

On A Warm Summer Night...

A Scenario for 3-6 Players for HeroQuest 2 by Christian Jensen Romer.

When a poltergeist outbreak afflicts a very ordinary family in the sleepy rural town of Barchester, a group of officials and friends of the family respond, hoping to be of assistance. What they experience that night will change them all, forever...



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You can learn more about the *HeroQuest 2* roleplaying game and purchase a copy of the rules at at <http://moondesignpublications.com/>

Part 1: Introduction

A group of experts have gathered in a very ordinary house with a troubled family to try and resolve a sudden and mysterious haunting. The player characters represent those gathered at 8.30pm, on a beautiful summer's evening, to try and solve the mystery and banish the ghost...

Handout 1- Mrs Browns Account

The following account has been written by Mrs Brown, and photocopied and faxed to Mrs Atkinson and Dr Smith. It explains recent events in terms of what exactly has occurred so far with the 'ghost'. Alicia and Simon also have copies, which Mrs Brown gave them to check through for accuracy, though Alicia never bothered. Mrs Brown admits she is not entirely certain about times and details, but it may help you grasp what has happened so far she hopes. It is reproduced as **Handout 1** at the end of the adventure for ease of printing.

Tuesday 8th – about 9pm --Odd feeling, house very cold. Alicia was in her room when I heard loud banging noises. Ran in, to find her laying on bed watching TV. She said not heard anything. Simon came out – he heard it. Just then heard toilet flush – thought Sharona had sneaked in. Waited outside, when no one came out opened door and it was empty. Bouncer started to howl. Then banging from back door. Rand downstairs. No one there. Gave up trying to figure it out and watched TV.

Wednesday 9th – told Tom (PC Sykes) about last night. He said Off License Gang playing around probably. Simon called to say that someone had smashed the glass coffee table. I told him not to worry about it – I thought one of his temper tantrums, which can be terrifying, but he is a good kid and not had one for years. Then he called to say mugs smashing in kitchen, and he had to go to work. Alicia came in after school to find Bouncer (dog) cowering in terror, and he bolted straight out passed her as she came in. She said smelt something awful in Kitchen, and went straight out after dog, and threw up then went over to a friends house and stayed there till after I'm home. I get in at 6pm, to find kitchen trashed, teapot on top of kettle on top of kitchen towel roll, all balanced precariously, and dog refusing to come in. Simon stayed out after work, but said when he came home he could not open the front door – lock turned, but door would not open, as if someone holding shut from inside. He gave up and went round the back.

Thursday 10th Everything normal,

Friday 11th At 9pm Alicia starts to shout what sounds like Spanish in her bedroom. I go upstairs, and suddenly hear her calling me (she shouted “Betty!” twice) from the bottom of the stairs, so I run back down, and she slams the living room door in my face. (I did not see her, but I clearly heard her voice). As I'm shouting at her through the door, she comes out of her bedroom, and starts laughing at me! There is no way she could have been in both places. She tells me she did not shout anything at all, heard nothing, and that I'm going nuts. I sort of believed her actually. It does feel like I'm going nuts.

Saturday 12th I was at work because Tom called me in, but Simon was home till 4pm and says nothing happened. Mrs Singh (neighbour) called Police Station at 3.45pm reporting sounds of crashing and shouting from our house, then everything went quiet suddenly. I

found a tool box that had belonged to Mike opened in my bedroom, tools everywhere. I swear it was in the attic before. I put it back in the attic. I apologised to Mrs Singh who was lovely, but told me that Simon left the house AFTER all the commotion.

Sunday 13th Simon alone home while I'm at shops, and Alicia said she heard him swearing at someone downstairs, telling them to get lost with very crude language. She goes down thinking Sharon has come down, but Simon just snaps at her and leaves house. As he walks out a walnut from the nuts in the dish on the dining table lifts in to the air and flies at her, striking her on the head and giving her a nasty bruise. She ran out and found me at the supermarket. When we got home the sofa was upside down, and the dog was shut in the bathroom. I phone Mrs Atkinson on the emergency number in a panic wanting to be rehoused.

Monday 14th A quiet day. Simon and Alicia both out, but I was home and nothing happened until late at night after we had all gone to bed, when there was a loud tapping noise, and what sounded like fainter answering knocks. Got up and found the single word ARTHUR painted in bright red letters on the bathroom door. The paint was still wet. The writing was a real scrawl. Simon got up and looked at it, but just shrugged and went straight back to bed. Alicia started laughing. I had a cup of tea, and Mr Stephens from next door (no 21 – Mrs Singh is no. 25) came round to ask us to stop banging on the walls so loudly. While we were talking on the doorstep I was shoved hard from behind, and I fell on top of him. Luckily he saw the funny side of it, but he did come in and have a look round. He suggested an airlock in the pipes and said I needed a plumber, but I told him about the ghost. He just laughed.

Tuesday 15th Mrs Singh came round. While we were having a nice cup of tea the cup she was holding shattered in her hand, and then a vase of flowers flew off the windowsill and smashed on the living room wall. Simon ran after her and managed to calm her down a bit., but she won't come in to the house now. Mr Singh came round, and heard the knocking, and saw the fridge door bang open and shut repeatedly when no one was near it. Simon made a joke about "Zuul", and they left, he to work, and I went to work just after. Alicia said it was all quiet when she got home from school.

Wednesday 16th (today) – We are all to gather at my house at 23 Glebe Close at 8.30pm to try and work out an action plan. Mrs Atkinson is arranging details. It will be five years exactly since my husband died.

GM Notes

This short *HeroQuest 2* adventure for a GM and three to six players was written by CJ for possible convention play, and is designed for players who know nothing much about poltergeists, parapsychology or the paranormal, but who are simply amused by the premise of playing ordinary people in an extraordinary situation.

It could potentially serve as an introduction to role-playing, and requires no background knowledge of any type to play. I have created this pdf version, but am happy to email the raw text file for modification to anyone who wants it.

The *character genders* are equally split, with three male and three female characters, but the *player gender* is of course irrelevant. With **five players** drop Mrs Atkinson the Council

Official: with **four players** also drop Dr Samuel Smith the Parapsychologist and with **three players** PC Mark Ryder,. These changes will completely change the game, but hopefully it will still be fun: the GM should play these characters as NPC's if they do become involved.

Pre-generated player characters are supplied, and because the game is based heavily on character interaction they are required. The GM or players may add extra characters if they so wish. Simon Brown is perhaps the most difficult character to play, and the GM should ensure the players are properly briefed before the game starts and has plenty of time to read and understand the character, and to ask questions. Because all the players will be constantly in touch with the GM it is advisable they sit nearby so they can whisper, pass notes, or use a messaging service on a smart phone to communicate with the GM. The scenario should lend itself to play over Skype, email or similar too I hope, or could be played in situ, walking around a real house, with the players talking to each other as they explore rooms etc.

Unlike most convention games, the pre-generated characters provided are essential for the game to run as intended, and contain significant back story, different for each character, giving their perspective on events past and present. **It is therefore essential for the referee to have read all six character sheets before the game begins.**

Important Disclaimer

Despite my interest in poltergeist investigations, and my original intention to write something loosely modelled on real poltergeist cases, this is entirely a work of fiction, and not based upon any real poltergeist case or persons connected therewith, though I hope it does give a feel for the kind of thing that is purported to happen in such weird events. In no way should any of this be taken as condoning any real world opinion on spooks, demons or paranormal claims. It's a game, that's all. However there are several adult themes (death, bereavement, family dysfunction, paranormal elements, bullying etc) in the game, and GM discretion should be advised and players notified of these elements before agreeing to play. These are very real things, and even a game can upset people and bring raw emotion to the surface. Let the players review the character sheets before the game session, and let you know if they are still interested in participating. Invite mature adult players only; and ones who understand what they are letting themselves in for.



Part 2: The Characters

Unlike most *Heroquest 2* scenarios the players do not start by creating a unique character of their own, but instead use special characters with detailed backgrounds covering the information already known to them. This is rather limiting compared with the fun of inventing your own character and background, but it works well for a scenario like this one designed for a single session of play. You need to print off and give each player a character you think they may enjoy playing.

Cast List

1. **Mrs Betty Brown**, hard-working mum and widow.
2. **Alicia Brown**, pretty teenage drama queen
3. **Simon Brown**, quiet teen nerd.
4. **PC Tom Ryder**, a loving cop in out of his depth.
5. **Dr. Samuel Smith**, cynical academic
6. **Mrs Atkinson**, Housing Officer

The GM should carefully read all the character sheets, as the game is about the characters and their interactions as much as the “spook” - indeed without those interactions, there is no spook. It is important the players have time to read their character sheets too, and ask any questions as they occur. Each character has highly specific information known only to their player, and each has their own role to play in the events of the evening. The Browns are the central characters in terms of plot however, and with less than 6 players they should be taken first as noted above, but that does not make the other characters less important or (hopefully) fun to play.

It is also important to tell the players that while in this game the characters, back story and what has been happening are all provided, normally in *HeroQuest 2* the players design all these themselves, and the game setting can be absolutely anything, from a fantasy world of dragons and wizards, to far future SF on a spaceship, through to superheroes or fighting with Napoleon at Waterloo. This scenario is just set in a much more prosaic and mundane setting, but is hopefully still fun.

Note also that the nature of the characters and game may lead to players wanting to go away from the table and talk in private about information that the other players may not know, and hold secret conversations. If they want to, that is fine, but make sure you check what has happened with them, pausing the main narrative, and be aware other characters may attempt to eavesdrop, etc. Or have everyone stay seated and either pass notes or speak openly, but remind them player knowledge is not character knowledge. You can GM: just go with whatever works for you.

The characters follow. Read these first, and give one to each player...

Mrs Betty Brown, Harassed Single Mum

Life was once happy, or happily dull, but at least comfortable for you. Now all that has changed.

Background

You married Mike at 17, after becoming pregnant with Simon and settled down to life as a mother and housewife, abandoning your plans for studying Art at University. Instead you began working part time at a supermarket, and later as Mike got a garage of his own at Mike's auto-repair business. So you were his secretary, and worked and lived together in happiness, with only occasional rows caused by his long hours and your hot temper. When time allowed, you enjoyed evening classes in art, socialising when time allowed only with other mothers, with only a yearly fortnight with Mike and the kids in Spain to break the steady rhythm of domestic life.

In those days you lived in a little cottage out in one of the villages, enjoying a solidly middle class life style – Mike and you were happy, and though you worried sometimes about **Simon**, always a quiet, withdrawn lad, life was good. When **Alicia** was born, she was much much more excitable – a little bundle of energy from the time she was a toddler, she has always been outgoing and vivacious. She is not just your daughter, she is your friend.

So all was good. Until the night, just five years ago tonight, when the police called at the door, and told you Mike would never be home. The heart attack had been mercifully sudden – he was dead by the time they got him to Barchester General, and he probably never even knew what hit him. You had lost your parents the year before, and now it became clear just how alone you really were. Mike had been everything to you. Now it was just you and the kids...

And then it became clear that Mike was under-insured, that the business had debts, and with the house you could not keep up the mortgage, as Mike's insurance did not come close to covering it all. You moved to a rented cottage, and for two years you lived there, but by this time you were becoming thin, drained and constantly harassed by the credit card companies you owe so much. Finally you realised you could not keep up the rent, and close to a breakdown your kindly family doctor put you in touch with Social Services, and **Mrs Atkinson** the kind Housing Officer helped you get this place, a council house administered by Barchester Housing Association, where the rent is so much less, and Housing Benefit payments help you keep your head just above water.

You are now working a few hours a week at the local state police station as a Civilian Support Officer, working on reception; just you and **PC Tom Ryder**, a lovely bloke. Sometimes you think he fancies you, and you are certainly attracted to him: but you have never said anything, and he has never made a move on you. Still you are best mates now, and you admire his strength of character, and if only the kids liked him more...

Still times are hard: money is the real issue, but Simon always one for his own company (he had an invisible friend as a child, named "Arthur", a gnome or something) took his dad's dreadfully death hard, and became even more withdrawn, retreating in to himself, his art work and his computer. He has almost no friends at all, unless they are online, and has not even made a Facebook profile. At school her performed poorly, in everything but

Art and Technical Drawing where he excelled, and as soon as he was 16 (last year) he left, though you had desperately hoped he might go to Sixth Form College (US: Community College). Still his part time job at the local Garden Centre brings in some money, and he is gentle enough, but when his tantrums strike, he can be terrifying.

Things are far worse with Alicia. She has just turned 13, and the beautiful little girl you love who did so much to keep you going when Mike died has become in recent months a sulky, depressed and selfish bitch. She has taken to dressing in punk styles, given up her dancing and her music classes that you sacrificed so much to pay for, and has taken to skiving off school, hanging out with a gang of rough kids off the estate – that Sharona Mitchell being the worst, and Alicia's new best friend. Her old friend Olivia from the village and her are no longer even speaking.

You know she has started smoking, and recently found in her room what you think is cannabis. You left it there in horror: even worse though are the two recent arrests, one for vandalism, one for shoplifting. You have banned Sharona from the house, and told Alicia not to associate with her outside of school, but you know full well she is disobeying you and meeting with that awful girl anyway.

You are at your wits end and have no idea who to turn to, and things have become more distant between you and Tom at work since Alicia got in trouble with the law – you are sure he is not judging you a bad mother, but even so, you now feel awkward around him. Alicia is due in Court next week to face the graffiti charge – she spray painted a crude design on the police house wall – and you know you will die of embarrassment, and none of your friends will ever speak to you again...

