

SPECTACULAR SUMMER ISSUE

Degoya County Digest

New Mexico's Premier Lifestyle Magazine

Skinny Jeans & Summer Screams

Our Summer Spotlights

Planning the Ultimate
Pool Party

The Hunt for the Best BBQ
in New Mexico

JUNE

\$3.95 US



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Plus:

TV Odyssey Fall Preview

An Interview with Gerrilyn Ambrose

Dr. Isaac Turner on Satanists



Foreword

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

I created an early version of *Public Access* back in 2014. At the time, I wanted to create a game that had the same feeling as reading “Candle Cove”: a group of people getting together online to share their hazy memories of an old public access children’s television show. That version of *Public Access* was barely a game, but it would be the foundation of the *Public Access* we would eventually release in 2023 (the gameplay of the original *Public Access* was basically just the Odyssey tapes portion of the current game).

I always wanted to revisit *Public Access*, but it wasn’t until I developed the *Brindlewood Bay* mystery system and *The Between’s* play structure that I started to see what a new version of *Public Access* could look like. I combined the mechanical and structural ideas of those games with my foundational thinking about an analog horror TTRPG, my lifelong obsession with the idea of deserts as ancient and mysterious places, my love of American pop culture and nostalgia, and the Big Man, a beloved character from my *Monsterhearts* actual play, and the new *Public Access* was born!

The response to the game has been incredible; it seems like every day I learn about a new group playing a campaign. We’ve also had a very rich homebrew and game jam scene around the project. People are fascinated by Deep Lake and surrounding Degoya County, and the fact they want to explore it through their own creations is very gratifying to me.

Skinny Jeans & Summer Screams is a supplement for—and celebration of—*Public Access*. It features a number of new mysteries and Odyssey tapes for your campaign (and your download also includes that old, 2014 version of the game). And because I can’t stop fiddling with this idea, it also includes a sneak peek at the future of *Public Access* in the form of the *Skinny Jeans* playtest document. If you get a chance to give this in-development version of the game a spin, I’d love to hear how it goes (come find me on The Gauntlet Discord server).

Welcome back to Deep Lake!

Jason Cordova



IN THIS ISSUE

THE DREAM

A frozen confection with highly addictive and possibly supernatural properties is all the rage in Degoya County, causing fights to break out at grocery stores as people can't get enough. The Latchkeys' deeper investigations takes them to the tiny nearby town of Whitespray, where they can pay a visit to La Fresca Foods' enigmatic founder, W. Atlas Morgenstern. You can't spell consumerism without CONSUME! Written by Jason Cordova, inspired by *The Stuff* (1985).

DOG TOLD ME TO

Independence Day weekend is around the corner, and Deep Lake is experiencing a peculiar string of violent activity. None of the perpetrators remember their actions, but all of them saw the cartoonish St. Bernard in a policeman's uniform. Something is behind these acts of violence—something *evil*—and it wears the face of Officer Barker. Written by Jack Hargreaves.

ON STRANGE WINGS

Every region has its own cryptid. No one really knows what the Deep Lake Devils are, but everyone knows they come from the labyrinthine caverns of Los Ojos de los Muertos. Dubious and whimsical stories aside, livestock around Degoya County are turning up dead and people are afraid. The Latchkeys may learn that even the tallest tales possess a kernel of truth. Written by Raymond Rich.

THE VOID ANGELS

An impossible storm is gathering over Degoya County. Dark clouds swallow the sun, tongues of lightning lash the earth, and people are vanishing without a trace. Some say this has all happened before. In ages past, the people of this land offered their best crop to the angels beyond the mountains. Now, they have returned—bringing the endless hunger of the Void. Written by Gabriel Robinson.

PALE HORSE

A fast and furious sequel to Slumber Party Summoning Circle. The ghost of Deep Lake's top street racer needs the Latchkeys' help to escape the fourth horseman of the apocalypse, who's hunting her down in a gray Mustang Boss 429. Start your engines, and get ready to drive for your life! Written by Kevin Macku.

NEW ODYSSEY TAPES

Home invasion makeovers, aggressive anti-crime PSAs, amateur paranormal enthusiasts, headbanging horrors, and Clint Yeastwood—these tapes have it all! A collection that gives players more opportunities to scare their fellow Latchkeys, and provides the Keeper with new Great Hungers for the Night of the Bone-Wolves!

- ❖ *Officer Barker Teaches You a Lesson*, by Hawk Williams.
- ❖ *Ghost Gals 03 Blackrock Pure-White Labyrinth*, by Katelijn Eelen.
- ❖ *Dwayne's World*, by Sasha Erfanian Dow.
- ❖ *Guerilla Makeover 012 Pure-White Pretext*, by Sarah Bolling.
- ❖ *Palmer's Pâtisserie 31 Apple of My Rye*, by Cassidy Hadlock.



PUBLIC ACCESS: SKINNY JEANS PLAYTEST DOCUMENT

Design Goals

We've been able to spend a lot of time with this game, and have played and observed numerous campaigns. While the game is extremely fun and rewarding as-is, there are definitely some changes we'd like to make for a future edition. We're testing some of those changes right now with what we're calling the "Skinny Jeans" edition. The goals of Skinny Jeans are to refocus *Public Access* to have a **stronger emphasis on core themes and ideas**, such as analog horror and childhood trauma; **centralize the TV Odyssey mystery** in the campaign; and **shorten the overall length of the campaign** so it doesn't lose any momentum.

We're testing the Skinny Jeans version of the game right now, and you can help us out! Below is a summary of the changes you should make to the game if you want to playtest this version. If you get a chance to try some of these changes, we'd love to hear your feedback. Head over to The Gauntlet Discord (find a link on our website, brindlewoodbay.com).

Starting the Game

1. Character Introduction

Players now begin by marking a box on the Key of the Child and introducing their character via flashback.

2. Latchkeys Arrival

A scene is framed showing the Latchkeys' arrival at 26 Rodenbecker Street for the summer. The scene is played until all characters have had a chance to mention key backstory elements: their current job, if any; what they want to be doing with their life, if anything; and any significant others back home.

3. Bedroom Selection and Your Corner of the House

Players say why their character chose the bedroom they chose at 26 Rodenbecker. Then, following the normal procedure, we populate the section of the character sheet called Your Corner of the House.

4. Fast Forward and Mystery Introduction

After these initial steps, the narrative fast forwards a few weeks and the game begins as it normally does, with the Latchkeys having no luck (so far) with TV Odyssey, but finding a single Odyssey tape. They also learn about the first Deep Lake mystery.



GAMEPLAY CHANGES

Odyssey Clues and the TV Odyssey Question

Central to this playtest is the introduction of Odyssey Clues and the TV Odyssey Question. The TV Odyssey Question is available at the start of the game: "What happened to TV Odyssey? (Complexity: 6)." The Latchkeys will be collecting Odyssey Clues in different ways throughout the campaign, and can answer the TV Odyssey Question at any time after they have collected at least 3 Odyssey Clues. If they answer it successfully, the endgame is immediately triggered. The players *must* attempt to answer the TV Odyssey Question after the Night of the Bone-Wolves and once all active mysteries are resolved.

Nostalgic Move

The Nostalgic Move is changed so that any number of Latchkeys can participate at one time, and the focus doesn't have to be on a specific Thing That Takes You Back. The group collectively defines the Clue that is stumbled upon. Latchkeys can only participate in one Nostalgic Move per phase of play.

Answer a Question

The 12+ result is replaced with: "On a 12+, the answer is also an Odyssey Clue." You can bump up the result in the normal way (by everyone turning a Key) OR if the special Key for that mystery is still available, you can simply mark that to increase the result tier.

Finding Odyssey Tapes

Players can only find an Odyssey tape by rolling a 12+ on the Meddling Move. The Keeper cannot give out an Odyssey tape as a Keeper reaction.

Watching Odyssey Tapes

Only one Latchkey is required to watch an Odyssey tape during the Night phase in order to trigger that kind of Night phase. Players are trying to do Signals from the Other Side as normal, but they also get to collectively define an Odyssey Clue based on the events of the tape (this is an additional step during the Dawn phase).

Night Phase Actions

Each Latchkey is now limited to taking a single action during the Night phase, or two actions if a tape is not being watched.



THE TV ODYSSEY CAMPAIGN

Threshold Progression

The Odyssey Tape thresholds for the campaign are now: Layer 1 is unlocked after watching 1 tape; Layer 2 is unlocked after watching 2 tapes; Layer 3 is unlocked after watching 3 tapes; a Great Hunger is introduced after the 4th and 5th tapes; and the Night of the Bone-Wolves takes place after watching 6 tapes. Layer 5 (the endgame) is unlocked after the Latchkeys resolve all active mysteries and then answer the TV Odyssey Question.

Stinger Scenes

A stinger scene featuring Big Man follows each transition between layers. For this playtest, just make up something for Layer 2; we'll have something scripted in a new TV Odyssey campaign sheet if we ever publish these changes.

The Key of the Child

Players mark another Key of the Child at the start of each session following the unlocking of a new layer. If they have none remaining at the start of such a session, they mark the Key of Desolation instead.

TV Odyssey Mystery

For purposes of this playtest, create the TV Odyssey mystery as before, but informed by the answer to the TV Odyssey Question. If the players get the TV Odyssey Question wrong, make a very hard Keeper reaction; once they've responded to that, give them another chance to answer. If these rules are ever incorporated into a new edition of the game, this part will likely be replaced by a special move related to answering the TV Odyssey Question, and a partially prepared TV Odyssey mystery that you modify based on the answer to the TV Odyssey Question.

stay cool



*"Come taste The Dream
It's a thick and luscious cream
Just swallow down a mouthful
And live the Dream*

*A sweet and cold delight
It's a dream in every bite
Just a little on your tongue
And you won't put up a fight"*

The Dream is an exciting new frozen novelty brought to you by your friends at La Fresca Foods! It has all the wonderful, creamy taste of ice cream, but with ZERO calories! That's right, you can eat and eat and eat and eat and eat and EAT to your heart's content! You'll never get enough! Come taste The Dream!

..... THE DREAM

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

In the 1970s, La Fresca Foods was the largest employer in Degoya County. The company produced a number of candies, packaged desserts, and frozen novelties, and while it was never more than a regional success, it was a highly profitable business on account of its signature product: The Dream. The Dream was a frozen custard-like dessert, and while the company's claims that it had zero calories were dubious at best, it was nevertheless much-loved in the region because of its creamy mouthfeel and excellent taste.

La Fresca Foods was on the verge of taking The Dream national when the company suddenly shut down. According to rumors, the company's founder and owner, W. Atlas Morgenstern, was being blackmailed for a secret so terrible, he was willing to burn his entire business to the ground rather than give in to the blackmailers. He then became a recluse, holed up in his mansion in the tiny nearby town of Whitespray, never to be seen again. That is... until recently.

Mr. Morgenstern has reappeared, and re-established La Fresca Foods. He's moved the entire operation from La Fresca to Whitespray, and it produces just one product: a new version of The Dream. Gone are the original flavors of Choco-tastic Blast, Sunshine Strawberry, and Groovy, Goovey Vanilla; The Dream now comes in a single flavor called White, and like the flavor's namesake, the frozen novelty is perfectly pristine in color. Furthermore, the new Dream is extremely low calorie but somehow even more delicious than regular ice cream.

The Dream is currently being marketed in and around Degoya County, though there are rumblings of a forthcoming national campaign. You got a container of the stuff and gave it a try.

Pose the following to a Latchkey of your choice: Apart from its astonishingly low caloric content, in what specific way does The Dream defy the laws of physics?

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the highest Sensitivity (or whoever you wish in the case of a tie): For a brief moment after tasting a spoonful of The Dream, you were filled with a sudden and intense anger about having to share the carton with the other Latchkeys. How did that anger manifest? You've already started to hear stories about fights breaking out at grocery stores around displays of The Dream, and that people who have been known to eat large quantities of the stuff are acting strangely. The Dream is, at the very least, a highly addictive, unsafe product; at worst, it's something supernatural. Consumer safety isn't exactly within the Latchkeys' remit, but it might be worth poking around to get to the bottom of what's going on. If nothing else, it's an excuse to head out to La Fresca, where the original La Fresca Foods offices sit abandoned (La Fresca is a much bigger town than Deep Lake, and so even if nothing comes of your investigation, you can resupply for the rest of the summer). If you want to go deeper with this mystery, you can always make the slightly longer trip to Whitespray...

