

# WEIRD FRONTIERS

ROLE PLAYING GAME

NOT  
SO FAST  
BILLY RAY!

A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE  
BY BRENDAN LASALLE



COMPATIBLE WITH

DCC  
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## NOT SO FAST, BILLY RAY

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To all those who played this adventure but whose names were lost in the trail dust, the writer offers his apologies.

This adventure is for Bruce Cunnington; I'm much obliged to you, buckaroo.

**Weird Frontiers created by David Baity**

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# **NOT SO FAST, BILLY RAY**

**A 2<sup>ND</sup> LEVEL ADVENTURE**

**BY**

**BRENDAN LASALLE**

**Not So Fast, Billy Ray is designed for 4-7 level 2 characters. This adventure features dangerous opponents, both mortal and supernatural, investigative elements, and a platform for your players to flesh out their characters with some backstory. In playtest, smart groups who used teamwork and were careful in their search for and interpretation of clues did well.**

**Judges should give the adventure a careful read before playing. Not So Fast, Billy Ray is fairly nonlinear, and once the action starts, the PCs may move from one section of the adventure, sandbox-style, until the final confrontation. Familiarity with the setting will make the game go smoother.**







## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### Billy Ray

William Raymond Jespers Jr., commonly known as Billy Ray Jespers, wasn't known for being a great thinker or a man of action, nor was he known for being brave, clever, thrifty, or pious. Yet despite this absolute lack of positive traits that even his closest companions couldn't argue against, he made friends wherever he went. He was a great listener, a huge laugh, and a man of very little opinion, and there is not much to dislike about such an individual.

Over the years, Billy Ray found work as a cowboy, stock hand, wagon drover, well digger, and camp cook, work which took him all over the former Nebraska territory, now a state since March 1, 1867. He is a friend, and a friend of friends, and a friend of friends of friends, to everyone in Nebraska.

### Cabezo de Cerdo (Pighead)

The mysterious Luchador known as "Pighead" is an impious and vainglorious luchador, known for wandering from town to town, sometimes to wrestle in legitimate matches, sometimes to join or author some criminal scheme or other. He arrived in Ogallala one day, bested Dwight Peterson in an easily won boxing match, and declared himself Gast's chief lieutenant. Gast relies on the wrestler without trusting him and means to sacrifice or run Pighead off when the time is right. Pighead is a strange one: he goes bare chested in the freezing cold without complaint, refuses to ride an animal, and claims to be a direct descendant of Genghis Khan.

### Ed Hoxie

Ed Hoxie is a wagonwright and carpenter and Billy Ray's best friend in Ogallala. Ed heard that Gant



knew something about his missing friend and went to confront the psychic. Instead of a confrontation, Ed wound up listening to Gant's tales of other worlds and new gods of the land, and eventually joined Gant's cabal.

## Edmund Gast

Locals know Edmund Gast as the distant cousin of Ms. Gast, the famous cook of the Ogallala House. He is small, dark, and intense, and since the days of his youth in Ellsworth, Kansas, experiences random flashes of extra-sensory perception and prophetic visions. Gast learned the grisly trade of grave robbing from his father, and on those dark forays, he discovered occult artifacts that led first to a fascination and finally to an obsession with trans-mundane phenomena.

After the Seven Days of Night, Gast's fledgling sensitivities have blossomed into real occult power, and his appetite for the dark and unknowable things beyond this world has grown apace.

## Lady Meadowlark

Lady Meadowlark, born Clemson Akeman, came to Nebraska by way of Tennessee, earning money telling fortunes, holding seances, and performing other sham magic and staged miracles. However, even before the Seven Days of Night, she had true glimpses into the spirit world that made her aware of a world apart from the material.

After the Seven Days, she was transformed. She is now a true psychic with the ability to see and communicate with the spirit world under the correct circumstances.

## The Peterson Crew

The four Petersons—brothers Clem and Davis Jr., sister Melle, and cousin Dwight—are four rough and rowdy ne'er-do-wells, who in the past have hired on as enforcers, deputies, regulators, rustlers, and even once as stagecoach robbers. They are currently under the employ of Edmund Gast, who wanted a gun outfit

at hand in case the rival psychic he senses decides to make a play for Billy Ray's soul. While the Petersons enjoy Gast's cash and seemingly endless supply of whiskey and tobacco, they are not themselves "true believers." They assume that his talk of a paradise world nearby our own is an invention designed to fleece the rubes, a deception they are happy to be a part of.

## BACKGROUND

One cold January day, Billy Ray went to bed exhausted from work in the early dark, only to awaken to the moon high overhead. Feeling restless and needful of company, he dressed, saddled his old swayback mare, and made the two-mile ride to Ogallala proper, intent on a drink and conversation at old Tuck's Saloon. On the way, he had the hair-raising feeling of being observed, a feeling that grew stronger and stronger as he rode along. Billy Ray looked up into the heavens and sealed his doom.

Azathoth, the mad daemon sultan that is the heart of the ultimate chaos of the universe, the force that is both the creation and destruction of all the physical worlds that are, or shall ever be, slept restlessly. Sealed away in its prison, far from mortal kin, the god dreamt. The failed 'prison break' that resulted in the Seven Days of Night caused it to stir, to open a sleepy eye and peer across the vast distance to the shining jewel of Earth. Time and distance warp and twist within Azathoth's presence, and so it came to pass that years after the Seven Days of Night, the mad daemon's regard fell upon one unfortunate Billy Ray.

Violated by such unfathomable cosmic intelligence as that and touched with just the smallest understanding of the true nature of our universe and humankind's negligible place in its horrific scope, Billy Ray lost his mind. Billy ranted and shrieked until his horse unseated him, then ran until he came unexpectedly upon Bernard O'Connor's old hostelry, where he stole an amount of kerosene, and used it to burn his own eyes out. Afterwards, he ran through the freezing prairie for some time, blind and mad, until



finally he succumbed to his wounds and exposure and died, miles from home and alone.

The death of Billy Ray, caused as it was by the taint of accursed Azathoth, sent out a psychic shock wave for miles, startling psychic sensitives like a blast of a trumpet. Even average citizens felt a strange pall fall over the town, and soon everyone in Ogallala who had the means had left the town.

In particular, the death of Billy Ray sent dark visions to the occult researcher Edmund Gast and the spirit medium known as Lady Meadowlark.

Gast knew that there had been a supernatural event of unspeakable power that took place within a day's ride of his room in Ogallala. While Gast had never met nor knew the name of Lady Meadowlark, he sensed a rival power in proximity to himself and feared to lose this power source.

The former grave robber nearly rode his horse to death in his effort to be the first one to the death site, as he could feel Lady Meadowlark's arcane senses straining to perceive what had happened. Arriving at the death site, Gast could sense the cosmically touched soul, and knew instantly that connection with some unknowable outer-world power had transformed the dead man's soul into an accursed beacon of power capable of creating a bridge between our world and a world Gast longed to see.