Mrs Brown

Administrator 1

+1 Motor Trade

+1 Police Procedure

Look Good On A Budget 13

Look After the Kids 13

Draw From Memory 1W

Knock Something Up In The Kitchen 18

Aerobics 13

Sneak Around House Unnoticed 16

Notice Something Out of Place 14

Charm Anyone 16

Control Bouncer the Dog 13

Flaws

Break Down And Cry if Kids Act Up 1

Secret Affection for Tom Ryder 18

Be Socially Embarrassed at Slightest Thing 13

Alicia Brown, 13 year old troubled daughter

You hate your mum, and you hate your brother; you even hate dad for dying. Most of all you hate your life. You hope the ghost kills everyone and the house explodes like in the movies. You have better things to do tonight...

Background

Life sucks, and you hate it. You used to live in the village, and be a prissy little girl, with everything – a pony, violin lessons, ballet lessons, and you used to love going to Spain every summer on holiday with **Betty (your mother)** and dad. Five years ago dad died; in fact it was five years ago tonight. Your life became rubbish immediately, and from then on it just got worse and worse. You hate everything now.

You used to be such a little goody two shoes, with your pretty hair, nice frocks and polite manners. You used to really love “mummy” as you then called Betty, but three years ago you ran out of money because the stupid bitch never knew what she was doing, and cos your dad went and died on you owing a mountain of debt. So you ended up losing the house, and after a brief spell renting, moving to this crappy estate in Barchester. And you know what? Olivia, your best friend in the world, with whom you were going to form a band and go travel in France and all that shit – well she turned her nose up at you, and pretty much snubbed you, and sniggers at you with all her posh mates, because they have nice clothes, and nice hair dos and the stuff you can;t afford because of your stupid mum, Betty.

The final straw was when mum sold your pony Clovis to Olivia's family, saying they could afford the stabling fees. If the stupid slut got off her arse and worked you would still have Clovis. You hate her, you really do. And then she got that stupid job at the police station part time, working with that awful old man **PC Ryder**, who is a right creep and probably a pervert too. You hate him.

You do have friends now – the Off Licence Gang, a group of girls your own age from the estate who smoke a bit of weed, drink cider and smoke fags, and harass shoppers at the estate shops. But you are banned from the supermarket now, after you and Sharona Mitchell were caught nicking booze there, and that bloody horrible PC Ryder brought you back home and told you off. Then he arrested you again, this time for vandalism – but you were not even there that night, and you know it was Sharona who sprayed the penis graffiti on the Estate police house wall. You won't tell though, and you look forward to appearing in court next week, because it will embarrass Betty. So what if your snobby old friends hate you, and you suspect that apart from Sharona no one from the gang really likes you either, because you are too posh for them. Still, you can rely on Sharona, even if mum has banned her from the house.

You have recently taken to dressing all in black, and have developed a strong interest in Goth culture, but it's all a bit superficial. You just like Teenage Vampire Romances, and secretly are still a bit of a romantic – if a handsome vampire boy was too come along, you would not say no to eloping. Instead you get a stupid spook though.

Ah the spook. That all started just a week (8th) ago, two nights after you and Sharona did a Ouija board (Sunday 6th). Your stupid **brother Simon** caught you, and asked if he could join in – you know he misses your stupid dad, and lets face it Simon hardly ever speaks to anyone. He is so shy you know he must be autistic or something – maybe he talks to customers at the garden centre, but you doubt it. Anyway you and Sharona let him join you in case he told mum, who would go ballistic: and you all sat in your room, round the

home made Ouija board, and watched as the glass tumbler spelled out letters. You all thought your dad Mike might come through – but no, the spirit said it was “Arthur”, and that he had come to “live with you again”. At that point Simon got up and walked out, shaking, and he has not even spoken to you since. The stinking coward!

After he left however it got more interesting. Vesparaso, a demon came through – it promised you power if you sacrificed to it, and promised to make you and Sharona witches. You were to steal a bottle of brandy from your mum's drink cabinet, and give to Sharona, who was to take it to the old graveyard in the nearby church at midnight the next night.

You could hardly wait to see her at school the day after. She looked drained and tired, and told you how she had entered the graveyard and seen a glowing headstone, and when she poured the brandy on the grave, a pale luminous figure spoke and initiated her in to the Black Arts. Tonight at midnight is your chance – you are to go to the graveyard, and offer a blood sacrifice at the grave, and you too will see the figure, and be sworn in as part of the Dark Sisterhood. This is the most exciting thing that has ever happened to you – but now all these weirdos are turning up to investigate the spook, and you are going to have real trouble sneaking out of the house. OK, so it may all be nonsense, but you really really want to believe Sharona – and given what Vesparaso has done around the house, how can you doubt too much? You feel you can communicate with the demon by talking out loud and addressing him – and sometimes he responds with thumps, raps or by moving objects. Soon he will give you power, and soon you will be revenged on your old snobby mates. It will have to be your blood you shed at midnight, so best find a knife, and then creep out ten minutes before the witching hour and run to the old graveyard to seal your dark pact...

Alicia Brown

Teenage Witch Wannabe 17

+2 pop occultism gleaned from films

+1 act mysterious dressed in black and wear a big pentagram

Shoplifted Occult Books on Candle Magic and so forth 13

Secret Stash of Illicit Stuff (fags, lighter, cannabis etc) 14

Play Violin 15

Throw Hissy Fit 15

Steal Stuff Quickly 15

Friends with Bouncer the Family Dog 15

Ballerina 18

Small and Agile 18

Sidekick - Best Friend: Sharona Mitchell 17

Break Stuff 16

Deflect Blame 14

Sneak Around Quietly 14

Flaw: Very Petite Child 18

Simon Brown, Incredibly Shy 17 Year Old Son.

You don't speak unless spoken to, and everyone ignores you. You like it that way. Now you had better come out of your shell, and fast, because your future happiness depends upon it...

Background

You are 17 years old, a handsome strong and healthy boy, of incredible artistic ability, and highly intelligent. You are however pathologically shy and withdrawn, and terribly, terribly sensitive, and deeply troubled. And a few times in your life times you have exploded in sudden violent rage, and break stuff – but only if pushed beyond your limits. That won't happen in this game though: **you remain utterly calm at all times**, no matter how far pushed – eerily detached emotionally from events, despite your stresses and the vital importance of what is happening to you. Play this up...

You grew up in a happy home, in a cottage in a village nearby where you enjoyed a middle class childhood with your dad Mike and **Mum Betty**. Dad owned an autorepair shop, and was a gifted mechanic, and mum worked as his secretary, but you have never been that interested in mechanics or stuff. You were a dreamer, given to drawing, and with deep love of the natural beauty of the countryside around your home. Despite the differences in temperament, you and dad got on incredibly well, and you deeply love your dad.

5 years ago tonight, when you were just 14 years old, it all changed, on that terrible night when the policeman **PC Ryder** came to the door (you have felt uneasy round him ever since). Mum broke down, and your then 8 year old sister and her dashed off tot he hospital, neither thinking to even tell you what has happening. But you had heard – dad had died, of a heart attack, and something of you died with him. You went from being a shy, awkward and sensitive child that night, to being a recluse, even in your own home, and Mum's betrayal in leaving without you has convinced you she never really loved you. That's OK, you don't need anyone else. You love your mum, and do what you can to help her – and Lord knows when the will was settled and you found out the financial mess the family was in, and how much dad owed, well you did all you could. You just don't find it easy to talk to her, or to your **sister Alicia**.

You moved to another cottage in the village, renting this time, but even that was beyond the families reduced means. Eventually you moved to Barchester, where you know live on a quiet council estate, and manage to scrape by with your income, mum's part time job at the estate police station (an office in PC Ryder's house) and with help from Housing Benefits. You pay little rent here, and are grateful to the Housing Office of Barchester Housing Association, **Mrs Atkinson**, who helped you get this place despite the waiting lists. She is here tonight, first time you have seen her in years.

You wanted to college and study art – you excelled at school at Technical Drawing, Graphic Design and Creative Drawing; but when the time came that you could leave, you immediately did, because the family needed your income. You have managed to get a job at a Garden Centre three days a week, and there you have even met a girl, a young (18) middle class girl called Mildred, who is incredibly sweet, and the two of you have been secretly dating for weeks now. You have told no one in your family – why would you? Except now there is a problem – because Mildred's dad, **Dr Samuel Smith** has shown up as well. Mildred knows you are poor, but her dad is meant to be very traditional, very snobby, and very very unlikely to approve of his daughter who is due to go to Oxford Uni in a few weeks dating some “estate” type. If he learns anything too embarrassing then any

chance of you ever being introduced and being allowed to continue to see his daughter will vanish. So perhaps you can befriend him – you are shy, but you can overcome that with a heroic effort of will. Perhaps you can show him all your family are not freaks? Anyway what he is doing sounds interesting: he claims to understand poltergeist outbreaks, and believe you all.

Of course you understand poltergeist outbreaks too, but it's not really a poltergeist, it's Arthur.. When you were a small child you had an invisible friend named Arthur, a little old man in a pink dressing gown and slippers who used to come to you at all times, and talk to you about your art, your hopes and fears, and your life. You guess he would be about seventy or eight, but at the time he was your best friend in the world. Alicia is too young to remember you talking about him, and mum seems to have forgotten, but you recall Arthur well, smoking his pipe, and gently chatting to you. Until Dad told him to go away that is...

One night when you were about 9 you and dad were working in the shed out the back of the old cottage where you lived back then, when Arthur came in. You acknowledged him quietly – Dad of course saw nothing. Then Arthur sat down, and seemingly jealous of the attention your dad was paying you as he explained the cars engine to you, started to throw nuts and bolts across the room at you. Your father looked up astonished, and went to shout at you, when a bolt lifted out of his toolbox, hung suspended for a moment and then struck him square in the stomach knocking him flying. You shouted “Arthur, stop it!” and your father told Arthur to “**** Off!” In no uncertain terms, before running in to the house.

Your dad thought of going to the vicar, but Arthur had left – you felt it immediately. Dad made you promise to say nothing to mum and Alicia, and you kept your word. It became a shared secret, something you never discussed. And you missed Arthur, but it was nothing like the pain you felt when your dad died a few years later, and you once again became withdrawn and secretive. Just once you thought you saw him, standing watching, still in slippers and pyjamas. It was among the mourners at the cemetery, even as in driving rain your fathers coffin was lowered in to the ground. Your eyes were dim with tears, your face screwed up against the rain and grief, yet for a moment you thought you saw Arthur across the churchyard, watching intently. You looked again, and he was gone.

Of course you have sort of stopped believing in Arthur as you grew up. Well until a few nights back, a week ago in fact. Bloody Alicia had come in to your room, and stolen some of your acrylic paints and you went out to look for her, finding her with that bloody Sharona, her friend who mum has banned from the house. They had made a Ouija board, and were sitting in the dark and trying to contact a spirit. Then you realised she missed dad as much as you did, so you quietly asked if you could join them, and after looking at Sharona for approval she agreed to your surprise. And then as you placed your fingers on it, the glass started to move, and slide around the table...

You first thought it was dad, but as Sharona asked the spirit its name it spelled out A-R-T-H-U-R. Arthur! You immediately asked what it wanted, and watched spellbound as the glass spelt out “I have come to live with you again....” You stood up, shaking, and walked out of the room, never looking back. Alicia and Sharona just stared. You went out for hours to see Mildred, and then returning home, you went to bed. And when you woke in the night, Arthur was standing at the foot of your bed watching you, but his old soft gentle smile replaced with one of grim menace, mocking, bitter.

Since that time Arthur has not spoken, but you know he is no twisted, evil, and you fear he played some role in your fathers death. And deep down inside, you know he wants to harm Mildred, to have you all to himself again. Your emotions all became curiously stilled at that moment – and as the haunting began in earnest two nights later, you knew what was

behind it – but you have told no one, because you know they would have you Sectioned as mentally ill...

Still you know something the others don't: you can make Arthur stop, and even flee from you by shouting at him, addressing him by name. You may have to do this if things get out of hand, but you really don't want to do it while others are in the house – but you have done a few times when mum and Alicia are out, and things have started to move or get smashed up...

Simon Brown

Gifted Artist 3

Computer Design +1

Paint Emotionally Compelling Scene +1

Technical Drawing +1

Girlfriend Who You Really Love: Mildred Smith **3**

Heft Shrubs & Sacks Of Stuff Around 14

Shout At Arthur To Shut Up & Go Away 16

Protect Your Family And Calm Mum Down 15

Calm Bouncer the Dog 17

Physically Strong And Athletic 15

Fix Stuff and Make Useful Things 13

Strong Willed and Stubborn 15

Flaws

Eerily Calm **3**

Madly In Love with Mildred **3**

Withdrawn and Odd 16

Note: Mildred is not present, and you don't want to get her to come over for fear of what Arthur might do, but you can call her and use your relationship with her to get her to help out, talk to her dad, run errands, etc, etc. You have a mobile phone and she likes to hear from you, and knows her dad is here and why, but knows nothing about "Arthur", though she has heard of the haunting. Her dad does not know about the two of you, and has never met you before, so you must make a good impression somehow.

Important Point: You are **NEVER** scared in anyway by the poltergeist phenomena. **Whatever happens, you are simply curious, and not bothered at all. This is odd but you have not noticed it is odd. After all, you know it is just Arthur.**

PC Tom Ryder, Good Cop In Out Of His Depth

You do your best to look after people, and your community. Even tempered, gentle and calm, you uphold the law with a sense of humour and an eye to looking after folks. Problem is there was nothing in your raining about how to arrest a spook!

Background

In a sense it all started five years ago: in fact tonight will be the fifth anniversary. Spooky that in itself, and sad. You were a young officer, back then working out of Barchester central police station, but that night you were up here when you got the call. Bloke had collapsed at Ratchet's Squash Club, just a few streets away over beyond the old church. Heart attack Ambulance had been called, but he hadn't made it. Your job was to go break it to the family.

