PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

A young man, Casey Wilcox, shows up at the house on Rodenbecker Street one day. He's heard about your investigation of TV Odyssey; he doesn't know much about it, but he thinks you might be interested in another Deep Lake mystery: the house on Escondido Street. He explains that 18 Escondido Street has been abandoned since 1994, when the family that lived there, the Rappaports, disappeared without a trace. Casey was ten-years-old then, and friends with Elliott, the youngest of the two Rappaport children (the other Rappaports are dad Hugh, mom Cheri, and Elliott's sister Abigail). He doesn't remember there being anything strange going on with the family at that time, which made their sudden disappearance all the more bewildering.

18 Escondido has become a local legend in the ten years since, a classic "haunted house" right in the middle of Deep Lake. People avoid it; they say it has "bad energy." Apart from some minor acts of vandalism over the years, the house is largely as the Rappaports left it.

Pose the following to the Latchkey of your choice: *Casey's story includes a detail that makes you think 18 Escondido Street is evil. What is it?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Question: What happened to the Rappaports? (Complexity: 6)
Opportunity: Resolve the mystery by revealing the truth to Casey Wilcox. Then, if you wish, destroy the house at 18 Escondido Street OR perform a ritual to banish the evil that resides there.

THE KEY OF THE CAVE-DWELLER

☐ Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to a fun activity they used to do with their family while at home.

MOMENTS

> The sound of children's laughter mixed with the squeaky whirr of bike wheels in motion.
> The smells of a backyard barbecue: charring meat, hoppy beer suds, kids pickled in chlorine.
> A trio of girls doing double dutch on the sidewalk.
> A sudden quiet upon entering the house, as if the world outside its walls slipped away.
> A shelf full of stuffed animals: forgotten, dead-eyed, looming.
> The creak of timbers, the shudder of something deep in the walls, the house stretching and shaking off its slumber.

THE HOUSE

18 Escondido Street is a ranch style house, originally built in the 1960s, and renovated several times since then. It sits on a half-acre lot with a small stand of ponderosa pines around it; there is a fenced-in backyard with a pool. The house is also utterly evil. The nature and origin of that evil is for the Latchkeys to discover, but a few things are definitely true: the house is aware of the people inside it and can read their minds; the house can manipulate the physical environment with a power that is like telekinesis; and the house can make people see things that aren't there.

If the Latchkeys ignore the house...

The house has been dormant for the last ten years, but is awakened when the Latchkeys set foot inside it. Now, it is ravenous and destructive. It will use its powers to lure people to it, including Side Characters the Latchkeys wish to protect, and will then do its best to destroy them. If the Latchkeys resolve the mystery but leave the house untouched, it will be a regular nuisance in the game, and the Keeper has a new reaction available to them: **Lure a Side Character to the house on Escondido Street.**

DANGERS

Telekinetic attacks

The house can physically attack in a number of ways, including hurling objects through the air and causing things to burst into flames, though it will only attempt the latter if it's desperate to stop the Latchkeys, as there is a danger of burning the house down.

Phantasms

The house is able to create highly realistic illusions with which to lure and torment. These phantasms are localized, rarely extending beyond whatever room they first appear in. The house's ability to read minds means it can make the visions particularly frightening or seductive.

Special Rule: If a phantasm plays into a Latchkey's Conditions, any die rolls associated with actions related to the phantasm are made at disadvantage, as normal, but also inflict a new Condition: Haunted.

Patience Head

Helmet hair. Striped polyester blouse. Chunky jewelry. Patience is the president of the local homeowner's association. She makes it her business to keep an eye on everything going on in and around Escondido Street. She is particularly suspicious of any activity associated with 18 Escondido, and has been trying for some years now to get the house condemned. While not a physical danger, she can be quite annoying, and if she thinks the Latchkeys are trouble, she'll call the police on them.

