

“The Bone Dealers” © 2001

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Call of Cthulhu

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Introduction

This adventure is intended to follow "The Player of Hell" and is part of a continuing mini-campaign. However, it can be run as a stand-alone adventure with some slight modification. It does, however, presuppose that the events detailed in "The Bookstore" have been resolved.

Keeper's Background

The terrible incidents involving the vrykolokas served to reinforce Reginald Preston's belief that a clear and dire danger to humanity exists. This belief has led Preston to increase his efforts in learning more about the nature of the danger. Unfortunately, his studies of the tome (the *Notes on Magic*) located by his ill-fated friend Don Wedenberg have lead him on a dangerous path. After mastering the ritual to Call Up Dwellers of the Charnel Yard (Contact Ghoul), Preston elected to attempt to contact these dwellers and learn from them as much as he could.

His efforts proved successful and he managed to make peaceful contact with a small band of ghouls. The ghouls, who have grown tired of their long servitude under the Blane family, have offered to assist Preston in return for their liberation. Seeing this as an opportunity to gain information while defeating cultists in service of the mythos, Preston will decide to enlist the aid of the investigators in dealing with the Blanes.

Since Preston is an important character in the adventures to follow, it is imperative that the Keeper find a plausible way to keep him alive.

Keeper's History of the Blane Family

The Blane family, sturdy and upright protestants, arrived in New England in 1743. The family was just another family until 1796. Reginald Blane, then a down on his luck sea captain, was lured into a smuggling operation by the promise of easy money. Unfortunately, the operation turned out to be a disaster that ruined the family.

This experience drove Reginald a bit over the edge. Later, when he was attending the funeral of a wealthy associate, he hit upon the idea of robbing graves. It is in the course of his new career as a grave robber that he encountered Ghouls.

After learning much from the Ghouls and other beings and deciding that he was tired of robbing graves himself, Reginald set out to develop a means of getting the Ghouls to do his dirty work for him. Shortly before his death he completed spells that would enable him to compel Ghouls to do his bidding and protect him from their wrath. After his death, his youngest son

found his books and notes and decided to follow in his father's footsteps. Since then the Blane family has been on a downward spiral.

By 1821 the entire family was firmly in the grip of the mythos. In 1824 one of their intended human sacrifices escaped and, though mad, penned an account of his experiences. Unfortunately, his story was dismissed as the mere ranting of a madman and the Blane family kept up its worship of the mythos.

In 1921, eager for more income, the Blane elders decided to get into the boot-legging business. Using their wealth, the Blane family was able to avoid police intervention.

When prohibition came to an end, the family was forced to seek a new means of acquiring wealth. Unwilling to work, and fast becoming almost imbeciles from inbreeding, the Blane family had few options. One of the more intelligent family members hit on the idea of kidnapping people for ransom. With the aid of the Ghouls, this proved relatively easy.

In 1935 the Ghouls kidnapped Janet Thurston. One of the Blane boys took a fancy to her, but ended up killing her by accident when he tried to express his affections. A friend of Thurston, Andrew Williams, was able to link her disappearance with the Blanes. Unfortunately, Mr. Williams was rather hot headed and rushed in to confront the Blane family. Tragically, the ghouls made short work of him.

Since that time the Blane family has been in even steeper decline, with only a few family members remaining. They still gain their money by pawning and selling things the ghouls bring them from graves, but modern funeral practices have made earning a living this way rather difficult. Currently the smartest of the Blane family, John, is trying to figure a way of securing a reliable source of income. He has rejected kidnapping people, because of the advances in law enforcement. He has considered becoming involved in the black market for organs and has speculated on using the ghouls to dig for artifacts in other parts of the world.

The ghouls, meanwhile, have grown rather weary of the constant demands of the Blane family. They are also concerned that John will come up with a plan that will put them at great risk. Since the ghouls cannot act directly against the Blane family, they were delighted when Preston contacted them and all too happy to supply him with information in return for his aid.

Getting the Investigators Involved

Preston will contact the investigators and convey the following: "My researches, which generally deal with events long fallen to dust, have turned up something modern and dire. While examining some unusual documents, I learned about a family, the Blane family, that I believe is connected to terrible things. At first, I thought this was but a matter of history. Further investigation, unfortunately, revealed that it is extremely likely that the Blane family is keeping up the family tradition. Of course, I cannot be certain without additional evidence. I am asking you to see if you can find that evidence. Naturally, if such evidence is found, the family will have to be dealt with."