Gast realized that the Azathoth-touched soul was amazingly dangerous. Working quickly, he found the nearest vessel at hand—a barrel full of rainwater. He drew his own blood and used it to sketch upon the barrel occult symbols of power and protection, blessed the water with a charm he knew, and then transferred Billy Ray's soul into the barrel's transformed depths to keep it inert until he could master its secrets. He took the rain barrel back to





Judge's Note: Read aloud or paraphrase all paragraphs in italics to the players when directed. Firearms in Stat blocks use the "simplified firearms" chart from the Weird Frontiers core book.

town and hid it in Rayner's Meat Market, currently closed for the winter.

Proximity to the star-touched soul of Billy Ray Jespers infected Gast with otherworldly intelligence. He heard a song in his head, a song he learned to sing. If enough voices sing this song, Gast believes, a gateway to a magical world will open through which will pour every secret of the universe, making him the most powerful being in the universe. Gast preaches of other worlds, gods never mentioned in the bible, and the ultimate transference of worlds that was to come. Now he has followers—including Billy Ray's friend Ed Hoxie—who have joined him in a kind of fledgling cult.

Lady Meadowlark actually knew Billy Ray, who had come to her once, hat in hand, to request a cure for a private complaint. The medium found the trail hand's request insolent and at first told him to go find a doctor, but after a pleasant night's conversation (it was hard not to have a good conversation with the ever-present, eager-to-please Jesper's), agreed to use the tiniest fraction of her power to bring Billy Ray relief in exchange for a drop of blood and a dark secret never spoken. Unbeknownst to all, the bond this ritual created persisted even after the wanderer's death.

Without understanding the details, Lady Meadowlark knows that something has happened to Billy Ray Jespers, something terrible and pregnant with cosmic consequence. The medium believes that Billy Ray may find himself used as a pawn in some terrible cosmic game. She also senses the arrival of warriors who could turn the tide. So, Lady Meadowlark reaches out to these warriors—who are the PCs, of course—hoping to form an alliance against the existential threat.

Billy Ray Jespers, the very definition of an inoffensive, normal sort of American, is now the fulcrum of terrifying possibilities. Did the accursed victim of Azathoth hope for refuge from the madness and suffering in death's holy embrace? Not so fast, Billy Ray.

## **"OF COURSE—EVERYBODY KNOWS OL' BILLY RAY."**

**B**illy Ray is a friend, and friend of a friend, to nearly everyone in Nebraska. If the PCs make an inquiry about Billy Ray to any random individual they meet while here, they may make a Luck check using a d16, with success meaning the individual at least has heard of Ma Jesper's only son.

## **THE ADVENTURE BEGINS**

**T**he PCs all arrive in Ogallala searching for Billy Ray Jespers. Make this search a function of an earlier adventure or interaction or allow your players to create a reason for seeking him out and reward them each with a Boon.

Motivations could include:

- Billy Ray holds the final clue to some mystery. For instance, a PC knows for sure that Billy Ray possessed sole knowledge of the identity of an otherwise unknown person, the location of a missing item, or the truth of a violent incident.
- The PC is seeking closure with Billy Ray. For instance, to apologize and ask forgiveness for a great wrong, to absolve Billy Ray of guilt for an incident for which the perished wanderer feels

If the party contains a calavera, they see the ghosts of thousands of buffalos, who all turn their heads to stare accusingly as the party rides by.





responsible—even though it was never actually in his control, to let Billy Ray know he was wrong about some assertion he made, or to demand an apology for a wrong that can never be righted.

- The PC seeks to learn an occult secret that Billy Ray discovered in his wide ranging, such as the knowledge of the workings of a mysterious artifact, the contents of a book he read, or the words to a needful incantation he has in his head.

PCs that choose to have no connection to Billy Ray (or cannot think of one) may be drawn to the town of Ogallala itself. They might come to support a friend or ally who has business with Billy Ray. Characters with magical sensitivity might also be drawn to Nebraska by the magical disruption created by Azthoth's connection with the hapless wanderer. Likewise, the adventurers might simply have stopped in town for some mundane purpose, innocent that they are being drawn along on a wave of cosmic coincidence, ever guiding them toward a reckoning with Edmund Gast.

### As the PCs ride into town:

*Even for a cattle town in its down-season, most of Ogallala is strangely dark and quiet. You hear your horses' hoofbeats echoing off the buildings, and somehow, it's the most lonesome sound you have ever heard. You pass boarded-up building after darkened building, and in the freezing night, it's easy to imagine that the entire city is abandoned.*

*As you ride in, you hear voices coming from the center of town. You pass a few more darkened streets before you can pinpoint the source of the sound: the Crystal Palace Saloon, which is lit and open for business.*

## OGALLALA PROPER

Ogallala is both a stop on the pony express and the Union-Pacific Railroad. As such, this small city is the major terminus for cattle drives from as far south as the Rio Grande. Cattle is brought from all over and

held in the massive network of stockyards until the cows can be loaded into freight cars and shipped east.

When the PCs arrive, Ogallala is empty, quiet, and spooky. (The town is naturally much quieter during the off-season between cattle drives—however, on this day, Ogallala seems unnaturally empty.)

### Enter the Strangers

When the PCs arrive, they see that only one saloon, the Crystal Palace, is open. The others, including the OK and the Cowboy's Rest, are boarded up and empty.

## AREA 1 - THE CRYSTAL PALACE

If the PCs didn't travel together, unknowable cosmic forces have them arriving within visual distance of one another at the same time in front of the Crystal Palace. They are likely to have some palaver regarding their arrival. If they come to understand that they are all in town searching for the same man, they might discover a clue in the cosmic coincidence that brought them all here at once.

### Exterior, Crystal Palace Saloon

As the PCs approach:

*You arrive at the Crystal Palace saloon, a comely public house at the corner of Railroad Street and a narrow alleyway. You hear shouting from the interior, not the normal friendly saloon din, but what sounds like insolent mockery.*

There is a hitching rail out front, but no horses—the Peterson crew's horses are secured behind Raynor's, and Pighead refuses to ride an animal.

### Interior, Crystal Palace Saloon

*The saloon interior is huge, with enough space for possibly two hundred, but there are less than a dozen people here now. The saloon, cold and nearly empty, has a kind of gloom to it that the wagon-wheel chandeliers and the long, cracked mirror behind the bar fail to dispel. A tiny stove in one corner provides not enough heat.*







*A stout man stands behind the bar. He seems a bit shocked to see you enter but nods respectfully.*

*At the farthest corner of the bar, two men are playing cards. They glance up at you from their cards for a moment before returning to their game.*

*Most of the tables have been shoved into the corners of the saloon, leaving just a few tables in the center of the room. Taking up the space between two tables is a group of men who seem to be having sport with two well-dressed saloon girls. One girl is held sitting upon the knee of the center most gentleman, who oddly enough is bare chested and wears a stitched-together pig's head, like a masked helmet that shows only his nose, mouth, and prodigious beard. The woman he clutches looks extremely uncomfortable. The other saloon girl stands at the edge of the circle of folks, being indelicately interrogated by another man.*

*The rest of the crew—three men and a woman, all of rough and rowdy appearance—have a huge laugh at the discomfort of the saloon girls while they pass a bottle. As you enter, their mirth fades, and they all stare at you. Their leader looks out from behind the empty sockets of the pig's face with small black eyes.*

*“Look who’s just come in to buy us drinks,” says the man in the pig mask, his impressive musculature rippling.*

Pighead and the Peterson Crew are enjoying their sport with the regulars at the Crystal Palace.