Quote: *"I mean, it's certainly no business of mine what people get up to in the privacy of their own homes, but as the president of the HOA, I have a responsibility to keep an eye on what's happening outside these houses. I mean, what sort of neighbor would I be—what sort of community leader would I be—if I didn't stay abreast of the happenings around here?"*

LOCATIONS

Stand of trees

A copse of tall ponderosa pines. Yellowing grass. Sticky pine needles all over your shoes.
Paint the Scene: *Something about the trees makes you think the evil in this place is in the land. What is it?*

Backyard

Swimming pool filled with a shallow layer of mucky green water. Faded and cracked Sunbrella furniture. Large, overturned planters.
Paint the Scene: *The Rappaports enjoyed one last day of fun in the sun before their disappearance. What do you see around here that shows that?*

Kitchen and dining room

A small kitchen with a bar window that looks directly into the dining room. Wedgwood blue trestle table, set for dinner. Oak cabinets and speckled formica countertops.
Paint the Scene: *Based on what was left out, name one thing that was on the dinner menu on the day the Rappaports disappeared.*

× TV room

Maroon sectional sofa. An entertainment center as big as a wall. A working VCR hooked up to a massive tube TV; the clock on the VCR blinks "12:00" even though there is no power in the house.
Paint the Scene: *Looking around, how do you know this was the most frequented room in the house?*
Special Rule: The VCR and TV in this room work despite the fact there is no power in the house. If the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey tape in this room, they can collectively define a Clue inspired by what they saw; the Clue can be used for any mystery but cannot conclusively answer a Question by itself. This can be done as often as the Latchkeys wish, even after the mystery is resolved, so long as they have access to the house.

Master bedroom

Teal and mauve decor with seaside motifs. Queen size bed with brass frame. The faint smell of Estée Lauder perfume.
Paint the Scene: *What here makes you think Hugh and Cheri were focused more on their children than themselves?*

Elliott's room

Twin bed with Ninja Turtle sheets. Large poster of Bill Nye the Science Guy. Matchbox cars spread on the floor like caltrops.
Paint the Scene (only if the Latchkeys specifically open the closet): *Something about the energy in the room changes when you open the closet door. What do you see or otherwise experience that makes you think Elliott is still in the house somewhere?*
Special Rule: Put Elliott Rappaport in play after the above Paint the Scene question is answered (see Side Characters).

Abigail's room

My Little Pony wallpaper. Twin bed with Pink Power Ranger sheets. The faint smell of strawberry-scented plastic.
Paint the Scene: *Looking around, how do you know Abigail's friends were the most important thing to her (after family, of course)?*

Basement

The smell of sawdust and rat droppings invades your nose. Stacks of U-Haul boxes. A disassembled Christmas tree in one corner.
Paint the Scene: *Something about the basement makes you think the kids were terrified to come down here. What is it?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Casey Wilcox, a friend
Blond fauxhawk. JNCOs and flame print. Cleft palate scar. Casey is a nice guy and considered the best piece of tail in Deep Lake by people in the know. He was deeply affected by the disappearance of his friend, and never really got over it.
Quote: *"I don't blame you for gettin' the hell outta here. This town does shit to you. If you let it get its claws in you, it's over—it will never let ya go. That's what happened to me after Elliott and his family disappeared. I was in a bad place for years after that, and that's when Deep Lake made its move on me..."*

Bill Hanscom, the sheriff
Square-jawed and handsome. Smells really good, like Old Spice and Big Red gum. The shirt of his uniform is strategically tight in the chest. Bill Hanscom is the sheriff of Degoya County. He grew up in nearby La Fresca and knows that things can sometimes get a little strange around these parts. He won't actively try to stop the Latchkeys unless he thinks someone is going to get hurt.
Quote: *"I guess I would have been in high school back when you lived here. Man, those were good times, let me tell you: football games on Friday nights, house parties on Saturday, then sleeping it all off on Sunday—after church, of course. Listen: I'm going to turn a blind eye to whatever you're doing here, but if you or anyone else gets into some kind of trouble, give me a call."*

Chuck Terrio, a landscaper
Five o'clock shadow. Plastic goggles. Heavy work gloves and boots. Chuck takes care of pretty much every yard on Escondido Street, and he knew the Rappaports before they disappeared. If pressed, he has a lot of... interesting thoughts about Deep Lake to share.
Quote: *"People think the job I do is easy or unimportant—just a lawnmower jockey, you know? But in actuality, my job is probably one of the most important around here because I'm in regular communion with the land. You see the land is what's really important in Deep Lake. And I don't mean property values or real estate or anything so mundane as that. I mean... the earth. And what lives in the earth."*

A gang of kids
A bunch of kids playing in the street. They'll express interest in whatever the Latchkeys are doing, and might even talk about what they've seen, but they won't go in the house unless they have a really good reason to. Some names, if you need them: Sophia, Kelsey, Tyler, Chase, Kyle, Maria.