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What is the true nature of The Dream? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by taking action that will neutralize The Dream's power or otherwise make it safe.

Question: What is W. Atlas Morgenstern's terrible secret? (Complexity: 8)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by confronting Morgenstern with the truth and convincing him to take The Dream off the market.

THE KEY OF PURE IMAGINATION

Candy and other confections from La Fresca Foods could still be found in Deep Lake when you lived there, despite the fact it was all long out-of-date. Which was your favorite?

MOMENTS

- > A stack of The Dream pints, towering, ziggurat-like.
- > A woman frantically eating a spilled carton of The Dream from the ground.
- > A man eats a spoonful of The Dream and then suggestively licks his lips.
- > A baby, screaming, won't take the bottle but coos with delight when given The Dream.
- > The smell of The Dream: cloying and perfume-like, with just a note of vanilla.
- > The taste of The Dream: a little bit like mallow fluff, but creamier, and much sweeter—the kind of sweet that makes your teeth hurt.

Special Moment:

THE DREAM commercial

An as-yet-unreleased commercial, prepared in advance of the national campaign. It opens with a group of fit, good-looking men wearing '80s-style aerobics outfits—neon spandex, sweat bands, and leg warmers—doing a dance workout in time with the upbeat, synth-y music. The dance workout is occasionally intercut with scenes of the men letting bright white gobs of The Dream dribble into—and out of—their mouths, their heads thrown back in total ecstasy. The jingle:

COME taste the dream
It's a thick and luscious cream
Just swallow down a mouthful and
Live. The. Dream.

Ropy, thick, and white
It's a dream in every bite
Just a little on your tongue
And you won't put up a fight

COME taste the dream
COME taste the dream
COME taste the dream

THE DREAM

The Dream is a frozen confection that is highly addictive and has strange physical properties. At the start of the mystery, the threat it poses to the Latchkeys comes in the form of eating it (see Special Rule, below) and how it affects and motivates the Dangers. As the mystery progresses, The Dream may start to reveal more of its true nature. Its precise nature can only be determined if the Latchkeys answer the appropriate Question, but you can start to have the ice cream behave in strange and aggressive ways, such as: it moves on its own, it can stretch globules of itself into pseudopods, it can lash out psionically, it can rapidly expand itself, it can take hostile shapes, and so forth. This behavior might influence the Latchkeys' answer to the Question about its true nature, but that's ok because they still have to use their Clues in order to come up with an exact answer and act on it. Certainly once (and if) they answer that Question, you can then start making The Dream lash out in a manner that reflects the answer. The key is to stay flexible and mind the overall narrative arc: The Dream is subtle in the beginning, and more monstrous/alien as things progress.

Special Rule: If a Latchkey eats any more of The Dream, they take the Condition: Live the Dream. Hereafter, any Latchkey with the Condition must make the Day/Night Move in order to resist offers to eat more. If a Latchkey eats more of The Dream while they have the Condition, they must turn a Key.

If the Latchkeys ignore The Dream...

The Dream addicts are mostly contained to La Fresca and Whitespray, but they will start to appear in Deep Lake as The Dream becomes more readily available there. Further, W. Atlas Morgenstern is ready to take The Dream national, and once the frozen novelty is no longer contained by proximity, it will be unstoppable.

DANGERS

W. Atlas Morgenstern

Neat, gray combover. Wild, silvery-blue eyes. A jaw like a grouper and a smile like a barracuda. Black pinstripe suit. W. Atlas Morgenstern has never gotten over losing his business back in the 1970s, and he'll do whatever it takes to protect the new incarnation of La Fresca Foods... and the secret of The Dream. He prefers to let others do his dirty work, but keeps a pistol in his pocket, just in case.

Quote: "My father, J. Phillip Morgenstern, and his father, R. Tanner Morgenstern, taught me that this world is full of small people—small people with small minds. And those small people will always get in your way—their whining, their simpering, their mewling—and so you must swat them from your sight if you hope to accomplish anything of worth in this life. But sometimes those small people can become a problem... sometimes they swat back... sometimes they find a way to take everything from you... Even the smallest grain of sand can be an irritant when it gets in your shoe, eh?"

Dangers cont'd >

THE DREAM

Dream addicts

People who have become dangerously addicted to The Dream. In the earliest stages of addiction, addicts are zombie-like, and will lash out violently at anyone who tries to interfere with The Dream or Morgenstern's plan to take the brand nationwide. Such addicts can be found in La Fresca, but might follow the Latchkeys back to Deep Lake, and even swarm 26 Rodenbecker. In the later stages of addiction, addicts become vicious and animal-like, driven by instinct. Such addicts are blind on account of white, Dream-like mucus filming their eyes and dripping from their tear ducts, but their other senses are greatly enhanced. These advanced cases of addiction are only found in Whitespray. The final stage of Dream addiction turns the victim into a bloated, Dream-seeping monstrosity that has super strength and is nearly invulnerable. There is only one addict that has reached the final stage; they can be found near the source of The Dream or wherever the Latchkeys' final confrontation in this mystery takes place.

A seething, simmering queue

Can be found anywhere they're selling The Dream—a grocery store, a gas station, a Dream-branded ice cream truck. It's filled with people anxious to get their hands on a carton.

Paint the Scene: *What do you see in this line of people that makes you think violence could break out at any moment?*

Florida "Flo" Jackson

Short, stylish afro. *Pulp Fiction* men's suit. Sensible shoes. Florida is a private investigator hired by a consortium of out-of-state food companies to do some corporate espionage in La Fresca and Whitespray. Her employers have heard rumblings about this crazy new ice cream in New Mexico, and so she's here to find out what she can. She's an affable sort, and willing to work with the Latchkeys so long as they don't get in her way. If they become a nuisance, she's more than happy to show them the business end of her Glock 19.

Quote: *"If you're cool, then we're cool, but if you turn this situation into something more complicated—AKA if you get in the way of me doing my job—then our ongoing relationship will be something you will not enjoy. But I prefer for this to be nice and easy. That's why my friends call me 'Flo,' because I like to go with the flo."*

LOCATIONS

The town of La Fresca

Streets laid out on a neat grid. A towering memorial dedicated to the people who lost their lives in the La Fresca Senior High fire of '86. The first chain restaurants you've seen in weeks.

Paint the Scene: *At a glance, how do you know La Fresca is the commercial and civic heart of Degoya County?*

Janey Neighborhood Market

Brightly-lit aisles. The cold, flat smell of packaged and uncooked food. A cardboard standee of Hamton the Pig greets you when you walk in. Janey's is the only grocery store in La Fresca, and serves all the nearby towns, including Deep Lake.

Paint the Scene: *One whole section of the store is currently awash in white and pink, a pop-up shop for The Dream. What sorts of marketing items do you see, and what about them is unnerving to you?*

Abandoned La Fresca Foods office

Mouldering shag carpet. Peeling walls reveal the pink insulation behind them. Marketing posters for long-forgotten La Fresca Foods products such as Sugarpigs, Tummy Tumps, Abuela's-brand pan dulces, Twinx, and more.

Paint the Scene: *Something about this place reminds you of a horrible office job you once had. What is it?*

× Gerrilyn Ambrose's bus

Full kitchen and wet bar. Comfortable, reclining seats, with a luxurious bedroom in the back for Gerrilyn. Numerous mounted TV/VCR combos playing old episodes of *Muffy the Zombie Killer*.

Paint the Scene: *What unusual contract riders does Gerrilyn have based on what you see in the bus?*

Special Rule: If the Latchkeys watch an *Odyssey* tape on Gerrilyn's bus, they get to do it in style. Ask each Latchkey to describe a luxurious amenity Gerrilyn provides for movie night.

The town of Whitespray

A single, small street with a few boarded-up storefronts. A sirocco of litter as a strong wind blows through. A group of coyotes that truly do not give a fuck.

Paint the Scene: *Many years ago, during the golden age of Hollywood, Whitespray was a resort town for the rich and famous. That's all gone now, but you can still see some very faint traces of that time. What?*

The Smoking Pole Tobacco Shop

The only storefront that's still open in Whitespray. The earthy, leafy tang of hand-rolled cigars, cigarillos, and cigarettes. A pool table and jukebox in one corner.

Paint the Scene: *How can you tell The Smoking Pole is more of a hangout for old-timers than a business?*

The Morgenstern mansion

A glass and concrete box on a hill overlooking Whitespray. Mid-century modern furniture combined with Santa Fe decor. Well-lit and spacious.

Paint the Scene: *In what ways is this house a shrine dedicated to W. Atlas Morgenstern's greatness?*

The new La Fresca Foods plant in Whitespray

Unusually high fences all around the plant. Workers wearing full biohazard suits. Stainless steel equipment and fixtures everywhere you look.

Paint the Scene: *What about this place makes you think the workers are trying to hide something?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Deputy Renita Torro, a peacekeeper

Black hair pinned up under her deputy's hat. Aviators. Smells good, like powdered donuts and Secret by Mennen. Deputy Torro has been sent to La Fresca to keep an eye on the crowds trying to get their hands on The Dream. Currently dating Hector, the grocery store manager.

Quote: *"Jesus Christ—this situation is worse than StorePlus on Black Friday. And that's even with someone being trampled to death last year! I'm scared what some of these folks are gonna do if they don't get this ice cream. I mean... just look at 'em. Something funny in the eyes, you know?"*

Hector Suiza, the grocery store manager

Dazzling smile. Well-fitted chinos and Janey Neighborhood Market polo shirt. A Rolex he got when he graduated college. Hector is a little unnerved by the fanaticism for The Dream, but he loves the business it's bringing to the supermarket. Of all the people in town, he has the most direct connection to La Fresca Foods, since he's responsible for placing orders with vendors. Currently dating Deputy Torro.

Quote: *"I don't think we've ever had crowds like this. I just talked to a couple who drove all the way from Albuquerque to get their hands on The Dream. Isn't that wild? Business is definitely booming, though I wish some of these people would buy other stuff, too. Would it kill them to add some vegetables or just, you know, food to their carts?"*

Gerrilyn Ambrose, a TV star

Smoking hot, but in a non-threatening, girl-next-door kind of way. Signature smirk and raised eyebrow. Confident posture. Gerrilyn is the star of *Muffy the Zombie Killer*, a teen horror-comedy show that ran for six seasons but was recently canceled. She's in La Fresca to do some promotional photos for The Dream, and will be heading to Whitespray soon in order to shoot a commercial for the national campaign.

Quote: *"Hell no I've never tried this stuff. I don't care how low cal it is—the tabloids would have a field day if they caught me stuffing my face with ice cream. And besides, I'm going to be auditioning again soon—my trainer would fucking kill me." (Leaning in to take a picture with a fan, and speaking in Muffy's valley girl accent): "Like, oh my god—gag me with a spoon, dead heads!"*

Stewart, an assistant

Top button buttoned. Colorful waistcoat. Glasses that he thinks make him look academic. Stewart is Gerrilyn's personal assistant and best friend. In addition to managing her schedule and coordinating her appearances, he runs interference with her fans. He's also an aikido master, and more than willing to step in if someone is physically threatening her.

Quote: *"I'm afraid Ms. Ambrose doesn't have time to meet with you today, but if you give me a number you can be reached at, I'll check the schedule and get back to you with some times that might work better for her. I'm sure we can make something happen, say... three months from now?"*

..... THE DREAM

SIDE CHARACTERS

Tomasina Hererra, a woman who sees things

Weathered boots, weathered jeans, weathered face. Gray hair pulled back in a ponytail. Public Enemy t-shirt. Tomasina is the owner of The Smoking Pole, and can usually be found sitting on the shop's stoop with some of the other Whitespray old-timers and DeeOhGee. She sees a lot and hears a lot, and doesn't trust W. Atlas Morgenstern or whatever it is he's getting up to with the new La Fresca Foods plant. She's a good source of information, but doesn't trust outsiders; the Latchkeys will have to find a way to get her to open up.

