

# THE TAKINGS



BY CHARLES M. RYAN



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*You can find handouts starting on page 26.*

*Pregenerated characters can be found starting on page 33.*



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It is 1921. Three young men (fraternal triplets, barely adults) have disappeared from a rural village in Devon. Authorities are called in, but the villagers have their own theory: a local myth tells of a vampire that, every few decades, steals away three young people. Is there any truth to the myth, or is something more mundane at work? And what does it all have to do with Creston Grange, the local manor house, now standing derelict and rumored to be one of the most haunted sites in England?

## OVERVIEW

This adventure was written for convention use; as such, it's designed to be played in a four-hour block. Several features facilitate this style of play:

- The adventure unfolds in three distinct phases, making it easy to manage both timing and events. The PCs begin in Wivelscombe, move to Creston Grange, and ultimately face off against the antagonists in the Grotto.
- Timing guidance is provided in margin notes near the start of each section, with a target time suggested for completing that part. This helps the GM keep the adventure on track for completion in a four-hour time slot, but it's advice rather than a requirement. If you're running "The Takings" at home or otherwise have more time freedom, feel free to ignore this advice. The time given is in hours and minutes from the start of the adventure.
- Each PC enters the adventure with information that might help them unravel the mystery they face. In more conventional play, this information might be discovered through research or other in-game activity.
- If the GM isn't constrained by a four-hour convention block, there are many ways to expand this adventure. Feel free to roleplay the PCs gathering in Houndsmoor, spend more time with the villagers in Wivelscombe, or explore secondary sites such as the Silburn Hollow or the Mere, which might be convenient places to leave additional clues regarding the backstory. Characters who

spend more time in Creston Grange may encounter more of the ghosts as well.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This is a story of three malicious and powerful supernatural forces. Four, actually, although one of them is nothing more than legend.

At the root of this tale sits **William Wickersfield**, a 300-year-old warlock and infernalist of exceptional cruelty. He is the primary antagonist. The players will first come to know him as Reginald Banks, an identity (and body) he has stolen. Destroying William is the player characters' ultimate goal, although they will not know it for some time, and it's unlikely they can succeed on their own.

As a warlock of exceptional power, William relies in part on his supernatural minion, known only as **the Familiar**. This infernal creature is a spirit of considerable potency that can take many animal forms (and stranger ones as well). It generally serves William as a spy and errand boy, but it also keeps the ghosts of Creston Grange at bay, protecting him from their vengeance.

Creston Grange is William's ancient home, and it's haunted by **the ghosts**. These are the spirits of those whose bodies and identities, over time, have been stolen by William to maintain his long life. The hatred of these vengeful spirits—and they are many—should rightfully be directed at William, but the ghosts exist in a confused, dreamlike state, and their ire may fall upon any who spend time in the old manor house.

Before the PCs encounter any of these, they will hear about **the Silburn Vampire**. William's depredations over the past three centuries have often made victims of the villagers in Wivelscombe. A myth has grown about a vampire that steals people from the village every few decades. This has in fact been William; the vampire as imagined by the myth does not exist.

## THE TAKING RITUAL

For 300 years William Wickersfield has maintained his immortality, despite the fact that, as far as the

**FOR THE GM IN A HURRY**

If you don't have time to read an extensive backstory and summary, here's the absolute minimum of information needed to run this adventure:

- For the past 300 years, a warlock named William Wickersfield has been using an evil ritual to transfer his soul into other bodies and arranging for them to inherit his property, including the country house called Creston Grange.
- After each soul transfer, William kidnaps and sacrifices three innocents to dark powers.
- The villagers believe a vampire was responsible for the local disappearances.
- The ghosts of William's former bodies haunt the family manor and some nearby areas.
- After the last soul transfer, the villagers attacked William's home, killing, burning, and burying his recently vacated host body (Robert Lynch, who they thought was the vampire). William had to flee, leaving

behind the spellbook and signet ring he needs to perform the ritual.

- Minor relatives sold the family manor to the church, which converted it to a nunnery for some time.
- Now in the body of Reginald Banks, William repurchased the manor and has returned to it, along with James Stockford. James believes William will make him immortal, but William actually intends to claim Stockford's body for himself.
- William, Stockford, and William's **supernatural Familiar** have returned to Creston Grange. They've found the missing spellbook but are still searching for the signet ring (which is buried with the body of the "vampire" at a nearby crossroads).
- William and Stockford have kidnapped a set of triplets from the nearby village and plan to sacrifice them after the ritual is finished.

With this information, you can skip ahead to the section on **Devon** and proceed from there.

*To avoid confusion about William Wickersfield's many personas over the years (many of whom share his family name), this adventure refers to him by his current body's name followed by a slash and "William," such as Reginald Banks/William, Reginald/William, or Banks/William. Putting the body's name first helps keep the GM from accidentally revealing William's name or identity too early.*

*The Familiar, page 20*

*Devon in 1921, page 5*

world knows, he is an obscure figure who passed into history in 1659. But through a terrible ritual of his own design, the wicked infernalist has transferred his being from one body to another, every generation or so, for three centuries, taking on the new identity each time.

The ritual separates the victim's spirit from their own body, and then transfers William's spirit into it. The victim must be present for the ritual, which William accomplishes by luring the victim to his home of Creston Grange and then drugging or subduing them.

The spirit of the taken body, pried loose from its mortal coil, lingers. It retains a tenuous connection to its stolen body, but it's not yet a ghost—because its body still lives.

With each taking, William vacates the body he previously inhabited, leaving it a catatonic shell. This abandoned body would, without close care, wither and die within weeks or months, but so far William has always induced a death due to apparent accident, suicide, or natural causes, to hasten the end and avoid any questions about the sudden catatonic state. At that point, the body's original spirit truly becomes that of a dead person—a ghost.

Over the years, ten victims have reached this point. Each spirit associates the final fate of its body with its demise. These spirits are gripped by passion and rage over their death, but (like most ghosts) they lack awareness or focus.

William's ritual must be held in the Grotto beneath Creston Grange, the only location consecrated to that purpose. It requires his spellbook and his signet ring. And it needs a blood sacrifice—three souls offered as a gift once the ritual is complete.

As an English landowner who viewed his tenants with absolute contempt, William never hesitated to draw upon the people of Wivelscombe, the village on his manor lands. The occasional disappearance of youths—always three, usually within a week (and sometimes just a day or two) of the ritual—has spawned the local legend of the Silburn Vampire. This time around, he has kidnapped the barely-adult triplets of the Waller family.

But in this modern world, the vampire legend is no longer enough to cover William's tracks—and his well-tested strategy for conducting the takings faces new challenges.

**EVENTS LEADING UP TO OUR STORY**

For centuries, being the lord of a country manor gave William the wealth, power, and relative isolation to attract candidates, gather the necessary blood sacrifices, and carry out his takings. But the twentieth century and changes in the family fortune have complicated his strategy. His current body—that of Reginald Banks—is aging. It's time to take a new victim, but this transfer will be more complicated.

This adventure includes page references to various subjects accompanied by this symbol. These references are to the *Cypher System Rulebook*, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept. It isn't necessary to look up the referenced items in the book; doing so is an optional way to provide additional information to your players.

*Appendix 2 is a complete overview of William's takings over the centuries. The dates and specifics of those events aren't directly relevant to the adventure in the present, but some details may come to light if the PCs do some research and ask the right questions.*

That's in part because the last taking didn't go well. The Wickersfield family has been consistently despotic (not surprising, given that the lord of the manor, regardless of name and appearance, was always William Wickersfield). Although the myth of the Silburn Vampire took the blame for the disappearances, it was commonly whispered that the Wickersfields were somehow connected. When three youths disappeared in the spring of 1878, the villagers attacked and partially burned Creston Grange. William, having just taken a new identity as Reginald Banks, escaped, but he was forced to leave behind his spellbook and signet.

Since that event William has lived in London, as Banks, for more than forty years. Previously, he had always taken members of his own extended family, to whom he could engineer the inheritance of the estate and thus retain control of his home and manor. But by the late 1800s, the value of that estate had diminished substantially. By taking Banks, who had his own wealth, William had regained financial power but given up any connection to the family estate and its remaining fortune.

Creston Grange passed on to distant relatives, who ultimately transferred it to the church for use as a nunnery (during this time it was called Creston Abbey). That lasted for only a few decades before the house was abandoned.

Banks/William recently purchased the house. He might move back into his longtime home, but for now his primary goal is to reacquire the spellbook and signet, which he hopes are still somewhere in the house, and quickly claim a new body and identity.

To that end he has brought his next victim, James Stockford, to Creston Grange. Banks/William has convinced Stockford that he's made himself immortal and can share that gift with the younger man. Stockford doesn't realize, of course, that he's the victim in this scheme, rather than the beneficiary, so he's been a willing accomplice.

William is desperate to move quickly. His current body is faltering, and if he doesn't act while he still has the strength to conduct the ritual, he'll be imprisoned within the body of Reginald Banks to slowly descend into old age, dementia, and a final and true death.

But things aren't as simple as they once were. Kidnapping three sacrifices from the nearby village doesn't go as unnoticed in the twentieth century as it did in eras past. He also hasn't yet located his spellbook or signet.

And to complicate matters, the many spirits of William's past takings still linger in Creston Grange. Although unfocused and irrational, the ghosts are active—and very, very angry.

## THE MOST RECENT TAKINGS

The last taking, which took place 43 years ago in 1878, has a significant impact on the events leading up to today.

William perfected his ritual in 1659 and, by the late 1800s, had used it ten times. Each time, he assumed a new body and identity, then brought an end to the old body (now spiritless and catatonic) in a manner that seemed natural or accidental. In some cases he occupied the new body for just a few years, while in others he kept it for decades, until the onset of old age spurred him to find a new victim.

An intensely hedonistic man, William sought to keep the family fortune and estate under his control. For this reason he generally targeted members of his own family tree—typically distant (and much younger) relatives—whom he would make his heir before the ritual. Thus, after each taking, he would continue to live with the comforts of his ancestral home and fortune.

But 1878 presented a troublesome situation. William had taken Robert Wickersfield Lynch some thirty years earlier. In that time, the industrial revolution had undermined the great fortunes that came with land ownership, so Robert/William had married the daughter of a wealthy industrialist, and they had a son. He planned, when the child reached a suitable age, to murder his wife, take the son, and inherit the fortune his mother's family was settling upon the child. But mother and son both died before he could carry out his plan (the child in an accident and the mother in a moment of William's rage), and Lynch himself wasn't personally in line for the inheritance. Robert/William found himself careening toward old age without a plan for a new host or a way to revive the flagging fortunes of the Wickersfield estate.

Fortunately, Robert/William had cultivated a friendship with Reginald Banks, a wealthy American living in London. In May of 1878 he brought Banks to Creston Grange and took him. As he had done each time previously, he kidnapped three youths from Wivelscombe as a gift to the dark powers, then set about creating a plausible death for Robert's body, now soulless but still alive.

However, this new kidnapping reminded the villagers of the Silburn Vampire, who was blamed for the last incident less than forty years before. A mob of villagers decided the vampire was associated with the Wickersfields (known for their cruelty for generations) and attacked Creston Grange. There they found Reginald/William with the live but catatonic body of Robert Lynch. They acted so quickly that Lynch's state was hardly noticed, let alone investigated: they set fire to Creston Grange.

Reginald/William was forced into a chaotic departure. With a burning house behind him and an angry mob before—a mob whose suspicions he dared not arouse—he couldn't dally. Presuming he could return later, he left behind many key possessions, most particularly his spellbook and signet ring.

As he fled, the villagers dragged Lynch's burned body from the manor, where they dispatched the "vampire" according to how folklore said the creature could be stopped: decapitation, a stake to the heart, and buying it facedown in an unmarked grave at a crossroads near the house.

Rain doused the fire at Creston Grange, sparing all but the west wing. However, Banks/William no longer had any official or legal connection to the Wickersfield family or its property, so he couldn't return to the house or prevent its eventual transfer to the church for the formation of Creston Abbey. It wasn't until recently that he could finally arrange the purchase of the property from the church.

Although the mob violence and the fire occurred more than forty years before this adventure, several villagers in Wivelscombe who took part in the assault on Creston Grange are still alive, and the rest of the people (except perhaps the youngest children) know the story well.

### THE SITUATION TODAY

Reginald/William recently purchased Creston Grange and, about a week ago, returned there with James Stockford. Stockford is his confederate and believes he is going to be given immortality, not realizing he's soon to be the victim.

Creston Grange is without electricity and has no telephone. It has sat empty for several years since the abbey shut down, so it's a bit musty and unkempt, and still outfitted predominantly as a nunnery. Banks/William and Stockford are living a somewhat rustic life.

Four days ago, Banks/William and Stockford kidnapped the Waller triplets. The Wallers had been scouted out by the *Familiar* beforehand and verified as an acceptable sacrifice. Banks/William used a *hand of glory* to sedate the occupants of the Waller household, and then Stockford climbed into the triplets' bedroom and retrieved them.

The triplets are currently imprisoned in a secret room attached to the Grotto. Unfortunately, Banks/William may have been too hasty in carrying out the abduction—although he quickly recovered his spell book, the location of the signet continues to elude him.

Banks/William and Stockford arrived from London by car. They didn't stop in Houndsmoor and have not visited Wivelscombe (except in

secret). It's not generally known that they're at Creston Grange.

The villagers of Wivelscombe are torn about the disappearance of the Waller triplets. Some people blame the Silburn Vampire, but others believe the creature has been destroyed these past forty years. Some villagers think the triplets are already dead and can't be saved. Others disagree. And those who took part in the events of 1878 might be culpable for murder and arson.

After a search by the locals turned up nothing, they called the authorities. Investigators won't find a united front at Wivelscombe, but they won't find clarity, either.

The following facts are directly relevant to the adventure in the present:

- The people of Wivelscombe have largely settled back into their routines, heartbroken by the loss of the triplets (who are thought of as good young people and well liked in town) but paralyzed by the vampire myth and fears that the 1878 murder will be uncovered.
- Banks/William and Stockford are at Creston Grange, seeking the signet.
- Unbeknownst to them, the signet is in the unmarked grave of Robert Wickersfield Lynch, still on his bony finger.
- The Waller triplets are in the secret room behind the tool room under the summer house.

### DEVON IN 1921

*(Read or summarize this section for the players.)*

Although the southwest of England is, generally, the warmest and driest corner of this green and pleasant land, November is dreary. The overcast skies dim in the afternoon, reaching the full darkness of night before 5:00 p.m. Rain, lazy but soaking, is frequent, and throughout this adventure it's either falling, pending, or just coming to a brief pause. Outdoors everything is damp, and there's a sense of chill decay in the copses and byways. Temperatures are distinctly cool, but not frigid.