Only second time you had done the notifying next of kin thing on your own, but no WPC available, and indeed no one else was free. You drove out there in your patrol car, to a middle class village about eight miles from here, and rang the doorbell, just as it started to rain. The woman answered, and you as gently as possible told her she needed to go to the hospital, and that her husband was in a critical condition, and possibly gone. So the widow just stood there a minute, gulping air, taking it all in. And that was how you met **Betty Brown**.

She grabbed her daughter, Alicia, who would have been about eight at the time, and came running out. So you drove her to the hospital, and stayed as long as you could, waiting for the doctors to confirm they could do no more. Then you drove her home, and gave her the usual numbers to call, and drove off, tired and melancholy. Lucky these things are rare, or you would never be able to keep in the job you love.

Three years passed, and you thought no more of Mrs Brown. Then you got moved to the Oldchurch council estate, a bit rougher than town but hardly a bad area – there are no bad areas really in Barchester – and moved in to the police house there, with a tiny one room office out front. Community policing. Not glamorous like detective work, but it suits your temperament. You are good with people, like to help and you have made a lot of friends. And then one day you were interviewing for a part time Civilian Support Officer to work with you, and help with the paperwork three days a week, and the first candidate to walk in was Mrs Brown.

So now you have worked together a long time, and become really good friends. You know all about her family, how she lost her mum and ad in the year before her husband Mike died, and you have finally met her son, **Simon**, now aged 17.. A colleague Bob Norris told you the son was a “bit odd” - and he did not lie . Simon is a good kid, but he is chronically withdrawn, and whenever you see him he seems to recoil from you like a snake. You just don't know what's wrong. Maybe he just does not like men? Still Simon is OK really, just quiet and painfully shy. You wish for Betty's sake that his sister **Alicia** (13) was more like him.

Alicia was a good kid, one of the best, but that was a year or so ago. She used to be a sweet young thing, all pretty frocks and sweet manners. You remember how she looked after her mum, telling her it would all be OK, on that terrible night as you drove them back from the hospital. And when Betty first came to work with you, Alicia was still a good kid, though Betty could not really afford her violin lessons and ballet classes, but she kept

paying for them. They had to let Alicia's pony go though – you think a lot of the resentment stems from that actually.

Anyway Alicia's 13th birthday was recently, and in the last few months she has changed beyond recognition. Now she is a surly, angry teen, taking to dressing in goth-punk fashions, and you have noticed she never calls Betty mummy any more – just “Betty”. Worse, she has started to hang around with the Off License Gang, a bunch of 12-13 year old girls who harass shoppers and smoke and drink booze outside the estate shops. Most of them come from troubled homes, and Alicia does not really fit in with them, but she does seem to have made friends there, especially with the gang leader, Sharona Mitchell – a habitual troublemaker, shoplifter and vandal who might actually harden in to a real criminal one day. You are pretty tolerant of these kids – the older kids gangs are much more of an issue – but Sharona had a nasty, spiteful streak, and you were glad when Betty who knows full well how many times Sharona has been arrested banned her from the house and tried to stop Alicia hanging round with her outside of school. You do wonder if Sharona could somehow be faking the whole thing, along with Alicia? In the early hours of Saturday morning you picked up Sharona dead drunk, still clutching a half consumed expensive bottle of brandy she had obviously nicked from somewhere, just a couple of streets away from here.

A few weeks ago Alicia and Sharona were caught shoplifting in the estate mini-supermarket. The manager banned them both, but they were let off with a Caution this time. Then one night someone sprayed a comedy penis and wrote obscenities over your police house wall, and several witnesses saw Alicia in the area. As she was caught with the paint, there was nothing you could do but charge her, and she is up before the magistrate later this week. You feel really sorry for Betty, who you regard as a best mate, and did wonder if perhaps there was a relationship in your future – but since that happened Betty has become cold and withdrawn at work, and you feel she is angry at you for letting her daughter go to court. But what could you do? Things have become so awkward at work you have started to wonder if you should suggest Betty finds another job, but you fear if you do she will never speak to you again. You really don't want that, as you are You like her, perhaps more than you admit to yourself. If it wasn't for the kids...

Of the others present, you know **Mrs Atkinson** the Housing Officer from Barchester Housing Association professionally, having met at many Resident's Association and Council meetings, and have always got on well enough. She is a severe woman, abrupt at times, but her heart is in the right place. You know she helped Betty get this place three years ago, and know she will do all she can to help her, and Mrs Atkinson could set up a multi-agency team – doctor, child psychologist, family therapist, the school, social services, yourself – to help the family with their issues. She is a consummate professional, always working for the best interest of the client, always only passing on information to you on a strictly need to know basis, which often means you are cut out of the whole picture. Your job tonight, given you know nothing about spooks and are actually scared of them, is to support her in resolving all this sensibly.

Now, spooks. You don't believe in them: but at some very deep level you are scared of them, and really quite frightened by being in this situation. You don't want to show fear, you want to be strong for Betty and family, but all the same, this unnerves you. You have only every had one “paranormal” experience – oddly enough, not far from here, At the end of Glebe Close stands a little gate, that leads through in to the churchyard of an old church. Kids like to sneak in there at night to drink and smoke, and sometimes worse elements lurk through there. One night you were patrolling, when in the moonlight you clearly saw one of the graves, a white cross, glowing in the moonlight, seeming shining with a light too

bright to come from the moon. You stood still for a moment, then freaked out, and ran. You really don't like going to the churchyard after that.

Technically you are on duty tonight, and won't finish your shift till 1am. As such you can't drink, must be available to respond to any incidents in your patrol area (broadly speaking the Estate and a few streets nearby in Oldchurch) and maybe called away at any time. You have not told the Barchester Central Station what you are up to, because let's face it, they would a) mock you and b) a few of the lads already joke you are sweet on Betty and they may not actually believe you are here for the reasons given ;) You have a police radio, and any call to your house office automatically redirects to your mobile. You are not expecting any trouble though – this is sleepy Barchester.

Tom Ryder

Police Constable 7

- +1 Community Policing
- +1 Patrol Car & kit
- +1 First Aid & CPR
- +1 Chase Down & Restrain Villain
- +1 Know Usual Suspects

Protect Locals 15

Keep The Situation Calm 15

Keen Amateur Photographer 13

In Good Physical Shape 15

Air Of Benign Authority 15

Shout Fiercely At Troublemakers 15

Flaws

Overly Protective of Betty 7

Scared of “ghosts” 15

Must Uphold Law 13

Dr. Samuel Smith, Head of Psychology Barchester University

After that angry exchange on poltergeist phenomena at the last Psychological Research Society International conference, where you were accused of being an armchair sceptic by some of these pseudoscientists, this is a heaven sent opportunity to prove it's all fraud or misperception...

Background

People just don't seem to understand you; which to an eminent academic psychologist like yourself is a puzzle, and an irritation. You know you come over upper middle class, authoritarian and perhaps a bit snobbish, but really, you are a University lecturer in your fifties, who has spent years as a Health Service consultant psychologist in Clinical Psychology. You are well educated, well paid and immensely cultured. People who live on estates like this really have no grasp on people like you, and they respond badly to what they don't understand. In fact, your Bentley parked outside on the street is probably even now having its hubcaps nicked. Best watch it whenever possible – the thieving scum round here will scratch it or worse.

You wish you weren't here. The house smells of dog, and you never liked dogs much. Stay away from that mutt – it looks like a retriever, but probably dangerous. You know the estate only by reputation, and have no desire to be in it. The policeman, **PC Ryder** is OK you guess, though only a constable, but play golf with Superintendent James regularly, and James is a personal friend. Best let him know you know his boss, and then he might be of use. The Housing Association woman **Mrs Atkinson** is again acceptable enough – she must realise these are just more people trying to get rehoused at the taxpayers expense, though you can hardly blame them living round here. Still when she called you up and asked if the university had anyone who knew about this sort of thing, you agreed to come over, however much you regret it now.

Actually, you are a little surprised. First impression of **Mrs Brown** is of a vivacious, quite normal housewife, a little tired, but the house is much nicer than you expected. She seems very pleasant in some ways, and reminds you a little of your wife's younger sister who insisted on taking a job as a librarian, and who is only occasionally embarrassing.. Mrs Brown is a single mother of course, but what do you expect? Feckless dads don't stick around in this day and age. Her son **Simon** looks OK, tall and handsome, reminds you a bit of yourself as a youth actually. Must be about 17 – well dressed, good upright bearing. Her daughter **Alicia** however is a ghastly little oik – all black clothes, pagan design jewellery and too much make up. Not more than 13, she will grow up to be a real problem no doubt. Her mother should control her, exercise some discipline.

You have a perfect family back home – your wife Lydia, and your brilliant daughter Mildred who is not only a superb cellist, but also a gifted academic with a real talent for languages and archaeology. She is off to Oxford University in two months, there to pursue her degree in Anglo-Saxon Studies. However recently you have been a little worried about her – she has seemed distracted, and even missed a few sessions with her expensively acquired Latin tutor. She insisted on taking a summer job in the garden centre, and you know she has shown an interest from time to time in utterly unsuitable boys, but luckily you have managed to protect her so far by scaring them off. You do worry she may have developed some other unsuitable attachment. Nothing must get in the way of her going to Oxford – she thinks she knows what will make her happy, but she doesn't, at 18 she is too young, and you must guard her brilliant future against her possible issues. You are terribly

protective of Mildred, your only daughter, and love her very much.

The reason you are here? You have a strong and genuine interest in the paranormal. You don't believe in ghosts or spirits, and you know eye witness testimony is deeply flawed, but you know people believe they experience these things. So you want to help, you really do: by debunking this nonsense, catching whoever is faking the phenomena if it is a hoax, or if it is just misperception then by finding what is causing people to think they see these things move and so forth. Perhaps the house wiring is giving off strong magnetic fields because of some issue with the wiring, or there is a boiler issue and gas problems, or perhaps the house vibrates because it is built on an old abandoned coal mine or underground stream, or maybe family stresses are causing one of the kids to begin to hallucinate or even smash and do things while in an altered state of consciousness, unaware they are doing them? You are very talented at coming up with sceptical explanations to explain away almost anything, and yet you are genuinely open minded. If something paranormal did occur, and you somehow could show it was not down to psychological factors, then you would be extremely excited, and immediately start to think about the scientific implications of what you were discovering, and think of ways to test and falsify various hypotheses.

The key to proper scientific study would be some kind of instrumental recordings, so just in case you have asked your lab technician to put together a large case of "ghosthunting equipment" - simple measuring equipment, recording equipment (including sound and nightvision video, and a still Polaroid camera, Polaroid being harder to fake than digital or even ordinary film images), and even a base station and three wireless baby alarms plus a few motion detectors, so you can remotely monitor rooms. The exact contents of this equipment is not described: if you want something from the gear in the flight case or the boot of your car, ask the GM the difficulty level and roll against your "technical kit" ability. Anything named here does not require a roll however, you just have it. Anyway, your mission tonight is simple. Debunk the ghost, find out what is behind it, and catch whoever is responsible. You are in charge, and must try and control the investigation if you are going to get a paper out of this...

Dr Samuel Smith

Academic Psychology 7W

Drone On About The Psychology of Anomalous Experience +1
Do Stats for Quantitative Research +1
Make Impressive Sounding Pronouncements+1
Assess Psychological State of Individual +1
Act Cultured And Like An Authority On Everything 15
Gleaming Silver Bentley Car 13
Technical Kit You Sort Of Know How To Use 14
Make Idiot Feel Small 14
Extremely Wealthy With Very Good Income and Resources 16
Help Those Less Fortunate 13
Withering Glare 16

Flaws:

Love Mildred 7W ,
Epic Snobbery 16,
Feels Sorry For Good People Down On Their Luck 15

Mrs Sarah Atkinson, Housing Officer, Barchester Housing Association

Your job is not to judge the rights and wrongs of this ghost business, but to protect your clients best interests, and the housing stock. If you were not so naturally psychic it would be much easier to remain professional and detached ...

Background

Sarah Atkinson is a confident, powerful, professional, capable woman. So everyone says – but you don't always feel that strong. Sure in your severe suits, with your clipboard in hand and smart phone in the other, you resolve most tenant problems quickly and effectively – and let's face it, 99% of the people on this estate are lovely, decent, kind folks, so unlike the stereotype of them from people who don't know them and turn their noses up and them. There are bad apples of course, but no more than in the little terraces of Oldchurch, or the most elegant upmarket suburbs of Barchester. People are people, and you have no time for empty headed snobs. In fact you yourself live on the estate, having bought an ex-council house from a former tenant who grabbed the chance to buy when he saw it, and made a tidy sum from it. . You love the people around here, and do your best for them.

Of course there are issues with noise, drugs, vandalism, graffiti, problem kids, and all the other things you get with urban living. None of them are very serious: look at **Alicia** there. She runs with the Off License Gang, a bunch of 13 and 14 year old kids who smoke, drink and hassle people outside the estate shops. They are not bad kids, apart from maybe Sharona Mitchell, the pushy little bitch whose petty crimes come up week after week at Resident's Association meetings. You know **PC Tom Sykes** does his best to keep an eye on them, but he has the older more serious offenders to deal with – still he is a great community policeman, and you are glad he and his civilian support worker **Mrs Brown** man the little office in the police house that serves as a local police station.

Alicia though is a pain. Her mother must be mortified that she was caught shoplifting a few weeks back, and is now banned from the supermarket, and then there was the vandalism when someone spray painted a huge neon penis and rude words over the wall of the police house, and Alicia was arrested for it. She is up in court next week, and you wish you could do something to help, but that is really a matter for Social Services, who should send a Welfare Support Officer over to see if they can help out.

