffer d2 Stun damage every turn. Once he has passed out, suffocation causes d2 Shock and d2 Wound damage every turn. In order to escape the grapple, the PCs may use *Strength or Agility + Athletics / Appropriate Specialty*, opposed by the creature's *Strength + Unarmed Combat / Grappling*.

At first, Father MacManus doesn't do anything except looking desperate. Eventually, however, he tries to call off the gargoyle. The almost mindless creature does not stop attacking relentlessly, though.

Shortly before a PC or the gargoyle has accumulated half his, her or its Life Points total in Wounds, read:

"Finally, the time has come." a deep, hollow, and inhuman voice suddenly says.

You turn around and, much to your surprise, set your eyes on the burly, broad-faced Joe Ryan whose eyes are darker than the last time you met the chief of the Fort Douglas Police Department. A closer look reveals that his eyes are pitch-black and seem like holes opening to a remote and deep darkness.

"Where is it?" the demon that not only took possession of Chief Ryan's body a few days ago, but also killed Lily and Mr. Sedgwick asks Father MacManus who is paralysed by fear.

Finally, Father MacManus tells the demon to leave, calling it by its real name: Asag. It's a HEROIC (19) (*Intelligence + Knowledge / Appropriate Specialty or Lore / Appropriate Specialty*) to know that, in the Sumerian mythological, Asag is a monstrous demon whose name means "demon that causes sickness". He is described as being so hideous that his presence makes fish boil alive in the rivers.

Regardless of whether or not the PCs know who they are up against, the demon just laughs at the priest, telling him that he has finally come to reclaim what is rightfully his. Father MacManus who is now trembling with fear stutteringly commands the gargoyle to attack the demon. If the grappled PCs did not manage to escape the creature's hold, the gargoyle now releases its grip. The PCs are more than welcome to come to the gargoyle's aid, but killing Joe Ryan who is kept alive by the demon until he

has suffered 44 or more Wounds not only turns them into cop killers, but also does not solve the problem. Asag just goes back to black smoke and tries to possess one of the PCs whose player must make a series of three FORMIDABLE (15) *Willpower + Discipline / Resistance* rolls. At least once success within three turns prevents possession and Asag must move onto the next PC. Three failures, however, leave the PC possessed.

The only true option the PCs have is drive the demon out of the person infested by it and to send the demon back to where it came from. To exorcise Asag, a ritual must be performed during which a solemn and authoritative adjuration of the demon is applied in the name of God. The PCs must either take out their journal to read aloud the set formula or recite it by heart which is a HARD (11) feat (*Intelligence + Willpower*). Reading the evocation, on the other hand, requires the probably quite distracted PC's full attention and is therefore also a HARD (11) task (*Willpower + Discipline / Concentration*). Hand out a copy of the exorcism formula, found in *Choke Hold's* appendix, to the player whose character is performing the exorcism and ask the player to read it out loud. Once he is finished, Police Chief Joe Ryan screams as wafts of dark black, billowing clouds stream out of his mouth and fly away. Once the PCs have exorcised the demon, award the players with 2 to 4 Plot Points and proceed to the last scene, *Conclusion*.

CONCLUSION

It is a FORMIDABLE (15) feat (*Willpower + Influence / Appropriate Specialty*) to persuade Father MacManus to talk about what the hell just happened. On a Success, MacManus hesitantly tells the PCs that an ancient, powerful artifact has been hidden in his church for centuries. He swore to protect it with his life and will not, under no circumstances whatsoever, tell the PCs what or where it is. The priest is only willing to confess that the gargoyle is a guard, abhorrent to both God and nature, that was part of some old French church that was dismantled. Some of its parts were shipped to build St. Paul's Church after the first building had burnt down. The gargoyle had apparently been ordered long ago to keep the artifact from Asag because the demon wants it badly and has been trying to get hold of it since the artifact came to Fort Douglas along with the gargoyle. While protecting it, the living statue killed at least three people in the past 150 years, unfortunately. Those poor souls were weak and corruptible so that the blasphemous Sumerian demon that returns every 66 years could enter their bodies. That is all that the priest tells the PCs about the artifact and the demon that killed two of their loved ones.

Since the PCs have made it to the end of the game session and live to fight another days, award their players with 1 to 4 Advancement Points now.