Quote: "Listen, no offense, but we don't really take to outsiders around here. The last outsider who came to Whitespray—that rattlesnake Morgenstern—has caused us nothing but trouble."

DeeOhGee, a dog

Black Australian Shepherd. Wears a pink kerchief that says, "A Very Good Girl!" Sweet as pie. DeeOhGee probably sees and hears even more than Tomasina, to whom she is fiercely loyal.

Some Whitespray old-timers, if you need them: Billy Boy, Sarasota, Cujo, Doc Martin, Tits, Papa Joe, Crybaby.

Chucho Churros, a Degoya County legend

Hawaiian shirt. A luxurious mane of salt & pepper hair, despite his age. A big gold belt buckle emblazoned with the Chucho Churros logo. Chucho Churros (real name: Chucho Martinez) was the owner and mascot of a food company by the same name back in the '60s and early '70s. He was famously put out of business by W. Atlas Morgenstern's aggressive marketing tactics, and has harbored a grudge against Morgenstern and La Fresca Foods ever since. He abandoned his Palm Springs retirement and came back to Degoya County when he heard La Fresca Foods was making a comeback. He wants to find out what Morgenstern is up to... and put a stop to it.

Quote: "Well dip me in cinnamon sugar and call me daddy! If W. Atlas Morgenstern thinks this new Dream is his express ticket out of obscurity, I've got bad news for him: that train ain't leavin' the station if Chucho Churros has anything to say about it!"

REWARDS

- A pint container of The Dream; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A collection of fine cigars from The Smoking Pole; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- DeeOhGee, if you met her (Tomasina is getting too old to take care of her); add her to Your Corner of the House.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

CLUES

- Evidence that a reporter doing a story on W. Atlas Morgenstern committed suicide before the story could be published.
- Rumors that W. Atlas Morgenstern had a business partner, Gabby Ravell, who went missing.
- Perfectly clean, unused manufacturing equipment.
- Crates stamped with "Roswell, NM."
- A story about a hastily-abandoned archeological dig near Whitespray.
- Evidence suggesting W. Atlas Morgenstern has been dead for years.
- A strange substance in a hole in the ground; it's delicious.
- An unusual detail about Morgenstern's deceased mother (pick one: her body is on display/her body is missing/she was legally dead when Atlas was born/something else).
- Local UFO watchers have intercepted strange radio transmissions in recent months.
- Evidence that W. Atlas Morgenstern had three siblings, all of whom died in their cribs.
- The Dream reacts strangely to prayers and other religious expressions.
- The Dream appears... in a dream. The dream is about (pick one: a sexual encounter/your teeth falling out/showing up to a test you didn't study for/something else).
- A collection of antique surgical tools and insane asylum restraints.
- A recurring frequency.
- Evidence of bizarre experiments being conducted in (pick one: the basement of the Morgenstern mansion/an old La Fresca Foods warehouse/a cave near Whitespray/somewhere else).
- Rumors of orgiastic rituals being performed late at night in (pick one: the basement of the Morgenstern mansion/an old La Fresca Foods warehouse/a cave near Whitespray/somewhere else).
- When dribbled out, The Dream forms a strange shape on the ground (pick one: occult symbols/Morse code/a rendering of a Latchkey/something else).
- Evidence of secret military experiments being conducted near Whitespray.
- An abandoned slogan: "You'll fall to your knees before The Dream!"
- Evidence that the Morgenstern family's original fortune was made in oil.

NOTES	

..... DOG TOLD ME TO

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

In the late evening hours of July 4th, 1981, police found ten-year-old Benjamin Castle wandering the streets of Deep Lake alone wearing a plastic cartoon dog mask and blood-soaked pajamas. They would later find the bodies of the Castle family, whose deaths had been so gruesomely violent that it was unimaginable a child his age could possess the strength to execute them. Only baby sister Cassandra was left untouched. When asked what happened, he allegedly whimpered: "Officer Barker told me to."

Officer Barker was an anthropomorphic uniformed Saint Bernard created by local illustrator Alan Gibson and the Degoya County Sheriff's Department as part of an anti-crime campaign targeted towards kids. Eventually, Officer Barker was in demand at every school assembly in New Mexico, and by summer of '81 there was talk of taking the campaign national. Not long after the murders, Officer Barker's campaign was abruptly canceled due to scandal. Alan Gibson quietly retreated back to obscurity in Deep Lake, and Benjamin Castle would spend the rest of his life under examination at a number of state facilities.

Pose the following to the Latchkey of your choice: *Cassandra was adopted and remained in Deep Lake. You grew up together and eventually befriended her. What did you two bond over?*

With another Independence Day weekend just around the corner, Cassandra March has come to you with concerning news. The town has experienced a peculiar string of violent activity the past week: a convenience store was set on fire by its own employee, a teenage barista vandalized Cassandra's car, and illustrator Alan Gibson viciously attacked his own son at their home. She's learned that each perpetrator claimed to not remember their violent actions, but all of them mentioned seeing someone dressed up as a St. Bernard in a policeman's uniform shortly before blacking out. With the upcoming 23rd anniversary of the Castle family murders, authorities have written off the timing as an unfortunate coincidence or morbid joke. Cassandra believes these events are somehow all connected to what happened to her birth family and has come to you for help in proving it, given your interest in Deep Lake's more peculiar history.

Direct to the Latchkey with the Move Have You Ever Danced with the Devil, the Latchkey with the highest Sensitivity, or a different Latchkey of your choice: *You've made a hobby out of researching strange, paranormal facts. What small detail about Cassandra's story is eerily similar to a detail from the reports of the 1981 murders, and how does it suggest that Officer Barker is actually a being summoned to Deep Lake?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Who summoned the entity posing as Officer Barker? Was it intentional or accidental? (Complexity: 2)

Opportunity: Unlock the next Question.

Special Rule: At the end of the session in which the threshold Question is answered, narrate a scene showing Benjamin Castle (see: Dangers) in Deep Lake watching the Latchkeys from a safe distance. Officer Barker stands behind him whispering, "*Good boy, Benji. You know what you have to do.*"

Question: How can Officer Barker be untethered from Deep Lake? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by performing an unbinding ritual.

Question: What kind of entity is Officer Barker and what does it want with Deep Lake? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by negotiating with the entity in exchange for its departure, or by luring it to you then capturing or destroying it.

THE KEY OF OBEDIENCE

Narrate a flashback to when you caved to peer pressure against your better judgment, and the fallout that resulted from it.

MOMENTS

- > You overhear or see a news bulletin regarding the deaths of three orderlies, a nurse, and two New Mexico State Police officers in connection to the recent escape of Benjamin Castle.
- > Children, pink with nascent sunburn, play Red Rover, Red Rover in the street. If a Latchkey with **The Sandstone Arch** marked encounters them, the kids chant for Red Rover to send them right over to join their game.
- > A tall figure looms in the periphery. When an attempt to directly observe it is made, the shape is gone.
- > A phone rings. There is only slow, heavy panting on the other line.
- > Teenage boys play in the street, laughing as they shoot bottle rockets and other small fireworks at each other. A nearby American flag bursts into flames as one of their fireworks flies into it.
- > Fireworks fill the night sky and bathe onlookers in flashes of red, white, and blue as they explode. Dogs in the surrounding area howl in unison begging for them to end.

OFFICER BARKER

Officer Barker is a cartoonish St. Bernard dressed in a New Mexico State Police uniform, and at first glance could be dismissed as someone in an elaborate mascot costume. It may also be more discreet and can shapeshift into a normal looking dog. The entity can probe the minds of would-be prey to morph into a breed of dog they find most disarming or appealing, but Officer Barker is its preferred form. In extreme cases, when it feels especially threatened, it can transform into a hulking eldritch canine monstrosity whose form is embellished with the viewer's fears.

Special Rule: When a Latchkey first encounters this version of the entity, ask them what fear manifests in the entity's form.

If the Lachkeys ignore Officer Barker...

Officer Barker will continue to incite acts of violence all over Deep Lake, and Benjamin Castle will continue to be its most brutal instrument of destruction. Independence Day will be marked by more and more violence, escalating from vandalism and assault to full-on rioting and murder.

DANGERS

Benjamin "Benji" Castle

Long dark hair and beard beneath a crude papier-mâché replica of his original Officer Barker mask. Stolen New Mexico State Police uniform. A lean and towering build. He has not spoken a word since the death of his parents, and has spent the following years silent and, as one of his case workers put it, "waiting for someone." He can be knocked down, but he cannot be killed outright unless his connection to Officer Barker is severed. He can show up seemingly out of nowhere as a Keeper reaction as long as this mystery is active.

Mind Control

The entity can influence the minds of those it speaks to. If the victim is unable to resist its commands, they will slip into a temporary fugue state, during which they may be compelled to act on their most violent impulses. While under the entity's influence, the victim (including Benjamin Castle) may possess preternatural strength, speed, and endurance.

Special Rule: As a reaction, the Keeper can bring a Latchkey under the influence of Officer Barker; the Keeper gets 1 hold. The Keeper can spend the hold at any time to suggest a course of action Officer Barker would like the Latchkey to take. If the Latchkey does what Officer Barker wants, they mark XP. If they resist, the Keeper gets their hold back.

LOCATIONS

× Cassandra March's teenage bedroom

Posters of '90s rock queens plastered over Pepto pink walls. Framed graduation portrait surrounded by candid photographs with friends. A TV stand topped with stuffed animals, stacks of alt-rock CDs, and a TV/VCR covered in flower stickers.

Paint the Scene: *Cassandra led a fairly charmed life with a loving family despite the circumstances that brought her there in the first place. What do you see that suggests she never stopped being curious about her birth family?*

Special Rule: If the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey Tape in this room while this mystery is still active, direct the following to the Latchkey with the lowest Sensitivity or the narrator of the final Odyssey Tape prompt: "*As soon as the Odyssey Tape finishes, the VCR spits it out like bad table scraps. A choir of dogs begin to bark and yowl throughout the neighborhood as the TV itself erupts into flames. While your fellow Latchkeys tend to the fire, something pulls your attention away; a voice beckoning to you...*" Then, invoke the Mind Control special rule on them (See: Dangers, Mind Control).

The Gibson Home

Two floor single family home. Rooms filled with mounds of clutter. Reeks of sweat, dust, and rot. Alan justifies keeping the Officer Barker memorabilia in case collectors reach out, but in the rare instance they do, he sabotages the sale.

Paint the Scene: *What symbol of Alan Gibson's once-successful art career do you see among the ruinous hoard, and what has neglect done to it?*

..... DOG TOLD ME TO

LOCATIONS (continued)

Big Sun convenience store

Blackened brick exterior. Half-scorched mural depicting a cartoon sun in a white cowboy hat smiling over Deep Lake. Ribbons of CAUTION tape drift across the parking lot. The store serviced the town from the late 1960s until it was set ablaze.

Paint the Scene: *Big Sun used to host an annual Independence Day potluck in their parking lot. As a kid, did you feel like part of the community during these gatherings or did it emphasize the otherness you felt growing up in Deep Lake?*

The Castle home

Thirsty lawn with a sun-bleached FOR SALE sign standing askew. Shattered windows, most of which have been sealed with sheets of particle board. Barren except for cigarette butts, fast food wrappers, and empty beer cans.

Paint the Scene: *This house has become something of a niche tourist destination. What morbid tokens have been left behind by visitors over the years to "honor" the slain Castle family?*

Benjamin Castle's childhood bedroom

Peeling blue sky mural covered in graffiti written by edgy teens and squatters. Moldering, carpeted floor. "Benji's Birthday" measurements on the closet door frame, ages 1-10.

Paint the Scene: *What do your senses pick up that indicates that someone—or something—was in this room before you very recently?*

Dark Star Café

Tables topped with stills from classic B sci-fi movies. Black tile floor with neon pink grid. Noticeably devoid of any overt signs of patriotism despite the upcoming July 4th weekend. This café has been operating in Deep Lake for less than a year, but its owners grew up, left, and returned here.

Paint the Scene: *The owners of this recently-established coffee house have embraced Deep Lake's peculiar history. What touches have they added to honor some of Deep Lake's strangest urban legends?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Cassandra March, sole survivor

Tattoo choker she's worn since 1999. Dark cherry blunt bob. Oversized Psychic Narwhal Messiah tee tucked into paint-flecked cut-offs. Adopted by Deputy March and his wife Debra after the murder of her birth family. She moved to Los Angeles to attend art school, but returned to Deep Lake to spend the summer with her parents.

