



# WHISPHERED SHADOWS

A Fallout: PnP Adventure  
For 3-6 Characters  
Levels 5-9

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## Introduction

Whispered Shadows is an adventure for the Fallout: Pencil and Paper Roleplaying Game. The game itself, and this module, are both available for download at <http://www.iamapsycho.com/fallout>. A copy of the 2.0 core rules book and the rules errata are required to play this module.

## For the GM's Eyes Only!

Thanks for checking out this stand-alone adventure. This is not planned to be part of any campaign, unless I get more requests for "horror"-style adventures. For that is what Whispered Shadows is: a horror story, with the characters as the victims. It is an extremely story-driven adventure, with almost no combat at all (unless the characters decide to initiate combat). Whispered Shadows is designed to draw the party in innocently, and slowly tighten the vise-grips until the players are practically choking along with their characters. It involves elements not traditionally found in Fallout: one could call them "magic," or simply "supernatural." Whispered Shadows is a haunted house story, a mystery, and a great way to humble an arrogant party all rolled into one.

Should the GM wish to play Whispered Shadows, he or she can have a great deal of fun torturing the PCs. But this is a warning to all sadistic Gamemasters: a little bit of horror goes a LONG way. Characters whose control is wrenched suddenly from them won't feel horror, they will feel frustrated. By the time the players realize they are trapped, it should be very late in the adventure; good GMs will have to be on a closer guard than normal, careful not to send the PCs packing before it's too late - and not to frustrate them too early. GMs should read through the entire adventure and be familiar with different possibilities, as the events in Whispered Shadows are not necessarily linear.

I should note that this adventure is based very closely (it's almost a direct translation) of an adventure that I wrote for 2nd Edition AD&D's "Ravenloft" campaign setting. That adventure was based on the House of Lament, a micro-domain outlined in the "Darklords" accessory for Ravenloft. Anyone interested in the background of the story can find more information there. The picture of the house and the map are both original artwork by The Kargatane, and you can find their website at [www.kargatane.com](http://www.kargatane.com).

I'd like to take a minute and thank all the great authors and illustrators who made Ravenloft a roleplaying institution: you're the reason 2nd Edition still exists, and will continue to do so. Your original ideas and style were the single-largest influence on me as a gamer and RPG writer. Thanks also to Elizabeth, because without her support, this never would have made it past the raw text stage.

Questions? Comments? Email the author at [unasoda@hotmail.com](mailto:unasoda@hotmail.com).

## Adventure Overview and Setting

Whispered Shadows is an ideal adventure for a party of 3-6 characters levels 5-9. Although there will be no experience points awarded for combat, surviving the night in the House will be reward itself (with some XP, too). Whispered Shadows is a great adventure to humble an overconfident or arrogant party, and (as will be outlined below), a great way to allow a character who no longer wished to play to leave the campaign. Whispered Shadows is not part of a campaign, and since the action takes place over one evening, it can easily be incorporated into any group's adventures. It will typically play about 4-5 hours to play (more if the GM builds the mood), so it's a great one-night adventure.

It should be noted that Whispered Shadows relies heavily on the supernatural and events that cannot be explained by science,

as it is a haunted house story. This may be enough to put some players off, but it's also a great way to draw the focus of a campaign away from giant killer robots for a night. Characters investigating the various phenomenon in the house will either find them to be scientifically possible, or their science skill fails them completely. How the GM chooses to address this is completely up to him or her; some suggestions are made along the way.

Once in the house, the adventure progresses in two ways: the exploration of the house, and a series of "events" that happen either as the characters are exploring or as they hunker down for the night. Once inside the house, every room and area is described first, allowing the characters to explore at their leisure. After that, the series of events is listed. Since some of those events might happen while the characters explore the house, it's important for the GM to be familiar with both sections, as players might be running rapidly from room to room to investigate.

The house itself has a strange and unusual history. Built by a wealthy businessman for his new trophy wife, Mara, it was completed but hardly ever lived in. Mara did not love her husband, as she was forced into marrying him by her father. Mara loved another, a handsome soldier in the pre-War Army. When he was sent abroad to fight, she began to waste away with worry. Her husband, growing suspicious, began to ask around and discovered his wife's affair. Enraged, he killed her in the house he built for her, and buried her body in the bottom level of the tower, covering the hole with bricks. Soon after, he began to have strange hallucinations and dreams, seeing his wife, and the house, as they tried to "get" him. One day, the neighbors came over and found him dead, a look of pure terror on his face. The house had claimed its first victim. It will continue to kill one member of each group (or a solitary wanderer) that enters, as the house itself searches for a friend for Mara. The War has not slowed it down,

although victims are fewer and more far between these days.

