

Murder will out, 'tis sure, nor ever fails,
And chiefly when God's honor vengeance needs.
The blood cries out upon your cursed deeds.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*

MURDER WILL OUT

An adventure for Hunter: the Vigil
using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by: Ben Counter

Developed by: Eddy Webb

Edited by: Genevieve Podleski

Layout: matt milberger and Eddy Webb

Art: Craig Grant, Ken Meyer Jr, Travis Ingram, Nick Stakal, Mark Poole, Brian Leblanc, Costas Harritas, Thom Ang

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING
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Introduction

Murder Will Out is a **Hunter: The Vigil** story of murder, madness and corruption. It pits the players' hunters against implacable killers of every stripe, and leads them into the grisly secret that links them all. What at first seems a case of an insane but isolated killer expands to put the players' characters at the mercy of an enemy that lives off violence itself, and can only be defeated by an act that could make the hunters killers on a par with the mass murderers they oppose.

This kit is written as a standalone adventure. It presumes that the players' characters are hunters who are established in the Vigil, understanding that there are other hunter cells out there who can cooperate or conflict in their hunt for supernatural horrors. It should work fine as a chapter in most ongoing chronicles, since it forms a self-contained struggle with a particular villain. This story makes use of slashers – compulsive killers, often with supernatural qualities – as antagonists. Storytellers may find the sourcebook **Slashers** useful, but it is not essential. **Murder Will Out** can be run with just the **World of Darkness** and **Hunter: The Vigil** core books.

Treatment

The story begins when the hunter cell links up with a contact in the police (or, if the Storyteller has access to the **Slasher** sourcebook, the FBI's VASCU unit). This hunter-friendly contact has been following the case of the Calculator, a serial murderer whose killings reflect a mathematical obsession. Frustrated that the police are unable to end the Calculator's killings, he joins up with the cell to intercept his next murder (predicted by a breakthrough in the mathematical code of the killings) and kill the Calculator. The cell is too late to catch the Calculator – he has fled, leaving his victim severely wounded – but clues from the victim's apartment and from the victim herself lead them to a penthouse apartment where the Calculator lives under an assumed identity.

Evidence from the penthouse points to a meeting between killers and their common patron. The meeting is a trap, and another slasher – Sally Duquesne – is waiting there to ambush the hunters. This is the first evidence that the slashers in the city are targeting the hunter cell. Duquesne carries a brochure for the Green Fields Retirement Home, pointing towards the third slasher, Donald Aitcheson.

ABOUT THE STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, we haven't included a lot of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller or an old hand, be sure to read the free SAS Guide, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Here are some of the features available in **Murder Will Out**:

- **Interactive links.** Clicking on anything in green will take you directly to the section referenced, or to an appropriate character sheet or prop. It can also take you to an external website that could be useful.
- **Scenes.** Clicking on a scene name in the scene flowchart or the page number in the scene card will take you to the full write-up of the scene.
- **Bookmarks.** This PDF is fully bookmarked, so you can jump to major sections at any time when the file is open.

The second attack is a psychological one and comes by letter, as each hunter and their contact receives a letter written to turn them against their cellmates. Donald Aitcheson is an invalid who kills through a supernatural ability to know just what buttons to press to turn the target's closest family member or friend against her. He writes letters to a target's closest associate, informing him that the target has done him some terrible wrong, sufficient to turn him to murder. Confronting Aitcheson gives the hunter cell the final link – all the killers were committing their crimes within an area that made sure the bodies were taken to the West Bridge Hospital.

An interlude takes place while the hunters are checking out the hospital. Devon Flaherty, a retired hunter, contacts them and tells them about an operation his old cell mounted against a supernatural creature who inhabited the hospital some years ago. It was living on



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the violent trauma brought in with the assault victims and bodies of murder victims brought into the hospital. Flaherty's cell destroyed the creature, but perhaps it is still there, inhabiting the hospital and using the three killers to bring it more murder victims from which to draw sustenance.

Flaherty's information and the leads from Aitcheson should lead the hunters to the West Bridge hospital, where the story's climax occurs. The demon (indeed inhabiting the hospital) along with the Calculator (waiting there to defend his master) combine to cut the hunters off from one another and kill them one by one. Should the hunters survive this and deal with the Calculator, they also have to deal with the demon itself. The only way to do this is to destroy the fabric of the hospital it inhabits. This is simple enough to do, since they can set fire to the place. They are, however, responsible for the safety of everyone inside, and failing to ensure the place is fully evacuated will result in innocent deaths and should take a severe toll on their minds. Should they fail to destroy the hospital, the demon gains enough sustenance from the murder victims already killed by its pet slashers to built itself a physical form again, whereupon it will terrorize the city once more and provide the antagonist for a future story.

Theme: Murder Most Foul

Murder is more than just a mundane crime. Murder is powerful, changing the world in the way that only the elimination of a human being can. The trauma and violence of murder ripples beyond the immediate family and acquaintances of the slain, and this power is sought and fed upon by the story's villain. Further, the hunters will, likely as not, kill people (probably the slashers themselves) during the course of the story. Even when dealing with an irredeemable villain, killing someone changes the killer, and very rarely for the better. *Hunter* addresses this through its Morality rules, but the players should also take into account the effects that committing murder can have on their characters. Do they see killing a slasher as a victory or as a necessary evil? Do they beat themselves up for not having a different solution? Do they have doubts that they are really that different from the killers they are pursuing? Or do they take a savage joy in meting out justice?

Mood: Mystery and Survival

For much of its length, *Murder Will Out* is an investigation story where the hunters chase clues from one killer to the next. The story also has an element of sustained threat hanging over the hunters: All three of the slashers involved in the story actively hunt them at some point. While parts of the story resemble a detective novel, others resemble a slasher movie, where the goal suddenly becomes survival. Murder is not just something that gets dealt out during the story – the hunters can be the victims, too.

A Chapter in your Chronicle

Murder Will Out is self-contained and can fit into most *Hunter: the Vigil* chronicles easily. It should be set in a city, since it involves multiple serial murderers and a large hospital. It can help lead to the next stage in a chronicle since it involves an alliance with a contact in the police force, who could then put the hunter cell onto leads from other police investigations into corruption in government, other slashers or supernatural events quietly filed away as "unsolved." The nature of the villain – a demonic spirit with the need to feed on violent trauma – could also send the cell trying to discover where the spirit came from and whether there are any more preying on humanity. If you have a chance to run stories before this one, you can seed references to the Calculator's killings prior to the game start. Further, you can even have an established Storyteller character in your chronicle be one of his victims, giving the hunters more of an emotional investment in the first scene.

This story can also serve as an introductory scenario, although in this case the players will need to create hunters who already have knowledge of the Vigil and the existence of other hunters in the same city. In either case, the repercussions of the story can easily be felt in subsequent stories – the West Bridge Hospital has probably been burnt down or demolished, the hunters could be wanted by the police for committing this act, and the hunters themselves could have gained new personal scars which remind them of just how far they were willing to go to pursue the Vigil.

Background and Set-Up

Background

Twelve years ago, Devon Flaherty led a hunter cell called the Clarion Street Sentinels. The cell tracked a demon to the West Street Hospital. This demon lived off negative emotions, particularly the trauma of violence. Its true name, though the cell never learned it, was Askarana-Khul. The cell cornered it in the hospital basement and killed it. Only Askarana-Khul's physical form was destroyed, however, and the demon lived on in a much-weakened form that possessed the fabric of the hospital building itself.

Fast-forward a few years. Askarana-Khul wants a physical body again. To create one, it needs a whole lot of violently killed corpses. It reaches out to three particularly violent inhabitants of the city – the Calculator, Sally Duquesne, and Donald Aitcheson. The demon promises them powerful boons to aid in their killing, on the condition that they take pains to ensure their victims are found in the area served by the West Bridge Hospital. Askarana-Khul gives the Calculator the knowledge to build a guardian – the Seventh Execution -- to kill any investigators who closed in on him. The demon gives Sally Duquesne the location of a knife steeped in so much blood it thirsts for more and kills more effectively than any mundane blade. And to Aitcheson it gave the names of everyone that fit the criteria to become one of his victims. And so the bodies flow into West Bridge's morgue, slain by three seemingly unconnected killers, and Askarana-Khul becomes almost strong enough to build a new body.

Franklin Kim, a police detective (or, at the Storyteller's option, an agent in the FBI's Vanguard Serial Crime Unit), is working on the string of murders committed by the Calculator. He has seen enough strange crap in his career to know the Calculator isn't just another killer. He believes the only way to stop him is to kill him, and enlists the help of the players' hunter cell to do just that. Kim believes he has cracked the pattern of the Calculator's killings, and the story begins as he and the hunter cell head to the site of the next expected killing – the apartment of Sandra Meyer.

Set-Up

The story should fit hunter cells from all tiers. **Murder Will Out** assumes the hunters' cell has been contacted by Franklin Kim to assist

in hunting and presumably killing the serial murderer known as the Calculator. The story begins with the hunters and Kim driving towards the apartment of the Calculator's next victim, and should require only a few words of exposition, explaining who Kim is and why he's working with the cell.

The scenes presented here assume the hunters are first tier cells, but second and third tier organizations can be accommodated. Second-tier cells are usually based in a particular city and need little extra incentive to stop someone like the Calculator. Both second- and third-tier cells might be spurred into action by the potential supernatural involvement in the Calculator's killings. He appears to be highly intelligent, and perhaps he is creating a magical or numerological pattern. The cell's superiors might hook them up with Detective Kim and put them on the killer's trail, or the cell might take it upon themselves to hunt the bad guy in time-honored hunter fashion. Other alternatives include:

- **Ashwood Abbey** has a new quarry, a supremely intelligent serial murderer known as the Calculator. Kim has been convinced, through bribery or coercion, to be a sort of safari guide as the Abbey cell goes on the trail of the killer.
- The **Null Mysteris** have acquired information from the city's police force about a killer on the verge of uncovering a mathematical secret that could explain countless "supernatural" phenomena. Kim is a member of the Null Mysteris, seeking to find rational explanations for some of the weird things he has seen in his career. The hunters' objective is to kill or capture the Calculator and steal his discovery.
- The **Aegis Kai Doru** would very much like to possess the Seventh Execution (p. 5), said to be created with knowledge passed on to mortals by a demonic force. Through esoteric means (a séance here, Kabbalistic numerology there), they have discovered the Execution is in the possession of a killer known in the press as the Calculator.
- **Task Force: VALKYRIE** has authorized the deployment of a cell in the city to link up with a friendly, Franklin Kim, and terminate the Calculator with extreme prejudice before the panic in the press turns into panic on the streets. Lock and load, soldier.
- The **Lucifuge** has ascertained that the Calculator is a potential scion of Lucifer. The cell is assigned to find him and recruit him – or kill him, if necessary.



MURDER WILL OUT

The Cast

Detective Franklin Kim, Cop Who Saw Too Much



Quotes: "The only thing I know after the shit I've seen is that the world is gonna throw a lot more at me."

"Hi. I'm Detective Kim, and I'd just like to ask you a few questions."

"I'm not going to read you your rights. I'm not going to get you a lawyer. I am going to shoot you in the stomach and watch you bleed until you tell me what I want to know."

Virtue: Justice. Kim joined the force to see the bad guys pay.

Vice: Wrath. When he flies off the handle, Kim doesn't forget he carries a gun.

Background: Franklin Kim doesn't look the kind of guy to have seen it all – compared to all the real vets on the force he's a fresh-faced kid, yet to be turned cynical by all the crap he's going to see on the streets. But he *has* seen it. He was on the taskforce set up to catch the Blacktop Killer, a serial murderer who left his disemboweled victims on the highway out of town like road kill. He never found the killer, but he did sit in on the autopsies where the bite marks and claw wounds were measured, and he knew then there were worse things out there than crazy guys. There were monsters, too. Kim is now investigating the Calculator's string of murders, and he has just cracked the pattern of house numbers and grid references that points him towards the Calculator's next victim.

Franklin Kim is well aware of a danger inherent to his line of work – becoming just as bad as the monsters he hunts. This is a fate he is willing to accept. The Blacktop Killer's rampage convinced him that men like him have to sacrifice everything, perhaps even their own humanity, to stop monsters from preying on the rest of us. Perhaps in killing the Calculator, he will become no better than the Calculator himself. So be it – there will always be a fellow cop or vigilante to take Kim down in turn, and until then he hopes he can take a hell of a lot of bad guys with him.

THE VASCU OPTION

Storytellers who have access to the Slasher sourcebook can make Franklin Kim an agent of the FBI's Vanguard Serial Crimes Unit (Slasher, pp. 56-73). Kim stays much the same in this case, since he's in the mould of a Fed anyway. Kim isn't one of the useful failures who find their way into VASCU – he would have got into the FBI regardless. The Calculator's intelligence got VASCU involved in tracking him down. The story proceeds much the same whether Kim is a cop or a VASCU agent.

Description: Franklin Kim is a Korean-American in his thirties, with an approachable, expressive face and a disarming smile. He's a plain-clothes detective, and unless he's holding his badge or his gun, he looks like he works in a bank.