Among the PCs, the Local and the Constable are from Houndsmoor or environs, and those from outside the area probably arrive via this local market town. It's the primary connection to the outside world; the train from Bristol (via Weston-Super-Mare and Taunton) comes through twice a day, bearing mail, passengers, and freight.

With a population of nearly 1,000, Houndsmoor is the commercial center that serves the rural populace within a 10- or 15-mile radius. Here one can find butchers and greengrocers, a petrol station, the local constabulary, several general

*The Familiar, page 20*

*Hand of glory, page 16*



Horror Mode, page 283

goods shops, and a small bookstore along with a few other specialty shops. There's a collier, a post office, a doctor's surgery, a veterinarian, a wainwright, a mechanic serving steam and petrol vehicles, and a variety of other services. Most of the homes and businesses have electricity, and several—including five of the six pubs—have telephones. Telegraphs can be sent during business hours from the railway station. Automobiles are not rare—there are at least a dozen in the town—but horse-drawn conveyances are more common.

The locals (here and in Wivelscombe) speak in the West Country accent. This sounds pretty much like the accent stereotypically given to pirates, though not necessarily as gruff. (The affirmative “Arr” is even used, meaning something like “OK” or “Yep.”)

## HOW THE ADVENTURE UNFOLDS

This adventure launches by giving the PCs a few moments to establish themselves as they travel to Wivelscombe, and then unfolds in three parts:

**Part 1: Wivelscombe:** Some of the PCs, such as the Detective and the Constable, are tasked with investigating the disappearance of the Waller triplets; others likely help out for their own reasons. Regardless, the PCs learn a few facts about the disappearance, which lead them to investigate the old manor house and abandoned abbey of Creston Grange.

**Part 2: Creston Grange:** Expecting the house to be abandoned, the PCs instead find it occupied by Stockford and Reginald Banks/William. They are invited to stay. Banks is “cataloging” the contents of the house (actually searching for the Wickersfield signet); Stockford offers to help the PCs in their search for the triplets (actually trying to keep tabs on them). The PCs may cross paths with the **Familiar**, and they certainly encounter some of the house's many ghosts. They likely find evidence that helps them piece together what's going on, and they inadvertently help Banks/William recover the signet.

**Part 3: The Grotto:** With the signet in hand, Banks/William begins the ritual. To stop him, the PCs must discover the Grotto and defeat both Stockford and the Familiar, allowing the ghosts to finish off the magically protected Banks. But if they aren't quick about it, one of the PCs may become William's next victim instead!

Each of the ghosts is described in Appendix 1: *The Ghosts*.

*The Familiar*, page 20

**GM intrusion:** *Just past the crossroads, a character looks back and sees an old man standing in the brush, watching with a sinister look. Before they can react, the man fades back into the brush. (This is the ghost of Robert Wickersfield Lynch.)*

**Timing tip:** *After assigning characters, spend only a few minutes in this phase. The PCs should arrive at Wivelscombe about 15 minutes into the adventure.*

## HORROR MODE

This adventure works well with a light application of the optional rules for **Horror Mode**. When the PCs reach Creston Grange, inform the players that you'll be using Horror Mode, but keep the starting GM intrusion result at 1. Advance the escalation rate by one step, to a maximum of 1–6, at the beginning of any encounter with a ghost, and when the PCs enter the Grotto.

### GM TIP

There are several GM intrusions in this adventure where the Visionary sees a vision of something in the past that relates to the present events. Use these to guide the PCs toward clues, events, or locations they should discover.

## GETTING READY

Before starting the adventure:

- Remind the players that this is a horror adventure and may include elements of the supernatural, body horror, murder, suicide, and violence against innocent people.
- Give the players the character sheets and have them choose which they want to play: the Constable, the Detective, the Local, the Occultist, the Visionary, and the Writer. If you have fewer than six players, remove some of the roles to match the number of players, in this order: the Visionary, the Constable, and the Local.
- Have each player fill in details of their character's name and appearance.
- Hand each player the starting handout for their character (the Local's handout is the map of Wivelscombe and the surrounding region). Give them a moment or two to absorb that information, then jump into the story!

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Begin the adventure on the road from Houndsmoor to Wivelscombe, with the PCs riding in the Local's horse-drawn passenger wagon. This vehicle, called a station bus, is open-sided but with a top cover, and seats six on rear benches, with the driver's bench up front. (If the Local is not a PC, an NPC drives the station bus.)

The trip to Wivelscombe takes an hour and a half at an easy plod. Give the players a few minutes to introduce their characters, talk about why they're there, and maybe begin to discuss the case.

# HOUNDSMOOR AND WIVELSCOMBE REGION

Eastbound Trains to Bristol via Weston-Super-Mare  
Departs at 9:17 AM and 4:20 PM

Westbound Trains to Exeter  
Departs at 12:05 PM and 6:30 PM

HOUNDSMOOR

**HOUNDSMOOR PUBS**  
*The Stars (Best for Visitors)*  
*The Spread Eagle*  
*The Prince's Head*  
*The Moon*  
*The Ring of Bells*  
*The Plough*



Scale: 1 mile

OLD ROAD TO HAWKLEY  
(Rarely used)

CRESTON GRANGE

SILBURN HOLLOW

WIVELSCOMBE

TO STAWLEY



G = THE GREEN  
H = HEN & CHICKEN PUB  
*Noah Cooper, Prop.*  
S = SMITHY  
W = WALLER HOUSE

TO WEST COTTFORD

# PART 1: WIVELSCOMBE

## ◀ READ ALOUD ▶

*Two dozen or so cottages form a huddled triangle overlooked by the spire of a small but pretty stone church. The homes, hidden in their gardens behind the hedges lining muddy lanes, are half-timbered or stone under thatched or tile roofs, and are generally modest but neat. A large tithe barn sits aside a green lorded over by a dozen testy geese. The sound of hammering carries from a smithy. The largest building—the size, perhaps, of a decent townhouse in London—sits at the village’s hub and bears a signboard marking it as the Hen and Chicken pub.*

Wivelscombe is a very typical English village. About thirty families make their homes here; with the exception of the blacksmith, the priest, and the publican, all are farmworkers. Only the smithy and the pub resemble anything like commercial activity, and both really serve only the village. (Other commercial needs are met by Houndsmoor, which is close enough to be visited in a day trip even without a motor vehicle.)

The village is not electrified. There is only one telephone, located in the Hen and Chicken, which connects to an exchange in Houndsmoor; the exchange is not manned at night or on Sundays, so the phone is useless during those hours.

Nobody in Wivelscombe owns an automobile. There are several steam tractors, but they’re slow to fire up and less suitable for transport than horse carts, which are more ubiquitous.

The village is small and tight-knit; everyone is distraught by the Waller family’s loss. The villagers are generally not highly educated, but that doesn’t make them backward, poorly informed, or ignorant. Anyone of late middle age or older directly remembers the events of 1878, which began with the disappearance of three children and ended with Creston Grange in flames and Robert Wickersfield Lynch beheaded and buried in an unmarked grave. Many of the villagers could be implicated in murder if the story of that night became known outside the village, so most are reluctant to discuss it.

But that event ended the Wickersfield line and closed Creston Grange. It should have put the Silburn Vampire to rest. Has it arisen? Is this new trouble something else? Was it unconnected to the Wickersfields, meaning those who attacked Robert in 1878 murdered a man who was innocent, if not of all wrongdoing, then at least of kidnapping?

In the throes of this dilemma, terrified of the house’s reputation, and having been promised the aid of the constable in Houndsmoor, nobody from the village has ventured up to the shunned house—yet.

## INVESTIGATING IN WIVELSCOMBE

The PCs’ investigation begins here. They will likely wish to examine the Waller house and speak to some of the villagers. How events unfold depends on the players’ approach, but regardless, the story advances when they move on to Creston Grange.

Key clues include:

- Evidence of foul play at the abduction site, particularly the signs (probably not recognized right away) that a hand of glory was used.
- The villagers are strangely reticent about the investigation, despite clear despair over the missing triplets.
- Some seem to believe in a vampire, but that belief is not universal.
- Youths have historically disappeared from Wivelscombe, in threes, for centuries.
- Heavy suspicion falls upon Creston Grange.

## THE HEN AND CHICKEN

This whitewashed stone building, the largest in the village, is Wivelscombe’s “living room,” the regular gathering place frequented occasionally during the day and busy in the evening. It consists of a common room with a pleasant fireplace, six or eight small tables, and a serving bar downstairs, with the kitchen and the publican’s home in the back. Upstairs are three small rooms available for rent; these are most commonly used by traveling salesmen or the rare other visitor with overnight business in the village.

**Timing tip:** Limit activity in Wivelscombe to 45 minutes or so. Try to move events to Creston Grange about 1 hour into the adventure.



**Noah Cooper:** Noah is the publican; he runs the Hen and Chicken. He's 61 years old and a bit on the jowly side. Noah was 18 when he joined the group of villagers who marched, with literal torches and pitchforks, to Creston Grange and killed Robert Lynch. He is fully convinced that the vampire is real, and he advises investigators to search the manor house—but only by day.

### THE WALLER HOUSE

A small half-timbered cottage, two stories tall, with a thatched roof, sits behind a hedge in a garden that is probably quite pretty in the spring but is currently wet and Novemberish. A vegetable garden, equally forlorn except for a row of onions, is in back, with a chicken coop next to the back gate letting out onto pastureland.

Within, the cottage consists of a sitting room in the front and a kitchen, dominated by a sizable brick fireplace and oven, in the back. Narrow stairs behind the oven lead up to the front bedroom and a smaller room shared by the triplets. Both have low, sloped ceilings.

**Ladder:** Four days of curiosity and rainy weather have obscured almost every clue that might exist in the garden, but the impressions left by the feet of the ladder are still visible beneath the triplets' window in the rear garden. The ladder itself lies in the garden nearby, but offers no clues. The villagers recognize it as having been taken from the barn, but the barn is unlocked and anyone could have removed it.

**Triplets' Room:** A standard bed, a bunk bed, and two wardrobes crowd this small space. The beds are made (although Hazel Waller reports they appeared slept in on the morning they were found empty). The latch on the double-casement window has been broken, apparently forced from the outside.

**Front Window:** A small double-casement window at the front of the house has a broken latch, with marks on the sash indicating it was forced open from the outside. On the sill within is a dark, greasy stain with a faint—but foul—odor. It doesn't appear that anyone entered the house through this window—it's small and a bit awkward, the curtains are not disheveled, and there are no marks on the wall outside or within. A search of the ground outside finds one distinguishable print of a patent shoe, and a single used match under the nearby shrubbery. (This is where Banks/William placed the *hand of glory*, which ensured the house's occupants remained asleep throughout the kidnapping.)

**Hazel Waller:** Hazel is a stout, pleasant-seeming woman in her mid-thirties with a taste for modern, though unpretentious, dress. Despite her deep distress, she has a generally helpful disposition, and an unending offer of tea to all visitors. She restricts her testimony to a factual account of finding her children missing on the morning of the 7th. It was Hazel's father who, in 1878, cut the head from Lynch's body, and she's haunted by the possibility that the kidnappings are some sort of punishment—and terrified of her father's legal peril should the authorities learn his role in Lynch's killing.

**Grant Waller:** A solidly built man in his mid-thirties, Grant shares some of Hazel's reticence, but has come to a conclusion: if someone were to find and dig up the unmarked grave at the crossroads, they could determine whether Lynch's corpse still sleeps there. He has yet to summon the courage to take this on himself, but may drop hints to investigators.

**Noah Cooper:** level 3, social interaction as level 4

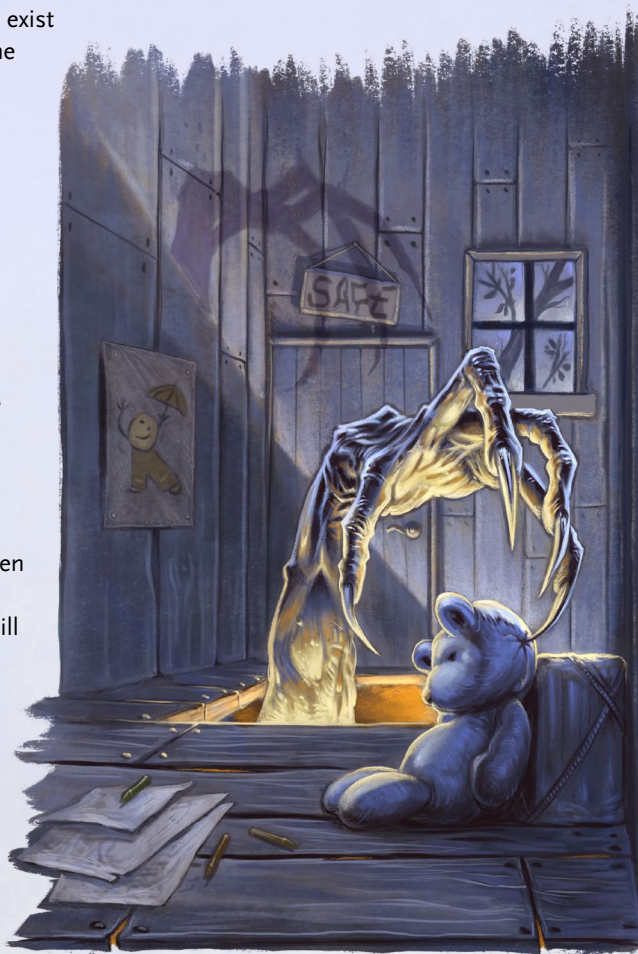
**Hazel Waller:** level 3; attempts to question her about the disappearance are hindered by two steps due to her fear of implicating her father

**Grant Waller:** level 2, local knowledge as level 4

**GM intrusion:** A crow is perched on the peak of the cottage next door. Its attention seems to be fixed on what the character is doing. When the character notices the bird, it croaks loudly once, then takes off, flapping heavily to the north. (The PCs don't know this, but this creature is actually the Familiar, William's supernatural servant.)