The adventure finds the characters stuck in a storm, looking for shelter. They find a pre-War house, still standing off of a lonely farm road in the middle of nowhere. As it seems to be the only option as the storm builds, the characters will (perhaps with some gentle GM prodding) take refuge in the house. Soon after they arrive, they begin to realize that things aren't quite right; strange sounds come from empty rooms, and other odd, unexplainable events occur around them. As the night progresses, the house "chooses" one of the characters - the "Focal Character" - to "welcome home." After this point, the only way out of the house is for that character to die. Whether that death is real, or merely something that knocks the character into a deep coma, is up to the GM. Morning only comes when the character sacrifices himself or herself to the house, or the entire party is dead, as the house will eventually begin to mount its attack on the party. Once the phenomenon begin to occur, they grow progressively worse until the characters have no choice but to leave, as the house will kill the entire party.

### **A note about healing in the house:**

Since it would be easy for a party with loads of stimpaks to simply heal themselves, the characters will find these drugs to be much less effective in the house. Stimpaks and other healing chems only give one-quarter of their normal benefits (the final number of healed hit points is divided by four and rounded down). In addition, whenever the characters attempt to use the First Aid or Doctor skills to heal, the house itself attacks them through some devious means; it might be a cold breeze that distracts the healer, or another incident occurs elsewhere in the house. Only as a last resort, or very late in the adventure, should the house directly attack the party.

## Part One: The Coming Storm

When the characters are traveling between places, read the following.

Far off in the late afternoon sky, you notice that storm clouds are forming fast. Their tall, menacing anvils hangs over you, threatening to open the skies on your head and soak you with hammer-like rain. It what seems like only a few moments, the clouds get much closer, and menacing sound of lighting reaches your ears.

That was just a taste of things to come. Allow the party time to discuss plans, etc. If they decide to make camp for the night, then read the next passage and then the passage after immediately. If they decide to press on towards their destination, read below.

The rain begins to patter your face as the storm finally breaks. The clouds nearly drown out the setting sun, leaving everything in a purple, shadowy glow. The rain instantly soaks you to the bone, cutting through clothes and armor with equal abandon. It gets in your eyes, stinging them with the dust of the Wastes. Discomfort becomes misery with every step you take, and all you can think of is getting dry and warm again.

If that isn't enough encouragement for the party to begin seeking shelter, the GM can throw something else in as well; perhaps Geiger counters (or sensitive characters) can detect that the storm is spreading some radioactive dust, or a giant twister might be sighted in the distance. Once the players are convinced they need to find a place to ride out the storm, read the following passage.

In the brief moment when lighting cuts the sky, you notice the outline of a large brick house sitting slightly off the road. Definitely a pre-War building, it looks to be both secure and intact. Inside, you imagine a place where you might be able to build a fire, or at least peel off your armor and

clothes and allow yourself to dry out.

If that isn't enough to convince the players to enter the house, stress that there is nothing else in any direction, either labeled on any of the party's maps or on an PIPBoy display.

As the players approach the house, read the following:

The house rises out of a hill like a welcoming hand. Its three stories, in a stately (if wet) red brick and tan stone, stand proud and strong against the wastes around it. A single tower rises on the house's left side, as if a point of defiance at the blasted surroundings. The double-wooden front doors still stand shut, and the glass windows all appear to be intact.

The characters should be allowed to make the final decision: go in, or brave the storm. Note that the characters *must* choose for themselves between the house and the torrent outside. Of course, that doesn't mean the GM can't (unfairly) make the house seem to be a better option: rather than focusing on the house's safety, as it is anything but, focus on the peril the storm presents. Different character (or party) shortcomings might be sensitive areas the GM could exploit (but not overdo). If the characters decide to leave, the adventure never takes place: instead, make the storm a truly hellish experience for them, perhaps dosing them up with radioactive particles or forcing them to fight some hunter-killer robot tanks.

When the characters go inside, read the following. A clever GM might even play up the stereotypical "haunted house" elements, putting the characters in a lighthearted mood - and creating a false sense of security or even superiority.

As you approach, the house seems to sigh a little, accepting its new charges. The wooden steps leading up to the porch creak slightly, but still appear to be strong and secure. The large, dark front door opens at the first try, a

heavy movement that makes it creak on hinges that have not been used in years. You cannot see anything inside, but the darkness seems much more inviting than the raging storm behind you.

