

Odds and Ends: Volume Three

Four new NPCs for *Heaven & Earth*

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H*eaven & Earth* is a roleplaying game of surrealism, horror, and absurdity set in the tiny community of Potter's Lake, Kansas. This remarkable town is filled with dozens of "colorful characters" and odd eccentrics. Some are merely quirky while others possess dark secrets or even abilities unexplainable by science. The *Heaven & Earth* rulebook introduces twenty-five such personalities and *Paradise Lost*, a setting expansion for the game, introduces twenty more. Four new NPCs are presented in this web enhancement, all of which are tied to locations, rumors, or adventures presented in *Paradise Lost*. They are designed to spruce up encounters, provide mysteries for the PCs to unravel, and support the tone of *Heaven & Earth*.

NICHOLAS ERLIGAN

In a town as small as Potter's Lake, it's hard to keep a secret, but Nicholas Erligan does it better than most. To most townsfolk, the owner of the Bel-Loc Diner is a mystery. His background and history before coming to Potter's Lake are unknown and anyone who's attempted to learn such information has been foiled, although not for lack of trying. Reporters, local busybodies, and gossips alike have all tried their hands against Erligan. In the end, they all learn the same thing: Nicholas Erligan is an affable, charismatic man with good fashion sense, superb business acumen, and no interest in revealing anything about his past except to say that he grew up "out East" and "couldn't pass up" the opportunity he saw in revitalizing the Bel-Loc Diner.

The general belief is that Erligan likes to play the role of the mystery man, thinking it'll attract more customers to the Diner. The truth is that he doesn't remember a great deal about his life before coming to Potter's Lake. He won't admit it, but his memory doesn't extend farther back than the day he purchased the Diner. Erligan has a dim recollection of having grown up in Richmond, Virginia and having been drawn to Potter's Lake. Everything else is a mystery. He only knew who he was because he had a passport in his name on his person, which confirmed his birth date and birthplace. He also had a very healthy bank account that had been opened in his name on the date of his birth at Potter's

Lake Savings & Loan by no one the bank can identify, since it was nearly forty years ago, and record of his or her identity has been seemingly lost.

Erligan spends his off-hours trying to uncover the secrets of his past. Thus far, he has found very little to sate his increasing curiosity. He has not yet dared to reveal the truth to anyone in Potter's Lake. He worries that the townsfolk might react badly to his story and that his business success would evaporate overnight. This possibility disturbs him a great deal, since he feels very much at home in the town, even if he cannot quite explain why. It's as if he was meant to be here at this time. Consequently, Erligan is considering enlisting the aid of outsiders or newcomers to Potter's Lake, people who aren't deeply plugged in to the town's social structure and gossip networks, and who can therefore act with somewhat greater freedom. Erligan is sure that unlocking the secrets of his past is important not just for him but for all of Potter's Lake, which is why his efforts will become more desperate as time goes on.

Nicholas Erligan is a thin, attractive man in his late thirties. He dresses in casual suits and is never without a carnation in his buttonhole. His eyes are brown and his hair, which he slicks back, is black. Like the Mona Lisa, he typically wears an enigmatic smile, one that simultaneously puts people at ease and unnerves them. While the Diner is open, he can be found hovering around the establishment, flitting from place to place, overseeing everything that happens. He's as much a fixture of the place as its faux 50s décor, and his absence during business hours would draw almost as much attention as his mysterious past.

MIRANDA NICHOLSON

Miranda Nicholson loves books. That's not a surprise, of course; her family has owned one of Potter's Lake's most well known bookstores for decades. She grew up surrounded by books. As a child, she and her siblings and friends would play hide and seek among the stacks after closing, and she always felt more comfortable spending her time inside the store than out. As a teenager, she worked in the store, alongside her older relatives, and chose to attend St. Anselm

College rather than more prestigious institutions so that she could continue to work at the shop. Not surprisingly, she never married and has made the bookstore her life's work. Nicholson only ever leaves the store after closing or on brief trips, when she travels to Kansas City or farther afield to attend estate sales or other events where she might be able to buy rare or valuable books.

Miranda Nicholson also talks to books — or perhaps they talk to her. “Talks” is a strong word, of course, as even she would admit. Rather, Nicholson knows how to use books as oracles. When she was seven years old, while playing among the shelves, she wondered aloud where one of her friends was hiding. Moments later, she knocked a book off one of the shelves and it opened to a seemingly random page. When she looked down at it, she saw that the first letters of each word down the left hand side of the book spelled out “Look behind you.” She did so and, sure enough, she found the hiding place of her playmate.

From that day forward, Nicholson could find out information by asking books for what she sought. As she grew older, she refined her methods, learning the best way to ask books questions and the best books to ask. She now has an elaborate system by which she can obtain oracular pronouncements from the books in her shop, and the most useful ones she keeps in a locked glass case behind the cash register. They are not available for sale at any price. Nicholson doesn't talk to her books frivolously. Indeed, she rarely does it for herself, believing that her “gift” is one best used to help others. For that reason, neither does she advertise her ability, although most long-time townfolk are aware of it, even if many don't believe it and just think Nicholson a quaint eccentric who'd do well to get out more often.