THE END

PLAYER CHARACTERS

BRAD SEDGWICK

Agi d8, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d8

Init d8+d8, **LP** 14

Traits Born Behind the Wheel d4, Combat Paralysis d4, Gear Head d6, Gullible d2, Weak Stomach d4

Skills Athletics d4, Covert d6 / Open Locks d10, Discipline d4, Drive d6 / Van d8, Guns d4, Influence d2, Knowledge d4, Lore d2, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Perception d6 / Sight d8, Mechanic d6 / Automobile Repairs d8, Tech d2, Unarmed Combat d2

Description Brad hates to be called the "baby" of the group, so tries to act more mature than he is. He tends to be sarcastic, and uses the emotion as a shield, to hide how he really feels, which most of the time, is just plain scared. Who'd have believed that things they hunted were even real. He began working on cars to settle his nerves, and soon found out that he had quite a talent for anything mechanical. Knowing that there would be times that they would need to get into places that they shouldn't, he took up the trade of a locksmith.

SHAWN SEDGWICK

Agi d8, **Str** d10, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d4, **Wil** d6

Init d8+d6, **LP** 14

Traits Brawler d4, Cool Under Fire d4, Duty (Defend Your Family) d8, Split Second Timing d4, Straight and Narrow d4

Skills Athletics d6 / Dodge d8, Covert d4, Discipline d6 / Leadership d8, Drive d2, Guns d6, Influence d2, Knowledge d4, Lore d6 / Demons d8, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d6 / Brawling d10

Description Being the oldest is a very hard job. You are always trying to keep an eye on the younger folk, to keep them safe and sound, even if they don't want you too.

Shawn tries his best to watch out over his brother and sister, but occasionally, he and Brad just don't see eye to eye on the way things should be done, and Heather gets all moody. He took a couple of years, after graduating, and joined the Marines, learning what he could that would be helpful, with hunting. But their mother died in a freak car accident, and he was given an honorary emergency discharge, so that he could go home and take care of his family. That is what Shawn does best, no matter how he has to go about getting it done.

HANNAH SEDGWICK

Agi d8, **Str** d4, **Vit** d8, **Ale** d6, **Int** d10, **Wil** d6

Init d8+d6, **LP** 12

Traits Fragile d4, Sensitive d6, Superstitious d4, Uncommon Knowledge (Religions) d4

Skills Athletics d4, Covert d4, Discipline d4, Drive d2, Influence d6 / Persuasion d8, Knowledge d6 / Religion d10, Lore d6 / Demons d8 / Mythology d8 / Superstitions d10, Medicine d2, Melee Weapon Combat d2, Perception d6 / Empathy d8, Unarmed Combat d2

Description Hannah has always had a fascination for supernatural information. It was one of the reasons she became interested in religions and the many different kinds of beliefs, because it in its own way is also a supernatural situation, in the fact that so many can believe in a higher being, without actually seeing, hearing, or any other facts beyond just believing. Before the incident, it was more of a fun hobby, just trying to figure out why such a belief ever came into being, and the differences between one religion and another. Afterwards, it was to try to find and know anything that might work to keep such creatures at bay, or banish them.

JACK HARRIS

Agi d10, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d6, **Wil** d6

Init d10+d8, **LP** 12

Traits Sure Footed d4, Shy d4, Talented (Guns / Pistols and Guns / Rifles) d4, Socially Awkward d4

Skills Athletics d6 / Dodge d8, Covert d6, Craft d2, Discipline d4, Drive d2, Guns d6 / Pistols d10 / Rifles d8, Influence d2, Knowledge d4, Lore d2, Mechanic d2, Medicine d4, Melee Weapon Combat d4, Perception d6, Unarmed Combat d4

Description Jack is an enigma to himself. On one hand he believes in ghost and things that go bump in the night. Especially after the event that happened in his childhood, but he still finds it hard to believe that so many can be out there causing as much trouble, so with every hunt that they go on, he keeps expecting it to be caused by natural, and not supernatural causes. Being so, he became more of a materialist, and also being the son of the local gun club owner, he had plenty of time and chances to learn all there was about many different types of guns and ammo, and most importantly, how to use them. He also has a crush on Hannah, but tries not to show it.