*The Familiar, page 20*

*The names of the missing Waller triples are Amos, Robert, and Francis.*



**Hand of glory:** An enchanted item made of a mummified hand with candles on its fingers; see page 16.

**Typical villager:** *level 2; social skills, interactions, and local knowledge as level 3*

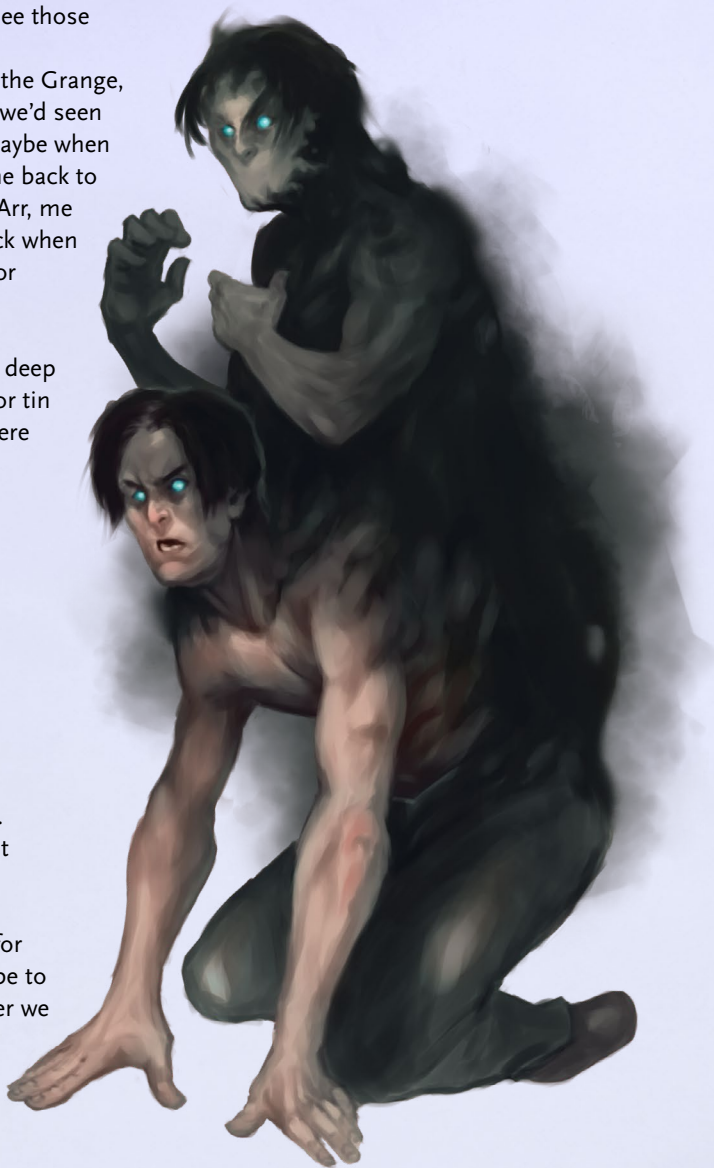
### TALKING TO THE VILLAGERS

It's likely the PCs talk to a few villagers—one or two might be at the pub, some might come watch the investigators out of curiosity, and others might be sought out at the smithy or as they maintain a steam tractor at the edge of a field. Mix and match the following interview tidbits with the character prompts that follow in whatever way best serves the story.

- “This ain't the first time. It's always three. That vampire has a curse on this village, and when it's hungry it always takes three. Sometimes it's every year or two, and sometimes it lets us be for a generation. It breaks my heart, but we won't see those kids again.”
- “I figured what with the fire up at the Grange, and the nuns and all being there, we'd seen the last of the Silburn Vampire. Maybe when they closed the abbey it done came back to life. What fire? It was back in '78. Arr, me mam saw it happen. That was back when those Wickersfields held the manor house. Good riddance to them!”
- “They say the vampire lives in the Silburn Hollow. It's a pit, of sorts, deep in the ground. The Romans dug for tin there, they say. They say that's where old Thomas Arleigh took his life, throwin' himself down in there as a suicide. Thomas Arleigh? He was the vicar, back in, oh, woulda been the 1700s. But he went bad. Drinkin' and womanizin', and worse, they say. Then he killed himself. In the Silburn Hollow. But I don't know. They say the vampire might live up at the Grange. I suppose it's too bad the whole thing didn't burn down. And they say the nuns didn't like it too much, neither.”
- “Those boys are gone, and it's no good to anybody looking around for them. They probably run off, maybe to Bristol or on up to London. Sooner we let the past be, the better.”

### A SELECTION OF VILLAGERS

- Agnes Wood; Stanley Wood
- Bessie Harris; Oliver Harris
- Cora Martin; Albert Martin
- Edith Cooper; Archie Cooper; Jack Cooper (veteran, missing his left arm, will go to Creston Grange with the PCs if asked)
- Hattie Bennett; George Bennett
- Matilda Davies; Ted Davies
- Nell Cox; Frank Cox
- Rosalie Hill; Edward Hill
- Winifred Richardson



## PART 2: CRESTON GRANGE

### ◀ READ ALOUD ▶

*The house, surrounded by the overgrown remains of a country garden and, beyond that, the dripping woods, broods. The uncolumned edifice, of finely cut grey stone, is distinctly Georgian in its formal details, though the hint of an offset wing to the rear and the addition of a separate chapel to the left, break the symmetry that's so definitive of the style. The house is large, but hardly huge as English country houses go. And the dark streaks of mildew, broken steps, and odd missing tile in the roof all hint at a decay having taken root within.*

*Above the door a signboard, much simpler in detail than the architecture surrounding it, reads "Creston Abbey."*

*A carriage house or other large outbuilding sits beyond, with an automobile parked beside it.*

Like virtually every English village, Wivelscombe has its roots as a feudal estate. The agricultural heart of medieval Wivelscombe was the manor house, essentially a large farmhouse surrounded by attendant outbuildings—this is where the “grange” in Creston Grange came from.

### CRESTON GRANGE HISTORY

The following background information can enrich the adventure but is not required for understanding or completing it.

As England's nobility transitioned from the feudal system into the aristocracy of the Enlightenment, Creston Grange, like so many manor houses, similarly transitioned from a farm complex into a mini-palace. In 1504 Lord Edwin Wickersfield relocated from the village to this site a couple of miles away, constructing a luxurious residence that retained the name of the original manor house even if it had little of its agrarian purpose.

Creston Grange was expanded and altered several times in the centuries since. William Wickersfield (the warlock of our story) added the west wing in 1652, in the leadup to his marriage to Amelia. John Wickersfield/William

It's in basically sound condition—musty and a bit cobwebbed, but generally intact (other than the burned west wing). Furnishings, linens, and décor are as the nuns left them. The house has never been electrified or had telephone service.

### MEETING BANKS AND STOCKFORD

Banks/William and Stockford have been living in the house for nearly a week. In that time they've explored the changes made since Banks/William fled in 1878 and opened the Grotto via the secret door in the west wing. They've searched for and found the spellbook, but continue in vain to look for the signet ring.

Banks/William had hoped to find the signet and complete the ritual before any investigation of the missing triplets reached Creston Grange. Although he's been stymied in that regard, he's prepared to face investigators. Stockford is posing as the valet and is the one who answers the door (or intercepts PCs who trespass without checking in first). He then leads the PCs to Banks/William.

radically remodeled the building in 1752–53, establishing much of the Georgian look that now characterizes the house. As Josiah Wythe/William, he rebuilt the west wing in 1790, following the excavation of the Grotto in 1784.

After the debacle of 1878, the house passed into the hands of the church. The conversion into Creston Abbey in 1879 led to considerable additional alterations, including the construction of the chapel and the conversion of the formal gardens behind the house into a large kitchen garden. But the abbey, plagued by isolation and haunted by ghosts, was never fully funded or staffed up to its initial vision, and a great deal of the expected work on the house was never undertaken.

The Creston Grange of today has been empty for six years, since the struggling abbey finally shuttered.

*If you're using Horror Mode, introduce it as the PCs arrive at Creston Grange, but don't escalate the intrusion range until the first ghostly encounter.*

**GM tip:** *If the PCs stay overnight at Creston Grange, the morning after they wake up is a good time to award some subtle cyphers, should any PC have fewer than their limit.*

**Timing tip:** *Limit exploration in Creston Grange to 90 minutes or so. Try to move events to the Grotto (perhaps with the intervention of a helpful ghost directing the PCs to the Tool Room) no later than three hours into the adventure.*

**Grange:** *A country house with farm buildings attached.*



The key points of their story are:

- Banks/William recently purchased the house and has come with his valet to make an inventory of the contents.
- They haven't been to Wivelscombe, have not heard the news of the missing people, and have seen nobody else at the house. They are, of course, horrified to hear about the disappearance.
- Banks/William is a little infirm and unable to move about much, but Stockford will show them around the house. The PCs are more than welcome to search the house and grounds as thoroughly as they wish.

Banks/William's strategy is to allow investigators to satisfy themselves that the triplets aren't present at the house, relying on Stockford and, if necessary, the **Familiar**, to steer them away from any real discoveries. If at any point the PCs confront him—if they discover the **hand of glory**, for example—he becomes indignant, states that any evidence found was present at the house before he bought it, and demands that the PCs leave his property.

**Reginald Banks** (William Lord Wickersfield): Banks/William is the current persona of William

Wickersfield, a diabolist who has unlocked an immortality of sorts. Using a ritual he developed in the mid-1600s, William is able to move his soul from his body to another's body. He's made his way through a string of lives, each time taking the body and persona of a younger individual, over the course of nearly three hundred years.

Reginald Banks/William appears to be a relatively strapping 67-year-old, but in fact his health is beginning to fail. His accent reflects both his American origins and decades of living in London. William is intensely cruel, but through Banks he presents himself as cultured and intelligent.

**James Stockford:** Stockford is a friend and accomplice of Banks/William, posing as his valet. Banks/William has convinced Stockford that he's made himself immortal and can share that gift with the younger man. This has motivated Stockford to help prepare the ritual, but he doesn't realize that he's actually the next target for Banks/William to take.

James Stockford is in his mid-twenties, athletic and handsome. Of upper-class background (he is distantly related to the Wickersfield line, although he's not aware of it), he is not naturally servile and sometimes struggles with the discipline necessary

**James Stockford:** level 4, deception as level 6; melee attacks (with a sword or similar weapon) as level 5

*The Familiar, page 20*

*Hand of glory, page 16*

**Reginald Banks/William:** level 7, physical attacks and Speed defense as level 4; health 18; Armor 2; recovers 2 health per round when in his sanctum

# CRESTON GRANGE MANOR

## UPPER FLOOR



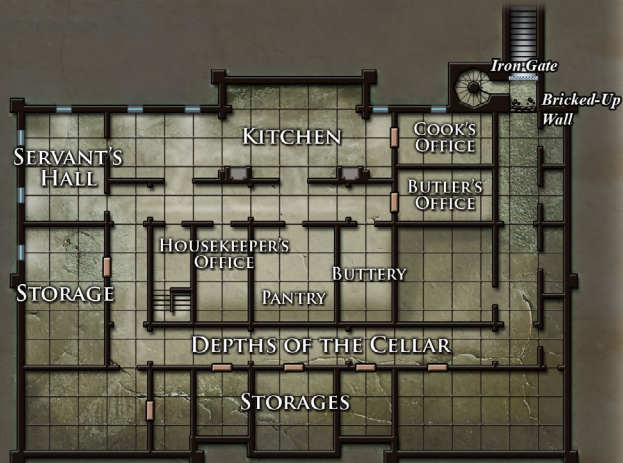
1 square = 5 feet (1.5 m)



## GROUND FLOOR



## CELLAR LEVEL





For a convention game, the GM should plan on two to three ghostly encounters.

Start with a scary one, then do one that's helpful, and if there are at least two hours left in the game, maybe add a third that can be either, depending on what best serves the story.

In a longer game, or in a convention game where time allows, the GM might add one or two more. But either way, don't overdo it—Creston Grange is a very haunted house, but not a carnival attraction.

*The Familiar*, page 20

Appendix 1: *The Ghosts*, page 22

Even a séance with a helpful ghost can be a terrifying event. Pull out the stops on the special effects—blow out candles, crack mirrors, introduce creepy sounds or spectral visions.

to pull off the role of the valet. Like William, he is ambitious and inconsiderate of the lives of lesser folk—a perfect accomplice for the foul work of finding victims to sacrifice to dark powers.

### INVESTIGATING IN CRESTON GRANGE

The PCs' investigations around the house and grounds ultimately lead to the events in the Grotto. To get there, they need to:

- Become aware of the Grotto, most likely by finding the bricked-up entrance in the cellar.
- Discover and dig up the remains of Robert Wickersfield Lynch, thus finding (and losing) the signet.
- Realize that they're being observed by one or more strange animals (the **Familiar**).
- Encounter a couple of ghosts, setting the stage for at least a partial understanding of the backstory and for the ghosts' aid in the adventure finale.

Along the way, they may discover other clues that help them piece together more of the story.

- They may attempt a séance to speak to one or more of the ghosts.
- The Visionary may have one or more visions.
- They may discover the hand of glory and connect it to clues at the Waller house.

- If they seem close to discovering the secret entrance to the Grotto in the tool room, the Familiar intercedes.

### ENCOUNTERING THE GHOSTS

There are many ghosts at Creston Grange—far too many, in fact, for the PCs to encounter even half of them. Which ghosts they encounter depends on where the PCs venture in the house, and, more importantly, the encounters the GM wishes to bring into play.

Some ghostly encounters are simply frightening events. Some provide insight into the house's history, particularly when coupled with the PCs' initial knowledge. For best results, at least one or two encounters should help the PCs find important locations, particularly the bricked-up entrance to the Grotto and the grave of Robert Wickersfield Lynch.

Details on the individual ghosts, their interests, and specific actions they may take are described in **Appendix 1: The Ghosts**.

### ATTEMPTING A SÉANCE

The Occultist may wish to attempt a séance. This is a fantastic way to bring about a ghostly encounter.

While the Occultist can (should!) dress it up with candles, hand-holding, or other gobbledygook, it's their Question the Spirits ability that actually enables the séance. The Occultist needs some sort of connection to the dead—in this case, it's most likely the spirit's name. Fortunately, the Writer's notes contain many names that may belong to the ghosts, and the PCs could learn others from the villagers in Wivelscombe.

Allow the Occultist to ask three questions. It serves the story well if answers lead to the Grotto, Lynch's grave at the crossroads, or other clues (such as the hand of glory in Banks/William's bedroom). That said, the ghost might be cooperative, combative, or downright terrifying. Do what makes the encounter fun!

## CRESTON GRANGE LOCATIONS

### ENTRY AND GRAND STAIRCASE

This central room is the hub of the house. If the PCs approach the house via the front door, they are met here by Stockford, who leads them into the library to speak with Banks/William.