The Keeper should make Psychology rolls for the investigators. If a roll succeeds, the investigator senses that Preston is holding something back. If the investigator asks, Preston will say "Indeed. Indeed I am. The sources from which I gleaned this information are most terrible. I fear to reveal the full extent of what I know out of the fear that it would rattle your very sanity."

If the investigators are not convinced by this, it is up to the Keeper to role-play the discussion. Preston will only reveal the truth, that he received the information from Ghouls, if he is sorely pressed and as a last resort.

Preston will provide the investigators with information to get them started, including the location of the Blane house.

Investigation

The following details the information the investigators can turn up during their research.

Preston's Findings

Preston has done much of the preliminary investigation for the investigators. He will convey the following information:

"While poring over a loosely bound set of pages said to have belonged to a madman, I learned that, at least according to this fellow, a family had taken him prisoner in the hopes of sacrificing him to some sort of evil god named "Chewlou." He identified the family as the Blane family. Further investigation of local records from this time, 1813 to be specific, revealed that the man later vanished. An investigation of the Blane family took place, but I infer that their wealth, which is alluded to in the article I examined, enabled them to deter any serious scrutiny.

The next reference I found regarding the Blane family is a newspaper article from 1921. The article mentions that the Blane family was questioned by police in regards to the production of bootleg alcohol. Once again, the family's wealth seems to have saved them from official scrutiny.

Driven by curiosity, I managed to acquire a journal from 1935. This journal, which belonged to Andrew "Red" Williams, recounts his experience with the Blane family. According to the journal, Williams was tracking a missing friend, Janet Thurston, and managed to connect her disappearance with the Blane family. His journal recounts his observation of the Blane family. He claims, in several passages, to have seen them conducting strange rituals in the family graveyard. The last entry in the journal records his intent to sneak into the Blane house in search of his friend.

I checked various records and learned that Mr. Williams was reported as missing by his immediate family. No doubt he met a terrible fate in that house.

Intrigued by these accounts, I asked my various contacts to be on the look out for any additional information pertaining to the Blane Family. I had assumed that the family had met some bad end, so you can imagine my surprise when I learned that the family was still dwelling in the same house Williams investigated all those years ago. My anonymous contact alleges that he has witnessed the Blane family conduct various rituals, including one that involves the consumption of human flesh. He asserts that the last ritual took place during the past full moon.

If my source is correct, the Blane family poses a danger to humanity. A danger that must be dealt with. Since I am incapable of robust action, I am asking you to undertake the risky task of examining the situation at the very site."

Locals

Not surprisingly, the Blane family has a bad reputation locally. Some of the older and more historically minded locals know a bit of the public history of the Blane family-how Reginald Blane lost one fortune, then got caught up in a smuggling scheme and then somehow managed to make a small fortune in gold and silver. They will also be able to tell the investigators about the Blane bootlegging during prohibition.

Any of the locals will be able to tell the investigators that the Blane family has a bad reputation in the area. According to many, the family is responsible for the disappearance of various pets. Many of the locals are convinced that the family has interbred for generations (this is true). Some of them will express concern for John, who seems to be almost normal. The general consensus is

that the Blane family "just isn't right" but that they have yet to do anything that would enable the authorities to take action against them.

The Blane Family

The investigators might decide to talk to the Blane family. The adults will all be very suspicious and hostile and will, most likely, not provide the investigators with any useful information. If the investigators seem suspicious but do not appear to be police, the Blane family will probably try to kill them.

John, the most intelligent of the lot, might be willing to speak with the investigators. If he can speak with them alone and he suspects they have some knowledge of what is going on, he will decide to try to convince them that his family is insane and that they are holding him against his will. He will then attempt to persuade the investigators into taking action against the rest of the family.

Map

The following details the maps used in the adventure.

Area Map

This map shows the area around the house. The house is 3 miles from the nearby town and is fairly isolated. The Blane family used to own a great deal of land around the house but they have been forced to sell much of it to pay taxes.

Road: A road.

Trees: These areas contain thick patches of pine trees. The trees have been tended by the Blane family to block their house from easy view.