Pighead and the Petersons are belligerent and drunk. Even if the PCs agree to buy drinks for them, they grow more and more insolent until a fight is certain to break out. If the PC team includes a luchador, it doesn't even take that long—whether or not he recognizes his fellow grappler, Pighead gives an escalating tirade of insults until he gets the wrestling bout he craves. If the fight is just between the two luchadores, the Petersons stand back and simply cheer for their champion, but if anyone else on the PC side gets involved, even just to cry some words to

the heavens, they are quick to answer—fisticuffs with fisticuffs, gunfire with gunfire.

Pighead fights until he wins or falls, but if the conflict is clearly going badly, the surviving Petersons might run, surrender, or apologize as circumstances dictate. If they run, they use their old trick of splitting up in all directions, knowing to meet up with the others in the back of Raynor's Meat Market later.

The two saloon ladies are Blue Katie and Dollar Annie. If the PCs come to their defense and comport themselves honorably, they will be allies forever. Both are extremely well-versed in the regular gossip of Ogallala, and each has some information that may later be of use to the PCs if they come back and visit. The PCs may already know Billy Ray and his best friend Ed and may ask the ladies about their whereabouts. Katie knows Ed Hoxie and can give directions to the room he rents in the back of the Cowboy's Rest saloon. If asked if she has seen anything suspicious or interesting of late, Annie confides she noticed a new patch of disturbed earth out on the far side of Boot Hill, near where she buried her recently departed twins.

The card players are professional gamblers, Teddy McCall and Louis L'Angel, currently playing a desultory game of two-handed euchre. If a fight breaks out, they take cover until it's over. The pair are no strangers to bar fights (even ones with supernatural elements), so once matters settle down, they go

#### **Pighead (3rd level Luchador—"heel"):**

Init +2; Atk open hand strike melee (1d10+3 + Lucha die); AC 14; HD 3d12+6; hp 34; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP luchador traits, lucky sign—hummingbird waltz (+1 to init); SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Path PoD. [Stats: Str 18, Agi 14, Sta 16, Int 8, Per 13].

Pighead's signature move is the Tope ' Suicida (pg. 80 of Weird Frontiers).





Torres 21



**The Peterson Crew (4):** Init +2; light pistol +2 ranged (1d8, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 4, Range 10/20/60) or Bowie knife +2 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 16, 10, 23, 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -1; Path PoD +1.

**Teddy McCall and Louis L'Angel:** Init +1; Atk derringer pistol +2 ranged (1d8, ROF 2, Load 2, Reload 3, Range 2/8/15) or knife +1 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 14, 13; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; Path WtL.

back to their game. If any PCs are interested, they cheerfully offer to change games to whist or poker. If asked about the town in a friendly manner, both McCall and Louis relate that they are just passing through, and while the town's population always

thins out between cattle seasons, it's bizarrely empty right now. A judge may find this a more congenial place to impart information on the goings on about town and Gant and his men.

The barman is "Quiet" Les Lanigan. Les tries to avoid trouble but is grateful for any comeuppance that befalls either Pighead or any of the Petersons, all of whom are consistently insolent and overly familiar with the bar girls.

Once the fight is over (or if it is avoided due to creative actions by the players), a filthy boy of about nine years shows up. Les tries to shoo him away, letting him know that there is no work for him today, but the boy insists that he be allowed in as he has a message for the newcomers.





The boy is Obie, a barely civilized urchin who ran away from his abusive home situation and, as of late, has found a guardian and mentor in Lady Meadowlark. “Lady M” sends him on the occasional errand, usually for supplies. He asks that the PCs accompany him to go see Lady M. All he knows is that the only person who takes care of him wishes to speak with the newcomers.

Teddy and Louis are two professional gamblers. L’Angel has 17 dollars, mostly in coins. McCall has been on a run and is currently sitting on a stake of more than \$500 and plans on heading south that next day in search of greener pastures.

## AREA 2 LADY MEADOWLARK’S BARGE

**A**ssuming the PCs agree to follow Obie, he leads them a mile south of town to a barge moored on the north bank of South Platte River.

Lady Meadowlark’s barge is roughly 30’ x 20’. Its major feature is a ramshackle shelter of scrap wood and heavy tarps adorned with buffalo hides, horse and coyote skulls, and strings of meadowlark feathers. A short pine board makes a rudimentary gangplank from the shore to the deck. Even from shore, the PCs notice a strong scent of sage and incense, reminiscent of a Catholic Church service. Lady Meadowlark lives on the river as the running water acts as a natural buffer against dark spirits and evil influences.

Calavaras approaching the barge see spirits hiding nearby, never getting too close to the barge itself. Any attempt at communication causes them to flee.

If the PCs come aboard the barge, Lady Meadowlark calls to them from inside her shelter, inviting them to join her.

The inside of the shelter has a clearance of barely six feet at its tallest point, so characters are obliged to remove hats and slouch a little to remain standing.

Any PCs who decline to drink are simply passed over and do not receive the cognitive enhancement described below.

There are several woven mats, a rickety shelf of scrap wood (holding various pots, jars, herbs, and ointments), a tiny portable stove with a kettle set under a smoke hole and sleeping mats.

Lady Meadowlark sits by the fire and beckons the PCs to join her. She is in her late 30s, with long hair in a bun held up with hair sticks, a long, carefully combed beard, and wearing a red oriental dress and cosmetics—if ever asked about her appearance or gender, Lady Meadowlark asserts, “I’ve survived Seven Days of Night; I shall never lie about who I am ever again.”

Lady Meadowlark tells the PCs that their arrival had been foretold by her spirit allies, and she tells them of the terrible psychic disturbance she felt and how it is centered on Billy Ray. She doesn’t know what happened to Billy Ray, but she feels that he is being used by terrible dark forces, forces which threaten all of Nebraska if not the world.

Lady Meadowlark asks that the PCs help her locate Jespers and put an end to whatever danger he is in, and end this. The Lady herself cannot go; she has enemies in the spirit world and may not stray far from her raft without risking their wrath.