Ah **Mrs Brown**. You first met about three years ago: she lost her husband, Mike, who ran an autorepair business but tragically dropped dead of heart failure one night. Nasty business , about five years ago now. After Mike died Mrs Brown was saddled with a huge burden of debt. Paying for **Alicia's** pony (now fortunately sold to a friend of hers), her dancing lessons and her violin tuition had not helped. Eventually Mrs Brown who lived in a very nice village not too far away then ran in to arrears with her rent, and was force to move. Luckily you helped her find a nice house here on the estate through the organisation you work for, Barchester Housing Association, who provide low cost social housing solutions and administer the remaining council housing stock on behalf of Barchester Borough Council – BHA is an ALMO, an “arms length management company” set up by the Borough Council – but enough jargon!

You love your job, and are highly qualified in Housing Law, and in Social Housing techniques , and have a huge knowledge of benefits and funds available to clients in

distress. Cases like Mrs Brown make you sad though – she needed more help than she was willing to ask for. You were part of the Multi-Agency Taskforce on her case, and indeed could convene another one - it is just a way that people like the doctor, school, police, Social Services, BHA, the Benefits Agency and anyone else of use can share information on a client on a need to know basis and deliver a package designed to suit the client's best interests. An awful lot of paperwork, but you can achieve miracles if it works!

You know that normally Mrs Brown might have waited years for a place in Social Housing – there is a long waiting list – but in her case medical and psychological concerns about her son **Simon** who you recall was chronically depressed and withdrawn following his father's death pushed her to the top of the list. You actually liked Simon – nice kid, but something was not quite right with him. Still he has a little part time job at the garden centre now, and you were incredibly pleased when you saw him out walking one night with a very pretty girl of about his own age, and they stopped and kissed for ages under a lamp post! You meant to ask him who his girlfriend is, she looked lovely, if a little old fashioned in how she was dressed, but you saw her working the other day at the Garden Centre where he works, and she served you on the tills, and so you spotted her name was “Mildred”. Funny old fashioned name too! You shall have to ask him about Mildred. Anyway clearly Simon is much improved.

Now this ghost business: it is not really your job to decide if the ghost is real or not, but it is your job to decide if the family need re-homing. The best you could offer would be a small two bed flat in a crumbling block on a much worse estate on the other side of town: the problem is that when you spoke on the phone Mrs Brown sounded so desperate you realised she might take it. You don't want it to come to that, this house is much more suited to their needs. You decided to convene a meeting tonight, to try and get to the bottom of matters, and called **PC Sykes** who happily said to come along, after checking with Mrs Brown she was OK for her colleague to be involved. Then you phoned Barchester University, got through to a secretary at the Psychology Department and asked if they had anyone who knew about ghosts or poltergeists. The lady gave you the name **Dr Smith**, so again, after checking with Mrs Brown and checking his credentials, you called him and invited him along tonight to help get to the bottom of all this.

However the person who can really help is probably you. You first discovered your psychic abilities when as a child your grandmother taught you to read tea leaves, but in the last few years you have taken to watching celebrity mediums on television, and have realised you have The Gift. OK, so you have not yet seen or heard from a spirit, but you can always sense their presence, and feel you can communicate with them. Your sensitivity to Spirit tonight may well be enough to allow you to help this troubled soul that is haunting the place move over in to The Light, passing peacefully to the Other Side. All you have to do is get everyone to link hands, visualise a brilliant white light and then “call out” to the spirit and establish communication with it, and ask it to depart. You are utterly confident you can do this. It will help however if you can establish the spirit's identity, so you have done some research on the history of the house.

The house was built in 1955, on the site of a former market garden, in what were once church lands. There are rumours that a Priory stood somewhere round here in the Middle Ages from what you could find on the internet, so maybe it is the tormented earthbound soul of a monk who broke his vows with a local girl? Anyway Oldchurch Church is just through the little gate at the end of the Close, so it could also be a spirit from there? It is an

eerie spot at night, and you have heard kids tell stories of a glowing tombstone in there!

The house itself, 23 Glebe Close seems less promising. From 1956 to 1968 it was home to the Hendersons, a family with our children, but they moved out in 1968 when all the children had left home, and have moved to a smaller retirement cottage. Mrs Henderson is still alive, you know her quite well.

The house was renovated in 1968, then was home to the Cox's, another large family who lived here happily until 1981, when they in turn moved on after the children had moved out. Sidney Cox, the father, did die in the house, in the living room however, of heart failure, on October 12th 1980. Mrs Cox was rehoused in February 1981. Could it be the spirit of Sidney? You have not been able to find out anything about him, or his widow Mildred (another Mildred!)

Terry and Patricia Soames moved in next, with their daughter Abigail, but they only stayed 8 months until Terry's work took them overseas. Gladys Mitchell (Sharona's Aunt) lived here from December 1981 until 1985, when owing to the expanding size of her family she moved on to a bigger house.

From 1985 John and Anne Sullivan lived here until 2009, when they retired to Eastbourne. Then the Brown's moved in. Really, not much to go on, and technically you should not share any of this information except on a need to know basis, but clearly the need is urgent, and if they asked neighbours they could piece it all together anyway. In fact you are really quite impressed by your detective work, and think PC Sykes and Dr Smith will be very impressed, and more so if you use your psychic talents to rid the house of the ghost!

Sarah Atkinson

Housing Officer 5

+1 sort out benefits and assistance for clients

+1 inspect physical state of property

+1 put clients at ease

+1 befriend noisy dogs

Psychic Sensitivity 13

Read Tea Leaves 15

Research Local History 15

Calm Down Local Residents 15

Know Estate Gossip 15

Daydream While Reading Romantic Novels 15

Play X Box Games Uncannily Well 15

Flaws

Overly Imaginative 5

Convinced She Is Psychic and Wont Shut Up About It 15

Married To Her Job 15

Part 3: Running the Story

HeroQuest 2 Mechanics

The Base Value for this scenario is 14: the Augment Value ditto 14. Every character has 3 Hero Points – not recorded on character sheets through lack of space, so make sure you mention them! Explaining mastery levels, simple contests, boosting results and expending Hero Points at the very start of the session usually helps I find, and I explain Extended Contests when one crops up, but you can explain it earlier – but I'd just explain there are more detailed mechanics will be explained when relevant.

23 Glebe Close, A Very Ordinary Home

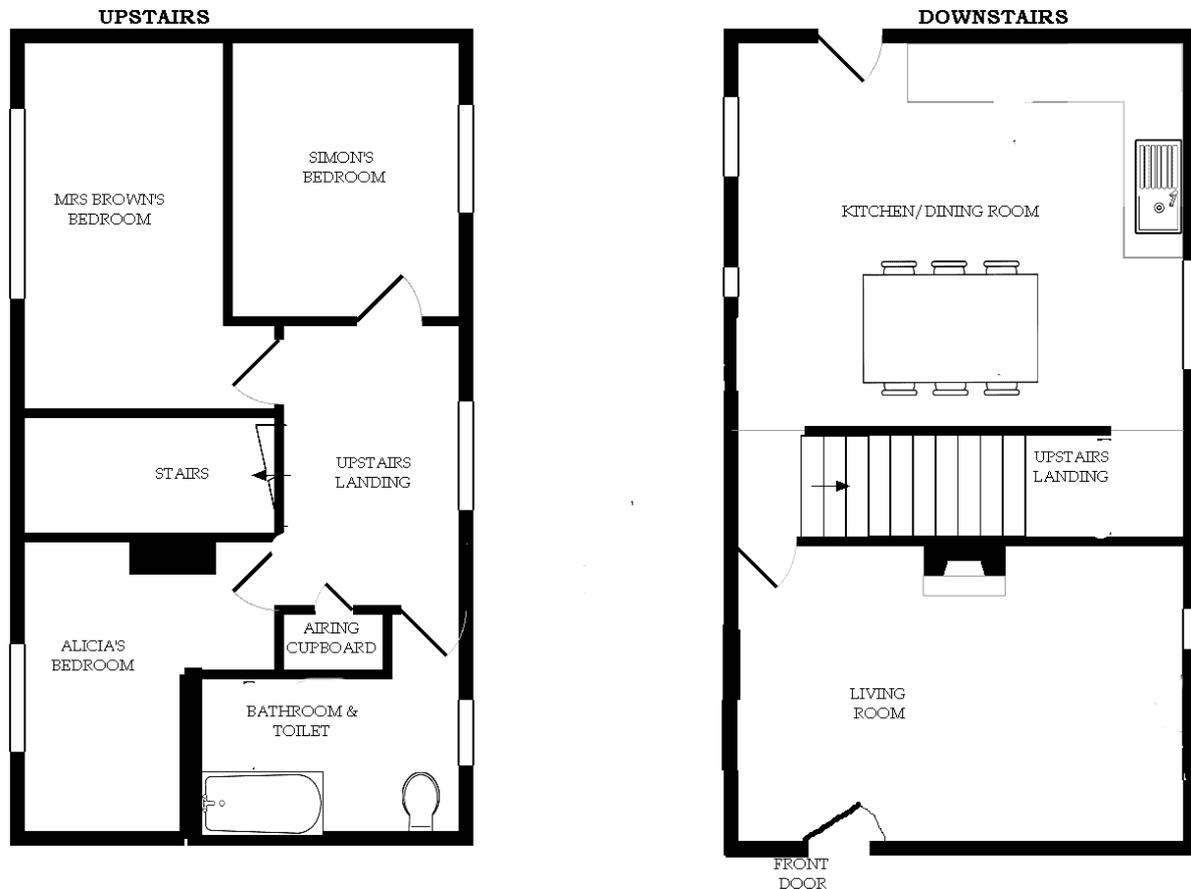
The game as written occurs in the fictional British town of Barchester, on a Council Estate (social housing project), with most of the action occurring in the Brown family residence at 23 Glebe Close. The houses on the estate were built in the 1954-57, and are generously sized three bedroom detached properties, with large back gardens. It is intended a rough plan of the house should be placed on the table in front of the players, and as the game begins the Browns take all present on a tour around the house (See Scene 2 below). The house is solidly built, of red brick, and while slightly in need of refurbishment there are no major structural issues unless the GM or players think of some and it adds to the story!

The house itself is something of a red herring, but because it provides the background for the events and interaction it is worth having a map, however crude or detailed so everyone can see what is where. A rough sketch of the floor plan follows on the next page.

It is possible to relocate the adventure to a North American or European setting (or elsewhere) easily enough – use find/replace to change all names, and redraw the house plan to suit local styles etc. If you decide to play semi-live action style walking around the rooms in character, clutching your dice, then that is fine too – just use whichever house you play at, but make sure you have all the residents consent to do so.

Part 4: The Haunting explains exactly what is going on and how the “spook” works. You may wish to skip ahead and read that now, or read through the scenes below to get a feel for the very loose structure of the narrative. Many scenes are optional, meaning they are notes for the GM to use if the players do the triggering event. Only four scenes, each with an associated time, are mandatory.

THE HOUSE.



Scene One – The Doorbell Rings

It's 8.30pm, and everyone is about to arrive. Still late evening outside, and a beautiful summer day of scorching heat has mellowed to a warm and pleasant evening. It will be light for another hour yet, and things have been quiet – perhaps the ghost has gone away, now the important visitors have been summoned? Alicia, Simon and Betty are in the living room and have 5 minutes in character before the first guests arrive, and the other characters will arrive 5 minutes apart – first PC Sykes, then Mrs Atkinson, and finally a few minutes late after getting lost on the estate, Dr. Smith. If you want you can summon them to the game table only as they arrive in character.

One of the family should open the door and greet each guest, and Bouncer the family dog will bark and leap up excitedly at each in turn, unless somehow controlled or vanished to the garden. The spaced arrivals are to give a few minutes for the characters to introduce themselves, and for the family to react, and it is entirely possible that Betty will think to offer them a drink. If she does, she may make an Easy test of her Notice Something Out of Place ability to realise a bottle of expensive brandy is missing from the drinks cabinet. Of course if they just ask for tea or coffee, that won't happen unless she looks there later for some reason. If anyone does accept a drink, make a note of it, and require them to pop to the loo later in the scenario. This is fun, because it means you can get their character

alone, preferably at a very tense moment.

Everyone should have had a chance to review their **character sheets** and **Player Handout 1** by this point. Tell Betty's character to describe the sitting room – mention the gas fire, the TV set, drinks cabinet, three piece suite, but tell her to describe the other furnishings and décor to everyone – and if she seems confused explain she should invent these details – it is her house after all! Once a quick description has been given, and everyone has had a chance to talk a little in character, move to Scene 2. There should be no phenomena at this point. If anyone tries to wander off, tell Betty it is best they stay together until she has given them a tour of the house. If the player can't come up with a description of the room, well you as GM must step in and do it, but it is more fun to have the player invent these details. Oh, and start recording **Spook Points** (explained later) now, you will need to keep score throughout the scenario as they are earned and spent by the “thing”.

The narrative point of this scene is letting the characters meet, and perhaps establishing some conflicts, personalities and setting up what is to come. Stress it's very light, very warm (the windows are open) and a lovely summer's day fading in to a balmy summer night. This scene should feel normal, domestic, cosy – until the characters start to get at each other, or the dogs excited yapping causes a problem.

Scene Two: A Tour of the House, around 9pm

Soon after everyone has arrived, and drinks or snacks have been served by Betty, she takes the other character on a tour of the house. You can just explain this to her, and again she gets to describe all the rooms, apart from Alicia's and Simon's bedrooms, which they describe in keeping with how they understand those characters. Encourage inventiveness.