House: The Blane House. The house is quite old and was once an excellent structure. Years of mistreatment and neglect have left it in fairly rough shape: the paint has all but peeled off, the roof leaks and many of the windows have been boarded up. The area around the house smells faintly of rot and decay.

Graveyard: The family members who have died are buried here. Out of spite the ghouls have secretly devoured the bodies of the dead.

House Map

The following details the house. The interior is musty, damp and unpleasant. The carpets are worn and stained and reek. The walls are stained and often cracked in places. The overall décor leaves much to be desired.

Basement

The basement is even damper and fouler than the rest of the house.

Main Area: This area contains a broken washing machine and dryer as well as piles of boxes. The boxes contain a variety of junk.

Furnace: This area contains the oil furnace. It has been jury rigged and patched since no repair person is willing to go into the basement.

Hidden Room: This room was constructed during the time the family was engaged in bootlegging. The door is concealed in the wall and is further hidden by a pile of boxes.

Cell 1-3: These cells were used to hold prisoners-either kidnap victims or those chosen for the various sacrifices the family practiced over the years. Buried under some filth in cell 1 is a small silver ring with J.T. engraved on it. The ring belonged to Janet Thurston.

Cell 4: This cell is used to hold the valuables the Ghouls turn up. It is heaped with funeral clothing as well as various small pieces of jewelry, watches and so on. There is enough material here to get the family convicted of grave robbing.

Tunnel Entrance: this tunnel leads down into the ghoul warrens. The entrance smells of death and decay. There is typically at least one ghoul within earshot of the entrance. The ghoul will investigate if it hears any unusual sounds. If the investigators elect to enter the tunnels, they will eventually encounter ghouls. What happens then is up to the players and the Keeper.

First Floor

Kitchen: The kitchen is equipped with a broken down electric stove and a crudely installed wooden stove. The refrigerator still works and is stocked with a variety of foods, mostly local wildlife. There is an abundance of sharp knives in the area.

Dining Room: This once elegant room is now a shambles. The fine oaken table is scarred with cuts and disfigured with burns and carvings. Bits of food are scattered about on the floor.

Living Room: The room still shows signs of its former quality. One small section has been cleared up a bit and is used by John.

Second Floor

Bathroom: A rather foul bathroom that clearly has not been cleaned for a very long time.

Bedroom #1: This bedroom is the neatest of the lot and is used by John. There are piles of books (mostly stolen) on the desks as well as a radio and a TV.

Bedroom #2: This room is used by Randolph. The bed has collapsed to the floor and there are two large stills in the room. Randolph spends most of his time here making booze or drinking booze.

Bedroom #3: This bedroom is used by Robert and Sarah. The bed is little more than a pile of mattresses on the floor. One wall is decorated with a collection of knives and axes.

Study: This room is in good shape and contains intact antique furniture dating back to the late 1700s. There are numerous books and manuscripts here, including *Blane's Book*. John uses this room to study and there are several manuscripts which detail some of the plans he has been considering.

Action

The following provides a guide to running the action in the adventure. If the Keeper intends to run the adventures in the series, it is imperative that Preston survives (find a plausible, but not obvious, way of doing this).

The action begins when the investigators either chose or are forced to act against the Blane family.

Locations

During the day, Randolph will usually be in his room with his stills. Sarah and Robert will often be outside, doing various tasks, such as throwing axes or knives at the local wildlife. John will usually be in the study.

At night the family will usually be inside. Most nights John and Randolph will be in the basement, cajoling the ghouls into finding more items to bring them. The family members usually go to bed around midnight, but John often stays up later talking with the ghouls.

Combat

If the investigators simply attack the Blane family, the family will not be well prepared. They will be armed, but will not be able to call up any ghouls right away.

Randolph always has his shotgun with him, four extra shots and his knife. He has a few boxes, for a total of 35 shells in his room. Robert always has a knife, while his wife always has an axe close at hand. John carries a small .22 pistol.

If the investigators arouse the suspicions of the Blane family (by skulking about the area or talking to the family), the family will prepare for trouble. Randolph will fill his pockets with shells, Robert will put the .38 in his pocket and Sarah will keep two axes at hand. The family will also call up a number of ghouls to help them guard the place.