If the PCs agree to help her find Billy Ray, Lady Meadowlark will reach out to her spirit allies to aid the PCs in their quest. She sends the PCs into the night to gather juneberry wood to make a special fire. While chanting low, she prepares a special tea out of rare herbs, medicinal distillations, and rainwater, chanting low all the while. When the brew is prepared, she pours it into a bowl, takes a long sip, then passes it around, telling everyone to pronounce the name of Billy Ray Jespers before they drink.



Once the ritual is complete, the participating PCs begin to hallucinate, experiencing visions of alien worlds and ancient Earth culture. All imbibing PCs must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or spend a few minutes helpless to do anything but observe.

**Lady Meadowlark (psychic medium):** Init -1; Atk fists +0 melee (1d3); AC 9; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP psychic medium, avenged of the spirit world; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +5; Path WtL. [Stats: Str 9, Agi 7, Sta 12, Int 14, Per 17].

*Avenged of the spirit world:* If Lady Meadowlark is killed, her allies in the spirit world take their revenge. The murderers find themselves subject to unending torments—horrific nightmares, sudden shifts in fortune, and persistent health issues. These acts of revenge persist until the guilty party dies of their folly or finds some way to appease the spirits.

*Psychic medium:* Lady Meadowlark is a spirit medium with the ability to perceive and communicate with spirits. While having no magical power of her own, she has entered alliances, pacts, and bargains with various spirit powers, aiding them in exchange for the benefit of their wisdom and power. Lady Meadowlark's barge has become a kind of refuge for wounded and ill-fortuned spirits, as it has special protections woven about it to ensure their safety and privacy. The barge itself is immune to any form of remote-viewing, curses, or scrying. Any evil spirits, demons, un-dead, and/or mythos creatures that approach within 100' must make a DC 17 Willpower save or are permanently repelled.

Ten minutes after the ritual ends, participating PCs all find their perceptions enhanced. They can see auras around people corresponding to their personalities. Beings able to manipulate magical energies have glowing sparks orbiting their bodies—Lady Meadowlark sparkles like a Roman candle to their eyes now. She tells the PCs that by this method, they will be able to track the psychic residue left behind by Billy Ray. She shows them one of Billy Ray's possessions, a tattered copy of the King James Bible, and to them, it appears to be covered in fingermarks that are indigo colored with glowing highlights.

Lady Meadowlark tells them that their enhanced perceptions are temporary; they need to start their search right away. The invited spirits can maintain the enhanced perceptions for up to 48 hours.

Lady Meadowlark does not know where Billy Ray is, but offers a few possibilities to start:

- **Billy Ray's Shack.** If the PCs wish to visit, Lady Meadowlark asks Obie to guide them. Obie takes them most of the way but refuses to get any closer than a half-mile; he has picked up some of Lady Meadowlark's psychic sensitivity, and fears to go near the place.
- **Ed Hoxie:** Lady Meadowlark says that during their brief acquaintance, Billy Ray mentioned a local friend called Ed Hoxie. She doesn't know Ed's exact location, but she knows he lives somewhere in town.
- **Mt. Cavalry** (later to be known as Boot Hill), a treeless hill north of town where the locals bury their fallen. Billy Ray would often go there to pay his respects to by-gone friends, sometimes taking a bottle.

## AREA 3 - BILLY RAY'S SHACK

**O**bie will take the PCs within a half-mile of Billy Ray's shack, but no closer—it gives him a “scairt feelin’,” and he avoids the place. He points the way, then heads back to the barge.



## Billy Ray's Shack

*The "shack" is a tiny, ramshackle dugout in the side of a low hill. The building is made from planks, scrap, and found wood. A horseshoe hangs over the low doorway. The yard is dirt and scrub, with only a single, leafless boxelder maple tree growing.*

Billy Ray moved into this shack, the abandoned residence of a homesteader, a year ago. If the PCs partook in Lady Meadowlark's ceremony, they see the indigo glow infused throughout the interior and exterior, although it is clearly fading.

If the PCs walk around to the back of the house, they find Billy Ray's Cayuse mare, Pepper, leaning against the back wall to stay out of the wind. Pepper is miserable—she has been saddled and unfed since unseating her rider and cannot get inside where Billy lets her sleep on cold nights. Pepper has bare skin patches and rubbed-off hair from where she was forced to eat and drink in saddle, and all of her tack is loaded with debris from where she tried to roll. If the PCs investigate, they find Billy Ray's left boot still stuck in its stirrup, and the hackamore is still tied to the saddle and looped around the animal's neck. Any PC that wants to claim the horse or gives it solace will find that the steed is quite intelligent and makes for an excellent trail companion.

The door to the shack doesn't lock, and the inside is silent, although if the PCs think to check there is a strange smell coming from inside—the alarming scent of too many insects in too small a space.

### Shack interior

Once the door is opened, read or paraphrase the following:

*As you open the door, a mass of insects, perhaps thousands of individuals, fly out into the night. They swarm about for a moment before flying off en masse, seemingly headed for the moon.*

The unique demise of Billy Ray has had many strange side effects, one of which is the unnatural swarm of hag moths that took up residence in the old shack. These moths are common in the area (but not the season), and they have never been seen in such numbers. If the PCs have any natural knowledge, they will know that it is much, much too late in the year for these bugs to be active; the cold should have killed them.

*A few moths remain in the shack, flitting about or resting upon walls or various other surfaces. The shack is small, with a dirt floor covered in a layer of burlap slacking. There is a sleeping pallet, a single wooden chair, a whiskey crate (repurposed as a table), and an empty antler rack. A gas lamp and box of matches sit upon the crate. There is a wooden crate at the foot of the bed, blazoned with the White House Coffee logo. In one corner is a rusty potbelly stove with a chimney vent leading to a hole in the ceiling. Two framed photographs hang on the wall over the bed.*

The crate contains a few sets of well-worn duds, a few basic carpentry tools, a half-full box of nails, and a tattered copy of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*. If the PCs' motivation for searching for Billy Ray included finding some item, the judge may find this a convenient spot to place it.

The two framed photos both feature Billy Ray. One is of him as an extremely young man, standing along with a small crowd of other youths all dressed for a cattle drive. The other shows Billy Ray as a man in his 40s, standing with another man and a youth in front of what appears to be a livery which bears the sign: HORSES BOUGHT AND SOLD, RIGS FOR RENT. The man and youth are Bernard O'Connor and his nephew, Gordy. If the PCs thought to examine the photographs and later ride back towards town, they pass the building pictured and may recognize it from the sign.



## AREA 4 - HOSTELRY AND CORPSE

**A**s the PCs ride by, read or paraphrase the following:

*You see an abandoned livery stable in deep disrepair. The building is covered in dust and the paddock fence is broken in several places, but you can make out part of a painted sign on its wall: RIGS FOR RENT.*

The investigators may recognize this building from the picture on Billy Ray's wall. If the PCs have partaken in Lady Meadowlark's ceremony, they see a faint indigo light coming from under the door.

If the PCs check the perimeter of the building, they see that the paddock has a huge pit.