- The large space is two stories tall. A large staircase ascends to a landing above.
- On both the ground and second floors, doors or archways lead to the rear of the house and to either side.
- The walls are ornately paneled in dark wood. The floor is of patterned polished marble. Despite the grandeur, the room is sparsely furnished.
- The room is unlit and gloomy.
- A massive crystal chandelier hangs from the center of the ceiling.

Several ghosts met their ends in this room.

- Amelia Wickersfield fell down the staircase in 1666.
- Elizabeth Sebrey was hung from the chandelier in 1775.
- Victor Huntington Paine fell from the banister above the staircase in 1845.

### LIBRARY

Banks/William and Stockford have made this room their base of operations; it's the only one (other than their bedrooms) that they're really occupying.

- A fire in the fireplace and several lit lanterns give this room a cheerful warmth.
- Ornate wooden bookshelves line the walls. They're about half full. Hundreds of books are also stacked, somewhat haphazardly, around the room.

- Large windows look out on the front and side of the house.
- The room is comfortably furnished.

Banks/William has been searching the library for evidence of the signet's whereabouts; hence the mess. (If questioned, he says he has been inventorying the contents.) Banks/William prefers to remain in this room while the PCs are at Creston Grange.

### GREAT PARLOR/CHAPTER HOUSE

This was the primary socializing room of Creston Grange, converted to the primary meeting room of Creston Abbey.

- This large room is dominated by tall glass windows and a wide central door that leads out into the gardens.
- Lavish woodwork and a large ornate fireplace testify to the room's original opulence.
- A pew-like wooden bench surrounds the center of the room, with a lectern at its apex. The room is otherwise unfurnished.

One person died here:

- Meriwether Lackford "died" sitting by the fire in 1766.

### KITCHENS

In the cellar an extensive kitchen runs along the back of the house, with a network of ancillary rooms including pantries, butteries, storage spaces, and offices for the housekeeper and butler.

- The hallway has large windows looking into the kitchen.
- The walls are plain, painted beige, and tiled to shoulder height.
- Windows set high in the back wall let in some daylight, which spills through into the hallway.
- The kitchen is reasonably modern and well equipped. It doesn't seem to have been used much recently, but it was clearly an active part of the abbey.

### DEPTHS OF THE CELLAR

A wide hallway runs parallel to the front of the house, leading from the wan light of the kitchen area into pitch blackness as you move north. At the north end it turns west toward the back of the house and the closed-off entrance to the Grotto.

- Several crosses are painted on the wall just where the last of the kitchen light fades.
- Doorways lead into storage rooms filled with old furnishings. The rooms are deathly quiet and completely dark.

**GM intrusion:** *A ghost that was helpful through one or two questions turns suddenly vicious, attacking the Occultist for one round before cutting off the séance.*

**GM intrusion:** *The Visionary experiences a vision lasting several rounds, during which time they are stunned and can't take actions. The vision is of a short, stout man wearing black, a frilly white collar, and an archaic wide-brimmed hat, and a younger, sallow-faced man wearing a brocaded coat and a powdered wig. The stout man is putting the other man into a chair near a fireplace. Both men have hollow black eye sockets. (These men are Thomas Arleigh/William and Meriwether Lackford, William's previous body.)*

**GM intrusion:** *The Visionary character experiences a vision that overwhelms their senses, stunning them for a few rounds. In this vision, they see several nuns in the depths of the cellar; one holds a lantern, one is praying, and the third is painting crosses on the (new-looking) brick wall.*

*If you have more time than that allowed by a convention game, place additional clues around the house. Perhaps a journal, kept by a nun, details their horrifying experiences with the ghosts.*

*The Familiar, page 20*

**GM intrusion:** *The Visionary is stunned as they experience a brief vision of a burned, headless body toppling into a shallow hole in the ground. (This is Robert Lynch being buried by the village mob at the crossroads. If the PCs haven't explored the crossroads yet, the Visionary recognizes an odd tree, which they remember seeing at the crossroads on the ride from Houndsmoor to Wivelscombe.)*

*Waller house, page 9*

**Secret door:** *level 6 to find*

- A sense of unease grows the further one travels into cellar.
- The hallway ends in a crude but sturdy brick wall. The construction obviously doesn't match the surrounding walls. The wall is covered with scores of painted and chalk crosses.

The entrance to the Grotto, just beyond the wall, was bricked off when the house was converted to a nunnery. Although the nuns never knew what lay beyond, they came to fear this part of the house.

No ghosts died in the cellar, but a helpful ghost may attempt to lead the PCs to the bricked-up wall.

Banks/William and Stockford will not agree to any proposal to break through the wall—although to feign helpfulness, they (quite reasonably) contend that the nobody could not have gotten behind a solid wall. If the PCs attempt to do so anyway, the **Familiar** tries to distract them in a manner similar to events in the tool room.

## BEDROOMS

A series of rooms once hosted upper-class guests but were later converted to the abbey's dormitory. Where each was once uniquely appointed, now they're all painted a uniform pale blue. Spare furnishings include simple beds (two per room), wardrobes, and side tables. Stockford uses the northeast bedroom for sleeping.

## BANKS'S BEDROOM

This bedroom, once the preserve of the abbess, is the nicest in the house. It has been claimed by Banks/William.

- A sizeable bedroom contains a large bed, a desk with a chair, a dressing table, and a wardrobe. It's nicely appointed but hardly lavish.
- It is clearly Banks/William's temporary home. A valise sits on the dressing table, half unpacked into the wardrobe.

If Stockford is present with the PCs, he discourages any search of the room and Banks/William's private belongings. Within the wardrobe is a black bag containing items Banks/William uses in his arcane activities, such as a silver chalice engraved with a pentagram. The bag also holds the hand of glory he used at the Waller house.

The western door out of the room leads to the burned remains of the original master bedroom in the west wing. On the south portion of this balcony-like space is a **secret door** that leads down into the Grotto.

## HAND OF GLORY

**Level:** 1d6 + 3

**Form:** Dried humanoid hand with candle-tip fingers

**Effect:** When the user lights the candles, up to five targets of the user's choice within short range fall unconscious if they fail an Intellect defense roll. Motion or loud noises won't awaken them, but an attack that inflicts damage allows them to attempt another Intellect defense roll to break free of the magic.

**Depletion:** 1 in 1d20 (check each hour of use)

## WEST WING

This once contained two large rooms: a music conservatory on the ground floor, and an expansive master bedroom suite on the second floor.

- A burned-out shell of masonry is filled with the charred timbers of the collapsed roof and second floor.
- A portion of the master bedroom's floor remains, looking like a precarious balcony hanging over the ruined conservatory. (This area connects to where Banks/William is staying.)

A secret door in the "balcony" upstairs connects to a hidden stairway down to the Grotto, but the PCs can't find it unless they climb up there or go through Banks/William's room, and Stockford won't let them do either of those things while he's around.

Two ghosts met their end in the master bedroom. Since this room was destroyed, however, they are more likely to be encountered elsewhere.

- George Brandlesford was consumed in a fire (not the fire that destroyed the west wing) in 1713.
- John Wickersfield died "in his sleep" in 1757.

## CHAPEL

This simple wooden structure was added when the Grange was converted to an abbey. A short colonnade connects it to the house. There's a small vestry adjacent to the entrance.

- Eight simple but pretty stained-glass windows line the walls, four on either side.
- Pews provide seating for thirty or so churchgoers.
- There's an altar at the head of the chapel, with a large crucifix above it.



## SUMMER HOUSE AND TOOL ROOM

The summer house sits at the far edge of the garden, overlooking the lawns below. The nuns used it as a potting shed.

- An airy room has tall glass windows all around. They may have been beautiful once, but now they're smudged and fogged.
- Workbenches line the walls. The benches are covered in long-dead potted plants, rotting bags of soil, and rusted gardening tools.

A staircase from the garden leads down to the overgrown lawns, which sprawl over several acres and end at the mere. At the base of the stairs, beneath the summer house, is the tool room. Mostly unused by the nuns, the tool room conceals a secret entrance to the Grotto.

- A rusty metal door opens into a dank, dark room.
- Shelves and old gardening tools line the walls.

Banks/William and Stockford have been in here; this is how they brought the Waller boys to their confinement in the Grotto. Characters **searching around the door** can find evidence that someone has come through recently. Finding the **secret door** requires searching the back wall—but before the PCs succeed, the **Familiar** intercedes.

## STABLE AND CARRIAGE HOUSE

Banks/William's 1919 Rolls Royce 40/50 is parked by the end of a long brick building opposite the remains of the west wing. Several wide double-doors lead to carriage garages, one of which holds a decaying cart. There's also stable space for a dozen horses as well as a tack room and storeroom.

One person met their end here:

- Josiah Wythe was trampled to death by horses here in 1809.

## MERE

At the far edge of the overgrown lawns, some 600 feet (180 m) from the house, is a mere.

- The mere is about 200 feet (60 m) across. The waters are dark, hiding an unknown depth.
- Probably decorative at one point, its shores are now heavily overgrown. About a third of the surface is choked with sickly looking water lilies.

This place is the site of one unnatural death:

- Reignold Farfew drowned in the mere in 1672.

## THE CROSSROADS

The road between Houndsmoor and Wivelscombe meets the entrance to Creston Grange in a section of woods. The unmarked grave of Robert Wickersfield Lynch lies in the bushes just a dozen steps away. Lynch's ghost haunts this crossroads; when spotted he fades into the bushes surrounding his grave.

Lynch's grave lies under a shallow depression, filled with damp leaves and decaying matter. Half an hour's digging (with tools) reveals a skeleton. A successful difficulty 5 Intellect task reveals the following about it:

- It was buried twenty to fifty years ago.
- There's evidence of charring on some bones of the extremities.
- The head was separated from the body with something sharp.
- The whole thing lies facedown in the grave.

Regardless of any roll result, a character who examines the skeleton easily discovers a heavy gold ring on its right hand. This is Banks/William's missing signet ring.

Unfortunately, the Familiar is watching. As soon as the ring is discovered, it takes the form of a raven, swoops down, and grabs the ring from the PC's hand. It immediately flies off toward the house. Treat this as a GM intrusion and award the PC 2 XP.

If the player rejects the intrusion, the Familiar looks for other opportunities to take the ring. The GM should get creative: nothing is more important to Banks/William (and by extension the Familiar) than that ring!

As soon as the signet is returned to Banks/William, he and Stockford move directly to the Grotto (via the secret door in the west wing) and prepare for the ritual.

## THE SILBURN HOLLOW

This deep pit in the woods is rumored to have been a Roman tin mine.

One person relevant to the adventure died here long ago:

- Thomas Arleigh "died" by falling into the pit after leaving a suicide note in 1768.

**GM intrusion:** *Pushing through the damp undergrowth, a character stumbles and falls facedown into a wet, leaf-filled depression about 6 inches (15 cm) deep. The depression is suspiciously grave-sized.*

**Searching around the door:** *level 4 to find evidence*

**Timing tip:** *Skip the following GM intrusion if you're almost three hours into the adventure.*

**GM intrusion:** *Within the tool room, a large black fox attacks with surprise, striking the character closest to the tool room door, biting them on the leg for 2 points of damage. The fox then attempts to slip away into the foliage outside the tool room. (The Familiar's goal is to distract the PCs from searching for the secret door.)*

**Secret door:** *level 6 to find*

*The Familiar, page 20*

**Mere:** *British term for a standing body of water that is relatively shallow for its breadth, similar to a large pond or wetland.*

*In a convention game, exploring the mere probably takes too much time. But if there is more time available, the mere is a great place to set clues. Over the centuries William used it to conceal the bodies of his sacrifices; the bones of dozens of bodies can be dredged from the muck. Along the shore, PCs might discover ropes and weights Banks/William hid there for the disposal of the Waller triplets.*

## PART 3: THE GROTTTO

### ◀ READ ALOUD ▶

*If you're using Horror Mode, escalate the intrusion range by one step as the PCs descend into the Grotto.*

**GM tip:** *The PCs entering the Grotto is a good time to award a subtle cypher to any PC who doesn't currently have any cyphers.*

**Rusty iron gate:** *level 7, resists lockpicking as level 6*

**Timing tip:** *After reaching the Grotto, spend no more than 15 minutes exploring its first few chambers. The PCs should arrive at the Sanctum about three hours and 15 minutes into the adventure.*

*The passage is just wide enough for you to touch both sides as you walk, and just tall enough for you to run your fingers along the vaulted ceiling—not tight, but on the edge of claustrophobic. The walls are rough-hewn but clearly manmade. The air, heavy and still, carries a musty smell, and a faint sound of dripping water comes from... well, somewhere. Aside from the light you carry, it's as dark as the blackest midnight.*

The Grotto is a network of tunnels and chambers built by Josiah Wythe/William in 1784. Inspired by a similar complex created by the infamous Hellfire Club (from which Wythe/William had been expelled), it served as an entertainment venue for his most debauched gatherings. It also contains an inner sanctum, a private space William specially sanctified for infernal magicks, including the taking ritual. It's here that he'll attempt his taking of Stockford, and then sacrifice the Waller boys as thanks to his dark masters.

There are three ways into the Grotto:

- The main entrance is in the cellar. It was bricked over when the abbey was founded. This is the most likely entrance to be discovered by the PCs, but they can't use it unless they break through the wall.
- A secret stair leads down from the master bedroom in the west wing. That room was destroyed by fire, but the secret entrance still exists. This is how Banks/William and Stockford generally enter the Grotto.
- A passage connects the Sanctum where the triplets are held to a concealed door in the tool room. This is how the triplets are brought into the Grotto.

### GROTTO LOCATIONS

The following are encounter locations within the Grotto.

#### STAIRS

The bricked-over door in the cellar and the secret staircase from the burned master bedroom both

lead to the top of a set of stairs that descend into the Grotto.

- A **rusty iron gate** blocks the top of the staircase descending into darkness. Banks has the key to the gate.
- The staircase is about 5 feet (1.5 m) wide and 7 feet (2 m) tall. The walls and vaulted ceiling are stonework for the first 10 feet (3.5 m) or so, then give way to rough-hewn carved bedrock.
- An inscription in the stonework over the entrance reads, "Leave here all Earthly woe; only our pleasure lies below."
- The stairs descend roughly 20 feet (6 m), giving way to a gravel-floored passage that slopes gently downward.

#### PASSAGEWAYS

The passageways are generally uniform. They have a gentle downward slope as one moves deeper into the Grotto.

- The walls are roughly carved from the bedrock. They're grey in color, streaked here and there with dark, slimy moisture.
- The passage is comfortable enough for single-file movement, but a bit too tight to walk side by side. The vaulted ceiling is about 7 feet (2 m) high in the middle—not cramped, but low enough to feel a bit claustrophobic.
- The floor is gravel.

