

Adventure Assignment  
“The Trouble at Aisley Asylum Home for Mental Health”

**A) Brainstorming**

Regrettably, the notebook that had my brainstorming in it was lost. However, I will do my best to describe my process and remember a few of the adventure ideas that I thought would be particularly fun.

The first thing I did was state the problem I was trying to solve with my adventure. In previous assignments, we’ve selected our audience and the problem has been about appealing to that audience. I thought, I would do the same for this assignment. Here, it was actually easier as I knew exactly who my audience was. As I wanted to appeal to them, I thought the best thing to do would be to first ask them about their likes.

Following our group assignments, and learning I would be the first one to do an adventure, I sent out the following e-mail to my teammates:

Hey guys, I thought I'd send this out to gauge you all's interests so I don't end up putting you in a character and situation that you really find no fun whatsoever.

First of all, is there any area or time period of history you find most interesting, if any? Or heck, even the future.

What kind of characters do you all find appealing that you might like to play? If there's been a movie/book character that has made you feel, "Wow, that guy's cool" feel free to mention it!

Besides that, you could also mention what type of character you like. A big beefy guy who hits things, a smarter person, or perhaps a smooth talking diplomat.

Uhhhh, anything else you can think of to your general likes, send them along too!

Bryan

While I didn’t pay as much attention to the time period question (as I felt that most situations can be made interesting with the right interaction), I did pay attention to the type of characters that people liked to play. The different types mentioned were a stoic warrior with gadgets, a secretive thief type character, and a sneaky guy who’s witty and good with words. This guideline would help inform me on the kind of events that would go on in the adventure to interest my players. As the interactions mentioned (fighting, stealth, and conversation) were all fairly dissimilar, I would need to make a careful balance.

Over the period of about three days, I just wrote down ideas for stories that came to me. Here, very much, it was about the narrative that the players would go on that interested me most. I tried to imagine a combination of the epic stories a poet would tell, and the kind of stories you would brag about to your closest friends over drinks at a bar. A strange line, but one that I would like to strive for.

I came up with about twenty-five different ideas, and from those the ones that I can recall appealing to me most were:

For years winter has reigned over the kingdom. There comes a story of a temple devoted to the seasons where Winter did something to his brethren and the players must finally allow spring to come again.

The players are called to infiltrate an old asylum for fairly terrestrial matters. However, it turns out the asylum will soon be a place where dark gods will enter our world (similar to Call of Cthulhu).

Captured by an infamous pirate of Mind, the players must break out from his fortress of stolen dreams and ideas. A world where thought shapes reality.

Of these, I felt the asylum story would have the most promise of offering fun interactions for all the players and would be possible in a three hour period. I was also particularly interested because I had never done a horror/investigation adventure before, and I had a lot of possible ideas.

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From here, I tried to think of the narrative scope of the story. I imagined the players being dispatched to the asylum island to check for standards compliance. Once there, a storm would break out preventing them from leaving. While things would initially seem fishy, gradually things would take a turn for the supernatural, eventually leading to realizing the Chair of Psychiatry was actually trying to open a portal so that his dark God could enter our world. The idea of a seemingly routine investigation becoming something rather amazing appealed to me.

With an idea of the story, I began to define the place. I decided on putting the time period at around the 1900's, however this was fairly flexible. I wanted the attitude and dress of the 1900's (quasi-Victorian), but I did not want to deal as much with technology issues. As such, I determined they would have some things like heating, electricity, some motor power, while keeping the attitude and feel of that era through the people.

Following the selection of the time period, I moved onto the physical location. I selected America mostly because I am just more familiar with the history. From there, I worked out more specific details of the 'place.' In the past I have found that with the 'where' established, the mind will begin looking over the map and coming up with ideas for things that could happen. I began to make a list of all the things an asylum should have, when I realized I might also want to come to terms with how big an asylum it was, and how many people it held.

I felt a reasonable size would be the (evil) chief of psychiatry, two orderlies, the nurse, and about seven patients. As I wrote down these roles, I would write notes next to their names as characters occurred to me. The nurse was particularly fun, because as soon as I wrote 'nurse' I began to imagine a fat British granny who would be incredibly lovable. She ended up making it into the game.

With the staff established, I came up with all the mundane places that an asylum would need (ranging from food, heating, and records keeping). With these things in mind, I now went back to my original narrative story and began working in other details.

I reasoned that the players might need a more exciting reason to visit the asylum other than standards compliance, so I included a new angle where they were going to the asylum in *disguise* as standards compliance officials. In reality, they were investigating on behalf of a father whose son was committed to the asylum.

From there, I tried to flesh out the characters more and work up motivations for them. What was it that drove them and what did they want? In the case of the patients, I thought up reasons why they were committed. For everyone else, I tried to think about what he or she seemed like on the outside and what he or she was like on the inside. I thought that if I gave them motivations, the rest of the story might come up naturally as I would follow how each person would meet their needs.

This became rather interesting when I had to solve for somewhat irrational behavior from some NPCs. For instance, at some point I decided it would be fun if the evil Chief of Psychiatry was actually the ghost of an insane inmate killed long ago in a revolt. Now gifted with power from his dark god, he has turned the minds of everyone at the asylum to believe he's been there forever, and disposed of the old chief of staff. The PCs have just arrived.

That all sounds fun, but then the question comes up of, "Well, why doesn't he just kill the PCs or take over their minds?" A lot of my brainstorming involved me just thinking about all the logical inconsistencies that might come up and then explaining them. For the previously mentioned question, I decided it could work out a number of ways. On one hand, perhaps the villain has himself stretched thin already, and thus must maintain appearances so investigators don't run off to tell the authorities. Alternatively, perhaps he's just cruel and likes the idea of innocents who will soon witness true horror. Like constructing a toolbox, I came up with a number of ideas that I could pull out depending upon the story at that time.

After fleshing out the characters, the next step was in nailing down some of the events that would happen at the asylum. I determined there would be a time limit, that the players were initially unaware of, that would tick down to the villain's plan coming to fruition. As it got closer, more supernatural events and horrors would occur until finally the ritual would be performed and evil would appear on this world.

To that end, I established a schedule of events that would happen in a certain order. These were mostly of the form: "Day 2: 9:00 pm, Dr. Alleister kidnaps Lobelia and locks her in the basement." These would provide a rough outline of events that would almost always be happening. I knew that it might not work out that way, but I determined the events could also be moved relatively easily.

After this, I came up with pluggable-events. That is, events that could work at just about any time or be found in just about any room. These were mostly in the form of strange occurrences, people dropping by, or items being found. That way, if the interest level began to wane, I could find the type of event that seemed appropriate (combat, strange occurrences, conversations), and just insert them rather seamlessly into the narrative.

Following this, I started to simply type up all the information I had written down and get a solid listing of the events that would happen as well as the other interesting things I could plug in to keep the interest level good.

**B) Items Created for the Purpose of Running the Adventure**

- 1) Non Player Characters
- 2) Getting the Investigators to Aisley Asylum
- 3) Events at Aisley Asylum
- 4) The Ritual (Completing or Foiling it)
- 5) Optional Events
- 6) Locations
- 7) Player Characters
- 8) Physical Handouts

## **1) Non-Player Characters**

Most characters do not have stats, as they will not be engaging in very much stat-related interaction. In cases where it is needed, a judgment call by the DM will be made.

The few that do have stats tend to have fairly general ones, as most of the interaction can be worked out at the time and tweaked to make for interesting encounters.



Name: Dr. Franklin Wit  
Position: Chief of Medicine at Rogers Hospital

What he seems:

Dr. Wit is a fatherly figure of 58, with a large moustache and spectacles. He has been the Chief of Medicine at Rogers Hospital for 12 years now. In his position, he oversees a number of the medical care units under Rogers. He has proven to be a capable administrator and is generally well liked by the staff. He is married with two children.

What he is:

For the most part, Dr. Wit is all of the things he seems, except for hiding one secret. One of his two children, Julius Wit, is schizophrenic with multiple personalities. While the majority of the other faculty believes Julius is in Europe, Wit has actually checked him into the Aisley Home for Mental Health under Dr. Hardstrom. In this day, he worries what will happen to his career if it was found out that the Chief of Medicine had a son who he could not take care of. Although somewhat illogical, Wit is correct. The news of Julius' condition would besmirch his reputation. Recently, he has become concerned with news of abuse at Aisley. He has hired investigators to sneak there under the guise of 'Standards Checking' and has gotten paperwork to prove it from an old friend.



Name: Dr. Richard Alleister  
Position: Chief Psychiatrist of Aisley Home for Mental Health

What he seems:

A heavyset man of 40, Alleister was recently hired on at Aisley to replace the retiring of the previous Chief Psychiatrist. Alleister has been quite capable at handling the goings-on at Aisley, although his stark and formal manner has been somewhat off-putting for the workers and patients. That said, he seems quite devoted to their care.