This is the player's last chance to avoid their fate. If they continue, begin by allowing them to explore the house, or to find a room where they can sleep for the night. Once the characters enter the house, read the following and then proceed to Part Two: The Rope Tightens

Stepping through the doorway, you feel a slight chill pass through you, and then just as suddenly, it vanishes, replaced with a sense of safety. It feels very good not to be pounded with little drops of water, although the rain still makes tinkling noises on the windows and roof. The interior smells dusty but clean, and as your eyes slowly adjust to the light, you begin to fumble for your things and get your bearings.

## Part Two: The Rope Tightens

Now that the characters have entered the house of their own free will (even if they were "convinced" to do so), the only way out is for one character to die. Read the following sections to learn the rules of the house, and then allow the character to explore at will. You might want to remind them of the need to sleep, as dreams (can) play a very important part in what happens next. The room descriptions are below, after the rules.

### This Old House

At the time the characters enter the house, it chooses one of them as its victim. This character will never leave the house alive - or if he does, he will be significantly changed. The house will never directly attack this character, although it will focus much of its phenomenon around him. That character must realize that he must give his life so that the others can leave; this is

described in the "Phenomenon" section, below.

The house is complete and total master of its environment, although it won't let the characters know that until much later. The front door, once closed against the storm, will never open again. Characters trying to open the door will find it locked. Characters trying to break the door down find that it doesn't move and damage mysteriously fixes itself when they aren't looking. Characters who attempt to break windows will find that cracks disappear when they avert their eyes, and that the glass seems to be made of some extremely resilient substance (much like a very thin bulletproof glass). The house is rather dark, although flares and other unnatural light sources function normally; the shadows they cast, however, will always seem to move and dance just out of the range of normal vision. Anyone who attempts to light the house's electrical lights will find that the power switch either doesn't work or that all the light bulbs break because of a power surge. Character-lit lights, such as oil lamps, torches, or fires, will go out in anywhere from 2 to 10 minutes from the time they were lit.

Characters may eventually become frustrated enough with the lack of escape options that they set the house on fire. Characters attempting this find the wood to be rotten and damp, and very difficult to light. Laser and plasma blasts likewise will not ignite the suddenly damp wood. If a character successfully lights a fire, the house will see that it does not burn for long.

Direct attacks on the house result in the walls, doors, or other affected areas to begin bleeding. The flow is first a trickle, and if attacks persist, finally a gush, as if from an artery. This "wound" does not actually damage the house (it cannot be killed by traditional means, except perhaps detonating a nuclear device inside of it), but does create a slippery area and a certain kind of critter, found only in this house. Initial

attempts to damage the house will not produce blood, as this effect is meant to horrify a desperate party, not stun a character who is simply exploring his resting place (or prison). If the house suffers an equivalent of 100 HP of damage, the blood collects into a Blood Monster (see description at the end of the adventure), which then attacks the party.

## Guided Tour

The following map and location descriptions should be used as the characters explore the house. Remember that some of the phenomenon, listed afterwards, might occur during this exploration, depending on how the GM decides to pace the adventure - and how soon the GM wishes the characters to realize that all is not what it seems.

See the Map of the house, in Appendix 1, for a layout (and a map for the players, if necessary).

### 1. Foyer

This entry hall stretches two floors up, and a large, spiral staircase ascends into the shadows above. A large, crystal chandelier hangs directly over your heads, its thousands of glass parts reflecting a dull, red light from a stained-glass window high above the door. The effect is strange, like a spider's compound eyes slowly glowing and spinning around you.

There is nothing of interest in the foyer, except for an old, rotted umbrella in a jar by the door. This curiosity might interest some PCs, and can serve as a way to decrease tension and lull the characters into a sense of security. Note that these stairs are one of only two ways to the second floor, and this room will become the focal point for several of the phenomenon experienced later.

### 2. Receiving Room

A small, cozy room, this little niche holds a few benches and several coat racks along the

walls. Everything is covered with a thick layer of dust, and it is obvious this room has not been used in quite a while. It seems like the light has a hard time penetrating this room, and the pegs sticking out from the walls cast strange shadows in the low light.

Aside from the pegs on the walls, which are nothing more than what they seem, this room is empty. It might be an ideal place for the party to attempt to spend the night, but a gentle suggestion from the GM might convince them to try and look for beds elsewhere.