#### VESTIBULE

Wickersfield and his fellow partiers used this chamber to prepare for their events, which were usually held in ceremonial robes. It's also the junction with the secret passage to the tool room in the summer house, through which Wickersfield could bring in illicit materials, prostitutes, and anything else he didn't want seen by his household. This is also how his ritual victims were brought in.

- Ornate wooden cabinetry contrasts with the rough-hewn stone and graveled floor. But time has not been kind—despite the fine construction, the woodwork is worm-eaten and weak with rot.



- The cabinetry forms thirteen alcoves, each with shelves and hooks like a doorless wardrobe.
- If Stockford and Banks/William have come down, their clothes are neatly folded in alcoves one and seven, respectively.

The panel at the back of one of the alcoves is a **secret door** leading to a narrow passage. It's possible to find **people's tracks** beyond this door.

### WATER

This metaphoric crossing point marks the entrance of the Grotto's celebratory spaces. The water is about knee deep. PCs may find it creepy or suspicious (it was designed for a psychological effect), but it's harmless.

- The passageway is marked by a distinct archway of fine masonry.
- Inscribed above the arch are the words, "Abhorred Styx the flood of deadly hate."
- Beyond, a cross-passage 4 or 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) wide is filled with water.
- The passage continues via a similar archway opposite.
- A rusty but strong iron ring is mounted in the wall beside the archway on either side of the water.

The water passage narrows and bends out of sight about 10 feet (3.5 m) or so in either direction. Wading to either bend reveals that it quickly tapers to an opening smaller than a foot across, through which the water flows. There's a very faint current running from northwest to southeast.

### WAITING ROOM

This is a utility space used by William's trusted servants for the preparation of comestibles and as a waiting area for prostitutes and other "guests."

- The mildewed tatters of an old curtain cover what seems to be an opening in the side of the passage.
- Beyond, a small chamber contains the rotted remains of a wooden bench, a cupboard, and a table.

### ANTECHAMBER

This is the space in which, in multiple personas over the course of a century, William held blasphemous meetings and celebrations that were intensely hedonistic at best, and downright unspeakable at worst. Sealed off like the rest of the Grotto for more than forty years, the remains of his celebrations are visible but well decayed.

- The passage opens to a five-sided chamber about 30 feet (9 m) across.

**Secret door:** level 2

**Tracks on the floor:** level 4 to find

**GM intrusion:** *The Visionary character is overwhelmed for a few moments by a vision of a man walking westward along the hallway. In one hand he holds a hand-shaped candelabra, and with the other he is dragging an unconscious man. Both men are wearing archaic clothing. Neither of their faces is visible in the candlelight. There is a sense that something unholy is about to happen.*

**James Stockford:** *level 4, deception as level 6; melee attacks (with a sword or similar weapon) as level 5*

**Reginald Banks/William:** *level 7, physical attacks and Speed defense as level 4; health 18; Armor 2; recovers 2 health per round when in his sanctum*

**Secret door:** *level 6 to find*

**The Familiar (animal form):** *level 5; stealth, perception, and seeing through deception as level 8; bite or similar attack inflicts 2 points of damage; if killed, it disappears and reforms in its bodiless state with full health in about a minute*

**The Familiar (bodiless):** *level 5; moves a long distance each round; cannot interact physically or make attacks; if killed, it reforms with full health in about a minute*

**The Familiar (nightmare form):** *level 5, Speed defense as level 6; Armor 1; inflicts 5 points of damage; if killed, it disappears and reforms in its bodiless state with full health in about a minute*

- Debris is piled along the walls: mildewed remains of silken pillows and rich fabrics; bottles and glassware; pipes, trays, and tarnished dishes.
- The air feels heavy, and the musty, decayed scent of the passageways is even stronger here.
- A line is inscribed in the floor, leading from the entrance to the far left corner opposite. From there it continues to form a pentagram that spans the chamber.
- Set high in the wall, at the far left corner, is a leering demon face carved of stone, with a long protruding tongue.

This gargoyle-like demon head unlocks the entrance to the sanctum. It's simple enough to operate, but anyone who enters without taking the proper steps triggers a curse. PCs examining the carving note the following:

- The tongue is damp with a dark, tacky fluid (blood), and there are some spots of this on the floor nearby as well.
- Inscribed on the wall beside the face are the words "Gain my assent to discover the way; gift me with thy life to assuage my hunger."

There is a **secret door** to the right of the demon head. Pulling on the demon's face, pivoting it downward—as if the demon head is nodding—unlatches the door.

A curse called the Demon's Lashing affects anyone who enters the sanctum. Any character who wets the demon's tongue with their blood is unaffected by the curse. This sacrifice (which requires only a few drops of blood) must be repeated each time the character enters the sanctum.

(Traditionally, William and his visitors walk the pentagram, following the line inscribed on the floor from the entrance to the room's apex, before stepping into the sanctum. But that's ceremonial theater, not a requirement.)

## SANCTUM

This is it: the scene of the ritual and the adventure's climax. If the PCs act fast, they can prevent the sacrifice of the Waller triplets. But, in the likely event that they dispatch Stockford, one of the PCs may be William's next victim!

- A sizable chamber is lit by two large braziers set into the floor. Orange flames fill the room with lurid flickering light and a sweat-inducing warmth.
- Banks/William stands at a lectern beyond the braziers wearing a simple linen robe. He holds a large dagger in one hand and seems

to be referencing a book on the lectern. Beyond him is a stone altar.

- A black fox paces about Banks/William's legs, but immediately fixes its gaze on PCs who enter the room.
- Stockford, also wearing a linen robe, sits in a chair facing Banks/William. He turns as the PCs enter.
- Behind Banks/William, the Waller triplets lie bound and gagged on the floor. The hand of glory burns amid them, keeping them asleep during the ritual.

When the PCs arrive, **Stockford** and the Familiar move to keep them away from Banks/William. Stockford grasps a saber from the floor near the chair and brandishes it at the PCs.

William's altar is set behind the braziers. The gap between the two braziers is easily defended by Stockford and the Familiar, so anyone who wants to get to Banks/William has to go through the fire, which inflicts 6 points of fire damage. Stockford and the Familiar attack any PCs who attack Banks/William or attempt to approach him.

**Banks/William** ignores the PCs and continues his ritual, even if he takes damage. He has an advantage in that the taking ritual grants him Armor, and a property of the sanctum heals him every round. Furthermore, he cares not one whit for Banks's body, which he's abandoning within minutes anyway. He relies on these factors to keep him alive long enough to complete his transfer.

**The Familiar:** Early in his career, William summoned and bound to his service a demonic spirit. This spirit, which has no name, has for three hundred years served William as a spy, messenger, protector, and servant. It is intelligent and capable of acting independently, although it follows William's commands without question or hesitation. It can take many forms—most typically **an animal** such as a cat, a black fox, or a raven—but it spends much of its time in an invisible, **formless state**. It communicates with William by whispering in his ear, which it can do in any form. Although it understands speech, it ignores attempts by anyone other than William to interact with it.

The Familiar can also take a **nightmare form**, which it does only when defending William from dire physical danger. In this state, it's a formidable foe. Every individual who views the nightmare form sees it differently (although its actions are consistent regardless of how they are perceived). One character may experience an attack as being lashed by a tentacle, whereas another views it as being slashed by a wicked claw; regardless,

the attack leaves a vicious wound. Some ways in which different PCs might see the nightmare form include:

- A catlike creature the size of a small table seems to be made of moving darkness.
- A shambling, lumpy form several feet across seems to move on a collection of short tentacles. Several long, bony necks are topped with heads that look like bird skulls.
- A white goatlike creature with a mass of eyes across the front and top of its head.
- An apelike creature with too many fingers on each hand.

**Ghosts:** As the PCs confront Banks/William and Stockford, the ten ghosts begin to appear. They arrive two or three each round, standing along the wall opposite the altar and watching the confrontation. However, the Familiar's presence deters them, so they take no action as long as it is part of the combat.

**Demon's Lashing:** A character who doesn't sacrifice a bit of their blood to the gargoyle-like demon head in the antechamber is cursed to see a **hallucinatory demon** waiting for them in the sanctum. It looks much like a classic fiend: tall and gaunt, horned, and red-fleshed. The demon is not real, and nobody else sees it. (If multiple people are affected by the curse, they each see their own demon.) It attacks the intruder on the second round after they enter the sanctum, and continues its attacks until the intruder leaves (or dies).

If the cursed character later returns to the sanctum without sacrificing blood to the stone demon head, they see the same demon ready to attack them.

## DEFEATING WILLIAM . . . MAYBE!

Given his Armor, his healing, and the protection of Stockford and the Familiar, killing Banks/William is a difficult task. The easiest way to destroy him is to dispatch the Familiar (reduce it to 0 health), at which point the ghosts immediately attack Banks/William. Despite his power, he is quickly overcome and destroyed by the combined effort of the ten ghosts.

But before that happens, Banks/William rushes to complete his ritual. It takes him five rounds (starting the round the PCs enter the sanctum) to complete the process. His plan was to transfer his soul into Stockford. Faced with the PCs and realizing Stockford might not survive the assault, he changes tack and—without the PCs realizing it—targets one of them instead!

On the third round after the PCs arrive, or immediately if Stockford is killed or grievously wounded, Banks/William shifts his target to one of the PCs. He can choose any PC, but his preference is a character in good health who is not substantially wounded. The PC might notice that Banks/William's attention has turned toward them, but otherwise has no direct way of knowing they have been targeted.

Once a PC is targeted, each round they must defend against the **taking ritual**. An individual failure has no immediate effect, but if the PC fails three times, Banks/William's eyes glaze over, and he collapses and ceases taking actions. He has successfully taken the PC's body. However, none of the PCs (including the targeted PC) realize it, or that the PC's actions for the rest of the adventure are actually William pretending to be that character.

## OUTCOMES

### **Banks/William Does Not Complete the Ritual:**

If Banks/William dies before completing the ritual, the game is over. The Familiar disappears, released from its centuries-long service. Stockford, if alive, surrenders. The ghosts, at last satisfied, fade away and never trouble Creston Grange again. The Waller triplets are safe. Congratulate the players on a job well done, and award each PC 2 XP for their success.

If the PCs subdue Banks/William without killing him, that interrupts the ritual, and they can send him to prison for kidnapping, which effectively ends his ability to switch bodies because he won't have access to the tools for the ritual.

**Banks/William Completes the Ritual:** If William transfers himself to one of the PCs, Banks's body becomes catatonic. The Familiar, recognizing what has happened, disappears—it will return to the PC/William's side after the adventure concludes. The ghosts become confused and fade away, but continue to haunt Creston Grange; they are eventually joined by the ghost of Reginald Banks. The Waller triplets are safe. (William will still want to perform a human sacrifice to appease his evil supernatural mentors, but that can wait a few days.)

Congratulate the players for saving the triplets, and award each PC 2 XP—and then reveal the terrible fate of the taken PC.

**Taking ritual:** level 7  
Intellect defense task

**GM intrusion:** The PC targeted by Banks/William must immediately make another Intellect defense roll without waiting for the next round.

**Hallucinatory demon:**  
level 4; barbed whip creates an illusory wound and inflicts 1 point of Intellect damage (ignores Armor); takes no damage from any attack

*The PCs have likely encountered only a handful of the ghosts. They should easily recognize the ones they've already seen, along with half a dozen or so that are unfamiliar to them.*

*There's no outward sign when William takes a victim, and he does his best to avoid suspicion and act like the person he's taken over. For the most dramatic results, don't tell the players that William has taken over the PC until the game ends. In this scenario, the PCs will have saved the Waller triplets—but not defeated William!*

# APPENDIX 1: THE GHOSTS

*If you're using Horror Mode, escalate the intrusion range by one step at the beginning of any encounter with a ghost.*

*The Familiar, page 20*

*Because many of these ghosts have the same family name, they are presented here in alphabetical order by first name.*



*Ghost, page 331*

*Even a helpful ghost can be terrifying. Its appearance may be gruesome or creepy, and its helpful intent might not be obvious.*

Creston Grange is a very haunted house. Were it not for William's penchant for keeping out of the public eye, it would probably have developed quite some fame.

Ten ghosts haunt Creston Grange. They are most active as William prepares for a new taking and for several months afterward. In the intervening years they are much less frequently encountered—perhaps just one every year or two, but even that is sufficient to make Creston Grange a very active haunted site.

The ghosts here exist in a sort of dream space; they're not rational actors, but rather beings driven by emotion and a surreal half-awareness of the world.

When did the ghosts of Creston Grange die? Each was forced from its own body into a detached spiritual state by William's ritual. For some years (as few as two; as many as forty or so) the being was not technically dead—nor was it human or alive. When William moved to his next taking, he killed the body he left behind (in most cases making the death appear natural, or a suicide or freak accident), and it was at this point that the body's spirit became a true ghost. (For this reason, Reginald Banks is not among the ghosts; although he no longer exists as a person, his body is still alive, controlled by William.)

As a result, these ghosts remember the deaths of their bodies as their "real" deaths. For example, Elizabeth Sebrey's body was hung from a chandelier once William was done with it. That apparent suicide is the death her spirit is aware of and memorializes.

## GHOSTS: SCARY OR HELPFUL?

Although they didn't technically die until their bodies were later abandoned and killed by William, the last earthly experience for each of his victims was the ritual—a moment of terror, pain, rage, and frustration. Most of the ghosts are driven by these emotions, consumed with anger and hatred they may direct irrationally at any living being.

One or more ghosts, however, may act upon a different impulse—a desire to expose and punish William. The ghosts are not rational and have very limited ability to communicate or affect the physical world. But a helpful ghost might try to lead PCs to clues or locations that help them

defeat William. The ghostly encounter descriptions below give ideas for using each ghost in an aggressive or helpful manner.

## THE GHOSTS AND THE FAMILIAR

The ghosts are repelled by the Familiar, which protects William from their activities. They can't manifest within immediate distance of the Familiar, and generally won't appear, even outside that range, within the same room in Creston Grange. (This is critically important to the climax of this adventure; the ghosts can kill William, but only if the PCs dispatch the Familiar first.)

## GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS

Some of the ghosts are associated with particular locations (generally the site of their body's death), but most can be encountered elsewhere. Details for all of them appear below, but the PCs will probably encounter only a few. The full details give you the flexibility to use encounters that fit the PCs' movements and actions.

Except where noted, use the standard Cypher System stats for **ghosts**. Note that even a hostile ghost should break off combat after a few rounds.

**Amelia Wickersfield** (1666; fell down stairs): Young woman, pretty and frail, wearing a pale silk floor-length gown with low neckline, lace collar, wide cuffs, and pearls.

