

Rest Stops © 1996
By Michael C. LaBossiere
Ontologist@aol.com
Call of Cthulhu

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Introduction

In this adventure the investigators are called upon to aid a friend whose son and daughter in law vanished on their way east from L.A. In their search for the missing couple the investigators will stumble across an ancient horror. This adventure is set in the 1990s but could be set in an earlier era with considerable modification.

Keeper's Introduction

This adventure pits the investigators against a malign spirit of dust. These supernatural beings dwell in the dry and desolate places of the earth but some of them revel in the chance to inflict suffering and horror on mankind. A young couple on their way back east had the misfortune of encountering one of these malign spirits at a rest stop. While David Holpen was walking a little way into the desert he was attacked and possessed by a dust spirit. It went back to Holpen's car, assaulted and killed his wife and then left her body and the car out in the desert. Since then, this dust spirit has been traveling the roads, satisfying its desire for evil.

Getting the Players Involved

One of the investigators will be contacted by a friend or associate, Frederick Holpen. This friend will tell the investigator that his son (David) and daughter-in-law (Jean) vanished on their way east from LA. He will say that they called him from a rest stop along Route 66 to say that they were heading out across the Mojave and that they would call him when they reached a hotel. He will say that they never called him and never showed up at their friend's house (they were going to stop at a friend's house the next day).

Holpen will say that he called the police, but they did not find any sign of the missing pair. Holpen will say that he fears something terrible has happened to his son and daughter-in-law and will ask the investigator to look into things. Holpen is a successful investor and will be able to help the investigator financially, if need be.

Investigation

The Area

The missing people last called from a rest stop on San Bernardino Route 66 and were on their way east. The way east goes through the Mojave Desert, which is extremely hot and desolate.

Frederick Holpen

Holpen will be able to provide the investigators with photographs and descriptions of the missing people and will be able to direct the investigators to the rest stop his son called from.

Initial Investigation

The investigators are likely to begin by talking to people who might have seen the missing people. If the investigators go to various restaurants and gas stations in the area, they will be able to find one or two people who remember seeing the missing people. However, they will not be able to provide much in the way of useful information.

Police

The investigators will probably decide to talk to the police at some point. Bakerfield and Perez were the officers who conducted the search for the missing pair. They will say that they checked the rest stops, hotels, and along the highway for the missing car. They will also say that other officers further up the highway have reported no sign of the missing people. The police will be friendly, but will not be able to provide much useful information. If the investigators are amiable and ask if there is anything unusual in the area, Perez will tell them that there has been a significant increase in the number of abandoned vehicles as well as a slight increase in the number of people reported missing.

Rest Stops

The investigators might decide to investigate the rest stops. Their initial investigation will reveal little substantial information. However, they should make a slightly disturbing find. Three rest areas (the one the missing pair called from is the middle one) have several cars parked in the lots that are heavily coated with dust and, upon closer inspection, can be determined to have been in the lots for a while. Some of these cars have been simply abandoned, but some belonged to victims of the spirit. If the investigators check the license plates with the police they will learn that some of them belong to people who have been reported as missing. These people have not been reported as missing to the highway patrol and hence the officers have not been checking for their cars. Most of the missing people were on extended trips and hence no one knows where they went missing.

At one rest stop there are signs (use Spot Hidden or tracking to spot) that a car has been driven off into the desert. If the investigators follow the trail for a half mile they will find Holpen's car with a tarp thrown over it. The tarp is covered with dust

and debris which makes the car all but impossible to spot from the distance. It is readily visible from the ground at about a quarter mile. The car contains the dried out and half naked body of Jean Holpen. Her body bears marks of blunt trauma and she has been sexually assaulted (by the spirit in Holpen's body). A forensic examination will reveal that she died of dehydration.

Juan Cortez

Before Encounter on the Highway: If the investigators encounter Juan Cortez prior to the Encounter on the Highway Cortez will be willing to talk to the investigators if they are friendly and interesting. He will be sympathetic if the investigators mention the missing people. However, he will probably not mention his past experience with a spirit of the dust.

