

WEIRD FRONTIERS

ROLE PLAYING GAME

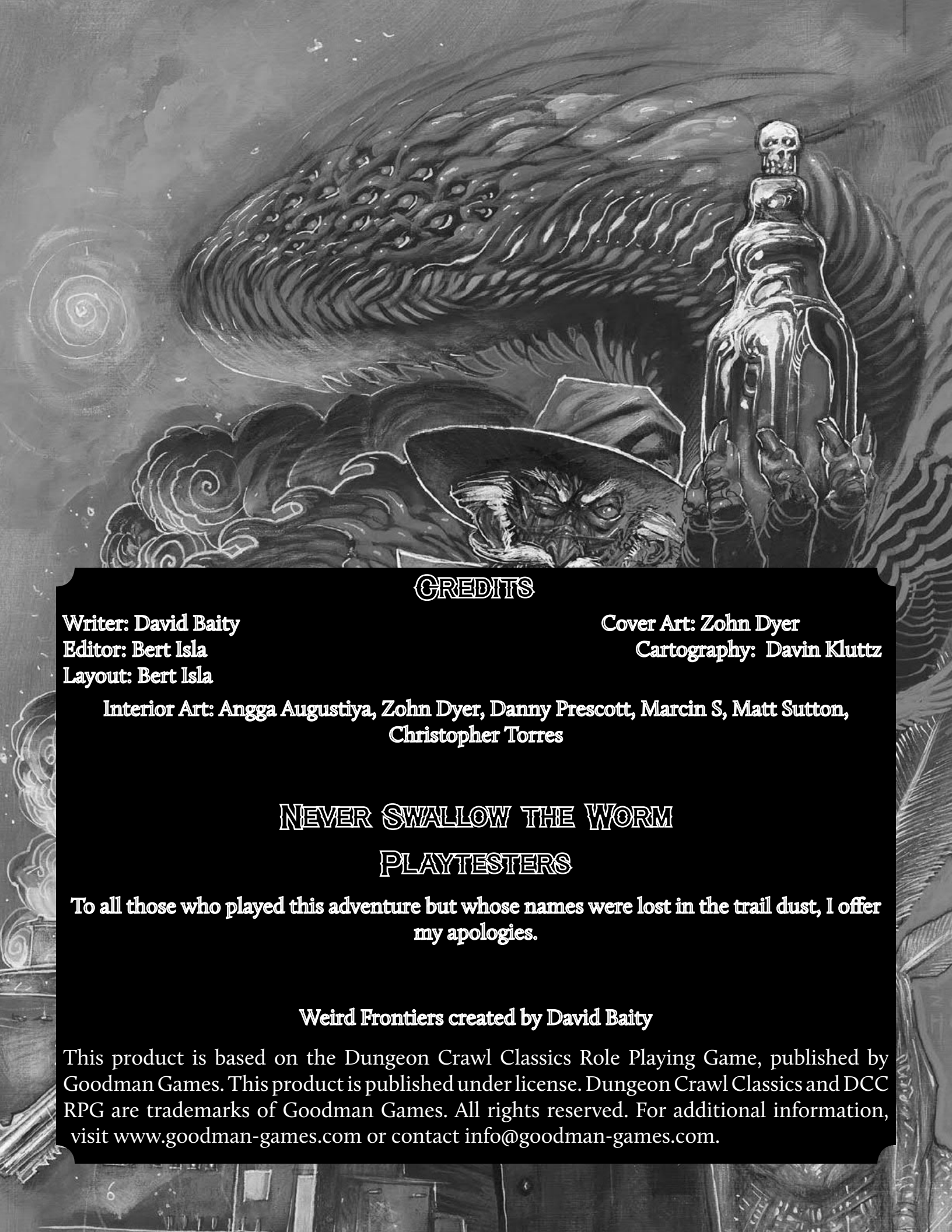
NEVER SWALLOW THE WORM!

A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE BY
DAVID BAITY



COMPATIBLE WITH

DCC RPG



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NEVER SWALLOW THE WORM

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**To all those who played this adventure but whose names were lost in the trail dust, I offer
my apologies.**

Weird Frontiers created by David Baity

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NEVER SWALLOW THE WORM

A 1ST LEVEL ADVENTURE

BY

DAVID BAITY

The posse begins the adventure riding hard on a dusty trail with the aim of putting down a gang of roughnecks dead set on conjuring up some elder-deviltry. But best laid plans often go off the rails, and the real devilry is taking a ride towards the town of Adobes, with a thirst for hooch, and a curse that just might spell the beginning of the end.

Never Swallows the Worm is a 1st level adventure for 4-6 characters written by David Baity.





SYNOPSIS

Never Swallow the Worm is an adventure designed to be run with 6-8 1st level characters. The PCs will begin the tale having taken a job with one Eric Hoffman—a U.S. Marshal tasked with tracking down a band of murderous cultists intent on heading into the desert to a place where they plan to enact a ritual, recently discovered, that will reveal the location of a dimension gate leading to the imprisoned dark god Sub-Niggurath they worship.

Having tracked the cabal for close to a week, the Marshal, along with the PCs, have the jump on their quarry. They are held up at the mouth of the canyon that leads to the cabal that is going about setting up camp, preparing for the ritual sacrifice planned for the midnight hour. If all goes well, the posse will succeed with a well-planned bushwhacking, hopefully sparing the innocents kidnapped for the dark ritual, while losing Marshal Hoffman to a well-placed bullet somewhere during the fight.

With Hoffman gone, the posse should seek to return the kidnapped to their village (a town called Ojuelo, just across the Rio Grande in the state of Texas) on the way to collect the bounty for the wanted cultists. This simple plan goes awry when the posse arrives to find the town has been served up to Holt Porter and his Juarez Jackals—who robbed and murdered the villagers, taking anything of value and a couple of women in the process. Holt and his gang have made a profitable hobby of jumping the Texas/ Mexican border and blazing a trail of robberies and violent acts along the way.

Unbeknownst to the gang, this final act of devilry would be the end of their lives, and the cursed beginning of something far worse that is driven by an undying thirst for hooch. Unknown to the gang, the village is the home of Pedro Delgado, an aging healer also known as

“Comedor de Maldiciones” (the Curse Eater). Pedro has spent the better part of 80 years using his special talent to take cursed items from those wishing to be free of the objects and eating the curses that have fallen upon them. One of these cursed items will prove to be the downfall of Holt and his bandits, an ornate bottle of tequila that just happens to keep a demonic worm and its curse in a larval state of limbo. During the violent attack on Pedro, Holt and his gang take the bottle, along with the meager spoils of the village, and ride off towards the border to a Texas town called Adobes.

The curse is unleashed on the world by Holt and his gang of jackals during the first time they break for camp to go through their spoils and drink any of the liquor taken up to this point. Each takes a sip from the cursed tequila, with Holt taking the last swill, swallowing the worm, bringing the demon out of limbo and into the bandit’s gut. El Gusano Diablo (the devil worm) makes itself known to Holt through a symbiotic attachment, allowing communication by thought. Although the worm will eventually use the carcass of Holt to manifest into the world, it lends its supernatural powers to the man, making him a far deadlier gunfighter.

The PCs will learn of Holt and the curse he has unleashed into the world by the lingering ghost of Pedro, who implores the posse to catch the bandits and take the cursed tequila or destroy the gang before El Gusano Diablo can infect the land with the curse of thirst. Conveniently, the posse was headed to the town of Adobes to collect their reward and notify the local sheriff of Hoffman’s demise; however, now the chase is on to try and stop Holt and his Jackals from reaching the town and raining down destruction by sowing the unsuspecting townsfolk with the curse.

This adventure begins *in Media Res* with the party in the midst of a shootout with some cultists. This is to help everyone (judge included) get some time with combat before the tale begins. In the case of a convention session or where time is limited, the judge may instead give a colorful description of the combat that has just happened, detailing the fall of Marshal Hoffman, and explaining why they are carrying a sack full of cultists’ hands.



INTRODUCTION

After riding hard in the saddle for days with the ever-affable U.S. Marshal Hoffman, the group has finally caught up with Stefan Weber's murderous cabal of cultists. Hoffman hired the PCs after giving them the long list of the heinous crimes and devilry that's left a wake of crimes best left unmentioned across the Texas/Mexico border. To make matters worse, the cabal has collected a fair share of innocents they plan to offer up to whatever dark tentacled thing they worship, and neither the PCs nor the marshal are about to let that happen.

Rather than riding straight in, Hoffman's expert knowledge of the sun-scorched canyons of the Chihuahuan desert leads the group to a vantage point far above the cultists as they set up for camp and their dark rituals. As night falls, the group will undoubtedly want to bushwhack the cabal, especially when they reveal a young child, kidnapped earlier in the day when the poor girl's unfortunate family crossed the path of the murderers. The fight will end well for the group, with but one casualty, Marshal Hoffman.

The Marshal made it clear that a \$100 bounty would be paid for each marked hand of a cultist (unmistakable, considering they carry a brand on their left hand and often have other visibly tainted features that appear with the corruption that comes from the worship of things best left alone) brought to the law office of Adobes. The PCs should give Hoffman a proper burial and travel with the girl for two days before crossing paths with the girl's aunt and uncle, who were searching desperately for the missing family when they never arrived home.

After leaving the girl in the care of her family, the PCs will travel for another full day, discovering the smoldering village of Ojuelo, stripped of any worth, and its peaceful inhabitants murdered in cold blood. A search of the village will reveal only one survivor that's fading fast: a village shaman known simply as El Brujo.

El Brujo will tell of a gang of murderous thieves that rode into his village under cover of night. The gang, led by Holt Porter (wanted dead or alive on both sides of the border!) had successfully pulled off a robbery days earlier and was riding hard to reach Texas to lie low in the first tumbleweed town unfortunate enough to lie in

the Jackals path. El Brujo also whispers to the PCs of a special bottle of hooch taken by Holt just before planting lead into the elderly shaman's chest—a rare bottle of tequila that just so happens to serve as a prison for a demonic worm carrying an infectious curse that has the potential to turn the masses into mindless slaves ready for commanding!

If hunting Holt and his gang for their long list of heinous crimes isn't enough to get the PCs fired up and on their trail; the fact that he's riding for the same Texas town Marshal Hoffman told the group they'd collect their coin should seal the deal. The PCs pursue Holt all the way to Adobes, where they'll find the Juarez Jackals (Holt's gang), alongside some special new "recruits" that don't take too kindly to any efforts to save anyone free of the curse Holt has recently learned of firsthand. Finding Holt results in an epic showdown that finishes with the group facing off with the demon worm, El Gusano!

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Judges should plug in a random encounter if the group begins to drift, but keep in mind the time should the session be a one-off of any sort. Judges wishing to stretch the adventure over a few sessions are encouraged to add a few days' travel time between convenient parts of the adventure, allowing for use of the Random Encounter table. Roll once per day and again at night on a d8. Any roll of a 1 will bring the attention of something nefarious with ill-intent. Roll 1d6 to determine the type of encounter.



RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

Note: While intended for 1st level characters, there's no reason a judge couldn't run this as a funnel. The stats below can be used in a funnel, and if you're running your group through "Never Swallow the Worm" at 1st level, each entry has a notation to better adjust the encounter to make for more of a challenge.

- 1) La Cegua: Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 4d6+2; MV Fly 30'; Act 2d20; SP fly, half damage from non-magical weapons, maniacal laugh; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2; PoD +1.
Maniacal laugh: A cegua's insane laugh forces all those within 30' to make a DC 18 Willpower save or be surprised. She will lash out at the nearest male target with her claws to pull her prey towards her huge skeletal horse maw. She then targets the face of her victim with her bite attack. If her victim flees, she will pursue with her ability to fly, her dress fluttering in the wind as she continues her diabolical laugh.
- 2) Rattlesnake, giant (12'): Init +6; Atk bite +3 melee (2d4+venom); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 15; MV 40' Act 1d20; SP venom (DC 20 Fort save or death); SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will 0; Path WtL. (For 1st level games, double the hit points and add +2 AC.)
- 3) Freak lightning storm: Dark clouds join to form a demonic visage as random lightning streaks from its eyes and thunder booms from the being's mouth. The PCs must attempt to find cover (DC 10 survival skill check; d20 if skilled); otherwise, the storm lasts for 1 turn and during each round the PCs must pass a Luck test (roll under) or be struck for 1d10 damage. PCs under cover are immune to the strikes.
- 4) Zombie settlers (1 per PC): Init attacks last; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will 0; Path PoD. (For 1st level games, add three zombies per character and increase hp to 8.)
- 5) Scorpion, large (8'): Init +3; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4) or sting +2 melee (1d3 plus venom); AC 15; HD 2d10+6; hp 20; MV 40' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP venom (DC 12 Fort save or paralysis for 1d4 rounds); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will 0; Path WtL. (For 1st level games, add 10 hp, change claw to 1d6, sting to 1d8 and add Act 2d20.)
- 6) Jackalopes, dire (1 per every 2 PCs, round up): Init +2; Atk kick melee +3 (1d6), gore melee +2 (1d6+1); AC 14; HD 1d8; MV 50; Act 2d20; SP milk; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Path POD +1. Milk: If the antlers of a jackalope are ground into dust and mixed with cold spring water, it forms a frothy white milk. If imbibed, the milk restores 2 HD of lost hit points. One pair of jackalope antlers can make four doses of restorative milk. (For 1st level adventures, include one jackalope per character.)