Quote: *"It was hard growing up after I learned about what happened. About who I was... who I am. Every time I wanted to ask more questions I would just freeze up, like I couldn't breathe or speak. I was afraid I'd seem ungrateful to them. Part of me wishes they never told me, but this town is small and word travels fast. It would've just been a matter of time."*

Otis March, retired policeman

Drooping jowls like a bloodhound. Rifle green eyes. Gentle but precise when he speaks. He found Benjamin Castle roaming the streets twenty-three years ago. Later, when he caught wind of there being a survivor (Cassandra) who would be sent into state care, former Deputy March stepped in and became the girl's legal guardian.

Quote: *"The heat does things to people. Makes them act all kinds of ways. Makes them see things that aren't real. That's what has folks on edge again. The ones claiming they've seen that cartoon dog, though? That's a whole 'nother level of cruelty that I refuse to entertain."*

Debra March, wife and mother

Gregarious hostess. Warm smile festooned between shiny, flushed cheeks. Embroidered blouse with red, white, and blue sequined flowers. She and Otis tried for years to have children of their own without success. She was elated when he presented her with the opportunity to take in Cassandra, but has always carried a small bit of shame for taking advantage of such a horrifically tragic situation.

Quote: *"Oh, you're Cassie's friend? Well come on in! Would you like anything to drink? I just made some pink lemonade. It's lemonade, but I put a splash of cranberry juice in it for that little extra something-something. All natural, too! We don't believe in Country Time in this house, haha. I'm Debra by the way, but please just call me Deb!"*

Dennis Gibson, adult son and caretaker

Frizzy hair pulled into a ponytail. Vintage Black Sabbath tee and cargo shorts. Docile in every capacity. He would be a challenge for an able-bodied person to throw across a room, let alone an arthritic seventy-year-old man. The death of his mother and estrangement of his sister have isolated the pair. He resents his life with his father, but is too dispirited to clean up the mess.

Quote: *"I'm sorry I can't really do anything about the heat in here. We used to have an air conditioner but we haven't been able to get anyone over here to fix it. Same with the ceiling fans. Dad doesn't like strangers over here anyways. We manage though, and at night it gets cooler. The fridge still works, too, and it keeps the Coke cold. At least I've still got that."*

Alan Gibson, aging illustrator

Withered build and wisps of silver white hair. White undershirt yellowed with sweat. Refuses to say "Officer Barker" out loud. By all accounts he was a consummate professional and gentle family man before the Castle murders. When his creation became synonymous with the tragedy and his contract with the Degoya County Sheriff's Department was terminated, he withdrew into himself and his "archiving." Claims that Officer Barker visited him in the night and asked if he could "come inside for dinner," and doesn't remember anything between opening his bedroom window and waking up in the back of a police cruiser.

Quote: *"I had so many things I wanted to do with him. I wanted the whole country to know his name, and how proud I was of him. I even thought I could open up a little shop or museum for folks who loved him as much as I did! I should have burned every trace of him from the face of the earth after that night, but I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I still can't."*

Verdell Reynolds Jr., heir to Big Sun convenience store

Air Jordans dirtied by ashen debris. Airbrushed "Reynolds Y2K Family Reunion" tee. Sweat beading on his brow and down his neck. Exhausted and angry after tending to the wreckage for his father all day, but keeps that bottled up behind an ever-thinning veneer of courtesy. He has worked at Big Sun since high school, and was set to inherit the store when his father retired. The fire started by his former co-worker, Casey, has made the future uncertain for both of them.

Quote: *"Casey was a weirdo, but like Shaggy from Scooby Doo weird. We weren't close, but we were cool. Never in a million-fuckin'-years did I think he'd pull some shit like this though. He knew what the store meant to me and my dad! He better be glad he's in jail right now, otherwise I would be."*

Winnifred "Winnie" Tinsley, bewitched teen

Weeks away from having her braces removed. Black apron with the Dark Star logo printed on it — planets orbiting a giant coffee bean. Fingernails bitten down to nubs. She was on the fast track to becoming valedictorian of La Fresca Senior High when she returned in the fall, but dousing herself in gasoline and breaking into Cassandra's car to fill it with fireworks may have jeopardized that. After listening to her describe her brief encounter with Officer Barker, Cassandra dropped all charges. She has miraculously been able to keep her job as a barista at Dark Star Café.

Quote: *"I mean, yeah, it was weird and kinda scary. But part of me feels like if this whole thing stops people from only seeing me as a try-hard teacher's pet, it may not be so bad after all."*

REWARDS

- Benjamin Castle's homemade papier-mâché Officer Barker mask. Add it to Your Corner of the House.
- The Officer Barker anti-crime pop EP, "Ruff Stuff," on a format of your choosing. Add it to Your Corner of the House. Paint the Scene: Name one of the songs on the album.
- If Cassandra is alive when the mystery is resolved, Otis March becomes a recurring Side Character; you get 1 extra Clue on the Meddling Move when you consult him about criminal history in Deep Lake.
- All the Latchkeys get access to a new move: **A Damn Fine Cup of Coffee.** When you perform the Nostalgic Move at Dark Star Café and you successfully clear one of your Conditions, add 1 to Reason (no max) for the duration of the Day Phase.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

LAST
CHANCE
GASOLINE



..... ON STRANGE WINGS

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Just about every rural region has its own cryptid, from Loch Ness to Boggy Creek to the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. Degoya County has more than its fair share. Few can agree on precisely what the winged Deep Lake Devils are: gargoyles, vampires, demons, aliens, mutant animals (bats, birds, insects, or some inexplicable combination), but everyone in town knows where they come from. Los Ojos de los Muertos ("The Eyes of the Dead") are mounds of labyrinthine caverns that lead down, ever deeper, to a vast underground reservoir of oil, an ancient necropolis, or the literal Gates of Hell, depending on who you're asking.

For the past few decades, stories of the Deep Lake Devils have taken a more whimsical bent, blamed for everything from tardiness to distracted driving to acts of vandalism. All of that changed last week when livestock around the county started turning up with strange wounds that could be characterized as bitemarks. Some insist that a prized calf was completely exsanguinated. With the Degoya County Open Bull Riding Competition coming up, accusations of sabotage are to be expected, but the whole "Watch the Skies" crowd has also come back out of the woodwork. Whatever the actual cause, the results are unmistakable... suspicion and fear.

Pose the following to each Latchkey: What dubious claim or local legend have you heard about the Deep Lake Devils and what personal experience leads you to believe that there's some kernel of truth behind the tall tales?

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the highest Vitality or any Latchkey who has expressed a relevant interest: What extreme sport or activity captured your youthful imagination and how did you determine it was never going to be a viable career choice?

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What are the Deep Lake Devils, and are they terrestrial or are they from another planet or dimension? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Unlock the next appropriate Question.

Question: If they're terrestrial, what can you offer them to barter for peace? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by facilitating the delivery. Satisfied, the Deep Lake Devils recede into their caves and abandon the surface world once more.

Question: If they're from elsewhere, how can you banish them from our world? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by sending the Deep Lake Devils back from whence they came, never to return.

THE KEY OF ADRENALINE

- Each Latchkey narrates a flashback when they took a big risk or beat the odds at the expense of someone unexpected.

MOMENTS

- > The distinctive smell of old bones.
- > An indistinct figure, motionless but wavering in the haze of afternoon heat.
- > Something unseen scraping across the roof of the car on a lonely desert road.
- > Three wizened figures pleading with four different gods for rain.
- > A cacophony of screeching in the distance, intensifying as daylight fades.
- > A Side Character hung upside-down like a side of beef.

THE DEEP LAKE DEVILS

While there's considerable debate about what the Deep Lake Devils are, three things are known for certain. They fly, they lair in Los Ojos de los Muertos, and they mostly come out at night. Mostly. The exact nature and physical characteristics of the Deep Lake Devils are left to be determined by the Latchkeys. The Devils are indeed in the details.

The Latchkeys may also be identifying what these creatures want and, subsequently, whether it's something they would be willing to surrender to appease the creatures or if a violent confrontation is inevitable. Bear in mind that regardless of the grim truth, others may not be so willing to abide by the Latchkeys' eventual decision.

Special Rule: The Deep Lake Devils can sense and perhaps communicate with any Latchkey who has marked **The Chromatic Desert**. This may be due to heightened senses such as sonar, telepathy, or extradimensional vision, or it may simply be a result of some otherworldly nature.

If the Latchkeys ignore the Deep Lake Devils...

If ignored, the attacks escalate, from livestock to a beloved pet, someone walking home alone, a group of teenagers tailgating too late in an otherwise empty parking lot, everyone attending the Degoya County Open Bull Riding Competition at the Chambliss Park Fairgrounds in La Fresca.

DANGERS

Death from above

The Deep Lake Devils are patient hunters and have been known to attack alone or in packs. While a single Devil might be able to snatch up a dog, two or more can work together to carry off larger prey. They prefer to use cover of darkness or their surroundings to strike with little warning. Smaller victims will be carted off to their cave lair, but cattle and the like are subject to "hit and run" attacks.

The Eyes of the Dead

Los Ojos de los Muertos are a series of lava tubes and natural caverns that riddle the nearby mesas like prairie dog mounds. While dormant now, volcanic activity made the area surprisingly fertile, and ancient fir trees stand sentinel over the whole region. There are a number of abandoned archaeological digs and some signs of prospecting over the past century or so, but no significant human activity.

Experienced spelunkers report groundwater caverns deep in the network, like the cenotes of the Yucatán. It is far easier to move downward than to ascend back out, and the winding nature of the tunnels makes getting turned around and lost a near certainty. Because of the unpredictable nature of the caves and the possibility of recent events attracting inexperienced adventure-seekers, the National Parks Service has suspended caving permits for the site until further notice.

LOCATIONS

Uncle Jimbo's Desert Museum

Highway travelers will start seeing the handmade wooden signs for Uncle Jimbo's Desert Museum for miles as they approach, each positioned next to the mile marker and advertising a "2 Headed Mystery Lizard," "The Snake Den," "The Desert Fish," "Cold Beer," and "The Monster That Flies (sic) from the Sky!" At a lonely intersection of two state highways, they'll find a dusty barn full of odds and ends, so much kindling alongside rusted drums of kerosene. A cooler full of overpriced bottled beverages and ice cream treats groans in protest next to the cash register.

Paint the Scene: How can you tell that the overwhelming majority of the exhibits and supposed "folk crafts" were created purely from industrial scrap and Jimbo's imagination?

Last Chance Gas

During the day, it would be easy to overlook this roadside rest stop as abandoned. At night, the flickering fluorescent light tubes spill their light out across the empty highway like a lighthouse positioned at the edge of a sea of dust. A pair of garage bays betray some sign of life as piles of tools are positioned around a dented and scratched station wagon that has certainly seen better days. The bare bones mini-mart contains the essentials for road trips and a single dusty spinner rack of souvenirs, the result of an aborted marketing campaign by the Degoya County Tourism Board. Tee shirts and bumper stickers depict a pair of wings and two googly eyes with the slogan, "Speak of the Deep Lake Devils."

Paint the Scene: What suggests that the "Last Chance" nature of this place is no mere marketing ploy, and that there is still a very real danger in venturing unprepared into the vast, empty space between roadside outposts?

The Saguaro Motel

A giant green neon cactus man beckons travelers to this motel with an idiotic grin and a sombrero tilted at a jaunty angle. One of his arms blinks intermittently, giving the impression that he's waving. Rooms are arranged in a U-formation like the caravanseraí of old, but show few signs of actual life. An office sits prominently out front with an empty ice bin and a vending machine containing the most recent copy of the La Fresca Tribune. The whole compound is painted in pastel colors faded by the unrelenting sun and chipped away by wind and wear.

Paint the Scene: The "No" part of the neon "No Vacancy" sign almost feels like a joke now, but what gives you the impression that this was once a popular way station for those who work and live on the road?