The order of the tour really does not matter, and some characters may wander off, or not participate. This does not matter at all. Throughout the game you will have to switch between characters in different rooms, and get used to dealing with the fact they will very rarely all be present together. If two characters are trying to have a private conversation, tell them they can leave the table and talk a little way away if they wish to maintain the privacy of the discussion, but if voices become raised, to let you know as others in the house will hear. Also if the characters become upset, scared or argue, mention they should let you know. (You don't say why, but partly this so you can keep track of the **Spook Points** accrued).

It is likely that during the tour the locations where various of the phenomena described in **Player Handout One**. will be examined. Improvise details if the players don't, and answer questions as best you can, and encourage the players to add (and disagree) on details if they like. No one is entirely sure that Betty's account is completely accurate after all, not even Betty who compiled it. Remember the Ouija Board under Alicia's bed (if anyone looks there), and the secret stash – Alicia's player can let you know where that is hidden at some point after she describes her bedroom.

At 9.30pm the sun goes down, and bright beautiful stars appear in a clear indigo sky. It is a lovely night, and still warm enough to go out in a tee shirt.

*This scene is just scene setting, familiarising everyone with the layout of the house. From here on in scene are not numbered, because they do not occur in any particular order. Two scenes happen at certain times – remember **The Witching Hour** begins when Alicia*

goes to the churchyard at midnight, and **Trouble Shows Up** at 10.30pm regardless of other events

Play now proceeds as the characters actions dictate, with a few other possible scenes and two mandatory ones.

Scene: Trouble Shows Up, 10.30pm.

Regardless of how other scenes play out, at 10.30pm a problem develops. A large group of estate youths, curious adults and of course The Off License Gang show up outside the house, as unfortunately word has spread of the “haunting”. At first they are curious – just peeking at the windows, keeping a way a way, slightly embarrassed. At this stage the people inside will only notice if they look outside for some reason. By 10.45pm there are about fifty people, and children will start to come and ring the doorbell, and ask about the ghost, others will try and creep in to the back garden, and a few will start to take photos and shout “woo! Ghosties!!!” and similar inanities. If the crowd is not somehow disperses by 11.30pm there are 150 people present, and rowdier elements straight from the estate pub will vandalise cars, throw stones and try and muscle their way in to look for the ghost. By this point a call to Barchester Central Police station will have been made, and it will take an hour for the situation to be brought under control: PC Sykes can expect a severe reprimand in the morning for letting this occur on his patch

Such bizarre behaviour from the public may appear completely out of keeping to the genre – but unfortunately it has been a common factor in many purported hauntings from Borley Rectory before world War 2 through to several cases recently reported in the UK where near riots have broken out as sightseers gather to gawk, laugh and throw stuff in the hope of provoking the “ghosty”. This scene gives PC Sykes a huge chance to do something useful, because he understands community policing. The resistance will depend on how thoroughly and early he manages to disperse the crowds, but none of them want to be arrested or cautioned for something like this, which is a just a laugh and high spirits to them. A few people are genuinely curious though, and actually believe in the haunting, and some may even be frightened the ghost might come to their home!

Scene: The Witching Hour, Midnight

This is likely one of the very last scenes of the game, and only occurs if Alicia manages to get out of the house and make it to the graveyard at midnight. When she gets there the tombstone is indeed glowing in the moonlight, and you should describe how it seems to have an eerie luminescence (actually a quality of the minerals in it). The name on the stone is Arthur Jones, 1901 – 1985, and the grave is well maintained. Let Alicia perform her sacrifice, and enjoy the scene – but suddenly Sharona if still at liberty, and the rest of the Off License Gang leap out of the shadows, shouting names and hurling insults, and then run after her, planning to rough her up a bit. Alicia has of course been set up with the nonsense demon story, and her player may react freely, running home for help, leaping on them in fury, or just breaking down and crying as she realises they don't like her at all. Alicia realises at this point she has to rely on her mum and brother who love her, or so we might hope, but let the player decide how she is going to act now.

Optional Scene: Dr Smith/Atkinson Investigate

Remembering all that monitoring equipment Dr Smith has? Once you have read Part 4:

The Haunting, you will know more about how the spook works. If Dr Smith takes readings, they are fairly normal assuming he makes the ability tests and gets some kind of meaningful results (In real life the equipment would need calibrating, baseline readings etc and would take hours to set up, but Dr Smith is not aware of this, or that his results are scientifically meaningless. In fact though, if he succeeds, then measurements from radiation to EMF to gauss to whatever else he thinks of are normal, except for 5 minutes after a phenomena occurs, or in the immediate vicinity of the thing itself to (always to the left of and above Simon's head – see **Part 4: The Haunting**) -- where in the vicinity the readings spike all over the place, seemingly at random. No meaningful patterns can be detected in the data of whatever readings he chooses to take, but it should be clear something very odd is occurring, and the instrumentation going haywire (until the spook chooses to break it anyway).

Smith's motion detectors are tripped by anything larger than a cat moving through, unless the person entering is aware of them and can use some form of athletic ability to avoid the area covered by them.

In case you are wondering why the thing hovers above and to the left of Simon, it was simply from a line by T.C. Lethbridge, noted archaeologist and author on weird phenomena who wrote of something being “above and a bit to the left”, and I had to place it somewhere! :)

Mrs Atkinson's Psychic Sensitivity ability picks up vague “bad vibes” in exactly the same locations as Dr Smith's instruments if she succeeds. A Minor, Major or Complete Defeat should give her false information however as her over active imagination cuts in.

Optional Scene: Talk to the Good Doctor or Read the Tea Leaves!

More useful potentially is Dr Smith's ability as a clinical psychologist of considerable experience and repute “Assess Psychological State of Individual “ which he has at 8 \square . He is very skilled in this, but even at his skill level a spot diagnosis is difficult (in real life impossible) If he merely observes someone carefully for an half an hour or so, focussing on that individual exclusively, he can test against Nearly Impossible resistance. Ten minutes chat asking them questions, make it Very Hard. Five minutes with their cooperation, just Hard. If the person agrees to be analysed, and is trying to help it's Normal difficulty and it can be as quick as seems appropriate. Still, Smith won't work out much, and what he does will be things the “client” is trying to hide, because they are overly careful to avoid describing them... The GM can feed information as seems appropriate to help move the plot on, but here are some key points you can feed to Dr Smith if he thinks to employ the skill.

Also, Mrs Atkinson bizarrely CAN read tea leaves! She can gain one of the following pieces of information by reading the tea leaves from that persons cup and making a successful test of her “read tea leaves” ability. The information should be phrased in a more “psychic” way though... The biggest problem with this ability so there actually aren't any tea leaves in the house, only teabags, but she can split a tea bag and find some way to strain the tea – there is a teapot luckily, hardly ever used. Let the player improvise something is she decides to use the ability.

Simon is unnaturally calm about the poltergeist phenomena

Simon seems to be very, very interested in you for some reason.

Simon has unresolved bereavement issues about his father

Simon is a very imaginative, creative person, but feels deeply frustrated in some way

Simon is very worried about his mother

Simon reacts very badly to PC Sykes, but why is not clear

Simon appears to be distracted, and you suspect a girlfriend or something similar is on his mind.

Betty is clearly in love with PC Sykes

Betty has some unresolved issue with PC Sykes, and vice versa, and they are failing to communicate properly.

Betty's woes are to a large part financial not emotional.

Betty seeks approval from her peers more than is healthy.

PC Sykes is clearly in love with Betty

Mrs Atkinson is clearly completely convinced she has some special gift, and needs that belief to help her function with her difficult job.

Alicia is disturbed in a very real way, but appears mainly to be extremely angry at her mother.

Alicia has more than usual teen identity issues, and you feel she could be easily manipulated by peers.

Alicia appears to be extremely prone to fantasy and day dreams, and have a disconnect with reality, perhaps brought on by her frustration at her changed circumstances.



Optional Scene: The Séance

Mrs Atkinson is of course very keen to hold a séance, though the other characters may be less keen to participate. This has no game effect apart from being rather atmospheric, but something will happen if Simon is involved, as the “thing” gains three spook points immediately. It will cause some rather spectacular phenomena, but nothing of any real significance to resolving matters.

Optional Scene: The Ouija Board

If the characters find the Ouija board, or make one, they may decide to use it to try and communicate with the spirit. If Simon is involved, as the “thing” gains three spook points and must immediately spend at least one, perhaps shattering the glass tumbler and maybe cutting someone's hand. The “thing” will use this opportunity to blurt out embarrassing secrets (but only those known to Simon: it's knowledge is effectively limited to his, and what it can see and hear currently occurring – which is anything in the house. It does not remember conversations unless Simon does, not even for two minutes. Odd, but it is not human remember?

I should note at this point that playing with Ouija boards is not something I endorse or condone in real life – some people seem to be severely scared by these things.

Optional Scene: Meet the Neighbours

It is entirely possible that the neighbours, all tenants of Barchester housing Association, will be questioned by the characters going round to check Mrs Brown's testimony. It will require a Normal resistance test to get them to speak, using an appropriate ability, unless it is one of the family who comes over. They like Mrs Brown and don't want her to get in to any trouble.

They can confirm what she reported they witnessed in her account, and having heard odd noises uncharacteristic of the family. Mr and Mrs Singh are very scared, and worried the ghost might cross the driveway to their house – Reg Stephens from the other side does not take any of it seriously, and just keeps laughing which may raise the characters suspicions that he is somehow involved. Any loud screaming, the burglar alarm going off, or other loud noise will quickly cause all three neighbours to arrive at the door.



Part 4: The Haunting

For the GM: The Nature of the Haunting

Before we proceed it is best to discuss the nature of the haunting, and what is really going on in the case. It is assumed that by this point you have read through all the character sheets, including those who will be played as NPC's, if any. It is important to note that the rules given here are not official *HeroQuest 2* rules, but simply (fan) material to allow the GM to simulate this particular haunting in this scenario.

OK, so what is going on? Well the key to the haunting is the troubled family dynamics, and the incredible stresses the characters are under. For the purposes of the adventure the “thing” that is haunting them is a sort of psychic battery, that gains power from strong negative emotions, and which has attached itself to Simon.

Imagine it as an invisible football sized swirling vortex of 'something', that floats about a foot to the left of Simon, and a foot above his head. Whether it was manifested by his latent psi, is actually a non-human rudimentary intelligence, or is some kind of spirit does not really matter, though it may fascinate the players, and the GM can make a decision as to the truth if the players find a cunning way to test these hypotheses. `Appendix 1 contains some material on theories of the poltergeist for those interested in developing a more elaborate idea as to the cause of the entity – here we shall concentrate on how it functions.

In essence however, some parapsychologists have speculated that when highly creative individuals find themselves trapped in circumstances with few emotional outlets, they experience a sort of “nervous breakdown outside the head”, an *exteriorization* of inner conflicts. While the lay public associates these with adolescent girls, people of any age or gender seem to have been identified as the focus of these bizarre haunts – a **poltergeist agent**. Here it is Simon who is the agent – and it is Simon who is haunted, not the house.

The spook will pretend to be whoever the people present believe it to be. To Alicia it claims to be Vesparaso, to Simon Arthur, and to Mrs Atkinson whoever she has settled on as the identity of the ghost, and so forth. It makes a particular enemy of anyone who is nasty to Simon, and if Dr Smith did tell Simon he could no longer see Mildred, the “thing” will go all out to kill Dr Smith, by whatever means necessary, ignoring all other targets and abandoning all subtlety.

OK, so how does the GM use the spook? It has a pool of powers, and **Spook Points** which are kept in the **Spook Pool**, and used to power these events throughout the night. The GM secretly keeps track of the size of the Spook Pool, and adds points when certain things happen, and spends points to create phenomena.

POLTERGEIST POWERS

Whenever a poltergeist power manifests in the same room as the dog, the dog reacts strongly – to a one point phenomena by barking, and raising it's hackles, to a two point phenomena by laying on the floor growling and snapping at non-family members who approach it, and by a three point phenomena by fleeing in to the garden, refusing to re-enter the house until calmed, and possibly by biting any non-family member who tries to

restrain it (A Normal Difficulty attack) while howling horribly.

The “thing” begins the game with 5 Spook Points in the Spook Pool. The characters will inadvertently strengthen this by their actions throughout the night. It can reach any level and is not limited to 5, that is simply the starting value.

FOR ONE SPOOK POINT

- **create strange scratching noises on wall or object**
- **create faint tapping noises on wall or object**
- **hurl up to 5 small items no larger than a matchbox through the air; one at a time in few minutes, but all must be within twenty feet of Simon when the power is activated, but not necessarily when they 'take flight'. They strike with great force, and are Hard physical attacks to resist. They can go round corners, hover, and otherwise violate the laws of physics.**
- **cause a sudden significant temperature drop in a room**
- **move something by sliding an object up to the size of a dining room chair up to six feet.**
- **Stack a series of objects no larger than a large book in odd and disturbing ways.**
- **Make a glass object vibrate then shatter; bottles vases and light bulbs for example.**
- **Hold a door or window firmly closed with Very Hard resistance for up to five minutes.**
- **Trip the electrics out, requiring the fusebox (by the front door) to be reset.**
- **Ring the doorbell, or phone, or someone's mobile. No number is registered.**
- **Create a horrendous, sickening smell of sweet decay like a rotting corpse. A Test will be needed to enter that room for 15 minutes, unless some method is used to alleviate the problem.**
- **Push a Ouija board glass for 5 minutes, giving messages to cause more upset, but only if someone is touching the glass.**
- **Make the pipes vibrate throughout house, and when the water is turned on the water runs red for a minute– it's just rust but it looks like blood unless examined.**
- **Bang the toilet seat up and down.**
- **Turn an electrical item such as the cooker, TV, toaster, PC, etc on or off.**

FOR TWO SPOOK POINTS

- **hurl up to 3 larger items no bigger than a cubic foot through the air; one at a time in few minutes, but all must be within twenty feet of Simon when the power is activated, but not necessarily when they 'take flight'. They strike with great force, and are Very Hard physical attacks to resist. They can go**

round corners, hover, and otherwise violate the laws of physics.