ADVENTURE START

Marshal Hoffman hires and accompanies the characters on a hunt to track and take down the cult led by Stefan Weber. The adventure begins with the group on high ground observing the cult setting up a campsite for the evening, using the walls of a canyon to provide safety and privacy for the ritualistic sacrifice they plan with the youngster they kidnapped a day earlier. Characters have the element of surprise and may take several different courses of action to stop the cultists.

“You watch quietly from the edge of one of the canyon walls serving as shelter for the object of your mission—the murderous cultists led by Weber. The group moves about, setting up their camp as the remaining amber rays of daylight slowly give way to a beautiful sky filled with plum-stained clouds, slowly parting to reveal a full moon.

You hear Weber’s harsh German accent barking orders at his followers as they begin to build a fire and prepare a meal. On the opposite canyon wall, you notice a small group marking the wall in what appears to be chalk, drawing alien symbols and planting candles at certain points. Another cultist, larger than the rest, carries what looks to be an altar, placing it on the ground close to the wall. A piercing cry grabs your attention away from the altar as you spot a small child, bound, obviously terrified by her captives. You feel the time to act is upon you.

The look on Marshal Hoffman’s face is grim, laced with determination and the exhaustion of several days’ hard ride. “It looks grim for the little one, less we figure a way to put a heel in their asses, and quick like!” Hoffman whispers gruffly before cocking his head and spitting out his chaw.”

Any PC making a DC 8 Intelligence check (DC 5 if any related skills are used, such as survival) will spot a path leading downward to the canyon floor some distance behind the campsite, making for a solid ambush point. Unless a roll to sneak is botched, the PCs will make it down and out of sight, gaining automatic surprise for 1 round.

Hoffman will not survive the encounter—going down heroically somehow, either victim to Weber’s spells, or possibly gunfire. Have this happen early in the combat, while the PCs are heavily engaged. Describe his grisly death (you might even call for a Grit check)!

Stefan Weber (4th level occultist): Init +2; Atk light pistol +2 ranged (1d8, ROF 2, Load 6, 10/20/60), sacrificial dagger +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 17; HD 4d6; hp 27; MV 30’; SP occultist traits (spell check 1d20+6), spells [1st level: *ricochet*, *obscuring mist*, *axle grease*, *magic lasso*, *incomprehensible babbling*; 2nd level: *armor of darkness*, *leech*]; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6; Path PoD +2. [Str 16; Agi 12; Sta 16; Per 16; Int 16].

Mutated brute cultist: Init +3; Atk (4) throwing axes +4 ranged (1d5, 10/15/25) or goat horn mutation +3 melee (1d10+3 and knock down); AC 16; HD 5d8; hp 38; MV 30’; Act 2d20; SP knockdown (on a successful attack, the target must pass a Ref save with a difficulty matching the attack roll or fall prone and become stunned for 1 round); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3; Path PoD+1.

Standard cultist (8): Init +2; Atk heavy pistol +1 ranged (1d10, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, 10/20/60); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 8 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; Path PoD +1.





Weber will attempt to cast *axle grease* to catch as many PCs as possible in the spell's area of effect. He will also try to cast *magic lasso* to capture the child as a last-ditch effort, threatening to hang her unless the PCs surrender.

The mutated brute will attempt to shield Weber from any melee attacks. Each cultist has goatlike features. Describe some as having disturbing eyes, snouts, small horns, coarse goat hair, claws, and other taint effects. Each cultist bears the mark of Shub-Nigurath on their right hand. Hoffman clearly stated the hands needed to be removed and taken to Adobes to provide proof Weber and his cult are finished.

Loot: Weber's grimoire (a book of forbidden rites dedicated to the black goat of the woods, Shub-Nigurath), \$256.00, weapons already listed, 10 extra shots of ammo, camping gear, horses with saddles, demonic goat idols, candles, camping gear, and herbs and incense.

Maria Gonzales: The poor girl witnessed her parents turned to pulp by one of Weber's spells and is barely aware of her surroundings. The PCs might attempt to reach through her shattered mind with a DC 8 Personality based check to offer comfort to the child.

Each of the next encounters occur on the way back to Ojuelo. If you need to extend the adventure, remember to roll on the Random Encounter table during the travels.

Encounter 1 - Family Reunion

The PCs will probably spend the rest of the night camping, burying Marshal Hoffman, and tending to Maria. The following day, the group should saddle up and ride back to Texas. At midday, they will meet a small cart being pulled by two horses. A man and woman, along with two children, are on the cart.

"As you pull your mounts to the side so that the horse-drawn cart can pass, you hear your newest member loudly yelling at the folks riding in the cart. Her bronze cheeks immediately streak with tears of apparent joy. The quick exchange of Spanish is too fast for you to keep up with, but you need no translation to understand the girl has found relatives. She hops off the horse and is met halfway with hugs and kisses from the family, who are just as joyous. After a long pause, the man driving the cart approaches, trying to express his gratitude."

Jorge is Maria's uncle, and once his brother's body was discovered, it was feared Maria would never be found. They have been riding out every day in hopes of finding some clue to her fate. Jorge will offer to fill the PCs' canteens up and what little food he has.

He will also gift rosary beads to a PC that made any attempts to take care of the little girl. The beads are blessed and considered lucky. Once per day, a PC can shed a Hex that they've previously acquired.

Encounter 2 - Jackalope Jinx

The PCs continue to follow the trail that led them into Mexico. Finding a copse of cacti (providing delicious cactus milk) near the end of the day seems like a good place to settle for the night. Nightfall will bring a ravenous pack of jackalopes, seeking flesh for their furry bellies. The jackalopes will attack during one of the PC's watches. The vermin gain a +5 roll to surprise the group (gaining one free attack outside of normal initiative order if they succeed). The attack will happen during a rare desert rain.

"The chill of a rare desert rain, coupled by the northerly breeze, makes you long for the comfort of four walls and a hot bath, but the flames of the campfire are plenty enough to keep things tolerable. You stand up to stretch your legs, walking the perimeter, then return to warm your hands as you gaze admirably at the rag-tag group of rowdies you've saddled up with. Suddenly, a pair of gleaming red eyes catches your gaze. Perched high on one of the boulders providing you with some cover appears as a dark silhouette against the glow of the prairie-moon. The creature looks as large as a wolf yet has a set of twitching ears too large to be anything but a rabbit!"





Encounter 3 - Ojuelo and El Brujo

The PCs had previously stopped to rest in the small village of Ojuelo several days ago. The villagers were welcoming and quickly found their way into the PCs' hearts (Note: If a luchador is in the group, they were treated as royalty) in just the night that was spent there. Ask each player for something memorable about the village that made their character's time there pleasant.

"Your saddle sores suddenly aren't bothering your blistered hides anymore, as you reach the top of a hill to find yourselves looking down at the peaceful village of Ojuelo. Your taste buds quickly have you salivating at the memories of the feast the wonderful people prepared for you several nights back during your pursuit of the cultists that you have since sent to the bone orchard. The fond memory is quickly replaced with a sense of urgency as you notice black smoke rising from several of the adobe houses. Anger fills your hearts as you spur your mounts to a hard gallop towards the village."

The PCs arrive to see the small village has been sacked and looted. Bodies lie scattered about in patches of blood-soaked sand. Read the following as they ride into the village.

"Riding into the village confirms your fears, and your hearts drop to the ground. The village abounds with the smell of homes and dreams ablaze, while visions of the recent massacre bring a special kind of anger you save for the worst kind of man. Villagers lie sprawled in patches of blood-soaked sand. Women, children, and the men—peaceful men—that tried in desperation to save them. If there are survivors, you'll be shocked."

Jackalopes, dire (2 per every PC, round up): Init +2; Atk kick melee +3 (1d6), gore melee +2 (1d6+1); AC 14; HD 1d8; MV 50; Act 2d20; SP milk; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Path POD +1.

Milk: If the antlers of a jackalope are ground into dust and mixed with cold spring water, it forms a frothy white milk. If imbibed, the milk restores 2 HD of lost hit points. One pair of jackalope antlers can make four doses of restorative milk.

MEXICAN VILLAGE OF OJUELO



Davin Kluttz · 2022
@escpod_designcraft

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Any PC searching the homes will find that each has been ransacked, with any valuables looted. Describe the tragic scene as many of the villagers have been shot to death, while a few are missing—possibly abducted or escaped. The PCs will find rations and a well for water. Those searching for survivors will remember the humorous shaman known as El Brujo as they come upon his colorful house. Read the following once a PC enters the house of the shaman.

Note: El Brujo will be devastated by the death of his wife, refusing any sort of healing, so that his wife will not be alone in the afterlife. If the party has a calavera, or sin-eater, the spirit of the man will linger on to help with hints or clues until the bastard Holt Porter is killed.

“You approach the last house in the village with fond memories of the village shaman residing here—“El Brujo,” an elderly man whose mouth seemed to be forever locked in a warm smile.

The outside of the house is covered in colorful murals, showing scenes of families going through stages of life, ending in the shedding of skin with a celebration of bones painted in sugar-skull motifs. Small animal bones, wood totems, and dream catchers hang from the roof, swaying slightly in the desert breeze. Pushing your way past the open doorway, you see the furnishings matching much of what you’ve seen in the previous homes. Only the western wall holds your attention.





Several shelves hold oddities and baubles—hundreds of objects, each probably with its own story to tell. Your eyes drop to the crumpled form, slumped over, blood pooling beneath him. El Brujo breathes and mumbles unintelligibly, his twitching hand weakly reaching out, possibly for his wife, who lies sprawled across the floor in their small kitchen.”

The PCs have a personal connection to the villagers of Ojuelo. Judges may decide whether to allow El Brujo to speak English or leave a bit of mystery to recent events by only allowing broken English or Spanish. If El Brujo can be understood, he tells the group that he is the “Eater of Curses.” The objects on the shelves represent a lifetime of taking cursed items from neighboring

villagers and even prominent people in Mexico. He tells the heroes that he’s protected by powerful patrons and is immune to the curses that live on his shelves. El Brujo only knows the bandits that attacked the town by the names he heard spoken before he was shot. “Holt” was the name of the American that shot him and his bride of 62 years. The man named “Holt” referred to his thugs as “Jackals.” El Brujo knows that Holt took the bottle of mezcal from the shelf of cursed objects. He pleads with the group to find the bottle before the curse is unleashed. He warns them of an ancient plague-curse that could consume the world. He knows a demonic worm (or “gusano demonio”) infects those around it with an undying thirst.

If the PCs cannot speak Spanish, El Brujo speaks broken English to answer a few questions before he dies.

Who did this to you? *“Era un grupo de bandidos. They say the name, Señor Holt.”*

Where did they go? *“Ellos montan Texas.”*

What are the things on your shelves? *“No debes tocar! No touch.... Cursed!”*

El Brujo will also repeat in between questions that *“Señor Holt must not drink. Botella maldita! Cursed...gusano demonio!”* making the sign of the cross each time.

El Brujo will take his last breath before succumbing to his gunshot wounds and, with one last motion, offers a PC on the Path of the Righteous (preferably a luchador) the small leather necklace from his neck, just before hoarsely whispering “Justice!”

The leather pouch contains bird bones and grants a bonus of +1 to all saves. (Even if magical healing is offered, it will fail, as El Brujo wishes to join his wife in the afterlife and will resist any attempts to reinvigorate him.)

Allow PCs a Luck check to see if they have heard of Holt Porter. Those that know of the man are aware he’s wanted for murder, robbery, and other dastardly deeds on both sides of the Mexican border (feel free to allow one of the PCs a chance encounter with the man in the past, possibly a bar fight, or some other incident).

Known as the leader of the Juarez Jackals, Holt is a bloodthirsty maniac that handpicked his seven “jackals” for their eagerness to bring pain and suffering to any that cross their path. There’s an \$800 bounty on Porter, with an additional \$100 for each of the seven bandits that follow the killer.

The PCs will easily find the tracks of Holt and his men as the rain from the night before makes their passage clear in the muddy ground. The madman is making a dash for the border by following the same route the heroes planned to take into Texas, to the town of Adobes. A PC need only make a DC 5 Intelligence check to follow the trail, but they slowly begin to suspect the bandits are headed to Adobes, Texas.

There are many interesting (and cursed!) objects to be found on the shelves in El Brujo’s home. If the temptation is too great and a PC wishes to touch or take an object, refer to this table:

ROLL 1d20

RANDOM CURSED ITEM TABLE

- 1) **Stuffed monkey** - A dessicated monkey in a crouched position looks skyward, a grimace frozen on its face. A small chain runs around the corpse-monkey’s neck ending in a clasp-styled link.

