

Mallory couldn't recall how she'd ended up in the middle of the woods, but she was becoming used to finding herself in strange locations with no memory of how she'd arrived. She was a little more annoyed than usual about it, though. She had been in the shelter, looking for the tape. It was important. If they found it, they would learn about the clutter, and then they would come after her.

undoubtedly, it was the clutter that had brought her here. They were always with her, comforting Mallory through her sickness. Mallory hadn't felt quite right for months now, and every day she felt increasingly drained from her illness. She was lucky to have them. One of the clutter, a burly, ginger tomcat she had lovingly named Britches, weaved in and out of Mallory's bony, arthritic legs as she shuffled stiffly forward. Weak sunlight filtered through the leaves, dappling the corpse sprawled on the forest floor. The body was covered in hundreds of scratches, and chunks of flesh had been playfully ripped away by dozens of small feline jaws.

"Not again!" Mallory exclaimed with the same bemused exasperation of a cat owner discovering a dead mouse carcass gift on the stoop. "Whatever shall I do with all of you?"

All around her, the clutter moved through the trees: cats of every color, long-haired and short, purring so loudly that Mallory could feel it reverberate through her tired bones.

COLLECTION

OF HORRORS

HOST OF THE CLUTTER

A Storytelling Adventure System
anthology for Hunter: The Vigil

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING, INC.
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Check out White Wolf online at <http://www.white-wolf.com>

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Host of the Clutter

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL ...

SOCIAL •

Overview

Several corpses, shredded nearly beyond recognition by tooth and claw, were discovered buried in shallow graves in the woods outside of town. The characters, investigating the unusual circumstances surrounding the murders, have begun to suspect the involvement of Mallory Oakes, a veterinary assistant previously employed at the Safe Haven Animal Shelter. She was known to have been a friend and colleague of a local hunter, Bryan, an identified victim of the attacks who was investigating cryptids resembling domestic housecats in a nearby urban neighborhood. Oakes mysteriously vanished several months ago, abandoning her work and leaving behind an eerie recording of her last-known autopsy of one of the cryptids, requested by the deceased Bryan.

Oakes had no prior history of violent behavior before her disappearance, and evidence suggests that she may be a victim of supernatural influence. If Oakes is a victim of demonic possession, it may yet be possible to free her and stop the string of murders in the process. The characters may have previously been allies with Bryan, or may have known Oakes prior to her conversion. Alternately, the cell may be doing a favor for allied hunters who may have their own motives for seeking out Oaks.

As the scene opens, vague reports of strange, nocturnal feline behavior around Save Haven Animal Shelter have led the characters to Oakes' former workplace. Here, they come face to face with Mallory Oakes, a frail shadow of her former self, and the feline demons who have taken her as their own, the Clutter.

Description

The feeble fluorescent lights cast a twitchy, sallow light upon the dismal lobby. Safe Haven Animal Shelter is clearly a misnomer: between the serrated edges of rusted chain-link kennels and the foul, poorly-disguised stench of fresh animal piss, the place feels downright sinister. The room itself is a disaster area. Several filing cabinets have been overturned - drawers pulled from their slots and emptied upon the floor as though someone was searching for something. A pair of dark corridors lead from the room, and from the blackness of the hallway directly ahead, two shining, yellow-green eyes stare, unblinking, back at you. A cat loose from its cage?

"You should not be here."

You swivel around, startled. A stooped, pale, old woman in a dingy lab coat emerges from the shadows of the second corridor. Your eyes travel down her withered form from her name tag to the deep, festering wound on her right hand. Mallory Oakes? Impossible! Although the woman's leathery, ancient face is a mask of deep wrinkles, the resemblance to the pretty, young vet tech in the photos remains undeniable. One by one, dozens of pairs of lamplit eyes appear in the darkness behind her. The shadows writhe and hiss as the cats slink toward you, and you catch the undeniable odor of rotting flesh.

Storyteller Goals

The goal of *Host of the Clutter* is to establish Mallory Oakes as a recurring contact in a chronicle. The scene itself is versatile, and its difficulty can be easily adjusted to suit novice and advanced cells alike, both to establish a useful ally for future endeavors, and to provide the characters with a glimpse of the supernatural world around them — all the more unsettling as its darkness permeates the mundane and familiar.

Character Goals

The characters' primary goal in this scene is to free Mallory Oakes from the parasitic demons that have chosen her as their host. In doing so, they may rid the city of the demons as well, ending the string of murders.

Actions

Saving Mallory Oakes

Although there are many possible courses of action when confronting Mallory Oakes, an attempt will likely be made to free Oakes from her connection to the Clutter. This can be achieved by killing the demon cats while subduing her until she is free from their influence. It should be noted that Oakes will attempt to use every resource she has available to resist, and she will violently attack those whom she perceives as a threat to the Clutter — to the point of throwing herself directly in harm's way to protect her "babies."