What he is:

Richard Alleister has been dead for about a century. Back then, he wasn't even a doctor, but actually a patient interred for hallucinations and insanity. Believing himself the prophet of the dread god Xor'aphal, his ravings eventually landed him at Aisley Asylum. There, Dr. Aisley himself found he could do little to help the diseased mind of Alleister and was planning on turning in the paperwork to transfer Alleister to a new facility that would administer drugs not available at Aisley. The night before the transfer, something warped the minds of the guards who released the prisoners. Alleister himself, with a horde of patients under his thrall moved through the Asylum killing all they found. Eventually reaching Dr. Aisley's office, the two faced off with Aisley firing a shot at Alleister while Alleister sliced open Aisley's belly. The two died and an earthquake shook the island, causing a part of the asylum to slide into the ocean and a fire to erupt in the main room. The building burned to the ground.

But Alleister has returned recently, brought back by some dark force, and is working his magic on the people of Aisley island. He plans a sacrifice to consecrate the Asylum to Xor'aphal and bring forth the dark god's avatar to this world. The investigators arrive three days before the sacrifice, and Alleister is quite pleased to have more bodies for his dark lord's return.

Alleister has already killed the previous Chief Psychiatrist.

Stats:

Physical: 12  
Mental: 25  
Social: 15  
Attacks: 1d6

Opposed Mental Rolls to try and mentally control someone. Can only control 6 people at a time.

Part of the Asylum. Alleister and the Asylum can meld together and share health points. Basically, the only way to kill Alleister is to destroy the Asylum. He can be chased off to meld with the house however.





Name: Lobelia Sumpkins  
Position: Nurse

What she seems:

At age 52, and grandmother to three, Lobelia has always been the friendly face of Aisley. Affectionately called “Aunt Lobby” by some of the patients, Sumpkins’ jobs include laundry, cooking, and the general cleaning and medicine distribution to patients. She suffers from occasional lapses in memory, where she will be very confused at what is going on around her, but these tend to pass soon.

What she is:

Sumpkins’ is actually slightly psychic, although she isn’t very aware of it. All her life she has been very good at picking odds and her hunches usually turn out correct, but she never thought it was anything but good luck. In truth, her lapses in memory have not been happening all her life, but only recently started when Dr. Alleister took control. Her slight powers have been fighting against his, and the moments of breakthrough are when she becomes confused at what has been happening.

Dr. Alleister is well aware of Sumpkins’ power and plans to use it in contacting his dark god.



Name: Dr. Lawrence Aisley

Position: Former Chief of Staff at Aisley Asylum (deceased)

Killed by Richard Alleister, but managed to fatally shoot Alleister before he died.  
Now haunting Aisley Asylum.



Names: Samuel Cooper and Ronald McCoy  
Positions: Orderlies at Aisley Home for Mental Health

What they seem:

Both orderlies at the Aisley home for quite some time, they pull in a decent living looking after the inmates and helping Nurse Sumpkins bathe the more aggressive ones. They also assist with the making of meals and patrolling of the grounds.

What they are:

Alleister is mostly directing their motions now, and they follow blindly along. Ronald McCoy resists a bit more than Samuel Cooper, and will soon be removed by Alleister as a nuisance. Before his death, Ronald McCoy has occasionally been lapsing out of the control by inflicting pain on himself. He hides a box of razorblades in his room.

Samuel Cooper's stats:

Physical:	12
Mental:	10
Social:	9



Names: Gregor Polanov  
Position: Caretaker of Aisley Home for Mental Health

What he seems:

Generally friendly, the Russian caretaker of Aisley also mans the boats that get people to and from the island. Besides that, his responsibilities are mostly involved in having tea with Nurse Sumpkins and minding the grounds.

What he is:

Polanov is Alleister's by choice. He has been promised great power and will make sure that what Alleister wants comes to pass. He still has some feelings of concern for Nurse Sumpkins, but he is willing to sacrifice her so that he may become great.

Stats:

Physical: 15

Mental: 11

Social: 13

Possesses a pistol (2d6 damage)



Name: Edgar Rhodes

Patient for: Dangerous Delusions

Edgar Rhodes is actually Dr. Eric Hardstrom. When Alleister infiltrated Aisley, he locked up Hardstrom and convinced everyone that the new patient, Rhodes, was too dangerous for contact with anyone. Hardstrom and Sumpkins were very close, and if she were to know that he had been locked up, she would regain control of her senses.



Name: Trent Yeats

Patient for: Hallucinations

A rather charming man with a devoted wife, Yeats has suffered from hallucinations that grow steadily worse. He has managed to overcompensate, and now tends to believe most things are a hallucination, even most of his life. Is quite fond of playing the violin as it helps him to cope.



Name: Norman Wilcox

Patient for: Hallucinations and Suicidal Tendencies

With so loose a grip on reality, Wilcox (a former business man of renown) is used by Alleister to attempt to attack the investigators.

Stats:

Physical: 8

Mental: 7

Social: 5



Name: Julius Wit (Trevor Morrissey)

Patient for: Schizophrenia (Multiple Personalities)

Wit has something that Alleister values very highly. Virginity. He is the only person on Aisley who is in fact a virgin. Suffering from multiple personalities, Wit was able to retreat from Alleister's probing for a long time. However, Alleister eventually rooted through Wit's mind, discovered his true identity, and then nailed him to the name Trevor Morrissey. Now Julius Wit is lost in the new Trevor's body and really doesn't remember much of his previous life. As the investigators start bringing Julius back, Alleister will begin to notice.



Name: Sofia Baker

Patient for: Kleptomania and Depression

A shy and nervous woman, Baker is the daughter of a steel baron who was tired of his daughter's strange habits. She doesn't talk much, but when pressed will reveal the nervousness of what is going on around her. She knows it all, but Alleister thinks her too cowed to act.



Name: William Swinburne

Patient for: Suicidal Tendencies

Swinburne is quite aware of all the ghostly activity and it has driven him mad. He will point at things the PCs cannot see yet and will eventually kill himself if left alone with all the ghosts.



Name: Eleanor Darby  
Patient for: Syphilitic Insanity  
Former streetwalker driven mad from syphilis. Kept locked in her room to avoid harming others. Alleister taunts her and eventually transforms her into his monster.

Stats (monster):  
Physical: 20  
Mental: 10  
Social: 0



Name: Arthur Perry  
Patient for: Schizophrenia (Paranoid)  
Always believing people were after him, it turns out the Bostonian businessman was right. When he sees the investigators he momentarily hopes, but is then taken by Alleister, tortured, and turned into a lapdog.



**2) Getting the Investigators to Aisley Asylum**

Place: Rogers Hospital, MA  
Purpose: Waiting to see Dr. Wit  
Day: 12th of September 1905  
Time: Early Morning

When the investigators arrive at the hospital, Dr. Wit's secretary leads them into his office where he asks them to sit down. The office is neat and orderly, and a large selection of medical books line the wall behind Dr. Wit. Wit looks grimly at the investigators before beginning to speak

*"I'll have you know that I am not entirely comfortable with the idea of you all's work. That said, you have come highly recommended to me and I do need people of your...talents."*

He pauses to clean his glasses and find his words.

*"I need you to infiltrate...a sanitarium for me. Specifically the Aisley Home for Mental Health. Please understand that what I am telling you I will hold you to the strictest confidence."*

With some gesture of ascent from the investigators, he continues, *"I have a son named Julius who is...not well. He's a good boy, I assure you, but occasionally he would go into fits where he simply would not be himself. Now, if word got out that I, Chief of this Hospital, had a son like Julius, I would be in danger of losing my position. I pulled some strings and was able to have him checked in at Aisley under the name of Trevor Morrissey. Recently though, I've been hearing of dangerous treatments going on at Aisley. I want my son to be well but not through barbarism! ...excuse me. I have managed to draft up papers that will get you into Aisley under the pretense of inspecting it for Standards compliance. I want you to ensure that Julius is being care of well and that they aren't hurting him. No on there, lease of all the Chief of Staff, Eric Hardstrom, can know that Julius is my son. There, his name is Trevor Morrissey."*

*"So...can you help me?"*

Wit will pay the investigators up to \$1000, a lot back then.

If pressed more for what Julius did, Wit will refuse to answer much besides the boy not being himself.

Wit knows about Aisley's history, but he doesn't see it as having any particular significance.

If called selfish, Wit will defend himself and attest to how much he cares for his son. Wit is getting his son care and keeping his name clean at the same time.

If the investigators agree, he will give them papers and tell them he will arrange transportation for them. He will also provide them with briefcases of legal looking information to back their stories up. He will direct them to the local dock tomorrow at noon.

On the way to the dock, this is a good time to describe the setting. Mention automobiles around, trains and factories belching out smoke. The dock is a busy foul smelling place,

but eventually they will come to the dock they were intended to go to. There, they will meet the wiry Russian, Gregor Polanov.

He will ask to see their identification, and once satisfied, will assist the investigators load their baggage into the boat (a reasonably sized sailboat with a small motor). The journey takes roughly an hour to get out to the small island of Aisley.

Polanov will not start conversations, but will respond when talked to. He is reasonably friendly, just not overly forthcoming. He doesn't admit to knowing much about Aisley, but has worked there for about three years now as caretaker.

The investigators may talk amongst themselves or you may skip ahead to when Aisley looms in the distance.

*Now in the distance you can make out an island. The shape of the terrain slopes upward from a small dock to what must be the building of the sanitarium, a grim looking two-story estate of grey stone and white marble. Two stories in height one of the ends of the building looks over a cliff side that seems to be some thirty feet above rocks and the crashing surf. A few lights are on inside, and the pale yellow from those windows contrasts against the muddy grass. Polanov clears his throat and says, "Aisley."*

The boat will pull in to the small dock where they will be met by Ronald McCoy, the older of the two guards. He'll identify himself and exchange a quick greeting with Polanov. Helping with what bags he can, he will lead them to Aisley proper.