..... ON STRANGE WINGS

LOCATIONS (continued)

× Spider's Basecamp

A squatter's camp sits between the highway and the cavern-riddled mesas, positioned at visual distance to both. There are a surprising amount of modern amenities, including a Quonset hut and a gas-powered generator with mini fridge, television, VCR, and an original Atari 2600 console with faux wood paneling but no cartridges, all outside and exposed to the elements.

Paint the Scene: *What suggests the resident of this camp was expecting visitors?*

Special Rule: The first time the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey tape here, they will all notice a faint, high-pitched whine as if the tape is dragging and stretching near its breaking point. Afterwards, the Latchkey with the highest Reason (or Keeper's choice in case of a tie) will gain the Condition: Pure White Noise. This Latchkey will start to hear the whine at all times, even when asleep. It seems to intensify whenever concentration or attentiveness is required. While actively ignoring the noise, the Latchkey will still suffer from "tunnel hearing," making it a struggle to even hold a conversation. When making a Night Move, the Latchkey with this Condition may roll with advantage as all other sound is drowned out by the noise except for a single whispered warning. The noise then fades out entirely and the Latchkey's hearing is restored. This is the only way to clear this Condition.

Los Ojos de los Muertos

Many of the caverns of New Mexico show signs of past human habitation, whether it's potsherds or petroglyphs. Everything about this area, however, seems designed to reject human intrusion, from the looming fir trees to the steep incline of the caves, like hungry throats that devour light and anything else that dares venture past the limestone teeth. The stories of what lies within range from the likely to the fantastical, from bats and subterranean lakes to oil deposits and silver veins to glowing lava pools and ancient tombs.

Paint the Scene: *What signs of recent activity, human or otherwise, immediately draw your attention, and how does it make you feel to consider the notion that you may not be alone?*

The bone pit

Multiple tunnels spill out into this cavernous shaft. The bottom is filled with bones, some bleached and broken, others alarmingly fresh. Many skeletons are intertwined, making the original source creatures virtually unrecognizable but suggesting the likelihood of being impaled on a jutting rib or skeletal limb. The sheer volume of dead may rival the current population of living people and animals in Deep Lake.

Special Rule: The first time any Latchkey enters the bone pit (willingly or otherwise), they gain the Condition: Left for Dead. While this will prove disadvantageous in many human interactions, it provides advantage when acting to avoid or hide from the Deep Lake Devils.

Paint the Scene (for Latchkeys who have marked The Fathomless Well): *Generations of the dead cry out for recognition, either as prey or as once willing sacrifices. What message are you tasked with bearing back to the land of the living?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Glenn Neville, the prodigal son

Denim on denim. Mutton chop sideburns. Knuckles and knees busted, torn, and scabbed. Glenn moved back from Indianapolis after inheriting the family ranch. He's since sold off the majority of the livestock and machinery except for a recalcitrant old goat ("Skip"). Glenn converted the equestrian track and equipment into ramps and jumps for his dirt bikes, performing progressively dangerous stunts for an audience of one unimpressed goat.

Quote: *"Evel Knievel totally changed the game, y'know? The man was a pioneer. He was like the Hulk Hogan of motocross."*

Uncle Jimbo, curator of the Desert Museum

A small, kindly face in a wild mane of gray hair. Wears a turquoise "Uncle Jimbo's Desert Museum" sweatshirt with the price tag still dangling off the sleeve, khaki pants, and Velcro sneakers. Eager to provide a guided tour of his exhibits and wares, gesturing wildly like a circus ringmaster. When the sun sets over the mesas, Uncle Jimbo closes up shop and bars the door. Anyone inside has mere minutes to make a choice: Finalize their purchases before leaving or stay the night.

Quote: *"Oh, I still do a fair bit of business, but this crossroads used to be a very important trading post. Lots of history out here, more lost than found, some of it very dark. Here, take one of these as Uncle Jimbo's gift to you. No charge. I seen how you was lookin' at it."*

Nikki Connolly, a gas station attendant and grease monkey

Grease-stained Toronto Blue Jays baseball cap. Overalls tucked into oversized cowboy boots. Wry smile that suggests, "It's worse than that." Nikki is a skilled mechanic and engine whisperer. She's heard bizarre sounds during the overnight shift including what she firmly believes were two Deep Lake Devils fighting on the roof of the garage. Ever since then, she listens to AM talk radio after dark and keeps the volume cranked up to the max. She is currently working to repair a station wagon that got pretty scratched and banged up before running headlong into a ditch.

Quote: *"You folks all right? You look like you seen a ghost. Gotta be extra careful out here. Easy to get white line fever and just drift off the highway. Worse than hitting something is realizing you're out in the middle of nowhere without right knowing the way back."*

Mrs. Hall, a nosy hotel manager

A flamingo-print housecoat drawn tight with a black sash. Scalp covered in more plastic curlers than actual hair. Breath like turpentine fumes. Able to juggle a room key, a lit cigarette, a glass of bourbon, a flashlight, and probably a bowling pin without any apparent signs of difficulty. She is always interested in hearing about grisly accidents out on the highway and will inquire about anything so unusual as an out-of-state driver's license. The whereabouts and disposition of her presumed spouse are both subject to speculation.

Quote: *"Back when the slaughterhouse was still running, them pig trucks would barrel through here two wide like they was drag racing. Round about '68, one of 'em hit a VW bus full of hippies head-on. Highway Patrol confiscated all my trash bags trying to sort out what was hippie and what was hog."*

Dr. Diana Warner, a zoologist with expertise in chiroptera

Strawberry blonde hair pulled back into a tight ponytail. Simple gray jumpsuit with tool belt and rugged boots. An iconic Turkey red bandana tied around her neck, ready for use as protection against the desert dust and the ammonia stench of guano. An experienced and capable spelunker, Dr. Warner is disappointed to discover that she cannot get a permit to survey the bats of Los Ojos de los Muertos and is debating whether or not she should just do it anyway, knowing that she won't be able to legally act upon her findings. She is staying at the Saguaro Motel until she can work up the nerve to go explore the caves on her own.

Quote: *"No, I don't hate the vampire bat. Quite the contrary... but they simply cannot coexist with mankind. That war is lost. Humanity isn't going anywhere, so I must exterminate them, gently, respectfully."*

Dr. Isaac Turner, "Anthropologist of Evil"

Barrel-chested. Tailored vest and pressed pants with his sport coat folded neatly over one arm like a Roman Senator. Stentorian voice of authority and confidence. Dr. Turner is an academic demonologist who has been working the daytime talk show circuit for a good twenty years or so, mostly commenting on such topics as Satanic Ritual Abuse and affluenza. He will deftly avoid questions about how and why he became a defrocked priest, but will readily acknowledge that it was due in part to an unfortunate and preventable death. His station wagon is being repaired at Last Chance Gas after an encounter with something out on the highway. Dr. Turner believes he simply fell asleep at the wheel after a long, dull day and is thankful that he woke up from his nightmare in time to avoid hitting anyone or anything more impactful than a ditch, but he can be easily convinced otherwise. In the meantime, he paces the parking lot of the Saguaro Motel where he's staying while he waits.

Quote: *"Evil isn't just the province of theology and superstition. It's a very real force, as inescapable as gravity."*

..... PUBLIC ACCESS



..... THE VOID ANGELS

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

Everyone in Deep Lake has their own story about a close call in a storm. It's practically a local tradition to swap tall tales of getting lost in the desert, sheltering from a hailstorm, or almost getting struck by lightning. But it's never just the weather—it's the ghostly headlights that chased them down a dark highway, the fist-sized hail shaped like faces, or the way a vast thundercloud spread over them like a pair of shadowy wings before lightning split the sky and melted the sand at their feet.

"I know it sounds crazy," they say, "but it's all true!"

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the most marks on the Key of the Child (or whoever you wish in the case of a tie): You have a story from childhood about your own strange, weather-related close call in Deep Lake. What is it, and how come no one believed you at the time?

Now another seemingly impossible story is buzzing throughout town: a thunderstorm like Degoya County has never seen, dark clouds swallowing the sun for seven hours, lightning tongues lashing the earth. Entire vehicles have vanished, and a group of hikers went missing without a trace.

Some folks are saying this has happened before—that the storms would get worse every year around the time of the corn harvest, until it seemed like they'd caused enough tragedy or plain bad luck, then would cease. In ages past, farmers would offer the best of their crops to the angels that lived beyond the mountains, and hope it was enough to be ignored by them for another year. Now, it seems, the angels have returned—bringing the endless hunger of the Void.

Pose the following to the Latchkey with the most marks on the Key of Desolation (or whoever you wish in the case of a tie): How do you know this storm is the work of supernatural entities?

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Why are the so-called angels wreaking havoc? (Complexity: 6)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by discovering what is attracting these entities to Deep Lake and finding a way to drive them off.

Question: How can the so-called angels be appeased? (Complexity: 8)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by making a ritual offering the angels will accept, causing them to withdraw from Deep Lake for the time being. Describe the nature of the ritual and what offering is made. Additionally, the Latchkeys get access to a new move, [Eye of the Storm](#).

EYE OF THE STORM

When you mark **The Chromatic Desert**, instead of doing what it says, you may instead be removed from any immediate danger, swept away to drift in the Void. You do not know when you will return—the Keeper will bring you back at a moment of their choosing, though within two phases of play. When you return, a part of the Void stays with you. Choose one of the following Conditions, none of which can be removed: Precious Memories Lost, A Strange and Insatiable Hunger, Cold and Vacant, Eerie and Unsettling.

THE KEY OF THE GLITTERING VOID

Each of the Latchkeys recalls a dream of flight, of soaring beyond the world before falling from the sky and waking a moment before impact. What wondrous visions lingered a moment before fading?

MOMENTS

- > A patch of full sunlight lingers at dusk, then vanishes in a curtain of darkness.
- > Colossal shadows glide across the ground at midday, vast and silent.
- > A solar eclipse. The wind dies. The land is silent with anticipation.
- > Two pickup trucks nearly collide at an empty intersection, both drivers craning from their windows to stare upward.
- > Circling vultures descend in a frenzied spiral, tearing at each other in a cloud of feathers and gore.
- > In the dead afternoon calm, the sky erupts in a hundred descending voices, which cease with a deafening thunderclap.

THE ANGELS FROM THE OUTER DARKNESS

Embodiments of shadow and stars, their anguished primordial screams rend the veil between this world and all that presses in to consume it. Born of the Void, their ravenous hunger is never sated. They long for a taste of the earth from which they were banished, of all things bright and beautiful. Dark clouds are their aura, rumbling thunder their discontent, and lightning their fury. The first people called them the Sky Dwellers and other names, and performed rituals to keep them far away, but those traditions have largely been forgotten.

If the Latchkeys ignore the Angels...

Deep Lake and the surrounding region will be plagued with continued attacks by these entities. People, animals, and vehicles will be snatched into the sky. Weather patterns will become increasingly erratic as the veil between this world and the void continues to be torn open. The ensuing chaos might draw other entities, eager to lay claim to their own prizes.

DANGERS

Tearing apart the veil between worlds

The presence of the angels causes strange shifts as the fabric of reality struggles to repair itself. Thunderstorms gather without warning, lightning strikes seem almost targeted. Nearby structures become unstable with otherworldly vibrations. Anyone in close proximity to the angels may experience spontaneous levitation. Gazing upon their form directly may cause temporary blindness. Their thunderous voices are deafening, and may continue to echo in the minds of listeners.

Claimed as tribute.

The movements of the angels are unpredictable, and there is no telling what objects or creatures they will choose to consume next. Draw their attention and you will simply be snatched into the sky.

LOCATIONS

Corn fields

Towering stalks twice your height, rustling husks concealing and revealing, glimpses of gold kernels kissed by the sun.

Paint the Scene: How do the creatures sheltering here use the stalks and furrows to keep a wary eye on you?

Firestone Ranch

Elevated, territorial-style home with wrap-around porch, rock garden, scenic view of Deep Lake just visible in the distance. A large barn, several training corrals and a collection of horses are visible from the driveway.

Paint the Scene: How have the owners overextended themselves in an effort to attract more tourists?

× The Lounging Lizard Saloon

Dead neon sign featuring a winking lizard in a cowboy hat, weathered stucco and dusty gravel outside, dim lamps and country radio inside. Only old-timers and road warriors seem to stop here—there's plenty of nicer places back in town.

