

“The Scarecrow” ©1991,1997,1998

by Michael C. LaBossiere

ontologist@aol.com

Call of Cthulhu

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Introduction

The adventure is a rather cruel trick to play on the players. The investigators will believe that they are going on a much needed vacation, far from the madness and horror of the Mythos. They will certainly be far from the madness and horror of the Mythos. Sadly, they will not be far from madness and horror.

This adventure is set in the 1990s and is located in the imaginary town of Deerfarm, New Hampshire. With some modifications, it can be set in a different time or place.

Getting the Investigators Involved

There are several ways to get the investigators involved with this adventure. First, the Keeper could inform the players that their investigators have won a vacation at the Contented Cow. Second, the investigators might ask if their investigators can go someplace “quiet” to recover a few Sanity Points. The Contented Cow is well known as a quiet, restful place and would be ideal for the investigators. Third, if an investigator is undergoing treatment for Sanity loss, the person treating the investigator can suggest the Contented Cow as an excellent place to visit. In any case, the Keeper should find a plausible way to get the investigators to the Contented Cow.

Keeper's Background

Unknown to the staff of the Contented Cow, two of their registered guests (Tamara and Jason Windflower) were murdered in California by Nadine Bryce and John Haplin. Haplin is a serial killer who has evaded the law for nearly a decade and Bryce is his girlfriend.

Haplin learned that his victims planned on going to the Contented Cow. Oddly

enough, Haplin's career as a serial killer began at that very spot, ten years ago. When he was going to college, he worked part time for Becky and Roger Speight on their farm. One night Haplin decided to play a cruel joke on the old couple. He dressed up as a scarecrow, even making gloves covered with straw. After dressing up, he went to the farmhouse and scared them. For some reason, their terror awakened something cruel and nasty in him and he killed them. Since then, Haplin has been obsessed with inflicting terror and pain on helpless people.

Thinking it would be a "real blast" Bryce and Haplin decided to assume the identities of their victims and go to the Contented Cow. Haplin wants to "do it big" by committing a series of killings that will become "bigger than life, an urban myth sort of thing." Haplin's plan is to kill some people in weird ways, then kill everyone at the Contented Cow and to finally blow up the Contented Cow with dynamite as sort of a closure on his career as a serial killer.

Investigation

The following information can be found by the investigators.

The Contented Cow

If the investigators check on the Contented Cow, they will find that it is owned by an aging rock star who recovered at the original farmhouse in the 1970s. He purchased the land eight years ago and had the old farmhouse replaced by a newer, larger building. The star is currently in England and the investigators will not be able to reach him. Even if they could, he would have nothing useful to say to them.

According to all sources, the Contented Cow is a respectable place. It is fairly expensive, but offers an excellent vacation for the money. The place has a reputation as a recovery spot for artists and professionals who have had problems with drugs or emotional breakdowns, but there are no incidents that stain its reputation. The Contented Cow is exactly as it appears to be: a vacation spot for people who really, really need to get away from it all.

Prior to the Contented Cow

If the investigators talk to some of the inhabitants of Deerfarm and specifically ask about any terrible or odd events, they might be able to learn about the murders that took place in the area ten years ago. The original farmhouse was the scene of two gruesome murders ten years ago. The owners, Becky and Roger Speight, were found strangled to death in their bed. The police report notes that no prints were found at the scene, but that there was straw in the bed and the forensic examination revealed bits of straw embedded in the victims' necks.

Most people believe that a mad person killed the Speights, since they were well liked and nothing of value was taken from the farmhouse. There is a local story about the "strangling scarecrow." According to the tale, back in the colonial days a witch lived in the area and it was said that she had the power to summon a demon to bring life to an old scarecrow. It is said that she used this scarecrow to strangle those that threatened her. The story ends with the old witch and her scarecrow being burned on the very spot where the farmhouse now stands. This story is a complete fabrication, but should give the investigators something to think about.

