TRAIL OF CTHULHU BY KENNETH HITE

BASED ON THE GUMSHOE SYSTEM BY ROBIN D LAWS

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DEMO GAME



Ritual Pursuits

a demo for Trail of Cthulhu by Steve Dempsey

Credits

Ritual Pursuits is a 15 minute demo for *Trail of Cthulhu* written by Steve Dempsey.

Artwork - Jerome Huguenin Layout Template - Jerome Huguenin Layout - Beth Lewis Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook written by Kenneth Hite Based on the GUMSHOE System by Robin D Laws

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TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Ritual Pursuits

BACKGROUND

Vincent Crane is a graduate of Miskatonic University. While there, he read some things in the library that have unhinged him - specifically, part of the Necronomicon. He decided that he wanted to contact Abdul Alhazred in order to understand things better. Crane has tracked down a descendant of the Mad Arab's, into whom his spirit can be summoned, namely Woodrow Chadwick, Fran Tyler's driver.

Crane has holed up in his family's old farm outside Muncie, IN. He has arranged for Chadwick to come to him by faking a haunting, and inviting Tyler to Indianapolis. Tyler has missed the rendezvous and welcolme party, so Crane has summoned up and despatched a Nightgaunt to fetch Chadwick for the ritual. This involved killing many farm animals as an offering, and inscribing a large Elder Sign on the side of his barn. This ruckus worried the neighbours, who called the police. Two policemen arrived. One, Officer Taylor, was killed by Crane with a shotgun. The other, Hicks, escaped the carnage by running away. It is he that the PCs will meet on the road.

NTRODUCTION

It's 1931 and the Indianapolis Indians have just opened their new Perry Stadium on 16th St., and the newly reformed Indianapolis ABCs are playing in the Negro National League. Travelling to Indianapolis cross country from New York in a quite a decent car, a Ford Model A Sedan, are the six PCs, looking to take advantage of these exciting times. There are two ball players, a sports journalist, a doctor, an author (whose car it is), a photographer and Woodrow Chadrick, the driver. It's not been an easy journey. Unmarried women travelling with men, and whites travelling with blacks, are viewed with great suspicion.

You took a slight detour in Ohio to check out a haunting in Lima. You had hoped to make better time, because you need to be in Indy tonight. You've been forced to push on into the night and now you're just south of Muncie. It is a moonless night. It is clear and cold March night, and the stars are bright.

Scene 1 – The Police Officer

Scene type: Core (Cop Talk) Suddenly, there is a roadblock up ahead. A police officer flags the car down with a torch, and Woodrow is asked to get out. Anyone who passes a Sense Trouble roll (Difficulty 4) will see a flickering as something occludes the stars.

Woodow and the officer stand talking in the headlights, when a large creature swoops down, assaults the officer, and disappears into the night with Woodrow in its clutches (a 4-point **Stability** test for those who can see the Nightgaunt; 5-point test for Tyler, whose friend has been abducted).

Officer Hicks, #7435, is dead (a 2-point **Stability** test for those who didn't see the Nightgaunt), his head almost twisted off. On the ground next to him is a torch and his notebook. **Medicine** or **Shooting** (supplementary clue) reveals that the officer has some shotgun pellets in his side, which were inflicted under an hour ago.

Decoding the notebook requires **Cop Talk** (core clue) and shows that he was investigating a disturbance at the Crane farmstead. Their neighbours, the Dicklys, reported (10-67) strange noises and screams (10-91b) coming from the farm, possibly a prowler (10-70). The Dicklys have the only phone in the area, and Old Mother Dickly wasn't too keen on investigating.

The officer's vehicle is nowhere to be seen, but across the fields you can the lights in a farmhouse.

Scene 2 -The Farmhouse

Scene type: Core (Evidence Collection)

Time is of the essence, as the group must find Chadwick before Crane completes his terrible ritual. Arriving at the farm house, the group finds the yard awash with the blood and flesh of many animals (a 3-point **Stability** test). Some parts bear human bite marks, and some parts have been nailed to the barn, in and around a strange symbol that has been inscribed. A pipe from a large water tower has created a small stream that runs into the barn. **Occult** (supplementary clue) will confirm this is some kind of summoning ritual.

To one side is parked a police car, both doors are open. A dead police officer lies slumped and bloody across the front seat. There is a large shotgun wound in his chest. His gun lies on the floor.

Inside the homestead is a bloody mess, the remains of Crane's research and experiments. Mad scrawlings

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adorn the walls, papers are strewn everywhere, and body parts and other indescribable things are scattered around.