Effect: The monkey once belonged to an occultist who dabbled too deeply with Elder tomes best left closed. One final act before what was left of his brain crumbled to crimson dust was to take her familiar and twist the poor beast into the dessicated husk it is now. Should any valuable gem or mineral worth at least \$25 be held in front of the monkey, it will slowly animate and swallow the object and then reach for the owner’s finger. It’s at this point that the owner should concerntrate on one question in their mind. The monkey will answer the question by way of of visions pulled from a place not meant for man. It is worth noting the monkey is capable of deception to a degree, thus half-truths may be provided. The monkey is cursed, and each use of its powers results in a DC 10 Grit check to avoid losing 1d3 Grit points with a natural 1 also causing the loss of 1 permanent point. Additionally, the owner wakes up each day with one Hex token.

- 2) **Harmonica** - Much like a standard harmonica, but the instrument is layered in gold and inscribed with strange glyphs and demonic faces.

Effect: The harmonica is rumored to have been given from the Devil himself on a dark night at the crossroads, but its original owner has long since parted with the object. Attempting to play the hamronica is surpsingly easy and has the effect of granting the power of persuasion when directed at one human within 15’. Upon finishing a small tune, the target must pas a DC 12 Willpower save to avoid considering the performer a good friend for the next 1d24 hours. Using the harmonica comes at a price. Inhaling through the instrument allows undetectable demonic larvae to enter the lungs of the user—who unknowingly becoming an incubator for these “mites.” The judges keep a secret tally for each time the instrument is played, deducting 1 Stamina point in secret. Other than a dry cough or a slight pain in the chest, the owner should not be made aware of the effects the instrument is having. Once Stamina reaches a 4, the cough becomes wet and bloody, after which only 4 dice of divine healing can save the owner.

- 3) Saddle** - Fashioned from a strange black leather, the saddle is stitched with silver threading. A silver plate is affixed to the horn. The entire piece is embossed with what appears to be screaming faces.

Effect: The saddle once belonged to a gunslinger, turned vampire, that legend says would ride under the light of the moon from town to town, terrorizing settlements for years. The saddle was created for the vampire by necromantic arts. Using the saddle slowly drains the horse it's strapped to of its blood over a period of several days, eventually leaving the horse devoid of all blood. In exchange for the feeding, the horse gains increased speed and endurance. Not only is the horse's movement doubled, but it also has no need for rest or water. The saddle will go from sipping to a full on feast within 1d4+3 days, leaving the horse dead and drained of every drop of blood.

- 4) Wineskin** - A typical wineskin, fashioned from a buffalo hide. One single eye (perhaps human) is inset by way of a brass ornament.

Effect: The eye was plucked during a dark ritual under a blood moon when our world aligned with worlds unseen. Anyone taking a full swill from the wineskin immediately gains the ability to see and interact with denizens of the Far. These creatures are considered "god-like" in their own pocket dimensions, drunk on the constant feast of souls collected by their "reapers" canvassing the Near for newly passed souls. Drinking from the skin grants one of two gifts. The imbiber may choose one ability from the Dark Inheritance chart normally reserved for the tommyknocker class or they may commune with the dark power contacted in the Far. Doing so means any question can be answered about the spirit world or those hailing from the haunted wastes (undead, spirits, etc.). Using the wineskin for either ability immediately leaves the imbiber with 1d4 Hex tokens and the animosity of any undead creature within 1 mile that can now sense and track the current owner of the skin.

- 5) Derby hat** - Made of a fine black velvet, the hat contains an Ace of spades card tucked inside the outer band and sports a bullet hole dead-center towards the front. The hat has a lingering smell of gunsmoke, whiskey, and perfume.

Effect: The hat belonged to a once legendary gambler whose name is long forgotten. The gambler met his fate by way of a bullet to the forehead, leaving the hole found in the hat. The spirit of the gambler is forever tethered to the hat due to a pact made with some lesser demon on a night filled with whiskey and losing hands. Wearing the hat grants the *bushwhack* and *shady dealings* ability normally reserved for the gambler class but at a price: the demon who originally made the deal visits the wearer in their dreams, demanding a game of "chance," where no cheating is allowed. Judges should play one hand of 5 card draw poker. Should the owner of the hat win, they wake up in the morning with 1 Boon to start the day; however, should they lose, they wake up with a Hex token and the loss of one permanent Grit point to symbolize a sliver of soul being taken by the demon. Trying to discard the hat is harder than one thinks (it can only be given to another willing soul). Committing this act deducts 1d3 permanent Luck.

- 6) Cigar box** - This ornate cigar box is carved from bone and inset with silver hinges and latch. Laughing skulls are carved in all sides of the box that holds six cigars, all of which appear to have been smoked.

Effect: The cigar box belonged to a landowner of questionable moral fiber. It was found in pristine condition amongst the smoldering ruins of his once lavish estate. Many townsfolk believed he had business dealing with a shadowy cult that sought wealth and power at all levels of government. Placing any number of cigars in the box overnight will imbue them with the power to suck the lifeforce from 1 target within 5' upon inhale. The target must make a DC 18 Fort save or lose 2 hit points, which are then used to either heal the smoker of 2 hit points or provide temporary hit points for 1 hour, should they be at max hit points. Each inhale from the cigar comes with a price. The smoker has a cigar sized hole of burning and smoking flesh appear on their body for 1 hour. This burning hole does no damage but lowers the smokers Stamina and Personality by 1 for each inhale, for the duration. It will also set worn clothing on fire with no roll allowed (consult page 146 of the Weird Frontiers rule book for catching on fire). Randomly roll a d6 for where each hole appears; 1 = front torso, 2 = back torso, 3 = left arm, 4 = right arm, 5 = left leg, 6 = right leg. There is no maximum number of holes the smoker may have.

ROLL 1D20**RANDOM CURSED ITEM TABLE CONTINUED**

- 7) Fishing rod** - This ordinary looking fishing rod is fashioned from bamboo. Silver twine is wound neatly around a brass reel.

Effect: The fishing rod's previous owner or creator is unknown. The first fish that is caught that day and eaten, by only one person, provides enough nourishment and hydration for 24 hours. During this time the consumer also gains 2 points of Intelligence. Unfortunately 2 points of Personality are lost during this time due to oily bubbles that slowly vent out and float upward from either the person's mouth or ears and nose (roll randomly for which orifice). This may also impose a -2 to all hide rolls.

- 8) Lantern** - This lantern appears to have been well used and left out in the elements. Made from a tarnished brass, the glass panes have obscure symbols etched (or perhaps scratched) into them.

Effect: The lantern belonged to a sailor named Henri Defour, who owned a fishing boat in the Gulf of Mexico off the Louisiana coast. He came across, what he thought, was simply driftwood, but upon further inspection with this lantern, was the remains of some alien material covered in strange symbols and patterns. His other crewmates were stricken with fear and begged him not to approach further. Feeling compelled by some force he could not understand, he approached it in a small row bow. There was a flash of light when his mind attempted to make sense of the cryptic symbols. His body was turned to shards of glass, and along with the floating artifact, they both sank into the dark water. His lantern was forever marked with some of those same symbols. The lantern, when lit, projects those same symbols upon surfaces. The lantern will only stay lit for 2d6 rounds. Anything that is on the Path of the Damned will suffer a -2 to all actions against anyone within the lantern's illumination of 30' diameter, lest they also be on the Path of the Damned. Those within the light are blinded (regardless if they shield their eyes from the light) for an hour when the lantern goes out, unless a DC 18 Will save is made. Failure results in a -4 to all actions for the duration.

- 9) Perfume** - A highly polished jade serves as the bottle for this perfume. A brass collar connects to a purplish spray bulb that ends in a tassel. It has an intricate dragon carved into a small brass plate mounted on the front. The bottle appears to be full.

Effect: The perfume bottle was once owned by the always-veiled daughter of Chinese nobility. Its alluring aroma was able to sway the minds of political rivals during contentious negotiations. Rumors that the perfume was made with the tears of a powerful demon began to spread amongst rival factions, leading to a violent conflict which ended the young woman's life. No longer able to provide her side of the bargain her father forced her to make, the demon now has become bitter and full of wickedness. Spraying the perfume on to the wearer's body adds +4 to Personality checks for 12 hours. After this time, and for the next 12 hours, the wearer's skin becomes putrescent with the smell of a burnt corpse, resulting in -4 to Personality checks. The wearer will also randomly yell curse words in Mandarin with an unknown and shockingly sinister voice, in the middle of all sentences, even during sleep. Scratching at their own face, causing 1 hit point of damage, will stop the yelling for the next hour.

- 10) Brass knuckles** - Two brass knuckles are connected by a 3' chain, all fashioned from silver and brass. The striking part of each are engraved with the words "SINS" and "Forgiven" (one word on each), while the rest of the brass knuckles are engraved with dozens of skulls.

Effect: The weapons belonged to a revelator that set upon a path of vengeance that eventually caused the woman to turn to the Path of the Damned before meeting a horrific end. Only a person on the Path of the Righteous may use the brass knuckles to gain the following effects: The weapons grant a bonus attack (at 1d20) and has the added effect of pulling flesh away from the face after each blow, causing an additional d4 from blood loss after each strike. The sight of free-flowing blood causes the wearer to enter a maddening rage unless a DC 12 Will save can be passed. While under the effects of the rage, the wielder loses all sense of self and tries to "murder the sinner" by way of wrapping the chain around the target's neck by a successful attack. Once the chain is in place, it begins to constrict and inflicts 1d4 Stamina points in strangulation damage each round. Targets reaching 0 Stamina perish of strangulation, their soul briefly hovering in front of the owner of the brass knuckles before being sucked into the brass knuckles, adding another link in the chain and skull on the brass knuckles. Slaying a sinner this way will break the owner from their rage and leave them one step closer towards the Path of the Damned.

- 11) Shrunken Head** - A grimace plays across the face of the unfortunate soul this dessicated and shrunken head belonged to. Sharp angular features indicate the owner was of Native American descent. One long ebony braid runs from the top of the head and ends in a silver hoop clasp.

Effect: The shrunken head's history has been lost through the years. In the presence of fresh human blood, the head will make a moan whilst its eyes move frantically behind its eyelids. Fresh blood, when applied to the respective part, will make that part come alive. Applying blood to the mouth will allow it to speak, whilst applying it to the eyes will allow them to open and see. It will not answer questions, nor react to threats to the wielder, though it will occasionally say something in a long-lost native language. The eyes project a dim purplish light with floating silver sparkles. Its mouth produces tendrils of shadows. The open eyes provide the ability to see into the Near, whilst the mouth provides the ability for the head to speak for the wielder with the spirits of the Near. This only lasts for 1d8 rounds until another application of blood would be needed. After such time, the wielder will find their eyes and mouth withered, leathery, and shut until midnight. The head can still be used to see and talk in the Near whilst the wielder's own eyes and mouth are shut, should another application of blood be applied.

- 12) Pommel bags** - Well-worn and fashioned from thick leather, these saddle bags are smaller in size and embossed with laughing devils on both the fronts. The bags have a faint lingering scent of sulphur.

Effect: These pommel bags were once used by a cult of murderous practioners of the black arts. Hunted to the border of Mexico by the Texas Rangers, these pommel bags were passed off to the surviving members, until the last one was shot down on the banks of the Rio Grande River. They were soon stolen from the Rangers evidence storage room. The bag is infused with the spirit of a powerful demon which bestows 1 spell each day to the rider whose horse carries the bag. The judge rolls a d5 for the level of the spell and then a d10 for the particular spell on page 177 of the Weird Frontiers corebook. The result is not told to the user. This spell is made with a +4 arcane check and the user does not need to be a caster of any variety already. The rider reaches into the the bag and grabs a handful of ectoplasmic vapors. The user must make a DC 16 Fort save after casting the spell, succeed or fail. Failure results in the caster taking 2 points of damage for each hour they're exposed to sunlight for the next 24 hours, due to their skin becoming blistered, red, and inflamed, while they suffer an uncontrollable crackling laugh during the most inappropriate moments, resulting in -3 to Personality checks.

- 13) Doctors bag** - This new black leather bag is stitched with the initials "JHH." Opening the bag reveals several instruments often used by traveling dentists.

Effect: The bag once belonged to James Henry Hawthorne, a doctor of denistry from Boston. Dr. Hawthorne served many of the upperclass of the city and even a few notorious outlaws. Called out in the middle of the night, a wealthy banker was in urgent need. Dr. Hawthorne arrived to see the man laying in the middle of an arcane symbol, surrounded by robed cultists—a green creature of pure nightmare attached to his face. Slimey, tentacled, and eyeless, the monster had buried itself into the man's mouth. Using his instruments, the doctor was able to pry and detach the thing, which slithered into his doctor's bag and vanished. Now the bag coats the instruments in a slightly green slime, which heals wounds, healing 2 hit points when used on an injury. The user must make a DC 20 Will save after each use or be compelled to lick the instrument clean of the slime. Failure causes the users tongue to become a 1' long green tentacle, covered in slime and suction cups for 1 hour. The tentacle-tongue only allows the victim to make slurred monstrous noises and moans as the uncontrollable tongue lashes out of their mouth. This results in a -4 to all Personality checks.