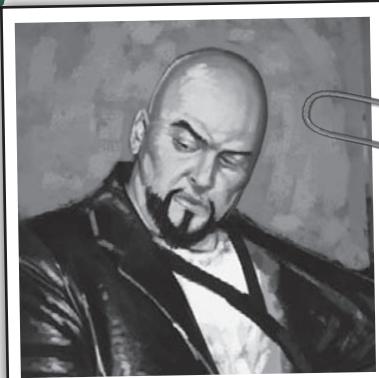
Storytelling Hints: Kim is a cop, so he speaks precisely and with authority and he's pretty good at seeing through bullshit. He's one of the good guys, but he's got a darkness underneath. That can come through when it comes to dealing with the monsters he knows are out there. He has no sympathy with anyone who suggests killing the Calculator isn't the right thing to do. He is still torn up about failing to catch the Blacktop Killer, and will threaten and use violence against anyone he suspects of being or harboring the killer (this will be used against the hunters during the course of the story). When he is angry, Kim becomes cold-blooded and threatening.

The Calculator, Math-Obsessed Killer

Quotes: "Do not be ashamed. I could not expect you to understand."

"I cannot let you go. The equation must be balanced."

"Only in death will you have meaning."





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Virtue: Fortitude. The Calculator will never give up. Ever.

Vice: Greed. The desire to possess secrets of the universe leads him to kill.

Background: The Calculator is obsessed with solving an insanely complex mathematical problem. He believes that solving it will provide him with the ultimate unified theory that explains everything – time, the universe, the meaning of life, God. The only way he can solve this problem is by murdering people selected according to a mathematical pattern, and using the results of the death such as patterns of blood spatter and the position of the body as factors in the solution. He will not stop until he is imprisoned or killed.

The Calculator is highly intelligent and has yet to be caught in spite of several previous slayings. He has murdered a software engineer named Matthew Coyle and is using his identity and apartment – since Coyle was wealthy, having helped create some very successful products, this gives the Calculator considerable resources – and he will continue using this identity until he is stopped.

THE CALCULATOR'S TALLY

- David Reynolds, 28, Caucasian male killed eight months ago. Killed by gunshot wounds to the chest and head in his garage while he worked on his car.
- Agnes Fowler, 59, Caucasian female killed seven months ago. Shot in the head while on her doorstep, apparently answering the door to a caller.
- Amy Garcia, 32, Hispanic female killed four months ago. Killed by an intruder who broke into her apartment. Survived an initial gunshot to the neck, and was subsequently stabbed to death while struggling with her attacker.
- Washington Small, 43, African-American male, and Deborah Small, 41, African-American female killed three months ago. Married couple killed by an intruder who broke into their house. Both killed by multiple gunshot wounds.
- Colleen Maas, 19, Caucasian female killed one month ago. Killed by an intruder who broke into her apartment. Killed by a gunshot wound to the head.

Description: The Calculator is an African-American man of indeterminate age with a large build. Further details are difficult to discern because he wears a black leather mask that covers his entire head with holes for his eyes and mouth. The mask is otherwise unadorned. The Calculator wears tailored suits and carries a hunting knife and automatic handgun.

Storytelling Hints: The Calculator's most remarkable feature is his voice. It is deep and sonorous, almost hypnotic. His tone of voice does not change regardless of the situation, always sounding calm, reasonable and creepy. The Calculator believes that no one else can understand the universal truth he is seeking. He will not try to explain it to attackers or victims, just reassure them that he is right and that their deaths are part of the pattern that ties the universe together. He's so convinced of his superiority that he does not get angry with those who threaten him or disagree. He simply writes them off as another one of the ignorant masses before stabbing them or shooting them in the head.

The Calculator's crimes are known through the press, which gave him his nickname (his real name is unknown and is not revealed in the story). He has killed seven people so far, including Matthew Coyle. The police have suppressed most of the details, but the press and public know that he scrawls mathematical formulae on the walls of his crime scenes, and that he tends to kill with a gunshot to the victim's head.

The Seventh Execution, Demonic Killing Machine

Quote: [Metallic claws skittering across the ceiling]

Virtue: Fortitude. The Execution will fulfill its orders to the last.

Vice: Lust. The Execution likes killing people.

Background/Description: Askarana-Khul's gift to the Calculator is the Seventh Execution, a creature assembled from the heads of executed men on a metal frame resembling a steel spider. The heads are not from the Calculator's victims; they are from executed Chinese criminals, bought over the Internet using Coyle's money. The heads are in early stages of decay and have recognizably Asian features.

Storytelling Hints: The Seventh Execution is not intelligent and does not speak. It is programmed to kill anyone who enters the Matthew Coyle's apartment other than the Calculator himself.

Sally Duquesne, Vengeful Slasher



Quote: "Where is Karen Jublonsky?"

Virtue: Hope. Duquesne knows that no matter what, one day she will find Karen Jublonsky...

Vice: Wrath. ...and she will kill until she finds her.

Background: Sally Duquesne was a middle school teacher much-loved by her pupils, who saw her as a friendly, motherly figure to whom they could always turn. When

one of her students, Karen Jublonsky, disappeared, the effect on Duquesne was profound. She joined in all the community's efforts to find the missing girl, and her sense of responsibility towards her students drove her to continue looking even after everyone else had given up hope.

The police investigated a local small-time criminal over claims he was involved in a botched kidnap plot. He didn't talk, but word reached Duquesne that the cops, at least, thought he knew something. She lay in wait for him one night and ambushed him as he put his pet cat out for the night. She asked him "Where is Karen Jublonsky?" When he told her to go to hell, she beat him to death with a ceramic plant holder. And it felt good.

Sally Duquesne's search for the girl has devolved into an endless pattern of murder. Her victims are selected mostly at random as she drifts from place to place. She picks someone who looks out of place or no-good, asks them were Karen is and kills them when they can't tell her. In what is left of her mind, she reasons that sooner or later she'll get an answer. In truth, Karen died when she fell into a river and her body was swept out to sea. Sally Duquesne will never get her answer, and so she will never stop killing.

Description: Sally Duquesne was a large woman before. Now she is much bigger, almost clearing seven feet even though her posture is hunched. Very few have seen her face through her lank hair – it is swollen and brutal, with her eyes tiny black pinpricks. She dresses

like a homeless woman (which, effectively, she is) and reeks of dried blood and old sweat. She does not speak except to ask, "Where is Karen Jublonsky?" They are the last words her victims ever hear. She used to kill with anything that came to hand. Now she uses an ornate kukri, a type of fighting knife with a broad blade that bends forwards near the handle, and she never bothers to clean the blood off it when she is done.

Storytelling Hints: Sally Duquesne is an inhumanly resilient, relentless killer. She will kill until she herself is killed.

Askarana-Khul, Demonic Spirit

Quotes: "What am I? You cannot imagine what I am. It will drive you mad to look upon what I become."

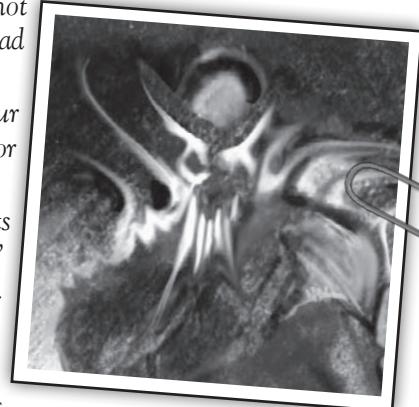
"What solace can there be in your world of sin? What victory, except for mine?"

"Good... good... cut it up, rip its skin... oh, the taste, the taste of it..."

Virtue: Prudence. Askarana-Khul is very patient, and can wait to reap his reward.

Vice: Greed. But he always wants, always needs pain.

Background: No one has ever been sure quite what Askarana-Khul is, save that it is a demon. It may be a demon in the true Judeo-Christian sense, an outcast from Heaven seeking a way out of Hell. It could be a natural phenomenon, congealed from a primordial soup of malice and pain. Perhaps it is an alien from another dimension. For hunters who encounter it, "demon" will usually suffice. Askarana-Khul craves the energy of violent trauma on the body of an assault or (even better) murder victim, which is both essential for his survival and highly pleasing for him to consume. Its supernatural powers include being able to sense violence when it occurs and telepathically contacting humans who interest it (such as the story's three slasher, and perhaps the hunters). Askarana-Khul is experienced in manipulating people and considers human lives worthless unless they can end in a way that brings it sustenance.



NEW DREAD POWER: INHABIT (• - ••••)

Effect: The Inhabit Dread Power represents a monster's ability to manipulate the location to which it is tied. The monster must be tied to a location for the power to work.

Dice Pool: Power + Resistance + Inhabit (or Intelligence + Crafts + Inhabit for manifested monsters)

Dramatic Failure: The monster is unable to use Inhabit for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: No aspects of the location are manipulated.

Success: Each success rolled allows one normal, working aspect of the location to be manipulated. Examples include opening or closing all of the doors in a building, turning all the lights on or off, activating all of the fire alarms or sprinklers, using climate control to raise or lower a building's temperature or throttling the phone lines or Internet connections.

Exceptional Success: No effect beyond additional successes.

Dice Pool Modifiers: The location is suffering significant damage (such as being on fire or during an earthquake, -3)

Description: Askarana-Khul's physical form resembles a vaguely humanoid mass of swarming filth eight feet tall. This seething foulness is hideous, mutable and very strong. The Clarion Street Sentinels "killed" it with the use of a jerrybuilt flamethrower, and flame is just about the only way to destroy its physical form. Without this body Askarana-Khul has no physical presence, and can interact with the world only through manipulating the building it inhabits, and communicating through telepathy. During **Murder Will Out** Askarana-Khul is encountered only in its non-physical form.

Storyteller Hints: Askarana-Khul is a being of evil and corruption, and any right-thinking human would recoil in horror that such a thing could even exist. Its speech, transmitted right into the mind

of his target, is booming and authoritative and should emphasize the being's certainty of its own superiority – as far as it is concerned it is the only entity in all existence that counts and it becomes enraged at anyone who defies it.

Sandra Meyer, Victim

Quote: "Oh God, help me... it hurts..."

Background: Sandra Meyer is just another plain Jane Doe. She works in a bagel shop and spends her downtime watching DVDs and phoning her friends from her one-bedroom apartment. She's single right now – guys tend to screw around on her.

Description: Sandra is a slightly overweight woman in her mid-twenties, with curly blonde hair. Her everyday uniform is a pair of sweat pants and a football jersey (courtesy of one of those old boyfriends) that almost comes down to her knees.

Storytelling Hints: Sandra's role in the story is the unenviable one of victim. She is confused, distressed and unlikely to make for a coherent witness while she's in pain. She is in shock during the story's first scene. If she is saved and is able to recover, her evidence, while valuable, is fragmented and vague.

Donald Aitcheson, Literary Murderer

Quote: "What does murder matter in a world where I can go on living?"

Background: Donald Aitcheson has had the mind of a killer since he was a child. The urge to kill was a powerful force, but he resisted it all his life. He fought to stay his hand whenever the impulse rose in him to commit murder.



THE POISON PEN

The Poison Pen is Askarana-Khul's gift to Donald Aitcheson. It is a fine and expensive-looking fountain pen. It is carved from ivory, and (on closer inspection) its tip is made from a tooth, like a shark's tooth, carefully split to create a nib. This pen is enchanted to serve as a weapon of murder. A victim is selected by using the pen to write out his name. The next letter the pen writes is addressed to a loved one of the victim, and describes some revelation that will compel the loved one to kill the victim in a fit of violent passion. It typically describes imaginary infidelities and betrayals. The Poison Pen guides the writer's hand imperceptibly as long as the writer continues to focus mentally on the intended victim.

The recipient of a Poison Pen letter must make a Composure + Resolve roll opposed by the writer's Intelligence + Expression (6 dice in Aitcheson's case). If the writer exceeds the recipient's successes, the target will attempt to murder the victim. Using the pen to murder in this way is pre-meditated murder, a Morality 3 sin.

During Murder Will Out, the players decide how their characters react to receiving a Poison Pen letter rather than making rolls - these rules are intended for use by hunters who keep the pen and use it themselves.

When he reached old age, he was relieved. He would die soon, and the urges would be gone. He was looking forward to dying, having succeeded in conquering his dark side. But everyone conspired to keep him alive. Nurses treated him. Health visitors made sure he was comfortable. Even his family, from whom he had always distanced himself, was in on it, insisting on paying for his care. He was put in Green Fields Retirement home where kindly men and women devoted themselves to extending his life. Aitcheson grew angry with them.

How could they keep a monster like him alive? How could they force him to live with these killer urges?

Eventually the resentment grew so much he had to do something to quell the desire to kill. He couldn't kill himself, because that would be giving up. Instead he decided to murder all those who had helped keep him alive, because it was their fault he was compelled to kill. Donald Aitcheson sees no irony in this at all.

Aitcheson began killing by writing letters tailored to turn his victims' loved ones violent. He sent such a letter to a nurse's husband telling him that she had been unfaithful. The husband snapped and shot her in her sleep. Askarana-Khul fed on the body of the nurse when it was taken to West Bridge Hospital. Seeing an opportunity to bring more violently killed bodies into the morgue, it contacted Aitcheson and granted him a gift, a fountain pen which would not only write letters supernaturally tailored to incite acts of violence, but could write out a list of all those indirectly involved in keeping Aitcheson alive. Aitcheson has killed several people using the demon's gifts, taking care to start with victims not directly linked with him.

While Aitcheson wants to kill those who have helped him in the past, he does not harbor such homicidal tendencies towards Askarana-Khul or his fellow slashers. This is because these people, he is certain, have no real altruistic feelings towards him and they only care about his survival if it benefits them. He is therefore confident that once he is done murdering all those who have kept him alive, the demon and its slashers will happily let him die.

Description: Donald Aitcheson is in his eighties, and he is confined to a wheelchair. He sometimes has to wear an oxygen mask to breathe, and he requires the round-the-clock care that Green Fields gives him. In spite of his age and poor health, he is as quick-witted as he ever was, and his watery blue eyes are far more perceptive than anyone expects.