Miranda Nicholson is a tall, thin woman who pulls her graying blonde hair back in a bun. Her blue eyes sparkle through her eyeglasses and she typically wears a business-like expression. Her preference for somewhat dowdy clothing — plain dresses, sweaters, and sensible shoes — makes her look like a stereotypical old maid librarian. In point of fact, Nicholson is a reasonably attractive woman,

As is the case with the NPCs presented in the *Heaven & Earth* rulebook and *Paradise Lost*, no statistics are given. Gamemasters should assign whatever Skills and Ranks they deem appropriate based on the needs of the story and the character descriptions provided. While the occupations of some will dictate their skill base, GMs are encouraged to personalize them as needed.

no great beauty, to be sure, but for more easy on the eyes than she gives the impression of being.

SAMANTHA MEADOWS

Samantha Meadows is an attractive young woman with auburn hair and green eyes. She wears her hair short and favors loose, flowing clothing. She's known around town for the bright colors of her attire, as well as her intense demeanor. Meadows takes everything very seriously. It doesn't matter whether it's sometime simple, like paying her phone bill on time at the bank, or more significant, like ensuring that every city councilor gets copies of the mayor's proposed budget. Not surprisingly, a lot of people avoid her if they can help it.

Meadows works in the Mayor's Office, where she's executive assistant to Mayor Wainwright. She excels at her job, both because of her intensity and her quick wits. Mayor Wainwright finds her an invaluable addition to her staff and depends increasingly on Meadows to get things done. Though not a formal member of the Zetetic Society, she has often worked on its behalf, sometimes unknowingly. Mayor Wainwright frequently sends Meadows on errands that further the Society's interests in Potter's Lake. Meadows has begun to suspect that these errands are not directly pertinent to city business, but she doesn't much care. She treats them every bit as seriously as she treats everything else, which is why she continues to receive more assignments from the Mayor.

Over the course of these assignments, Meadows has visited some of the more unusual locales of Potter's Lake, as well as a few outside it. In doing so, she's developed a remarkable ability to get from one place to another. In fact, she knows the town better than almost anyone, using shortcuts and back entrances that most everyone else overlooks. Meadows has begun to realize that her travels aren't always “normal,” which is to say that she sometimes, when she's at her most intensely single-minded, can move from one place to another without going through the intervening space. She'll find a door that on one side of town that opens up to a room on another or she'll walk down an alley that leads her right to wherever she needs to go. Meadows can't explain how or why this happening, but she's very much aware of it and uses it to help maintain her reputation as a highly efficient worker. Interestingly, Meadows' unusual ability doesn't seem to work inside New City Hall, where she gets as lost as anyone else.

Meadows is deeply concerned that Mayor Wainwright or someone else will discover her unique ability. She knows that the Mayor doesn't take kindly to anything that implies Potter's Lake is anything but a normal midwestern town, lest it attract any more weirdoes and deviants to it (as it

already has). At the same time, Meadows is very curious: is she actually special or do her travels have something to do with the town itself? Could someone else, similarly focused, travel as she has done? Meadows would love to find the answer to this question, but whom could she tell?

REVEREND WILLIAM RAMBLIN

The Reverend William Ramblin is an Episcopal minister and pastor of St. Luke's Church, one of the largest Protestant churches in Potter's Lake. He was born and bred in the town and considers it a signal honor to have been assigned as pastor at the church he attended as a child. Although he attended seminary and graduate school out west (he has a Ph.D. from Stanford in Cultural Anthropology), Ramblin takes great pride in his roots. He's not stuffy or arrogant and tries his best to minister to the needs of his congregation to the best of his ability. He's hampered somewhat by the fact that, at base, he's not a very down-to-earth sort of man. He inhabits a rarefied intellectual realm most of the time and his sermons can leave his flock scratching their heads, baffled by his impressive vocabulary and erudition.

Ramblin's congregation aren't the only ones with whom he has some difficulties. Father Gorrard is a long-time irritant and public sparring partner of the good reverend. Father Gorrard has denounced Ramblin on a regular basis as being a "false Christian" leading astray "ignorant sheep." This hasn't won the priest any admirers among the parishioners of St. Luke's, who, despite their bafflement at what Rev. Ramblin sometimes preaches, very much like and respect their pastor as a devoted man of God. Though not as learned as their minister, the people of St. Luke's share Ramblin's passion for the social Gospel of Christianity, believing it far more important than the doctrinaire adherence to medieval teachings that Gorrard espouses. On more than one occasion, proponents of each cleric have come to blows, much to the disappointment of Rev. Ramblin, who considers violence contrary to the teachings of Christ.

In recent months, William Ramblin has begun to doubt his faith. Every time he reads or hears about another inexplicable tragedy, he finds himself unable to reconcile such great evil with the merciful love that he has always attributed to God. His wife, Joanne, has suggested he should take a sabbatical to travel and clear his head, but he has so far refused. He believes that, even without the deep faith his congregation believes he possesses, that he can do some good. Indeed, Ramblin has regularly preached that the truth of Christianity is not dependent even on the existent of God, but only on the capacity of human beings to love another as they love themselves. Needless to say, this hasn't endeared him to Father Gorrard, whose attacks against him have only intensified.

William Ramblin is an attractive middle-aged man with thinning blond hair and expressive gray-blue eyes. His face is lined from worry, but he nevertheless smiles broadly when greeting others. Unless acting in an official capacity, Ramblin dresses casually. When "on-duty," he wears a light blue shirt with a Roman collar and a tweed jacket. He's clearly uncomfortable in his clerical attire, but he understands that others expect him to dress this way, and he doesn't wish to counter their expectations.