### The Livery and Sinkhole

*All the windows of this hostelry are boarded up, and the building is gloomy and silent. The door hangs open.*

The livery was a small, thriving business run by Bernard O'Connor, who eventually discovered the area had a flaw: a huge sinkhole that opened suddenly during a rainstorm, taking both the tack shed and his nephew. The owner moved the operation into the town proper, abandoning the building and the body of his nephew, which was never recovered.

If under the influence of Lady Meadowlark's potion, the PCs can clearly see fading indigo footprints, indicating the psychic residue left behind by Billy Ray. Following the indigo smears on the ground that begin at the back of the property is easy. Without said enhanced perception, tracking Billy Ray's last steps is difficult but not impossible (DC 16 to follow the two-mile twisting path to the ditch where Billy Ray died). Investigations around the pit will disturb the now un-dead boy of the owner's nephew. The occult energies invested in Billy Ray have bled into the soil here, invigorating the body with un-dead energies.

**Deadpoke:** Init -1d; Atk fist +2 melee (1d5+2), bite +2 melee (1d8), strangler +2 (; AC 12; HD 2d8+2; hp 14'; MV 20'; Act 1d20, 1d16; SP un-dead traits, strangler; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; PoD +1.

**Strangler:** The creature uses the disgusting tactic of roping its entrails around the throat of a victim and pulls the life from their lungs. If the deadpoke succeeds in a strangle melee attack, the victim must pass a DC 12 Ref save or be entangled in entrails and will be slowly strangled for 1d3 in Stamina damage each round until the save can be passed. Victims bound this way are at -1d to any physical action they attempt while being strangled.

**Un-dead traits:** Like all un-dead, deadpokes are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis spells (or spell-like effects), as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

### Hostelry, interior

*The interior of this building is mostly empty, and huge cobwebs hang in great dusty drifts in every corner of the ceiling.*

If the PCs search the area, they discover the following clues: The rusty can that held the kerosene is out in the front yard, empty but still redolent with fumes. Billy Ray's hat lies nearby, instantly recognizable to any who find it and know Billy Ray.

The ghost of O'Connor's nephew Gordy haunts the yard, hanging over the huge sinkhole in the yard. If the PCs have a means of perceiving and communicating with the spirit, Gordy's shade answers readily, as the lad knew Billy Ray in life and is eager to share the curious tale:

*"My uncle and Billy Ray were practically neighbors in the month before the hole opened up and sometimes would get together to drink whiskey and talk. My uncle said Billy Ray was just dumb enough, but for what he never said, leastways not to me. Anyways, I saw Billy Ray a few nights ago. He ran*



*in, hollering and fit to be tied. He screamed and pointed up at the sky, like the moon were chasing him. Then he found that old can, shook it out over his eyes, and lit a match so his eyes caught up fire. I thought he had hollered before, but now he screamed like nothing you ever heard, running out into the night, face and hair all a-flame. I would have followed him, but I can't go more 'en a few paces from the hole, 'ceptin on All Hallow's Night when I get to go into town."*

If pressed for additional details, the spirit thinks for a moment and then comments that he thinks Billy Ray was wearing only one boot.

The sinkhole is unstable and dangerous. Every character attempting to climb in must make a Luck check. On a failed check, the sides of the hole give way, widening that area of the rim by one to three feet and sucks the unlucky victim down into the depths, where they possibly suffocate. Characters who safely make it to the bottom can carefully dig through four feet of frozen soil to find Gordy's corpse (now no more than bones), a gun belt, and a loaded Colt .22 revolver in desperate need of cleaning.

If the PCs give Gordy a proper burial, including appropriate words spoken over the interred body, they each receive two Boons.

## AREA 5 - THE CORPSE

**T**he PCs can find Billy Ray's corpse by following the trail from the old hostelry, or they may use some other means to divine the body's location.

Billy Ray ran for nearly half an hour after lighting himself on fire before he passed out from wounds and exhaustion—finally dying of exposure.

Read or paraphrase the following when the corpse is found:

*You see a body in a ditch under a tall bristlecone pine. It has clearly been dead for more than a week. The body is wrapped in rags, including a filthy sheepskin coat and tattered dungarees. The body has no hat nor boots.*

### **Star-mutant cougar (1):** Init +3; Atk claw rake

+5 melee (1d8+3) or bite +3 melee (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 4d8; hp 25; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP supernatural senses, visions, accursed hide; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Path PoD.

The star-mutant cougar is an animal painfully transformed by the brief connection our world shared with Azathoth. It looks like a cougar with azure fur spangled with white starbursts.

*Accursed hide:* The star-mutant cougar has a uniquely colored hide, and a PC with the appropriate skills might like to take it as a trophy. However, this would be a fatal mistake. Absorbed of much of the energy of dread Azathoth's regard, the hide will be an accursed object for the one who takes it—attracting the attention of supernatural creatures and mortal seekers of the dark. The one who takes the hide has the curse, and try as they might, they can never lose or destroy the object. Being rid of the pelt will be the object of a difficult and dangerous quest. The upside is that the object will provide a +2 bonus to AC.

*Supernatural senses:* The star-mutant cougar can sense the presence of beings with magical or supernatural powers from within 300', and it also has a general idea of their direction from its person.

*Visions:* The star-mutant cougar begins the conflict by creating a vision, a mental hallucination that the PCs all share. Every character within 120' of the creature must make a Willpower save vs. DC 15; failure means they perceive that the world has become a phantasmagoria of swirling colors and images, with hallucinatory creatures and people popping into and out of their vision.

Victims take a -1d penalty to all attack rolls. The cougar instinctively uses the visions to hide itself, and after a single round of movement, it can attack any affected target with the element of surprise. The visions last for 1d6+1 rounds. PCs saving against the creature's vision ability do have their perception changed slightly—colors swirl around and shades, like phantoms, harry their perception, giving them a -2 on all attacks. The PCs will understand that some outside force is at work on them.





There is a creature here, a cougar transformed by the residual energy of the Daemon Sultan's contact with Billy Ray. The creature regards the corpse, touched by Azathoth as it was, as a kind of prize that it means to defend to the death. It sits in the tree, ever vigilant against those who would defile its prize.

## AREA 6 - ED HOXIE'S ROOM

**H**oxie lives in a tiny loft room at the back of the Cowboy's Rest, a local saloon currently closed for the season. Dollar Annie or any other NPC at the Crystal Palace Saloon knows the location and will share it with the PCs if asked or a PC might have seen an old advertisement about the town.

Ed Hoxie himself has joined with Gant and is one of the singers encountered in **Area 8**.