Storyteller Hints: Aitcheson is a highly intelligent, impeccably polite man who bears no ill will to anyone, save those responsible for his survival. Even intruders into his home will be offered refreshments and conversation. He can speak lucidly and reasonably of his motives in killing and is courteously dismissive of anyone who suggests he is insane.

SLASHER UNDERTAKINGS

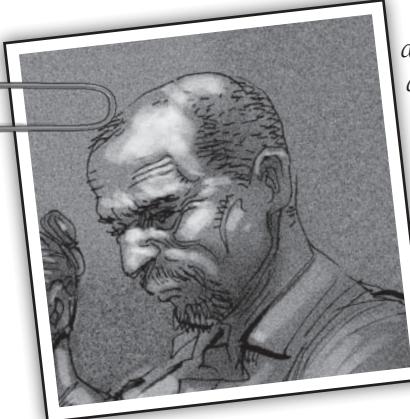
Storytellers with access to the Slasher sourcebook can use the rules in that book to supplement the basics given here, in particular the rules for Undertakings.

The Calculator is a Freak (Slasher, pp. 112-114). The unusual nature of his intelligence has made him feel apart from humanity and caused him to lose any empathy for other people. He has the Revulsion talent option (p. 114), while the Deformity weakness applies to him because of the sense of wrongness that accompanies any dealings with him.

Sally Duquesne is a Legend (Slasher, pp. 97-99). Her Strength in the Story comes into play against someone who does not answer her questions, since that confirms his guilt in her mind, while her Trapped in the Story rule is covered by her inability to attack anyone who convincingly answers her (for a while, at least).

Donald Aitcheson is a Maniac (Slasher, pp. 121-123), and both the Compelling Madness and Obvious Lunatic special rules fit him to a T.

Devon Flaherty, Retired Hunter



Quote: *"You want advice? Give up and move away. That's my fucking advice."*

Background: Flaherty was the leader of the Clarion Street Sentinels, a hunter cell that claimed the scalps of many of the city's nastiest inhabitants during the five years or so they were active. That was almost twenty years ago. Now Flaherty is a hermit, an ex-hunter who has lost contact

with his cellmates and keeps only loose tabs on the world of the Vigil. The destruction of the demon Askarana-Khul pushed the cell off the streets, and they eventually went their separate ways. Flaherty was left bitter and cynical about the Vigil by the cell's demise. He wonders if there is any point in fighting the predators who have the resources, the powers and maybe even the numbers to defeat the city's hunters time and time again.

Description: Once built like a middleweight boxer, Flaherty is now doughy and indolent. He rarely shaves and his thinning brown hair needs cutting. Flaherty is in his fifties and looks like he carries every one of those years on his shoulders.

Storyteller Hints: Devon Flaherty is emblematic of the realities facing a hunter – eventually they'll either die on the hunt or give up the Vigil. Flaherty's cynicism should counterpoint any enthusiasm or earnestness among the hunters. He's quick to put down any newbies with a reminder of just how long it is since he started carrying the candle. Flaherty is, however, an important source of information about Askarana-Khul.

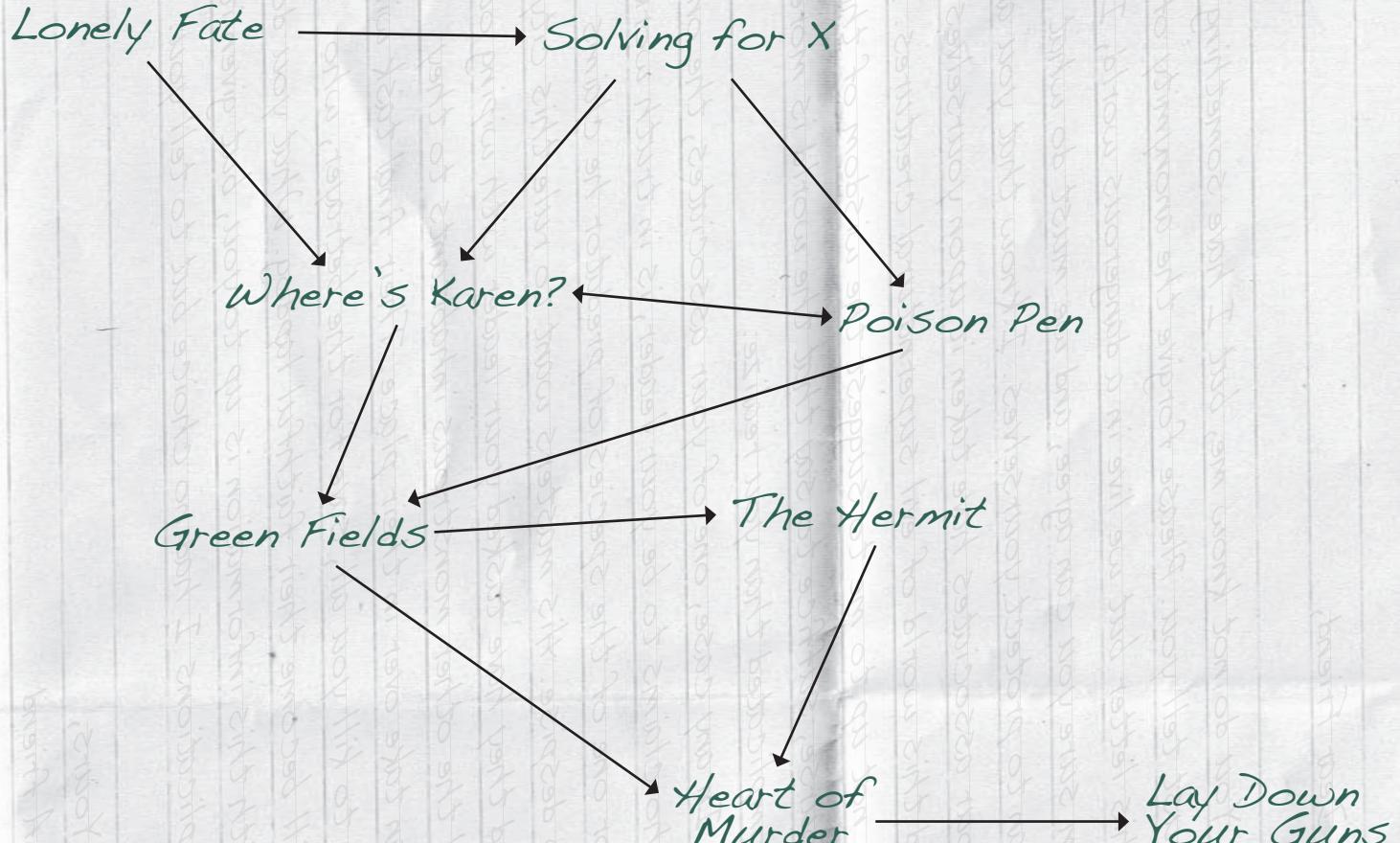
Scenes

The scenes in *Murder Will Out* follow a fairly linear path; in order to follow this trail, the hunters need to find specific pieces of evidence. The Storyteller should make sure the characters find the jacket left by the Calculator at Sandra Meyer's apartment, the letter from Aitcheson at the Calculator's penthouse, the brochure carried by Sally Duquesne and the map on the wall in Aitcheson's apartment at the Green Fields Retirement Home. If need be, Franklin Kim can find these pieces of information and pass them along to the cell. Other information, such as Askarana-Khul's real name, is optional but useful to the hunters, and requires some additional effort to uncover.

Two scenes take place outside the linear progression. The first is "Where's Karen?" Aitcheson tries to lure the hunters to a fake meeting so Duquesne can ambush them, but if they don't go Duquesne attacks at some other time. The second is "Poison Pen," which can happen any time after the hunters visit the Calculator's penthouse. You can have a letter reach Kim or one of the hunters when the players assume their characters are safe, plunging them back into the conflict.

MURDER WILL OUT

SCENE FLOWCHART



SCENE FLOWCHART



The Lonely Fate of Sandra Meyer

Mental •• Physical - Social ••

Overview

The hunters and Kim arrive at the apartment of Sandra Meyer, the next victim of the Calculator according to the formula cracked by Kim. They are too late – the Calculator has fled and Sandra Meyer is severely wounded, and will die unless the hunters can intervene. The hunters find a clue, a bespoke jacket left behind by the Calculator, which will lead them to his penthouse in “Solving for X.”

Description

The sun has just set. You are packed into an unmarked van by Detective Franklin Kim, who starts to drive you to the scene. One of the guys at the precinct has worked out the mathematical formula that the Calculator had written on the walls of his crime scenes. It indicates a map reference and house number, which corresponds to an apartment rented by Sandra Meyer. Only Kim knows the location of the Calculator’s next victim, and intends to kill him with your help, rather than risk the vagaries of the legal system and see the freak walk free.

The hunters have a few minutes to talk with Kim and learn what he knows about the Calculator. The characters likely know some basics about the Calculator from the press, and now is a good time for the Storyteller to have them “remember” it. Kim has not informed Sandra Meyer that she is a potential target – he wants to make sure she’s home so the Calculator will strike. His intention is to wait outside the apartment, or perhaps inside with Meyer, to ambush the Calculator.

The apartment block is new but dismal, made of brick and concrete and lit unappealingly with fluorescents. The rent is low and people don’t tend to speak to one another on the stairs. Sandra Meyer’s apartment is number twelve, on the third floor. Kim ignores the elevators and starts to run up the stairs, two at a time. The door to number twelve is shut but the lock has been forced from the outside. “Damn. We’re too late,” says Kim.

The apartment has been completely rearranged. Furniture has been overturned and pulled into a rough square in the center of the living room.

The apartment window is open and the night billows the curtains and ruffles the pages of the books fallen from an overturned bookcase. The walls of the living room and the kitchen are covered in scrawled algebra and numbers in black marker, so cramped and intense that the formulae are barely legible. Inside the square of furniture lies a young woman in her twenties. She is spread-eagled on her back and has a spreading bloodstain on her abdomen. She is breathing shallowly and her skin is ghastly white. Blood pools on the carpet around her.

The unfortunate woman is Sandra Meyer, and she is dying from a gunshot to the stomach. Without immediate medical help, she will die in a few minutes before paramedics can arrive. A cursory check of the apartment will reveal the jacket from a fine suit hanging on the back of a chair in the kitchen. If the hunters don’t spot it, Kim will. It is a bespoke suit with the label of the tailor, SF Leopold and Sons.

The hunters have the option of calling paramedics, although they will not be able to save Sandra unless the hunters have already administered first aid successfully. The paramedics will be alarmed and excited to be present at one of the Calculator’s crime scenes. Kim, with his police credentials, will vouch for the hunters, claiming they are plain-clothes detectives, and inform the paramedics that this is an ongoing investigation and they are to keep what they have seen at the apartment a secret. The paramedics will then take Sandra (or her body) to West Bridge Hospital. Kim will not permit the hunters to call more police, since he’s going to have a hard time explaining why he and the hunters are there at all. If the police do arrive, Kim will say he was answering a 911 call from Sandra Meyer, and until this can be checked with the call handlers this explanation will be believed.

Storyteller Goals

To start the story with some drama, and set up the Calculator as a villain. To provide an important clue to the hunters that will put them on Calculator’s trail. To provide an unexpected form of conflict – while they may have been expecting combat with a serial killer, instead they are confronted with a dying innocent who needs their help to survive.

Character Goals

To save Sandra and to uncover clues about the Calculator’s identity and whereabouts.

Actions

The two most important actions here are helping Sandra and investigating the jacket left by the Calculator by contacting SF Leopold and Sons. Particularly academic characters can investigate the equations written on the walls.

Giving Sandra First Aid

Dice Pool: Dexterity or Intelligence + Medicine

Action: Extended; each roll represents one minute of work

Hindrances: Improvised medical implements (-1)

Help: Medical kit (+1), military trauma kit (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Sandra dies as the hunter is treating her.

Failure: Sandra survives for a few minutes but expires before the paramedics (if they are called) arrive.

Success: Sandra is stabilized and is able to talk for a few minutes. She can describe how she was watching TV when the door to her apartment burst open and a tall, muscular man in a suit and tie walked in. He was wearing what Sandra describes as a “bondage mask.” While she could not see his face, the skin on his hands was dark brown. He had a silenced gun in his hand and shot her in the stomach before she could even scream. Sandra is only dimly aware of her apartment being rearranged and of the killer being there for some time while she slipped in and out of consciousness. She doesn’t know when he left or where he went. She thinks he was about to finish her off, probably with a shot to the head – maybe the approach of the hunters scared him off before he could execute her.

Exceptional Success: Sandra is stabilized and can talk lucidly until the paramedics arrive. This is mostly the same as “Success” above, but Sandra is a lot more comfortable and is composed enough to thank the hunters for saving her.

Calling About The Jacket

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Hunter sounds or looks like trouble (-1)

Help: Police credentials (+3), private investigator or press credentials (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character contacts SF Leopold and Sons, but Mr. Leopold doesn’t believe the character has any business asking after his customers and will not cooperate with anyone who asks after the same jacket except for Kim, who has genuine police credentials. Kim visits the tailor after this scene and finds out the information in “Success,” below.

Failure: Mr. Leopold doesn’t divulge any information about his customer, but another character can try again. If none of the hunters succeed, Kim can get the information as above.

Success: Mr. Leopold is satisfied that the characters have given him a reasonable explanation as to why he should tell them about the man who ordered the bespoke jacket from him. Given the jacket’s large size and fine specifications, he can tell them that he made it as part of a very expensive suit for a “colored gentleman” named Matthew Coyle. Mr. Leopold remembers Coyle as a pleasant and courteous man who gave the impression of having done very well for himself. Mr. Leopold can give a description of Coyle as a tall, well-built black man but remembers little more about his appearance. Mr. Leopold has Coyle’s address on file, a swanky penthouse in one of the better parts of town.