Place: Aisley Home for Mental Health, MA  
Day: 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1905  
Time: Afternoon

As they enter the front doors, they find the investigators will find themselves in a broad hallway. In front of them will be Nurse Sumpkins and Dr. Alleister.

Alleister will clear his throat and smile charmingly, "Welcome, gentleman. I hope your boat ride was smooth. I understand you were here to meet Dr. Hardstrom. I'm afraid he is currently on the mainland still, but I will all I can to assist. I'm the Chief Psychiatrist, Dr. Richard Alleister. You may set your bags down here. I'll make sure they get to the rooms we have laid out for you."

He arches an eyebrow, "I'm afraid we don't regularly have guests, so I fear you will be housed in some of the extra patient rooms. This is Nurse Sumpkins."

Nurse Sumpkins will smile amiably and offer to show the child among them (Michelle's Character) to the kitchen for a snack. She will also have the people sign a visitor's card. Meanwhile, the adults will be taken on a brief tour by Dr. Alleister.

Alleister is currently engaged in a kind of game, trying to put the investigators at ease so he can later on try to control their minds.

At this point, patients are at the following locations:

Edgar Rhodes:	His room
Trent Yeats:	Playing violin in the common room.
Norman Wilcox:	Pacing in the common room.

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Trevor Morrissey: The kitchen preparing for supper.  
Sofia Baker: In the common room looking outside.  
Eleanor Darby: Her room  
Arthur Perry: The second floor common room.  
William Swinburne: Wandering the second floor.

Guard Cooper is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. McCoy will take the bags up to the player's rooms and then return to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

Norman and Sofia, upon seeing the investigators will react strongly. Sofia will back away frightened, and Norman will walk towards them tentatively and then begin to cry. When pressed, he will mumble about just wanting to be let out. Alleister will reprimand him and send him to his room. Sofia will not say much but will only look terrified. Yeats dismisses the new people as a hallucination.

Arthur Perry reacts rather violently, screaming about being chased and people coming to get him. Alleister will attempt to soothe Perry, but eventually will have to call Cooper to have him hauled away to his room.

While Alleister talks seemingly lovingly about his 'children,' there is a side of cruelty that he cannot quite hide. Eventually, he will say he has work to do and permits the investigators free reign. He does specifically ask that they do not go into any of the locked rooms as personal records and effects are kept there. As he understands it, the investigators are more there to check the qualities of the facility, not the potential cruelty.

From here, Alleister will begin to prepare for the ritual. He will leave the investigators alone until the very end, when he will have then brought to him as a sacrifice. However, if it becomes blatant that the investigators know too much and seek to sabotage plans, he will act more quickly to eliminate them.

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### **3) Events at Aisley Asylum**

The investigators arrive at Aisley Home for Mental Health at 6:00 pm on Day 2.

They are given a brief tour until 7:00 pm.

A storm begins to rage outside, making boat travel dangerous at around 6:50 pm. Alleister offers the investigators rooms to stay in.

After the investigators go to bed, they will be attacked in their room by Norman Wilcox (he is being controlled by Alleister).

Note, as the majority of the adventure is puzzle solving and trying to unravel the mystery, the events that happen after Wilcox attacks the investigators can appear in a number of different orders. My job will be manipulating them to create the rising tension of the interest curve.

Wilcox will be taken away and killed out of sight, placed in a straitjacket and left in his sealed off room to rot.

Shortly after the attempt on Wilcox's attack, Alleister will have an argument with McCoy in Alleister's office.

Shortly after the attack, Alleister will have McCoy kill himself in some way (DM's discretion how visible to the players).

Around midnight, a bell will begin ringing from the direction of the cliffside. Before the quake, this is where the bell tower had been in Aisley Asylum.

On Alleister's orders, Cooper will take Perry down to the electroshock machine at 2:30 am.

Ghosts of the old Asylum will begin appearing at 3:00 am (investigators should catch an occasional look at them, but nothing too blatant).

Sumpkins will note that McCoy is missing at breakfast on Day 3.

Depending upon time length of the adventure, the rest of the events can either happen in one day (with Alleister's ritual at dawn of Day 4) or two days (with Alleister's ritual at dawn of Day 5).

Julius Wit will have his head shaved in preparation for the ritual. This will be done by Sumpkins and Cooper.

Julius Wit will be locked in the Boiler Room.

Nurse Sumpkins forgetting spells will grow more frequent as her psyche tries harder and harder to break free. DM's choice if she succeeds or not.

Sumpkins will channel the ghosts for a moment, hearing them say that *he* is trying to open a door.

If players confront Alleister, he will laugh and vanish into the house, turning the very house alive.

Julius will shyly reveal how Alleister was very focused on Julius' virginity.

Alleister, with the help of Polanov, will kidnap Sumpkins and lock her in the Boiler Room.

The investigators will enter one room to find it transformed back in time to the office of Dr. Aisley. They will have the chance to talk to him briefly before history will reenact itself, and Alleister's shadow will burst in and stab Aisley while Aisley shoots Alleister.

The boiler room will begin to overheat, causing the temperature in Aisley to grow stifling.

Some of the patients will start panicking, some will kill themselves, and some will choose to follow Alleister.

Perry and Darby will follow Alleister.

Swinburne will kill himself.

Baker, Yeats, and Rhodes will panic.

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**4) The Ritual (Completing or Foiling it)**



As the ritual draws closer, the old asylum will become more visible. The bell tower will appear, the sign at the front will now read 'Aisley Asylum,' dead patients from the old graveyard that sunk into the sea will begin to claw their way onto the island.

#### The Ritual:

To complete the ritual, Alleister must sacrifice two people and a virgin in a great fire. He intends for these people to be Lobelia Sumpkins, Julius Wit (the virgin), and one other. He is having the Boiler Room slowly build up pressure to eventually explode and consume them all. While this is going on, he will be on the cliff-side chanting an old spell to summon his Dark God to him. The ritual takes one hour to finish. Once it finishes, Xor'aphal enters our world and things become very bad for the investigators.

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There are a number of ways the adventure can end.

#### Destroy the house prematurely:

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This can be accomplished by getting the boiler room to explode prematurely, or using the gasoline or perhaps the generator to create a fire.

Explosives also work wonders. Any way aside, if the house is destroyed, Alleister's tenuous link to this world will fade away again.

Ways to hint at this: show the danger of the two rooms below. Also, need to hint that Alleister and the house are somehow connected. When one is hurt, show the other hurt. When one gets stronger, the other gets stronger.

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#### Getting the ghosts to fight Alleister.

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The ghosts do not like Alleister but are mostly mindless. If they can somehow be directed, they may be able to distract him enough for the investigators to accomplish something.

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#### Use Sumpkins to talk to the ghosts:

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If the investigators are able to get Sumpkins free of Alleister's control, they may be able to find out that she is a psychic medium. Hint at this by using her hunches on where to go or give her a moment where the ghosts seem to listen to her. Also make sure the ghosts don't seem bloodthirsty, but more tragic.

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#### Use Julius to talk to the ghosts:

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If the investigators are able to reliably switch Trevor back to Julius, they may realize he has a connection with the ghosts coming to the asylum because he too was hurt by Alleister. Again, have Alleister openly mock the ghosts to show it's a separate side. Have Julius talk about in his dreams seeing all of the tortured spirits.

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#### Kill Alleister.

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This is not easy, as he's been alive for a very long time. There are a number of ways this can be accomplished, although the direct way is difficult. Destroying the house works, as would giving the ghost of Aisley the pistol from the storage room. Remember the room with the big bloodstain in it. If the investigators can think of a creative way of closing off the wound, reward them with success.

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Escape the island.

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Polanov is guarding the boats with a few creatures spawned by Alleister. The investigators may be able to defeat him and get a boat, but that means the ritual will still go on and this means big trouble.

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**5) Optional Events**

Things that may not necessarily happen, but can be thrown in for interest:

Nurse Sumpkins having one of her forgetting spells. In the midst of it, she will start pressing the investigator asking who they are and what is going on. Soon she will succumb back, but if investigators confront her with all the evidence of foul play, she may come around.

A guard or patient loses his cool and begins to scream at Alleister accusingly.

Poltergeist behavior in any of the rooms as Alleister grows more powerful.

Ghostly behavior in any of the rooms as the pain of the dead inmates rises.

One of the patients (Darby preferably) is turned into a monster to hunt the PCs.

Polanov seems to be taking the investigators to safety and then turns on them.

As the boiler room overheats, the air in the facility begins to grow stifling.

The power goes out.

Patients are taken to the electroshock room and disciplined.

Investigators find pictures/articles about the numerous fires that Aisley has been through.

A group therapy session.

The investigators suffer from terrible dreams (or possibly, Sumpkins' psyche trying to reach out).

Hardstrom's note to Lobelia about being worried.

McCoy's note on pain

Scroll of the ritual discovered

**6) Locations**

A map can be found in the handouts section.

