

Odds and Ends: Volume One

Three story seeds for *Heaven & Earth*

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H *Heaven & Earth* is a roleplaying game of surrealism, horror, and absurdity. The kinds of adventures it encourages are rather unlike those appropriate to other games. Consequently, both players and—especially—gamemasters may take some time getting used to its unique setting, mood, and themes. To make this easier, the Third Edition rulebook is littered with potential story seeds in the form of urban legends, folktales, and quirky townfolk.

Chapter XIII: Gamemastering and the sample adventure, “The Waiting Room,” also provide gamemasters guidance in creating adventures appropriate for *Heaven & Earth*. This download is more such advice.

Odds and Ends: Volume One provides three adventure seeds that make use of the characters, locales, and story elements introduced in the Third Edition rulebook. While not fully fleshed out adventures, each seed provides a lengthy outline that a GM can use as the basis for his own tales in Potter’s Lake. Each seed highlights a different aspect of *Heaven & Earth*, as well as providing springboards for future adventures.

BACKDOOR

While the characters are attending a sold-out performance at Brandeis Theatre, a fire alarm goes off. Though there is no evidence of an emergency, the building is evacuated until the Fire Department can ascertain the cause of the alarm. The evacuation is anything but orderly, as theatre patrons rush out through every available exit, pushing the characters away from them and up against the back wall of the building. There they see a door that no one else seems to notice.

If the characters choose to open it and walk through, they find themselves in an empty alleyway, presumably the one behind the theatre. When they make their way to the street, however, the characters realize that they are not where they believed they would be. Instead of finding themselves at the corner of Main and Maple Streets, they are deep in a darkened forest, possibly Potter’s Woods. When they look back at the alleyway from which they came, it is gone, as is any sign of the town, the theatre, or the door that led them here in the first place.

Just over a small hill is a cabin that looks completely uninhabited. In the distance, the characters can hear the baying of dogs, although their number and direction is uncertain. The characters quickly become convinced that the dogs are getting closer, even if there is no reason why they should believe this; they simply do. If they choose to flee away from the cabin, they will find themselves quite lost but will find no evidence of the dogs they heard baying. After half a day of wandering aimlessly,

they will escape the woods not far from the Southey Mill.

If, on the other hand, the characters approach the cabin, they will indeed find it uninhabited. Its interior is quite simply appointed, with what look like handmade furniture in its two rooms. The walls are lined with shelves in which they can see jars of jam, preserves, and honey. They also see several jars of what look like large insects of some kind, perhaps grasshoppers or crickets. Otherwise, the cabin is unremarkable.

When the characters leave the cabin, they will find the forest less dark than it was before. Indeed, it is much brighter and less ominous in appearance. The sound of the dogs has ceased, creating an eerie silence. As the characters are looking around, attempting to make sense of the change in their surroundings, they’ll hear a man’s voice call out to them, “Who goes there?”

Cresting a nearby hill is a large, burly man with a full beard and long hair. He uses a tall walking stick and is dressed in what look like old-style leather clothing, like that worn by Daniel Boone or some other frontiersman from the early nineteenth century. The man looks over the characters and then extends his hand, saying with a trace of a French accent, “My name is Jean and that’s my cabin. Who are you? I didn’t think anyone else would really come after me.” He asks if the characters would like to return to the cabin with him. If they are reluctant, Jean says, “Well, you’ll never get wherever it is you’re going if you don’t walk through that door” and he points to the front door of the cabin.

Jean takes the characters inside and apologizes for the roughness of his quarters. He explains, “I don’t get many visitors here—at least not the ones a man wants to get, if you know what I mean.” If asked to explain, Jean is evasive, saying only that “these woods are full of dangers for unwary souls.” He then questions the characters on who they are and how they came to be here. If any of them mentions the backdoor of the Brandeis Theatre, Jean will be momentarily confused. “Oh,” he then says, “you’ve arrived too early, but then I fear I’m a little early as well. His time has not yet come—and neither has yours.” Pointing to the backdoor of his own cabin, he suggests the characters go through it. “That ought to get you where you should be. Just don’t forget about old Jean, though, please? Bad enough I have to be a voice crying out in the wilderness without being all alone.”

If the characters step through Jean’s backdoor, they find themselves again inside Brandeis Theatre, where fire fighters can be seen talking with theatre employees. If the characters approach them, they’ll learn that there was indeed a fire in the basement of the theatre. Someone had placed a large silver coin—a French franc from the reign of King Louis-Philippe—in a circuit breaker, which caused an overload. The fire fighters

have no idea who would have done such a thing or why. The fire damage is minimal, mostly lots of smoke, which is what set off the alarm. In a day or two, the theatre should again be ready for business.

Naturally, the characters will be curious about their experiences. If they ask around town, they might learn the story of the Cabin in Potter's Woods and the Wild Man and his dogs. No one will have ever heard of someone called Jean living in the woods, but research at the college library will reveal that Louis-Philippe was king of France from 1830 to 1848. During the latter part of his reign, many Frenchmen emigrated to the United States, especially the states west of the Mississippi River. Beyond this, the characters will have to draw their own conclusions, as there is no evidence of what they have seen but their own experiences.