### Hoxie's Room

*This is a small, spartan sleeping space. There is a narrow bed, a single shelf with a few carefully folded garments, a chair, and a night table with a snuffbox set on top of a folded piece of paper.*

The folded paper on the night table is an unfinished letter in Hoxie's own hand, meant to inform a mutual acquaintance in Wyoming of the death of Billy Ray Jaspers. Most of the letter is a stiff, formal thing, expressing sorrow and sharing the meager details known of the circumstances of Billy Ray's demise. However, the final two paragraphs are bizarre—the handwriting becomes wild and erratic, the writing unsarcastically poetical:

*Perhaps I was wrong to write to you prematurely, as Billy Ray is neither lost nor dead. I have had communion with him, even from beyond the grave, and the quiet place where his Soul is kept on this earthly plane, I can report is tranquil and safe, even as it smells of the thousands of animals slaughtered and hung there over the years.*

*Billy Ray is the gate! He is the bridge upon which we enlightened shall walk to THE GREAT CITY*

*the next world that ONLY WE FEW SHALL EVER REVEL IN! Give up your meaningless life and come to Ogallala to join us washed in the real blood of THE TRUE GODS OF EARTH AND THEN TO SEE*

The letter ends abruptly. The PCs might realize that the place that "smells of the thousands of animals slaughtered and hung there over the years" is Raynor's Meat Market and continue their investigation there.

## AREA 7 - MT. CAVALRY

**M**t. Cavalry is a treeless hill north of the city. This area has dozens of graves, many of which are occupied by itinerant cowboys who died far from home.

Billy Ray would often come out here to spend time with his deceased acquaintances, often with a bottle in hand. Lady Meadowlark suggested this as a place where the PCs might find Billy Ray's trail.

*Dozens of grave markers dot the cold earth of Mt. Cavalry. From here you can see the town of Ogallala laid out before you to the south, and to the north, the dark frozen prairie.*

PCs who partook in Lady Meadowlark's ritual do not see any of the indigo marks telling of Billy Ray's recent presence—it's been too long since he visited Mt. Cavalry for there to be any. However, they do see glowing sparks hovering over one specific grave that bears a simple marker made of a section of flooring with the following inscription burned upon it:

**DOKTOR MISTER STEVEN HALL THROWN AND  
NECK BROKE - 1866**

The body interred beneath was once Dr. Steven Hale, a local physician who did indeed die from injuries sustained in a terrible riding accident. The doctor was an occult dabbler, and during his long life of study, he came across the name of Azathoth, and said the name out loud a few times. Those syllables, spoken innocently by the man in life, caused his departed spirit to resonate



with the energies of the cosmos at the moment Billy Ray died, creating yet another terrifying cosmic event waiting to happen.

If the PCs disturb the grave of Dr. Hale, even so much as kicking a bit of earth over the grave, a bolt of lightning strikes the earth, 10-40' away. Mundane lightning begins at the earth and goes skyward, but in this case, the electric blast came from the heavens. All PCs in the vicinity must make a DC 16 Reflex save or be dazzled, taking -1d on all attack rolls for 1d3+1 rounds.

Where the lightning struck suddenly stands a being—a naked human male from the neck down, but their head is like looking out of a window into a violent storm; clouds, rain, lightning, all features in miniature in an undulating space where the being's head should be. The former Dr. Hale has become a dark-energy wraith, grown active due to the player's interference with his grave and their aura as persons touched by the Seven Days of Night. The creature attacks the PCs with no concern for its safety or survival.

**Dark-energy wraith (1 or more):** Init +4; Atk electric blast +5 ranged (2d5+3/2/1 depending on range, Range 30/60/90); AC 16; HD 8d8; hp 48 each; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP cosmic manifestation, charged flesh, summon dark-energy wraith, directed energy; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will+4; Path PoD +2.

*Charged flesh:* The creature's skin is electrically charged. Striking it with an unprotected body part causes the attacker 1d6 points of electrical damage, and any so rash as to attempt to grapple the creature takes 2d5 points of damage per round that the grapple is maintained.

*Cosmic manifestation:* The dark energy wraith is a manifestation of the residual energy created when Azathoth's eye fell on Billy Ray. A dark-energy wraith is more of a phenomenon than a true being existing in the world—having more in common with fire than with creatures of flesh. As such, the dark-energy wraith has no need to eat, breathe, or sleep. The creature is immune to electric damage, mind-controlling effects or enchantments, and physical attacks from weapons that do not hold some form of enchantment or powers. Smart characters may devise some way to smother or ground the energy the wraith is made of, thus destroying it. However, the creature is particularly vulnerable to water, and takes damage from exposure relative to volume; a glass of water would cause it 1d4 points of damage, a bucket of water would cause it 1d8 points of damage, being forced to stand outside during a deluge would cause it 2d6 points per round, etc. The creature cannot be turned by *turn back the night* attempts.

*Directed energy:* The dark-energy wraith methodically attempts to blast any and all living creatures in range with its electric blast (electricity is our closest understanding, but the energy expended is a type relatively unknown on earth, a by-product of the friction caused by the dark matter that makes up most of the universe). Given the choice of PCs to target, it always attacks the one with the most Hexes or lowest current Luck score if none of the potential victims are currently burdened with hexes. The wraith has some control over the blast, so it can curve around one opponent to strike another or force it to move around barriers, etc.

*Summon dark-energy wraith:* As a full round action, the creature can summon another dark-energy wraith with the same abilities (reroll hit points). The creature stands with its arms aloft, lightning streaks out of its hands, and a blast of lightning strikes from 10 to 60' away. Wherever it struck stands the newly arrived dark-energy wraith. The summoned creature doesn't appear until the summoner's *next* combat round, although the new creature can instantly act once it manifests. Once the summoning is begun, slaying the dark energy wraith does not prevent the one it summoned from arriving in our world and attacking.









## AREA 8 - RAYNOR'S MEAT MARKET

### Raynor's (Exterior)

*Raynor's Meat Market is boarded up and dark. The front door has a chain and padlock across it.*

**T**he front doors and all the windows are boarded up, but the back door is open. If a PC puts their ear to a window or the wall, they hear strange singing in an unknown language coming from the building's root cellar.

The situation at Raynor's Meat Market depends on what has transpired in Ogallala since the PCs arrived.

**US army (ret.) guards (6):** Init +1; Atk Bowie knife +1 melee (1d6) or heavy pistol +2 ranged (1d10, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, Range 10/20/60); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 14, 12, 21, 18, 10, 11; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Army training; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will+2; Path WtL.

**Army training:** These men have worked together as a squad for some time and have developed tactics that make them deadly foes. When at least two of the guards are concentrating fire on a single target, every-other member of the volley has their critical range increased to 18-20 as one teammate's shot is used to create an opening for the followup shot. Example: In a four-man squad that concentrates their fire on one target, two of them will have the increased critical range.

If the PCs avoided a battle with Pighead and the Peterson Crew, there are no guards outside. Pighead and the Petersons are back at the Crystal Palace and only become involved if they hear the sounds of battle. Sneaking up to the building without being detected is fairly straightforward in this case (DC 10).