JEREMY MITCHELL

Agi d6, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d8, **Int** d10, **Wil** d6

Init d6+d8, **LP** 12

Traits Absent-Minded d2, Coward d4, Tech Expert d4, Good-Natured d2

Skills Athletics d4, Covert d2, Discipline d4, Influence d6 / Persuasion d8, Knowledge d6, Lore d6 / Demons d12 / Ghosts d8, Medicine d4, Melee Weapon Combat d2, Perception d4, Tech d6 / Computer Programming d10 / Hacking d8, Unarmed Combat d2

Description Jeremy had been out of his league, when he went with the group to the old house, as part of the dare. He normally spent his days reading science-fiction/ fantasy books and playing games on computers, or role-playing games. But when he had heard of the dare, through rumors at school, he had found out who was going and had asked to be included, thinking that it would make for good background information on a game he was looking to run soon. After the incident at the old house, he turned his focus to the learning about the history and different types of supernatural creatures and ways to banish or destroy them. He ended up spending a lot of time with Hannah, as their research paralleled each other and for a while thought he had a crush on her, but then just realized it was the love of all the knowledge, and the smell of the books.

GEAR

CHEVROLET SPORTVAN

Agi d4, **Str** d6, **Vit** d6, **Ale** d0, **Int** d0, **Wil** d6

Init d4+d0, **LP** 12

Scale Large, **Speed** 2

Armor 1 W

Description A relatively large, family-sized vehicle with a high profile. It's not fast, but has a huge trunk suitable for hunters wanting to stash a cache of weapons and supplies. *Dimensions* 12 x 6 x 6 feet; *Passengers* 7, *Range* 400 miles.

ARMS CACHE

Quantity	Weapon	Damage	Range	Ammo
5	Knife	d2 W	--	--
1	Baseball Bat	d6 B	--	--
5	Pistol	d6 W	50'	8
2	Shotgun	d10 W	30'	8
1	Rifle	d8 W	300'	20

OPPONENTS

GARGOYLE

Agi d4, **Str** d12+d4, **Vit** d12+d2, **Ale** d4, **Int** d2, **Wil** d8

Init d4+d4, **LP** 28

Traits Duty d8, Formidable Presence d6, In Plain Sight d4, Mute d6, Tough d8

Skills Athletics d6 / Climbing d10 / Flying d8, Covert d4, Perception d6 / Sight d8, Unarmed Combat d6 / Clawing d8 / Grappling d10

Description The gargoyle is big, strong, and surprisingly fast. One of its claws (d10 B) can easily snap a neck. It has an *Armor Rating* of 4 W.

ARAG

Agi d8, **Str** d12+d2, **Vit** d10, **Ale** d8, **Int** d10, **Wil** d8

Init d8+d8, **LP** 22 (doesn't die at 22 Wounds; body destroyed at 44 Wounds; recovers 1 Stun per turn)

Traits Anger Issues d2, Mind Control d6, Obsessed d6, Uncommon Knowledge d6

Skills Athletics d6, Covert d6, Discipline d4, Guns d4, Influence d6 / Persuasion d8, Knowledge d6 / History d10 / Religion d10, Lore d6 / Demons d10 / Sumerian d12, Perception d4, Melee Weapons d6, Unarmed Combat d4

Gear Joe Ryan's pistol (DMG d6 W, RNG 50', AMMO 8)

CHOKER HOLD ADVENTURE SCRIPT

Use the following script to start your adventure. When your turn comes, read your lines out loud, speaking the way you think your character would. Be sure to listen to what the other characters say as the script contains important background information to start the adventure.

Brad: "All things considered, it could be worse."

Hannah: "We're driving down a dirt country road in the middle of nowhere and we don't have much money left. How could it possibly be worse, dear brother?"

Brad: "It could be raining."

Shawn: "You're the sunshine of my life, little brother... Always looking on the bright side."

Jack: "Well, at least there might be a job to do in that town we're heading to. What's its name again?"

Jeremy: "Fort Douglas, Wisconsin."

Jack: "Right. How could I have forgotten?"

Jeremy: "You don't want me to answer that question, do you? Could we please stop at the next gas station?"

Hannah: "Gotta go to the bathroom again, Jeremy?"