First Floor:

Common Room:

Looking out over the cliff-side, the common room is usually bright and sunny with the big open windows. Various works of patient art are either on the walls or on easels throughout the room. When the ghosts begin to appear, a bell tower will be seen outside the windows, hanging out in space.

Kitchen:

Nurse Sumpkins prepares the meals with usually a patient or guard assisting her. The kitchen has a well-stocked larder behind a large sealed door and a number of kitchen devices and cutlery in locked cabinets that only Sumpkins and Alleister have keys for. Sumpkins will be kidnapped from this room when preparing dinner and signs of a struggle will be visible.

Showers:

This is where the various staff can go to take their showers. The area is divided between men's and women's.

Nurse Sumpkins' Room:

Sumpkins will often retire to her room for tea. The area has been made comfortable by Sumpkins, and much of the formal coldness of the Asylum has been covered over in various pastel quilts. In her dresser one can find a picture of Lobelia with her grandchildren standing by a snowman, the key to the kitchen larder and the medical area, and a note from Dr. Hardstrom to her about him feeling strange. A small purse has a few dollars in it.

Dining Room:

This is where the patients and faculty will eat. There is a separate table for each faction, although all dining ware is kept in the kitchen.

Medical and Storage:

This is the room where most of the patients' medication is kept. It also has a small section for the personal records of the current patients. Investigators who make their way in here will be able to find all the personal records and expense reports for the current patients. There is no patient file for Edgar Rhodes however. This is because he is actually Eric Hardstrom. Of particular interest is one form that lists Julius Wit as having made significant progress and is soon to be released.

Guard rooms:

This is where the two guards sleep. Cooper's living area is mostly bare except for a pack of playing cards and a small safe where he keeps his wages. McCoy has a small picture of his family and a razor blade. McCoy has been cutting himself because when he feels pain, his mind becomes slightly clear of Alleister's influences. DM's discretion if a note detailing this exists.

Room of the Chief of Psychiatry:

This room is kept under many locks, all held by Alleister. Inside the room, it is completely empty except for a rough pallet and a table. On the table is the scroll that details the ritual. It is not in a common language, but the investigators may be able to get the gist of it if they are familiar with some foreign languages. There is also a large knife whose handle looks like a tentacled eye gripping a blade.

#### Room of the Chief of Staff:

Formerly the office of Eric Hardstrom, it is locked but not as tightly as Alleister's. The note in Nurse Sumpkins' room can alternatively be placed here. When the ghosts emerge, this is the ideal place to find Dr. Aisley's office. The place is comfortable but formal, and should be reminiscent of Dr. Wit's office. Somewhat out of place on the floor is a rather brightly colored quilt. It is one of Nurse Sumpkins' and is currently hiding a bloodstain that will continue to spread as the adventure draws closer to the ritual. This is where the first blood (of Dr. Aisley) was spilled and it is where Alleister's dark lord will emerge. There is a bare area on the wall where a portrait of Eric Hardstrom used to hang.

#### Interview Office:

Richly decorated, the room should look like the stereotypical psychiatrist's office. It has the momentum balls, a Rorschach test, and a couch to lay down upon. Hidden near the desk is a passageway that leads to a rope ladder going to the basement's storage room. The chair of the desk is currently on the passageway top.

#### Second Floor:

##### Common Area 2:

Similar to the first floor common area. This is where Swinburne will be found hung, after the ghosts really start coming.

##### Counseling Rooms:

Both of these rooms are empty except for a few chairs and a blackboard.

##### Storage Room:

The place where various foodstuffs and cleaning supplies are kept. Has a large door that can be sealed from the outside. Most of the gardening supplies are kept here. After the ghosts begin to appear, investigators can get a glimpse of spirits locking themselves in the room hiding from someone and then being consumed in fire.

##### Showers:

The two showers rooms are mostly for the patients. Additionally, they both have a large tub and detachable showerhead in case patients must be forcibly bathed.

##### Patients' Rooms:

Edgar Rhodes is kept in a strait jacket in his room and heavily medicated. If he is released and sobers himself, he will reveal himself to actually be Dr. Eric Hardstrom. The only people who regularly enter the room are the guards who bring him food. Alleister has forbid Nurse Sumpkins and anyone else from socializing with him.

Trent Yeats' room is normal, except he has been permitted a violin that he will occasionally play. After the ghosts begin to appear, he will be playing violently trying to banish them from his mind.

Normal Wilcox's room is fairly normal, albeit padded. After he attacks the investigators, he will be killed and locked in his room, covered up, and left to rot. After the ghosts appear, he will be one of them and will sadly pace around his dead body.

Trevor Morrissey (Julius Wit)'s room is bare except for a flowerpot that he planted with the help of Nurse Sumpkins. Investigators may find some of his hair on the floor by his bed, as he has been plucking it out from agitation.

Sofia Baker's room is uninteresting except for her bed. Stored within a hole in her mattress, she keeps items that she has managed to steal from the various people at Aisley. Among them are McCoy's pocket watch, a few buttons, some spare change, and a part of the painting that used to be in Hardstrom's office. Alleister had it torn down and destroyed, but Baker managed to find a small part of it. Investigators who have seen both Edgar Rhodes and the painting will recognize that they are the same person. The Aisley Asylum newspaper clipping can also be found here at the DM's discretion.

Eleanor Darby's room is padded with restraints on her bed. She will occasionally be let out of her room, but only under guard. As Alleister nears the ritual, he will transform Eleanor's hands to scalpels and set her after the investigators.

Arthur Perry's room has some of the paintings he has done in the common room. Most of them seem to deal with bells, towers, and the face of a thin-lipped man (who is actually Dr. Aisley). Following the electro-shock treatment, a much jittier and afraid Perry will keep mostly to his room. As Alleister nears the ritual, Perry will follow Alleister around like a lap dog eager to please, his will broken.

Swinburne's room is mostly bare except for his bed. He mostly wanders about Aisley like a ghost, dressed in a nightgown barely saying a word. After the ghosts do appear, he will panic and kill himself by hanging.

There are two empty rooms with small cots in them. These will be given to the investigators.

Basement:

Storage Room:

This room holds mostly gardening and boat supplies, including a number of cans of gasoline. There is a secret passage in the ceiling that leads to a rope ladder and passageway to the Interview Office. Currently, a chair is on top of the passageway that will make it slightly harder to open. Previous Chief of Staffs' paintings are in here, as well as a picture of Aisley Asylum (complete with bell tower). The gun Aisley used to shoot Alleister is down here.

Generator and Electroshock machine:

This is where the power for the building comes from. The electroshock machine here is used to get the more aggressive patients to submit to Alleister's will. The generator can be overloaded, causing it to spark.

Records room:

This is where all patients no longer at the facility have their records kept. In addition, all records that survived or were recovered after the quake were stored in here. An investigator searching for something interesting will probably not find too much unless they scan alphabetically or specifically search for Richard Alleister's file. Those that find it will discover Alleister was a patient at the Asylum 180 years ago, was listed as insane, and is believed to have been killed in the quake. Investigators should also be able to come across newspaper clippings about the accident at Aisley Asylum.



### Boiler Room:

The heating unit of the facility is kept here. Powered by steam, if the valves are turned in such a way as to avoid release, the boiler will eventually explode. This is the room where Alleister will bring his sacrifices as he allows the boiler to reach an explosion point to take out his victims and the asylum. In happier times, this is where Polanov would go to warm up after being outside in the cold. The wall of the Boiler Room is also very ragged as it was hastily constructed when most of that side of the Asylum collapsed in the quake.

## **7. Player Characters**

The characters were all made with input from the players. I talked to each about what kind of character they wanted to play, as well as any quirks they might like. I then generated stats and a bit of back-story.



**Player:** Michelle Pun  
**Name:** Olivia Cuthridge  
**Age:** 16

**Attributes**

Physical: 12  
Mental: 14  
Social: 9

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Skill Points</b>	<b>Actual Skill</b>
<b>Physical</b>		
Unarmed Combat	0	2
Melee Combat	0	2
Long-Range Combat	10	12
Combat Defense	2	4
Athletics	4	6
Stealth	8	10
<b>Mental</b>		
Investigation	4	8
Science	0	4
Medicine	2	6
Machinery	0	4
Repair	0	4
Super-Vision	3	7
Super-Hearing	1	5
<b>Social Skills</b>		
Leadership	0	-1
Performance	2	1
Intimidation	0	-1
Subterfuge	1	0
Style	0	-1

**Inventory:**

Small crossbow (1d6 damage)  
Small knife (1d4 damage)  
Big dark cloak  
Lockpicks

Adopted and apprenticed to Arthur Cuthridge, Olivia tends to shy away from conversation but is ready to learn all she can.



**Player:** Michael Taylor John

**Name:** Ben Turner

**Age:** 37

**Attributes**

Physical: 17

Mental: 12

Social: 13

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Skill Points</b>	<b>Actual Skill</b>
---------------	---------------------	---------------------

**Physical**

Unarmed Combat	5	12
Melee Combat	7	14
Long-Range Combat	0	7
Combat Defense	4	11
Athletics	3	10
Stealth	0	7

**Mental**

Investigation	3	5
Science	2	4
Medicine	0	2
Machinery	7	9
Repair	5	7
Super-Vision	1	3
Super-Hearing	3	5

**Social Skills**

Leadership	2	5
Performance	0	3
Intimidation	4	7
Subterfuge	2	5
Style	1	4

**Inventory:**

Pistol (2d6 damage)

Big Knife (1d6 damage)

Basic medical kit

One stick dynamite

Matches

Rope

Mining pick

Formerly serving in the war, Ben specializes in being ready for just about any situation.