When the combat takes place, the adults will do their best to savagely kill the investigators. The ghouls will be somewhat half-hearted about fighting the investigators and will flee if the Blane family is slain or defeated. John will attempt to avoid combat and will only fight to save his life.

Conclusion

The adventure comes to a conclusion when either the Blane family is defeated or the investigators meet their end or give up.

If the investigators defeat the Blane family, they should receive a 1D8 Sanity Point Reward.

The grateful ghouls (although their gratitude will vary depending on the number of ghouls the investigators harmed) will provide Preston with additional information, information that will lead to additional adventures.

If the investigators give up or are defeated, the Blane family will continue with their ways. If the investigators survive, the Keeper might wish to give them another shot at defeating the Blane family.

Enemies

The Blane Family

The following details the Blane family.

Randolph Blane, Family Elder

STR: 11 CON: 10 SIZ: 14 INT: 10 POW: 15 DEX: 11
APP: 9 EDU: 13 SAN: 0 HP: 12 DB: None

Important Skills: Bargain 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 17%, Disguise 35%, Fast Talk 55%, Natural History 45%, Sneak 20%, Speak Ghoul 45%

Weapons: Double Barrel 12-Gauge 51% 4D6/2D6/1D6 10/20/50, Knife 57% 1D6+db

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Ward Ghoul, Compel Ghoul

Description: Randolph is an old man with gray hair and beard. He is missing a few teeth and has a gleam of madness in his eyes. While only of average intelligence, he possesses a great deal of cunning and is surprisingly good at talking people into or out of things. When trouble threatens he brings out "olde Bess", his double barrel 12-gauge shotgun. He generally tries to shoot people in the legs, so he can go to work on them with his trusty knife, "Mack."

Robert Blane

STR: 14 CON: 14 SIZ: 15 INT: 9 POW: 11 DEX: 12

APP: 8 EDU: 10 SAN: 0 HP: 15 DB: +1D4

Important Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 8%, Hide 45%, Sneak 55%, Spot Hidden 47%, Speak Ghoul 35%

Weapons: .38 Revolver 27% 1D10 15 Yards, Knife 46% 1D6+db

Spells: Ward Ghoul

Description: Robert is a large man whose brutality is exceeded only by Sarah's (his wife). He has an old .38 revolver (it used to belong to Williams) but prefers to use a knife on his victims.

Sarah Blane

STR: 15 CON: 15 SIZ: 17 INT: 8 POW: 12 DEX: 10

APP: 7 EDU: 9 SAN: 0 HP: 16 DB: +1D4

Important Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 7%, Dodge 36%, Hide 37%, Sneak 47%, Speak Ghoul 30%

Weapons: Axe 43% 1D8+2+db

Spells: Ward Ghoul

Description: Sarah is a very large and psychotically brutal woman. She bosses Randolph and Robert, but is secretly afraid of John. Her solution to most problems involves the use of her trusty axe.

John Blane

STR: 9 CON: 10 SIZ: 12 INT: 14 POW: 16 DEX: 9

APP: 12 EDU: 18 SAN: 0 HP: 11 DB: None

Important Skills: Anthropology 15%, Astronomy 20%, Cthulhu Mythos 27%, Fast Talk 35%, Latin 21%, Occult 30%, Speak Ghoul 41%

Weapons: .22 pistol 39% 1D6 10 Yards

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Ward Ghoul, Compel Ghoul

Description: Thanks to random recombination of DNA, John is by far the smartest of the Blanes. Unlike the others, he is fairly small, quiet and subtle. He prefers to develop intelligent plans to deal with problems, but the other family members give him little to work with. He has been considering allowing the ghouls to kill and feast upon his family. Unlike the others, who will probably just try to kill the investigators, John will attempt to negotiate with them. If that fails, he will attempt to escape.

Ghouls

Char	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	18	19	15	17	21	17
CON	14	12	14	15	17	14
SIZ	13	16	16	14	17	14
INT	13	14	13	12	16	11
POW	12	15	14	17	10	13
DEX	15	16	11	9	14	12
HP	14	14	15	15	17	14
Damage Bonus	+1D4	+1D6	+1D4	+1D4	+1D6	+1D4

Move: 10

Weapons: Claws 30%, 1D6+db, Bite 30% 1D6+worry.

Armor: Half damage from projectile weapons.