Paint the Scene: Which patron looks strangely familiar to one of the Latchkeys, and why do you try to avoid them?

Special Rule: If the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey tape here, the end of the tape will show a scene from inside the Lounging Lizard, but back when the place was new. Pose the following to the Latchkey with the most marks on the Key of Desolation (or whoever you wish in the case of a tie): The scene shows one of your parents when they were younger, enjoying themselves in the bar. What happens to them in the scene that causes you to feel a deep sense of dread or loss?

A trailer

Loose canopy awning flapping in the wind, collection of lawn ornaments and beer can sculptures that mostly resemble wildlife. Bumper stickers include Bigfoot Crossing, Not All Who Wander Are Lost, Honk If You're Horny and Homeland Security: Fighting Terrorism Since 1492.

Paint the Scene: How has someone made a comfortable home here, in such an inhospitable environment?

Radio tower

An imposing monolith of rusted steel and cable silhouetted against the sky, surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. A trio of red bulbs blink at the zenith like sleepless alien eyes. The husks of small birds and insects lie scattered around the base.

Paint the Scene: How do your senses react to the strange frequencies of the tower? What jarring visions flash through your mind?

Cliffside caves

A narrow canyon of brilliant red and gold sandstone dotted with watchful cave entrances far above. A dirt road barred by a padlocked gate and sign indicating the park is closed to the public. The nearby visitors booth is boarded shut, only the stapled corners of old flyers left behind.

Paint the Scene: How is it obvious that the park sign has been ignored?

..... THE VOID ANGELS

SIDE CHARACTERS

Ricky Moreno, an amateur filmmaker

Paisley button-down shirt, obnoxious haircut, excessive cologne and recording gear. Saw a rumor on an amateur UFO investigator forum and came to get the first report. As oblivious as he is enthusiastic.

Quote (speaking to a handheld camera): *"It's just another quiet afternoon in Deep Lake, New Mexico. The sky is clear, the sun shines bright over the region's scenic cornfields, and local residents are going about their day. But this sleepy town is the site of a SHOCKING series of paranormal events, which have somehow flown under the radar... UNTIL NOW."*

Charlotte Haywood, a rancher

Dazzling smile and bedazzled cowboy hat, indigo jeans, yellow scarf. Continues the family business of horse-riding lessons and equestrian shows since her husband's tragic passing several years ago. Slowly renovating one of the lofts to rent out to luxury campers.

Quote: *"My husband used to talk about seeing things around here as a kid. Flying saucers, the moth-man or something. He was obsessed with that stuff, had this huge movie collection. Overactive imagination if you ask me. Plus that was back before he got sober."*

Larry Garcia, a utilities worker

Company uniform, broad shoulders and fresh cut fade, constantly chewing gum and nodding along to earbuds. Called in at the last minute to cover a second shift, running on energy drinks and cigarettes. Just wants to go home.

Quote: *"You ever look at all these roads, all these phone poles and wires we put everywhere, and just wonder what things were like before we showed up? Just silent, empty desert. No cars, no radios, no... billboards advertising vacation cruises no one can afford... We're just little specks in the universe, man. Anyway. Sorry. It's been a long day."*

Brad and Donna Wilson, tourists

Matching cowboy hats, extreme tan lines, gargantuan Silverado hauling a deluxe Airstream trailer. Riding a wave of early successes in their online startup, taking an extended cross-country trip before "taking things to the next level!"

Quote: *"Beautiful country, everything's so scenic, you know? We were up at the lake yesterday, made it just in time for the sunset. Do you see a lot of those big birds up here? What are they called, condors? Aren't they supposed to be extinct or something? The guidebook never said anything about that."*

The Deep Lake Warriors, a biker club

Leather jackets emblazoned with thunderbolts and feathers, striking tattoos and jewelry, always wearing sunglasses. An unofficial roadside assistance group for the community. Their membership is mostly Native and queer, and quick to embrace newcomers or kick anyone's ass who tries to start trouble. Some names, if you need them: Rae, Will, Sammi, Mira, Knuckles, Half-Tank, Big Mouse, Ghost.

Quote: *"Shit's about to get real around here. Stick around, you'll see. Probably better if you leave though. But if you think you can keep up... we ride under the stars tonight."*

Joshua Green, a farmer

Dusty overalls and gold bandana, deep tan, pensive gaze to the horizon. The family once grew several varieties of heirloom corn, but turned to genetically modified seeds in hopes of reversing a steady decline in their crops.

Quote: *"We made a huge mistake. I don't know how we'll ever make it back to the way things were. I hate to say it, but there's no future here. But what else am I supposed to do?"*

Alice Romero, a trucker

Rolled flannel sleeves, intricate floral tattoos, NOPE beanie. To all appearances, a lone wolf content to travel long and empty roads. A fair number of beers in, she might mention a more personal mission to track down her estranged wife who hit the road with little explanation.

Quote: *"I don't know, man. I've seen some pretty weird shit on the road. Small towns like this especially. You're gonna have to be more specific than that..."*

Mateo, an elder

Windswept gray hair, twinkling eyes and deep smile creases, hand rolled cigarettes, I Want to Believe t-shirt. Wry humor, cackling laugh. Keeps tabs on all the local kids by letting them check in on him.

Quote: *"Don't listen to those city folk. It's got nothing to do with 'unseasonal storms.' My aunt used to say those are the Sky Dwellers. They ruled here once, before the first people were born from the caves. They were banished to the Outer Darkness, part of an agreement long, long ago. They return each season to claim the offerings they're due. But people here, maybe we fucked up and they're angry now. Or maybe the Sky Dwellers got a little greedy, and came to take back more than corn offerings this time. Who knows?"*

REWARDS

- A large claw of an unidentified species; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A damaged radio, speakers melted and circuits fried, which continues to pick up nearby stations; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A hunting knife with an elk horn handle, blade inlaid with lightning motifs; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A piece of smoky quartz which glows when storms are near; add it to your Corner of the House.
- An unsettling angel ornament; add it to Your Corner of the House.

CLUES

- Unfamiliar star constellations, appearing in full daylight.
- A radio weather forecast interrupted by distorted screeching.
- A new memorial in an unlikely place, store-bought carnations withering against scorched earth.
- A pair of holes burned through a roof in ragged, star-like shapes.
- Tattooed wings with brilliant rainbow feathers.
- Magazine article on the declining traditions of a local Native tribe, as there are few surviving elders able to teach elements of foraging, medicine, traditional art, and ceremony.
- A massive swarm of sphinx moths take flight, a writhing dark star against the sun.
- Deep burn marks in branching fractal patterns.
- Local radio reports a record number of lightning strikes this season—and associated deaths.
- A heap of satellite dishes, trailing warped mounting bolts and torn aluminum siding.
- Petroglyph featuring a thunderbird, beak and talons of lightning, feathers like arrows.
- A Side Character painstakingly avoids looking up at all times.
- Running footprints in the sand, further and further apart, ending abruptly.
- A curiously arranged collection of angel statuary.
- Newspaper clipping from 1992, outlining the debate on genetically modified "decay resistant" corn vs. small scale traditional agricultural practices.
- An extinct variety of jeweled maize, defiantly reaching for the sun.
- A spooked stallion leaps a fence, dashing madly for cover.
- A bird carcass, charred from the inside, beak stretched open in eternal song.
- A distant plane enters a patch of cloud and never exits.
- Withered corn stalks fall from the sky, striking power lines in a cascade of sparks, piercing the ground like spears.

NOTES



..... PALE HORSE

Note: This mystery can only be played after Slumber Party Summoning Circle, and only if Linnea Rodenbecker survived the resolution of the mystery.

PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

The lady on the Morning News coldly announces that another car fatality occurred last night in Degoya County, bringing the total to four this week, and spurring some to speculate about the return of the old street racing ring that haunted Deep Lake back in the '80s... when there is a knock at the door. It's Linnea Rodenbecker. She is disheveled and has not slept.

When you get some water or coffee in her, she tells you how she'd been visited by the spirit of Kate Burnside. Kate was Deep Lake's top street racer back in the '80s, able to outpace even the fiercest opponents from Phoenix, Los Angeles, and beyond—she even once bragged that she could outrace Death.

Well, Death must have heard her, because in the summer of 1986, there came a racer from the east—from Waco, maybe, or somewhere beyond that—in a classic, gray Ford Mustang. The stranger and Kate raced on the Mercado Street Circuit, where the old power plant was abandoned back in the '60s. It's Deep Lake's most dangerous run, with a hairpin curve at the bluffs overlooking the city. The Mustang was the only car to reach the finish line. Kate's Chevelle SS was found near the hairpin on the wrong side of the guard rail. According to legend, the Pale Gray Mustang was never seen again.

But now the sound of racing cars rolls like thunder through the night once more. The night meets have begun again in earnest. It's worse than it was in the '80s: people are dying.

Kate's appearance in Linnea's dream must be connected. Linnea remembers being in a car with Kate, and the Pale Gray Mustang—Death, she insists—was chasing after them. They only narrowly escaped. When she saw herself in the mirror later that night, Kate was standing where she should be, saying, "Help me. It's coming for me."

Pose the following to a Latchkey of your choice: *You grew up hearing about the crash in '86. The way the story is told, a red moon was hanging over the sky for what felt like weeks that summer. What other ominous portents were always mentioned that you've noticed recently, and tell you with no uncertainty—along with Linnea's visions—that Death stalks Deep Lake once more?*

Death comes and goes; but they were never meant to stay in one place this long, and nothing good can come of their lingering here.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Did Kate escape the Other Side on her own, or is she being pulled back to our world by someone or something else? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Unlock the next appropriate Question.

Question: If Kate escaped on her own, what prevented her from beating Death in their race? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by helping Kate complete her task, then race Death in a rematch; if you win, gain access to the custom move Unfinished Business (see below). If you lose, Kate is dragged back to the Other Side (her relevant Reward becomes unavailable).

Question: If Kate is being dragged back by outside forces, who is the culprit, and how are they trying to anchor her spirit in this world? (Complexity: 4)

Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by stopping the ritual, whatever that entails.

Custom Move — UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Death can be beaten. You've done it before. When the Keeper narrates your death as the result of a missed roll, you may mark a box below. If you do, state that you cannot die yet, you have unfinished business; say what it is, then narrate how you survive through sheer force, luck, or will. The Latchkeys share this track.

THE KEY OF THE ROARING ECHO

Each Latchkey narrates a too-real dream of a past life. Who were you, and what do we see in your dream that you failed to accomplish because of your finite lifespan?

MOMENTS

- > You're sitting at a stoplight when another car pulls up beside you. Two revs of the engine, the universal invitation to race. The driver's smirk is offensive. The light will turn green in just a few seconds.
- > Thunder rolls overhead, like cars chasing each other through the heavens.
- > An old man sitting nearby stares blankly into middle distance, his breath ragged. His feet and right hand are mimicking the motion of gas and clutch. He is shifting into second gear. Then third. Then fourth.
- > A dog with three heads sits nearby, its owner a cloaked stranger. The dog heads look your way, sniffing, then snarling. A moment later you realize it's actually three nearly identical dogs, seen at an odd angle.
- > You wake with a start. Your heart is racing. The last thing you remember is the sound of screaming, or an engine redlining. Or both.
- > You find yourself short of breath, and a nearby car starts struggling sluggishly. As your lungs start to burn for air, the car's engine whirs and whines, but the gears fail to catch. You both cough. Your vision starts going white. You feel a sharp pain—once, twice around your lowest ribs, and the car's supercharger finally opens up. Air rushes into the engine with a sucking gasp. It is the most delicious breath of air you have ever taken.

DEATH, FOURTH HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Drives a Mustang Boss 429, gray with black racing stripes. Death itself is invisible via window tint. If ever seen outside of its car, they are an androgynous figure in all black professional racing gear, their face obscured by a skull-painted racing helmet. A character with **The Chromatic Desert** marked sees a glitchy black void where the car should be. Death is more of a force than an active threat. It cares not for the meddling of the Latchkeys—only Kate, whose soul it wants to bring to the Other Side. But Death's mere presence is a problem: where Death lingers too long, flowers wilt, jobs and romances end, food gives way to rot. Because of the form it takes, a self-destructive urge begins to spread throughout Deep Lake, called the Need for Speed.