- 14) Duster coat** - This oilskin duster shows signs of heavy use—patched up in places and heavily mottled by the elements from what appears to be years of use.

Effect: Bart Goeringer was a wanted rustler who evaded the law for several years before his luck ran out and he found himself with a noose around his neck. He was known for an uncanny ability to avoid capture. Bart had made a pact with a traveling witch coven and sold his soul for the ability to give Johnny Law Dog the slip whenever he picked up his trail. For their part of the bargain, the witches took the man's duster and soaked it in a cauldron of things best not discussed. The coat allows the user to use existing shadows as a means of transportation. Activating the duster requires 1 temporary Stamina point to feed the coat for each "jump." The wearer can use any existing shadow to jump distances of up to 100'. The duster only reveals its sinister nature once the coat has been used for the first time. Each additional use of the cursed duster requires a contested Will test between the wearer and the duster. Should the duster win, it continues to suckle from the warm flesh of it's "partner" at the rate of 1d3 points of Stamina. If the owner of the duster win the contested roll, no additional draining happens. The roll must be made each round until the wearer wins, or they are drained of all blood, leaving a pale corpse wrapped in an oilskin duster.

- 15) Whip** - Once uncoiled, this whip reaches 20' in length. The whip is made from a strange hide, braided and well-oiled to the popper, which is made from golden threading that wraps around a trio of snake fangs. A string of rattlesnake buttons dangle from the wrist loop.

Effect: Bakade Kwe (Hungry Woman) an Apache skinwalker was cast out from her tribe after being discovered for her dark magics, including cannibalism. The woman swore revenge for being declared a pariah and fashioned a whip made from the skin of those she ate and her rattlesnake familiars. The old crone was eventually put down by those she chose to terrorize, but the whip lives on. The whip must be a signature weapon to use and has the following statistics: 3d4+3 damage (poison, victims successfully struck must pass a DC 13 Fortitude save to avoid suffering 1d4 Stamina loss for 1d4+1 rounds), reach 20', trip, and disarm. Carrying the whip has the odd effect of making its owner crave the taste of human flesh. This craving only grows stronger with time, and during any encounters where blood is spilled (friend or foe) the owner of the whip must pass a DC 10 Will save to avoid dropping everything to have a taste. With each failed save, the DC of the save increases by +1 cumulatively. Once the DC of the save reaches 20, the character transforms into a skinwalker, lost to hunger and darkness.

- 16) Tobacco pouch** - Fancy silver stitching of a desert scene, including cacti and rattlesnake, covers the front of this leather tobacco pouch. A gold chain runs from a loop on the back of the pouch to a clasp suitable for a belt.

Effect: The pouch once belonged to Brian Clark, a cattleman that prospered during the Civil War, supplying both sides with beef in the early days. Legend has it that Clark crossed his herd through a Comanche territory, trampling a small group of children before they could be moved to safety. The shaman of the tribe cursed Clark and his crew, and one by one, they all fell victim to rattlesnake bites. Clark was rumored to take his last breath, spitting the juice of his chaw, and striking the serpent before passing on to whatever afterlife awaited him. Valuables Clark had on his person were taken by the offended tribe—who took the tobacco pouch and stitched it with the story of Clark's demise. The tobacco case has the special property of removing venom and its effects from any creature, mundane or supernatural, by way of spending 1 Luck point and then spitting the juice on the site of the bite wound. On the following round, all effects of the venom, including damage caused by the attack, are restored. Unfortunately, the cursed item attracts serpents of all types like a beacon in the night, giving a 40% chance of a serpentine encounter with each night of rest. Judges may wish to vary the serpents that come calling, but typically, it will be 1d4 rattlesnakes. The snakes will often slither into bedrolls or other items where they can gain the element of surprise.

- 17) Horse shoes (4)** - Four well-used horseshoes made from brass are kept in a large leather pouch. The horseshoes appear to be from a much earlier time, and each has an odd symbol stamped into them

Effect: The horseshoes come from ancient Arabia. Once belonging to a peddler of the strange and the occult, the horseshoes have had many different followers of the arcane as owners. When mounted on a horse, the animal becomes a vessel from which a powerful being of cosmic origin can interact with the rider. The horse will whisper, during the night, to its rider in an unknown language that only the rider can understand. The whispers last 1 hour, and during this time, the horse's eyes look like a reflection of the blackness of space. After this time, the rider gains +2 to all arcane checks until the sun comes up. During the day, no matter if the sun is visible or not, the horse is a menace to its rider. Often becoming beligerent, refusing to move, neighing constantly, bucking, biting, kicking, rolling in mud, and other such acts of mischievousness as decided by the judge. This behavior inflicts -2 to Personality checks to the rider, versus those that have witnessed the embarrassing animal. The rider must make a DC 20 Personality check to be able to stop the behavior for 1d6 x 10 minutes.

- 18) Spider skillet** - This four-legged frying pan is fashioned from cast iron. The pan still has the appearance of being oiled and seasoned, and the legs and handle detach to store in a black leather bag.

Effect: This frying pan belonged to a hunter named Earl Goggins from the Utah Territory. Earl became lost and starving in the desert and came upon a massive bloated slug which he quickly killed. Frying the slimy slug meat in his spider skillet, Earl ate his fill. A year later, a travelling merchant found the skillet discarded on a desolate trail. Its owner was nowhere to be seen. Food cooked in the skillet becomes green, mushy, bubbling, and very unpleasant to look at. A DC 10 Will save is required to muster up the courage to eat as much as they can. This results in a discharge of slimy sweat 10 minutes after consumption. This gives +2 to all Fort saves and AC for 1 hour. Unfortunately, after the hour, the consumer will vomit forth a mouthful of slugs made from stomach lining. This makes the consumer nauseas—spitting up a mixture of slugs and blood for the next hour. This results in a -3 to all actions and Personality checks for the duration.

19) Eye glasses - This pristine set of bifocals rests within a black leather case stamped with a “Crafted by Dr. Abraxas in New York City 1869” in gold foil.

Effect: Dr. Abraxas led a demonic cult in the darkest bowels of Chicago before his demise in 1866. Rumors of his body being used by a demon amongst hushed circles do have merit, as the man reportedly “melted” in front of his cult during a ritual where the sacrifice somehow escaped before they could meet the knife. Abraxas was a well-to-do optometrist before his demise, and these spectacles were his own personal set. When worn, the bifocals grant the ability to cast magic, much like reading a scroll. Any arcane spell that is written will form the necessary words of power needed to be uttered to cast the spell (even by those with no ability to do so). Any spell cast this way requires the user to lose 1 temporary Stamina point, much like the spellburn ability of the occultist. The point allows the spell to be cast using a d16 roll. In addition to the point expenditure, should the wearer fail to cast the spell, it immediately draws the ire of a demon who attempts to corrupt the attempted spell caster. A DC 10 Will save must be passed to avoid rolling for corruption (see the spell description for specific corruption charts).

20) Velvet pouch - Strange symbols are embroidered upon this large, black velvet bag that is drawn closed by silver cords.

Effect: This bag was created by the notorious practitioner of the black arts, Albert Falk of Newcastle England in 1802. This bag was used in countless rituals during his life. He told people he was taught the symbols when astrally projecting himself on a moon of Jupiter, by a race of living shadows. Albert Falk died of malnourishment in 1804 at the age of 36. This bag provides the user with an infinite supply of black motes of arcane energy. Grabbing a handful whilst making an arcane check provides a +2 to the check. A small amount of the motes enters through the casters skin, forcing a DC 8 Fort save; failure results in 1 point of permanent Stamina loss from extreme hunger. Each time the motes are used in an arcane check and the Fort save is failed, the DC of the next save goes up by 1. Once the first save is failed, the caster always feels a slight tinge of hunger, no matter how much food they consume. Continued Stamina loss increases the feeling of hunger. The motes will not flow freely from the bag, and only one handful can be taken out per round. The bag is deceptive in regards to its weight of 35lbs.

Encounter 4 - The Chase

Riding hard on Holt’s trail, the PCs will stumble upon an odd sight once they reach the end of a day of riding.

“At first sight, you think you’ve been fortunate to catch up with the band of murderers sleeping off a hard spell of drinking, but you quickly realize the uneasy quiet permeating the scene stems from the fact that it’s abandoned. Bedrolls are still spread out amidst a charred rabbit left to cook over the fire. Broken bottles lay in shards all about the site, while several saddlebags lay propped against a canyon wall.”

Two women, obviously abducted from Ojuelo, sit slumped over, each hand bound and tied to a crag in the stone wall. Their dresses are soiled with dirt and dried blood. The hairs on your necks tingle as you survey the scene—half expecting to be bushwhacked.”

Holt and his crew left several hours earlier—victims of the curse. After ingesting the worm,

Holt immediately succumbed to the demon worm, El Gusano. All it took to infect his crew was a bite. Once the entire crew acquired “the thirst,” they saddled up and are currently riding hard to Adobes in search of more hooch and friends to invite to the club.

Investigating the scene will lead to nothing of worth. Several wanted posters, chaw, rations, and canteens are all that remain in the saddlebags. The two women have been infected and were left to spread the curse or die. Any PC investigating the bodies will notice they are both breathing. Cutting them loose will result in a surprise round as they try to bite anyone within range.

Infected village girls (larva stage infected):

Initiative +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3+1 plus infection); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 13,9; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with “The Thirst”); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Path PoD+1.



THE THIRST

The bite of El Gusano and its minions carries a terrible curse. Upon being bitten, the victim must immediately pass a DC 10 Fortitude save. Success results in the larval host not having time to enter the target's bloodstream (they pull away before enough saliva enters the bloodstream), while failure means countless eggs have entered the host body. Once the curse takes hold, follow the phases below.

Phase I/ Infection (egg): Each time a victim is bitten, have them make a DC 10 Fortitude save. Failure results in the eggs entering the bloodstream. Those infected by "The Thirst" become increasingly thirsty and agitated as the larva begins to grow and develop the physiology of the host. The Thirst is also accompanied by feelings of "worms" crawling under the skin or maybe a "tickle" in the eye, which may actually be spotted by anyone close enough to witness a worm moving just under the eyelid. As the side effects can only be (temporarily) subdued by imbibing alcohol, the infected become more and more obsessed with finding alcohol and will resort to violence to procure it.

Each Hour after infection: Have the victim make a DC 11 Fortitude save (the curse is harder to shrug off at this stage). Passing the save means suffering no ill-effect other than increasingly weird sensations and thirst. Failing the save results in the second of three phases manifesting. Infected passing the save must continue to do so every hour with a cumulative +1 to the DC of the save to simulate the ever-growing clutch of eggs invading their systems.

Phase II/ Molting (larva): The clutch of eggs begins to grow into demonic worms. This phase sends the host's sense of thirst into overdrive, and infected victims must immediately imbibe some form of alcohol (whiskey, tequila, etc.). Failure to procure spirits results in the victim immediately suffering 1d3 points of Stamina damage each hour to reflect the worms nibbling on various organs instead of the sugary booze they're being deprived of. Sanity is often sacrificed for blind rage at this point, and as a result, the host gains a +2 to attack and damage rolls at the cost of a -2 to AC to represent the futile realization that acquiring alcohol is the only way to prolong life.

Ingesting alcohol-laced sugar has a twofold effect. It provides the fuel needed by the growing worms to begin phase III of the curse. Feeding the worms the sugar needed to evolve also instills a euphoric high in the host, while the brood begins to molt through several growth stages. This "high" increases the infected's pain tolerance and is reflected by reducing all damage by -1d until phase III has begun.

Phase III/ Manifestation (grub): Once in phase III, the infected must continue to pass a DC 12 Fortitude save each hour; passing the save results in a loss of 1d3 Stamina points—however, the victim remains alive for an additional hour. While fighting for their life, the victim gains a +4 to attack and damage rolls while suffering a -4 to AC as the futile fight for life escalates. Failing the save signifies the nest of worms has begun devouring one another, burrowing and chasing its kin throughout the victim's body until the strongest, most cunning remains. This survivor immediately travels to the brain and assumes control of the victim, now considered a "grub" (forever lost as a PC). Curing an infected victim at this stage is nearly impossible and requires magical healing of at least 4 class dice to completely rid the host of the Thirst.



Encounter 5 - Hellbloom

The PCs follow Holt's trail into a wetland that has tall reeds.

"Walking through the tall reeds makes a stark contrast against the sparse scrub of the harsh western landscape. You and your fellows find the cool waters of the Rio a comfort, both in that it offers a welcome tonic to help fight off the effects of the blistering sun as well as giving you a landmark to follow. Your stomachs pull you away from whatever daydreams you've festooned to your psyche to make your travels easier, and the scent of something exotic reminds you of the mango jam served along with your breakfast during your last stay in Ojuelo—before the town was destroyed. Your noses lead you to a patch of flora. The colorful copse of plants smells of citrus and rose."