**Player:** Dan Sorge  
**Name:** Arthur Cuthridge  
**Age:** 28

### Attributes

Physical: 12  
Mental: 17  
Social: 16

Skills	Skill Points	Actual Skill
--------	--------------	--------------

#### Physical

Unarmed Combat	3	5
Melee Combat	3	5
Long-Range Combat	5	7
Combat Defense	3	5
Athletics	5	7
Stealth	10	12

#### Mental

Investigation	8	15
Science	4	11
Medicine	1	8
Machinery	1	8
Repair	0	7
Super-Vision	3	10
Super-Hearing	3	10

#### Social Skills

Leadership	5	11
Performance	4	10
Intimidation	3	9
Subterfuge	6	12
Style	3	9

#### Inventory

Pistol (2d6)  
Small knife (1d4)  
Caltrops  
Matches  
Pipe & Tobacco  
Big dark cloak  
Lockpicks  
Hammer

Smooth talking and capable, Arthur is the group leader and their liaison to the Midnight Society.

## 8. Physical Hand-outs

The items on the following pages represent physical objects I would hand to the players. Many of them can be placed just about anywhere to be found.

Additionally, I also printed out pictures of each of the NPCs and cut them out of the paper leaving white space to the side. When the players encountered an NPC, I showed them the paper, and the white space was there for them to write notes. As it was an investigation, I thought I would try to help them out with keeping their facts straight.

List of the Handouts:

- a) Letter from Dr. Hardstrom to Nurse Lobelia Sumpkins expressing his worries. It can be placed in numerous places, but Lobelia has had the memory of it blocked from her mind by Alleister. It is intended to be somewhat difficult to read, but it says:  
"I'm worried Lobelia. My head has been pounding lately and I feel very sick. Please come to my office when you get this. On the good side, Trevor is doing very well and should soon be ready for release. Talk to you soon."
- b) When the investigators arrive at Aisley, Nurse Sumpkins will have them sign this visitor form. It is intended primarily as a mood enhancer. The last three lines show where the players have signed.
- c) The burnt remnants of Alleister's medical records. It is written by Dr. Aisley himself and mentions Alleister's strange behavior.
- d) Alleister's certificate of insanity.
- e) Alleister's certificate of death in the great fire that ravaged Aisley Asylum.

This page has several things on it.

- f) The upper right has a newspaper clipping about the great fire at Aisley Asylum.
- g) The item in the lower right is a note made by one of the orderlies. It has 'pain makes him go away' and is written on very thin napkin paper. It is intended to be accompanied by razor blades (which I elected to not have actually in the room)
- h) The other three items represent dreams each player has. I would fold up the paper and hand one to each of them. Arthur Cuthridge sees his name scrawled on a fragment of Aisley Asylum check in, Ben Turner feels fire, and Olivia Cuthridge sees a dresser and knows something is inside it. The dresser is in Lobelia Sumpkins room and can have an item to help the investigators inside it.

Maps:

- i) This has the first and second floor on it. As the players are initially given a tour, they know what each room is.
- j) A map of the island and the basement. As the players don't see the basement initially, it is drawn in as they visit it for the first time.



# Aisley Home for Mental Health

Dr. Eric Hardstrom

Chief of Staff  
Arkham, Mass.  
Telephone 3887

ASS-1912F

I'm worried Lobotomy.

My head has been pounding  
lately and I feel very sick.

Please come to my office

when you get this. on

the good side. There is

nothing very well and steady

soon be ready for release.

Talk to you soon.







# Aisley PATIENT

If any notes or transcripts from

Psychiatrist's Name: Lawrence Aisley  
Case No.: 5 Date of Interview: 3/27/68  
Patient Name: RICHARD ALLESTER  
Responsible Party (next of kin, spouse, guardian, etc.):  
Address: NONE KNOWN

Patient's chief

SAFETY CRUSHING  
US UNABLE TO SEE  
SOMETHING WAITING  
FORGETTING WAY OF BLOOD ON DEAR  
VERY FAR

Patient's personal history:

FOUND RANTING IN STREETS  
BRIEF CULT LEADER  
CHARGED WITH MURDER  
FOUND INSANE

Diagnostic impressions:

(Also note reactions and nervousness of subject cards)

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

# Certificate of Insanity

This document does hereby serve notice that

Richard Alleister

has been certified

**Legally Insane**

by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on this date of

March 15, 1825

Whereby the above named has become a Ward of the State  
to be committed to an appropriate Institution of Mental Hygiene  
to receive treatment for the condition of

Dangerous Hallucinations

For a period of six (6) months or more, as care shall require,  
or until sufficient cause can be shown as to warrant release.

Edward Ellis M.D.  
Attending Psychiatrist or Physician

Roland B. Forsythe  
Judge, District Court

Eric Herdston M.D.  
Superintendent of Institution

Keegan Russell  
Judge, Municipal Court



Reg. Dis. No. March 28th, 1830  
Primary Reg. Dis. No. \_\_\_\_\_

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
VITAL STATISTICS  
**CERTIFICATE OF DEATH**

State File No.: 1023  
Registrar's No.: 83

Decedent's Name: <u>Richard Allerster</u>		Sex: <u>M</u>	Marital Status: <u>Single</u>	Surviving Spouse: <u>None</u>
Race: <u>White</u>	Education: <u>None</u>	Place of Death: <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Inpatient <input type="checkbox"/> Outpatient <input type="checkbox"/> DCA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) <u>Asylum</u>		Facility Name (address if residence): <u>Aisley Asylum</u>
Age (from last birthday): <u>40</u>		Date of Birth: _____	Date of Death: <u>March 23, 1830</u>	Decedent's Usual Occupation: _____
Under 1 year (months/days): _____		Birthplace: _____	Kind of Business/Industry: _____	
Under 1 day (hours/minutes): _____		Mailing Address: _____		
Father's Name: _____				
Mother's Name: _____				
Informant's Name: _____				
Registrar's Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>			Date Filed: <u>March 25th, 1830</u>	
Signature of Person Incharge of Burial for Disposition: <u>[Signature]</u>			Date Permit Issued: <u>March 25th, 1830</u>	
Method of Disposition: <input type="checkbox"/> Burial <input type="checkbox"/> Cremation <input type="checkbox"/> Reinterment in State <input type="checkbox"/> Donation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) <u>Accident</u>				Place of Disposition (cemetery, etc.): _____
Name of Embalmer: _____				License #: _____
Signature of Funeral Director or other person in charge: _____				License #: _____
Date of Disposition: _____				
Certifier (Check only one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certifying Physician To the _____ (specify date, place, and date and date to the cause(s) and manner as specified.) <input type="checkbox"/> Coroner On the basis of _____ (specify date, place, and date to the cause(s) and manner as stated.)				
Certifier's Signature and Title: <u>[Signature]</u>			License #: <u>839</u>	Date signed: <u>March 27th 1830</u>
Name and Address of Person who Completed Cause of Death: _____			Was Case Referred to Coroner? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Date Pronounced Dead: _____
Immediate Cause (final disease or condition resulting in death): <u>Born Not Found</u>				Approximate interval between onset and death: _____
Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to immediate cause. Enter UNDERLYING CAUSE (disease or injury that initiated events resulting in death) LAST. a _____ b _____ c _____ d _____				
Other significant conditions (contributed to death) but not resulting in Underlying Cause: <u>Aisley Asylum</u>				Was Autopsy performed? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Manner of Death: <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accident		<input type="checkbox"/> Pending Investigation <input type="checkbox"/> Could not be determined	Date of Injury: <u>March 23, 1830</u>	Time of Injury: _____
			Place of Injury: <u>1</u>	Injury at Work? _____

# Tragic Fire at Aisley Asylum

By Oliver Carroll  
March, 23rd 1830

Citizens of the mainland were awakened today to a reddish light coming from across the coasts. Men dispatched out there found to Aisley Asylum in flames and with a large portion of the island falling into the ocean from the blast of an explosion. Very few survivors found, and it is believed that an accident occurred in the heating rooms that caused the fire to spread to the rest of the



Aisley Home for the

INPATIENT ADMINISTRATION

Patient's Name: FRANK COOPER  
 Usual Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Usual Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Race: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Height: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Next of Kin: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_