If the PCs fought and dispatched Pighead and the Petersons, leaving zero survivors, their unexplained absence puts Gast and his people on alert. Gast hires some local muscle in the form of a squad of army retirees as guards who walk the perimeter around the entire meat market and only occasionally stop for a smoke at the entrance. Sneaking up to the building becomes more complicated (DC 15 test or on a failure, the would-be sneak is spotted and challenged by the guards). In addition, one guard will always be tucked low on the roof in a sniper's position (DC 20 test to notice them).

If the PCs fought and some of the Petersons escape, they report to Gast. Gast is incensed, especially if he hears tales of strangers with supernatural abilities. The remaining Petersons hide in the alleyways of adjacent buildings, where they can remain while targeting the back door with rifles and keeping an eye out for intruders. If Pighead survived, he is healed for 3d8+3 of any damage he took (owing to a mysterious tonic an old woman gave to him), and he waits in hiding on the roof, ready to launch a spectacular aerial attack on his enemies once they arrive. In this case, sneaking up on the building without some sort of distraction or clever subterfuge is difficult indeed (DC 17). In addition, Gast takes two further precautions. The six retired Army guards are hired, and he risks spending a bit of his power on creating guardians to protect the ritual: he infuses two of the bovine corpses in the back of the meat market with life-force, creating two wickedly brutal creatures—deaf and dumb but compelled to attack and smother intruders (see Raynor's [Interior]).





## Raynor's (Interior)

*It is even colder in the interior of this room than it is out in the chilly Nebraska night. There are several hooks set into beams along the ceiling. A dozen sides of salted beef slowly twist on their hooks, moved by the wind from outside now that you have opened the door.*

*A heavy tarp hangs in front of a door at the end of the room. There is a stairway going down into darkness. You hear singing coming from there.*

If Gant spent energy creating guardians, the two closest slabs of meat are actually beef revenants that slither off their hooks and attack once the PCs are in the room. They can be evaded if the PCs enter stealthily (DC 13 or better) and can make it downstairs before the creatures are aware of their presence, but if they linger or pass through the meat locker, the creatures stalk them, not stopping until they crush their prey or are destroyed.

## Raynor's (Interior Cellar)

*The singing grows louder and louder as you head downstairs. The cellar of Raynor's has a dirt floor, and the clearance is barely six and a half feet. The room has been decorated, as if for some kind of stage performance. There are crude paper cutouts of stars, flowers, crescent moons, and castles, all stuck to the walls or hanging from the rafters on wires. There are candles set behind many of these cutouts, giving them a strange glow.*

*On the east end of the room, you see a group of people, standing and singing. There are two women and a man, dressed as if for a party, all holding sheet music out in front of themselves. Beyond them is another individual, a man stripped to the waist. He sings loudly and waves his hands over a barrel that is set before him. The barrel is full of water, and a strange white light glows from within the water, illuminating the man's face and casting strange shadows over the raftered ceiling. The barrel is covered in crudely drawn symbols.*

**Beef revenants (4):** Init -2; Atk body slam + 2 melee (2d8+2); AC 15; HD 5d8; hp 24, 18, 37, 30; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, knockdown and smother, unnatural senses, awkward; SV Fort +6, Ref -2, Will+0; Path PoD.

**Awkward:** The creatures undulate after their prey in the manner of inchworms. They move awkwardly and take a -1 penalty on all attack rolls.

**Knockdown and smother:** On a successful slam attack, the target must make a Reflex save vs. the attack roll total. Failure indicates they have been knocked down, and the beef revenant makes a free grapple attempt +5. If it is successful, the creature lands upon its target and smothers and crushes them (even going as far as shoving a bit of its bulk down the victim's throat), doing an automatic 1d4 points of Stamina damage per round the victim remains grappled. Targets reaching 0 Stamina are slain. Breaking the grapple allows lost Stamina to return at the rate of 1 point per round.

**Un-dead traits:** They are immune to sleep, charm, and mind-affecting abilities, as well as illusions. They don't need to breathe or sleep. Gant infused them with enough energy to animate them for 12 hours, after which time they become inert sides of befouled beef.

**Unnatural senses:** As they are essentially slabs of beef with no head, organs, or limbs, they are blind with no other senses save an unerring attraction to the life-force of creatures they guard against—in this case the invading PCs.







Any PCs who partook in Lady Meadowlark's ritual perceive the light from the barrel as deepest indigo.

Any surviving members of the Peterson crew are down here watching the ritual, although they draw their weapons and attack once they see the PCs.

As soon as the cultists are aware of the intruders, they skip ahead to the end of the ritual, hoping to open the gateway to the City of Forever (or so Gant has named it) before the meddlers can stop them. If Gant created his beef-revenant guardians, the ritual takes seven rounds to complete. If Gant has not, his unspent power allows him to finish the ritual in three rounds.

The ritual can be interrupted by the following means:

- Killing Gant
- Tipping over the barrel, although the cultists could make another ritual attempt if they force the shade back into the barrel and trap it once again in rainwater
- Silencing all the singing

If the barrel is tipped over, the water rushes out, and onto the floor tumbles the Shade of Billy Ray, who had been trapped by the charged rainwater. He is a translucent spirit (to all that are capable of seeing or sensing him—including those that partook of Lady Meadowlark's brew) whose feet don't quite touch the floor, but he is unmistakably Billy Ray. He reacts to PCs he knows in a friendly manner, as if he had run into them on the street rather than at the site of a diabolical ritual powered by his immortal soul.

If Gant and the cultists finish their ritual, the gateway to another world is opened, but it is nothing like they imagined. They instantly realize they have made as great a mistake as any mortal ever has.

Note for judges that want the scene to happen: Even if the ritual is interrupted, have the creature be summoned but with 1 HD less than its maximum for each round of the ritual that was not completed.

## Enter the Monster

The creature Gant's imperfect ritual brought forth is a nameless nightmare from another dimension, a slaving beast born of the contact between the extra-dimensional world Gant managed to contact and the thousands of deaths—human, bovine, and other—that have taken place in Ogallala.

When the creature appears, many things happen at once:

- The creature smashes the building apart from the inside, reducing it to a wave of wood and stone debris that flies away in every direction. The roof flies off in two main sections, destroying one nearby building and tearing the facade off another. Players still stand in the basement of what was once Raynor's Meat Market, now open to the sky.
- Gant and all of his fellow cultists die. They shriek, grasp their heads, fall to their knees, and finally turn to dust, which is then inhaled by the creature.
- No matter what time the confrontation with Gant and his followers takes place, it is instantly as dark as night. Dark thunder clouds roll in, and lightning strikes, catching 1d3 buildings in town on fire.
- Animals within three miles of the event panic, screech, and either flee or attack nearby creatures in their terror—fallout the PCs may have to deal with afterwards.
- Every sentient being of less than 1 HD within 10 miles must make a DC 18 Grit check.

If the PCs slay the creature, it disappears—before its body even hits the ground; it dissolves into mounds of falling black sludge that penetrates the earth and poisons the soil where it enters.