Debbie Rappaport, a relative
Red hair with gray roots showing. Defensive body language. Raspy voice, like she's smoked a pack a day since she was a girl. Debbie is Hugh Rappaport's sister, and lives just down the street from 18 Escondido. She wants to know what happened to her brother and his family more than anyone, but she refuses to go inside their house. Nevertheless, she's very protective of the property, and has been fighting Patience Head about it for years.
Quote: *"That house is just... wrong. It's cursed. Evil. I don't know what—just real bad juju, you know? And it's always been that way, even before my brother and his family disappeared. I never liked it from the start. That said... it's still their house. I think... well... I think they might come back someday if we just leave it as it is."*

Elliott Rappaport, a phantom (only enters play if the Paint the Scene question from his bedroom is answered)
Bowl haircut. Neon green t-shirt. Peeks around corners. Elliott is a phantom; possibly an illusion created by the house that has managed to gain sentience and free will, or maybe a literal ghost. He's very shy and will run away the first time he is encountered. The Latchkeys can befriend him if they answer the Question below. He is unable to speak, and can only communicate with gestures.
Question: How can we lure Elliott to us? (Complexity: 2)
Opportunity: Unlock Elliott as a Reward.

REWARDS

- ☐ Elliott Rappaport becomes a recurring Side Character. He can only be found in 18 Escondido Street, unless the house is destroyed, at which point he will attach to the house on Rodenbecker. This Reward can only be chosen if Elliott is befriended by answering his Question.
- ☐ Casey Wilcox becomes a recurring Side Character; you get 1 extra Clue on the Meddling Move when you consult him about matters related to Deep Lake's young people.
- ☐ Bill Hanscom's personal cell phone number; 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.
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CLUES

- ☐ Scorch marks in an unusual shape (pick one: spiral/pentagram/antlers/something else).
- ☐ Threatening messages left for Hugh Rappaport on the answering machine. The messages are about (pick one: money owed/a conflict at work/a marital affair/something else).
- ☐ A sequence of numbers scrawled in an unusual place.
- ☐ Gardening tools caked with dirt and blood.
- ☐ A realistically rendered door painted on a wall.
- ☐ Wrappers for a particular type of candy found all over the house (pick one: Reese's Peanut Butter Cups/Snickers/Smarties/something else).
- ☐ Height marks on a door frame for one of the children, except the mark for one year is missing.
- ☐ A family photo shows a third child.
- ☐ A photo album entitled Summer Camp '93 is empty except for the last page, which has pictures of (pick one: dead animals/the night sky/empty hospital beds/something else).
- ☐ A Candyland board featuring characters you don't remember: the Toffee Duke, the Ravenous Sugarpig, the Licorice Beastie, the Peanut Butter Sphinx, and more.
- ☐ A surprisingly well-preserved hopscotch diagram featuring a picture where the 10 should be (pick one: devil/crying eye/hand pointing east/something else).
- ☐ A smashed mirror in an unusual place.
- ☐ Neatly organized medicine cabinet; every pill bottle is empty.
- ☐ A strange residue that (pick one: glows/changes color/makes you feel lightheaded when you touch it/something else).
- ☐ Signs of forcible entry, carefully hidden after the fact.
- ☐ A copy of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in an unusual place.
- ☐ The following is scrawled on the last page of Cheri's dream journal: "I finally have the answer. I know how to save my family. We must sleep in order to wake up!"
- ☐ A hastily scrawled phone number for (pick one: a taxi cab company/a lawyer/a priest/someone else).
- ☐ An ongoing game of chess.
- ☐ A stash of comic books in an unusual place, with cute messages between two people written in the margins.

NOTES