**Elizabeth Sebrey** (1775; hung from chandelier): A woman in late middle age, wearing an expensive eighteenth-century gown, petticoat, wig, and hat.

- Encountered in the upstairs halls, usually when PCs are in a bedroom.
- Aggressive ghost: All of the doors along the hallway slam shut, trapping the PCs in their room. Elizabeth runs noisily up and down the hall for several rounds, screaming and banging on doors. Opening the door when she's active is a difficulty 5 task; the PCs can wait for her to quiet down, at which point the door can be opened normally. PCs emerging from the room catch a glimpse of her heading to the grand staircase. If they follow, they arrive in time to see her jump from the railing, her neck tied to the chandelier by a knotted bedsheet. She looks

directly into the eyes of the nearest PC, with a triumphant expression—this is a **mental attack** against that PC. After swaying for a moment, Elizabeth and her improvised noose disappear.

- Helpful ghost: Elizabeth is never helpful.

**George Brandlesford Wickersfield** (1713; burned in his bedroom in the west wing): A human form is completely engulfed in flame that crackles and roars as it approaches. Heat washes off of it, along with a sickening smell of burnt flesh. The flames only singe objects he comes near, but the damage to attacked characters is very real.

- Encountered anywhere.
- Aggressive ghost: George lurches toward a PC, attempting to take them into his **fiery embrace**.
- Helpful ghost: George is never helpful.

**John Wickersfield** (1757; smothered to death in his sleep): wears a full-length dressing gown and a white cloth sleeping cap.

**Josiah Wythe** (1809; trampled by horses in stable): wears period-appropriate riding clothes (white breeches, boots, and a coat with knee-length tails).

**Meriwether Lackford** (1766; died “naturally” after prolonged illness): A young man with a sallow complexion dressed in a long brocaded coat and powdered wig.

- Most likely encountered in the parlor.
- Aggressive ghost: Meriwether is generally not aggressive.
- Helpful ghost: Meriwether stands watching the PCs. When noticed, he turns and leads them to the depths of the cellar, always seeming to be unnaturally far ahead. (When the PCs reach the corner he just disappeared around, he’s already disappearing around the next corner.)

**Reignold Farfew Wickersfield** (1672; drowned in the mere): A sad-looking young man with a grey and hollow face, with Puritan clothing and a long seventeenth-century wig. Water drips from his soaking-wet clothes, puddling around his feet.

- Encountered anywhere.
- Aggressive ghost: Reignold is more likely to be helpful than aggressive, but he might make a ghost’s standard fear attack.
- Helpful ghost: The PC closest to Reignold feels overwhelmingly sleepy and must succeed at a difficulty 5 Intellect defense roll to remain awake. On a failure, the PC falls to the ground and Reignold disappears. The sleeping PC dreams of a man engulfed by shadow who holds a mummified hand. The

upstretched fingers of the hand burn at the tips like candles. When the PC awakens, a foul, bitter odor lingers in the air. If the PC resists this mental attack, Reignold targets the next closest PC, and so on, but disappears if anyone approaches him closer than immediate range.

**Robert Wickersfield Lynch** (1878; killed by fire, then beheaded by an angry mob): A tall man dressed in a dark coat and top hat, his face unnaturally shadowed, glares or leers menacingly at the PCs from the brush by the side of the road. If approached, he fades back into the undergrowth.

- Encountered only at the crossroads.
- Aggressive ghost: Although his appearance is sinister, Robert is essentially helpful.
- Helpful ghost: PCs who investigate Robert may stumble into his grave site.

**Thomas Arleigh** (1768; thrown into the Silburn Hollow after leaving suicide note): A short, stout man is dressed in black with a frilly white collar and an archaic wide-brimmed hat. Blood runs down his face, staining his collar and dripping onto the floor.

- Encountered anywhere.
- Aggressive ghost: Thomas appears briefly, then all the lights go out. A disembodied voice whispers, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In the darkness, barely visible if at all, Thomas **attacks** one of the PCs. He continues his attacks until light is restored—a difficulty 5 task. Once a single light is created, all other lights in the room relight, and Thomas is nowhere to be seen. A distinct odor of alcohol and sex lingers for several moments.
- Helpful ghost: Thomas opens his mouth as if to speak, but only a rough croaking emerges, along with a copious amount of blood. He staggers toward one of the PCs, pointing at them—or past them. Behind the PC, on the wall, letters formed in blood appear: *Levit. 20:27*. Thomas disappears while the PCs are distracted by the writing. A PC with sufficient knowledge, or referring to a bible, can determine that Leviticus 20:27 reads “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”

**Victor Huntington Paine** (1845; fell from banister above grand staircase); a confident-looking man in breeches and a jacket, his neck bent at a lethal angle.

**Elizabeth’s attack:** on a failed level 5 Intellect defense roll, the character takes 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) from shock

**George’s fiery embrace:** level 5; on a failed Speed defense roll the creature is held and takes 2 points of fire damage; this damage increases by 2 each round until the grip is broken

**Thomas’s attack:** level 5; darkness hinders the character’s defense; melee attack (feeling like a powerful blow to the head with a large rock) inflicts 4 points of damage

## APPENDIX 2: TAKINGS TIMELINE

Although this timeline doesn't directly affect the course of the adventure, the PCs might learn dates and official causes of death for these people associated with Creston Grange.

### 1659

In his first (and somewhat experimental) use of the ritual, William Wickersfield takes the body of his young wife, **Amelia**. He returns his own body to his bed, where it's assumed he died in his sleep.

*Amelia Wickersfield,  
page 22*

### 1659–1666 (7 years)

William despises living as a young woman, but the very reasons he hates it (relatively little physical and social power) make it difficult to arrange the next taking.

*John Wickersfield, page 23*

### 1666 (same year as the great fire of London)

In a fraught night, Amelia/William takes the body of **Reignold Farfew**, a cousin of William. Reignold had been invited to Creston Grange for this purpose (unwittingly, of course). Prior to the event, Amelia/William forged a will by William naming Reignold his heir should Amelia die before marrying. Amelia's corpse "falls" down the stairs to create a plausible cause of death. The forgery is suspected, and the cause of death investigated, but ultimately Reignold/William is determined to be innocent.

*Reignold Farfew  
Wickersfield, page 23*

### 1666–1672 (6 years)

Reignold/William enjoys the fruits of his labor, but becomes restless.

### 1672

Reignold/William takes the body of **George Brandlesford**, his nephew. Following the same pattern, he names this person in his will, arranges for George to visit, and conducts the taking during that stay. Reignold's body is "drowned" in the mere. This third taking in thirteen years spawns the legend of the vampire and arouses, briefly, the

*Meriwether Lackford,  
page 23*

suspicion of the authorities. Although there's an eerie similarity to the death of Amelia (an inheritor arrives, and the estate holder dies in a freak accident), the principals are different so there's no legal basis for serious investigation.

### 1672–1713 (41 years)

George/William remains in this body for an extended period, avoiding drawing negative attention by conducting the ritual too often. He courts and weds **Mary Ashfeld**, then murders her after she bears a son, **John**.

### 1713

George/William takes the body of his son. **John** is suspicious and doesn't go down without a fight. William is injured in the process and forced to make a last-minute change in plans for the disposal of George's body. He originally intended to let George "die" in his sleep, but instead places him in bed and sets fire to the bedroom. The fire is extinguished before spreading to the rest of the house.

### 1713–1757 (44 years)

John/William earns a reputation as an exceptionally cruel landlord, increasing the already substantial animosity of the Wivelscombe villagers. John/William marries **Sophia Blakely**, but she bears him only three daughters. She dies of consumption in 1729, saving him the trouble of murdering her. He considers a second marriage but abandons that plan when his eldest daughter, **Margaret** (now married and living in Somerset) has a son, **Meriwether Lackford**, whom he immediately designates as his heir.

### 1757

Following the same model again, John/William invites his young nephew **Meriwether Lackford** to the manor and takes him. John "dies" in his sleep.



**1757–1766** (9 years)

Meriwether/William becomes chronically ill within a few years, complicating the normal methods for creating or establishing an heir to be taken.

**1766**

When his health suffers a sudden and dangerous downturn, Meriwether/William targets the only person of stature to whom he has easy access: the local vicar, **Thomas Arleigh**. Meriwether “dies” in a chair by the parlor fire.

**1766–1768** (2 years)

Thomas/William has no claim on Creston Grange, which is inherited by John Wickersfield’s second daughter, **Elizabeth Sebrey**. Furthermore, the vicar has responsibilities for which William lacks both the temperament and training. He quickly moves to take Elizabeth, despite his intense hatred of living in a woman’s body.

**1768**

Thomas/William takes the body of Elizabeth. Thomas “dies” by apparent suicide, the body found at the bottom of the Silburn Hollow after a suicide note laments the previous two years of debauchery and dereliction.

**1768–1775** (7 years)

To Elizabeth/William’s chagrin, it takes nearly seven years to identify an ideal heir, establish a will, and lure the victim to Creston Grange. Perhaps subdued by the limits of his vessel—a late-middle-aged woman—this period is marked by relative sobriety and calm.

**1775**

Elizabeth/William takes the body of **Josiah Wythe**. Elizabeth “dies” by hanging from a chandelier. This is the fourth taking in less than twenty years, and the rumors of the vampire, which had lain fallow for decades, gain renewed power.

**1775–1809** (34 years)

Josiah/William is really into debauchery. Creston Grange takes on a Hellfire Club-like atmosphere. Rumors of the vampire strengthen, despite the lull in mystery deaths, and for the first time focus distinctly on Creston Grange.

**1809**

Josiah/William takes the body of **Victor Huntington Paine**, a wealthy and admired comrade in debauchery. Josiah “dies” after being trampled by horses in the stable.

**1809–1845** (36 years)

Victor/William lives principally in London. Creston Grange is intermittently occupied by distant members of the extended family, but ultimately Victor/William buys it. After several decades, he names Robert Wickersfield Lynch as his heir (to regain the Wickersfield name while retaining what remained of Grange’s wealth), and, following his old successful model, invites Robert to Creston Grange.

**1845**

Victor/William takes the body of **Robert Wickersfield Lynch**. Victor “dies” falling from the banister above the grand staircase.

**1845–1878** (33 years)

Robert/William is no model citizen or landlord, but he lives a more subdued life than many past incarnations. He marries Portia Smithfield, daughter of a wealthy industrialist. She mysteriously drowns in the mere when their son, Richard, reaches school age. Unfortunately, four years later—within a year or two of being old enough for the taking ritual—Richard dies after being kicked in the head by a horse. The Wickersfield fortune is nearly depleted, and though Robert/William is only late middle-aged, he doesn’t have a solid alternate plan.

**1878**

Robert/William takes the body of visiting American businessman and new-money heir Reginald Banks. While Banks/William is in the process of creating a death scene for Robert, Creston Grange is attacked by a mob of villagers from Wivelscombe and the west wing is set afire. Banks/William flees without any suspicion falling upon him. The fire is contained, and Robert’s burned body is recovered by the villagers. Believing they have killed the vampire, they behead the body and bury it, facedown, in an unmarked grave at the crossroads. The “death” of Robert ends the Wickersfield line.

**1878–1921** (43 years)

Banks/William lives in London on Banks’s considerable net worth. Creston Grange passes to distant relatives. As the manor is no longer an economic asset, the family donates it to the church for the creation of an abbey.

*Thomas Arleigh, page 23*

*Robert Wickersfield Lynch, page 23*

*Elizabeth Sebrey, page 23*

*Josiah Wythe, page 23*

*Victor Huntington Paine, page 23*

This is the handout for the player of the Constable PC. Rather than throwing all of this information at the other players all at once, use it to inform the questions you ask of the Wallers and other villagers, as needed.

## THE TAKINGS

Notes from Wivelscombe-7 Nov, 21

Waller children gone missing: Amos, Robert, Francis, fraternal triplets, each 18 years.

### Interviews

Hazel Waller, mother, marr., age 36.  
7 the Row, Wivels.

Awakened half six, customary time. Descended to kitchen. Went to hen-house at 6:40/6:45 for eggs, noticed ladder against rear of house, open window above. Hurried upstairs. Triplets gone, window open, latch broken. Beds slept in. No sign of struggle. After confer with husband, went to Bennet cottage at 4 North Lane to inquire with friends of children.

Slept through night, did not hear motion or tumult. Triplets went to bed about 10. Nothing unusual eve. 6 Nov. or prior. Reports no enemies or antagonists.

Followup: Hazel asserts a vampire likely the abductor. Silburn Hollow.

Grant Waller, father, marr., age 36.  
7 the Row, Wivelscb.

Awakened half six. To kitchen for tea. Wife returned fr. hen-house excited. Went to garden and observed ladder, footprints below of mult. adults. Male shoes. Prints to rear gate. Wife agitated. Went to Albert Martin at 8 the Row. Upon wife return from Bennet proceeded to H&C to organize search. ~~Criminal record?~~ None.

George Bennett, marr, age 41  
No. 4 N. Lane, Wvls.

Hazel Waller knocked at 7 in state of distress. Inq. with teen children whether they know about Wall, triplets location or activity. Children of both families close mates. Benn. children offered no insight. Half 7 proceed to Henn and Chicken. Discuss with others. Search organized. Lanes, barn, pastures, steam shed.

Benn. suggests search of Silburn Hollow. Cave to west. Believes vampire resides at this location. Claims vlg. children have been abducted by vampire 1878, 1855 1845, others. ~~Check county records?~~ Addend. co. records unclear.

==Additional interviews with similar details==

### Examination

Cottage sturdy and undamaged except as noted. Ladder at rear placed adjacent to bedroom window. Considerable mire due to recent rains. Sturdy hedges all around. Gate at front to lane, at rear to pasture. Cottages to either side. Much coming and going in garden since event, footprints obscured.

Beds and bedroom as mother described. Window latch bent as if forced. Two footprints on bedroom floor of garden mud. Male shoe, patent, avg. size. Pocket knife on floor, belongs to Amos. Would he leave it? Mother says no, gift from late grandfather.

Window in parlor forced same manner as above. No footprints or indication the house was entered at this point. Nothing out of order in parlor, kitchen, parent room. Valuables not removed.

This is the handout for the player of the Detective PC. Rather than throwing all of this information at the other players all at once, use it to inform the questions you ask of the Wallers and other villagers, as needed.