Spells: None

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6

Description: Ghouls are detailed on page 142 of the 5.5th edition of the rules. These ghouls have been trapped in the service of the Blane family for a long time, giving them an effective POW of 1 when attempting to resist the Compel Ghoul spell. The ghouls will not be particularly interested in attacking the investigators, but will be compelled to do so. If the Blane family is slain, the ghouls will flee as fast as they can.

New Spells

Compel Ghoul

This spell is used to force Ghouls to do the caster's bidding.

Each casting of the spell requires at least a pound of human remains. The caster invokes the spell by expending 3 magic points and 1 Sanity point. The remains are then enchanted. The caster may then call a ghoul if one is not present. When a ghoul is present, the caster matches his POW against the Ghoul's POW on the resistance table. If the caster succeeds, the ghoul must obey the caster for 24 hours. If compelled to do something that goes against its nature or something dangerous, the ghoul can match POW with the caster in an attempt to shake off the compulsion.

The enchantment gradually wears down the ghoul's resistance. Every four successful castings of the spell reduces the ghoul's effective POW for resisting the spell by one (to a minimum of 1).

Ward Ghoul

This spell is used to create an enchanted ward (typically a bone on a necklace or a bone ring) which prevents ghouls from attacking the wearer.

Creating the ward requires a suitable item made of human bone and a pound of human remains. During the casting the caster expends 1 point of POW to enchant the item and ingests the remains during the ritual. This process costs 1/1D8 Sanity points. A ward must be worn to be effective.

Ghouls will be inclined not to attack the bearer of a ward. If a ghoul desires to attack the bearer of a ward, it must match its POW against the POW of the creator of the item or it will not be able to attack. Even if the ghoul is able to attack, it will sustain 1 point of damage each time it strikes a warded person. Once a ghoul overcomes a ward, it does not have to check to overcome it again (though it will still take damage attacking the warded being).

New Mythos Tome

Blane's Book: This handwritten work in English, by Reginald Blane, is an extensive treatise on ghouls. *Sanity loss 1D2/1D4; Cthulhu Mythos +2 percentiles; average 4 weeks to study and comprehend/8 hours to skim..* The work contains the spells Call forth the Eaters of Corpses (Contact Ghoul), Command the Eaters of Corpses (Compel Ghoul) and Charm Against the

Teeth that Gnaw Bones (Ward Ghoul). Study of the work confers 1D4+4% in the language of the Ghouls.

NPCs

Reginald Preston, Scholar

STR: 4 CON: 7 SIZ: 8 INT: 15 POW: 18 DEX: 6

APP: 9 EDU: 20 SAN: 70 HP: 8 DB: -1D6

Important Skills: Astronomy 11%, Bargain 65%, Credit Rating 35%, Cthulhu Mythos 14%, Library Use 85%, Natural History 20%, Persuade 55%, Psychology 25%, Occult 63%, Philosophy & Religion 82%

Languages: French 41%, Latin 60%, German 41%, Spanish 16%, Japanese 11%, Russian 15%, Chinese 12%

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3-1D6

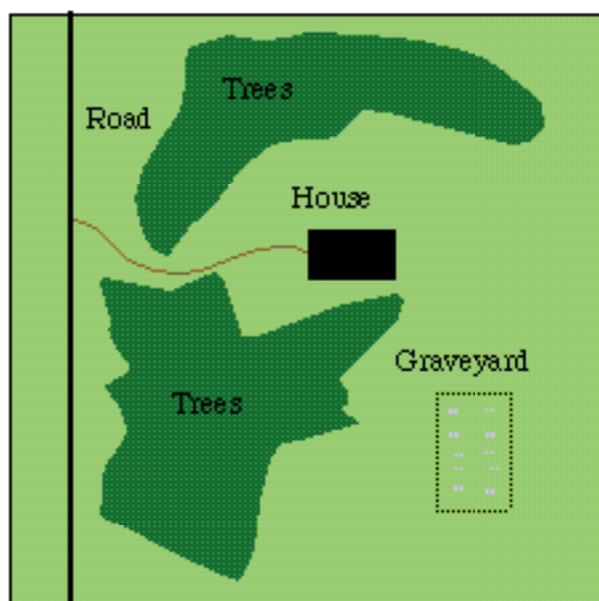
Spells: Elder Sign, Call up Dwellers of the Charnel Yard (Contact Ghoul), Symbol of Power (Voorish Sign), Binding of the Ethereal Protector (Bind Guardian).