SAVING FLUFFY

Martha Moynihan is the Cat Lady of Potter's Lake. Her love of felines is well-known and most local residents regard her with a combination of affection and concern. Martha sometimes blurts out secrets about her neighbors, secrets she claims she learned from her cats, who "see everything" that goes on in town. Despite the implausibility of her claim, Martha does seem to know an awful lot about the hidden lives of others. As one might expect, that puts people on edge around her, worried that they might be the next to have their peccadilloes revealed to the world.

The characters are approached by Martha one day, who begs them to help her. She explains that her cats told her that they were "good-hearted people" who would be willing to assist an old woman in need. If this contradicts their previous relationship, the Game Master should use Martha's cats as a way to bring her to them, perhaps with words like "Tom told me it wasn't right to tell everyone about you the way I did, and I'm sorry for that" or something along that line. The important thing is to establish that Martha Moynihan is in need and, it is the characters whom her cats have suggested would make the best people to whom to turn.

Martha explains that one of her cats, a white Persian named Fluffy, is being brought up on false charges before the Animal Court. The complaint was filed by several different families jointly, all of whom claim Fluffy is responsible for the deaths of beloved family pets, mostly mice, guinea pigs, and hamsters, with an occasional rabbit thrown in for good measure. The evidence against Fluffy is circumstantial, admittedly—white fur and muddy paw prints—but Martha worries that it'll be enough to convict the cat and send her to Potter's Lake Animal Control to be euthanized. After all, the sight of children mourning over the brutal deaths of pet rodents is likely to sway the jury, and Judge Solomon King has made it clear that he intends to "get tough" with repeat offenders.

Martha Moynihan insists that Fluffy is innocent, because, in her words, "Fluffy's just not like that." Unfortunately, Fluffy is mute, whether congenitally or because of misadventure, Martha doesn't know, since the cat was so impaired when she found her. If she could talk, Martha's sure Fluffy would be able

to prove her innocence. Martha believes that someone in town has it in for Fluffy and is using the Animal Court to do the dirty work. She asks the characters either to help prove Fluffy is innocent or, better yet, to find out who is framing the cat and why. She can offer little in return except a promise that she'll let the characters in on any interesting secrets her cats uncover. Though an odd reward, many characters might find it more than worthwhile, particularly since Martha does seem to know things that others in town do not.

How the characters proceed in their investigation is up to them. If they have the white fur examined, they will find that it does not belong to Fluffy although it is from a cat of the same breed—several in fact. In addition, the muddy paw prints are insufficiently distinct to be tied to Fluffy with 100% certainty. They might be hers, but they could just as easily belong to another cat. Martha will gladly call the characters as witnesses in Fluffy's defense at trial, and Judge King will find their testimony convincing, especially if it's backed up by additional expert witnesses. Fluffy will be exonerated and the charges against her dismissed.

Of course, the question of who is responsible for attempting to frame Fluffy and why won't be solved by the conclusion of the trial. Resolving this requires further investigation. Unfortunately, almost everyone in the town has a reason to want to get back at Martha for her gossiping about them. This line of enquiry is pretty much fruitless; there are just too many possible avenues. If one of the characters thinks of it, he can ask Fluffy to show him who is responsible. Since the cat is mute, she can't tell Martha the perpetrator's name, but she can lead the characters to the right place, which is just what she does.

Fluffy leads the characters to Napoleon Hawthorne's home. Unless the characters already know Hawthorne's secret, this may be baffling to them. Martha does not know the secret and has had very few dealings with Hawthorne, all of them generally pleasant. Yet, Fluffy is correct. Hawthorne has recently purchased several trained white cats to use in framing Fluffy, whom he has come to believe, in his growing paranoia, knows his secret. He attempted to kill the cat several times on his own, but had no luck. Instead, he decided to use the Animal Court to do the job and will be frustrated by his failure yet again.

Napoleon Hawthorne will deny having anything to do with the charges against Fluffy, a lie that can be disproved with sufficient detective work. His purchase of trained white Persian cats, for example, can be verified. Other evidence, such as eyewitness accounts of his being in the vicinity of several of the pet deaths, can also be brought to bear. If confronted with these facts, Hawthorne will become discombobulated, since his actions seemed so much more logical when he was doing them. Now, they seem absurd and even a little insane. He apologizes profusely to Martha and offers to make recompense to her and to her cats, if she will accept it. Being quite wealthy, he has many resources at his disposal and, after consulting with her cats, she agrees to accept Hawthorne's apology and financial compensation.

Soon thereafter, Hawthorne begins seeing a therapist because his fear that a cat would expose his secret worries him greatly. Unless the characters encounter someone who already knows and is willing to reveal Hawthorne's secret, they will be none

the wiser about him and will probably consider his behavior evidence of mental imbalance rather than anything else. For her part, Martha Moynihan is true to her word. As a reward for helping save Fluffy, she provides them with juicy gossip in the future, possibly spawning additional adventures.