Hellbloom (4): Init -5; Atk mesmerizing scent; AC 9; HD 3d6; hp 15, 8, 11, 13; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP mesmerizing scent; SV Fort +1, Ref -6, Will +0; Path PoD.

Mesmerizing scent: The hellbloom is a beautiful scarlet plant that stands taller than a man. The scent of a hellbloom beguiles those who smell it, and they must succeed in a Will save to resist moving directly toward the flower. The save DC is a function of distance: DC 10 up to 240' away; DC 15 at 120'; DC 20 at 60'; DC 25 at 30' or closer. A creature that touches the hellbloom stands mesmerized while the flower wraps itself around them and consumes their flesh. No further save is possible. The flower automatically does 1d3 points of temporary Strength and Stamina damage each round without requiring any attack roll. A rescued victim must succeed in a Fort save (DC 10 + total Strength and Stamina damage taken) or 1d3 points of each type of damage (Strength or Stamina) is permanent. A victim wrapped in the flower takes half damage from any attack targeting the hellbloom.

The hellbloom plant is a sentient man-eating plant that lures creatures by scent and typically mimics something its unsuspecting victim finds irresistible. The PCs are 120' away when they first catch the scent, requiring a DC 15 Willpower save to resist the effects. PCs escaping the plants will find human and animal bones intertwined among the roots along with a pepperbox pistol (16 shots left) and a bowie knife, along with a partially digested money pouch holding eight gold eagle coins.

PCs that survive the encounter will find the rest of their day free from aggression, though a random PC on watch will see a demonic face form in the smoke of any campfire they happen to set. The face gazes at each PC before hissing and dissipating. The minor manifestation is merely to spook the group.

Encounter 6 - Lend a Hand

The PCs have one full day and night of riding before they reach Adobes, with one last encounter while on watch once they cross the shallow waters of the Rio.

The severed hands of the cultists have probably been forgotten by now, making it the perfect opportunity to unleash them on the group! The crawling claws will attempt to make telepathic contact with a suitable host by using a dark power. Each claw is capable of affecting the compulsion center in the human brain in a way undetectable to normal senses.

The spell check DC for the crawling claws to affect a PC is equal to their Personality. A PC may spend Luck or Boons on a 1 per 1 basis to lower the charm result. If the charm is successful, an affected PC will release the claws from where they are being stored and seek to cut off their own hand, replacing it with a claw.

The unusual "union" of host and crawling claw makes for an unsightly appendage that comes with the advantage of a +2 to spell checks, in addition to granting the host immunity to Grit checks when faced with a source of fear aligned with the Elder God the crawling claw serves. Additionally, the claw may be used to attack (1d5 damage).

ADOBES AT DUSK



Crawling claws (number appearing based on how many severed hands were collected):

Init +1; Atk leaping rake +1 melee (1pt); AC 16; HD d4; hp 3 each; MV 20', leap 10'; Act 1d20; SP charm; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; PoD.

Charm: The claw may attempt to make contact with the chosen victim. The claw must pass a spell check using 1d16 + an additional 1d6 to the roll for each crawling claw within 30'. A successful result convinces the new host that they must amputate one of their hands to complete the union. Targets immediately find the nearest tool or weapon and proceed to amputate the appropriate hand (1d3 damage)—allowing the waiting claw to instantly meld itself to the new host during the same round.

The PCs will reach Adobes by sunset with no additional encounters. Approaching the deputy's shed that overlooks the town will prove to be an ominous sight. Below, a large portion of the town is in flames, with townsfolk seemingly swarming from building to house.

"The small building that stands above the valley that cradles the small town breaks the violet skies that signal the fall of dusk. The deputy normally posted here seems to have vacated the building, yet his horse remains tied to the post. A wooden sign marking the town laws ironically silhouettes a town seemingly in chaos. Various buildings are full ablaze as townsfolk resemble ants scurrying from one area to the next. You feel a slight chill in your bones as you replay the shaman's dire warning. Perhaps it's too late. Your attention is pulled back towards the building, normally used to collect firearms, among other tasks. The front door squeaks faintly, giving slightly to a desert breeze."

Holt and his gang wasted no time in holding the deputy down and biting him. The infection took hold, and the building currently houses what was the deputy.

Any PC wishing to peer through the windows will automatically be surprised as two tentacles break through the glass and pull the poor soul through the broken window.

Infected Deputy (grub stage infected):

Atk bite +2 melee (1d5+2 plus infection), (2) tentacles +2 ranged (1 point of damage plus special, 15'), brood vomit +2 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 13 MV 20'; Act 2d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks), tentacles, brood vomit; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1, PoD +1.

Tentacles: The target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check (treat the creature as Str 18) to avoid being pulled in for an automatic critical bite attack the following round.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save.





Loot: There are 1d3 pistols, and 1d2 rifles (enough ammo for 20 shots for each gun) on the wall in the building in addition to a cot, cooking stove, and a visitor registry.

THE WORM'S TURN

"Despite a heavy down-pouring of rain, the city burns against the darkness of the night. Your senses are assaulted by the smell of thick wood smoke laced with the char of flesh cooking, and a multitude of screams echo in your ears. In the streets, a frenzy of violence is taking place as townsfolk chase one another through the streets. The slower folks don't make it to safety and are taken down by their fellow residents, who tear into them like a pack of wild dogs."

The town is currently in a state of chaos, and its citizens have turned into drunken, bite happy maniacs! Holt and his jackals headed straight to

A particularly evil judge might note that there are several penalties that could be applied to any combat that breaks out. Darkness penalties could be used where burning buildings don't quite give enough light to see, muddy streets could cause problems with movement, and the frenzied populace know their streets and alleys far better than the PCs do and will use that to their advantage in surprising the party.

the Thirsty Cactus saloon and distillery once they reached Adobes. It was only after three bottles of tequila that Ned Bittles, owner of the Thirsty Cactus, realized the strange-looking fellas hadn't the means to pay and told them they were cut off from the well! Holt immediately saw fit to teach Ned a lesson by biting his lip off (the one with the mustache). Ned ran screaming into the street, trying to form words

despite his newly acquired speech impediment, but Holt was too consumed by thirst to give chase and instead began guzzling the best brands of booze on the wall with his banditos, all in efforts to satisfy the new tenant making its home in his belly, a demonic worm going by the name of El Gusano!

Busy with draining the well-stocked bar of its choice hooch, Holt was oblivious to the fact that Ned had just bitten Ellie May Thornton while she was trying to help the ungrateful bar owner. Ellie then ran screaming down Adobes' one good street before falling into the strong arms of Clem Masterson, who she proceeded to bite—and right through his jugular too! Clem bled out quickly. Watching Ellie pilfer his whiskey flask was the last thing he'd see before taking his last breath.

In less than an hour, the town has become infested with a herd of thirsty, ravenous murderers infected by “the Thirst,” and only the quick thinking of Miss Sharples would save most of the town's children. The elderly schoolteacher rounded the curtain-climbers up just as soon as she saw things were getting weird, herding them to the chapel in the middle of town. She has the church locked down tighter than a drum for now, but the infected have started to gather, eager to bring the young'uns into the fold and relieve the church of any communion wine it might have locked away in Preacher Conway's supply closet.

If the “heroes” are spotted by little Davey Hockert, he immediately begins ringing the church bell to alert the group to the current danger and the need for help.

The PCs can tackle the problem from multiple angles but going in with guns blazing will more than likely end up in a party-wipe. The infected cursed souls of Adobes are still searching for stragglers to “recruit” (and some exist, holed up in their homes and businesses, waiting things out) and trying to figure out how to get to the kiddies praying for rescue in Preacher Conway's chapel.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Storm the street: PCs running straight in to fight will find themselves fighting 1d10 townies with an additional d5 arriving each round. Should they succeed, they'll find themselves ambushed by Holt's gang—now all grubs (see pg. 26).

Sneak into town: PCs using stealth to sneak into town will find plenty of places to enter the town undiscovered, where they can attempt to find a survivor to learn as much as possible before acting. (The judge may allow a +1d modifier to stealth-based checks due to the heavy downpour, but this cuts both ways when the PCs get ambushed by any random or set encounters.)

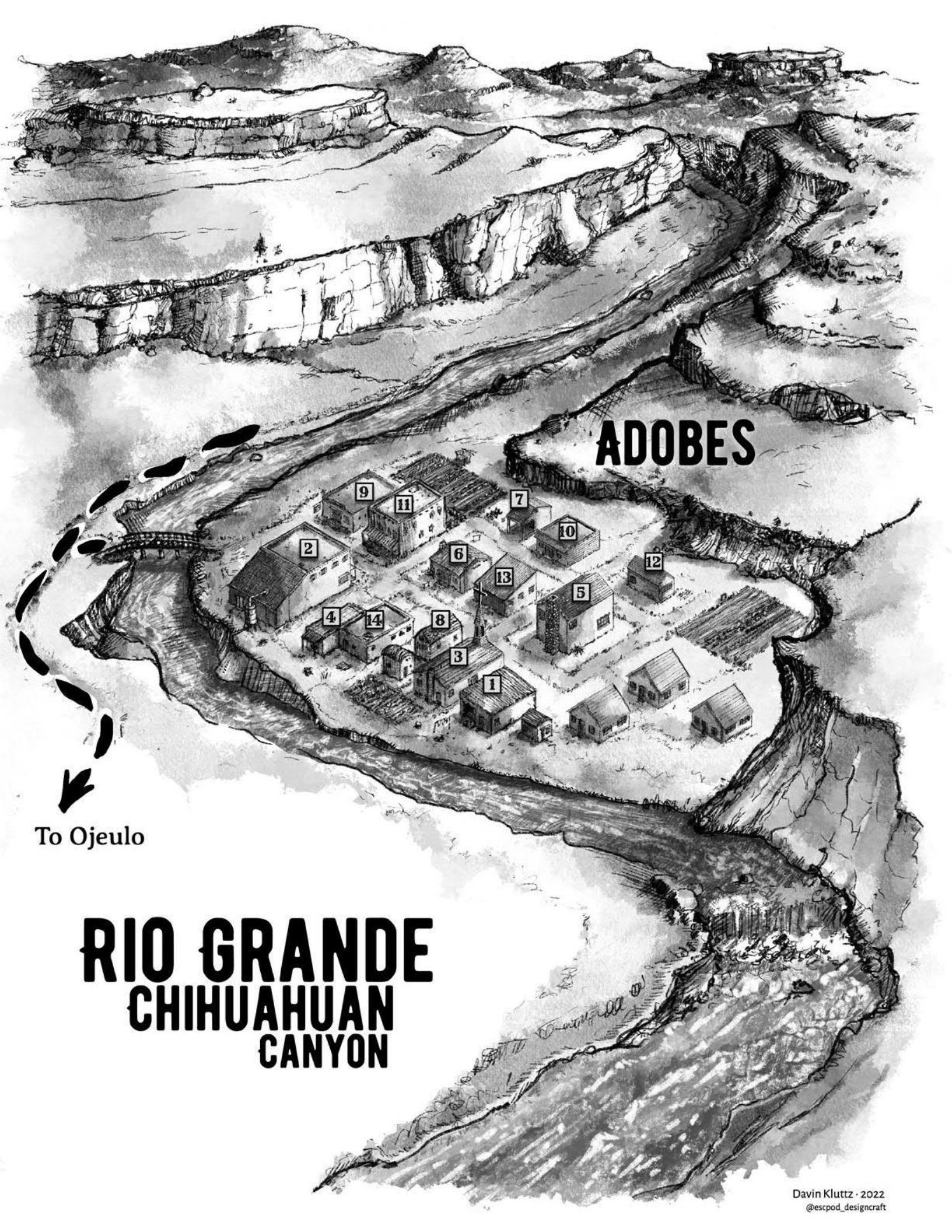
Sneak into the chapel: PCs will have a hard time sneaking in (as the infected are currently trying to gain entry), but with a proper distraction, it can be done. Finding a way out, with 13 children and a crotchety old woman, is a different story altogether.

Hunt down Holt: Holt is staged up in the saloon drinking his weight in spirits, currently unaware the characters have followed him to town. Feel free to place his seven banditos at various points through the town, but remember, the worm growing in Holt's gut has a limited form of telepathy over all the infected. If one of the banditos runs afoul of the PCs, Holt will become “aware” of a threat in town and act accordingly.

Ultimately, judges are encouraged to go with a bit of improv depending on what actions the PCs choose to take. If they seek a particular item to aid them in a plan, allow for a single Luck check by ONE party member if they're in a part of the town that might normally have a chance at having the item being searched for. As the judge, if you think it's highly unlikely for an item to be available (or you just don't want to give it out), don't allow for the check.

Use the 30 infected townsfolk that are still in the larva stage of the curse to cause occasional problems and humorous moments.

Infected townsfolk (30) (larva stage): Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage + infection); AC 11; HD 1d8+4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with “The Thirst” see pg 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks); Path PoD.