### 3. Front Parlor

A spacious parlor that opens off of the main hallway, filled with tiny couches and chairs, this room looks as if it once belonged to a prim and proper lady. The lace has long since faded to white, and the couches smell a little musty. A tiny hand-mirror sits on one of the tables, long since corroded, its glass broken and gone.

The mirror has no value, although if a character wishes to take it, that's his or her prerogative. Otherwise, there is nothing in this room.

### 4. Gallery

Small statues line the walls, their shadows dancing across several framed paintings. It looks as though whoever owned this house was quite the art collector.

This room actually contains several original paintings that might be considered unique items. However, the house has no plans to give them up; should a character attempt to take a frame down, he or she will find that it is nailed or bolted to the wall. If the character attempts to tear it off, see rules for damaging the house, above. If the character gets to desperate that he or she tries to cut the painting out, they slip and ruin the art. Statues can be removed, but weigh a minimum of five hundred pounds each.

Should any character examine the

artwork closely, read the following.

What looked to be simple paintings of landscapes turn out, on closer inspection, to be pictures of several macabre scenes from religious literature. There are woodcuts depicting sinners in Hell, a sand mandala with Mara's head consuming the Wheel of Life, and Shiva destroying people by the thousands. The colors have not faded over time, and in the dim light, the images appear almost to have a life of their own. You shudder uneasily, wondering who would collect such strange artwork.

#### 5. Parlor

You find yourself in a large parlor, with a fireplace on one wall and a musty deer's head on another. Everything seems to be made from a dark wood, and intricate carvings of mermaids and dolphins cover the mantle. A large couch sits on one wall, surprisingly free from the dust and dampness that seem to have affected the other furniture. A large pile of wood, dusty but otherwise dry, sits beside the fireplace.

This would be an ideal place for the characters to attempt to spend the night. The fireplace is fully operational, and the flue opens with ease. The wood will build a large fire that burns for approximately six hours; more conservation-minded characters can make it last about eight. Either way, it will run out before the end of the night (and mentioning this might prompt further exploration).

#### 6. Library

Shelves greet you as you step into a room that obviously served as a library. The books appear to be in decent shape, and the wing backed reading chairs still look comfortable, if somewhat worn.

PCs who search the books can make a roll against Luck to find a volume that will increase one skill (GM's choice) by 3 skill points. One PC can only find one book. After the PCs begin to experience the phenomenon in the house, they can

make a roll against Luck and find a book called "This Old House," containing a letter that might shed some light on their current situation. The letter falls out of the book. A copy of the letter can be found as Prop "A", at the end of the book. GMs should copy this letter for the PC that finds it.

#### 7. Music Room

A large piano sits in the corner of a long, comfortable music room. Its lacquer top has faded with age, and the tables and chairs surrounding it sit empty, waiting for someone to come and hear it make music once again.

The piano actually works, if any of the characters can play it (although it's a bit out of tune). This room becomes an important focus of phenomenon later.

#### 8. The Game Room

This large, dark room contains a billiards table and a half-rotten bearskin rug. It looks as though the master of the house enjoyed his games; a chessboard, a go table, and some intricately-carved dominoes lie along the walls, and several stuffed deer heads watch you though lifeless eyes.

The pool table has no balls or cues, and the felt has long since decomposed. The bear skin rug is hardly recognizable beneath its layers of grime and dirt, but the deer heads are very well-preserved in a way that is almost uncanny. Do not mention this fact unless one of the PCs specifically asks about it. Other than that, there is nothing of interest here (although a PC might want to take the chess set, the go set, or the dominoes - which is fine. They are in excellent condition and would probably sell for a decent price, to an interested party). Otherwise, this room holds nothing of interest.

#### 9. Smoking Room

This small room contains several overstuffed wingback chairs and numerous ashtrays. The smell of stale cigarettes and cigars still

lingers here years after the last one was extinguished. Copies of old newspapers from the time before the War sit on a small end table.

If the PCs try to pick up a newspaper, it will instantly disintegrate.

#### 10. Ladies' Sitting Room

Well-crafter wicker chairs surround a single large table in the middle of this room. A small basket with a hunk of something that might have once been yarn sits by one of the chairs, untouched in years. A Tiffany lamp hangs from the ceiling, but a large crack down the middle mars its otherwise intricate beauty.

Other than the broken lamp and a knitting needle (treat as a shiv, should a character decide to pick it up as a weapon), there is nothing else in this room.