Evidence Collection (core clue) allows a quick assessment. Simple searching will find all the clues, but the group will arrive at the quarry after the ritual has failed. The perpetrator is not here, but there is a drawing on the wall that is some kind of map. **Outdoorsman** allows the speedy identification of the location, a quarry somewhere to the north of here.

A spend of Evidence Collection will allow the investigator to recognise that the various notes, books and images, if collected, amount to a Mythos Tome, the Crane Archive, giving a pool of Occult 2 and Cthulhu Mythos 1. It is a mixture of English and Arabic. There are three spells present, Call Dark Servitor (Summon/Bind Nightgaunt), Summon Ancestor (a Resurrection variant requiring a descendant of the deceased into whom the spirit of the dead is summoned) and Blessing of the Dark (Enchant knife). Using Languages (Arabic) will spot that the Summon Ancestor

The Quarry

spell has been mistranslated. **Occult** would then indicate that the ritual is likely to fail.

Scene 3 -The Ritual

Scene type: Resolution

Crane has prepared an old quarry for his ritual. Long strips of copper wire radiate out from the centre to the rim, and channel whatever unearthly power Crane is using (see map, below). Unearthly energies coruscate in the night.

If the PCs used a simple search in the farm, they arrive after the ritual has failed, finding both participants unconscious and slumped on the ground, the Nightgaunt prancing and picking at their bodies.

Otherwise, as the PCs reach the quarry, their car is attacked by the Nightgaunt (see below, sent to stop them by Crane. It will attempt to carry PCs off and drop them into the quarry (it has to make a scuffling roll to avoid dropping them in the water.

Athletics checks are necessary to make it down into the quarry quickly. The target is 4 with a torch, 5 without (-1 to target if going more slowly). Otherwise a **Drive** check (Difficulty 7), with one wheel bumped up on one of the copper strips, can get the car down to the bottom in one round.

The PCs have three rounds to reach Crane before he finishes his ritual. And it will take them this long to get in range to shoot him. Other ways of interrupting the ritual include disrupting the copper wires in some way. Touching them directly incurs a blast of ethereal energy doing 1d6 damage and permanently blasting away 1 **Sanity** as the unfortunate's brain is directly exposed to the otherworldly nexus. However this will stun Crane and knock him down for a round.

In any case, the ritual will not succeed because Crane doesn't have the correct spell. It will pull Alhazred from his proper place in time and space, as if invisible creatures were devouring him. He will be mostly trapped in limbo, but some portion of his being will enter Chadwick and corrupt him. He will respond by using the Shrivelling spell (p117 of *Trail of Cthulhu*) on any who come near, first using it to severely hurt Crane.

Chadwick will be on -1 **Stability** by this point. He will shrivel the first PC to approach (4pts to cast, 5 pts to the damage roll) leaving him on -11 **Sanity**, almost completely mad. He will last one round of gibbering before he, too, collapses.

THE NIGHTGAUNT

This is straight from the book, although you might like to change things a bit to make it more interesting for the players. Nightgaunts use a 'tickle' ability to immobilise. There are several ways this can be represented in the game:

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- the Nightgaunt applies pressure to points on the character paralysing them and causing their face to contort in a terrible rictus;
- the Nightgaunt does not swoop but presents itself initially as a ridiculous idea to the character who can't help but chuckle at the enormity of it. When the character laughs, they let down their guard and the Nightgaunt can insinuate itself into reality and carry them off, helpless as they are with the terrible humour of what is happening.

Nightgaunts are winged creatures with barbed tails, prehensile paws, and a pair of inward-curving horns. Their skin is black and oily like a whale's, and they have no faces. They never speak or laugh, and their wings make no sound.

Nightgaunts serve Nodens by, among other things, grasping and carrying off intruders, who they unceremoniously dump in the most dismal and horrible places imaginable (including the Dreamlands or other dimensions) and leave to die. Nightgaunts perch various spots in the lonely parts of the world, and come out at night. They are not very intelligent, but can understand some languages (such as the gibberings of ghouls), and are friendly to some occult races.

Nightgaunts attempt to sneak up quietly on victims, grasp their weapons, and overpower them.

Tickling: Nightgaunts who win a Scuffling contest do no damage, but may disarm their foe of one weapon or item. Once they have won two Scuffling contests in a row, he is grappled by their long, strong fingers and toes, and they can carry him off and begin to tickle him with their razor-sharp barbed tails. A successful tickle attack (which also uses Scuffling) leaves the victim disoriented and confused for 1D6+1 rounds, unable to take any physical action and with effects similar to being



shaken (see p. 74). Armor does not protect against nightgaunt tickling.