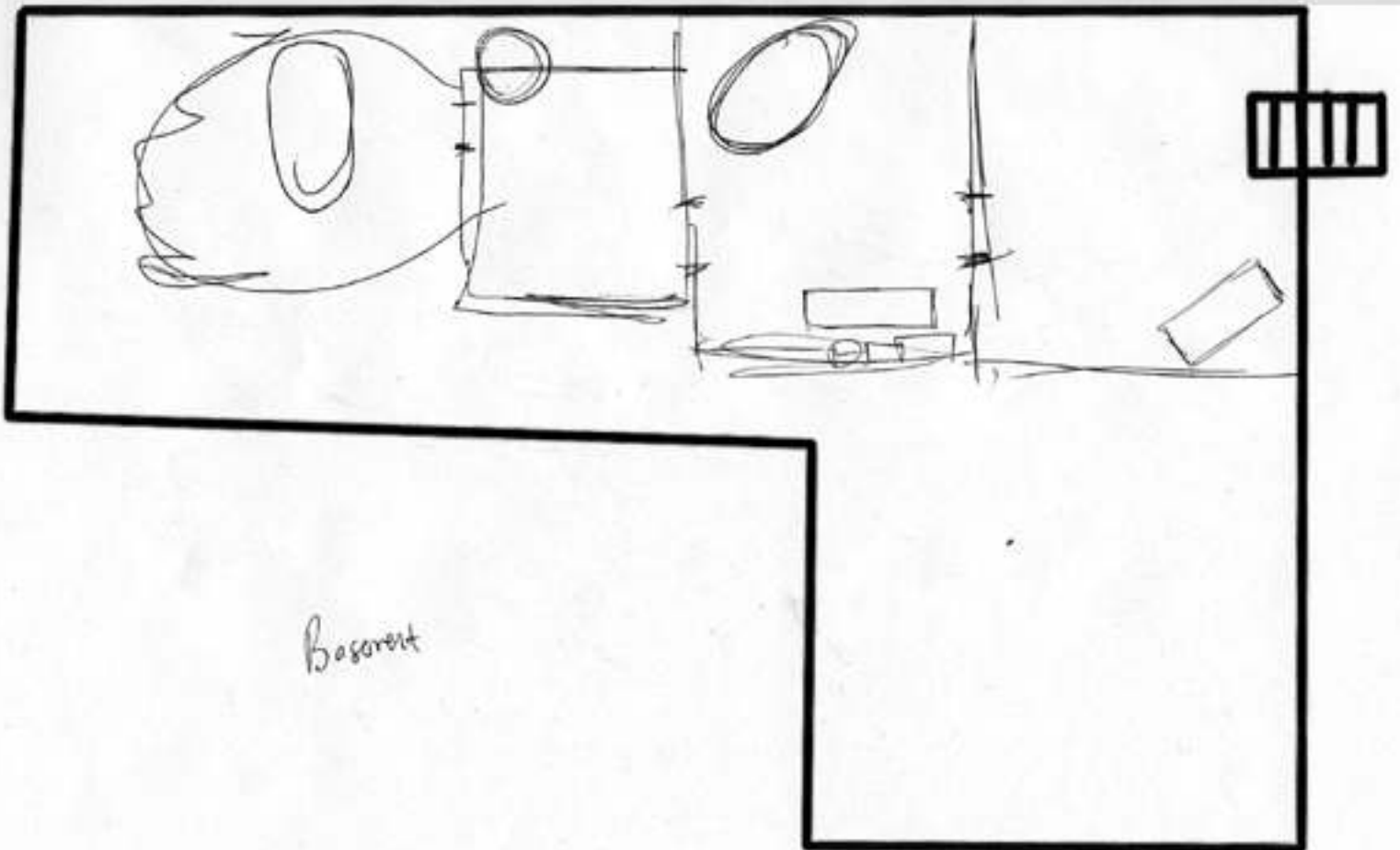
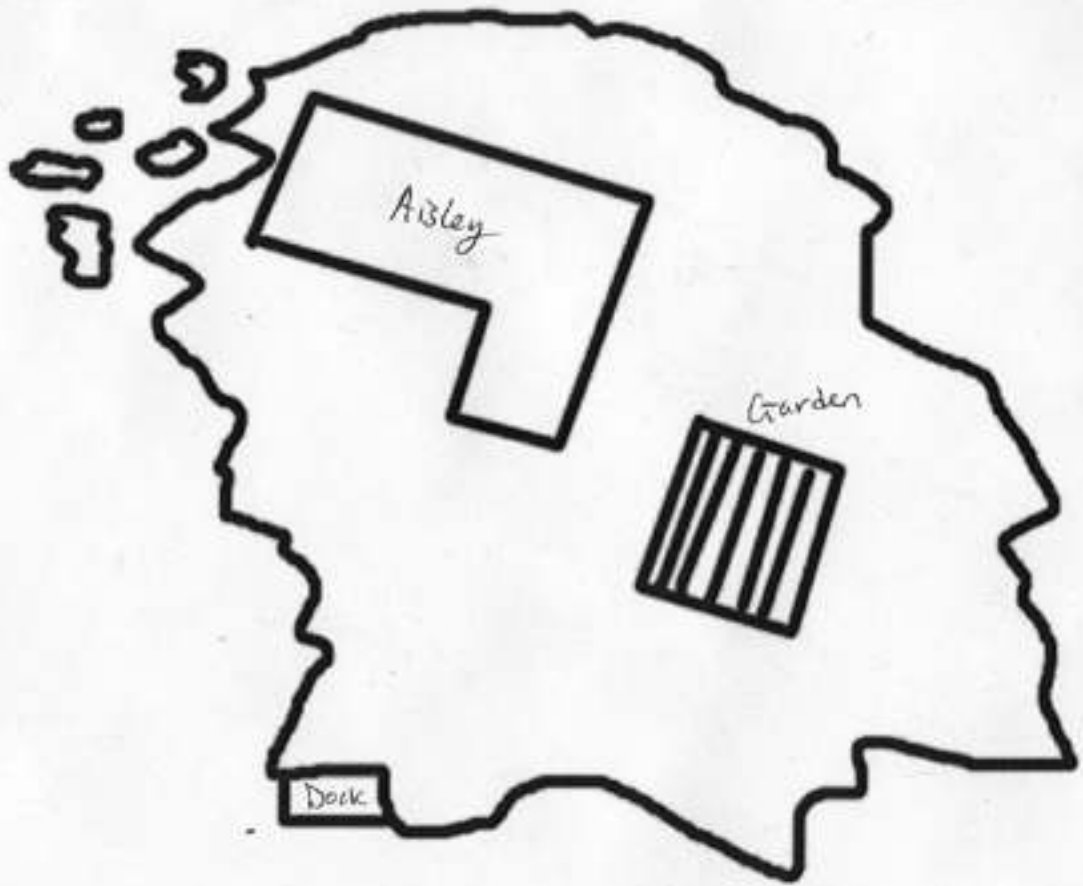
Doctors still not sure what caused the explosion, and are trying themselves in various ways.

*You see a dresser with a yellow daisy on top. Something is there.*

*You dream of burning. You were in a fire.*

*Handwritten notes and scribbles at the bottom right of the page, including the words 'Pain', 'fire', 'burning', and 'dream'.*





### **C) Description of the Puzzle**

As the adventure is an investigation, the entire thing is a kind of puzzle. In the beginning stages, the puzzle seems to be the dramatic question of, “Is the asylum mistreating Julius Wit, and if so, how can we prove it?” There are a number of clues that can turn up through talking to people, sneaking around, and breaking into locked areas. During play, the investigators wanted to find the medical records of the patients. To do this, they talked some keys out of the nurse, snuck past an orderly and broke into a storage room. Conversation itself became a bit of a puzzle; especially in talking to Julius Wit and gradually working out that his multiple personality disorder has been solved by trapping him in the wrong personality. This discovery came about from the investigators feeling that something was wrong, and trying to say different things to him until they sensed a coherent response and then seized upon it. All of these smaller puzzles though are all part of unlocking the greater puzzle of the major dramatic question.