Exceptional Success: As “Success” above, but Mr. Leopold believes the hunter is a fine upstanding member of society and is willing to give them an excellent deal on one of his suits.

Investigating the Numbers

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics

Action: Extended. Five successes are required. Each roll takes ten minutes.

Hindrances: Poor lighting (-1), apartment is full of paramedics and crime scene guys (-1)

Help: Portable computer or smartphone (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is unable to decipher the cramped handwriting and gives up trying to understand it.

Failure: The math is too complex for the character to grasp.

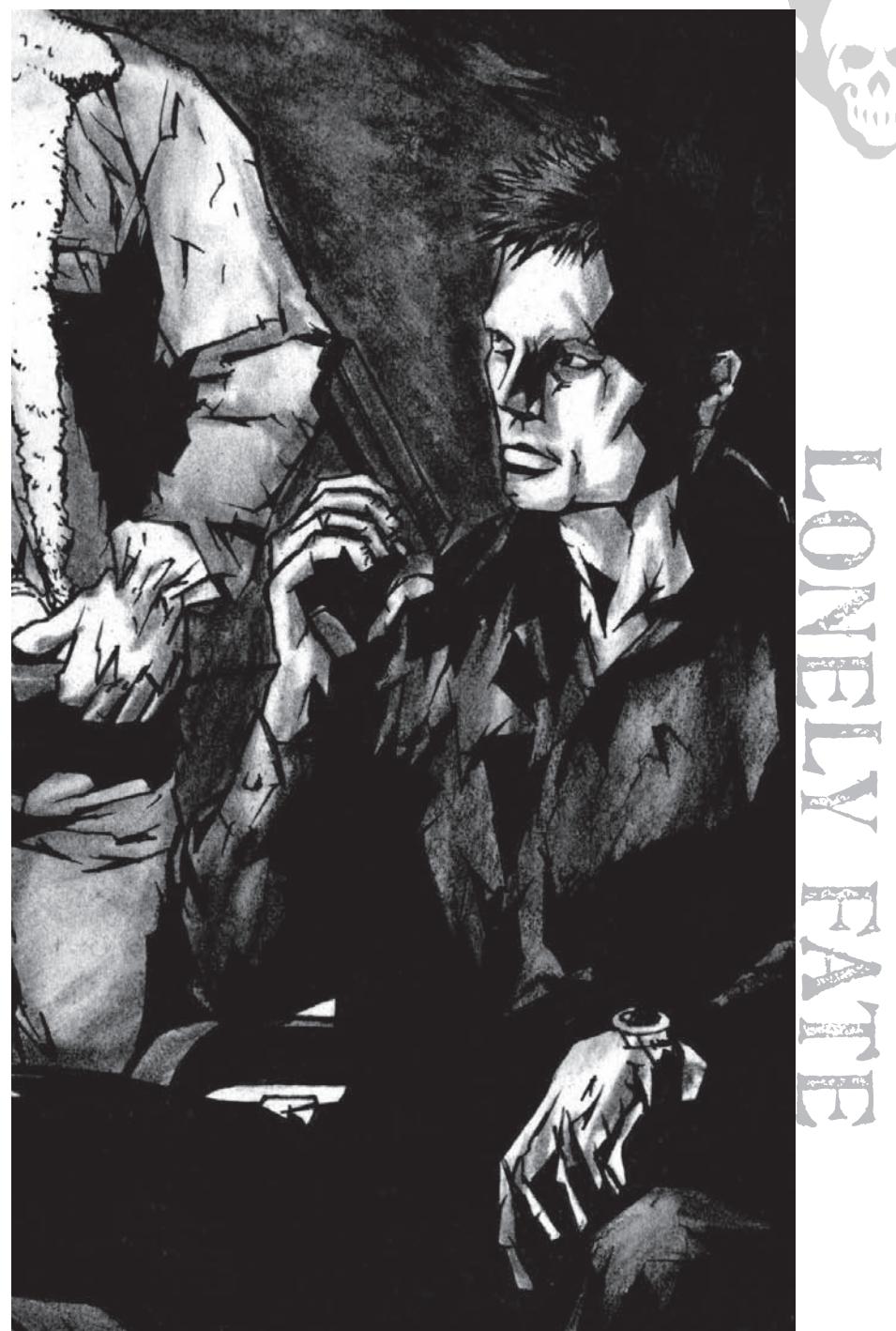
Success: The character gets the impression that the circumstances of the apartment, such as the arrangement of the furniture and even the blood spatters from Sandra’s bullet wound, are used as factors in a supremely complex mathematical equation.



Exceptional Success: As “Success” above, and the character sees a pattern in the mathematics that, though incomplete, indicates a gradually reducing sequence that will eventually give a single number. The character is exposed to the Calculator’s uncanny intelligence and understands that the Calculator is looking for a solution to a mathematical problem involving the entire world – a universal theory that explains everything. Most disturbing of all, the character realizes the Calculator might actually be on to something.

Consequences

The crucial information is acquired from the jacket whatever result the hunters get while investigating it – if they fail (or miss the significance of the jacket entirely), the information is found by Detective Kim and passed on to the cell. Regardless, the hunters and Kim will likely follow up on their next lead, which goes to the scene “Solving for X.” If for some reason the character can’t or won’t go to Coyle’s apartment, you can have them attacked by Duquesne – in that case, move to “Where’s Karen?”



Solving for X

Mental :: Physical :::: Social -

Overview

The hunters investigate Matthew Coyle's apartment, probably in the belief that he is the Calculator. There they are set upon by the Seventh Execution. After dealing with it they find a letter sent to the Calculator by Donald Aitcheson hinting at a mutual patron who supports several slashers in the city, and suggesting a meeting in an underground parking garage. They also have the chance to discover the body of the real Matthew Coyle, and various details further suggesting the Calculator's madness.

Description

Matthew Coyle's apartment is the penthouse in an upscale area. Plenty of coffee shops and specialist delis dot the streets nearby. The streets themselves seem clean and safe, especially compared to Sandra Meyer's neighborhood.

Stanley, the elderly building manager, is on duty behind his desk in the entrance hall. Not recognizing the characters, he will ask what they want. If Kim is with the hunters, he can flash a badge and get past Stanley without too much trouble – other characters need to talk their way past Stanley or overpower him. Asking other residents of the block or Stanley himself reveals that Coyle is a white man pushing forty but not bad-looking, who wears really nice suits and is a nice-seeming guy who does very well for himself doing something to do with computers. If the hunters have a description of the Calculator from Sandra Meyer, Coyle definitely does not fit it. Stanley remembers a “business associate” of Coyle’s, a heavy-set black man, visiting him regularly.

No one answers the door or the intercom in Coyle’s apartment. The door is locked and sturdy, but kicking it in or picking the lock isn’t too difficult for a determined hunter. The Seventh Execution is waiting for intruders here, and is crouching on the ceiling waiting to drop.

The apartment has a large living area with adjoining kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom and a utility room with a washing machine, freezer and dryer. It is large and well-appointed, with a big screen TV, black leather furniture, a state of the art sound system, a high-spec personal computer and various other yuppie conveniences. The kitchen has granite

work surfaces and the bathroom has under-floor heating. It is very neat and clean.

On a coffee table in the living area are several hardback notebooks, which are full of equations in the Calculator’s cramped handwriting. Between the pages of one notebook are the plans for the Seventh Execution (half blueprint, half occult ritual), requiring the heads of seven executed men to construct. In the utility room, crammed into the chest freezer, is the body of Matthew Coyle. He has been shot in the head and stripped naked.

Aitcheson’s letter lies on the kitchen work surface in its envelope. The letter is written in neat handwriting on decorative notepaper. The envelope is addressed to Matthew Coyle, but it has no postmark.

Storyteller Goals

To give the hunters a taste of sudden, nasty combat, and to introduce a powerful supernatural horror element in the shape of the Seventh Execution. To pass on the important clue of Aitcheson’s letter. To give the hunters an insight into the methods and mindset of the Calculator.

Character Goals

To survive and to destroy the threat of the Seventh Execution. To recover evidence about the Calculator.

Actions

Fighting the Seventh Execution

The Seventh Execution does not stop until the attackers are dead (in which case it resumes its post on the ceiling) or it is destroyed. If non-silenced gunshots are fired, someone else in the block will hear and the police will arrive in a few minutes. The hunters and Kim should have enough time to deal with the Execution and grab the letter from Aitcheson before the police show up.

Examining the Body

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine

Action: Extended. 4 successes are required, and each roll takes ten minutes.

Hindrances: None.

Help: Surgical implements (+1), morgue or coroner’s equipment (+3)



MURDER WILL OUT

MURDER WILL OUT



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to learn anything about the body or how it was killed, and leaves a fingerprint or other evidence that could lead the police to his doorstep.

Failure: The character fails to learn anything, although the body has a bullet wound in the back of the head, which is a pretty good bet for the cause of death.

Success: The body was not bound or wounded prior to death, so he could have been killed either by someone he knew or was taken by complete surprise. Scorched skin around the wound suggests he was shot at very close range. Other than the bullet wound, he was in good health and evidently worked out regularly. The time of death is impossible to guess owing to the body being frozen, but freezing a human body solid takes at least several days.

Exceptional Success: The hunter learns everything in “Success” above, and if he has seen the bullet wound suffered by Sandra Meyer or in crime scene photos from the Calculator’s previous slayings, he realizes that the calibers were similar and the wounds could have been inflicted by a similar firearm.

Researching Matthew Coyle

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation or Computer

Action: Extended. Four successes are required, and each roll takes thirty minutes.

Calling around, asking questions and doing some record searching can turn up information on who Matthew Coyle was.

Hindrances: The authorities are suspicious of the character (-2)

Help: Police credentials (+3), private investigator or press credentials (+1), asking appropriate contacts for help (+ dots in Contacts or Professional Training)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to learn anything about Matthew Coyle. In addition, he leaves some evidence of his interest in Coyle that may come back to haunt him should the police find Coyle’s body.

Failure: The character learns nothing.

Success: The character learns that Matthew Coyle is a wealthy software engineer who designed a key component of one of the country’s most popular applications. His last project ended three months ago and

he has been taking time off since then. Communication with him in that time has been sparse, and no one seems to have seen him. The character also acquires a photograph of Coyle from a software conference some years ago, and he is clearly the same man whose body is in his freezer (and definitely not the Calculator, if they have Sandra Meyer’s description).

Exceptional Success: The character learns everything in “Success” above, and ascertains that the last time anyone can be certain of seeing or speaking to Matthew Coyle alive was just over two months ago. Since then he has not been seen, and the only communication with him has been the occasional email.

Examining the Seventh Execution

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult

Action: Extended. Five successes are required and each roll takes one hour.

Hindrances: Seventh Execution is completely destroyed (-1)

Help: The original plans from the Calculator’s journals (+2), occult library (+2)

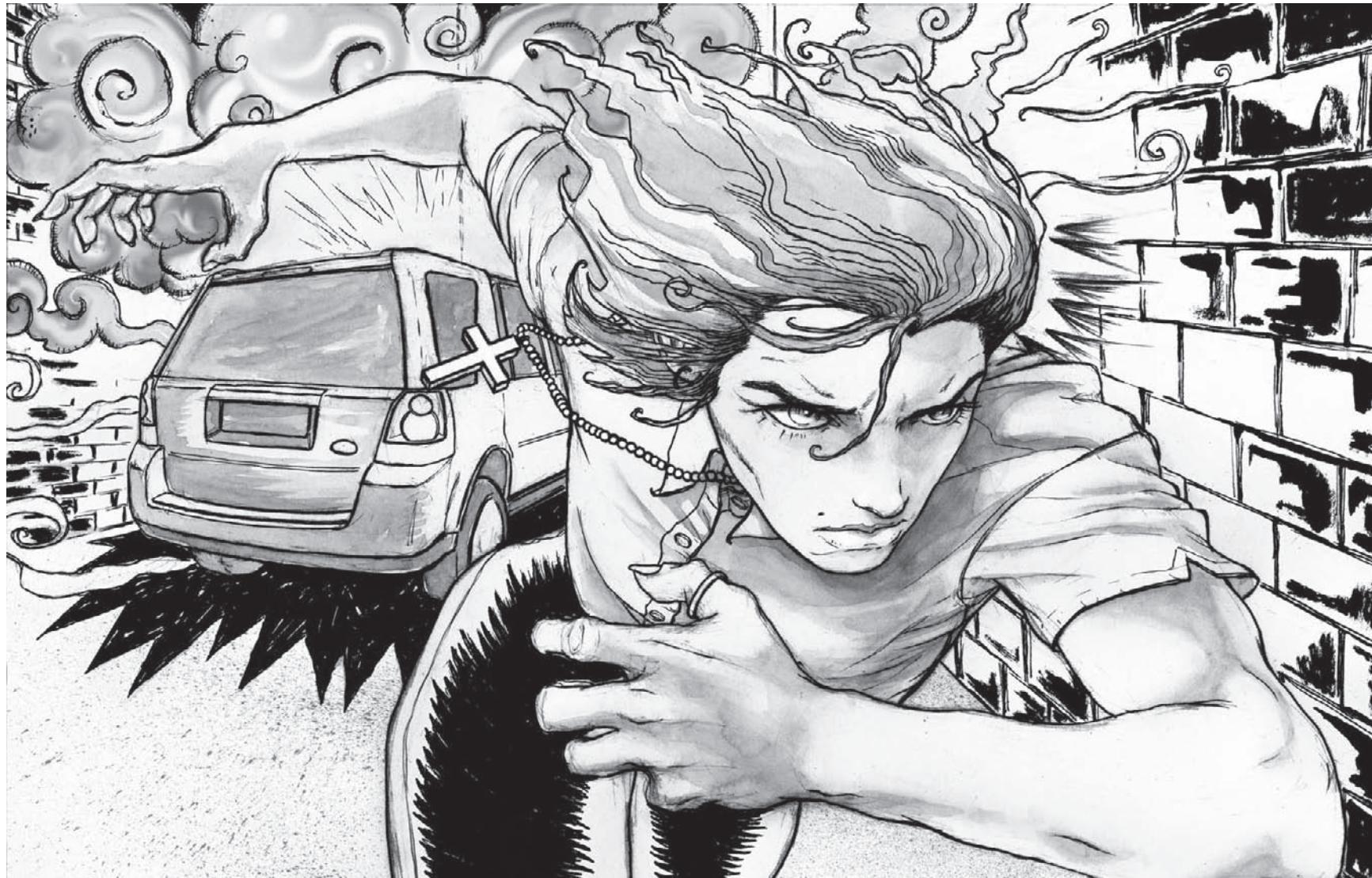
Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to learn anything. Askarana-Khul is aware of his fumbled attempt to discover the nature of the Seventh Execution, and will single him out for death during the showdown at the West Bridge Hospital in (“Lay Down Your Guns”).