- Permanently break an electrical item which inexplicably blows up
- Leave a short voice message on an answerphone or tape recorder.
- Cause the whole house to become icy cold
- Rearrange bed sheets and pillows in to a weird simulacra of human figures, shaped like people present or anything else.
- Move large items of furniture silently around, in a room where no observer is present.
- Set off the burglar alarm, bringing neighbours running.
- Turn the taps on or off – usually having placed the plug in the bath first to cause a flood
- Cause an object no larger than a brick anywhere in the house to 'teleport' somewhere else.
- Shove someone hard, so they might fall over or down the stairs (This is a Normal Difficulty attack)
- Create an odd 'metallic' voice that can 'say' a short sentence, something known to Simon but embarrassing or hurtful loudly from nowhere. It uses this to reveal secrets and cause trouble. The voice is odd, alien sounding.

FOR THREE SPOOK POINTS

These phenomena are very costly and should be used only to build a climactic scene, or when the Spook Pool is very full.

- Shove someone very hard, so they might crash in to a wall, another person over or badly down the stairs (This is a Hard Difficulty attack to resist)
- Create a realistic voice, mimicking someone present, that can 'say' a short sentence, something known to Simon but embarrassing or hurtful. It is loud enough to be heard throughout the house, but comes from nowhere. It uses this power to reveal secrets and cause trouble. The voice is indistinguishable from the person mimicked. It can also mimic Sharona and Mildred's voices and can use this power to make phone calls.
- Send a text (SMS) message with no known reply address or caller information to someone's mobile.
- Cause an apparition to appear for a few seconds in any 'ghostly' or 'demonic' form it chooses. Can mimic Arthur or Vesparaso, or something worse still.
- Cause an apparition to appear for a few seconds that appears to be a real person present, or Sharona or Mildred. Uses this power to inflict maximum distress.
- Causes all loose objects in a room to fly in to the air and swirl in a great vortex, striking all present and damaging them unless they manage to flee (AT Normal Resistance).
- If Simon goes out on to the street, silently turn Dr. Smith's BMW on to its roof, doing no damage to the car but leaving it upside down.
- Cause rocks to strike the house for ten minutes, seemingly coming from across the street somewhere, and breaking windows and smashing the cars outside.

- **Causes rocks to rain through the ceiling of a room, but they do not strike anyone in the room, for up to ten minutes: one rock at a time, seemingly passing through the ceiling. The rocks are from the local area.**
- **Make hideous terrifying images appear in windows, mirrors etc.**
- **Cause a minor fire to break out in a room which will require significant efforts to put out.**
- **Scrawl a message of up to ten words on a wall, using paint, lipstick, pencils etc. from the room, but only if the room is currently unoccupied.**

These effects are not subtle, and only manifest when Simon is in the house, though he does not need (unless specified) to be in the immediate vicinity. All of the above powers are based upon phenomena from 'real' purported poltergeists, with the exception of the car turning upside down, which is just in the tradition of the phenomena.

The GM should use their Spook Points wisely – the thing is out to scare the characters, not to kill them, or to create a Hollywood spectacular. It is better to have phenomena occur in the early stages of the game, and perhaps throughout, where no one can witness it, but the effects are discovered later in play when someone enters the room, notices they have an answerphone message, or tries to leave a room and finds the door locked.

You may wonder why bother with Spook Points – why not just craft events to create maximum suspense and chills? The mechanic is designed to simulate an entity that can be understood, and be studied. The players may attempt to communicate with it in various ways, and may eventually realise it is trying to cause maximum distress. They may realise the best way to get rid of it is to resolve issues peacefully, and create a “happy ending”. (See later). But largely, a scenario where the spook has unlimited powers and can't be defined or challenged is ultimately a dull scenario, if the characters can be no more than passive victims. There is limited scope for research, so the scenario is about the people – and the spook is a reflection of their problems. I therefore offer these mechanics. Disregard them if you wish, but do try to stick to the (limited) range of effects above for 'authenticity', whatever that may mean in this context. :)

Anyway, as GM you will soon start to run short of spook points. So here is how you replenish the Spook Pool – remember, there is no maximum size, but it is a good principle to spend points every time it reaches size 8 or higher, fairly soon afterwards, to help the players detect the pattern, **and you must spend at least one point immediately any 3 point gain is triggered, as something spooky interrupts the cause of the point gain.** This rule allows the players to spot the connection between distress and the spook.

Ways to Gain Spook Points

- **Whenever a character is insulted or emotionally hurt by another, +1 point**
- **Whenever a character becomes annoyed +1 point**
- **Whenever a character becomes very scared and acts it +1 point**
- **Whenever someone shouts at another character +2 points**
- **Whenever someone is moderately embarrassed +2 points**
- **Whenever there is strong emotion, such as discussion of Mike's death which appears to upset a character, +2 points**

- **Whenever the tension becomes very strong or people are genuinely frightened +2 points**
- **Whenever a character instigates a violent or destructive act +3 points – but spend at least one point immediately to cause a phenomena.**
- **Whenever someone has a secret they desperately want to hide revealed not by their own choice, +3 points, but spend at least one point immediately to cause a phenomena.**
- **If a character completely melts down emotionally in some way, +3 points but spend at least one point immediately to cause a phenomena.**
- **If the characters hold a séance or Ouija board session, with Simon participating, +3 points but spend at least one point immediately to cause a phenomena.**

The “thing” will use it's powers to cause the maximum distress it can. However, Simon can never give the Spook Points to the “thing”, and is never effected in anyway beyond curiosity by it's antics, as noted on his sheet. This should eventually give the players the hint Simon is somehow the focus of events. If they send him from the house, all hauntings stop, instead manifesting wherever he is. Oh, and if he is with Mildred – no haunting. He is happy then! (See the section “Ghostbusters!” below)

So these are the mechanics for the haunting: it is up to you as GM to craft an effective story, maintain player interest and set the pacing. If someone is becoming less involved, try throwing some phenomena they can witness or uncover. Try to make sure that everyone gets equal “screen time” - don't let very loud or assertive players push the wallflowers out, but recognise that some players may be happy planning, researching, and trying to figure stuff out. This scenario is very open in terms of how it plays out, and ultimately how good a time your players have will come down to your skills as a GM. A good GM can have fun with even the worst scenario (which I hope this is not, as author). It is important to let the players have some creative control – follow the HeroQuest 2 advice for GM's, and say “yes!” as much as possible for maximum game fun.

Ghostbusters! Resolving the Scenario

Any good story, and most good games need some kind of satisfying ending and “win condition”, even if it is a temporary or arbitrary one. In most *HeroQuest 2* games the story can go on week after week with the same characters, but in this case we want to wrap to a satisfying conclusion after just a few hours of play. The obvious “win” here is if the players manage to get rid of the ghost, and happily that requires a lot of the other issues facing the family to be dealt with, as they are what has allowed the poltergeist manifestation in the first place.

So how do they get rid of the ghost? Well, if peace reigns, everyone is calm and happy, and stops worrying, the ghost will run out of Spook Points and not get any more. It's not a very satisfying ending though if they all go home, and the story just abruptly ends.

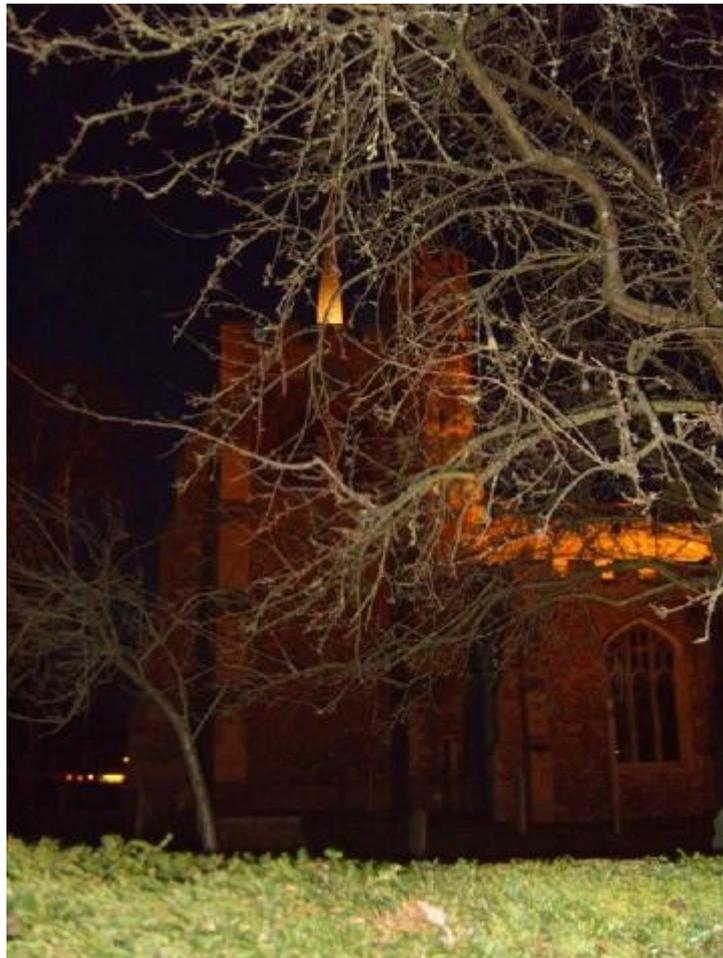
In the short term you can shout at the ghost if you have an appropriate ability (or use the default of 6) against Normal resistance. If anyone does that, there will be 15 minutes of peace before it manifests again, and it loses a Spook Point or more depending on the level of Success. (A critical success would cost it 5 points, and banish it from the house for an hour at least).

Ultimately, the only effective way is sort the family out, and in particular Simon. Simon must somehow get the full approval of Dr Smith to see his daughter Mildred, and a promise he and Mildred can have some sort of future together, either by her going to Barchester Uni, or Simon moving to Oxford with her.. He also needs to get his mother some income and support in dealing with Alicia, things Mrs Atkinson can help with. He does not care about PC Sykes, but f he understands why he reacts badly to him then he can overcome it. So sort Simon out, and you cure your spook. The problem is the players have to realise that is the solution, and not become hung up on Arthur or Vesparaso as the real cause of events...

OK, the ending is not as dramatic as the house exploding as in a Hollywood blockbuster, but hopefully it is more satisfying at another level. If the ghost does get resolved, everything feel different, better, and Simon becomes much more animated and emotionally normal thereafter...

I hope you enjoy the scenario, and if you do run it drop me a line at chrisjensenromer@hotmail.com to let me know how it goes. If encouraged by feedback and (hopefully constructive) criticism I may one day write another.

CJ, May 2012.



Appendix 1. ON POLTERGEISTS

Here follows a quick overview of poltergeist theory, and if you have plenty of time before running the game then you could give it to the player of Dr Samuel Smith so they can have a look, and use it for colour in their “investigation”. It is traditional for parapsychologists to reference earlier cases and authors after all, like the “Philadelphia Mass Turbulence of 1957”., “symmetrical book stacking” or what they just read in *Tobin's Spirit Guide*. :)

More seriously, Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis sounds really cool, even if it does not mean much. For the incredibly dedicated player my occasionally updated blog **Polterwotsit** (<http://polterwotsit.wordpress.com/>) has more on the subject . You don't actually need to read this at all, and neither does Dr Smith's player, but if this sort of thing amuses, feel free to use it and make it available to them – just make sure you stress it's not homework and they don't have to read or use it.

Poltergeist Theory: A Very Brief Introduction

Introduction

The term **poltergeist** derives from an old German word which means ‘noisy ghost’ or ‘spirit’. Although this term is now rarely used in Germany it has become a common term in English. ('Polter' meaning to make a noise was also a 19th century Suffolk dialect term, probably adopted from the Dutch; so I am not sure if the words etymology may not be English -- but as far as I am ware the first usage in English was Catherine Crowe's *The Night Side of Nature*, published in 1848. The term 'hobgoblin' or just plain 'ghost' was in common usage before this.)

This term suggests that poltergeist activity is caused by the spirit of a deceased person; however there are four main distinct hypotheses for what causes poltergeist activity. This essay will begin by looking the common features of poltergeist activity and then will briefly describe two well known poltergeist cases; Enfield (Playfair & Grosse 1977) and Cardiff (Fontana 1993). It will then look at the first two theories of what poltergeist activity is, these being **fraud** and **misinterpretation of natural phenomena**. The second two theories; the **Entity Hypothesis** and **Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (RSPK)** will then be discussed as theories of poltergeists.

It will be argued that fraud and the misinterpretation of natural events may be able to explain a few cases of poltergeist activity but certainly cannot explain the majority of them, especially cases like Enfield and Cardiff. It will also be argued that there appears to be evidence for both the Spirit Hypothesis and RSPK in some cases of poltergeist activity so rather than two separate theories a more appropriate theory may be a combination of the two.

When purportedly paranormal activity is experienced in a house or other type of building this activity will be considered to be either **place-centred** or **person centred**.

The Symptoms of the Poltergeist

If the activity is **place-centred** this means that the activity is linked to the building; the occupants of the property can change and the activity will continue. This would usually be called a **haunting** but may be classed by some as a poltergeist outbreak.

If the activity is **person-centred** this means the activity appears to be linked to a person and will follow this person to different properties; this is typical of poltergeist activity. The person that the poltergeist activity is linked to is known as the focus and it has been found that the focus is often a young adolescent around the age of puberty who may be facing personal turmoil of some kind (Irwin, 2004; 158).