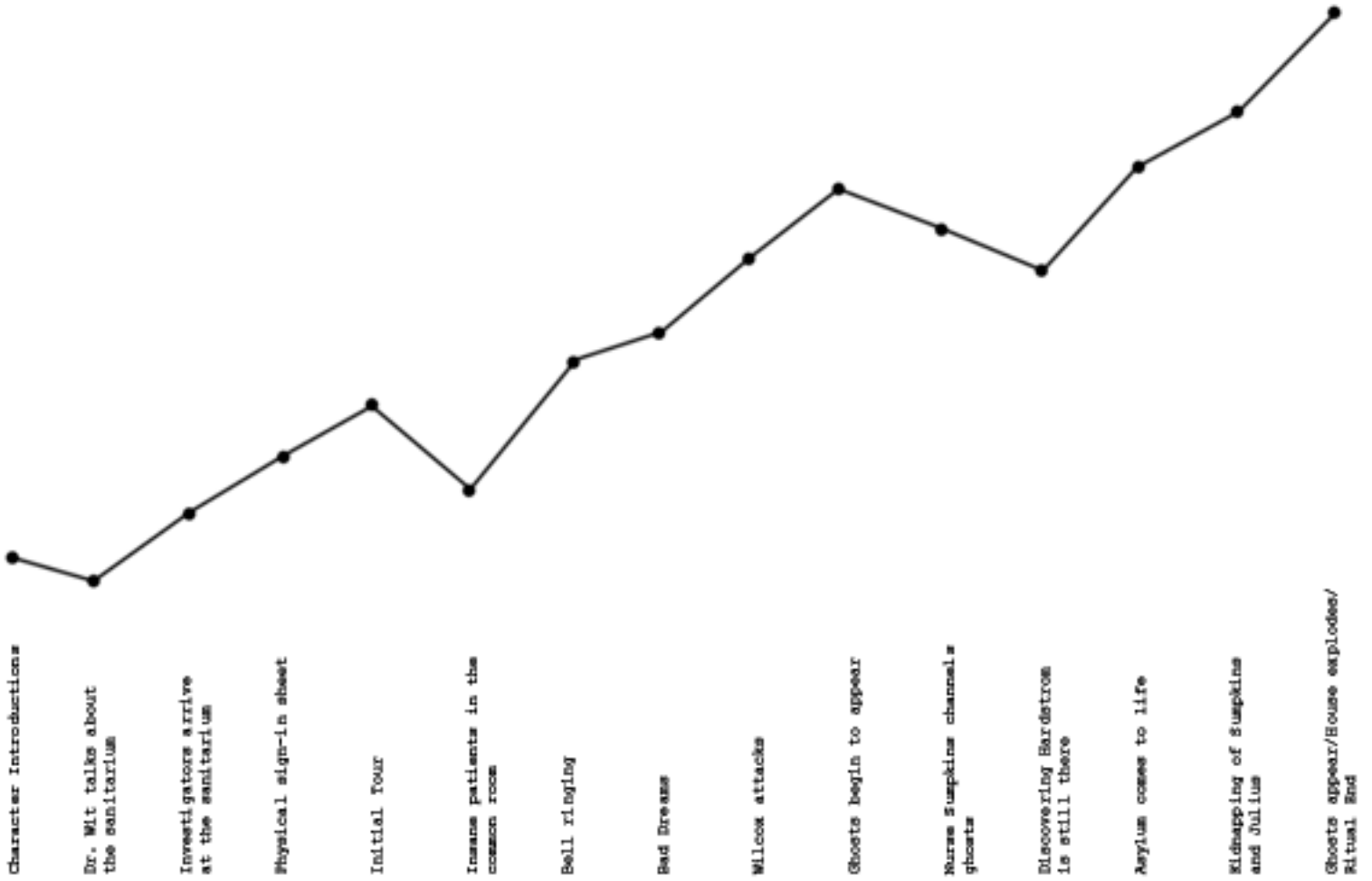
Overall, I feel the puzzle was a great success. Establishing at the beginning that the players were trying to solve something directed their focus immediately and all their actions served the interests of solving this puzzle.

The individual puzzles also seemed to work especially well. I am particularly fond of the investigators trying to find out what happened to Julius Wit. Initially he seems calm, but somewhat empty. It isn't till they actually call him Julius (as opposed to his fake name of Trevor) that they get anything resembling a response. Additionally, in different conversations with Julius, he gives different answers and the players were able to understand that something very bad had happened to Julius to make him turn only into Trevor. All this was revealed through conversation and asking the right questions.

While later on, the global puzzle was to evolve into “How do we foil the ritual and rescue the people?” the group never reached this stage as we stopped the adventure due to time.

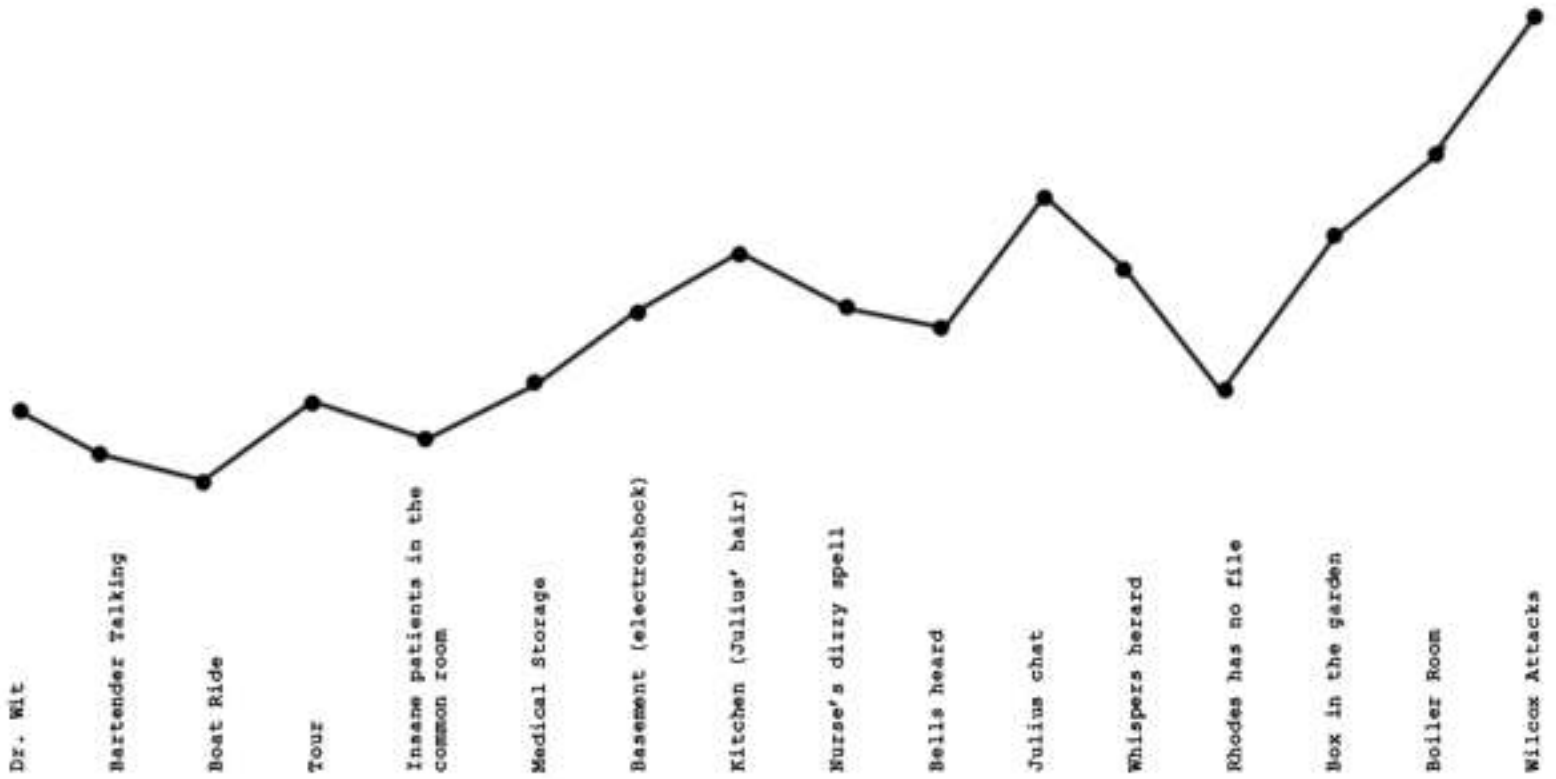


## D) Expected Interest Curve



### E) Actual Interest Curve

(note, when we ended the session, we were only 1/3 of the way through the planned events. That is, 1/3 of the way through the interest curve shown above.)



**F) Player's Interest Curves**

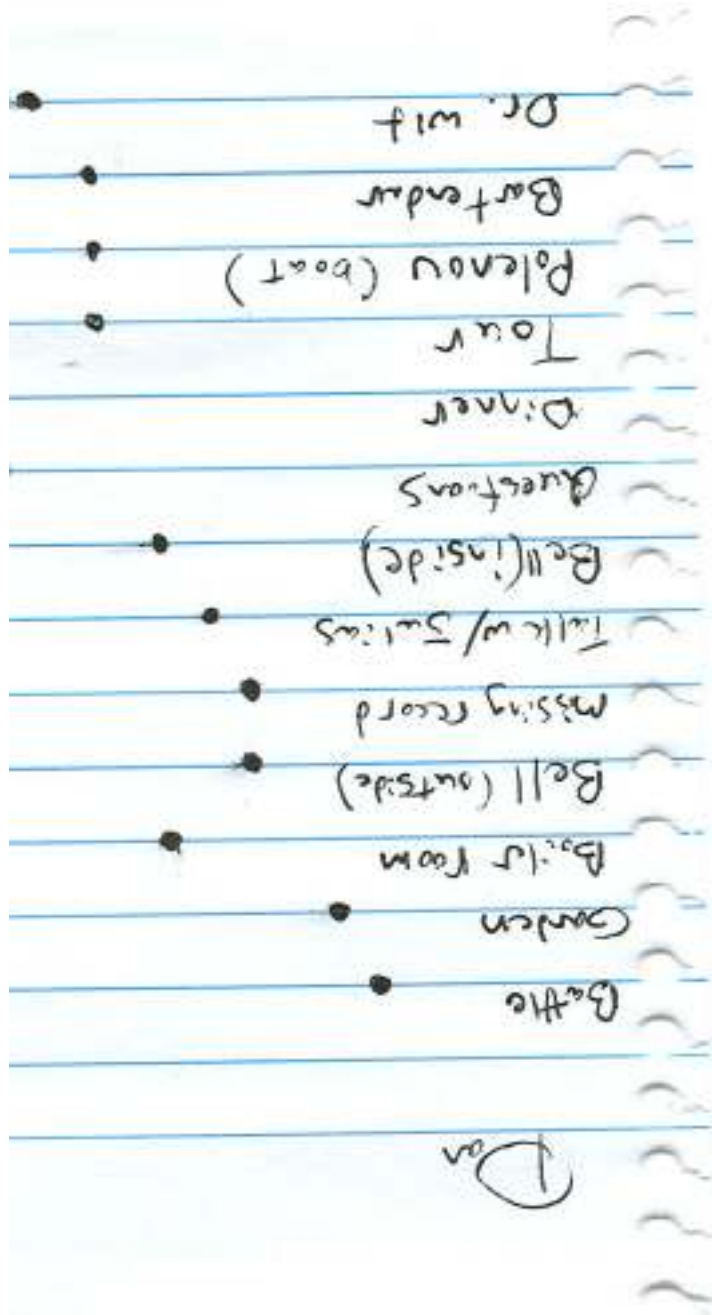
Michelle Pun's, Dan Sorge, and Michael Taylor John's.