ADOBES

To Ojeulo

RIO GRANDE CHIHUAHUA CANYON

Infected banditos (7) (grub stage): Atk (2) heavy pistols +2 ranged (1d10, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, 10/20/60); bite +2 melee (1d5+2 plus infection), (2) tentacles +2 ranged (1 point of damage plus special, 15'), brood vomit +2 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 13 MV 20'; Act 2d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks), tentacles, brood vomit; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; PoD +1.

Tentacles: The target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check (treat the creature as Str 18) to avoid being pulled in for an automatic critical bite attack the following round.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save.

TOWN LOCATIONS

There are unkeyed buildings and areas to add as the judge sees fit.

MAP KEY

1 - The Lost Angel's Orphanage- This large house is in disrepair and in need of a good set of skilled hands. Luckily, only three children were housed here, along with Jose Navarro and Sister Maria. No children present now, and Maria is roaming the street looking for a human to bite or hooch to swill. Nothing of value is here.

2 - The Thirsty Cactus- Ned Bittles runs this average saloon/ distillery that hosts a small gambling parlor, a quality piano, and a stage for the occasional traveling show. Ned enjoys a fair shake of the bush with the folks living in town by running a clean establishment where lawbreakers aren't welcome (Sheriff Gowers is his first cousin and thus frequents the saloon with his deputies). Folks that drift into town on their way to bigger dreams only add to the honeypot.

Holt made the saloon his first stop and will be busy guzzling spirits with his jackals when the PCs enter the

town. In addition to Holt and his posse, six infected townsfolk watch motionless at the window, with one pounding on the piano (Gene forgot how to play once he caught "The Fever" several hours ago). All are under the control of Holt just in case someone comes looking for trouble.

The Cactus is a two-story structure, with an upper floor containing rooms for staff and others that are rented from time to time, by the month or hourly. Other than the previously described items, the bar is well stocked (or was), and a loaded shotgun lies mounted under the bar. A warehouse is attached to the back, which serves as storage for the distillery for some of Texas' best-rated whiskey.

Holt Porter (host to El Gusano): Initiative

+4; Atk (2) pistols +3 ranged (1d6, ROF 2, Load 20, Reload 1, 10/20/60) or by bite +2 melee (1d4 plus infection), brood vomit +1 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 12; HD 5d8; hp 33; MV 30'; Act 2d20 (Holt may dual wield his pistols); SP infection (DC 10 Fortitude save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic host (takes half damage from non-magic attacks), brood vomit, just a shell of a man; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; Path PoD +2.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save.

Just a shell of a man: If Holt Porter dies, the incubating demon within him 'hatches' out of Holt's body, shedding bone, skin, and tissue as it tears its way out! See the stats for El Gusano (the demon worm). This hideous display happens in an instance, and El Gusano is ready to attack the round after Holt drops. Don't forget to ask the players for Grit checks for all the PCs that witness the birthing of the worm.

Pistols: Holt carries two rare LeFauchaux 20 shot double-barrel pinfire revolvers. The pistols are adorned with pearl-inlaid handles depicting hellish imagery. The pistols are worth \$75 each. His gun belt holds an extra 40 cartridges.

Other Loot: Bowie knife (d6), fancy rattlesnake boots (size 12) worth \$100, leather chaps, a hat, dirty blood-stained clothes, and \$50 in cash.



Infected (6) (Grub stage): Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d2 + infection), (2) tentacles +1 ranged (1 point of damage and the target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check [treat infected as Str 16] to avoid being pulled in for an automatic bite the following round, 15'), brood vomit +1 ranged (1d4 and targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save); AC 12; HD 2d8; MV 20'; Act 3d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Path PoD +1.

Infected banditos (7 minus any the PCs might have already killed) (grub stage):

Atk (2) heavy pistols +2 ranged (1d10, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, 10/20/60); bite +2 melee (1d5+2 plus infection), (2) tentacles +2 ranged (1 point of damage plus special, 15'), brood vomit +2 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 13 MV 20'; Act 2d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks), tentacles, brood vomit; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Path PoD +1.

Tentacles: The target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check (treat the creature as Str 18) to avoid being pulled in for an automatic critical bite attack the following round.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save.



EL GUSANO (THE DEMON WORM)

El Gusano is a minor demon dedicated to one of the seven deadly sins. The demon worm has found its way into many a weak soul by way of the bottle. The demon takes the form of a giant worm, much like that found in a bottle of tequila. Towering at 12', the creature's mouth resembles a lamprey with several circular rows of sharp teeth, offset by an outer ring of glowing green eyes. The worm attacks by way of six tentacles, each with a 15' reach. The tentacles attempt to grapple targets, dragging them closer for a bite/swallow attack. El Gusano may communicate telepathically with all larva and grub within 300 feet, giving basic commands.

Unless the destroyed remains of the demon are doused with holy water, they will dissolve 1d3 rounds later only to reform in the original bottle of tequila (now sitting inconspicuously among the other liquor bottles on the bar shelf at the Thirsty Cactus). Destroying the worm will end the curse infecting the townsfolk still in larva stage, but those that have succumbed to "The Thirst" and become Grubs are beyond saving, dropping dead on the spot.

El Gusano (demon worm): Initiative: +2; Atk tentacle constriction +3 ranged (1d4 plus special, 15'), bite +2 melee (1d10 plus engulf plus infection); AC 14; HD 8d12; hp 66; MV 20'; Act 7d20 (only one attack may be used for a bite attack); SP engulf, infection (DC 10 Fortitude save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from mundane weapons, spell resistance 40%), tentacle constriction; SV Fort +4, Reflex +2, Will +5; Path PoD +3.

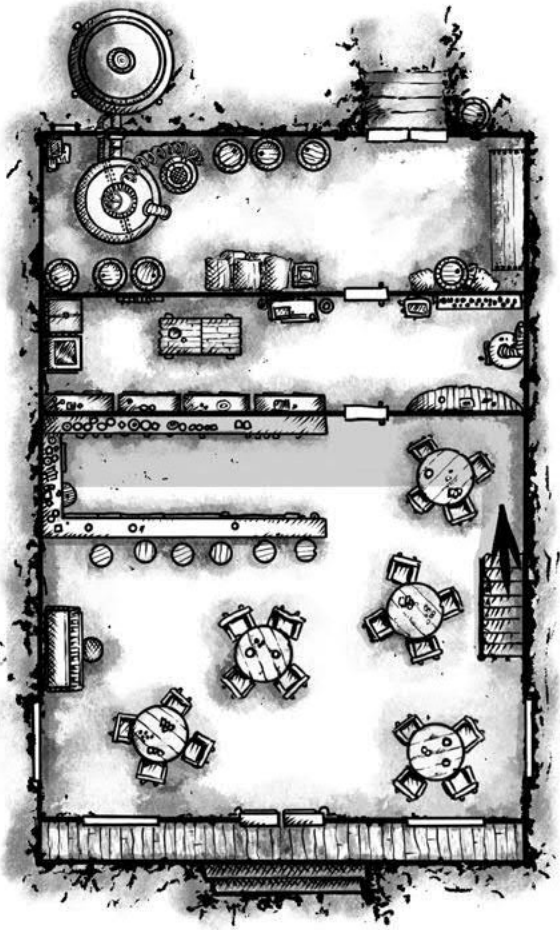
Engulf: Victims currently affected by a tentacle attack will be swallowed whole with a successful bite attack on the following round. Swallowed targets will begin taking 1d4 Stamina damage per round as they begin to drown in alcohol and bile. For each additional round the victim remains in El Gusano's belly, the damage die is increased by a cumulative +1. Swallowed targets may only use weapons smaller than a bowie knife to attack from inside, pistols may be used, but two cards must be flipped from the gun deck (taking the worse result) to simulate the tight quarters and the fact that the victim(s) is submerged in gut-hooch. Victims able to inflict 20 points of damage to the demonic worm will immediately cause the creature to regurgitate the victim. Two man-sized targets may be swallowed at any given time. Lost Stamina damage returns at the rate of 1d4 per round.

Tentacle constriction: 1d4 points of damage from constriction per round and target is grappled until they match or beat the demon in a contested Strength roll (treat El Gusano as having a Str of 18) with their next action.

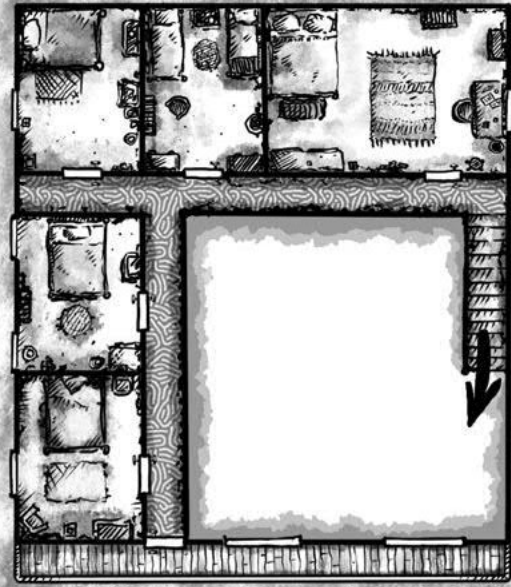
THE THIRSTY CACTUS

Saloon

Davin Kluttz · 2022
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Ground Floor



2nd Floor



3 - Church of Our Savior- Recently built upon the soil where the town's original tent revival first began. The church of our Savior is the pride of Adobes, sporting white-painted lacquer topped by a small bell tower complete with a brass bell purchased by the mayor himself. Currently, Miss Sharples (Sunday school teacher) is pacing the floor of the sanctuary, safe with her frightened chicks for the time being.

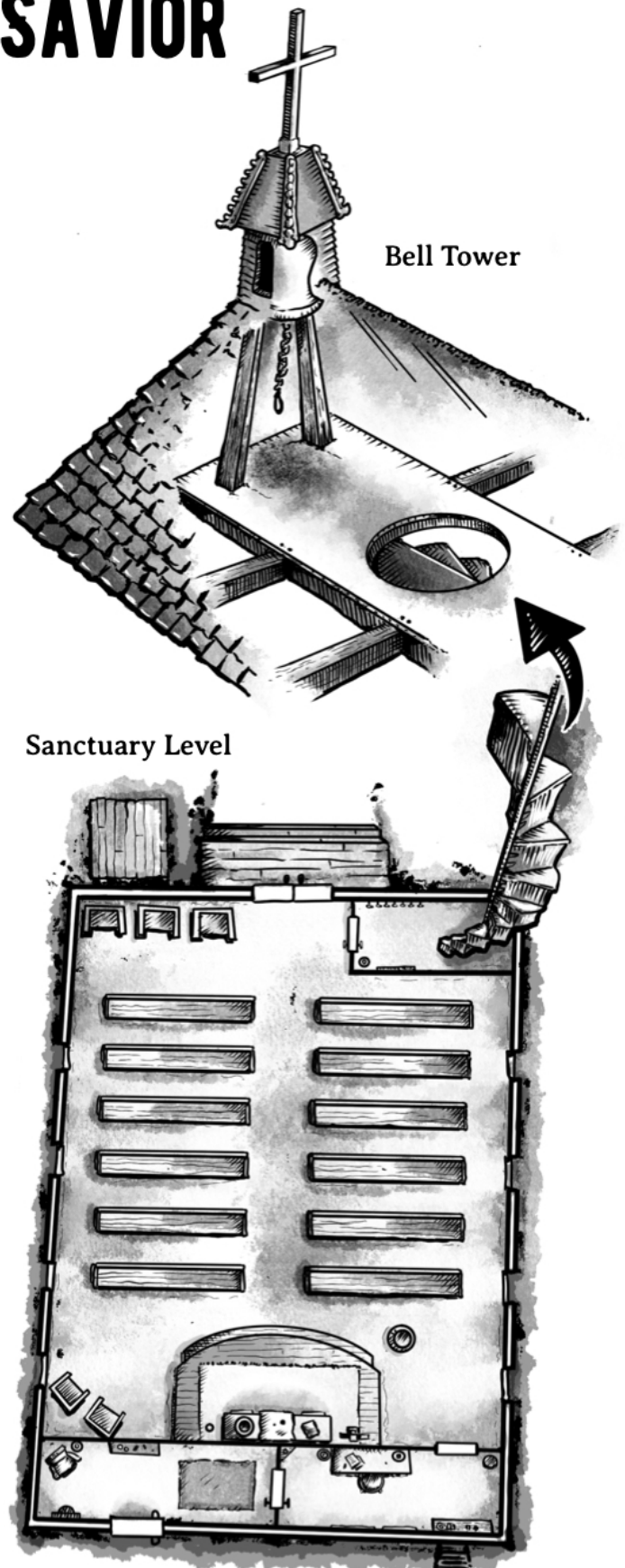
The old bird is currently coping with the horror of the town's dilemma by constantly nagging the children she's rescued by leading them in church hymns. Both the front and back doors are barred from the inside along with all of the shutters being closed and latched on the windows, Little Davey Farkles is the only child not being forced to sing, perched in the steeple and watching for help like a soggy-feathered hawk, ready to ring the church bell at the first sight of potential saviors—oblivious to the effect the ringing will have on the infected horde wandering the streets (dinner bell?).