Failure: The character learns nothing.

Success: The character learns that the Seventh Execution is a supernatural guardian gifted to followers of a particularly powerful and loathsome demon. This entity is referred to primarily as the Suckler Upon Torments, but is also euphemistically called the Most Merciful Guide. The character could, if he wished, create his own Seventh Execution, although he needs to get hold of the heads of seven executed men first.

Exceptional Success: The character learns everything in “Success” above, and also discovers alternative names for the Suckler Upon Torments: The Mocking Prince, the Daughter of Murder, and Askarana-Khul (although the character does not know that Askarana-Khul is the demon’s true name).



Consequences

The address mentioned in the letter is easily found with a quick computer or local map search, and Kim is also familiar with the location. Checking out the area leads to “Where’s Karen?” If the characters don’t choose to fall into the trap set by the letter, Duquesne can still attack them, perhaps while they are doing research or the like. In that case, continue on to “Where’s Karen?” but change the location of the attack (as mentioned in the sidebar of that scene).

A day or two after this scene, letters start arriving from Aitcheson, which leads to “Poison Pen.”

Where's Karen?

Mental - Physical •••• Social •

Overview

Aitcheson's letter to the Calculator is a trap, intended to send anyone investigating the Calculator to a fake meeting where they would be killed by Aitcheson's fellow slasher, Sally Duquesne. Whether the hunters fall into the trap or not, Duquesne is on their trail and attacks without mercy.

Description

The multi-story parking garage is a particularly desolate piece of urban wasteland, with a few cars parked in an ugly mass of layered concrete. Crude graffiti covers the walls, trash and debris lie in dark piles in the corners and the place smells of stale urine. Florescent strip lights that glow a sickly yellow through layers of cobwebs and dirt light the garage. It has public restrooms and vending machines for drinks and snacks, but these have all been vandalized beyond use. There doesn't appear to be anyone else here.

When Duquesne attacks, she follows the same pattern she has with all her victims. First, she tries to catch them on their own (although if the hunters stay together religiously, she will make her move on all of them at once). She creeps up on them if possible, and then asks a single question: "Where is Karen Jublonsky?" If the victim claims to know the answer, Duquesne listens intently until she realizes the hunter bullshitting her, at which point she tries to stab him to death. If he says he doesn't know or just stares at her blankly, she jumps straight to the stabbing. A quick-witted victim can string Duquesne along for several minutes inventing information about the fate of Karen Jublonsky, perhaps long enough for friends to reach her and even the odds. Even though Duquesne has been sent by Aitcheson to kill the hunters, she always asks her question. When additional hunters arrive to aid a lone victim, for instance, she asks the newcomers.

The fight with Sally Duquesne should be startling, vivid and nasty. Hunters caught on their own who choose to run away have taken a sensible option and should have a good chance of succeeding if they roll well during the subsequent foot chase. A chase also evokes the slasher film genre, as an implacable knife-wielding killer pursues a victim.

IT'S A TRAP!

Experienced (or paranoid) hunters might suspect the meeting is a trap and choose not to attend. If this is the case, Sally Duquesne attacks at a different time. This should happen at a time when the hunter feels he is safe, perhaps while carrying out some research tasks from the previous scenes, buying gear or simply relaxing at home checking their e-mail. Duquesne should make her move against an isolated hunter or pair of hunters. The Storyteller will require some improvisation if Duquesne attacks during "downtime," since he will have to come up with details of the location on the fly. The players can help supply this information, however, especially if Duquesne attacks in the hunters' safehouse or a character's home. Most of the information in this scene remains the same, though, regardless of the location of the attack.

Duquesne is carrying an important piece of evidence: a brochure for the Green Fields Retirement Complex. The brochure is creased and stained but still legible, and is in the pocket of her stained and unwashed coat. If Duquesne is not killed or captured during this scene, she should leave the brochure behind, either dropping it during a struggle or losing it along with her coat in a foot chase. Again, if Kim is present he can find it instead, but it is better if the hunters themselves make this discovery. Green Fields is a home for the elderly, with several bungalow apartments and 24-hour care facilities, and is generally well respected among the city's healthcare community as a well-run and trustworthy place. In the margin of the first page is a note written in very neat handwriting: "Thank you for your visit, dear girl. Do come again! Yrs, Donald A."

Another consequence of the fight with Sally Duquesne is that hunters might come into possession of Duquesne's kukri. This is a dangerous weapon and can prove extremely valuable when the story turns to combat, but it is also highly dangerous to a hunter's mental state. Using it, like everything else in a story, should have its consequences. Using the kukri can rapidly erode a person's Morality and eventually



turn them into a remorseless killer – a slasher in their own right. See Sally Dequesne's sheet for information on how this works.

Storyteller Goals

To create a brutal combat in true slasher movie style. To reinforce the slasher theme of the story. To pass on the crucial clue of the Green Fields brochure.

Character Goals

To survive Sally Duquesne's attack, and to recover evidence about her connection with the Calculator and their patron.

Actions

Bullshitting Duquesne

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. Composure + Subterfuge (chance die for Duquesne)

Action: Instant

Hindrances: None

Help: Fabricated evidence to back up the story (+1 to +3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Duquesne is utterly unconvinced. The character is surprised when Duquesne attacks.

Failure: With a roar of anger, Duquesne attacks the character.

Success: The character strings Duquesne along with a plausible story for a number of rounds equal to the successes rolled by the player. However, the story will eventually fall apart, and at the end of this time, Duquesne attacks.

Exceptional Success: As "Success."

The Chase

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics vs. Stamina + Athletics (7 dice for Duquesne)

Action: Extended and contested. Each turn represents one turn of running. See "Foot Chase," *World of Darkness Rulebook*, pp. 65-66 for more information.

Hindrances: Bad weather if outdoors (-2), debris (-1), poor footwear (-1)

Help: Athletic shoes (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The runner trips and falls, and suffers a point of bashing damage. Duquesne catches up to the hunter and gets an attack before the hunter can respond.

Failure: The runner gains no ground.

Success: The runner gains some ground in the pursuit, pulling away from Duquesne.

Dramatic Success: As "Success."

Researching Karen Jublonsky

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation or Computer

Action: Extended. 5 successes are required, and each roll takes 30 minutes.

Hindrances: Character looks like trouble (-1), character has a criminal record (-2)

Help: Police credentials (+3), private investigator or press credentials (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character not only fails to uncover information on Karen Jublonsky, but the fact he is looking for her raises a flag with the police who are still keeping the missing girl's file open. If the character falls foul of the cops later in the story, he will have to answer a bunch of awkward questions about his interest in her.

Failure: The character uncovers no information.

Success: The character learns that Karen Jublonsky was a 12-year-old girl who went missing from her home three years ago (the Storyteller can decide where this happened, but it should not be in the same city as the story is taking place). Despite extensive searches of the area and the involvement of her entire home community, she was never found. One of those interviewed by the police at the beginning of the investigation, a local hoodlum named Jimmy Thorne, was later found stabbed on his doorstep. The police theorized that someone had found out about his questioning and killed him in an act of vigilantism, although they do not believe that Thorne had anything to do with the girl's disappearance. In a newspaper clipping about the case, the character finds a picture of Sally Duquesne, one of the girl's teachers, and is able to recognize a faint trace of resemblance between the teacher and the hulking slasher.

MURDER WILL OUT WHERE'S KAREN?





Exceptional Success: As “Success” above, but the character also finds a memo from a police detective speculating that the murder of Jimmy Thorne could be linked to subsequent killings in nearby towns, and then spreading out across the state, in which small-time underworld figures were killed with a bladed weapon by an assailant with tremendous strength. No hard evidence exists to confirm such a connection, however, and criminals are killed by one another too frequently for any definite pattern to emerge.

Investigating Sally Duquesne

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Investigation or Computer

Action: Extended. 4 successes are required, and each roll takes 30 minutes.

Hindrances: The authorities are suspicious of the character (-2)

Help: Police credentials (+3), private investigator or press credentials (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character finds some misleading information about the slasher’s identity.

Failure: The character doesn’t find any clues to the slasher’s identity.

Success: The character does not find out the slasher’s identity, but he does find that her fingerprints link her to three murders committed in nearby states. One victim was a convicted armed robber named Marcelano Reyes, who was stabbed to death in his home while out on bail for assault. Another was a prostitute named Debbie Stone, stabbed in an alleyway near the corner she worked. The third is Mark Faustino, a drug dealer stabbed while he waited at a red light in his car. These three murders were committed in different states, and the victims were unconnected except by the fingerprint evidence.

Exceptional Success: As “Success,” but the character also uncovers a police cast of the likely murder weapon in the Stone and Faustino killings, taken from blade marks on their ribs. It is an unusual blade angled forward near the hilt, probably a kukri knife traditional to Nepal.

Consequences

It is possible, given the location of Duquesne’s attack or the subsequent investigations into it, that the characters might have attracted police attention. Kim can provide some cover for their actions, but

his efforts are probably starting to wear thin. The pamphlet from her coat is the strongest lead they have, which points to “Green Fields.” Also, letters from Aitcheson may start arriving at this point, leading to “Poison Pen.”



Poison Pen

Mental • Physical •• Social •••

Overview

Donald Aitcheson, aware that the hunters are closing in on him and his fellow slashers, sends letters to Kim and the hunters intended to turn them against one another. In Kim's case it works – whether the hunters also take the bait is up to their players.

Description

Aitcheson's letters can arrive at any time after the scene "Solving for X," and they do not need to all arrive at the same time. Since this scene takes place outside the linear progression of the story's other scenes, some improvisation will probably be needed as to where it takes place. Donald sends his letters to whatever address will get it into the hands of the victim the quickest. A day or two after "Solving for X," they start arriving. Not all the hunters need to receive a letter, but Kim definitely does.

Aitcheson's letters are in neat, elegant handwriting, but it is not the same as the letter in Coyle's apartment (Aitcheson has had a lot of practice at disguising his handwriting). The letter received by Kim is as follows:

The letters sent to the hunters themselves might require some work on the part of the Storyteller to create. Examples are given which should create suspicion amongst most hunter cells. However, they will be more effective if they are tailored to the individual characters, and involve that character's background or the events of previous stories. For instance, if a character has lost a friend or family member to a supernatural enemy (a common starting point for a hunter's career), Aitcheson's letter could suggest that a cellmate knows more than she is letting on about the killing and is deliberately shielding the killer from the hunter to fulfill some personal agenda. If the cell killed a particularly heinous supernatural foe in a previous story, the letter could state that a cellmate was actually working for another creature of the same kind, and helped manipulate the cell into killing his master's rival. While tailored letters like this require some work from the Storyteller, it does help focus the story more on the hunters themselves. How the hunters react to these letters is up to them – see the sidebar "The Poison Pen" on p. 8 for more information.

Storyteller Goals

To run a conflict very different, but no less dangerous, than the confrontation with Sally Duquesne. To create a sense of paranoia and suspicion among the hunters. To focus the story on the hunters themselves rather than outside forces.

Character Goals

To deal with the suspicions of Kim and their fellow hunters, either through reason and diplomacy or through violence.

Actions

Many different actions could be attempted as a result of this scene, from restraining and interrogating a fellow hunter to going on a cell-wide killing spree. One of the actions stemming from Aitcheson's subtle attack is likely to be calming down a homicidal Detective Kim after he reads the letter sent to him.

Calming Kim

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy vs. Composure + Empathy (5 dice for Kim)

Action: Instant and contested

The letter sent to Kim taps into his hatred of the Blacktop Killer and the shame and anger that he could not catch the murderer. He confronts one of the hunters over this, pulling his gun and threatening to put a bullet in the hunter unless she tells Kim the truth, right now.

Hindrances: Character has used violence against Kim (-3)

Help: Character has saved Kim from harm (+1), character has saved Kim's life (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Kim believes he sees through the hunter's tissue of lies, and in his mind the letter's accusations are confirmed. He immediately tries to kill the hunter.

Failure: Kim is not convinced. Another character may try to calm him down instead. Kim tolerates a couple of failed attempts to calm him down before his nerve breaks and he opens fire.