Game Statistics

Abilities (on ground/in air or space): Athletics 6/12, Health 7, Scuffling 10 Hit Threshold: 4 Alertness Modifier: +1 Stealth Modifier: +2 (flying), +3 (flying in darkness) Weapon: see above Armor: -2 vs any (skin) Stability Loss: +0

Pre-Generated Characters

- Amanda Jones, journalist
- Brad Heller, catcher
- Eugene Stafford, pitcher
- Fran Tyler, author
- Alex Lansdale, doctor
- Lian Chao, photographer

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² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

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⁵ In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

⁶ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: Amanda Jones

Drive: Adventure

Occupation:² Journalist

Occupational benefits: Use Reassurance to get access to newspaper morgues.

Pillars of Sanity: I) Our elders are worthy of respect. 2) The truth should be heard.

Academic Abilities		Internergenal Abilitieg		Conoral Abilitias	
Acqueinic Admines		Interpersonal Abilities		General Abilities	
Accounting		Assess Honesty*	2	Athletics	
Anthropology		Bargain*	2	Conceal	4
Archaeology		Bureaucracy	1	Disguise ^{(1)*}	4
Architecture		Cop Talk*	2	Driving	2
Art History		Credit Rating	2	Electrical Repair ⁽¹⁾	
Biology		Flattery	2	Explosives ⁽¹⁾	
Cthulhu Mythos⁴		Interrogation		Filch	4
Cryptography		Intimidation		Firearms ⁵	2
Geology		Oral History*	2	First Aid	4
History	1	Reassurance*	2	Fleeing ⁷	8
Languages ⁶	1	Streetwise	1	Health ⁹	8
				Hypnosis ⁸	
				Mechanical Repair ⁽¹⁾	1
		Technical Abilities		Piloting	
		Technical Abilities		Preparedness	6
Law		Art		Psychoanalysis	
Library Use	1	Astronomy		Riding	
Medicine	-	Chemistry		Sanity ⁹	8
Occult		Craft		Stability ⁹	8
Physics		Evidence Collection*	2	Scuffling	2
Theology		Forensics	_	Sense Trouble	6
		Locksmith		Shadowing*	4
		Outdoorsman		Stealth	4
		Pharmacy		Weapons	•
		Photography*	2		

SOURCES OF STABILITY: CONTACTS AND NOTES

Your father, baseball player Bob Jones; your former editor, Harvey Smith You're originally from Brooklyn, and your dad played for the Dodgers. Watching him play, you fell in love with baseball, and determined to make it your career. It's hard to make it as a woman sports journalist, but your skills have swung you a job in Indianapolis, writing about the local AAA team, the Indians.

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⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: Brad Heller

Drive: Arrogance

Occupation:² Journeyman ballplayer

Occupational benefits: Use Credit Rating pool to call on personal contacts in any field of endeavor

Pillars of Sanity: I) Work is good for the soul. 2) Jesus is my salvation.

Academic Abilities		Interpersonal Abilities	5	General Abilities	
Accounting		Assess Honesty*	2	Athletics	12
Anthropology		Bargain	2	Conceal	
Archaeology		Bureaucracy		Disguise (1)	
Architecture		CopTalk		Driving	2
Art History		Credit Rating*	4	Electrical Repair ⁽¹⁾	
Biology		Flattery*	2	Explosives ^(I)	
Cthulhu Mythos⁴		Interrogation		Filch	
Cryptography		Intimidation	3	Firearms ⁵	6
Geology		Oral History [*]	2	First Aid	2
History	1	Reassurance	1	Fleeing ⁷	6
Languages ⁶		Streetwise*	2	Health ⁹	9
				Hypnosis ⁸	
				Mechanical Repair ⁽¹⁾	2
		Technical Abilities		Piloting	
		Technical Abilities		Preparedness	2
Law		Art		Psychoanalysis	
Library Use		Astronomy		Riding*	
Medicine		Chemistry		Sanity ⁹	8
Occult		Craft	1	Stability ⁹	8
Physics		Evidence Collection		Scuffling	6
Theology*	2	Forensics		Sense Trouble	2
		Locksmith		Shadowing	
		Outdoorsman*	2	Stealth	2
		Pharmacy		Weapons	4
		Photography		<u> </u>	

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

CONTACTS AND NOTES

Your mother Clara, who's still in California, where you're originally from; your former coach in the Louisville Colonels, Clarkson. You've travelled all over the States plying your trade as a catcher in the Negro Leagues. You'd been working as a bible saleman until you landed a job at the Indiana ABCs, who were looking for a seasoned pro to help develop their young players. You helped local author Fran with some baseball myths when you played for the Louisville Colonels.