After Encounter on the Highway: If the investigators talk to Martinez after the encounter on the highway, he will mention Perez when he is talking to the police. If the investigators follow up on this and are polite, Perez will talk to them he will tell them a story from thirty years ago:

"About thirty years ago, when I was a young man, I was just drifting about without a purpose. One day I was by the fire station, cooling off in the water running from the hoses, when a group of determined and dusty looking men drove up in a battered car. They offered the firemen a wad of bills to borrow some of their equipment and one of asked me if I wanted to make some money at a dangerous job. Being young and full of myself, I was all for it. Well, we rode out into the desert and we set up the gear. I had an old back pack pumper on and they had hoses and stuff. One old guy, looked like he was from India, made marks on the ground and started chanting something. Well, about 30 minutes passed and this guy just came flying, and I mean literally flying, out of the desert. One of the younger guys emptied a Thompson, you know, one of those gangster guns, into the guy. Something came out of that man and they started spraying it with water. They yelled at me and I started spraying it and screaming like a wild animal. The thing, whatever it was, looked like a man of dust. The water was clearly hurting it and eventually it was reduced to a pile of foul dust. The old guy gave me another fifty dollars and told me not to tell the police. I never have. I've always been a moral man, but that wasn't murder. Even though I was just a green kid, I could see they were ridding the world of something evil."

Based on what Martinez has to say, Perez will suspect that another one of the things he say is in the area. He will be able to suggest that the investigators will need a great deal of water to kill it. If asked about the ritual used by the Indian, he will say that he does not know how to do it or even what it really was. He will be willing to help the investigators if they ask for his aid.

Maps

The maps detail a standard rest stop area.

Rest Stop Exterior

The exterior map shows the area used to get on and off the highway, the parking

lot and the rest stop building. The parking lot is well lit at night. The rest stop building is made of concrete and there are two water fountains out front. There are automatic sprinklers to keep the grass around the rest stop alive.

The rest stops are cleaned about once a week or every two weeks, depending on the budget and the conditions. The rest stops are generally kept in good repair. Chances are good that at least a few people will be stopped at a rest stop at any given time. Rest stops are located every 50-100 miles.

Rest Stop Interior

The interior map shows the inside of the rest stop building.

Men's:

1. Sinks.
2. Shower Stalls.
3. Bathroom Stalls.
4. Urinals.

Storage:This area contains cleaning equipment, tools, supplies and such. The door is kept locked.

Women's:

1. Sinks.
2. Shower Stalls.
3. Bathroom Stalls.

Action

Encounter on the Highway

At some point when the investigators are driving along the highway (perhaps when the players are starting to run into dead ends) they will be driving by a rest stop and a flat bed truck will come flying out of it. The truck will swerve, strike their vehicle a glancing blow and a car will fall off the back of the truck (cruel Keepers may wish to have the wayward car inflict some more damage to the investigator's vehicle and give them a scare). Lucky for the investigators, a highway patrol car will be in the area and set off in hot pursuit. After about ten miles, Martinez (the driver of the truck) will pull over. The investigators, who should be driving after the fleeing Martinez, will arrive just in time to see Martinez shouting out something about a flying man in Spanish to the officer who is trying to calm him down. If the investigators stop, they will be able to hear his story. Roughly, it goes like this:

"I was driving into the lot, looking for a place to rest before I brought the car back to town for repairs. Well, I pull in and I see somebody lying in the parking lot. I go and check his body and I can see that his jaw is broken and his face is a mass of bruises. I can see his chest and it is all busted up and dried out. I then heard a woman scream. I looked up and saw a man standing there with a woman. She was struggling with him and I could hear a crunching noise when he pulled on her arm. He then rose off the ground, just like the guy in Perez's story. He was carrying her

and came towards me. I jumped in my truck and pulled out like a bat from hell.”

If the investigators accompany the officer to the parking lot, they will find a Toyota with its engine still running. In the parking lot is a tennis shoe and some dried blood. There is no sign of either the body or the missing woman as the spirit took both of them out into the desert. The car is registered to Henry Carver and his friends will say that he was going on a trip with his girlfriend Helen Jones.

The officer will question the investigators to see if they know anything and will call for a team to come out to check the sight. Martinez will be ticketed for reckless driving. If asked about Perez, Martinez will offer to introduce the investigators to him.