Success: Kim relents and shows the letter to the hunters. He is still suspicious, but his attention is now turned to who sent the letter and why, rather than confronting the hunters.



Exceptional Success: Kim is calmed and realizes the letter was tailored to turn him against the hunters. He is no longer suspicious of the cell.

Consequences

It is entirely possible that the team will be smaller as a result, whether through the absence of Kim or one of the other player characters. The Storyteller can improvise a scene where the hunters try to acquire any of the team who have left in a paranoid huff. Otherwise, move to whichever scene the next scene would have led to before this one was inserted (“Where’s Karen?” after “Solving for X,” perhaps, or “Green Fields” after “Where’s Karen?”).

Green Fields

Mental • Physical • Social ...

Overview

The hunters check out the Green Fields Retirement Home. There they can encounter Donald Aitcheson, third of the triad of slashers serving Askarana-Khul, and find the link leading to a confrontation with the demon.

Description

The Green Fields Retirement Home is located on the outskirts of the city. It is composed of several single-story buildings each containing four apartments, an administration and reception building which includes some medical facilities and the managers' offices, a staff building with locker rooms and a canteen for the staff, and a small maintenance building with supplies for cleaning, repairs and tending to the grounds. Green Fields lives up to its brochure and is a clean, calm and pleasant place. The grounds, in particular, are neatly kept. When the weather is pleasant, many of the elderly residents spend the day outside.

As you approach the administration building, you notice a number of flowers left by the entrance. The cards left with the flowers indicate they are in the memory of Sharice Evans, a care worker who died a couple of weeks earlier. There is a security guard by the door and a plump, smiling woman sitting at the reception desk.

Asking members of Green Fields staff will reveal that Sharice was killed by her jealous boyfriend, that she was well liked by the staff and residents and that she is missed very much.

The staff at Green Fields includes a duty manager and a security guard at all times. Getting past them is not too difficult but requires some fast-talking or a plausible excuse to avoid raising suspicion. Visitors are required to sign in.

The duty manager at the reception desk when the hunters arrive is Marjorie, who speaks of her elderly charges as if they were her children. While the duty manager's job is not to keep people out, she will become suspicious of someone who is not there to visit a particular resident. Should they raise suspicion, Burt, the security guard, follows the characters at a distance while pretending to make his rounds of the home's grounds.

A quick conversation can confirm that "Donald A." does indeed live at Green Fields – Donald Aitcheson. Hunters inquiring about someone matching the description of Sally Duquesne are told that the "unfortunate woman" visited Green Fields a week ago to see Mr. Aitcheson; Marjorie believes she was a daughter or niece down on her luck, probably hassling Donald for money. Marjorie's opinion of Aitcheson is very positive – he's a kindly, well-spoken and polite old gentleman who, unlike many of the residents, still has all his faculties intact. Questions about any supernatural activity are politely declined.

Hunters who stake out the home eventually see Donald Aitcheson being wheeled out of his apartment to spend an afternoon outside, and they overhear one of the workers say his name. The care workers habitually speak loudly and clearly because so many residents are hard of hearing, so eavesdropping on them isn't difficult.

Aitcheson answers the door to his apartment and invites the hunters in, regardless of their appearance. He will even respond with politeness if they break in. After he offers them tea and biscuits, the characters have a chance to interrogate him. Aitcheson welcomes the chance to speak with others on his intellectual level, and only refuses to answer questions if they are put rudely or aggressively. He has already decided that anyone who visits him unexpectedly must know about his murderous deeds, and is therefore prepared to tell the hunters of what he does and why he does it.

Aitcheson admits to his killings, including that of Sharice Evans, partly because he has nothing to lose from doing so (he does not have much longer to live, and the authorities are unlikely to prosecute someone for writing letters even if evidence could be found), and partly because he enjoys the intellectual challenge of defending his actions. The conversation with Aitcheson should be chilling, with Aitcheson calmly explaining his motives in killing people whose only crime was to care for his well-being. He will not, however, volunteer the nature of the patron mentioned in his letter to the Calculator, and he doesn't know the Calculator's real identity. Information about the patron will have to be drawn out of him by a hunter pretending to be fascinated by the possibilities the patron offers (see *Actions*, p. 24).

Aitcheson's apartment is fastidiously clean. It has a bedroom and a combination living area and kitchen, plus a bathroom with rails and other amenities for the disabled. In the living area is a writing desk with several different kinds of decorative notepaper, as well as some bottles of ink with which Aitcheson writes his letters. Pinned to the wall

AITCHESON'S MURDERS

Aitcheson has killed - or more accurately, caused the killing of - a number of people since he moved to Green Fields some years ago. All these murders appear to be crimes of passion, but the authorities are just starting to make the connection that all the victims were involved in caring for Aitcheson in some way when the hunters arrive on the scene. The letters Aitcheson sends to spark the murders are usually not found, having been burned or thrown away by the killers. The accusations Aitcheson makes in his letters are never true, but they are carefully tailored to be believed by the recipient.

• Wendell Buckridge, ambulance driver, aged 51. Buckridge was shot dead by his best friend, Dave Guzzo, who received a letter accusing Buckridge of having got Guzzo's daughter pregnant. Buckridge often ferried frail residents of Green Fields to hospitals, family gatherings and other events, and was particularly concerned for Aitcheson's welfare given Aitcheson's decrepitude.

• Tammy Simmons, geriatric nurse, aged 29. Killed by her boyfriend Martin Brandt after a letter stating she was about to inform the authorities of his drug dealing. Tammy was kind to Aitcheson when he visited hospital with a lung infection.

• Tom Speight, hospital administrator, aged 49. Killed by his son, Bryan, after a letter stating that Tom Speight was abusing Bryan's sister. Speight helped make sure that Aitcheson's medical insurance went towards his care at Green Fields.

• Michael Fong, hospital janitor, aged 35. Killed by his mother after a letter accusing Fong of having poisoned her late husband twelve years before. Fong cheerfully transported Aitcheson around the hospital while Aitcheson was being treated for an ongoing lung complaint.

• Sharice Evans, Green Fields care worker, aged 33. Killed by her boyfriend, Sam Khane, who ran her over in his car after receiving a letter accusing Sharice of sleeping with his brother. Sharice took pains to make sure Aitcheson was always comfortable at Green Fields.

above the desk is a map of the city with annotations in black marker pen. A large irregular area is circled around the West Bridge Hospital, and within this are several crosses along with dates. These correspond to Aitcheson's recent victims, and the victims of the Calculator. The circled area represents the parts of the city in which a murder victim's body would usually be sent to West Bridge Hospital. The hospital itself is marked with a cross larger than that for any of the killings. This map is a crucial piece of evidence leading to the story's climax at the hospital, and hunters should be aware of its importance.

The hunters have to decide what will become of Donald Aitcheson. Should they choose to kill him, they find that doing so is extremely easy. Aitcheson is incapable of putting up a fight, and smothering him with a pillow only takes a couple of minutes. Should Kim be present, and if he was driven to violence by Aitcheson's letter, he is eager to kill Aitcheson personally. If the cell leaves Aitcheson as he is, he continues writing letters that get people killed. If the hunters

set the authorities onto him, the police investigate him but are unable to find any concrete link between him and the murders – even if he confesses, a lack of evidence to back up what he says causes them to dismiss him as a crank.

If the characters do anything violent or loud in Aitcheson's apartment, Burt contacts the police, and two officers arrive a few minutes later. The characters have some notice of their arrival thanks to the flashing of the police car's lights, but if they don't leave quickly, they'll have to explain themselves to the authorities.

Storyteller Goals

To provide players with the final piece of evidence pointing towards the hospital, and the chance to discover from Aitcheson more about the patron linking the three slasher. To present the hunters with a chillingly unrepentant killer.



MURDER WILL OUT



Character Goals

To discover the link between Aitcheson and the other slashers, and the evidence pointing towards the West Bridge hospital. To deal with the threat that Aitcheson poses to the innocents who care for him.

Actions

Everything the hunters need to know to further the plot can be gleaned without any rolls. However, questioning Aitcheson further will net them more information on what they are facing. The only type of questioning to which Aitcheson will respond favorably is for the hunter to express an interest in Aitcheson's motives and an admiration for the patron who has helped him commit his murders.

Asking about the Patron

Dice Pool: Intelligence or Presence + Expression or Persuasion vs. 4 dice for Aitcheson

Action: Instant and contested

Hindrances: Character has been rude to Aitcheson (-1), character has been violent towards Aitcheson (-3)

Help: Character appears to express a keen interest in gaining power from the patron (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: With a polite smile, Aitcheson refuses to answer the hunter's questions and any further questions from his cellmates.

Failure: The character learns nothing further, but other hunters may try questioning Aitcheson afterwards.

Success: Aitcheson describes his patron as a wonderful creature, a force of magic and wisdom who reached out to him and some like-minded individuals to grant them some of its knowledge. It knew of Aitcheson's decision to kill those who cared for him, and in a series of dreams it made a deal with him. Aitcheson received the Poison Pen to begin killing in earnest. In return, the patron asked that the victims be killed wherever possible in an area that would see their bodies transported to the West Bridge Hospital. Aitcheson doesn't know what the patron really is and he has never seen it in person, but he is full of admiration for its power and determination.

Exceptional Success: The character learns everything in "Success" above. Aitcheson also whispers the patron's name to him – Askaran-Khul.

Consequences

The map on the wall is the next key to the story – West Bridge Hospital. The hunters might go directly to the hospital ("Heart of Murder"), or if they spend a little time researching it, Devon Flaherty will contact them first ("The Hermit").



GREEN FIELDS

The Hermit

Mental • Physical - Social ...

Overview

This scene is sparked when one of the hunters starts checking out the West Bridge Hospital. If none of the hunters research or contact the hospital, this scene does not occur. If they do, Devon Flaherty contacts them by telephone or email. Flaherty meets them in a bar and gives the hunters a chance to learn more about what they're facing.

Description

Flaherty's initial message is short and blunt.

"If you're thinking of going to West Bridge talk to me first. Johnny Reb's, 9 tonight. You're buying."

Johnny Reb's is a bar in a rough part of the city. Blue-collar guys, bikers and assorted lowlifes frequent it, and later on there'll probably be a fight over something or other. On one wall is pinned a Confederate flag. The air smells of smoke, stale beer and body odor and there are always a few tough-looking guys playing pool in the back. Drinks are cheap and glasses aren't very clean.

Non-white hunters will get a few strange looks when they enter. Flaherty will recognize the hunters and call them over to a booth across from the bar.

"I've been keepin' an eye on y'all, and I hear you're thinking of heading over to West Bridge," he says. "Huntin' some big game or other, right? I've been out of the game a good few years, but I've got a hundred more hunts under my belt than you pussies, and I got some advice: Stay the hell away. 'Course, you're not gonna listen, so here's another piece of advice: me and some friends killed something in the West Bridge morgue twelve years ago, and by the sound of it, it might still be there."

Flaherty's conversation is blunt and cynical to the point of rudeness. He thinks the hunters' investigation (and the whole damned Vigil) is a losing fight, and he isn't afraid to say so. He will, however, give the characters what information he can. He can describe the operation to kill the demon in West Bridge Hospital and how it was dispatched, with enough details for occult-minded hunters to follow up later.

FLAHERTY'S CONTACT

Devon Flaherty keeps one ear to the Vigil through emails and secure internet sites. At the Storyteller's option, this could be part of an established compact - most likely Network Zero, although the Union also uses such means to keep in touch with its various cells. If the players' hunters are members of the compact, this could explain how Flaherty contacts them. If not, the website or server could become a useful source of information in its own right for the cell in the future.

He won't provide any material help, and he certainly won't come along on the hunt with them - he's retired. The Vigil, he says, is a lie, a desperate lashing-out against forces far superior to humanity, and he's glad to be out. He still has a contact through a secure email server that he uses to keep tabs on major hunts going down in the city. When someone posted about hunters checking out West Bridge, Flaherty broke his exile from the Vigil to give the hunters a few friendly words. He expects them to be grateful for that, and suggests that he doesn't really care much if they die.

Once he's done, he fleeces them for drinks as long as he can until they leave. He remains a grumpy bastard until the end. Hunters familiar with mental health issues might suspect that Flaherty is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder that manifests itself in a withdrawal from social contact, but he dismisses such claims as bullshit.

The Clarion Street Sentinels and the West Bridge Hospital

The Clarion Street Sentinels were an independent cell that operated in the city for about five years. It consisted of Flaherty, a lawyer named Connal who was handy with a gun and even handier with legal complications, Sandy the machete-wielding soccer mom (Flaherty suspects she lost a kid to something supernatural long ago, but he never asked her outright), a young Chinese hoodlum named Lei and a big lunk called Fross who used to play semipro football until something horrible came in the night and drained his sister of all her blood. They killed numerous low-level threats in the city. Eventually, they were



MURDER
OUT

MURDER
VILL

MURDER
HERMIT

tipped off to a number of body parts turning up in hospital waste from West Bridge that looked like they had been chewed off rather than amputated. They found the monster in the hospital's morgue, a huge mass of putrescence that seethed and pulsed. It was in the act of feeding on the corpse of a shooting victim. Flaherty points out that the thing only seemed to eat the corpses of those who were killed violently – it was the violence, not the flesh, which sustained it.

Fortunately, the cell had brought with them plenty of fire. Lei torched the thing with a homemade flamethrower. Sandy waded in and was consumed by the thing, as was Fross when he tried to pull her out. Flaherty emptied a shotgun into it and Lei torched it again. The thing finally dissolved into a pool of stinking filth, leaving no sign of either Fross or Sandy. The West Bridge monster was a far more horrible foe than the Sentinels had ever faced, and the survivors fled from the scene in different directions, never meeting up again. Flaherty has no idea where Connal or Lei are, and he wouldn't want to see them again anyway.