Player Name:

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⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

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⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: Eugene Stafford

Drive: Duty

Occupation.² Criminal turned baseball pitcher Occupational benefits: When using Conceal, Filch or Shadowing, you can spend after the roll

Pillars of Sanity: I) Love of baseball. 2) A good life is its own reward.

Academic Abilities	Interpersonal Abilitie	S	General Abilities	
Accounting	Assess Honesty*	2	Athletics	10
Anthropology	Bargain [*]	2	Conceal	6
Archaeology	Bureaucracy		Disguise (1)	
Architecture	Cop Talk	1	Driving	2
Art History	Credit Rating	3	Electrical Repair ⁽¹⁾	2
Biology	Flattery	1	Explosives ⁽¹⁾	
Cthulhu Mythos⁴	Interrogation		Filch	6
Cryptography	Intimidation*	2	Firearms ⁵	1
Geology	Oral History	1	First Aid	
History	Reassurance	1	Fleeing ⁷	
Languages ⁶ 1	Streetwise*	2	Health ⁹	9
Italian			Hypnosis ⁸	
			Mechanical Repair ⁽¹⁾	6
	Technical Abilities		Piloting	
	Technical Abilities		Preparedness	
Law 1	Art		Psychoanalysis	
Library Use	Astronomy		Riding	
Medicine	Chemistry		Sanity ⁹	8
Occult	Craft	2	Stability ⁹	8
Physics	Evidence Collection		Scuffling*	6
Theology 1			Sense Trouble*	4
	Locksmith*	2	Shadowing*	4
	Outdoorsman		Stealth*	8
	Pharmacy		Weapons	2
	Photography			

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

CONTACTS AND NOTES

Louis, the barman in your local in Queens; your girlfriend Teresa.

You're from Queens, where you had a job as a locksmith. You practised on the side a bit, cracking safes for the mob. On Sundays, you played amateur baseball in the park and that's where you were spotted by a scout for the Indianapolis Indians. Hopefully you can stay out of trouble and make a name for yourself.

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⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: Fran Tyler

Drive: Thirst for Knowledge

Occupation:² Author

Occupational benefits: Use adventure downtime to refresh one Academic pool point (max four times)

Pillars of Sanity: I) Knowledge is to be cherished. 2) Humanity is special.

Academic Abilities		Interpersonal Abilities		General Abilities	
Accounting		Assess Honesty*	2	Athletics	
Anthropology	1	Bargain		Conceal	4
Archaeology		Bureaucracy		Disguise ⁽¹⁾	2
Architecture		CopTalk		Driving	6
Art History		Credit Rating	5	Electrical Repair ⁽¹⁾	
Biology		Flattery		Explosives(I)	
Cthulhu Mythos⁴		Interrogation*	2	Filch	
Cryptography		Intimidation		Firearms ⁵	4
Geology		Oral History*	2	First Aid	2
History*	2	Reassurance		Fleeing ⁷	6
Languages6*	2	Streetwise		Health ⁹	8
				Hypnosis ⁸	
				Mechanical Repair ⁽¹⁾	
		Technical Abilities		Piloting	
		Technical Abilities		Preparedness	4
Law		Art*	2	Psychoanalysis	
Library Use*	2	Astronomy		Riding	
Medicine		Chemistry		Sanity ⁹	8
Occult*	2	Craft		Stability ⁹	10
Physics		Evidence Collection*	2	Scuffling	3
Theology		Forensics		Sense Trouble	4
		Locksmith		Shadowing	4
		Outdoorsman		Stealth	6
		Pharmacy		Weapons	
		Photography	1		

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

CONTACTS AND NOTES

Your driver, Woodrow Chadwick, who's been with you for years; your great-aunt Constance, who inspired your love of stories; fellow author Edith Henry Originally from Louisville, KY, you travel across America, collecting myths and legends and writing them up as horror stories for the pulp magazines. Recently you've heard some strange things about Indianapolis so you're checking it out. You don't like to travel alone, so you advertised in the paper and have some interesting companions for the trip from NY.

Player Name:

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⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: Dr. Alex Lansdale

Drive: Adventure

Occupation:² Doctor Occupational benefits: Each point of First Aid heals either 3 Health (others), or 2 (you); you can stabilize a seriously wounded victim by spending I First Aid. Pillars of Sanity: I) The Hippocratic Oath. 2) The American Dream is there for me.