Description: At the age of eight, Preston was in terrible automobile accident that killed his parents and left him physically crippled. Fortunately, even at that young age, Preston had an indomitable will that prevented him from giving in to despair. Taken in by his uncle, a noted professor of religion, Preston was set upon a path of learning. By the time he was twenty-three, he held two doctorates and was considered one of the foremost scholars in the fields of philosophy and religion. His scholarly pursuits would have led him to a notable, if mundane, career if not for his chance discovery of a strange text at an old bookstore. This book, a minor mythos text, started him on a path of strange research into the occult and the mythos itself. Since that time Preston has been diligently pursuing clues to the true nature of the world.

Physically, Preston is a very thin man who is missing both legs and half of one arm. He has scars across his face and is confined to a wheel chair most of the time. He has prosthetic legs and a prosthetic arm, but the severity of his injuries and later illnesses prevents him from being very active physically. Mentally, Preston is extremely sharp and displays a powerful and influential personality.

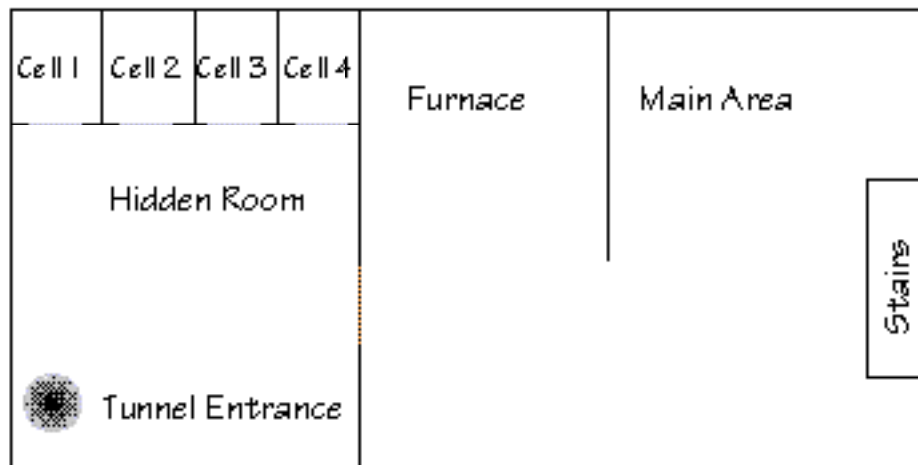
Preston recognizes the mythos as a grave threat to humanity and is dedicated to doing all he can to protect the world from this menace. Preston's one weakness is that he hopes to find some magic that will cure his body.

Area Map

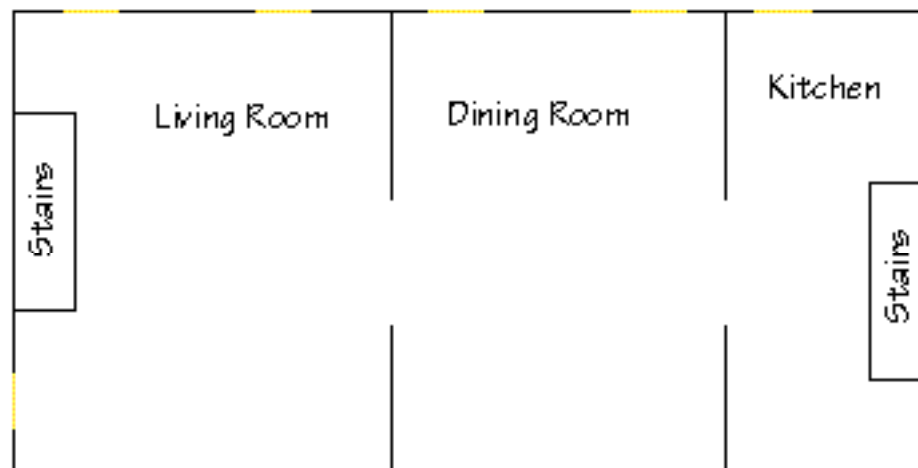


The Blane House

The Basement



First Floor



Second Floor