Storyteller Goals

To pass on useful information to the hunters and fill in some of the backstory. To give the players a reward, in the form of Flaherty's information, for having their characters prepare for the story's climax by researching or staking out West Bridge Hospital. To provide foreshadowing for the conflict with Askarana-Khul, and to provide a character scene that can cast a different light on the Vigil.

Character Goals

To find information about their enemy, and to gain insight into the Vigil from someone with strong opinions about it.

Actions

Researching the Monster

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult

Action: Extended. Five successes are required, and each roll takes one hour.

Hindrances: None

Help: Occult library (+2), previous success researching the Seventh Execution (+1), getting specific details from Flaherty (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The hunter uncovers misleading information from a flawed source. He comes to believe it is a spirit coagulated from shed blood known as the Sanguilith that is vulnerable to dried lily and rose petals thrown at it in handfuls and that its true name (Duugerthalinox) will give its enemies power over it. None of these facts are true, and Askarana-Khul is sure to mock hunters who try to take advantage of them.

Failure: The hunter can't find out anything about a monster fitting the description of the one slain by the Clarion Street Sentinels.

Success: The hunter learns from an obscure reference that a medieval demon resembling the one killed by Flaherty's cell was said to haunt the battlefields of war-torn Europe, sucking the misery out of those killed in battle. It ignored any corpse killed by disease or accident, and while it consumed flesh it was truly sustained by the violence of the corpse's death. It is referred to in the source as the Raven Wyrm.

Exceptional Success: The hunter discovers everything in "Success" above, and also finds an annotation in the margin of a medieval bestiary informing him that the true name of the Raven Wyrm is Askarana-Khul.

Consequences

The contact Flaherty used to keep tabs on the hunters may become a potential contact (or antagonist) for the cell in future. After the conversation with Flaherty, the hunters are more prepared to face Askarana-Khul at the hospital, in "Heart of Murder."



Heart of Murder

Mental •• Physical ••• Social ••

Overview

The hunters head to West Bridge Hospital to seek out the patron of the three slashers. Askarana-Khul and the Calculator are both waiting for them in the hospital, and the demon uses its power over the hospital building to separate hunters so the Calculator can kill them off one by one.

Description

West Bridge Hospital is a large and well-appointed hospital serving a large area of the city. It has facilities for long-term care, outpatients, surgery and emergency care. Its ER in particular is large and has a large trauma center, so it's constantly chaotic. The city generates a wave of casualties every night – drunks bloody from bar brawls, gangbangers with bullet wounds, car crash victims, drug overdoses, victims of after-dark muggings with knife wounds in their stomachs, battered wives and husbands, and just about every other unfortunate story you can imagine. The waiting room is full, and the ER doesn't seem to have enough doctors, nurses and other staff to keep it running smoothly. Several security guards are here as well, looking edgy and nervous.

There are always a few security guys on duty at the hospital (use the statistics for police officers on pp. 205-206 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, but arm them with only batons), with most of them in the ER to deal with the drunk and drugged patients. Sometimes a gang hit will leave a victim wounded but alive, and other gang members follow the ambulance to the hospital to finish the job while the victim is being treated. The ER sees plenty of crazies, too, and the security guys find themselves drafted in to hold such mental cases down so they can be sedated. The security guards can often be found in the locker room or canteen, complaining about how the job would be a lot easier if they had tasers. Or guns. The deaths that occur in the ER sustain Askarana-Khul in its current form, but they are never enough for the demon who constantly hungers for more.

If the hunters look around, other areas of the hospital are less hectic.

• The wards are quiet and a little too dimly lit, and looks like a prison for the sick rather than a place of care and recuperation.

• The surgeries are bright and clean, with haughty surgeons backed up by tight teams of anesthesiologists and nurses, but here the sick and wounded seem like products on an assembly line to be fixed and then shunted out of the door, and people start to resemble problems or puzzles to be solved rather than human beings.

• The hospital's staff areas are dingy and smoky in spite of the signs admonishing anyone from smoking there, and conversations away from patients' ears are cynical rants about how it is stupidity that fills half the ER every night, or how one doctor is a bitch and another is a half-competent butcher who covers up his mistakes with an Ivy League education and a round of golf with the administrator.

West Bridge Hospital should seem wrong, a place where human vices and failing cannot help but reach the surface to be glimpsed in all their raw and bloody reality. Most of the sinister things that happen in the World of Darkness, and most of the horrific incidents of the Vigil, end up leaving their mark on a place like West Bridge. No matter how dedicated an individual doctor or nurse might be, the hospital can only reflect all that horror.

How the hunters approach West Bridge is up to them. They might stake the place out, pose as patients, relatives or staff, or try to break in (see "Actions," below). West Bridge operates constantly so there's no easy time to sneak in. However they choose to enter the hospital, they soon feel Askarana-Khul's presence. It knows they're present, too. Askarana-Khul likes to inflict violence of its own, and even a chill of fear or trauma will serve it as a tasty morsel. Characters hear a voice in their heads that will mock them for thinking they could face it, that they are protecting a world that only produces the human garbage bleeding behind the screens in the ER. It will offer them something (preferably some boon from the character's background, like the identity of a creature who killed a loved one) if they will serve it. Askarana-Khul will contact each hunter like this, trying to rattle each one in a different way.

It is during this time that Askarana-Khul tries to kill the characters using the Calculator. This is the first time the characters are face to face with the Calculator, and seeing him should be a dramatic, terrifying event. Askarana-Khul tries to separate the hunters so the Calculator can face them one at a time, and will do this by locking hunters in rooms, shutting fire doors to block off sections of corridor, seal elevator



MURDER WILL OUT



HEART OF MURDER

doors and so on. A particularly striking ploy is to seal a single hunter in a section of corridor which includes an elevator. Once the hunter realizes she is trapped, the elevator door opens and the Calculator steps out. The Calculator is wearing his suit and black leather mask and carrying his hunting knife, so hunters with a description from Sandra Meyer should instantly know who they are up against.

The Calculator himself is an important source of information in this scene. The hunters need to work out that Askarana-Khul inhabits the hospital building, and that only destroying the hospital will destroy it. The Calculator can impart some of this information as he is stalking the hunters. Don't forget his deep voice as he calmly informs his prey of the circumstances of their deaths. "My master inhabits this place now, like you inhabit your body. Unlike him, your body is easy to destroy."

Storyteller Goals

To bring the characters into the story's climax, and to tie up the plot thread started in the first scene with a showdown with the Calculator. To provide the first direct contact with the demon inhabiting West Bridge. To illustrate the bleeding wounds left in human bodies and souls by the World of Darkness.

Character Goals

To locate the demon and survive the Calculator.

Actions

Characters can take a great many different kinds of actions, given the free-form nature of this scene. Examples are breaking in to the hospital or impersonating a member of staff or a patient, both options for subtle characters trying to gain entry to the building.

Breaking In

Dice Pool: Strength + Stealth or Larceny

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Heightened security after previous failures (-2)

Help: Lockpicking tools (+1), stolen key (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character botches the attempted break-in and is caught by the security guards. He can either try to fight his way out or accept being arrested.

Failure: The character is unable to break in, but avoids capture.

Success: The character gains entry to the hospital.

Exceptional Success: The character gains entry to the hospital and is able to lead his cellmates and other allies in, too.

Impersonating Staff

Dice Pool: Presence + Subterfuge vs. Intelligence + Subterfuge of observer (5 dice for security guards, 2-3 dice for most other observers)

Action: Instant and contested

If a group of hunters are attempting this together, for the sake of simplicity have the hunter's player that's doing the most talking or has the highest pool make the roll. If the hunters are caught out or challenged unexpectedly, the player whose hunter has the lowest chance of succeeding could make the roll instead.

Hindrances: Character is particularly distinctive in appearance (hugely muscular, dramatic scars, strange eye colour, etc.) (-1), no medical knowledge if impersonating medical personnel (-2)

Help: Disguise kit (+2), authentic uniform (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is so unconvincing he is immediately apprehended by hospital security.

Failure: The character is not convincing but knows it, and is able to leave the hospital before suspicions are raised too much.

Success: The character is convincing and can access the hospital as they could if they were who they are impersonating.

Exceptional Success: The character convinces someone of his great suitability for his job and the staff trusts him enough to give him free run of the hospital.

Consequences

After the characters have infiltrated the hospital and dealt with the Calculator, they are forced to deal with Askarana-Khul in the final showdown, "Lay Down Your Guns."



MURDER WILL OUT

Lay Down Your Guns

Mental •• Physical ••• Social •

Overview

Askarana-Khul tries to deal with the hunters by sealing off the hospital and summoning the local police. The hunters have a chance to destroy the hospital and escape, but doing both is a challenge.

Description

Assuming the hunters deal with the Calculator, Askarana-Khul now tries a more direct approach.

Suddenly, all of the doors and windows around you slam shut at the same time. You can hear the sounds of frightened and nervous people all around you. Trying to open one of the doors reveals it to be stuck.

Even if the hospital is being evacuated at this point, which will happen if there is any gunplay or serious violence in the hospital or if it catches fire, there are still a couple of dozen people inside, including some poor soul midway through an operation and the doctors and nurses trying to keep him stable.

Askarana-Khul then uses the various automated alarms to signal the local police department. The police send several squad cars and officers and a SWAT unit to the hospital. The hunters' own actions might help determine the stance taken by the police. If they have used guns or explosives, the police will act as if the hospital is under terrorist attack. Otherwise they are likely to assume that the alarm is a result of desperate fugitives taking hostages, or from an armed robbery gone wrong (perhaps for the drugs kept on the premises). Regardless, they will set up a perimeter to keep anyone from going in or out without them knowing.

Some time after this, Askarana-Khul makes a telephone call and assumes the voice of a terrified staff member, confirming that hostage takers are executing members of staff. At this point the armed police unit will enter the hospital and get everyone out, shooting anybody who has a weapon. It is up to the Storyteller when this happens – preferably, it should happen at the worst possible time for the hunters.



Storyteller Goals

To create a powerful climax in which the hunters must make difficult choices and live with the consequences. To present a moral dilemma – destroy the hospital and banish Askarana-Khul, and risk innocent lives? Or leave the building intact and risk further horrors inflicted by the demon? To conclude the story with an action sequence, and allow for success or failure.

Character Goals

To defeat Askarana-Khul and escape. To make the right choices when dealing with the destruction of the building and the hostile police.

Actions

This scene requires some improvisation as it places the hunters in a dire situation and challenges them to use their wits to get out of it. Do not be afraid to take some breaks and work out what is likely to happen next.

Getting Out

They can get out of the hospital by breaking a second or third-floor window (the ground windows are all barred to prevent burglaries), or knocking down a door, probably with explosives or an improvised battering ram. Doors out include the main outpatients' entrance, the ER entrance, a couple of maintenance exits at the rear and a way into the parking garage adjoining the basement levels. The parking garage is sealed off, but a substantial vehicle like a van or a pickup could break through the shutters for a spectacular escape.

Dealing with the Cops

Hunters who choose to fight it out with the police have a hell of a scrap on their hands, as the police respond with lethal force. Use the statistics for police officer in the *World of Darkness Rulebook* on pp. 205-206, and the SWAT officer on pp. 206-207, but taking on the cops here is suicidal, and this should be obvious to players whose hunters consider it. Remember that the police are loath to enter a combat situation unless bystanders or cops are in immediate danger, but also that they have no qualms about using lethal force against cop killers.

LAY DOWN YOUR GUNS



Other options include masquerading as hostages or bystanders (in which case hunters had better get rid of any weapons they are carrying), hiding in the hospital and hoping not to be found until the police have finished searching the place or barricading themselves inside. Storytellers should give the hunters a chance to do something creative to deal with their predicament. Hunters who choose to barricade themselves, and perhaps even take hostages for real, are not doing anything to defuse the situation but they are buying themselves time to deal with Askarana-Khul (and impacting their Morality).

Dealing with Askarana-Khul

The hunters' other conflict in this scene is with Askarana-Khul. It continues to speak to them telepathically and hinders them by manipulating the building. It can start to use more lethal methods like crashing an elevator with hunters inside, or using the magnetic field of an MRI machine to fling loose metal objects like scalpels at them. It enjoys telling the hunters that the police are going to kill them and that they are doomed, and in this way can actually help inform them about what is going on. Askarana-Khul can also assault the minds of the hunters directly with its Judgment of Guilt and Confuse dread powers, although it prefers to toy with them first and let the police do its dirty work. If the Calculator is still alive, he helps the demon by killing a patient or member of staff and throwing the body from an upper window to spur the police into taking action.

Destroying Askarana-Khul is relatively simple, but not easy: the West Bridge Hospital must be destroyed. The obvious method is fire, and a concerted attempt to burn the hospital down will be too much for firefighters. The hospital will be gutted by fire, and after the building has been investigated it will be demolished, ending Askarana-Khul's reign of terror. A massive explosion would also do the trick, but unless the hunters have brought plenty of explosives with them they won't be able to improvise enough to inflict more than localized damage.

Consequences

Plenty of actions during this scene can impact a hunter's Morality. Askarana-Khul is such an inhuman being that Morality shouldn't come into question for the act of harming or banishing it. Deceptions involved in infiltrating the hospital counts as a Morality 9 sin. Taking hostages, given the trauma it inflicts on the hostages, is a Morality 5 sin. If, during the destruction of the hospital, innocents are injured,

USING ENDOWMENTS

Hunters in higher-tier cells might try to employ Endowments against Askarana-Khul. While none of them prove as conclusive as destroying the hospital, they can certainly be useful.