Each time one of the cats is killed, Mallory Oakes regains a piece of her soul that was consumed by the Clutter. As each stolen piece of her soul is returned, Oakes becomes noticeably younger, although she will not cease resisting until every last one of the cats has been destroyed.

Subduing Mallory Oakes

If Oakes is subdued and immobilized, she will struggle to break free, and the Clutter will focus their attacks upon the character holding Oakes captive. If at any time Oakes rolls a dramatic failure when trying to escape the hold of her captor, she injures herself in the process, taking one point of lethal damage.

The Clutter

While Mallory Oakes herself is not intended to be a particularly difficult opponent, her demonic feline parasites present much more of a threat due to their number and the strength of their combined force. In combat, the demonic cats of the Clutter are no different from ordinary house cats, apart from their tendency to relentlessly attack in unison and overwhelm their foes by sheer numbers. The total number of cats the characters are up against may be adjusted to suit the cell's level of ability.



THE CLUTTER

Description: The demonic cats of the Clutter look like mangy, malnourished housecats of every shape and color — they may be long- or short-haired, tabby or calico. The odor of ammonia and decay clings to their matted fur, and they circle and swarm about their host in clumps, hissing and yowling when threatened.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 1, Resolve 2, Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Stealth 2

Willpower: 3

Initiative: 4

Defense: 1

Speed: 11 (species factor 7)

Size: 2

Health: 3

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	0 (L)*	2
Claw	0 (L)*	2

*A cat's attacks receive no damage bonus, but still inflict lethal damage.

If the Clutter's numbers are reduced to less than a quarter of what they started at, and Oakes is free and able to escape with them, the Clutter will attempt to flee the scene, scattering in all directions. However, they will not abandon Oakes if she is still alive and being held captive, as the Clutter is bound to its live host. If Oakes is immobilized without hope of release or too wounded to escape along with the Clutter, the remaining cats will turn their numbers against Oakes, attempting to kill her so that they may break free and escape. If the Clutter succeeds in killing Oakes, they will then immediately scatter from the scene to find a new host.

Consequences

If the characters succeed in freeing Mallory Oakes from the demon cats, she completely regains her free will and reverts to her original state. Oakes becomes a loyal ally and will offer to help the characters in the future.

If the characters kill Oakes during the scene, any remaining demonic cats that have fled from the shelter will find a new host. After recovering, the Clutter may seek out members of the cell individually, attempting to time their attack when a character is alone (and therefore much easier to kill). The clutter may also seek out and kill others once they have a new host, which may lead to an encore confrontation in the future.

BRYAN'S JOURNAL

Oakes may be in possession of a journal taken from Bryan before his death, containing notes or valuable firsthand accounts of the Clutter or other supernatural phenomena. If desired, these accounts may be those found in the *Horror Recognition Guide* (see "The Cat Lady," pp. 23-34). Alternatively, the Storyteller may use the journal as a means of providing new information to the characters, tying the scene into the story as a whole.

Mallory Oakes, Possessed Veterinarian

Quotes: "Heeeeerrre, Britches! Mommy has a treat for you if you promise to be a good boy and not kill anybody tonight!"

"Where did we leave it? Don't you fret, my darlings, I'll remember where I left the tape sooner or later. Then we'll make sure it's never found, won't we? Yes, that's what we'll do!"

"You! Stay away from us! Touch one whisker on any of my little ones and I'll kill you!"



Virtue: Charity. Oakes will do whatever she can to help a friend or an animal in need, even if she must occasionally put herself at risk in order to do so.

Vice: Sloth. Believing she has better things to do with her time than clean, Mallory Oakes lives and works in a state of perpetual disarray. Her disorganization occasionally leads her to misplace important items and information.

Background: A gifted veterinarian, Mallory Oakes spent several years in medical school before turning her focus toward animals. Her first brush with the supernatural occurred shortly before her disappearance several months ago, while performing an autopsy upon a demonic cat-like cryptid requested by local hunter, Bryan. It was during the autopsy that Mallory Oakes was marked as the new host of the cat-demons, collectively called the Clutter. Subsequently, the Clutter began the slow process of possessing Oakes, stealing her breath and leaching her health to feed their vile essence. Supernaturally compelled to protect the Clutter, she no longer recognizes her own face in the mirror, and her rare moments of lucidity are becoming fewer.

Description: Before becoming host to the Clutter, Mallory Oakes was a mousy young woman in her mid-thirties. Her face was soft and pretty in a muted, untraditional way, and she often wore her long, wavy, mink-brown hair in a loose braid. Now she barely resembles her former self. The Clutter have drained the youth from her, transforming Oakes into a stooped, senile, withered old hag. Were it not for the lab coat that she continues to insist upon wearing at all times and the festering wound on her right hand marking her as the host of the Clutter, Mallory Oakes would look for all the world like a stereotypical lonely old cat woman.