Pastor Jim McTaggart has fallen to "The Thirst" and currently wanders the backyard, attempting to figure a way back into the church so that he might raid the wine racks of their treasure and to shut those off-key singing kids up, permanently! PCs attempting to sneak anywhere around the church will be caught unaware of the lurking pastor who gains a round of surprise.

Pastor Jim McTaggart-Infected (larva stage):

Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4; hp 11; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR



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4 - Willie's Sundries- This general store is well-stocked on the basics, along with a little bit of everything else. The shades are pulled low, and Willie is crouched in a position of cover behind the far counter. Should the PCs break-in (the door is locked), Willie will take a shot at the first person to step through the door with his prized Colt revolving shotgun. Willie is half-blind and terrified, not fully understanding what is going on with the townsfolk. He'll offer anything he has if the group will promise to get him out of town. The building is two stories, with a large storage area in the back, including basic living quarters. PCs may ask Willie for any items normally carried in a general store—they may search for anything the judge would deem available. For uncommon items, such as dynamite, have one (and only one) player make a Luck check to see if the item(s) is on hand.

Willie Sundry (store owner): Init +0; Colt revolving shotgun +0 ranged (1d12/1d8/1d5, ROF 2, Load 5, Reload 3, 15/30/60); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +1; Path WtL.

Willie carries 30 rounds for his Colt revolving shotgun and has \$20 in various coins and bills in the register.

5 - Doc Blanson's Dentistry- The first floor of this two-story building houses "Doc's" business, while the second floor is reserved as his posh living quarters. Unfortunately, the curse has resulted in the hatching larva nesting in the Dentist's brain. The little critters have begun to gnaw and squirm, which has added insanity to the regular effects of the curse.

PCs entering the business will hear two voices, one seeming to scold the other from a room down the hall. Moving closer to the door will reveal Blanson yelling for the "patient" to "Hold still til I can get em out," the other voice merely whining in what seems like protest. Opening the door reveals a horrific scene, as the Dentist is plying his trade to Katherine Jankes, who is strapped to the reclining dental chair in the

center of the room. The man has one leg propped up on the chair while he pulls with both hands with what looks like a set of dental pliers attempting to unroot Katherine's tooth. With a sickening crack, the tooth and bloody pulp are pulled free and dropped into a porcelain bowl filled with teeth and blood tainted water.

PCs give pause in horror to see one of the worms infecting the poor soul slither out of the hole to writhe and wiggle along with the rest of the worms creeping out of the empty sockets Blanson has made in her skull. Both Doc and Katherine are infected and crazed and will immediately attack the group, however Katherine will first have to pass a DC 11 Strength check to break the straps holding her to the chair. Doc Blanson has evolved to stage three and is effectively a grub.

Doc Blanson Infected (Grub stage): Init

+1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d2 plus infection), (2) tentacles +1 ranged (1 point of damage plus special, 15'), brood vomit +1 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 13; HD 2d8+2, hp 14; MV 20'; Act 3d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks), brood vomit; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Path PoD +1.

Tentacles: The target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check (treat the creature as Str 18) to avoid being pulled in for an automatic critical bite attack the following round.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save.

Katherine Jankes Infected (larva stage):

Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst"); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.



PCs will find anything related to medicine on the first floor, including basic tools and remedies. The upper floor reveals a library with medical books, photography equipment, a well-stocked bar that has been destroyed (by Doc), and a closet full of men's and women's clothing (which seems odd until a PC spots the photographs on the walls showing Blanson in the dresses).

A writing desk also contains a mahogany box with a LeFauchaux Knife Revolver (ranged 1d10, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 1, 10/20/60; melee 1d6 for the knife) in addition to a box of 50 pin-fire cartridges and a box containing 22 gold fillings. Branson has been taking the gold fillings out of his patients, replacing it with brass for years.

6 - Bob Sheffer Physician and expert Taxidermist-

The lower floor of this two-story business serves as a doctor's office. A waiting room is attached to a long hall with storage closets and an exam room connected at the end.

All throughout the 1st floor are the mounted heads of various game from all across the territories. Bob has since left his office in search of hooch, but the two infected patients he was trying to tend to before one of them bit him are still prowling about mindlessly going through cabinets and closets looking for anything alcoholic.

Stevie Barnes, a youngster that got bit before Miss Sharples could snatch him up, is currently in the exam room on top of storage cabinets mounted on the walls and will get the jump on the first PC to enter the room.

The exam room is appropriately appointed and PCs asking for anything typically found in a doctor's practice will be here in limited quantities.

The second floor of the building hosts several stuffed and mounted animals, including bears, elk, and a moose. Bud Holcombe awaits in hiding should PCs venture upstairs. Bud had half his left arm blown off by one of Holt's jackals and had been rushed to the office for treatment before biting Doc and infecting him.

PCs searching the upper floor will find all manner of tools and products normally kept for taxidermy, including two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a posh

bedroom. A thorough search will reveal a box with \$300 dollars cash, a confederate uniform along with a service pistol and saber. A leather journal records much of Sheffer's wartime exploits and journey to become a practicing physician.

Stevie Barnes Infected (larva stage): Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4, hp 8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

Bud Holcombe Infected (larva stage): Initiative +1 Atk bite -2 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4, hp 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

7 - The Lucky Shoe- The building housing the town's farrier is filled with dead horses that appear to have been gnawed on. Each wound drips with maggoty worms writhing around. PCs taking their time and observing the quiet will hear what could only be described as whispers coming from the writhing worms. Venturing further down the stall area, the noises of what sounds like agitated horses can be heard coming from the last stall.

Nearing the stall door, PCs will notice a prone body of a large man in denim overalls. The man's body seems to move slightly to the stomping of a hoof. PCs moving into full view of the scene will witness a bizarre sight.

Two horses fill this stall, one continually rising on two legs and splintering the wall, in apparent attempts to break through. The second horse has a whiskey bottle turned up and is busy guzzling the hooch while simultaneously stomping the prone man's head, now a busted gourd of crimson gore, his body shuddering with each stomp. As soon as the horse's attention is



drawn to the group they will attack. A general search will reveal tools used to re-shoe and maintain horses. A small desk, round table with chairs and wood stove make up the rest of the facility, along with general sundries that would normally be kept there.

Trigger and Bartholamew Infected horses (larva stage): Initiative +3 Atk bite +1 melee (1d5 points of damage plus infection), trample +2 melee (4d4 points of damage and target is knocked prone); AC 13 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 4d8+4; hp 19, 28; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

8 - Post Office- What does a bank robber do when a town doesn't have the good grace to have a bank? Why, you rob the post office of course! Sharon and Randy Connely are a much-devoted husband and wife who just happen to rob banks for a living. They had the misfortune of robbing this bank when Holt and the Jackals showed up. As this post office often holds payroll outbound to other stops along the way, there is a secure 'cage' and safe in the back of the building. The Connelys locked themselves into the cage area when the first of the infected came callin'.

They have not, however, located the key to release themselves from the secured area. The dead body of Ms. Peasley, the postal worker on duty at the time, has been shoved into a mail sack. She did not have the key on her, rather, it was left on her desk in the main lobby, hidden beneath her coffee cup. PCs entering the bank will hear Sharon and Randy calling from the rear of the building. Sharon has donned Ms. Peasley's official post-master's vest

and will masquerade as the authority here with Randy being a customer that was caught in the post office when the infestation broke out.

The pair have no idea what is going on outside but know that several of the infected have entered and tried to make meals of them. They will plead for the PCs to help them get out as “Ms. Peasley” dropped the key somewhere in their rush to find safety. The thieves will continue the charade until they are released. They will then weight the odds of stealing any horses the PCs might have on them or robbing a PC if the opportunity presents itself. If they are questioned too heavily, allow the PC asking questions to make a Personality test vs. a DC of 12 to spot inconsistencies in their story.

Loot: 1d10 dollars’ worth of goods can be found in various packages and mail for every 10 minutes a PC searches. For each 10-minute period, the judge should check for the interest of infested townsfolk (a roll of 1 on 1d10 makes 2d6 infected come looking for grub and booze).

The Safe: This is the perfect location for a judge to place a story-hook item for the next adventure, a cursed item (use Random Cursed Item table, page 13), wealth in the form of silver or gold coin, or anything else the judge might want to ‘gift’ the party with.

9 - Sheriff’s Office/ Jail- The PCs already know the fate of the sheriff, as he’s riding as far away from Adobes as possible. Any PC entering will find Deputy Gilly slumped over amid several broken whiskey bottles. The deputy has succumbed to “The Thirst” and is now a grub (see pg. 43).

The small room is filled with a writing desk, a gun safe that is empty, a wood stove, and a bunk. Feel free to place a townie in the jail cell, perhaps guilty of horse thievery, or just an innocent that locked himself in the cell to wait out the storm.

Sharon and Randy Connely have been together so long that there’s very little to distinguish between them by their skills and abilities.

Bank robbers (Sharon and Randy Connely):

Init +2; Atk brass-knuckle punch +1 melee (1d6+1) or light pistol +2 range (1d8, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, 10/20/60); AC 13; HD 2d8+2, hp 8 (Sharon), 9 (Randy); MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP confidence game, can opener; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; Path PoD.

Can opener: The Connelys, being professional bank robbers, have elevated the craft of safe cracking to new levels. Given enough time, there is no safe made that they can’t eventually coax open. With all the chaos around them, they have not yet plied their skills on the post office safe. Roll 1d20 + an assigned difficulty for the safe or lock being opened (the post office safe is DC 16). This is the number of rounds it takes for a Connely to open the item. This might come into play if PCs are interested in getting the safe open. The judge should make a 1d10 check each round that passes. On a roll of 1-3, infected townsfolk are drawn to the post office and will attack (2d6 infected show up each time).

Confidence game: If one of the Connelys distracts a target (1d20+3 vs. a DC equal to the target’s Intelligence stat, +1 to the DC for each other person able to witness the act) the other Connely can pick their pocket for any item of interest. Enumerate each item of value the target is carrying (that is carried in such a way that it could be stolen this way) and roll the closest die-size equal to or larger than the number of items on the list. The item number rolled is what is stolen. If the die results in a number larger than the list, the target chooses what is stolen. If the distraction fails, no pickpocket attempt is tried.



Deputy Don Gilly Infected (Grub stage):

Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d2 plus infection), (2) tentacles +1 ranged (1 point of damage plus special, 15'), brood vomit +1 ranged (1d4 plus special), Colt 1861 Navy pistol +2 ranged (1d8, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 10/20/60); AC 13; HD 2d8+2, hp 14; MV 20'; Act 3d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks), brood vomit; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Path PoD +1.

Tentacles: The target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check (treat the creature as Str 18) to avoid being pulled in for an automatic critical bite attack the following round.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile spray those failing the save.

Tony Tucker Infected (larva stage):

Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4, 2hps; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg xx); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

Martha Masters (larva stage): Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4, 8hps; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

10 - Tucker's Clothiers- Little Cindy Lou Masters was trying on her wedding dress with her well-to-do mother when the store was invaded by infected townies, and both the ladies and Tucker were attacked.

The white dress is covered in her gore, as Cindy Lou lies motionless (Tucker snapped her neck in his rage when he succumbed to the curse), while Tucker paces the backroom throwing boxes and emptying the contents of his cabinets for hooch. Cindy Lou has a very ornate necklace and wedding ring, both worth 60 dollars, but any fool getting close enough will spark a bite attack from her mother, who is using the racks of dresses to gain the element of surprise on the PCs.

Once the attack is sprung, Tucker will hear the tussle and join the fray. The rest of the storefront contains racks of fine dresses for all occasions in addition to gentleman's clothes and accessories for both sexes and all occasions. A cash box containing \$120.00 rests in a locked desk drawer beside a wood stove. The upper floor serves as Tucker's living area and, other than basic living necessities and family photos, nothing of value will be found.

11 - Lucky's Bed and Breakfast- This large two-story building combines a restaurant with a good assortment of rooms. Lucky wasn't so Lucky and is currently roaming the streets looking for hooch. The lower level is splattered with gore but searching will reveal a well-stocked kitchen and a selection of spirits, in addition to a cash box containing a pistol and a ring of keys. Any PC wishing to explore the rooms of the upper floor will undoubtedly encounter a townie or two, possibly infected.

12 - The Butcher's Block- Denver Mathers runs the town's butcher shop and was one of the first to become infected when Trudy Scifert came in looking for the bottle of high price bourbon, he poured her the night she let him talk her into a prime ribeye over candlelight. Other than the typical cutting instruments and hanging meats, nothing will be found of value and Mathews has since joined the chaos in the street in search of spirits.