There are several different types of activity ("symptoms") associated with poltergeists which include the movement of objects, noises, bite and scratch marks appearing on people, and water inundations (Gauld & Cornell, 1979). One of the most common types of activity is the movement of objects which can include small objects such as keys, ornaments and cutlery and the movement of much larger objects such as wardrobes, beds and tables. [Called SOD, an acronym for **Small Object Displacement** - blame the 'sodding' poltergeist!]

Gauld and Cornell found that of all the poltergeist cases they looked at, 64% featured the movement of small objects and 36% featured the movement of larger objects. Another common type of activity is noises which can include knocking, banging and scratching sounds. Gauld and Cornell found that noises featured in about 50% of the cases they sampled. 15% of these cases featured the appearance of scratches or bite mark appearing on people's bodies and the outbreak of numerous small fires featured in about 11% of cases, with some of these fires featuring objects that would normally seem to be incombustible. Finally about 5% of these cases featured water inundations, which may include the unexplainable appearance of puddles of water. (CJ : Gauld and Cornell's book remains the classic study, [well worth acquiring](#)). Another common feature is that most poltergeist outbreaks tend to be brief, lasting around two weeks to two months although some cases have been found to have lasted for more than a year (Irwin, 1994; 154).

The Enfield Poltergeist

One of the most famous British poltergeist cases is that of the Enfield Poltergeist ([Playfair, 1980](#)). The activity at Enfield started on 31st August 1977 and lasted over a year, finally ending around the beginning of 1979. The family who lived in the house at the time included Mrs Harper, Rose aged 13, Janet aged 11, Pete aged 10 and Jimmy aged 7. The activity began when Pete and Janet reported that their beds were shaking, this was followed by shuffling sounds and knocking and then a heavy chest of drawers slid out of the bedroom on its own. Activity experienced at Enfield included the movement of furniture and other objects (large and small), knocking, and the poltergeist developing a voice, all of which seemed to focus around Janet. Many other people witnessed the activity at Enfield including the Harpers neighbours, the police, reporters and different types of investigators. (The case has been much discussed, and it must be noted that a minority group of the Society for Psychical Research (www.spr.ac.uk) investigators did not believe it to be of paranormal origin – a position Maurice Grosse and Guy Lyon Playfair heartily contest.)

The Cardiff Responsive Poltergeist

Another well known British poltergeist case is the Cardiff poltergeist which was investigated by David Fontana over a period of two years from June 1989 to early 1992 (Fontana, 2006; 64-80). This case involved mostly stone throwing and some movement of objects in a lawnmower repair shop and adjoining garden accessory shop. As well as the owner John, four other middle-aged people were closely involved with the case; Pat John's wife, Paul Pat's brother, Paul's wife and a business associate who worked with John in the workshop. Activity was also witnessed by visiting salesman and acquaintances of John and Pat's family. We will refer back to both these classic modern cases in the following discussion.

Theories of the Poltergeist

There are four main theories for what causes poltergeist activity. These are **fraud**, **misinterpretation of natural causes**, **The Spirit Hypothesis** and Subconscious Psychokinesis or **Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (RSPK)**. Each of these theories will be addressed in turn.

The first of these theories, that is fraud, holds that poltergeist activity is simply childish pranks (Irwin, 2004; 156) or deliberate hoaxing. When you consider that poltergeist activity is often associated with adolescent children it would suggest that children playing tricks may be a possible explanation, however if you actually look at some of the activity supposedly experienced if accurately reported fraud cannot account for this.

In the Enfield case one occurrence particularly astounded the family and investigators (Playfair, 2004; 66-67). In the bedroom where the family was sleeping there was a gas fire that was cemented into the brickwork of the building. One morning while the family were still in bed there was a violent shaking sound that caused panic in the bedroom.

When Playfair reached the room he discovered that the gas fire had been wrenched from the wall, it was still attached to the half-inch pipe that connected it to the mains but this was now bent at a 32 degree angle. When the investigators went to dismantle the gas fire they found it hard to move due to the weight of it. It is therefore hard to believe that this kind of activity can be faked in any way; it would not be possible for Mrs Harper or any of the children present in the room to wrench out a gas fire that is concreted into the wall.

On another occasion a researcher called David Robertson was experimenting with trying to get Janet to levitate (which she claimed to have done before) by bouncing on the bed.

On one attempt Janet exclaimed 'I been through the wall' meaning she had passed through the wall into the bedroom of the house next door. To test whether Janet may have actually passed through solid matter David gave her a large red cushion from the living room and asked the poltergeist to make it disappear. Before he had even left the room Janet called out and the cushion had disappeared.

Janet said she had thrown it at the closed window to see what would happen and it had gone through and gone onto the roof. Playfair tried to get the cushion on to the roof to see if this could be done. He found to begin with that the window was hard to get open and then he had to lean out dangerously far and reach up as far as he could to get the cushion on the roof. He did manage this but nearly fell out of the window doing this. In the amount of time Janet had before calling out and taking into account Janet's size compared to a

grown man it is inconceivable that Janet would have been able to open the window and get the cushion onto the roof.

Fraud and Misinterpretation

While some poltergeist cases can be explained by fraud, Gauld and Cornell found that 8% of the 500 cases they looked at involved total or partial trickery, this certainly cannot explain the majority of cases, especially those featuring activity that is currently beyond known human capabilities. A stronger possibility is that poltergeist activity is misinterpretation of natural events. Whereas the fraud theory states that poltergeist activity is deliberately faked this theory states that it is genuine misinterpretation.

This means that noises or movement of objects is caused by vibrations from small earthquakes, the movement of water through underground streams or subsidence (GW Lambert, 1956). Cornell and Gauld looked at whether these natural events would be able to produce the kind of object movement featured in poltergeist cases by measuring the vibrations needed to produce this movement and comparing this to the vibrations produced by these events.

They looked at the movement of an object in contact with a wall 6ft above the ground which is thrown a distance of 6ft and 9ft, an object in contact with a wall 3ft above the ground which is thrown 6ft and 9ft, a stone being thrown from the floor of a room to a ceiling 12ft high and a teacup flying from a table. They found that the vibrations produced by natural events were far too weak to produce the sort of object movement under consideration and in fact an earthquake would substantially damage a building before this type of movement could be produced. Therefore it would be obvious that this type of movement was being caused by natural events because anybody in the building would be able to feel the earth movement and the building may well fall down around them.

As well as not being able to explain the sort of movement considered above these natural events will not be able to explain other activity such as water inundations, fires, apports and the substantial movement of much large objects such as tables being overturned.

The Entity Hypothesis

The Entity Hypothesis which states that poltergeist activity is caused by an entity, possibly the spirit of a deceased person. This theory appears suitable to explain poltergeist cases that are place-centred, as the activity is not linked to a particular person, and those that seem to display a level of intelligence. This would appear to be the best theory to explain the Cardiff poltergeist.

Towards the end of the activity one of the people most closely involved with the case started to see an apparition of a young boy within the workshop, therefore it may be assumed that this was an apparition of the spirit that was causing the stone throwing activity. The activity at Cardiff also showed evidence of intelligence. Sometimes after unlocking the premises and entering the kitchen they would find that there had been attempts to lay out cutlery on the table as if ready for a meal. One day John decided to test whether somebody in the workshop was responsible and so after closing they sat with their hands visible on the counter and the stone throwing continued.

A suggestion was made to request for certain tools to be bought to them. Each time they

requested a tool this appeared in front of them appearing to drop down from the ceiling and John commented he would not have been able to find the tool that quickly himself in the workshop. A common feature of poltergeist phenomenon is that when objects move they appear to travel as if being carried; they appear to be lifted, carried in a straight line and then are placed down again or drop straight down as if they have been released.

The stone throwing in the Cardiff case does not appear to follow this type of movement, however one day John placed an object on the far side of the workshop and attempted to hit it with stones. After unsuccessfully being able to hit the object John called out for Pete to hit it which he immediately did. Therefore although the stones in the workshop appear to be thrown and not carried Pete was able to accurately hit an object that Fontana and John were unable to hit. It appears that Pete would attempt to be helpful, was able to respond intelligently to requests and would join in games and be able to beat the people in the workshop. As will be discussed shortly this level of intelligence would appear unlikely if RSPK is responsible for poltergeist activity.

Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (RSPK)

Those that do not believe in life after death or the existence of spirits or that just do not believe that spirits are responsible for poltergeist activity may instead support the theory of Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (RSPK). The theory of RSPK says that poltergeist activity is the result of the unconscious use of psychokinesis (PK) as a way of releasing psychological tension (Irwin, 1994; 158).

Psychokinesis means 'movement by the mind' and involves the movement or alteration of an object without any direct contact with the object (Irwin, 1994; 6). The theory of RSPK supports a claimed common factor in poltergeist activity, which is that a child around the age of puberty is usually the focus of the activity. Around this age children may experience a lot of psychological tension because their bodies are changing and they are facing become an adult and if this tension builds and this cannot be released through normal means this may result in a psychological release of PK. This release of PK may result in the movement of objects or other possible effects around the focus.

Returning to Enfield at first Janet appears to be the focus of the poltergeist activity and indeed she reached puberty and started her periods during the outbreak. However a lot of factors in this case also appear to suggest that the activity may have been caused by a spirit. The poltergeist developed a voice, which appeared to be linked to Janet as it would only speak when nobody was watching her, however the voice claimed to have lived in the house and to have died downstairs in a chair. Later when Janet was sent away from the house, although some activity did follow her activity also still continued at the house and while Janet was away an apparition of a man was seen in the living room.

It appears that although RSPK may explain some aspects of poltergeist activity such as the association with adolescents around the age of puberty that the activity seems to focus around this may not be able to account for other aspects of poltergeist activity. Very little is known about what PK actually is and even less is known about how to try and control it.

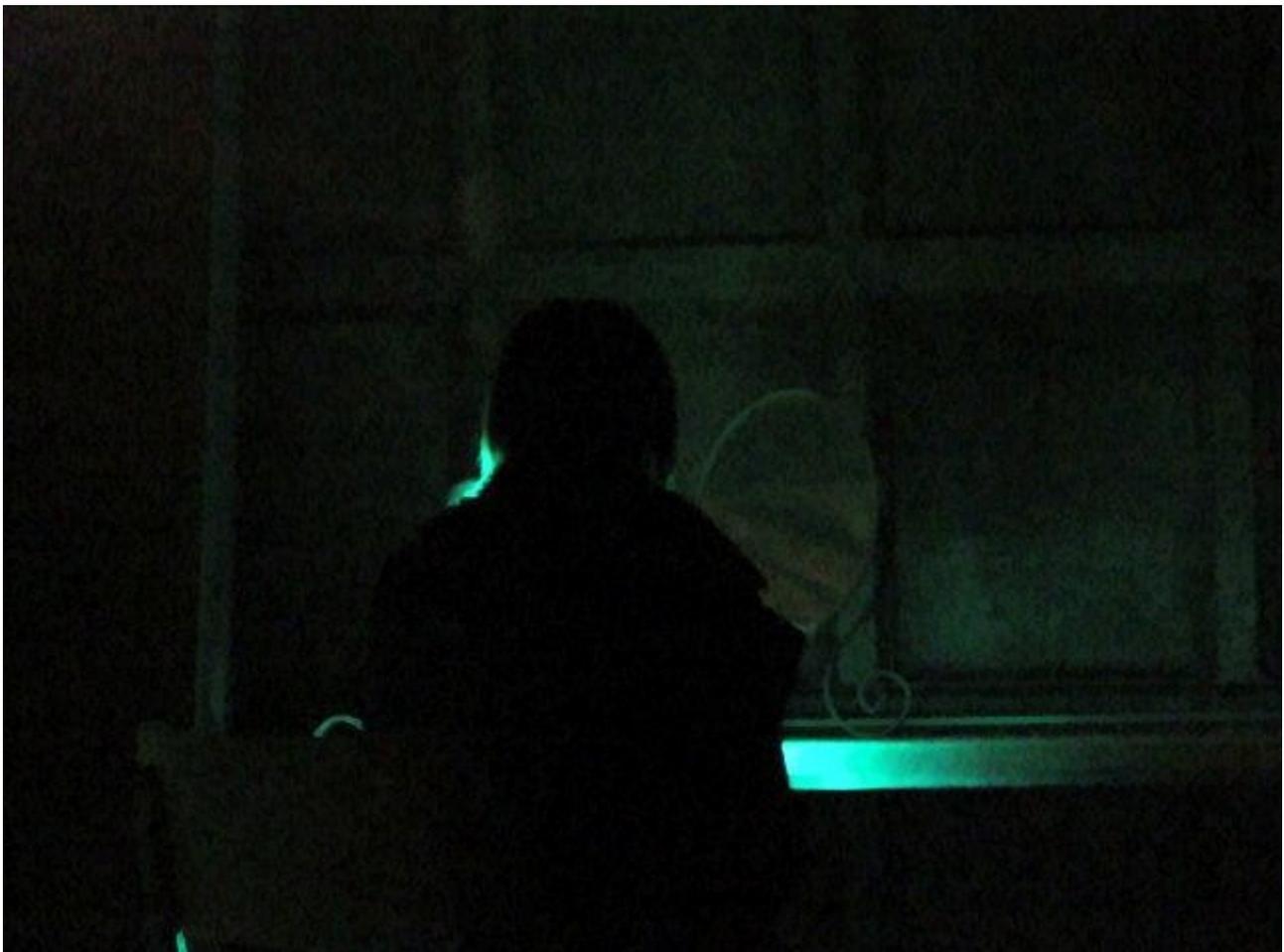
As mentioned previously a common feature of poltergeist activity is that when objects move they appear to be lifted and carried; would it be possible for an object to be moved in such a controlled way by unconscious PK.