When released from the Clutter, Oakes is soft-spoken and highly intelligent; she has a soft spot for animals and humans in need, and a kind, charitable nature. Despite her meek outward appearance, Oakes is a woman with strong personal values, and can be jarringly blunt when she feels she must. Oakes is steadfastly loyal to those who have earned her trust, and her medical experience (both with humans and animals) and keen intelligence make her a useful ally.

Storytelling Hints: When under the influence of the Clutter, Oakes is a senile old hag entirely bent on protecting the Clutter, who she feels comfort and protect her as well. She is not openly hostile unless she feels her “children” are in danger, at which point she will use her limited strength to attempt to protect them from harm. Keep in mind, however, that Oakes should also be portrayed as a victim, manipulated by dark forces beyond her control.

HUNTER

THE VIGIL

Name: Mallory “M” Oakes
Concept: Possessed Veterinarian
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Sloth

Profession: Doctor
Compact:
Conspiracy:

Intelligence	●●●●	Strength	●●●●●	Presence	●●●●●
Wits	●●●○	Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●○○
Resolve	●●○○○	Stamina	●●○○○	Composure	●●●○○

SKILLS	MERITS	HEALTH
<input type="checkbox"/> Academics	●●●○○	Eidetic Memory
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	●●●○○	Encyclopedic
<input type="checkbox"/> Crafts	●●○○○	Knowledge
	Investigation	Holistic Awareness
<input type="checkbox"/> (Autopsy)	●●●●○	Contacts
	Medicine	(Medical Forensics)
<input type="checkbox"/> (Veterinary)	●●●●●	Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Occult	●○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Science	●●●○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics	●○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brawl	●●○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Drive	●○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Stealth	●○○○○	
	Animal Ken	
<input type="checkbox"/> (Regional)	●●●●●	
<input type="checkbox"/> Empathy	●●○○○	Morality 6
<input type="checkbox"/> Persuasion	●○○○○	Size 5
<input type="checkbox"/> Socialize	●○○○○	Speed 9
<input type="checkbox"/> Streetwise	●●○○○	Defense 2
<input type="checkbox"/> Subterfuge	●○○○○	Initiative Mod 5
		Armor

NOTES

Derangements: Vocalization (Morality 6)

Notes: Mallory Oakes suffers from the derangement Vocalization (p. 98, *World of Darkness Rulebook*) and will often talk to herself when in distress and facing an important decision, considering possible courses of action out loud. This derangement becomes more severe when she is under the influence of the Clutter, during which time she takes a -2 penalty to the usual Resolve + Composure roll to avoid thinking aloud.

Audio Prop

Subject appears to be a gray tabby housecat, male, weighting approximately 9.6 pounds. Its fur is clumped and matted with debris. Other than appearing slightly malnourished, the subject is unremarkable. The time of death was estimated to take place around 1 A.M. this morning, approximately five hours ago. There is a wound penetrating the thoracic cavity — according to Bryan, the cat was shot by a CO2 pellet.

Preparing to make the primary incision along the ventral midline of the abdominal cavity...

[Tape stops.]

This is unusual to say the least. I can honestly say I've never seen anything like it. I can't begin to imagine what could have caused this kind of damage. There are no organs present in the abdominal cavity. It's clear from the rest of the body that the cat died recently, but it looks as though ... I don't know how to describe this ... it's as though something has caused this cat to dissolve away from within ... almost like a worm in an apple — healthy on the outside, and rotten on the inside. The stench of necrotic tissue is unbelievable.

There's absolutely no way a CO2 pellet could have caused this kind of internal damage, and I could not begin to guess what did. Bryan said that it was running across a yard when he shot at it, but that's simply not possible! From the look of it, this cat should have been dead weeks ago.

It looks as though the damage may have extended past the diaphragm. I am beginning the dissection of the thoracic cavity...

[Tape stops.]

It bit me! The damn thing bit me! It was dead! How is that possible? I was cutting through the rib cage, when the fucker swiveled its head and latched onto my wrist. I heard its neck crack through the rigor mortis. I jerked my hand away, pulling the thing off the table and onto the floor. It took a nice chunk of my skin with it when I finally got my hand loose. I saw it shuddering and trying to lift itself up off the floor and I was so freaked out I just stomped on its head without thinking about it... FUCK. My hand. I need to make this bleed... clean it out... Where's the goddamn rubbing alcohol?

That's it. I'm done. There's no way in hell I'm completing this autopsy. This thing is going straight to the incinerator.

To listen to the audio prop of Mallory Oaks's autopsy of the cat double click the poster.

Once you start the recording you will not be able to stop it until it reaches the end without closing the pdf.

