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The Dinner Guests

INTRODUCTION

This is a short adventure for **Trail of Cthulhu**. The characters are family members: a father, a mother, and as many children as needed. The family also has a small dog. The game happens in the 1930s in a small suburban area in the USA.

THE BEGINNING

It is seven o'clock, and the family is starting a dinner. Suddenly someone knocks at the door. The family is expecting no guests. Calling out has no response. After a dozen of seconds, the knock can be heard again. If nobody opens the door, it will be picklocked from the outside. The family dog is growling.

When someone unlocks the door, it is pushed open. Three men in a black gown come in. The first puts a finger on his lips. No sound is uttered. The last of the men closes and locks the door after him. The guests have a small box with them. They also carry nasty looking long knives. One of them looks at the dog and makes a strange gesture with his hand. The dog falls unconscious. The man picks it up. Attacking the cultists - for cultists they are - is not a good idea. They are excellent fighters (their Weapons ability is 12, Scuffling 10, and Health 12). They also fear no death.

The men do not answer to any questions. One of them takes out the knife and keeps an eye at the dinner table. Another one starts building something - a large box - on the living room floor. The third one puts a black candle on each window. If someone looks out, he sees candles on the windows of the neighbours as far as he can see. The box in the living room is an altar. Building the altar takes five minutes. When it is completed, the dog is promptly sacrificed. Seeing this is a 3-point stability roll. If, for some reason, the dog isn't sacrificed, one of the family children is. This is a 6-point stability roll.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The characters are in the middle of a huge operation to call the Bloated Woman, an aspect of Nyarlathotep. The center of the ritual is at the church nearby. There are literally hundreds of cultists participating. The only survival options of the characters are either to flee the area or to kill the high priest performing the ritual. The ritual will last until midnight.

THE HOUSE

The house itself is pretty simple two storey suburban home. It has four bedrooms on the second floor, and kitchen, living room, and a library on the first floor. There are no firearms in the house. In the cellar there are carpenter's tools (a hatchet, for example), and knives in the kitchen. All of the player characters know these things. In the cellar there is a small window from which small children might get out. Teenagers or grown-ups won't make it. There is a back door on the other end of the hallway close to the stairs. The entrance to the cellar is under the stairs. The phone line has been cut.

The car keys are in a coat pocket. The coat hangs in the hallway. The car lies in the garage with lots of gasoline. Unknown to the players, the cultists have taken out the spark plugs, so the car won't start. There are more in the cellar.

THE STREETS AND YARDS

There are some cultists guarding the suburb outside. Each one has a large knife. They never utter a word, but the players should think they can communicate telepathically. This is not true. The cultist count on their numbers. Each five minutes a character is outside, there's a cumulative chance of 1 in 6 of a guard appearing. If they are outnumbered by more than two to one, they try to flee and search for help.

THE OTHER HOUSES

The characters may try to get into other houses. All of the houses in the suburb is manned with three cultists. Sacrifices have been made, either a pet or someone from the family. There's a 2 in 6 chance that a house contains firearms.

THE BLOODY TRAIL

From under each front door, a trail of blood is trickling. Seeing this is a 3-point stability roll. The trails meet at the streets, forming a small river of blood. If the characters follow the river, they come to the church.

THE CHURCH

There are five guards at the door. The characters can get in from the back. There's a tall oak with branches resting at the roof of the church. It requires either a 1-point sacrifice of Outdoorsman or a successful Athletics roll to get to the roof. The characters can piggyback, helping each other up the tree.

From the roof it is a simple matter to get into the bell tower, and there to the church itself. The hall is full of cultists, chanting and holding their hands up. If the characters are dressed up in gowns, nobody pays any attention to them. Otherwise, there is a cumulative of 1 on 6 chance per minute of someone noticing them, unless a successful Stealth roll is made.

The main priest is at the church altar, in which a naked child is tied. The characters know the child: she is a schoolmate of the family's girl. Seeing her like that is a 2-point Stability roll. If the priest isn't stopped before midnight, he sacrifices the girl and calls forth the Bloating Woman. The sacrifice is a 4-point Stability roll, but it doesn't matter anymore, since seeing this aspect of Nyarlathotep sends the characters into insanity.

FLEEING

Fleeing the area may be the best option. The next day, newspapers scream murder. Apparently, an entire suburb got hit by murderous strangers. How this happened is unknown to the police. Reading this, the characters face a 5-point stability roll if they were at the church, otherwise it is a 3-point stability roll.

THE CHARACTERS

Father: Age 40. Accountant. Health 10, Scuffling 8, Weapons 5, Other General Abilities at 5. Occupational Skills at 6: Accounting, Law, Library Use, Credit Rating.

Mother: Age 37. Housewife. Health 8, Weapons 5, Other General Abilities at 5. Occupational Skills at 6: Craft: Cooking, Reassurance, Interrogation, Assess honesty.

Child #1: Age 16. Health 7, General Abilities at 4.

Child #2: Age 13. Health 7, General Abilities at 4.

Child #3: Age 10. Health 6, General Abilities at 3.

Child #4: Age 7. Health 6, General Abilities at 3.