**Edmund Gant, cult leader:** Init +3; Atk cosmic blast +6 ranged (3d6, Range 40') or punch +3 melee (1d8); AC 16; HD 7d8; hp 48; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP cosmically enhanced abilities, cosmic blast; SV Fort +5, Ref +3; Will +6; Path PoD +1. [Stats: Str 18, Int 12, Per 14(18), Sta 18, Agi 18].

*Cosmically enhanced abilities:* Gant's physical and psychic power has only grown as he has increased contact with the unseen world. His physical abilities are enhanced, as is his Personality (treat as an 18 while he actively preaches about opening a gate to another world). Those listening to his sermon must make a DC 12 Willpower save or be mesmerized and unable to perform any action until the sermon ends (or is interrupted).

*Cosmic blast:* Gant can send a cosmic blast of dark matter energy at foes within 40', but each time he does, it costs him 1 temporary Personality point.

**Gant's Followers (3d6+5 followers):** Init +0; Atk fist +0 (1d3) or light pistol +0 ranged (1d8, ROF 2, Load 6, Reload 3, 10/20/60); AC 10, HD 1d4, hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; Fort +0, Ref +0, Will+0; Path PoD.

These unfortunates are the lost and unmoored, those looking for something greater from this life, and have found a spiritual leader in Edmund Gant. If Gant fights, they will fight as well, but the death of their leader snaps them out of their confusion and they flee, swearing never to stray from Christ's teachings ever again should the Almighty be so good to see them through to safety.

### The "creature" (dark-matter ogre) (1):

Init -1; Atk tentacle claw +5 melee (2d10+5, Ref save vs. damage or fall prone), gore attack +5 melee (3d8+5, automatic critical on a successful attack if followed by a tentacle claw attack that results in the victim falling prone); AC 11; HD 12d10; hp 100; MV 20'; Act 3d20; SP resistance, confusion; Fort +7, Ref +3, Will+11; Path PoD +2.

The dark-matter ogre is a 40' tall humanoid that crouches low in the confines of the room before it destroys the ceiling and roof of the building. Its head is shaped like a Texas longhorn, but its facial features are partially human and partially something not of our world. It has one eye in the center of its brow, a stubby snout with a cow's nose, and lips that reveal the jagged teeth of a coyote. Its body is covered in short black and brown hair, and its disproportionately long arms and relatively stumpy legs end in a bristle of thin tentacles, each of which ends in a jagged claw.

*Confusion:* The dark-matter ogre did not exist before Gant's imperfect ritual connected our world with the beyond. It springs into existence innocent of every aspect of the universe with only a desire to satiate an unfathomable hunger. If it slays a victim, it spends the next round roaring at the sky; it knows that it needs to feed but doesn't know how to eat and can do nothing but howl its frustration until it learns how to do so. The creature is extremely confused. Knowing absolutely nothing, it might be tricked into following a decoy, investigating phantom noises, or other ruses.

*Resistance:* The dark-matter ogre is resistant to mortal weapons, cold, and electrical attacks—taking only half damage, rounded up (enchanted or magical attacks do full damage). But it takes double damage from fire-based attacks. Holy water does 1d6 damage to the creature, and curiously, so does a like amount of any liquor over 80-proof.





The Shade of Billy Ray Jespers is a cosmically touched, non-corporeal un-dead creature, steeped in the horrifying energies of terrible Azathoth's perception. As an un-dead spirit, he can only be harmed by magical means, and is otherwise immune to physical assault, natural energy (including fire and electricity), sleep, paralysis, and mind-influencing effects. He is a ghost with no need to sleep, eat, or drink, but is subject to the power of a revelator. Coming into physical contact with the shade of Billy Ray Jespers forces a Grit check vs. DC 14—on a failed check, in addition to any other effects, the being must flee, dropping anything they carry, for 1d3 turns, during which time they are at -1d to all actions.

## AFTER THE SMOKE CLEARS

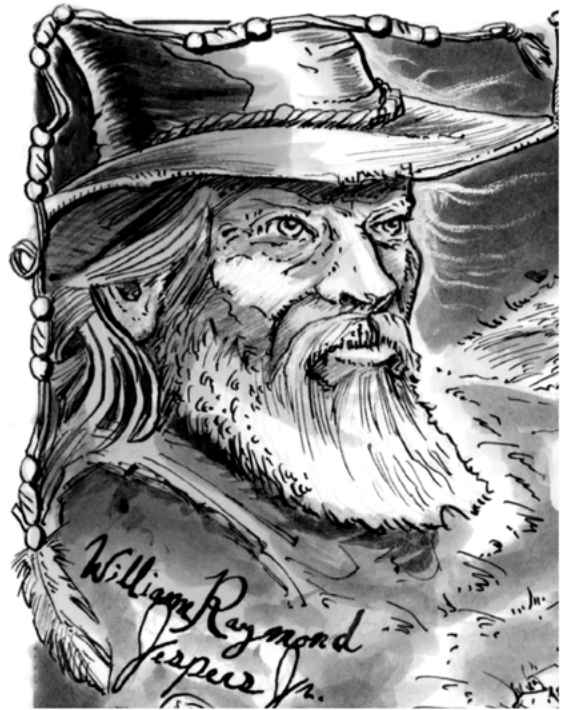
The Shade of Billy Ray Jespers, freed from the water barrel that held it prisoner, thanks the PCs for freeing him. Any who partook in Lady Meadowlark's ritual see an aura around the shade, like an indigo flame.

Billy Ray can communicate with the PCs, but not for long. He is being called on to the Next World, and while he is ignorant of what this world may be, its call is inexorable and promises a great comfort to the troubled soul.

If the PCs have any questions for Billy Ray, he answers as best he can. He apologizes for any injury to the assembled or their families and friends he may have caused, forgives any who feel they have wronged him, and generally let's all know that he has absolutely no hard feelings about any of this. The shade can remain for a minute or two of questioning, after which he apologizes for having to leave, tips his hat, and begins to fade out of existence even as he turns to walk away.

The citizens of Ogallala do their best to recover, although everyone touched by this incident will likely have permanent psychic scars. Most eventually decide that all the strangeness, including the destruction of Raynor's Meat Market and any other buildings, is the fault of a freak storm.

If the PCs tell Lady Meadowlark what happened, she is saddened but relieved to hear that his soul has passed on. She is aware that the dark psychic pall that hung over Ogallala has been destroyed and is grateful. The medium could become a long-term ally to the PCs, providing information or liaison to the spirit world, as needed.



**REST IN PEACE WILLIAM  
(BILLY) RAYMOND (RAY)  
JESPERS JR.**

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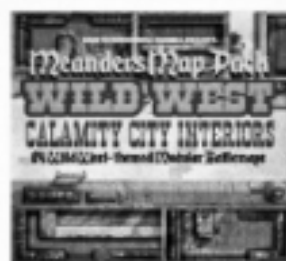
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