A Story

Once the investigators get to the Contented Cow, they will almost certainly start asking around about anything unusual about the place. The old handyman, Carl O'Donald, loves to make up stories and tell them to people. He will almost certainly see the investigators as the sort of people who would appreciate a tall tale. Because of this, he will tell them that the place has a rather dark history. According to an old legend, a small group of Indians were massacred on this spot by another tribe. The dying Indians are supposed to have cursed the ground so that none would be able to live here. Shortly afterwards, or so the story goes, the tribe that had perpetrated the massacre vanished one day, leaving only a deserted village.

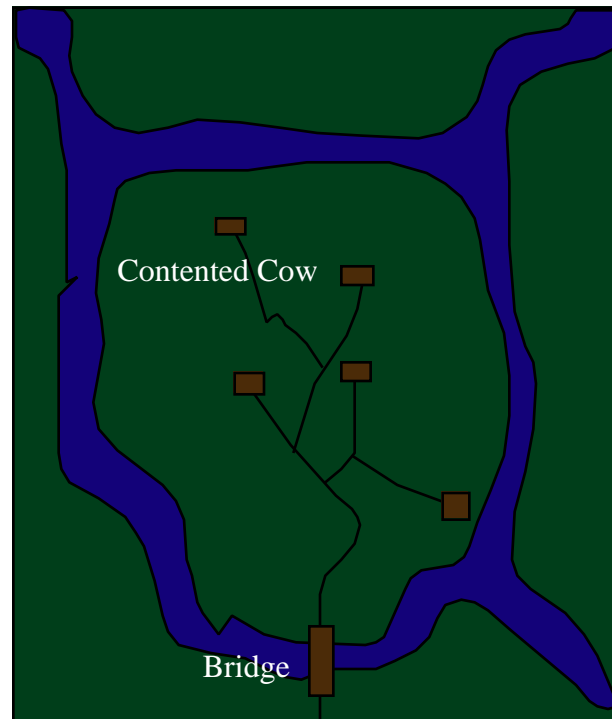
O'Donald knows the scarecrow story and will attest to its veracity. He will add that he thinks the old witch learned her secrets from the indians who were massacred.

Another Story

The owner of the one private house on the island is a middle aged woman, Betsy Carter. She was the person who found the Speights when she went to visit them for morning coffee. She knows that they were strangled and will describe how there were bits of straw and hay in the room. She will also say that the Speight's scarecrow was missing. She doesn't know anything more about what happened, but will speculate for as long as the investigators are willing to listen. Most of her speculation will be sensible, but if asked, she will say that sometimes she thinks that something unnatural might have happened in the old farmhouse.

The Contented Cow

The PCs will be staying at the Contented Cow, which is a replica of an old style farmhouse (except for the fact that it has dozens of bedrooms). It is a rather nice place with various tame farm animals about to add to the ambience. There is even a scarecrow out in the fields. The land itself is surrounded on two sides by a river and a canal has been dug making the area into an island (to keep out the riffraff). Access to the island is via a bridge. The bridge has a gate that is kept locked at night. There are four other houses on the land. Only one is currently occupied (by Betsy Carter), the other three are owned by corporations and are used in corporate retreats.



Action and Events

The first day will be enjoyable and the investigators will get a chance to relax. Not so for the next day.

A Murder

The night of the first day the investigators stay at the Contented Cow , there will be a massive thunderstorm, complete with extremely loud thunder and flashes of lightning. One bolt will strike an old tree in the yard and split it open. The next morning, Mr. James Cocil, a innocuous businessman from North Dakota ,will be will be found murdered in his room. The room is on the first floor and the window has been smashed in. There are muddy footprints on the floor leading to and from the window. The man appears to have been strangled. If the marks on the neck are examined, small bits of straw will be found stuck in his skin. He has been killed by Haplin, who dressed up in a scarecrow costume for the deed.

A dead cow will also be found in the morning with most of its major organs gone. Haplin also killed the cow, to add to the terror.