Hunting the Spirit

The spirit, which is currently in possession of Holpen’s body, spends most of its time cruising the highway looking for victims. It prefers to prey on women, but it will attack anyone when it needs to drain fluids. The dust spirit will not leave its desert and will tend to strike along a 150 mile stretch of highway. This will give the investigators the chance to catch up with it and destroy it.

Fighting the Spirit

Once the investigators find the spirit, they will almost certainly want to destroy it. Destroying the spirit will require the following steps. First, the spirit must be driven from the body it occupies. This can be done by a magical exorcism, if the investigators have the means of performing one. This can also be done by killing the host body or rendering it unconscious (the spirit will leave a body that has been rendered unconscious out of fear-it cannot see or hear while occupying an unconscious body). Once the spirit has been driven from its host body it can be attacked by magical means or by dousing it with water. It will take a considerable amount of water to destroy it, so the investigators will need some means of rapidly getting many gallons of water onto the spirit.

Conclusion

The adventure ends when the investigators defeat the spirit or they are defeated by the spirit. If the investigators leave the area, the spirit will eventually decide to abandon Holpen’s body and get a new one. Holpen’s body will be found shortly thereafter and the Spirit will continue its killing spree. Surviving investigators should lose 1D3 Sanity Points when they learn of these events.

If the investigators defeat the spirit, they should receive 1D8 Sanity Points as a reward. If they are able to destroy the spirit without killing Holpen, they should receive a 1D4 Sanity point bonus.

NPCs

Kevin Bakerfield, Highway Patrol Officer #1

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

Skills: Fast Talk 38%, First Aid 46%, Handgun 57%, Nightstick 41%, Shotgun 52%,

English 70%, Spanish 19%, Law 30%, Persuade 35%, Drive Automobile 65%, Martial Arts 25%

Weapons: .9mm 57% Shots/Round:3 Damage: 1D10 Range: 20 Shots: 15

12 Gauge Pump Shotgun 52% Shots/Round:1 Damage: 4D6/2D6/1D6 Range: 10/20/50 Shots: 5

Night Stick 41% Damage 1D6+db HP 15

Equipment: 2-Way personal radio, patrol car, 2 9mm clips, 50 shotgun shells

Description: Bakerfield has been a Highway Patrol Officer for six years. He is above average in size, has tanned skin, black hair and brown eyes. He is a very calm individual and has a great deal of respect for the law. Although he is somewhat religious, he does not believe in supernatural creatures and will give no credence to any legends or myths.

Jacob Hector Perez, Highway Patrol Officer #2

STR: 14 Con: 14 SIZ: 10 INT: 16 POW: 11 DEX: 13 APP: 11 EDU: 15 SAN: 55 HP:12 DB: +1D4

Skills: Fast Talk 42%, First Aid 41%, Handgun 52%, Nightstick 43%, Shotgun 48%, Law 41%, English 80%, Spanish 45%, Persuade 38%, Drive Automobile 56%, Martial Arts 32%

Weapons: .9mm 52% Shots/Round:3 Damage: 1D10 Range: 20 Shots: 15

12 Gauge Pump Shotgun 48% Shots/Round:1 Damage: 4D6/2D6/1D6 Range: 10/20/50 Shots: 5

Night Stick 43% Damage 1D6+db HP 15

Equipment: 2-Way personal radio, patrol car, 2 9mm clips, 50 shotgun shells

Description: Perez has been a Highway Patrol Officer for four years. He is of average size but keeps in excellent shape. He has black hair and brown eyes. Perez has a college degree and is currently working his way through law school in his off hours. Perez is fairly religious and, thanks to some wild stories told to him by his grandfather, he has some belief in the supernatural.