MIND READER

The characters witness a woman run out into a busy intersection and get struck dead by a car. The woman seemed to come from nowhere, as the shaken driver attests. When Sheriff Bowman investigates this accident, every witness—including the characters—says the same thing: “I didn’t really see what happened.” Details are thus extremely sketchy, frustrating any attempts to determine what actually happened. All that is certain is that the woman was a one-time resident named Jennifer Wainwright-Lambert. Jennifer recently returned to town after many years away. Most townsfolk remember her from before she went off to college and got married to “some guy from Topeka” against the wishes of her family. That her father is Mayor Wainwright’s cousin only adds to her notoriety.

Eventually, a man approaches the characters, asking about the accident. He gives his name as Dennis Lambert, the ex-husband of Jennifer. He explains that Jennifer recently packed up her belongings and moved back to Potter’s Lake to live with her family. Normally, this would not concern Dennis—their divorce was far from amicable—but it resulted in his losing contact with his six-year-old daughter, Christine. He has joint custody of Christine and Jennifer violated a court order by moving so far away from Dennis. So, he followed her to Potter’s Lake and tried to make contact with her. Unfortunately, he had no luck until he heard about Jennifer’s death.

Even with this tragic news, Jennifer’s parents still will not speak with Dennis, whom they consider a worthless layabout lacking in good breeding. Worse yet, he cannot find Christine. Dennis is certain his daughter was with Jennifer when she came to Potter’s Lake, but no one remembers seeing the girl. Now that Jennifer is dead, Dennis is frantic, worrying that either his former in-laws—or other members of the extended Wainwright clan—are hiding her from him or that something far worse has occurred. He asks the characters to help him get to the bottom of this mystery and find his little girl.

Searching around town reveals several salient points. As Dennis said, Jennifer’s parents are reluctant to help anyone associated with him. Being secret members of the Zetetic Society, they were appalled by their daughter’s decision to marry someone from an “impure” bloodline. That said, it is clear, that the Wainwrights do not know where Christine is. In fact, they have encouraged a sheriff’s investigation into the matter, since they believe that Dennis kidnapped her. They even suggest he may have somehow been involved in Jennifer’s death, although they offer no evidence of this. If pressed or otherwise cajoled, they reveal that Jennifer had found “somewhere else to live” not long after she returned to Potter’s Lake. She never told them where precisely, out of fear that Dennis would find out. They paint an unflattering picture of the man as an abusive good-for-nothing loser, who is capable of almost anything. This image

does not match that of the man the characters met, but then they don’t know him very well either.

The characters also learn that Jennifer had enrolled at St. Anselm College but never attended classes. An old friend of hers, Maureen Tierney, worked in the Admissions Office and helped her matriculate. Maureen agrees with Jennifer’s parents that Dennis is unstable and untrustworthy, but she does not believe he killed Jennifer or kidnapped Christine. Instead, she points to a man called James Revell, a local banker with whom Jennifer had recently begun a romantic relationship. Maureen does not like Revell, calling him “creepy” and suggests he had an unnatural interest in Christine.

James Revell does indeed work for Potter’s Lake Savings & Loan. He works in the loan department and is an upstanding citizen. He is also an Air Force reservist but was not called to duty during the invasion of Iraq when others in the town were. Instead, Revell stayed in town, working at Powell Air Force Base. When he was asked about this, Revell implied he was doing “intelligence work” at the Base, which was always enough to divert attention—at least until someone thought much about its implausibility. Attempts to visit Revell at the bank are stymied by his superiors, who make all sorts of excuses for his absence. Visits to his home are likewise prevented by his housekeeper, who threatens to call the sheriff if the characters become too nosy.

Characters who follow Revell from afar will soon realize that he makes regular visits to Powell Air Force Base and passes through its gates with ease. Clearly, he is more than a “weekend warrior,” a fact that should arouse suspicions about his true motives. In point of fact, it is Revell who kidnapped Christine and killed Jennifer (via Victoria McCarthy/Vicki Brubeck’s black ops team, which chased her into oncoming traffic). A member of Project: Grayscale, Revell realized that Christine Lambert possessed remarkable psychic abilities, including telepathy on a massive scale. To please his superiors, he did what he needed to do to bring the girl in for examination and testing. Now that the Project knows the extent of her abilities, it will never allow her to escape.

The characters must find a way to infiltrate the Air Force base, locate Christine, and free her from the Project. Given the high security and paranoia of the Base—as well as Revell’s awareness of the characters—this will be a difficult operation, one demanding subterfuge and skill. Even if the characters succeed, they will still be faced with the prospect of Project: Grayscale’s hunting them down and taking the girl back to the base. Thus, the characters must find a way of protecting her over the long term. What they decide to do and how successful they are in their efforts can lay the groundwork for many exciting *Heaven & Earth* adventures.