If the investigators try to call the police, they will find that the lines are dead. If someone else tries to make the call, they will report that the lines are dead. Anyone going to check out the bridge will find that it has been destroyed (the noise of the explosion was covered by the thunder). The river has also swollen to dangerous proportions. Anyone attempting to swim across must make a roll against their swimming skill at half normal chances or be swept away and possibly drowned. Their are no boats on the island, although a raft could be made by tearing apart part of a wooden structure.

It will continue to rain and storm during the day, making it fairly dark and quite noisy.

A Witness

If the investigators become involved in the situation, a young boy will come up and tug on one of the PCs' pant legs. He will say "I was scared by the thunder and I looked out the window. I saw the scarecrow..." at this point the boy's mother will take hold of him and pull him away from the investigators. She will not want him around the investigators and will keep a careful eye on him. The boy saw Haplin dressed as a scarecrow walking across the field to the building. He will be killed that night if the investigators don't solve the mystery.

Events to Follow

Haplin will pretend to be shocked and horrified by the events, while carefully planning his next murder. He will first kill Betsy Carter and then, over the course of the day he and Bryce will attempt to lure people into traps where they will be murdered. Haplin and Bryce are both skilled at deceiving people and will be able to kill several guests and staff members unless the investigators are able to stop them. If the investigators appear to be a threat, Haplin and Bryce will focus on them first.

Conclusion

If the investigators are not able to stop Bryce and Haplin, the two will kill everyone who does not escape. Once everyone is dead, Bryce and Haplin will plant dynamite in all the buildings on the island and blow them all up. After that, Bryce and Haplin will stab each other and then wait for the authorities to show up. They will tell a convincing tale about two murderers and they will go on to kill many more people.

If the investigators defeat Bryce and Haplin, they will be considered heroes. They will be welcome to visit the Contented Cow for free, as long as they do not abuse their privileges.

After putting the investigators through such an ordeal, the Keeper might decide to allow the investigators to remain at the Contented Cow, recovering and resting. If so, the Keeper might decide to allow the investigators to recover 1D4 or 1D6 Sanity points, depending on the generosity of the Keeper.

NPCs

Carl O'Donald, Handyman

STR: 13 CON: 14 SIZ: 15 INT:13 POW:12 DEX:13 APP:11 EDU: 16 SAN:60 HP:15
DB:+1D4

Important Skills: Climb 55%, Dodge 35%, Electrical Repair 60%, First Aid 45%, Hide 20%, Jump 30%, Mechanical Repair 65%, Operate Heavy Machinery 25%, Sneak 15%, Track 15%, Handgun 45%, Rifle 55%

Weapons: Garand M1 Damage 55% 2D6+2 Range 110 yards Attacks 1/2 Shots 8 HP 11
Malfunction 00

Description: O'Donald is an older man, with graying black hair. He wears jeans and work shirts when on the job. He served in Vietnam as an Army mechanic and returned to New Hampshire after the war. He does not like to talk about the war and prefers to talk about fishing instead. O'Donald saw some rather unpleasant things during the war and hence will not be excessively panicked by the events that take place. If he thinks the investigators are okay, he will help them.

Carol Burt, Police Officer

STR:13 CON:13 SIZ:13 INT: 13 POW: 13 DEX:13 APP: 13 EDU: 17 SAN:65 HP:13
DB:+1D4

Important Skills: Climb 45%, Drive Auto 44%, Fast Talk 45%, Law 25%, Library Use 46%, Listen 35%, Martial Arts 31%, Spanish 25%, Persuade 31%, Psychology 21%, Sneak 24%, Spot Hidden 32%.

Weapons: Glock 9mm Damage 1D10 Range 20 yards Attacks 3 Shots 15 HP 8
Malfunction 99

Description: Burt is a fit woman who has brown hair and blue eyes. She wears hiking clothes while on vacation. Burt is a police detective in Miami and after investigating a series of brutal homicides in which she was badly wounded she decided she needed some time away from the city. Burt is an experienced detective and, if the investigators do not take the lead, she will.

Billy Barnes, young boy.