If the Latchkeys ignore the Pale Mustang...

Death's increased presence will spur more and more people into giving into the Need for Speed. Instances of people seriously injured or dying in high-speed accidents will continue to grow. A beloved Side Character may succumb completely to the Need for Speed.

DANGERS

The Need for Speed

Something like a memetic virus, brought on by Death's mere proximity, causing people to drive faster or more dangerously, not just to get somewhere, but to feel that thrill. The afflicted may talk with fear at the resurgence of street racing, sing the virtues of vehicular safety in public, be every bit a paragon of safe driving when off the road—then still run a stop sign on the way home, or "split the gap" or find themselves gunning it when the light turns green. They will find every way to justify this in their own head. Many people begin to organize at night, bringing about a resurgence of semi-organized street racing. While this mystery is active, a Latchkey moving from one location to another may have to make a Day/Night Move to avoid a dangerous driver zooming by them. Finally, as a reaction, the Keeper can give a Latchkey the Condition: The Need for Speed.

The Deep Lake Speed Competition Club

An informal semi-organization of street racing enthusiasts from all walks of life, from punk high schoolers to business owners (and, nowadays, maybe their kids), to even organized crime. At the lowest level, races are for sums of cash, usually a few hundred dollars. Higher up, the payouts get bigger, but so do the stakes. The ultimate stake is to race for "pink slips," the certificate of ownership of the loser's vehicle. Stakes are handed over to a neutral observer before the race. Failure to honor losses usually results in the victor and their friends tracking down the offender's vehicle and slashing its tires, bashing out the windows or lights, or stealing the vehicle wholesale. Some street racing cars, if you need them: Audi 100 Coupe S, Nissan 200SX, Honda CR-X, Toyota Corolla GT-S, Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C3), Mazda Miata, Aston Martin V8 Vantage.

Degoya County Highway Patrol

If the problem grows severe enough, the Highway Patrol may begin setting up checkpoints in a vain attempt to curb reckless driving. They would love nothing more than parade some upstart youths like the Latchkeys in front of the press and extoll the dangers of speeding. It is worth noting that they are not invulnerable to the Need for Speed themselves, and if so enthralled might happily play the hounds to the Latchkeys hares on the roads.

..... PUBLIC ACCESS

..... PALE HORSE

LOCATIONS

The Meet

Only available during the Night phase. Somewhere on the streets of Deep Lake (pick one: the flat outskirts/the foothills/a long, four-story parking garage by the mall/Main Street/near the Mercado Street power plant/somewhere else). Pick a different place when revisited. College party, almost Burning Man vibes. Cars of all make and model (and condition) lined up side-by-side. Several of them have been modded cosmetically. Music plays loudly on sound systems. Every now and then, a drag race rockets through, or cars will do donuts and burnouts nearby. A red moon hangs above.

Paint the Scene: *What outlandish modifications have people done to their cars that cross the line from "neat" to "a little death culty?"*

The hairpin curve

A sharp turn, though easily negotiable at slow speeds. The tips of the power plant's cooling towers visible over the hill on the high side. A small pull-off before the guardrail, space for about two or three cars to park before a sudden dropoff. Past that, a picturesque view of Degoya County's skyline, maybe one of the best in the town, especially at night.

Paint the Scene (Day): *What do you see that reminds you of why you left?*

Paint the Scene (Night): *What do you see that makes you wish you'd stayed?*

Crown Auto Repair

A small, two-lift car garage. Cars and trucks sit in various states of repair in the lot out front. Sounds of metal clanking, a hammer drill. An engine block hangs from chains over a workbench off to the side. Pot of coffee on a filing cabinet near the door. Hiding under a plain tarp in the back, an old Chevelle SS, mostly restored, but still needing just a little more work.

Paint the Scene: *What do you see that tells you that the mechanic who runs this shop was once Deep Lake's racing queen?*

The Old Mercado Street power plant

A chain-link fence meekly attempts to ward entry to an empty lot beside the brick husk of an old two-stack power plant. Graffiti artists use the walls for practice. Broken glass, rusty nails, signs of vagrancy. A tent nearby. On the inside, the building is gutted entirely save for the main control room.

Paint the Scene: *What graffiti reminds you that Death is never far from here?*

×The Control Room

Knobs and levers line the walls. Charts and dials and unlit buttons connect to nothing. A pair of mirrored desks dominate the center of the room. No power, but a single TV screen on the center of the far wall shows white static. A slot for a VCR sits right beneath.

Paint the Scene: *What suggests that the control room may have had more to do with Deep Lake as a whole than the power plant itself?*

..... SPECIAL RULE

When the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey Tape in The Control Room, pick a favorite Side Character (preferably from a resolved Mystery), then precede the third prompt with the following: *"The Odyssey tape's image flickers and bends, as if it was spliced over. After a moment of tracking, a driver safety PSA begins playing. The words 'Buckle up, Degoya!' appear over the screen to cheery, though distorted music. We see [the Side Character] strapped too tightly into a car's passenger seat, eyes wide and pale with fear. The camera zooms out slightly and pans over to the driver's seat, where a nondescript figure in black racing gear and a skull-painted helmet calmly sits down and buckles their seat belt. The driver seems to look to the camera for a moment before driving off, and we clearly see it is a classic Pale Gray Mustang. The recording warps, then—"* Immediately continue with the third prompt as if nothing happened.

Any attempts to reach the Side Character in the PSA fail. The following morning, the Latchkeys can be informed that the Side Character passed away in their sleep overnight.

Then, on the Night of the Bone Wolves (if you play this mystery before Layer Four), narrate the return of the Pale Mustang. The Side Character who died emerges from the passenger seat. Ask the Latchkey who was closest to them how Death has visibly marked them to indicate that they are now its Agent. The Agent comes with a boon to aid the Latchkeys (pick from the list of Clues on the TV Odyssey sheet). This counts as two Clues for the purposes of resolving the Night of the Bone Wolves. If asked, the Agent says that the Latchkeys may see Death as their enemy, but it is just a part of this world's natural process. These things the Latchkeys unearthed—these hungers—aren't. And while the things that made the world and everything in it cannot intervene directly, they are watching, and they can sometimes lend their aid.

Assuming the Latchkeys survive, the Agent must return to the Other Side when morning comes. Death will wait for them at dawn.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Kate Burnside, prodigal soul

Brown hair, slight curls, spilling over her shoulders to mid-back and chest. Stylish leather jacket over plain tee, jeans. Fingerless black leather driving gloves. The best damn street racer in Deep Lake. Most at home in a car, but cannot drive while incorporeal. Will try to hide, and when that fails, she runs. As a ghost, when she is near, lights and screens flicker, small objects whip about, doors creak open, radios snap on; this effect intensifies at night. She can sometimes appear in reflective surfaces. If a tangible Latchkey has marked **The Fathomless Well** and has **The Need for Speed**, Kate may attempt more direct interaction, including possession.
Quote: *"Can you hear me? I'm here."*

Linnea Rodenbecker

Blonde hair, a new stress streak of silver in her locks, worn loose or pulled into a quick ponytail. Pink cardigan. Chinos. The close brush with Death while possessed by Kate leaves her morose and subconsciously drawn to dead things: flowers, animals, people. But where there is a ray of sunlight in a room, let her find it. Probably asks to stay with the Latchkeys; her house isn't safe.

Quote: *"Why does this keep happening to me? What did I do to deserve this? Is this whole town fucked, or just me? I'm sick and fucking tired of this! I want to cry, I want to hit something! I want to break something! Even if it's just my fingers. I want to drive a hundred miles an hour—off a cliff! I want to grow wings, and fly away from here! I want to kiss someone like they'll die tomorrow, or I will! I want to squeeze a little tomato with my teeth! I want to feel—I want—I'm scared. Oh God! I'm so scared! For me. For this person, Kate. I saw Death in the mirror, it came for me! It CAME for me! I'm fucking terrified and I just want... I want my body to be mine again."*

Shelly Burnside, Kate's younger sister

Slightly older than the Latchkeys. Bookish sort, modest blouse and skirt. Thin glasses. Brown hair pulled back in a loose bun or ponytail, but always misses a couple bangs. Never overcame the grief from her sister's death. Lives alone.

Quote: *"Is there anyone in your life you'd do anything to get back, if they died? I have done nothing important in my life. I work a dead-end job at a bookstore. My sister was a champion at sixteen. It isn't fair!... Find me a god, tell me where to sign, and I would trade places with her in a heartbeat!"*

Tony Li, a race organizer

Short black hair slicked forward to a single point at the front of his head. Untucked button-down under a cream blazer. Fists full of paper betting slips. Showman energy; talks fast, will coyote howl at something. Organizes the races and takes bets.

Quote: *"Ey yo, mamacita! A hundred hot rides out here, can I be yours? Aha, just kidding! But maybe later, ya? Here to make a bet? Maybe enter a race?"*

Charlie Myers, a younger racer

Messy brown hair. Band-Aid across the nose. Forearm in a cast. Gap-toothed. Has been driving for years, only the last few legally. Rough-looking '98 Ford Taurus SHO that may double as their home for all the food wrappers and laundry in the back seat. Loves talking cars, forgets there are people.

Quote: *"Might not look like much, but Baby here's got one of the biggest engines on the block! It's a V8! Tuned it myself! Big meet tonight, and I'm gonna win it all!"*

Axel Gradd, an older racer

Lean, average height. Brown trench coat over a white shirt, loosened tie. Five o' clock shadow pushing hard towards six. Takes swigs from a hip flask. May be Mafia. Give 'em your best Hans Gruber. Owns a bar in La Fresca (pick one: dive bar/jazz club/sports bar), but puts all his money into his car and comes to Deep Lake to race. Flanked by lackeys, armed. Lamborghini Diablo GT, pristine. Sawed off shotgun in the driver's side door panel, just in case. Will do anything to win.

Quote: *"You don't belong here. What do you drive, a Civic? Go bother someone else."*

..... PUBLIC ACCESS

..... PALE HORSE

SIDE CHARACTERS (continued)

Karen Krissler, a mechanic

Rosie the Riveter aged well. Arms of a mechanic, grease stains and all. Denim overalls. Gray hair tied up with a blue paisley bandana. Wrench in her hand, two more in her pockets. Probably elbow deep in an engine. Warm, mama hen type. If pressed or stressed, will throw herself harder into working on whatever car is in front of her. Blames herself for Kate's death, either from encouragement, or maybe she thinks she knows something about Kate's Chevelle that night.

Quote: *"Can I offer you a cuppa coffee? Best motor oil for the soul this side of the county line."*

Dave Otero, a highway cop

Early 40s. Caterpillar mustache. Aviators. Khaki cop uniform with wide-brim hat. Chewing sunflower seeds. Was racing around the time Kate was, joined the force after he left racing. Privately owns a '87 Ford Thunderbird Turbo Coupe, ready to race again.