**THE TAKINGS**

## REPORT OF CRIME

### Metropolitan Police

*Victoria Embankment, Westminster*

*File No., 36299*

*Date on which made, Nov. 11, 1921*

*Period for which made, The overnight of Nov. 6-7, 1921*

*Report made by,*

*Character of case, Possible abduction of children*

*Site of incident, No. 7 The Row, Wivelscombe, Houndsmoor, Dorset*

### ACCOUNT OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED AND EVIDENCE COLLECTED

Upon the morning of 7 November it was found that the three sons of Grant Waller and Hazel Waller, had disappeared from their family home. These children, fraternal triplets Amos Waller, Robert Waller, and Francis Waller, each age 18, were not abed in their shared room nor had left that room through the main part of the house. A search of the premises, a village cottage of two rooms downstairs and two above, revealed evidence indicating the Waller children were removed during the night through use of a ladder placed below the bedroom window at the rear garden of the cottage.

A search of the environs conducted by the villagers of Wivelscombe did not discover the triplets nor any evidence of their abductor(s). The Houndsmoor representative of Devon Constabulary was then called, arriving early afternoon 7 Nov. Statements were taken from G. Waller and H. Waller and other village personages. However, superstition regarding a vampire abiding in the area overcame the good observations of the local residents, and no additional information of relevance was able to be obtained. The local constable lacks the skills and equipment for a more minute investigation of physical indicators.

Wivelscombe is reported to be a village of typical rural character and not known for an abundance of criminal activity. It is situated six miles from Houndsmoor.

*Proceed to Houndsmoor and assist local constabulary in the gathering of evidence pursuant to the apparent abduction of three people in Wivelscombe village.*

This is the handout for the player of the Local PC. Rather than dumping all of this information on the other players all at once, reveal details as they become relevant to the adventure.

# THE TAKINGS



This is the handout for the player of the Occultist PC. Rather than dumping all of this information on the other players all at once, reveal details as they become relevant to the adventure.

## SOME THINGS KNOWN TO US ABOUT VAMPIRES



“Vampire” is a word describing a wide variety of revenants, or the legends and myths thereof, that sustain themselves by drinking the blood of the living. It is sometimes said that the bite of a vampire is a sort of contagion, which can produce, of the victim, another vampire. Modern popular ideas of the vampire have been shaped by the well-known novel *Dracula*, by B. Stoker. This entertaining tale takes as its principal inspiration vampire myths peculiar to Hungary, combined with other concepts that likely sprang solely from Mr. Stoker’s imagination.

Vampires are well documented in England back to the middle ages. In the 12th Century a vampire terrorized Berwick-upon-Tweed by night. At dawn it was followed back to its grave. Accounts differ as to whether it was dismembered, or whether St. Hugh, the Bishop of Lincoln, destroyed it by placing an absolution on the corpse as it lay in the grave during the day.

The village of Wharram Percy in Yorkshire was abandoned after being overcome by a plague of vampires in medieval times. More than 100 revenants were destroyed by dismemberment and burning before the village was nevertheless forsaken.

The Alnice vampire of Northumberland terrorized its region for many decades. It was eventually tracked to its lair in an ancient ruin, disabled with pitchforks, and burned.

In 1750 in Cumberland, the Croglin vampire terrorized Amelia Cranswell. It picked the lead from the window to loosen a pane, climbed through, and bit her throat. It was chased away by her brothers, but returned a few months later. This time, after retreating, it was tracked to the crypt beneath a nearby church and destroyed by burning.

What these and other credible accounts tell us includes:

- As revenants, vampires can exist for a very long time until confronted, and cannot be killed in manners that might typically dispatch the living.
- When found by daytime in a coffin, crypt, or other lair, the vampire appears to be a lifeless corpse, excepting that it shows few signs of decay.
- Vampires feed periodically, drinking the blood of their victims where they are encountered. They are not known to abscond with their victims.
- Dismemberment, the removal of the head, burning, or the removal and destruction of the heart appear to be reliable methods for the destruction of vampires.
- There are accounts of vampires, in particular mythologies, that attribute to them the ability to change form to that of a dog, wolf, bat, or other creature. These are likely the embellishments of folklore, as most credible accounts describe only the form of a human revenant.
- Religious implements are sometimes said to be effective in deterring or destroying vampires, but this idea perhaps can be laid down as propaganda of the Christian church.

This is the handout for the player of the Writer PC. Rather than throwing all of this information at the other players all at once, reveal details as they become relevant to the adventure.

### **Notes on Creston Grange, Wivelscombe, Houndsmoor, Devon** (Later known as Creston Abbey)

#### **Of the House and Manor**

Creston Grange, The manor of Wivelscombe, was held by the Wickersfield family from the early Tudor period. Creston Grange as it now exists was constructed to replace an earlier manor house, by Sir Edwin Wickersfield in 1504; later, in 1753 his descendant John Wickersfield undertook a lavish refit in keeping with the architectural fashion of the day, leaving the house with what we now identify as a Georgian character.

In 1878 the Grange suffered a fire which consumed one wing of the structure, Robert Wickersfield being the tragic victim of this misfortune. Robert, a widower, left no direct heir, and the more distant relatives who came into possession of the property chose to transfer it to the church rather than to undertake the considerable expense of its upkeep.

The Creston Abbey was, by accounts, not a success. Although established in 1880 the complement of nuns appears never to have exceeded a dozen, and a planned school for girls did not come to be. The Abbey was vacated during the war, having been reduced to the Mother Superior and no more than two or three charges, all of whom perhaps found stronger callings elsewhere.

#### **Of the Wickersfields, select accounts**

**William Wickersfield 1615-1659:** William seems to have been a figure of minor note in the court of Charles I, but seemed to have little interest in the events of the Civil War or the interregnum, appearing in the rolls of neither the Roundheads nor Cavaliers. A bon vivant and rowdy, he was well known in London for a decadent lifestyle. Despite that, and the violence of the times, he died peaceably in his sleep at Creston Grange at a young age.

**Reignold Farfew Wickersfield 1632-1672:** An unlikely heir! Suspicion is cast upon the will that names Farfew, a cousin of William, the recipient of Creston Grange and the manor. And upon, as well, the unlikely death of William's widow, Amelia, whose neck is broken in a fall down the staircase. No culpability is found in Farfew, but he himself suffers a similarly questionable death, of drowning in the local pond, a dozen years later.

**John Wickersfield 1695-1757:** A taste for hedonism is hinted at in the earlier generations, but it is with John that the family reputation for cruelty comes fully into its own. The crushing of one's manorial charges under the aristocratic heel is hardly a rarity in this era, but John Wickersfield seems to have been noteworthy even among his peers. John dodges the early and strange deaths that bedevil his line, dying in his sleep at the astonishing age, for a Wickersfield, of 62.

## **THE TAKINGS**

**Josiah Wythe Wickersfield 1754-1809:** Famed for his debauchery, Wythe was reputed not only to have been a member of the infamous Hellfire Club, but to have been expelled from its ranks for the extent of his depravity! A letter from none other than the American statesman Benjamin Franklin alludes to an underground chamber in which Wythe conducted blasphemous parties, though this is almost certainly a conflation with the Hellfire Club cave in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. It is perhaps entirely in character with his habits, as well as the fates of his family, that Wythe dies trampled by his own horses in the Creston Grange stable.

**Robert Wickersfield Lynch 1825-1878:** The last Wickersfield at Creston Grange, Robert seems to have led a less colorful life than his forebears. Alas, he does not escape what element of justice the universe seeks for his line: He finds an unlikely death when the wing of Creston Grange is devoured by a fire that is never fully explained.

#### **Reports of Ghostly Sightings**

**1909 - Clara Stone** quits Creston Abby (where she was known as Sister Emma Grace). She recounts to the Daily Herald (Mar. 31, 1911) that the sisters were frequently terrorized by a ghost that ran through the halls nightly, sometimes screaming or pounding on doors. Stone claimed to have once seen the apparition as a woman in a long gown at the top of the central staircase. Perhaps this is Amelia Wickersfield (died c. 1665)?

**1879 -** A laborer quits work on the Abbey after an encounter with a young man wearing a long brocaded coat and powdered wig. The laborer at first thought this a living person in fancy-dress, but was so distressed when the phantom faded from view that he quit the job without taking his wages. His name is not recorded, but perhaps payroll records can be located?

**1852 -** Mariam Porter writes in a letter that, during a stay at Creston Grange to visit her friend Portia Wickersfield (wife of Robert), she witnessed a woman throw herself from the landing at the great stairs, tied by a noose to the chandelier overhead. I recall a reference to a suicide by hanging of Elizabeth Sebrey nee Wickersfield in 1775, but I am unable to re-find that source.

**1813 or 1814 -** According to a family legend among his descendants, one George Fenwick, while a guest at Creston Grange, encountered a man dressed as a vicar in "old fashioned" garb, who grasped him about the throat and nearly throttled him. Another person entered the room just as he passed out, and that apparently prompted the vicar to disappear. Nobody could account for a vicar (or any other stranger) being in the house, and the apparition was not that of the then-current vicar at Wickersfield.

**1764 -** Jacob James Hill, a doctor attending the chronically-ill Meriwether Lackford Wickersfield, enters a drawing room and is astonished to find a hideously burned man seated in a wing chair. Hill flees for aid, but the man is gone when the room is again entered. This predates the west wing fire by over a century, so this apparition could not be that of Robert Wickersfield.

This is the handout for the player of the Visionary PC. Rather than throwing all of this information at the other players all at once, reveal details as they become relevant to the adventure.

## THE TAKINGS

three gone missing  
always three

the vicar knew  
he was part of it  
but not part of it

Nuns washing soot  
off the walls  
And painting  
them blue?

Creston Abbey,  
I saw the  
name on a  
wooden sign.

The fiery apparition is  
threatening the nun.  
I can't see his face  
too much FIRE —

Handsome man?  
Wheels come?

This is the handout for the player of the Visionary PC. Rather than throwing all of this information at the other players all at once, reveal details as they become relevant to the adventure.

## THE TAKINGS

Three gone missing, always three

The vicar knew, he was part of it  
but not a part of it

Nuns washing soot off the walls.  
And painting them blue?

Creston Abbey,  
I saw the name on a  
wooden sign

The fiery apparition is  
threatening the nun.  
I can't see his face,  
too much fire—

Houndsmoon?  
Wivelscombe?



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

IS A **Charming** **Speaker** WHO

DESCRIPTOR TYPE

Interprets the Law

FOCUS

The Constable

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1 TIER 1 EFFORT XP

MIGHT		SPEED		INTELLECT	
9	0	12	0	15	1
POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS 1d6+1

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED  DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SKILLS T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	Pool	T	S	I
Positive or pleasant social interaction		X		
Special abilities that influence others' minds		X		
Intimidation		X		
Seeing through deception		X		
Deceiving (in lieu of Contacts)		X		
Searching		X		
Social interactions asset (see Authority ability)				
Defending against mental attacks				X
Task involving lore, knowledge, or understanding				X

ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Demeanor of Command (2 Intellect points):** You project confidence, knowledge, and charisma to all who see you for the next hour. Your demeanor is such that those who see you automatically understand that you are someone important, accomplished, and with authority. When you speak, strangers who are not already attacking give you at least a round to have your say. If speaking to a group that can understand you, you can attempt to have them produce their leader or ask that they take you to their leader. You gain a free level of Effort that can be applied to one persuasion task you attempt during this period. Action to initiate.

**Fast Talk (1 Intellect point):** When speaking with an intelligent creature who can understand you and isn't hostile, you convince that creature to take one reasonable action in the next round. A reasonable action must be agreed upon by the GM; it should not put the creature or its allies in obvious danger or be wildly out of character. Action.

**Knowledge of the Law:** You're trained in the law of the land. If you don't know the answer to a question of law, you know where and how to research it (a university's law library is a good place to start, but you've also got other sources). Enabler.

**Opening Statement:** You're trained in tasks related to persuasion, deception, and detecting the falsehoods of others. (This is already accounted for in your Skills.) Enabler.

**Authority:** Your authority as the Constable gives you an asset on many social interactions, particularly with the folk of Houndsmoor and Wivelscombe.

**Practiced With Medium Weapons:** You can use light and medium weapons without penalty. Enabler.

ATTACKS

Truncheon, medium bashing weapon	4
Pocket knife, light bladed weapon, attack eased	2



**CYPHERS**

**Best tool:** level 3, provides an asset for any one task using a tool, even if that means exceeding the normal limit of two assets.

**Speed boost:** level 5, adds 2 to your Speed Edge for one hour

2 LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

Uniform, helmet, and raincoat  
Truncheon (medium weapon)  
Badge  
Notebook and pencil  
Whistle  
Handcuffs  
Pocket knife  
Constable's notes on the children's disappearance (see handout)

Depending on your proclivities, you may also choose to have:

- Cigarettes, a cigar, or a pipe and tobacco
- Matches or a lighter
- A flask
- A makeup case
- A cross

ARMOR MONEY

## BACKGROUND

You are the constable in the market town of Houndsmoor—the closest town to Wivelscombe. You're the only police force in the town, and one of just a handful in the District, so after the disappearance of the Waller children the District called in help from the Metropolitan Police of London (Scotland Yard), who have expertise in new methods of gathering evidence.

In your initial inquiries you've found that the villagers are convinced a vampire is to blame. (The legend of a local vampire goes back centuries, but there are no cases—at least in your lifetime—that anyone has attributed to the vampire.)

## NOTES

## PORTRAIT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

IS A **Sharp-Eyed** **Warrior** WHO

DESCRIPTOR TYPE

Learns Quickly

FOCUS

The Detective

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1 TIER      1 EFFORT      XP

MIGHT		SPEED		INTELLECT	
12	0	12	1	13	0
POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS 1d6+1

1 ACTION     1 HOUR

10 MINS     10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED     DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SKILLS T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	Pool	T	S	I
Speed Defense when not wearing armor		X		
Initiative		X		
Perception		X		
Balancing		X		
Running		X		
Persuasion		X		
Deception		X		
Detecting falsehoods		X		
Solving problems with multiple solutions		X		
Clue analysis		X		

ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the *Cypher System Rulebook*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Combat Prowess:** You add +1 damage to ranged weapon attacks (already included in your handgun attack). Enabler.

**Overwatch (1 Intellect point):** You use a ranged weapon to target a limited area (such as a doorway, a hallway, or the eastern side of the clearing) and make an attack against the next viable target to enter that area. This works like a wait action, but you also negate any benefit the target would have from cover, position, surprise, range, illumination, or visibility. Further, you inflict 1 additional point of damage with the attack. You can remain on overwatch as long as you wish, within reason. Action.

**Find the Flaw:** If an opponent has a straightforward weakness (takes extra damage from fire, can't see out of their left eye, and so on), the GM will tell you what it is.