STR: 7 CON: 12 SIZ: 7 INT: 12 POW: 12 DEX:13 APP:12 EDU: 7 SAN:60 HP:10

DB:-1D4

Important Skills: Hide 10%, Throw 20%

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3+DB

Description: Billy is a young boy. He has brown hair and brown eyes. Aside from not being able to sleep well at night, he is a normal young boy.

Typical Male Guest (10)

STR: 12 CON:11 SIZ:14 INT:12 POW:12 DEX: 12 APP: 11EDU: 15 SAN:60 HP:13

DB:0

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3+DB

Description: The typical guest is a middle aged professional, skilled in his field, but not up to dealing with violence. Most of the guests will be too scared to do anything effectively.

Typical Female Guest (8)

STR:10 CON:11 SIZ:12 INT:12 POW:12 DEX: 12 APP:12 EDU: 15 SAN:60 HP: 12

DB: 0

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3+DB

Description:The typical guest is a middle aged professional, skilled in her field, but not up to dealing with violence. Most of the guests will be too scared to do anything effectively.

Typical Male Staff Member (6)

STR: 13 CON: 13 SIZ: 14 INT: 13 POW:11 DEX: 12 APP:13 EDU: 14 SAN:55 HP:14

DB:+1D4

Important Skills: Fast Talk, Persuade 35%, Psychology 35%

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3+DB

Description: The typical staffer is a student who is earning money for school. All of the staff are selected to be good looking, good listeners and friendly. The staff members are not well equipped to deal with violence.

Typical Female Staff Member (7)

STR: 12 CON: 13 SIZ:12 INT:13 POW:11 DEX: 12 APP:14 EDU: 14 SAN: 55 HP:13

DB: 0

Important Skills: Fast Talk, Persuade 35%, Psychology 35%

Weapons: Fist 50% 1D3+DB

Description:The typical staffer is a student who is earning money for school. All of the staff are selected to be good looking, good listeners and friendly. The staff members are not well equipped to deal with violence.

Serial Killers

“Jason Windflower” (John Haplin)

**STR: 14 CON:15 SIZ:13 INT:14 POW:15 DEX: 14 APP:13 EDU: 18 SAN: 30 HP: 14
DB:+1D4**

Important Skills: Art (Graphic Design) 60%, Bargain 35%, Climb 55%, Conceal 25%, Fast Talk 55%, Hide 35%, Jump 35%, Law 15%, Library Use 35%, Listen 45%, Locksmith 27%, Persuade 49%, Psychology 34%, Sneak 55%, Spot Hidden 45%, Handgun 31%

Weapons: .38 Revolver 31% Damage 1D10 Range 15 yards Attacks 2 Shots 6 HP 10 Malfunction 00, Knife 45% Damage 1D4+2+1D4 HP 15, Fist 65% 1D3+1D4

Description: Haplin is reasonably good looking and has an honest, kind face. He is quiet, but has good social skills. He has light brown hair and brown eyes. Haplin is, by normal human standards, insane. While he is rational and has effective planning skills, he loves to harm others and lives for acts of planned violence. Haplin is not a crazed killer, he is a planning, careful crazed killer. Haplin is posing as Jason Windflower, a graphic designer he worked with once. Since Haplin is also a graphic designer, he is able to play Windflower's role convincingly.

“Tamara Windflower” (Nadine Bryce)

**STR: 11 CON: 11 SIZ:12 INT: 12 POW:9 DEX: 13 APP:15 EDU: 13 SAN: 40 HP:12
DB:0**

Important Skills: Anthropology 21%, Fast Talk 41%, History 35%, Medicine 15%, Persuade 37%, Sneak 21%.

Weapons:.38 Revolver 23% Damage 1D10 Range 15 yards Attacks 2 Shots 6 HP 10 Malfunction 00, Knife 27% Damage 1D4+2+1D4 HP 15, Fist 54% 1D3+1D4

Description: Bryce is a good looking woman who knows how to use her looks. She has black hair and green eyes. She was a student when she met Haplin. Something in Haplin appealed to her and she was eventually drawn into his abyss. Like Haplin, she enjoys harming others. Also like Haplin, she is careful and planning in her crimes.