Jeremy: "Very funny, Hannah. Ha, ha. No, I want to buy a local newspaper to check whether the reports I've read in the Net are correct, that's all."

Jack: "Those mysterious murder cases sound like a hoax to me."

Jeremy: "Well, it is strange that three people seem to have drowned in the open street."

Hannah: "You don't think that there's a rational explanation, do you?"

Jeremy: "No, I don't think that there's a serial killer on the loose."

Brad: "At least not one who's made of flesh and bone, that is."

Jeremy: "Right you are, Brad."

Shawn: "Do you think it might be the same bastard that killed Lily and dad?"

Fort Douglas Chronicle

Homeless Found Dead, Possibly Murdered

By Phillip Wilkes

Fort Douglas, Wisc – October 22 Police Chief Joe Ryan is looking into the unexplained death of Daniel Whitley as a homicide. Whitley, a known homeless man, was found dead behind the Gates Hotel two days ago. While police have yet to release a cause of death, the nature of Whitley's death near the renowned hotel was enough to lead detectives to believe that Whitley may not have died of natural causes. The Chronicle attempted to contact Police Chief Ryan regarding the death of Mr. Whitley, but the Police Department would not comment on an open investigation. According to unverified reports, however, Whitley was beaten up and his lungs were filled with water despite the fact that temperatures were below freezing the night the homeless man died. The Chronicle will report more as soon as we learn more.

EXORCISMVS

EXORCIZAMUS TE, OMNIS IMMUNDUS SPIRITUS, OMNIS SATANICA POTESTAS, OMNIS INCURSIO INFERNALIS ADVERSARII, OMNIS LEGIO, OMNIS CONGREGATIO ET SECTA DIABOLICA, IN NOMINE ET VIRTUTE DOMINI NOSTRI JESU CHRISTI, ERADICARE ET EFFUGARE A DEI ECCLESIA, AB ANIMABUS AD IMAGINEM DEI CONDITIS AC PRETIOSO DIVINI AGNI SANGUINE REDEMPTIS. NON ULTRA AUDEAS, SERPENS CALLIDISSIME, DECIPERE HUMANUM GENUS, DEI ECCLESIAM PERSEQUI, AC DEI ELECTOS EXCUTERE ET CRIBRARE SICUT TRITICUM. IMPERAT TIBI DEUS ALTISSIMUS, CUI IN MAGNA TUA SUPERBIA TE SIMILEM HABERI ADHUC PRÆSUMIS; QUI OMNES HOMINES VULT SALVOS FIERI ET AD AGNITIONEM VERITARIS VENIRE. IMPERAT TIBI DEUS PATER; IMPERAT TIBI DEUS FILIUS; IMPERAT TIBI DEUS SPIRITUS SANCTUS. IMPERAT TIBI MAJESTAS CHRISTI, ÆTERNUM DEI VERBUM, CARO FACTUM, QUI PRO SALUTE GENERIS NOSTRI TUA INVIDIA PERDITI, HUMILIAVIT SEMETIPSUM FACFUS HOBEDIENS USQUE AD MORTEM; QUI ECCLESIAM SUAM ÆDIFICAVIT SUPRA FIRMAM PETRAM, ET PORTAS INFERI ADVERSUS EAM NUNQUAM ESSE PRÆVALITURAS EDIXIT, CUM EA IPSE PERMANSURUS OMNIBUS DIEBUS USQUE AD CONSUMMATIONEM SÆCULI. IMPERAT TIBI SACRAMENTUM CRUCIS, OMNIUMQUE CHRISTIANÆ FIDEI MYSTERIORUM VIRTUS . IMPERAT TIBI EXCELSA DEI GENITRIX VIRGO MARIA, QUÆ SUPERBISSIMUM CAPUT TUUM A PRIMO INSTANTI IMMACULATÆ SUÆ CONCEPTIONIS IN SUA HUMILITATE CONTRIVIT. IMPERAT TIBI FIDES SANCTORUM APOSTOLORUM PETRI ET PAULI, ET CETERORUM APOSTOLORUM. IMPERAT TIBI MARTYRUM SANGUIS, AC PIA SANCTORUM ET SANCTARUM OMNIUM INTERCESSIO.