# MICHE

- Dr. Wit
- Bar tender
- Boat Ride
- Tour
- Common Room w/ Patients
- Medical Storage
- Basement (Electric Storage)
- Kitchen
- Julius' Hair
- L's dizzy spell
- Bells
- Julius' chat
- Whispers



To be read from Dr. Wit to Battle.



0



•

LIBBY'S SPELL

spell

SNOOTING OUTSIDE



•

BATTLE WITH WILCOX

## **G) Post Mortem: Revelations and Insight**

When I came up with my adventure, the first day was fairly short and sweet. You got the quest from Dr. Wit, you went to Aisley Asylum, got the tour there, had dinner, talked to a couple people, then went to bed. The next day, the strangeness began. I initially intended to have this take one hour.

What actually happened when I ran it was that Dr. Wit gave the players the quest, the investigators then went to the docks to question the bartenders there about everything they knew about the island, the players then took the boat to Aisley Asylum (and along the way talked extensively to Polanov the boatman), got the tour, talked to a number of people, and had time to visit the rest of the house and talk to most everyone. This took three hours. This brings me to my first revelation.

### **Investigative Player Will Exhaust Every Option. Especially Ones You Don't Consider**

If your players are supposed to solve a mystery, they will darn well do their best to discover the mystery through as many leads as possible. I, rather obliviously, thought that having been given their quest and their boat ticket, the players would go to bed and immediately the next morning head off to the asylum to investigate. Instead, my players went to the local bars near the dock (like good investigators) to ask about Aisley Asylum. Naturally, the people there would know about that place and they may very well know about the people who come from there. This brings me to my next insight.

### **Know Your World.**

This is something I actually managed to do very well. Your players will probably ask you questions about the world, people, and history, and you need to be prepared with an answer. While a person may very well say, "I don't know," too much of that and the players will either realize you are avoiding their questions or they will start getting frustrated. Having intimately crafted the people, world, and environment, I either had an answer for everything, or I could logically come up with an answer in one second.

### **Should Your "Rare Knowledge" Really be Rare? Or Does Everyone Know It?**

However, there were some factors where again, I underestimated the investigators. Originally I planned for the investigators to not know that Aisley had been through a number of fires. They would eventually come across it by searching the records archive and finding news clippings and burnt paper. Instead, what ended up happening is they talked to the bartender about interesting happenings at Aisley. Of course he is going to know about the several big fires that have gone over there. Relatively small community with a big disaster? Everyone's going to know that.

### **Characters with Personality Add to the Experience**

The bartender was never a character I came up with until the players decided to talk to him, but by adopting the posture, facial expression, and voice of what I thought a 1900's bartender would be like, it added to the reality of the experience. He had a gruff

personality but a sweet side to him, and that came across in how he talked to the investigators. In turn, they felt more willing to role play and get into their characters.

### **Your NPCs Can Change Based on PC Perspective**

The caretaker, Polanov was originally intended to be a gruff individual who was working with Alleister and would eventually betray the PCs and his friends to gain power. In practice, when the players first began talking to him, he was gruff, plain, and direct. He had a sarcastic sense of humor and the feel of ‘working man just trying to get by.’ I had intended him to be dour and he ended up being dour yet incredibly charming to the players. At that moment I made the snap decision of, “I can’t have him be such a huge jerk later on now, it just wouldn’t seem right. He’s too much of a realistic and enjoyable character to have him turn completely evil.” So instead, I went with the gruff everyman appeal, and even added a scene where the players come across a happily drunk Polanov.

### **Keeping Track of Time in Game Can be Important And Setting Events Based on Time can be Frustrating to Players**

As stated earlier, the players were supposed to go to the asylum, interact a little bit, go to bed, and then have the craziness start. Instead, due to me miscalculating time, they had plenty of time before and after dinner to do as they pleased on the island. As such, they were able to cover a lot more ground than I thought they would be able to. Additionally, as the trigger for the next series of events was them going to sleep, and due to (as stated earlier) investigative players exhausting all options, they spent a lot of time before going to bed just spinning their wheels. They were finding out information, but none of it seemed too related to the rest of the case because I was waiting for them to go to sleep. Having the appropriate player action be, “Wait 8 game time hours” is a little lame. This was a mistake on my part, but could have been fixed. Through more careful use of time, I could have either ensured they would go to bed early or that their investigations would have a quicker cut off point. Either that, or I could have moved the events up a bit. All the same though, there was still one big problem.

### **Red Herring Main Quests can be Problematic**

The players start the quest thinking it’s about seeing to Dr. Wit’s son and making sure he’s being taken care of. The actual main quest involves stopping Alleister from summoning his dark god. These are *very* different. There are clues and evidence for the second quest, but I did not really pay attention to the red herring quest. The players would find plenty of evidence, but it would all be related to the Alleister quest, so players had a difficult time working out how it fit in with the Wit quest. I feel there are a couple different ways this could have been solved. Either I could have hinted at the Alleister quest a lot more heavy-handedly (or sooner), or rephrased the Wit quest so it was more closely related to the Alleister quest ,or quickly disproved/proved the Red Herring quest so the real quest can be focused upon.

### **Genre Shifts Need to be Hinted At**

My adventure starts out relatively realistically and then takes a bit of a wild turn. After we folded up the game at the three hour mark (and not finished with it), the players had me explain the rest of the story of what was going on at the Asylum. When they



learned about the supernatural events that were going to happen, they were quite surprised. Slight supernatural events had started to happen in the game, but they just felt a bit off because they hadn't been hinted at before. This could have easily been solved by the bartender or Polanov saying, even in passing, "I don't like Aisley. Too many old ghosts and bad deaths." Basically, don't have wide genre shifts without a little bit of foreshadowing at the beginning.

### **Technology Concerns can be Forgiving**

Having a player ask you, "How many ohms are listed on the electroshock machine," can send you for a whirl, especially when you have only the vaguest idea of what an ohm is and no idea whatsoever how many would be on an electroshock machine.

Stay cool, make something up, or state something along the lines of, "They are all within reasonable numbers."

### **Give Players Something When they Have Been Looking Hard**

Here, my wide assortment of items that could be placed anywhere came in very handy. When a player mentions with a light in his eyes of checking in a certain place to try and find something, you really have to try not to crush that hope, otherwise they'll feel more resentful and less willing to experiment. There was one case where one of my players decided to check the rotten garden during a rainstorm. He seemed hopeful, so I had him find a box filled with razor blades and a note about 'pain makes him go away' that was originally intended to be in the room with the orderlies. The discoverer felt good and the other players were interested.

### **Personally, I Need to be Better at Judging Time**

I had originally intended the initial trip to Aisley to take one hour and then the players would spend the remaining two trying to foil Alleister's plan. It turned out that because the players were exhausting all sources of information, the first day took all three hours. I need to be more careful when analyzing how long something can take.

### **The Interest Curve Really Helps**

Being conscious of events that have happened and the general interest of your players does wonders for keeping them interested and staying within the flow channel. I kept track of the interest curve as we played, and because of that I knew when to 'throw them a bone' and when to let them sit in frustration a little bit longer so that the reward would be sweeter. One time this worked very well was for the end of my adventure. We were approaching three hours and I realized that we were only about 40% finished with the entire adventure. I began engineering events to happen that would start raising the stakes tremendously. Weird events started to happen, the players were uncovering strange documents, then, at the moment before we closed, a patient attacked, fought the investigators and eventually was killed. All the while he had tears running down his face and was apologizing as he lunged out at them. This ended the adventure on a quite high note, as the players really wanted to know what was going on. Even though the players were willing to keep going, after I decided against it due to all of our time constraints, they had me reveal the rest of the story because their interest was at a peak.

### **Little Touches to Characters Help**

As I was making characters for the players, I decided I really wanted them to feel a little special in their role, so I resolved to give them items and history that would help make them feel like more than just a lot of numbers. One I made an orphan and apprentice to the other, one I gave a pipe and matches, and one I said was a former soldier and I had him carry a few sticks of dynamite. Upon reading their character sheets, every player was initially intrigued or at least amused that their character had a little quirk that made him different. This got the players much more willing to get into their characters.

### **Means to a Story**

As I've learned, if you're going to tell a story, use whatever means possible. The paper handouts really got people jazzed up. From the moment when they had an actual hospital sign in sheet to fill out, to finding other documents buried in boxes, players had something tactile they could hold onto. Second, pictures always work well. I could spend time describing an NPC, or I could just show a picture of what they look like. The players now have that image right in front of them and they can spend less time mentally categorizing and more time engaged in the game. Third, I have some talent at acting, and being able to portray a bunch of different characters with voices, posture, and what they say really makes the world feel a lot more alive. Through these things, I got the players more interested in the story and thus more willing and free to play.