- Endowments that grant sight of the supernatural, like the True Sight of Saint Abel or Advanced Armory Etheric Goggles, can help the hunter perceive the demon's influence over the hospital - the walls seem to drip with maggots and circular fanged maws loom from the walls and ceilings.

- The Gugnir targeting system goes haywire in the hospital because Askarana-Khul is everywhere.

- Hunters within an area that has received the Blessing of Saint Agrippina no longer hear the demon's voice.

- The Vade Retro Santana and Call Forth the Pit may be used to exorcise Askarana-Khul from the hospital, but both take time and Askarana-Khul sends in the police once it realizes the hunters have the power to banish it.

- Mandate of Hell can command Askarana-Khul, but the demon will still send in gun-toting cops unless the hunter using it specifically prohibits this (even "do not harm us" will not work, because it's the cops who will be doing the harming).

this is a Morality 7 sin, and if they die it becomes Morality 4. A death inflicted during a gunfight with the police is a Morality 4 sin – Morality 3 if the hunter takes the first shot. Hunters who burn the hospital without making any effort to get bystanders out of it have committed a Morality 4 sin.

Whether hunters try to destroy the hospital or not, their escape from West Bridge forms the conclusion of the story. They might have got out by the skin of their teeth, in handcuffs, or in body bags, but the story of *Murder Will Out* is over.





Aftermath Success

The West Bridge Hospital has been destroyed, and Askarana-Khul is banished. As the flames leap overhead the sound of screaming can be heard, distorted as if drifting across from another world. A billow of flame rips up into the sky, and the screaming ends as Askarana-Khul is robbed of a body and disappears from this world.

What happens after this is up to the Storyteller, and can spin off into a new chronicle. For instance, the hunters could well have been arrested, or perhaps the police catch up with them after evidence is found in the burned-out hospital. They could even have been connected to the Calculator's crimes by some evidence they have left behind. The chronicle could follow the cell's attempts to escape the law or clear their name, or perhaps they could find a friendly element within the police (maybe including Kim) who know what the cell did and wants to help them do the same thing to other supernatural bad guys the police have detected.

In any case, the events of **Murder Will Out** should not be allowed to transpire without a profound effect being made on the hunters. If innocents died at West Bridge, Morality rolls will be needed, especially if the hunters made no attempt to get everyone out before destroying the place. Askarana-Khul is gone, but that is not to say others like it have not found their way into the World of Darkness, or that they will not come flocking to the city to seek revenge for their fallen brother.

Failure

The West Bridge Hospital still stands. Askarana-Khul soon has the strength to create a physical body and leaves the hospital to take up a new roost, somewhere violence and trauma are commonplace. There are probably several tempting locations in the city. If the cell are not dead or in prison, then they might well catch up with Askarana-Khul after its reign of suffering begins again.

Hunters could be in the same trouble with the law – arrested, hunted, or tied in deep with a monster-hunting police faction to whom they owe a major favor. They have not failed completely, however. Surviving hunters have gained valuable experience and knowledge about beings like Askarana-Khul, and can arm themselves with this knowledge if they face it or things like it in the future. Their actions have probably

broken up the demon's triumvirate of slashers and stopping Duquesne, Aitcheson or the Calculator are all worthy achievements in their own right. So long as a hunter still breathes, it will take more than this failure to snuff out the light of the Vigil.

Experience

Depending on how deeply characters investigate the available information and how many of the scenarios they encounter, **Murder Will Out** should take between one and three sessions to complete. In addition to the experience given out after each session, achieving certain goals or checkpoints specific to this adventure kit may earn players additional experience points for their characters.

- +1 Defeating the Calculator
- +1 Learning about Karen Jublonksy (and thus, learning a bit more about a killer's mind)
- +1 Getting Aitcheson to cease writing his letters
- +1 Defeating Askarana-Khul

SCENE: THE LONELY FATE OF SANDRA MEYER (11)

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL ••

HINDRANCES

While treating Sandra Meyer, -1 if using improvised medical implements.

When investigating the jacket left by the Calculator, -1 if the character obviously looks or sounds like trouble.

HELP

While treating Sandra Meyer, +1 for a medical kit and +2 for a military trauma kit.

When examining the numbers left behind by the Calculator, +1 for a palmtop computer.

When investigating the jacket, +1 for press or private investigator credentials, and +3 for police credentials.

OTHER

There is a suit jacket here that provides a clue to Matthew Coyle.

STs

To set up the Calculator as a villain and set the hunters on his trail. To provide a dramatic introduction with a dying innocent.

PCs

To help Sandra and to uncover clues about the Calculator's identity and whereabouts.

SCENE: WHERE'S KAREN?

(17)

MENTAL —

PHYSICAL ••••

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

Characters who look like trouble (-1) or have a criminal record (-2) find researching Karen Jublonsky more difficult. Suspicious authorities (-2) hinder researching the attacker herself.

HELP

Fabricated evidence to back up their story (+1 to +3), Police (+3) or press/private investigator credentials help while researching Karen Jublonsky, and while investigating the attacker herself.

OTHER

Hunters need to find the brochure to Green Fields Retirement Complex.

STs

To run a vicious slasher-movie conflict and pass on the important clue of the Green Fields brochure.

PCs

To survive, and get a lead on the other slashers.

SCENE: SOLVING FOR X (14)

MENTAL ••

PHYSICAL ••••

SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Suspicious authorities (-2) hinder characters researching Matthew Coyle, while a completely destroyed Seventh Execution (-1) hampers research into the machine.

HELP

Surgical implements (+1) and access to a fully equipped morgue (+3) help while examining Coyle's body, police (+3) or press/private investigator credentials (+1) help while researching Matthew Coyle, and an occult library (+2) helps researching the Seventh Execution.

Seventh Execution attacks.

STs

To pass on the important clue of Aitcheson's letter, provide a brutal combat with the Seventh Execution and provide an insight into the Calculator's mindset.

PCs

Survive the Seventh Execution and get a lead on the Calculator.

SCENE: POISON PEN (20)

(20)

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL •••

HINDRANCES

A character who has previously attacked Kim (-3) will have a more difficult time calming him down.

HELP

None.

None.

STs

To inflict conflict among the characters and with Detective Kim. To turn the focus of the story onto the hunters themselves.

PCs

To deal with Kim and avoid killing each other.

SCENE: GREEN FIELDS

(22)

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL •

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Being rude (-1) or violent (-3) towards Aitcheson renders penalties in questioning him.

None.

There is a map here with West Bridge Hospital circled.

STs

To run a chilling encounter with the psychotic Aitcheson and pass on the clue of the map on his wall.

PCs

To find out more about the three slashers and get a lead on their patron.

SCENE: HEART OF MURDER

(27)

MENTAL • •

PHYSICAL • • •

SOCIAL • •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Previous failures (-2) can hamper attempts to break in to the hospital. A particularly striking appearance (-1) or impersonating a doctor with no medical knowledge (-2) are obstacles to impersonating a member of staff.

Burglar's tools (+1) or a stolen key (+1) can help with the break-in. A disguise kit (+2) or an authentic uniform (+1) can help with the impersonation.

The Calculator is here.

STs

To create a chilling escalation as the players encounter Askarana-Khul and the Calculator. To provide a striking environment.

PCs

To come face to face with their ultimate adversary, Askarana-Khul, and to resolve the conflict with the Calculator that has been smoldering since scene one.

SCENE: THE HERMIT

(25)

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

None.

An occult library (+2) helps researching the monster.

None.

STs

To reward cells who check out West bridge Hospital with Flaherty's information. To confront them with the apparent hopelessness of the Vigil.

PCs

To find out more about their adversary.

SCENE: LAY DOWN YOUR GUNS

(29)

MENTAL • •

PHYSICAL • • •

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

None.

None.

Askara-Khul is here.

STs

To provide a thrilling climax and to confront the characters with the consequences of their actions.

PCs

To destroy Askarana-Khul and escape, hopefully without too much collateral damage.

HUNTER

THE VIGIL

Name: Detective Franklin Kim Virtue: Justice Profession:
 Concept: Cop who saw too much Vice: Wrath Compact:
 Conspiracy:

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

SKILLS	MERITS	HEALTH		
<input type="checkbox"/> Academics	●○○○○	Danger Sense	●○○○○	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	●○○○○	Disarm	●○○○○	□□□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation	●●●○○	Contacts (Police)	●●○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brawl			○○○○○	
(Cuffing Perps)	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Firearms			○○○○○	
(Service Revolver)	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Empathy	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidation			○○○○○	
(Interrogation Room)	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Persuasion	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Streetwise	●●○○○		○○○○○	
<input type="checkbox"/> Subterfuge	●●○○○		○○○○○	
	○○○○○	Morality	6	
	○○○○○	Size	5	
	○○○○○	Speed	10	
	○○○○○	Defense	3	
	○○○○○	Initiative Mod	6	
	○○○○○	Armor		

NOTES

Weapon	Damage	Ranges	Clip	Strength	Size
Service Revolver	2	20/40/80	6	2	1

HUNTER

THE VIGIL

Name: The Calculator Virtue: Fortitude Profession:
 Concept: Math-Obsessed Killer Vice: Greed Compact:
 Conspiracy:

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

SKILLS	MERITS	HEALTH		
<input type="checkbox"/> Academics		Weaponry Dodge	●○○○○	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
(Mathematics)	●●●●●		○○○○○	□□□□□□□□□□□□
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	●●○○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Science	●●○○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletics	●●●○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Brawl	●●○○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Drive	●○○○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Firearms	●●●○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Larceny				
(Breaking & Entering)	●●○○○			
<input type="checkbox"/> Weaponry				
(Hunting Knife)	●●●●●			
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidation	●●○○○			
	○○○○○	Morality	0	
	○○○○○	Size	5	
	○○○○○	Speed	10	
	○○○○○	Defense	2	
	○○○○○	Initiative Mod	4	
	○○○○○	Armor		

NOTES

Weapon	Damage	Ranges	Clip	Strength	Size
Pistol	3	30/60/120	7+1	3	1
Hunting Knife	2L				

Real name unknown.

My dear fellow struggler,

I understand our patron has gifted you with a token of his support. I hope that his gift to you brings you as much joy as that which I received. Truly we are fortunate among those of our ilk! Who else could claim a benefactor of such wisdom and generosity? Only we, my friend. Only we. Many thanks for visiting me at my home, for it can be most lonely here. One of our mutual friends has also been to see me, thankfully under cover of darkness, and it warms my heart that our confederacy only grows closer under our patron's auspices.

I believe it behooves us to pool our efforts further in matching our benefactor's requirements. Do you not think so? I do, very much. We should meet to discuss the matter face to face. There is an underground parking garage that I feel should be adequate for our needs. It is accessible enough for myself and I trust you should find it easily. It is off Gordon Avenue East, and is rarely inhabited by anyone after six o'clock. I suggest you meet me at seven in the evening this Friday, so we can coordinate our efforts.

All the best, my friend. I hope this letter finds you in good health,

Yrs.

A Walker on the Path

Dear Detective Kim.

You do not know me, but I have some important information for you. I understand you are currently associated with a group of civilians who might be described as vigilantes. Quite probably your joint enterprise is a noble one and I wish you every success. However, I feel I must impart to you some information they have kept from you.

One of their vigilante activities was hunting a creature that killed people along a stretch of highway. They discovered what it was - I will not write it here, but no doubt you have come to similar conclusions - and were able to track it to its den. There it spoke to them, and convinced them that its killings were not mere predation but were to help protect the highway and the city itself from "evil spirits." I have uncovered evidence that this claim was a lie, but the vigilantes believed it, and they let the creature go.

The creature they found was known to you as the Blacktop Killer. They confronted it on the seventeenth of September, shortly before you were called to the scene of its fourth killing. Had they fulfilled their self-styled duty to protect us all, the Blacktop Killer would have been stopped. I thought you should know this.

Yours,

A friend.

Dear Friend,

You do not know me, but I have something I must tell you. Please forgive the anonymity of this letter but we live in a dangerous world, I am sure you can agree, and we must do what we can to protect yourselves. I know that you and your associates have taken it upon yourselves to rid this world of evil supernatural creatures. It is not up to me to suggest the wisdom of this course, suffice to say that the world is more complicated than you realize.

In any case, one of your associates, the one who claims to be your leader, is in truth working for one of the species of predator he claims to despise. His masters want to rule this city and they have tasked your leader with wiping out all the other monstrous inhabitants to they can take over in their place. Their final task will be to kill you all, save for the betrayer, who will become their faithful lapdog. What you do with this information is up to you, but given its implications I had no choice but to tell you.

Yours,
A friend

Dear Friend,

I am an inhabitant of the twilight, like you. I do not take up arms so vigorously as you and your compatriots, but I fight my own fight and I am aware of you and those like you. I could not know what to know without telling you, for we are all in this fight together and should one of us fail then we all suffer.

One of your fellow hunters, the one to whom you are particularly close, is not human. Once, during one of your excursions against the forces of darkness, this hunter died and was replaced. Now the creature you call a friend is something else, a simulacrum of life, inserted into your cell as a spy for others of its kind. If you allow it to live, it will betray you all. Perhaps it has already done so, and its brothers are approaching as you read this. Do not delay. Expose it for what it is. Fire is the only way to prove its true lineage, and to destroy it. Our world is a cruel one, and in this case you must be cruel - intensely cruel, abhorrently cruel - to survive.

Yours,
A friend.