13 - Lead Belly's Saloon- Being at the end of Main St. opposite the Thirsty Cactus saloon and distillery hasn't proven too profitable for Slim, but the watered-down drinks and rigged gambling have kept him in business for years. Slim is hiding in the piano case, but upon hearing voices, the snapping of a few wires, added to a scream will reveal the yellow belly who was hoping to ride the storm out. Slim is armed with a Remington Double Derringer (1d8, ROF 2, Load 2,



Reload 1, 2/5/12) but will not put up a fight. He has a pocket full of 12 rim-fire cartridges. One thing that's worked in his favor is the infected townies still have some of their memories, and everyone remembered to avoid Slim's watered-down drinks. Slim refuses to leave his saloon but will offer food and watered-down spirits in hopes the PCs get bit before he does. The saloon has the bare minimum on much else.

14 - The Kitty Cat Ranch- This is a run-down brothel butted up against the Lead Belly. Slim acts as a pimp to the girls and charges rent on the building otherwise run by Samantha Graves. Samantha is the only woman not infected, and she has her "kittens" holed up in one of the spare rooms upstairs, the door bolstered by a chair under the doorknob. Once she hears the PCs, she'll let out a scream for help, as it's all she can do to keep the infected girls from busting through. Unless PCs immediately help and find a better means to fortify the door, the captive cursed will blow through the door knocking Samantha back and over the railing to the floor below, breaking her neck, while the "kittens" make their way down looking for people to nibble and hooch to guzzle.

Dancing girls "kittens" (8) (larva stage):

Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage plus infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4; hp 8, 6, 10, 5, 12, 11, 6, 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

THE END?

The PCs should eventually learn the source of the curse if they hadn't already before entering the town. A showdown with Porter, and eventually the demon worm in his gut, will bring the adventure to an end. Should Holt and the worm be put down, all larva stage infected will be freed from the curse, as a heavily armed posse of U.S. Marshals led by Marshal Bjorn Nelson will soon realize who the heroes of the day are and pay the bounty on Porter and his thugs, in addition to the bounties on the cultists originally agreed on. Adobes can be used as a home base for the PCs as they continue to adventure in the unforgiving, rough and tumble world of Weird Frontiers.

APPENDIX

CRITTERS AND PERSONALITIES

Crawling claws: Init +1; Atk leaping rake +1 melee (1pt); AC 16; HD d4; hp 3 each; MV 20', leap 10'; Act 1d20; SP charm; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; PoD.

Charm: The claw may attempt to make contact with the chosen victim. The claw must pass a spell check using 1d16 + an additional 1d6 to the roll for each crawling claw within 30'. A successful result convinces the new host that they must amputate one of their hands to complete the union. Targets immediately find the nearest tool or weapon and proceed to amputate the appropriate hand (1d3 damage)—allowing the waiting claw to instantly meld itself to the new host during the same round.

El Gusano (the demon worm)

El Gusano is a minor demon dedicated to one of the seven deadly sins. The demon worm has found its way into many a weak soul by way of the bottle. The demon takes the form of a giant worm, much like that found in a bottle of tequila. Towering at 12', the creature's mouth resembles a lamprey with several circular rows of sharp teeth, offset by an outer ring of glowing green eyes. The worm attacks by way of six tentacles, each with a 15' reach. The tentacles attempt to grapple targets, dragging them closer for a bite/swallow attack. El Gusano may communicate telepathically with all larva and grub within 300 feet, giving basic commands.

Unless the destroyed remains of the demon are doused with holy water, they will dissolve 1d3 rounds later only to reform in the original bottle of tequila (now sitting inconspicuously among the other liquor bottles on the bar shelf at the Thirsty Cactus). Destroying the worm will end the curse infecting the townsfolk still in larva stage, but those that have succumbed to "The Thirst" and become Grubs are beyond saving, dropping dead on the spot.

El Gusano (demon worm): Initiative: +2; Atk tentacle constriction +3 ranged (1d4 plus special, 15'), bite +2 melee (1d10 plus engulf plus infection); AC 14; HD 8d12; hp 66; MV 20'; Act 7d20 (only one attack may be used for a bite attack); SP engulf, infection (DC 10 Fortitude save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst"), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from mundane weapons, spell resistance 40%), tentacle constriction, "The Thirst"; SV Fort +4, Reflex +2, Will +5; Path PoD +3.

Engulf: Victims currently affected by a tentacle attack will be swallowed whole with a successful bite attack on the following round. Swallowed targets will begin taking 1d4 Stamina damage per round as they begin to drown in alcohol and bile. For each additional round the victim remains in El Gusano's belly, the damage die is increased by a cumulative +1. Swallowed targets may only use weapons smaller than a bowie knife to attack from inside, pistols may be used, but two cards must be flipped from the gun deck (taking the worse result) to simulate the tight quarters and the fact that the victim(s) is submerged in gut-hooch. Victims able to inflict 20 points of damage to the demonic worm will immediately cause the creature to regurgitate the victim. Two man-sized targets may be swallowed at any given time. Lost Stamina damage returns at the rate of 1d4 per round.

Tentacle constriction: 1d4 points of damage from constriction per round and target is grappled until they match or beat the demon in a contested Strength roll (treat El Gusano as having a Str of 18) with their next action.



Holt Porter

Holt Porter ran the Juarez Jackals in and out of Texas for several years before he decided to drink from the mystic “hooch” and swallow the demon worm.

Holt stood 6'6 and weighed in at 260 lbs. before succumbing to the effects of El Gusano (see below); now, he looks like an albino prune, desiccated skin pulled tight against a rictus grin, set off by two gleaming fires set deep into sockets where eyes used to rest.

Holt Porter (host to El Gusano): Initiative +4; Atk (2) pistols +3 ranged (1d6, ROF 2, Load 20, Reload 1, 10/20/60) or by bite +2 melee (1d4 plus infection), brood vomit +1 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 12; HD 5d8; hp 33; MV 30'; Act 2d20 (Holt may dual wield his pistols); SP infection (DC 10 Fortitude save, failure infects the target with “The Thirst” see pg. 43), demonic host (takes half damage from non-magic attacks), brood vomit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; Path PoD +2.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, alcohol, and bile sprays those failing the save.

Pistols: Holt carries two rare LeFauchaux 20 shot double-barrel pinfire revolvers. The pistols are adorned with pearl-inlaid handles depicting hellish imagery. The pistols are worth \$75 each. His gun belt holds an extra 40 cartridges.

Hellbloom (4): Init -5; Atk mesmerizing scent; AC 9; HD 3d6; hp 15, 8, 11, 13; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP mesmerizing scent; SV Fort +1, Ref -6, Will +0; Path PoD.

Mesmerizing scent: The hellbloom is a beautiful scarlet plant that stands taller than a man. The scent of a hellbloom beguiles those who smell it, and they must succeed in a Will save to resist moving directly toward the flower. The save DC is a function of distance: DC 10 up to 240' away; DC 15 at 120'; DC 20 at 60'; DC 25 at 30' or closer. A creature that touches the hellbloom stands mesmerized while the flower wraps itself around them and consumes their flesh. No further save is possible. The flower automatically does 1d3 points of temporary Strength and Stamina damage each round without requiring any attack roll. A rescued victim must succeed in a Fort save (DC 10 + total Strength and Stamina damage taken) or 1d3 points of each type of damage (Strength or Stamina) is permanent. A victim wrapped in the flower takes half damage from any attack targeting the hellbloom.

Infected (larva stage): Initiative +1 Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 points of damage + infection); AC 11 (damage resistance -2D to non-magical attacks); HD 1d8+4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infection (DC 8 Fort save, failure infects the target with “The Thirst”); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Path PoD.

Infected (grub stage): Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d2 + infection), (2) tentacles +1 ranged (1 point of damage and the target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check [treat infected as Str 16] to avoid being pulled in for an automatic bite the following round, 15'), brood vomit +1 ranged (1d4 and targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds as a mixture of worms, tequila, and bile spray those failing the save); AC 12; HD 2d8; MV 20'; Act 3d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with “The Thirst” see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Path PoD +1.

Infected banditos (grub stage): Atk (2) heavy pistols +2 ranged (1d10, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, 10/20/60); bite +2 melee (1d5+2 plus infection), (2) tentacles +2 ranged (1 point of damage plus special, 15'), brood vomit +2 ranged (1d4 plus special); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 13 MV 20'; Act 2d20 (only one bite attack per round); SP infection (DC 9 Fort save, failure infects the target with "The Thirst" see pg. 43), demonic resistance (1/2 damage from non-magical attacks), tentacles, brood vomit; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1, PoD +1.

Tentacles: The target must spend its next full round making an opposed Str check (treat the creature as Str 18) to avoid being pulled in for an automatic critical bite attack the following round.

Brood vomit: Targets must pass DC 11 Fort saves or vomit for 1d3 rounds (taking no other actions) as a mixture of worms, tequila, and bile sprays those failing the save.

Jackalopes, dire: Init +2; Atk kick melee +3 (1d6), gore melee +2 (1d6+1); AC 14; HD 1d8; MV 50; Act 2d20; SP milk; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Path POD +1.

Milk: If the antlers of a jackalope are ground into dust and mixed with cold spring water, it forms a frothy white milk. If imbibed, the milk restores 2 HD of lost hit points. One pair of jackalope antlers can make four doses of restorative milk.

La Cegua: Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); claw +3 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 4d6+2; MV Fly 30'; Act 2d20; SP fly, half damage from non-magical weapons, maniacal laugh; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2; PoD +1.

Maniacal laugh: A cegua's insane laugh forces all those within 30' to make a DC 18 Willpower save or be surprised. She will lash out at the nearest male target with her claws to pull her prey towards her huge skeletal horse maw. She then targets the face of her victim with her bite attack. If her victim flees, she will pursue with her ability to fly, her dress fluttering in the wind as she continues her diabolical laugh.

Rattlesnake, giant (12'): Init +6; Atk bite +3 melee (2d4+venom); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 15; MV 40' Act 1d20; SP venom (DC 20 Fort save or death); SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will 0; Path WtL.

Scorpion, large (8'): Init +3; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4) or sting +2 melee (1d3 plus venom); AC 15; HD 2d10+6; hp 20; MV 40' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP venom (DC 12 Fort save or paralysis for 1d4 rounds); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will 0; Path WtL.

Zombie settlers: Init attacks last; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will 0; Path PoD. (For 1st level games, add three zombies per character and increase hp to 8.)

THE THIRST

The bite of El Gusano and its minions carries a terrible curse. Upon being bitten, the victim must immediately pass a DC 10 Fortitude save. Success results in the larval host not having time to enter the target's bloodstream (they pull away before enough saliva enters the bloodstream), while failure means countless eggs have entered the host body. Once the curse takes hold, follow the phases below.

Phase I/ Infection (egg): Each time a victim is bitten, have them make a DC 10 Fortitude save. Failure results in the eggs entering the bloodstream. Those infected by “The Thirst” become increasingly thirsty and agitated as the larva begins to grow and develop the physiology of the host. The Thirst is also accompanied by feelings of “worms” crawling under the skin or maybe a “tickle” in the eye, which may actually be spotted by anyone close enough to witness a worm moving just under the eyelid. As the side effects can only be (temporarily) subdued by imbibing alcohol, the infected become more and more obsessed with finding alcohol and will resort to violence to procure it.

Each Hour after infection: Have the victim make a DC 11 Fortitude save (the curse is harder to shrug off at this stage). Passing the save means suffering no ill-effect other than increasingly weird sensations and thirst. Failing the save results in the second of three phases manifesting. Infected passing the save must continue to do so every hour with a cumulative +1 to the DC of the save to simulate the ever-growing clutch of eggs invading their systems.

Phase II/ Molting (larva): The clutch of eggs begins to grow into demonic worms. This phase sends the host's sense of thirst into overdrive and infected victims must immediately imbibe some form of alcohol (whiskey, tequila, etc.). Failure to procure spirits results in the victim immediately suffering 1d3 points of Stamina damage each hour to reflect the worms nibbling on various organs instead of the sugary booze they're being deprived of. Sanity is often sacrificed for blind rage at this point, and as a result, the host gains a +2 to attack and damage rolls at the cost of a -2 to AC to represent the futile realization that acquiring alcohol is the only way to prolong life.

Ingesting alcohol-laced sugar has a twofold effect. It provides the fuel needed by the growing worms to begin phase III of the curse. Feeding the worms the sugar needed to evolve also instills a euphoric high in the host, while the brood begins to molt through several growth stages. This “high” increases the infected's pain tolerance and is reflected by reducing all damage by -1d until phase III has begun.

Phase III/ Manifestation (grub): Once in phase III, the infected must continue to pass a DC 12 Fortitude save each hour; passing the save results in a loss of 1d3 Stamina points—however, the victim remains alive for an additional hour. While fighting for their life, the victim gains a +4 to attack and damage rolls while suffering a -4 to AC as the futile fight for life escalates. Failing the save signifies the nest of worms has begun devouring one another, burrowing and chasing its kin throughout the victim's body until the strongest, most cunning remains. This survivor immediately travels to the brain and assumes control of the victim, now considered a “grub” (forever lost as a PC). Curing an infected victim at this stage is nearly impossible and requires magical healing of at least 4 class dice to completely rid the host of the Thirst.

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