Academic Abilities		Interpersonal Abilities		General Abilities	
Accounting*	2	Assess Honesty*	2	Athletics	4
Anthropology	1	Bargain		Conceal	
Archaeology		Bureaucracy	1	Disguise ⁽¹⁾	
Architecture		CopTalk		Driving	
Art History		Credit Rating	3	Electrical Repair ⁽¹⁾	2
Biology*	2	Flattery		Explosives ⁽¹⁾	
Cthulhu Mythos⁴		Interrogation		Filch	
Cryptography		Intimidation		Firearms ⁵	3
Geology		Oral History		First Aid*	12
History		Reassurance*	2	Fleeing ⁷	6
Languages6*	2	Streetwise		Health ⁹	8
Latin				Hypnosis ⁸	
				Mechanical Repair ⁽¹⁾	2
		Tachnical Abilitian		Piloting	
		Technical Abilities		Preparedness	4
Law		Art		Psychoanalysis	6
Library Use	1	Astronomy		Riding	4
Medicine*	4	Chemistry		Sanity ⁹	8
Occult		Craft		Stability ⁹	10
Physics		Evidence Collection		Scuffling	4
Theology		Forensics*	2	Sense Trouble	2
		Locksmith		Shadowing	
		Outdoorsman	1	Stealth	2
		Pharmacy*	2	Weapons	
		Photography			

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

CONTACTS AND NOTES

Your sister, Judy, who was closest in age to you; your professor, Dr. Alteus, whose encouragement got you through college; Miriam Greenberg, a nurse in your first hospital From a poor farming family from up-state Massachusetts, you've worked hard and won scholarships to become a doctor. The trouble is, you've got no money to buy a place in a swanky new practice, but the Indianapolis Indians need a doctor to go with them on the road and you've got the job. You hope to save enough to start your own practice.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU BY KENNETH HITE

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1				
		Sar	nity ¹	
	0	1	2	3
	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14	15
	Hit T	hreshol	d 3	3
		Stat	oility	
	-12	-11	-10	-9
Ì	-8	-7	-6	-5
Ì	-4	-3	-2	-1
	0	1	2	3
	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14	15
ſ		Hea	alth	
	-12	-11	-10	-9
	-8	-7	-6	-5
	-4	-3	-2	-1
l	0	1	2	3
	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11
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1				
1		A CONTRACTOR		

¹ In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

^(h) These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

⁺ Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

⁵ In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

⁶ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsycholigists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: Lian Chao

Drive: Artistic sensitivity

Occupation:² Photographer

Occupational benefits: Use adventure downtime to refresh one Photography pool point (max four times)

Pillars of Sanity: I) Photographs can't lie. 2) Human beings are inherently good.

Academic Abilities		Interpersonal Abilities		General Abilities	
Accounting		Assess Honesty*	2	Athletics	4
Anthropology*	2	Bargain		Conceal	3
Archaeology		Bureaucracy		Disguise ^{(1)*}	2
Architecture*	2	CopTalk		Driving	2
Art History*	2	Credit Rating	4	Electrical Repair ⁽¹⁾	6
Biology		Flattery*	2	Explosives ⁽¹⁾	
Cthulhu Mythos⁺		Interrogation		Filch	
Cryptography		Intimidation		Firearms ⁵	
Geology		Oral History	1	First Aid	4
History		Reassurance		Fleeing ⁷	4
Languages6*	2	Streetwise		Health ⁹	8
English				Hypnosis ⁸	
Mandarin				Mechanical Repair ⁽¹⁾	2
		Tachnical Abilitian		Piloting	
		Technical Abilities		Preparedness	6
Law		Art*	2	Psychoanalysis	
Library Use	1	Astronomy		Riding	
Medicine		Chemistry		Sanity ⁹	8
Occult		Craft*	2	Stability ⁹	8
Physics		Evidence Collection		Scuffling	
Theology		Forensics		Sense Trouble	4
		Locksmith		Shadowing	4
		Outdoorsman		Stealth	6
		Pharmacy		Weapons	
		Photography*	4	-	

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

CONTACTS AND NOTES

Your classmate, Ruth Collins, who's helped you settle down in New York; your grandfather Feng, who encouraged you to follow your dreams. Originally from Shanghai, you moved to New York four years ago to study art at New York University. During the course, you became fascinated by both American culture, and capturing everyday life in photographs. Your university has arranged for you to spend a month with an AAA baseball team, the Indianapolis Indians.