Jesus Martinez, Thief

STR: 13 Con: 13 SIZ: 13 INT: 11 POW: 11 DEX: 11 APP: 10 EDU:11 SAN: 55 HP: 13 DB: +1D4

Skills: Bargain 44%, Drive Auto 54%, Fast Talk 45%, Locksmith 53%, Mechanical Repair 47%, Sneak 47%, Spot Hidden 52%, Handgun 29%

Weapons: .22 Short Pistol 22 % Shots/Round: 3 Damage: 1D6 Range: 10 Shots: 6

Equipment: Truck, tools

Description: Martinez is of average height and in good shape. He has black hair and brown eyes. Martinez was a college student for two years but was forced to leave school when his parents were killed in a house fire. After that he drifted around, eventually turning to crime. He is actually fairly moral and religious. Because of this, one of his main sources of income is "stealing" abandoned vehicles. His latest operation is going along highways and areas where cars are abandoned. When he finds abandoned vehicles he checks them out and loads them onto his flatbed truck if they are worthwhile. Martinez is not a violent person and has never committed an act of violence against another human being. He carries a small .22 automatic,

mostly in case he runs into snakes (he has a mild phobia about snakes). Martinez does not initially believe in the supernatural. He knows Juan Cortez from a story Cortez did on new drifters of the west.

Juan Cortez, Writer

STR:11 Con: 12 SIZ: 13 INT: 14 POW: 13 DEX: 10 APP: 13 EDU:18 SAN: 65 HP: 13 DB: 0

Skills: History 58%, Library Use 63%, English 95%, Spanish 65%, Persuade 45%, Psychology 59%, Mechanical Repair 34%, Occult 57%, Track 27%, Handgun 41%
Weapons: .45 Automatic 41% Shots/Round: 1 Damage: 1D10+2 Range: 15 Shots: 10
Equipment: Van, PowerBook, Cellular Modem

Description: Juan Cortez has written several successful books on such topics as myths of the wild west and Native American legends. He is tall and thin with gray hair, beard and moustache. He has brown eyes. Cortez travels the American west looking for new material for his stories.

When he was a young man, about 30 years ago, he had an encounter with a Spirit of the Dust. He survived the encounter and saw how the spirit was destroyed. Because of his experience, he believes in the supernatural. He will be quite willing to aid the investigators.

Creatures

Spirit of the Dust

Spirits of the Dust are non-Mythos supernatural beings. They have been in existence since there have been extremely dry, dusty places (such as deserts). Most of them are wickedly evil and revel in destroying living things ripping the moisture from them.

In their natural form, Spirits of Dust have vaguely human-like torsos, featureless heads, and a lower body like a whirlwind. They appear to be made of swirling, dry dust and gritty sand. In this form they move by flying and can pass through any area which dust or sand can pass through (although the passage will take time). In this form they cannot be harmed by most weapons. In this form they can be attacked by magical means or by dousing them with large quantities of water. Each gallon of water that strikes a spirit lowers its Magic Points by 1 point. When its Magic Points reaches 0, the spirit perishes. The spirit can also be disrupted by extremely strong blasts of air (like an explosion) or captured by a high power suction device. However, they take no damage from such "attacks" and will quickly reform. They are also adept at escaping from confinement. In this form they can attack living things by contacting their bodies. They damage living things by draining the moisture from their bodies. Such an attack inflicts 1D8 and leaves marks on the victim that looks like excessively dry skin and windburn. A spirit can also attack a victim at a distance. This attack has a range of 100 yards and inflicts 1D2 points of damage for every Magic Point the spirit expends. The spirit may make this attack whether it is occupying a body or not.

Spirits of Dust can occupy human bodies and many of them enjoy this opportunity to enjoy the experiences afforded by occupying flesh. To take possession of a victim,

a Spirit of Dust must engage the victim in a struggle. To initiate and maintain the struggle, the spirit must be in contact with the victim. The spirit matches its POW against the victim's POW. If the spirit wins, the victim loses 1D6 Magic Points. If the victim loses all Magic Points, the spirit occupies his body. If the spirit loses, it loses 1D6 Magic Points. If it runs out of Magic Points, it is destroyed. A spirit will break off the struggle when it runs low on Magic Points. Being possessed by a spirit costs the victim 1D8 Sanity points. While the victim is possessed he has no awareness of what is going on and will have no memory if he survives.