**There's Your Problem:** You are trained in tasks related to figuring out how to solve problems with multiple solutions, like the best way to pack a truck, calm an enraged customer, give a cat a shot of insulin, or find a route through the city for maximum speed. (This is already listed in your Skills section.) Enabler.

**Detective's Insight:** Once during the adventure, you may relate a case you investigated in London that bore some similarity to the events you are pursuing. You may ask the GM for a special insight that comes from comparison to the prior experience.

Enhanced Intellect: 3 points have been added to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

ATTACKS

Medium handgun, long range weapon	5



CYPHERS

**Analeptic:** level 5, restores 5 to your Speed pool

**Noncombat Effort enhancer:** level 3, you can apply one free level of Effort to any one noncombat task; this level of Effort doesn't count toward your limit of how many levels of Effort you can apply to a task

2 LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

Middle-class clothing, hat, and coat or raincoat  
Handgun (medium weapon)  
Magnifying glass  
Tape measure  
Fingerprinting kit  
Notebook and fountain pen  
Wristwatch  
Electric torch  
A report from Scotland Yard (see handout)

Depending on your proclivities, you may also choose to have:

- Cigarettes, a cigar, or a pipe and tobacco
- Matches or a lighter
- A flask
- A makeup case
- A cross

ARMOR      MONEY

## BACKGROUND

You are a young detective from the Metropolitan Police (commonly called Scotland Yard), assigned to aid the local constabulary in the small Devon market town of Houndsmoor with the disappearance of the Waller children.

The villagers in Wivelscombe are obsessed with a vampire legend, to the extent that getting reliable testimony from them has apparently been difficult. For that reason you've employed an occultist, not to find a vampire but to help sort through the villagers' stories and assuage any concern that you might not take them seriously.

## NOTES

## PORTRAIT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

IS A **Tough** **Warrior** WHO

DESCRIPTOR TYPE

Works For a Living

FOCUS

The Local

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1 TIER 1 EFFORT XP

MIGHT		SPEED		INTELLECT	
16	1	10	0	8	0
POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE

**RECOVERY ROLLS** 1d6+2

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

**DAMAGE TRACK**

IMPAIRED  DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

**SKILLS** T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	Pool	T	S	I
Speed Defense when not wearing armor		X		
Might Defense		X		
Carpentry		X		
Plumbing		X		
Electrical repair		X		
Local knowledge		X		
Asset on life-or-death phys tasks (Local ability)				

**ADVANCEMENT**

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the *Cypher System Rulebook*

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Bash (1 Might point):** This is a pummeling melee attack. Your attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal, but dazes your target for one round, during which time all tasks it performs are hindered. Action.

**Control the Field (1 Might point):** This melee attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal, and regardless of whether you hit the target, you maneuver it into a position you desire within immediate range. Action.

**No Need for Weapons:** When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a medium weapon instead of a light weapon. Enabler.

**Handy:** You work for a living and are trained in tasks related to carpentry, plumbing, and electrical repair (these are already included in your Skills box). Your knowledge in these realms also gives you an asset to craft entirely new items within your spheres of knowledge and the limits of possibility within the setting. Enabler.

**Local:** You are toughened by country life and, among the PCs, have the highest personal stakes in the outcome of this adventure. You gain an asset in life-or-death physical challenges while in Houndsmoor, Wivelscombe, Creston Grange, and the general area.

**ATTACKS**

Shotgun, heavy weapon, immediate range weapon	6
Hatchet, medium bladed weapon	4
Crowbar, medium bashing weapon	4
Pocket knife, light bladed weapon (attack eased)	2



**CYPHERS**

**Curative:** level 5, restores 5 points to your Might Pool

**Stim:** level 3, eases your next action by three steps

2  
LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

Rustic clothing, hat, and coat or raincoat

Shotgun (heavy weapon)

Hatchet (medium weapon)

Crowbar (medium weapon)

Pocket knife (light weapon)

Pocket watch

Kerosene lantern

Station bus (horse-drawn wagon, seats six), with two ponies to pull it (Ginger and Abner are reliable and good-natured, although Abner can be nippy)

map of the local area (see handout)

Depending on your proclivities, you may also choose to have:

- Cigarettes, a cigar, or a pipe and tobacco
- Matches or a lighter
- A flask
- A makeup case
- A cross

1  
ARMOR

MONEY

## BACKGROUND

You are from the market town of Houndsmoor, along the railway line that runs from Taunton to Minehead. You aren't well educated, but you know the area very well. And you own Houndsmoor's station bus (a horse-drawn cart for passengers).

You have sometimes in the past aided The Constable from Houndsmoor, and they've employed you once again to provide transport to the nearby village of Wivelscombe. The constable has brought along The Detective from London, along with (perhaps) The Occultist. You may have a couple of other passengers as well.

## NOTES

## PORTRAIT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

IS A **Doomed** **Speaker** WHO

DESCRIPTOR TYPE

**Shepherds Spirits**

FOCUS

**The Occultist**

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

**1** TIER **1** EFFORT **XP**

MIGHT		SPEED		INTELLECT	
9	0	11	0	16	1
POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE

**RECOVERY ROLLS** 1d6+ **1**

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

**DAMAGE TRACK**

IMPAIRED  DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

**SKILLS** T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

Pool	T	S	I
Perception	X		
Speed Defense	X		
Intellect Defense related to losing sanity	X		
Occult lore	X		
Asset on defending against supernatural attacks			

**ADVANCEMENT**

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the *Cypher System Rulebook*

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Anecdote (2 Intellect points):** You can lift the spirits of a group of creatures and help them bond together by entertaining them with an uplifting or pointed anecdote. For the next hour, those who pay attention to your story are trained in a task you choose that's related to the anecdote, as long as it's not an attack or defense task. Action to initiate, one minute to complete.

**Encouragement (1 Intellect point):** While you maintain this ability through ongoing inspiring oration, your allies within short range ease one of the following task types (your choice): defense tasks, attack tasks, or tasks related to any skill that you are trained or specialized in. Action.

**Inspire Aggression (2 Intellect points):** Your words twist the mind of a character within short range who is able to understand you, unlocking their more primitive instincts. As a result, they gain an asset on their Might-based attack rolls for one minute. Action to initiate.

**Understanding (1 Intellect point):** You observe or study a creature or object. Your next interaction with that creature or object gains one asset. Action.

**Doom:** Every other time the GM uses GM intrusion on your character, you cannot refuse it and do not get an XP for it (you still get an XP to award to another player). This is because you are doomed. The universe is a cold, uncaring place, and your efforts are futile at best.

**Question the Spirits (2 Intellect points):** You can call a spirit to you and petition it to answer a few questions (usually no more than three before the spirit fades). *(Continued in the Notes section of your character sheet.)*

**ATTACKS**

Knife, light weapon (attack eased)	2



**CYPHERS**

**Intellect booster:** level 5, adds 2 to your Intellect Edge for one hour

**Perfection:** level 5, treat your next action as if you had rolled a natural 20 on it

**2** LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

Middle-class clothing, hat, and coat or raincoat

Knife (light weapon)

Writing planchette (for spirit writing; works best with two or more participants)

Magnet

Music box (can be used to indicate the presence of spirits)

Stake and hammer

Hand mirror

Psychograph (used for spirit communication similarly to a Ouija board but faster; works best with two or more participants)

Candle lantern and four candles

notes about vampires (see handout)

Depending on your proclivities, you may also choose to have:

- Cigarettes, a cigar, or a pipe and tobacco
- Matches or a lighter
- A flask
- A makeup case
- A cross

ARMOR MONEY

## BACKGROUND

You are an occultist. You've been employed by a Scotland Yard detective to help find some children missing from the rural Devon village of Wivelscombe. The villagers believe a vampire is responsible; the detective doesn't agree but wants your help getting useful information out of the villagers.

You know that there are supernatural things that science and history cannot explain—you are certain that vampires, ghosts, demons, and the like are real. However, you believe the detective is almost certainly correct; vampires are not common in Devon.

## NOTES

### Question the Spirits, continued:

First, you must summon a spirit. You must have personally known the creature, have an object that was owned by the creature, or touch the physical remains of the creature.

If the spirit responds, it can manifest as an insubstantial shade that answers for itself, it can inhabit an object or any remains you provide, or it can manifest as an invisible presence that you speak for.

The spirit may not wish to answer your questions, in which case you must persuade it to help. You can attempt to psychically wrestle the spirit into submission (an Intellect task), or you can try diplomacy, deception, or blackmail ("Answer me, or I'll tell your children that you were a philanderer" or "I'll destroy this relic that belonged to you").

The GM determines what the spirit might know, based on the knowledge it possessed in life. Action to initiate.

## PORTRAIT



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

IS A Mysterious Explorer WHO

DESCRIPTOR TYPE

Sees Beyond

FOCUS

The Visionary

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1 TIER 1 EFFORT XP

MIGHT		SPEED		INTELLECT	
10	0	15	1	9	0
POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS 1d6+1

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED  DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SKILLS T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	Pool	T	S	I
Speed Defense (when not wearing armor)		X		
Stealth		X		
Resisting interrogation		X		
Climbing		X		
Jumping		X		
Asset on searching for hidden things				
Religion		X		
Getting people to believe or trust				X

ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Fleet of Foot (1+ Speed points):** You can move a short distance as part of another action. You can move a long distance as your entire action for a turn. If you apply a level of Effort to this ability, you can move a long distance and make an attack as your entire action for a turn, but the attack is hindered. Enabler.

**Surging Confidence (1 Might point):** When you use an action to make your first recovery roll of the day, you immediately gain another action. Enabler.

**Confounding:** You pull talents and abilities seemingly out of nowhere. You can attempt one task in which you have no training as if you were trained, attempt a task that you are trained in as if specialized, or gain a free level of Effort with a task that you are specialized in. This ability refreshes every time you make a recovery roll, but the uses never accumulate.

**See the Unseen:** You can automatically perceive creatures and objects that are normally invisible, out of phase, or only partially in this universe. When looking for things more conventionally hidden, the task is eased (already included in your Skills box). Enabler.

**Visions:** You are sometimes subject to visions that seem so real that sometimes you don't realize they aren't. You don't control when or how these visions occur (the GM decides).

ATTACKS

Unarmed attack, light bashing (attack eased)	2



**CYPHERS**

**Enduring shield:** level 7, for the next day you have an asset on Speed defense rolls

**Remembering:** level 3, allows you to recall any one experience you've ever had. The experience can be no longer than three minutes, but the recall is perfect, so (for example) if you saw someone write something on a pad of paper, you remember what they wrote

2 LIMIT

**EQUIPMENT**

Middle-class clothing, hat, and coat or raincoat  
Wristwatch  
Bible  
Bandages

Depending on your proclivities, you may also choose to have:

- Cigarettes, a cigar, or a pipe and tobacco
- Matches or a lighter
- A flask
- A makeup case
- A cross

ARMOR MONEY

## BACKGROUND

Since you were a child, you've had occasional visions. They are always religious in nature. Recently you've had visions of nuns at an abbey who have seemed frightened, and those visions have drawn you to the Devon town of Houndsmoor.

While in Houndsmoor, you discovered that a police investigation is setting out toward the nearby village of Wivelscombe, and felt compelled to tag along.

## NOTES

## PORTRAIT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

IS A Calm Explorer WHO

DESCRIPTOR TYPE

Solves Mysteries

FOCUS

The Writer

TYPE, FLAVOR, OR OTHER

1 TIER 1 EFFORT XP

MIGHT		SPEED		INTELLECT	
10	1	9	0	17	1
POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE	POOL	EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS 1d6+1

1 ACTION  1 HOUR

10 MINS  10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED  DEBILITATED

+1 Effort per level  
Ignore minor and major effect results on rolls  
Combat roll of 17-20 deals only +1 damage

Can move only an immediate distance  
Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SKILLS T = trained, S = specialized, I = inability

	Pool	T	S	I
Perception			X	
Identifying		X		
Researching			X	
Mythology		X		
History		X		
Geography		X		
Religion		X		
Philosophy		X		
Asset on many social interactions (Upper Class)				
Physical Attacks				X
Climbing				X
Running				X
Jumping				X
Swimming				X

ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 points into stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 to the Edge of your choice

EXTRA EFFORT +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER Refer to the Cypher System Rulebook

SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Decipher (1 Intellect point):** If you spend one minute examining a piece of writing or code in a language you do not understand, you can make an Intellect roll of difficulty 3 (or higher, based on the complexity of the language or code) to get the gist of the message. Action to initiate.

**Trivia:** You can come up with a random fact pertinent to the current situation when you wish it. This is always a matter of fact, not conjecture or supposition, and must be something you could have logically read or seen in the past. You can do this one time, although the ability is renewed each time you make a recovery roll.

**Investigator:** To really shine as an investigator, you must engage your mind and body in your deductions. You can spend points from your Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to any Intellect-based task. Enabler.

**Sleuth:** Finding the clues is the first step in solving a mystery. You are trained in perception (already included in your Skills box, this increased your perception skill from trained to specialized). Enabler.

**Upper Class:** As a member of the upper class, you have an asset in many social interactions and are treated as a peer by other members of that class. Enabler.

ATTACKS

Small handgun, light ranged weapon (attack eased) 2



CYPHERS

**Rejuvenator:** level 5, restores 5 points to a random Pool (01-50 = Might, 51-75 = Speed, 76-00 = Intellect)

**Tissue regeneration:** level 7, for the next hour, you regain 1 Pool point per round. As each point is regained, choose which Pool to add it to. If all your Pools are at maximum, the regeneration pauses until you lose points again, at which point it begins again (if any time remains in the hour) until the duration expires or a total of 14 points have been restored.

2 LIMIT

EQUIPMENT

Smart clothing, hat, and coat or raincoat  
Small handgun (light weapon)  
Journal  
Fountain pen  
Camera and film  
Electric torch  
Writer's notes on Creston Grange (see handout)

Depending on your proclivities, you may also choose to have:

- Cigarettes, a cigar, or a pipe and tobacco
- Matches or a lighter
- A flask
- A makeup case
- A cross

ARMOR MONEY

## BACKGROUND

You are a writer, and you are particularly interested in the topic of haunted houses. The manor called Creston Grange has caught your attention; you've unearthed numerous reports of ghostly activity at the house, which has remained surprisingly unnoted given all of these interesting encounters.

You were traveling in Devon recently and heard about the disappearance of the Waller children from the village of Wivelscombe—the village in which Creston Grange is situated. In the town of Houndsmoor you connected with The Local, who has agreed to take you to Wivelscombe.

## NOTES

## PORTRAIT