Quote: *"YOU'RE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE LAW, SON."*

REWARDS

- Kate's 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS, restored; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- Kate Burnside becomes a recurring Side Character. Latchkeys who have marked **The Fathomless Well** get 1 extra Clue on the Meddling Move when they consult her on matters about Degoya County's deceased.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

Media References:

The music video for "Turbo Killer" by Carpenter Brut (2016)

Redline (2009)

Catch Me if You Can (1986)

The Fast and the Furious movies, particularly the first one (2001) and Tokyo Drift (2006)

A dash of Mad Max: Fury Road (2015)

Music for your own Public Access Mixtape:

Icarus - "Be Somebody"

Paradelous - "Power Slam"

Kate Bush - "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)"

The Midnight - "Days of Thunder"

Franz Ferdinand - "This Fire"

Ludowic - "Panoramic Feelings"

Journey - "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart) (Steve Perry & Bryce Miller Extended Remix)"

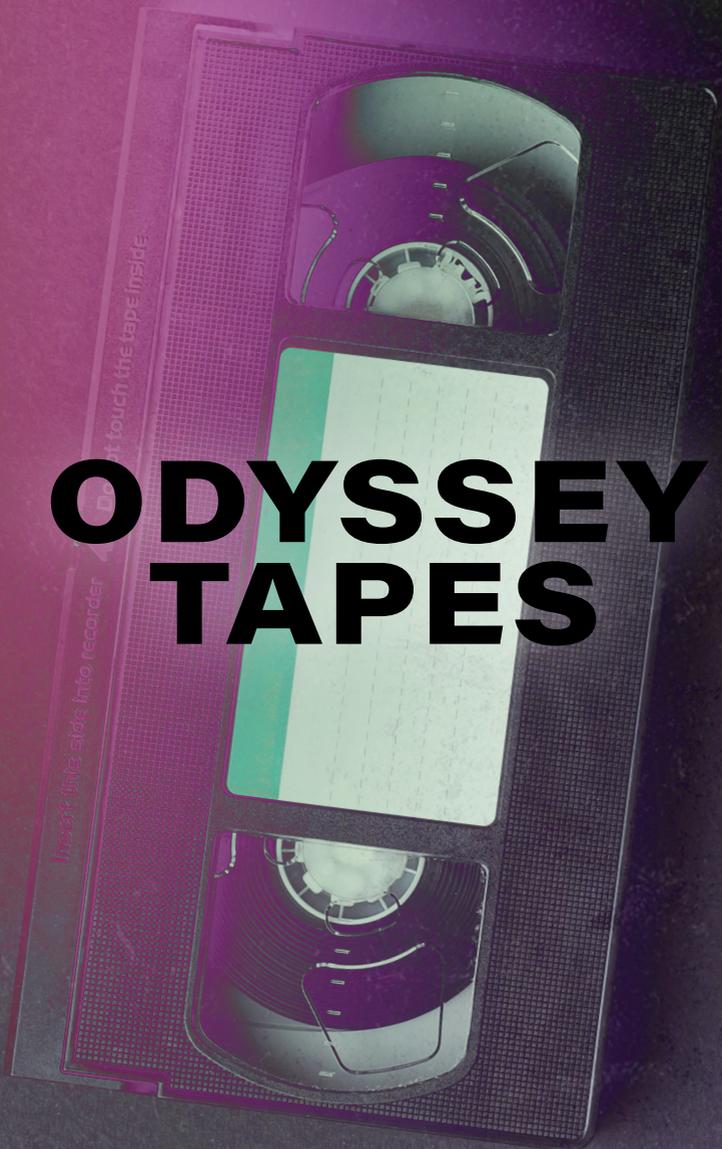
CLUES

- A purple cassette, labeled "Kate's Mix" in black marker on masking tape. Ask each player to name a '70s-'80s power anthem for the mixtape.
- A radio nearby snaps on or changes to Journey's "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)," repeating the line, "Break those, chains that bind you!" over and over.
- A Grecian urn; depicted on it are the three Furies, facing opposite Hades. For Latchkeys with **The Fathomless Well** marked, one of the Furies looks exactly like Kate, in Grecian style.
- A "pink slip" certificate of car ownership. Where there should be a make/model/year, there is just written "Kate Burnside." Where there should be a signature, there is a thumbprint, in blood.
- A note folded into a small square, reading "Meet me at the point, 10pm sharp. -KB"
- A 1984 newspaper article clipping about the Deep Lake Speed Competition Club. Beneath the headline ("A New Queen is Crowned!") a picture of Kate standing next to Karen Krissler, in front of the Crown Auto Repair Shop.
- A section of large conduit, buried or running through the floor, too deep to follow in its entirety. Labeled, mostly faded but still legible: "Deep Lake Power & Utility".
- Detailed plans to convert the Mercado Street power plant to a nuclear power plant.
- Detailed maps of Deep Lake's racing streets. The hairpin on the Mercado Street Circuit is drawn on by hand, with faintly glowing ink.
- A raven nearby caws, "Kate! Kate!"
- A black pyramid of what seems to be some kind of quartz. Small enough to fit in your hand.
- The corpse of a poisonous snake not native to the United States. In its mouth is a quarter, dated 1986.
- A reflective surface you're looking at cracks in all directions like a spider web. In half of the resulting faces, you see Kate where you should be, a sandstone arch beyond her.
- Buttons, levers, and dials on a wall that seem to connect to nothing in the local area.
- A room that shouldn't smell strongly of a repair shop: engine grease, chrome, gasoline fumes.
- A proposal to buy the Mercado Street power plant by Henrik Gradd, going back to the '70s.
- A pile of sunflower seed husks in an unusual place.
- The recently burned-out husk of a Pontiac Firebird. Eggshell fragments litter the ground nearby.
- The word "Death" inscribed over a doorway in an ancient script (pick one: Aramaic/Greek/Hebrew/something else). The door has been bricked up.
- A tarot card, XIII, unnamed. A driver in racing gear stands next to a gray classic car. Bodies of all social classes litter the floor around it. In the background, at the horizon, a two-stack power plant with a rising sun between the stacks.
- A Bible, bookmarked to the Book of Revelation. Revelation 6:7-8 has been cut out.

When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a pale horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death...

— Revelation 6:7-8

NOTES



ODYSSEY TAPES

Insert this side into recorder
Do not touch the tape inside

Officer Barker Teaches You a Lesson

An installment of the *Officer Barker* series of anti-crime PSAs that aired on TV Odyssey. It opens on the eponymous Officer, a ghoulish William Wegman pastiche with the head of a Saint Bernard and the hairy hands of a middle-aged man, dressed in a New Mexico State Police uniform. He sits at a nicotine-yellowed folding table before a shoddily constructed police station set.

1. **Paint the Scene:** The atmosphere is tense and hostile, reflected in the manic clenching and unclenching of Officer Barker's fists. How can we tell that something is deeply wrong with the dog playing Barker?
 2. Officer Barker tells the viewer that he's very upset with them because they've committed a terrible crime against God and all His angels. What act is Barker accusing the viewer of, and what "proof" of their misdeeds does he place on his desk?
 3. Officer Barker says that he has to make an example of the viewer as a warning to all the other boys and girls. What punishment does he promise to inflict on the viewer and their loved ones?
 4. Right before the tape cuts off, the person providing Barker's hands and voice peers over the dog's shoulder. What about his face makes us realize he might not be a "person" at all?
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Ghost Gals 03 Blackrock Pure-White Labyrinth

This tape is an episode of *Ghost Gals*, a show where two amateur ghost hunters—Ria Sterling and Samira Mangal—explore famously haunted places around Deep Lake. Ria believes in the supernatural and is easily frightened, while Samira provides comic relief by making light-hearted fun of Ria and explaining away strange events in hilariously mundane ways. They are exploring Deep Lake's abandoned mines, colloquially called the Blackrock Maze.

1. The camera, held by Samira, shows Ria posed dramatically in front of an old mine shaft, the entrance looming behind her like the open maw of a great beast. Ria explains that today they are looking for the Blackrock Vulture, a cryptid that still lingers after a deadly collapse in the mine. What about the origin story or alleged behavior of this cryptid causes Ria visible discomfort?
 2. Ria startles at a noise emerging from the darkness. The camera swivels, catching only a faint glimpse of something disappearing into the maze of tunnels the girls have found themselves in. Samira tries to break the tension, rationalizing the strange sight and sounds the camera is picking up. How can we tell Samira is trying to convince herself and calm Ria, but doesn't believe what she's saying?
 3. **Paint the Scene:** The angle on the camera has changed. Both girls are clearly unaware it's filming. They're arguing, blaming each other for being lost. As the argument grows in intensity, anger, and resentment, how can we tell something else is listening and watching?
 4. Ria stands with her back to the camera, crying out for Samira, who's nowhere to be seen. What's the last thing we see of Ria before she is pulled screaming into the depths of the mines?
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Dwayne's World

"DWAYNE'S WORLD! DWAYNE'S WORLD! PARTY HARD! EXCELLENCE! DEDEDE-DUH!!" The tape is an episode of *Dwayne's World*, a music variety show hosted by local headbangers, Dwayne Lipton and Dana "Garf" Garfield, live from Dwayne's mom's basement. Despite their shoestring budget and confusing format, the duo always host surprisingly high-profile guests. The episode begins with Dwayne in his signature trucker hat and black tee, shredding a sick riff on his butterscotch blonde '66 Fender Telecaster as Garf air guitars along. Party Hard Dwayne! Party Hard Garf!

1. **Paint the Scene:** You notice the heavy metal posters adorning the wood-paneled walls are for bands you've never heard of before. Describe them. What makes you think these bands don't exist in our reality as we know it?
 2. In the middle of interviewing their musical guests—the Rolling Stones—the video cuts out. Once the static clears, everything is as it was... except the Stones have been replaced by Aerosmith, and Dwayne seems even more bemused than usual. Despite this, how can you tell this is the exact same episode that was playing before the disruption?
 3. After their (new?) guests complete the rip-roaring musical segment, Dwayne and Garf thank them for coming and bid their viewers a hardy "Party Hard!" before signing off. No sooner does the screen fade to black before the show's opening riff plays again, and the episode restarts from the top. What does Dwayne do that shows he's just as confused as you are?
 4. As the episode continues, Dwayne can't take it anymore. He runs up the basement stairs only to reappear stage right. He runs up again only to emerge stage left. Dead-eyed Garf laughs. Dwayne turns to the fourth wall and addresses you directly. What does he ask you to do?
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Guerilla Makeover 012 Pure-White Pretext

This tape is an episode of *Guerilla Makeover*, which aired sporadically on TV Odyssey in the mid-'80s, often interrupting other programming. It begins with a series of disorienting cuts—shattered glass, a smooth red-manicured hand clutching a hammer in a dimly-lit room, garbled speech over a black screen—before opening on the show's two nameless hosts, faces just inches away from the camera. They are precise, plastic beauties with vacant eyes caked in makeup. Their teased hair almost entirely fills the frame as, in breathy whispers, they introduce this episode's makeover candidate: a housewife named Gracie Richards.

1. **Paint the Scene:** "We're here tonight," the hosts say, "because every woman has inner beauty just waiting to come out, and everyone deserves to feel special. Even someone like Gracie." What cruel and oddly specific reasons do they give to explain why Gracie is an ideal "volunteer" for a total makeover?
 2. The hosts step back from the camera, revealing Gracie's living room—and Gracie herself, sitting stock-still in a swivel chair center-frame. How do we know that the hosts have invaded Gracie's home, and that she is being held against her will?
 3. The hosts drag their makeover kit, a heavy black duffel bag, from offscreen. They begin to assemble their tools: first foundations and eyeshadow palettes, then hairsprays, curling irons. What do they pull out of their bag that prompts Gracie's final futile attempt to escape?
 4. The tape cuts to the final moments of the episode. Gracie is turned away from the viewer, and the hosts beam as they spin her toward the camera for the big reveal. How have the hosts corrected Gracie's flaws—and how does she, in the end, concede that they were right, a change was exactly what she needed?
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Palmer's Pâtisserie 31 Apple of My Rye

This tape is an episode of *Palmer's Pâtisserie*, a long-running show that aired on TV Odyssey. From the comfort of her "newly remodeled" kitchen, the titular Pamela Palmer teaches her viewers how to make a new bread or dessert recipe each week, throwing in punny jokes or commentary on local events. The opening credits are a compilation of photos from past bakes. Cookies, buns, cakes, and more flash across the screen, ending on a shot of Pamela wearing her iconic lime green apron.

1. Pamela welcomes the viewers and introduces what she'll be baking today: a classic loaf of pumpernickel rye. "But around my house we call it..." What uncomfortable name has her family given the bread?
 2. It's obvious that Pamela has made this recipe dozens of times by the quickness and certainty of her movements. She measures out salt, flour, and a few other ingredients. As Pamela lists everything that goes into the loaf, what disturbing ingredient does she gloss over? How is it packaged on the counter next to the other ingredients?
 3. The shot changes. Pamela is elbow-deep in a sticky, thick dough. Flour coats the formica counter. How can you tell that Pamela has been kneading for hours? Why can't she stop?
 4. The tape suddenly cuts to an empty kitchen. You can hear Pamela talking off-screen to Clint Yeastwood, her sourdough starter and well-loved "guest star" that frequents the show. "Oh, I could never forget to feed you," she coos. "Here you go." What sounds can you hear during the feeding, and what do you catch a glimpse of before the tape ends?
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