Once a spirit takes over a person it has full control over the body, but does not have access to the victim's memories or skills. Spirits can learn while in a body and will acquire skills to make their time in the flesh easier. Because of the spirit's nature, it increases the energy of the body, making it stronger and tougher. However, the occupation by a spirit is draining on the body and the spirit tends to dry out the host (this manifests itself as a dryness of skin, some cracking of the skin and a lack of sweat). The host body lose two points of CON each day and will die when the CON falls below 0. This loss can be offset by draining living things. For every 10 points of damage the spirit drains in a day, it offsets one point of lost CON. CON loss is permanent and cannot be regained by the spirit by draining others once it is lost. It also cannot be regained by the victim, should he survive (Keepers may wish to make an exception if an Investigator becomes possessed). A spirit will abandon a body once its CON is reduced to 50% of its enhanced CON. When the spirit leaves, the victim's CON and STR return to normal, which will typically result in the victim's eventual death (the spirit generally abandons the body in a desolate area and with a 0 CON the victim will not last long). A spirit can be driven from the body by killing the victim or performing a magical exorcism. The spirit must expend 5 Magic Points at the end of each day to maintain control over the body. If the spirit does not have the points to expend, it must leave the body and the victim regains control. A spirit can inhabit one body every ten years for every five points of POW it has. For example, a spirit with a POW of 20 can inhabit no more than four bodies a decade.

When in a body, the spirit will be able to attack by touching a victim and drying them out. This leaves marks on the victim's flesh. The spirit can also attack by using the desiccation attack mentioned above. The spirit can also attack with normal weapons, although they usually do not do this. The victim's body is normal flesh and vulnerable to conventional attacks. Killing the victim does not harm the spirit and it can move on to another body.

When occupying a body, a spirit will typically go on a spree of violence and pleasure, indulging in excesses of various kinds. Most of them turn to murder as they enjoy killing. They are intelligent and cunning, but their evil natures often lead them to excesses that cause them to slip up. Spirits are also confined to a particular geographical location, although this location can be up to 300 miles of territory from a central point (the point the spirit was "raised up from the dust" by whatever malign beings spawn such things).

The first body the spirit occupies belonged to David Holpen. The second body listed is that of Gus Jacobs, a former football player. The spirit will take additional new bodies as needed.

Characteris	Rolls	Ave.	Body#	Body#2
STR	3D6X2*	20-22	24	34
CON	3D6X2*	20-22	28	26
SIZ	2D6+6*	12	13	15
INT	3D6	10-11	14	14
POW	4D6	14	20	20
DEX	3D6*	10-11	13	15
HP	*	16-17	21	21
Damage Bonus	*	+1d4	+1D6	+2D6

* In a human host body. Outside of a body a Spirit of Dust only has INT and POW.

Move: 8 (in a human body)/ 16 (flying in a body)/30 (outside of a body)

Weapons(when inside a human host): Hand 60% Damage 1D6, Fist 65% 1D3+db, can use human weapons.

Attacks (in spirit form): Desiccate 65% 1D8

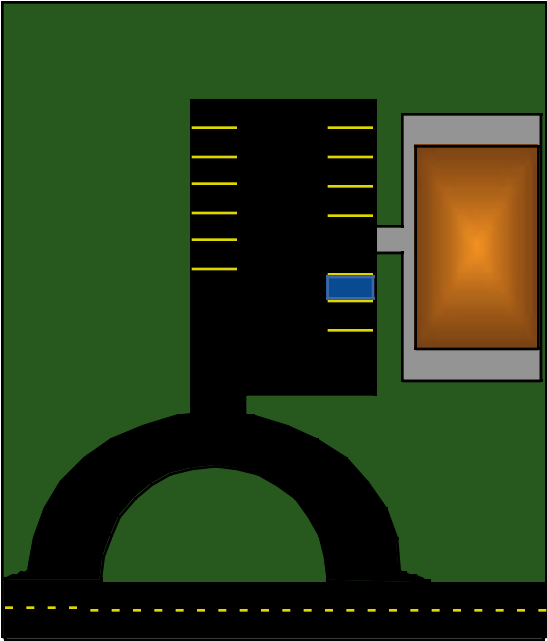
Armor: None.

Skills: Varies. This particular spirit has the following skills: Bargain 25%, Climb 55%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 65%, Hide 45%, Jump 55%, Listen 55%, Locksmith 45%, Navigate 45%, Psychology 45%, Sneak 70%, Spot Hidden 30%, Track 47%

Spells/Special: Desiccation attack.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8 Sanity points to see a Spirit of the Dust outside of a body.

Rest Stop Exterior



Rest Stop Interior