Unfortunately not enough is known about PK (or if it even exists) to be able to say whether this would be possible or not, although it appears if the PK involved is unconscious it would not be possible for it to be that controlled. Would this unconscious

PK also be strong enough to move larger objects such as the fireplace that was wrenched from the wall in Enfield and could this explain other activity such as fires and water inundations. It appears that trying to explain poltergeist activity with RSPK is currently using one unexplained phenomenon to try and explain another unexplained phenomenon.

Combined Approaches

One suitable explanation may be a combination of the two theories. It may be that spirits are responsible for poltergeist activity but the build up of tension within adolescents provides useful energy for the poltergeist to use and therefore they become the focus of the activity. The existence of a spirit causing the activity would explain the intelligent nature of the activity when at first it would appear that the activity is originating from the focus as subconscious and probably uncontrollable PK.



HANDOUT 1: MRS BROWN'S ACCOUNT

The following account has been written by Mrs Brown, and photocopied and faxed to Mrs Atkinson and Dr Smith. It explains recent events in terms of what exactly has occurred so far with the 'ghost'. Alicia and Simon also have copies, which Mrs Brown gave them to check through for accuracy, though Alicia never bothered. Mrs Brown admits she is not entirely certain about times and details, but it may help you grasp what has happened so far she hopes.

Tuesday 8th - about 9pm --Odd feeling - house very cold. Alicia was in her room when I heard loud banging noises. Ran in, to find her laying on bed watching TV. She said not heard anything. Simon came out - he heard it. Just then heard toilet flush - thought Sharona had sneaked in. Waited outside, when no one came out opened door and it was empty. Bouncer (our dog) started to howl. Then banging from back door. Ran downstairs. No one there. Gave up trying to figure it out and watched TV.

Wednesday 9th - told Tom (PC Sykes) about last night. He said Off License Gang playing around probably. Simon called to say that someone had smashed the glass coffee table. I told him not to worry about it - I thought one of his temper tantrums, which can be terrifying, but he is a good kid and not had a bad one for years. Then he called to say mugs smashing in kitchen, and he had to go to work. Alicia came in after school to find Bouncer (dog) cowering in terror, and he bolted straight out passed her as she came in. She said smelt something awful in Kitchen, and went straight out after dog and threw up then went over to a friends house and stayed there till after I'm home. I get in at 6pm, to find kitchen trashed, teapot on top of kettle on top of kitchen towel roll, all balanced precariously, and dog refusing to come in. Simon stayed out after work, but said when he came home he could not open the front door - lock turned, but door would not open, as if someone holding shut from inside. He gave up and went round the back.

Thursday 10th Everything normal,

Friday 11th At 9pm Alicia starts to shout what sounds like Spanish in her bedroom. I go upstairs, and suddenly hear her calling me (she shouted "Betty!" twice) from the bottom of the stairs, so I run back down, and she

slams the living room door in my face. (I did not see her, but I clearly heard her voice). As I'm shouting at her through the door, she comes out of her bedroom, and starts laughing at me! There is no way she could have been in both places. She tells me she did not shout anything at all, heard nothing, and that I'm going nuts. I sort of believed her actually. It does feel like I'm going nuts.

Saturday 12th I was at work because Tom called me in, but Simon was home till 4pm and says nothing happened. Mrs Singh (neighbour) called Police Station at 3.45pm reporting sounds of crashing and shouting from our house, then everything went quiet suddenly. I found a tool box that had belonged to Mike upended in my bedroom, tools everywhere. I swear it was in the attic before. I put it back in the attic. I apologised to Mrs Singh who was lovely, but told me that Simon left the house AFTER all the commotion.

Sunday 13th Simon alone home while I'm at shops, and Alicia said she heard him swearing at someone downstairs, telling them to get lost with very crude language. She goes down thinking Sharon has come down, but Simon just snaps at her and leaves house. As he walks out a walnut from the nuts in the dish on the dining table lifts in to the air and flies at her, striking her on the head and giving her a nasty bruise. She ran out and found me at the supermarket. When we got home the sofa was upside down, and the dog was shut in the bathroom. I phone Mrs Atkinson on the emergency number in a panic wanting to be rehoused.

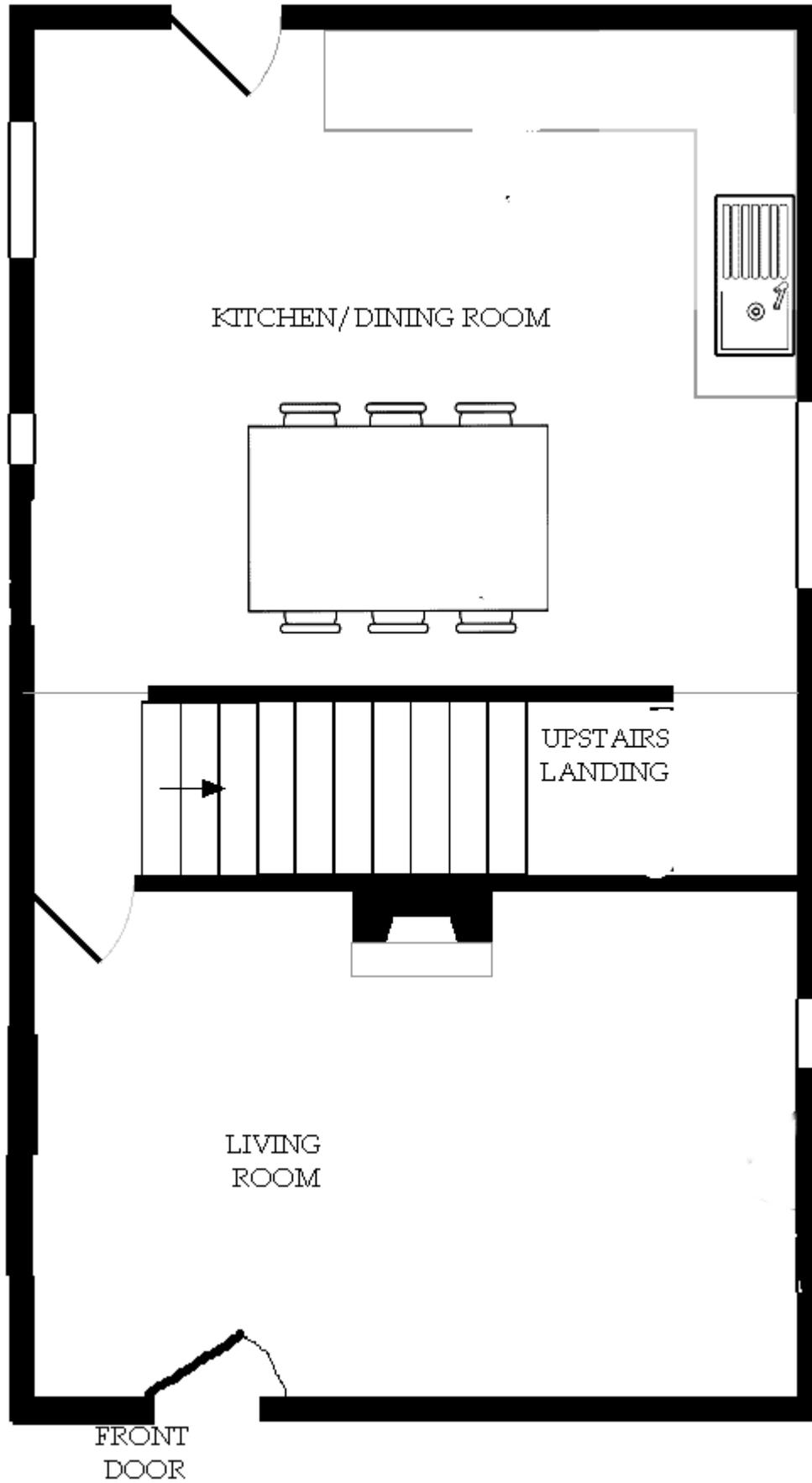
Monday 14th A quiet day. Simon and Alicia both out, but I was home and nothing happened until late at night after we had all gone to bed, when there was a loud tapping noise, and what sounded like fainter answering knocks. Got up and found the single word ARTHUR painted in bright red letters on the bathroom door. The paint was still wet. The writing was a real scrawl. Simon got up and looked at it, but just shrugged and went straight back to bed. Alicia started laughing. I had a cup of tea, and Mr Stephens from next door (no 21 - Mrs Singh is no. 25) came round to ask us to stop banging on the walls so loudly. While we were talking on the doorstep I was shoved hard from behind, and fell on top of him. Luckily

he saw the funny side of it, but he did come in and have a look round. He suggested an airlock in the pipes and said I needed a plumber, but I told him about the ghost. He just laughed.

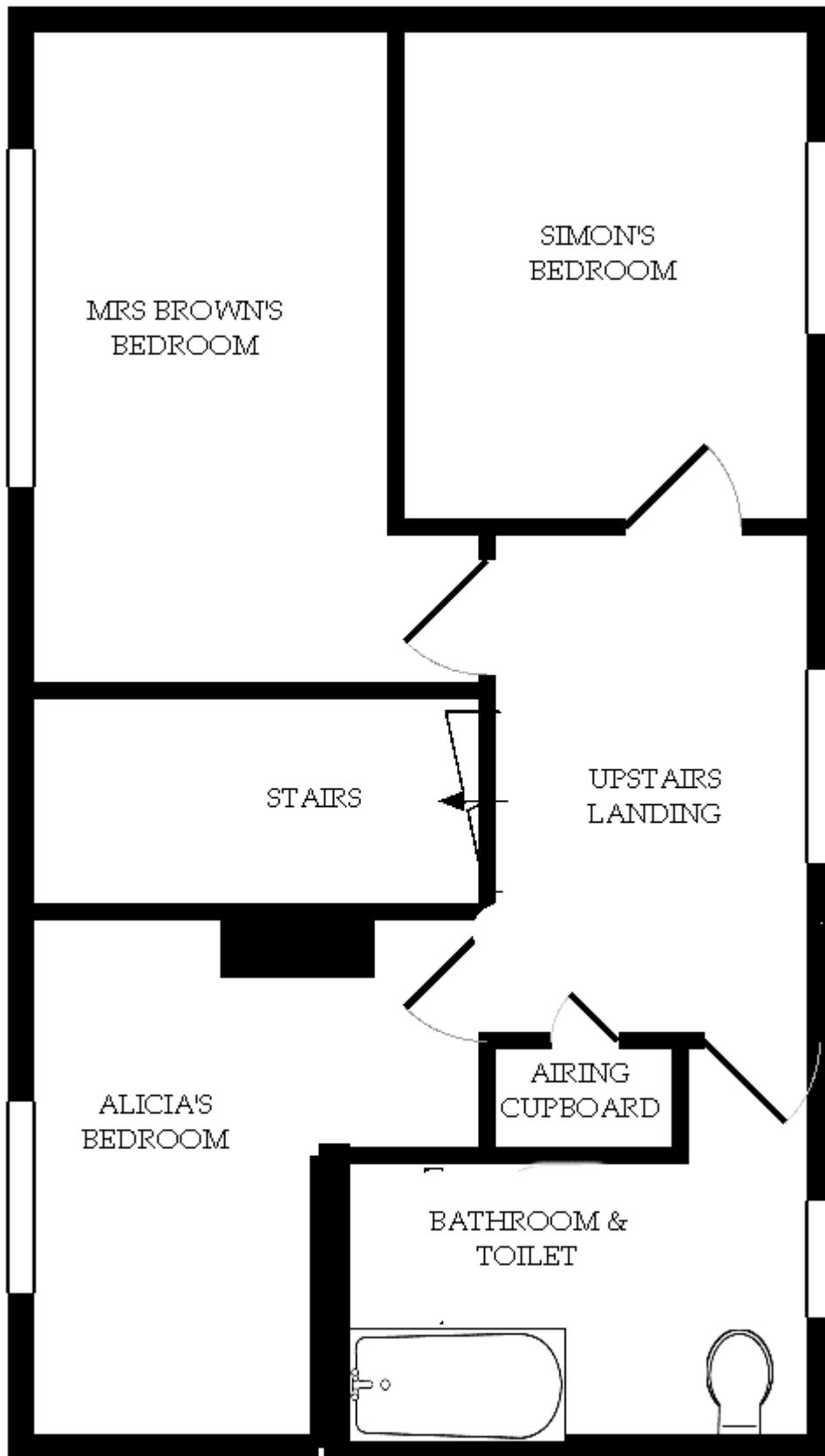
Tuesday 15th Mrs Singh came round. While we were having a nice up of tea the cup she was holding shattered in her hand, and then a vase of flowers flew off the windowsill and smashed on the living room wall. Simon ran after her and managed to calm her down a bit., but she won't come in to the house now. Mr Singh came round, and heard the knocking, and saw the fridge door bang open and shut repeatedly when no one was near it. Simon made a joke about "Zuul", and they left, he to work, and I went to work just after. Alicia said it was all quiet when she got home from school. I type this up in the evening from memory, and Simon checks through it. I'm now going to go FAX it from Tom's.

Wednesday 16th ^(today) - We are all to gather at my house at 23 Glebe Close at 8.30pm to try and work out an action plan. Mrs Atkinson is arranging details. It will be five years exactly since my husband died.

DOWNSTAIRS



UPSTAIRS





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This scenario by Chris Jensen Romer, Appendix by Becky Smith, photography by Ed Woods. Written to be run at the Continuum 2012 convention – <http://www.continuum.uk.net/>
If you have any questions regarding this scenario, or would like to tell the author how it went please do drop me a line at chrisjensenromer@hotmail.com. I am always delighted to receive feedback, criticism and suggested improvements.

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