#### 11. Ballroom

A large, hardwood floor makes your footsteps echo in this spacious ballroom. The storm outside pounds the windows, and you get the idea that one could cave in at any point in time. You can almost see the men in tuxedos and women in fine gowns dancing the night away here, so many years ago. It's funny, but you can almost smell champagne and hear little pieces of party conversation as you walk around, but it's probably just your mind playing tricks on you.

This open room can become the focal point for a major phenomenon.

#### 12. Ballroom

This room is identical to the one above, and the two can be connected by opening the large pair of French doors between them. Like the room above, there isn't much of interest here, except for the mood – and the phenomenon later.

#### 13. Conservatory

The dead remains of large plants are all that is left of what once might have been a beautiful conservatory. Large glass

windows replace the walls, and you can see the storm in full fury outside. The plants themselves still have an earthy stink to them, the scent of loam makes you want to sneeze.

None of the plants can be harvested for anything useful, although the topsoil is still good, if a character has a green thumb (and actually cares enough to take some).

#### 14. Morning Room

The large windows along the walls of this room were designed to let in the morning sunlight, but now only show the occasional flash of lighting. Cabinets sit at various heights, and a table and chairs sit passively, waiting for a family that will never return. There don't seem to be any appliances or other usual kitchen furnishings here, though.

A search of the cabinets will reveal only a few crumbs of dust.

#### 15. Servant's Room

As you enter this room, you notice that the chairs and cabinets here are of significantly less quality than in the rest of the house. The chairs are falling apart, and the wardrobes sag in on themselves. Here more than anywhere you can smell dust and mildew; you can't decide whether to sneeze or cough.

This room originally housed the servants during the daytime, while they waited upon the family. There is nothing in it now save a few cobwebs.

#### 16. Pantry

Rows and rows of shelves sit empty along the walls in this room. The floor is a cold stone, and you see the reason: in the corner, stairs lead down into the cellar. A cold draft seeps up from below, causing you to shiver slightly with the chill.

PCs who ask specifically about the temperature will notice that this room is about ten degrees (F) colder than the rest of the house. This is not because of



some supernatural occurrence, but merely the cellar.

### 17. Kitchen

A large, black stove sits on one side of the room, across from a modern-looking sink and oven set. Everything here is covered with dust and grime, and some decomposed substance sits in the sink and on the stove, making you second-guess any notions you had of eating in here.

The kitchen would be functional, if it had power. The substance on the stove and in the sink is actually some of the house's blood; any character who decides to analyze it will only be able to identify it as blood, not any specific kind of blood.

### 18. Butler's Pantry

This narrow room holds a few empty wine racks, a broken box of flaked cigars, and a large chair for a servant to sit in.

There is nothing much of interest here. The cigar remains will crumble if touched.

### 19. Dining Hall

Photographs of different people line the walls here, the members of a family staring out over the enormous walnut table. Chairs sit around it, and in a mockery of past ritual, corroded silverware still remains at each place setting. The lace napkins are twisted and yellow, and there seems to be an air of tightness and sadness in this room. For some reason, you have the strange urge to leave, or else you might cry at what has been lost.

Of course, this is a double entendre, but don't tell the players this: it was in this room that Mara was murdered by her husband. One of the photographs on the wall is of her. Close inspection of the photographs will reveal that mold or fading has removed the faces on all but one of the pictures: one of a young woman in her early twenties, blonde, but with a sad expression behind her smile.

This is Mara, and this picture becomes the focal point of one of the phenomenon later in the adventure.

### 20. The Cellar

As your eyes adjust to the space in the darkness, it becomes clear that your light source only penetrates a few feet in any direction. You hear the sounds of rodents scurrying back and forth, and other noises that are probably just the house settling. You seem to be in a large, open room with a dirt floor. Pieces of junk, such as broken chairs, children's rusted bicycles, and unidentifiable things covered by white cloth litter the area, casting shadows everywhere.

The cellar is spooky, but not out rightly dangerous. If the characters choose to explore it, they find a door sealed with brick at one end, leading to the tower. This is, in fact, the only entrance to the tower, and must be broken in by inflicting 50 points of damage to it (note that firearms are useless against the brick). If the characters search the junk, they have a 5% chance of finding one item from the Core Rules with a value of 50 or less. Each character can only search once, and each character can only find one item. Subsequent searches, regardless of how the first turned out, will always be fruitless.

In addition, for each minute spent searching around the cellar, each character must make a roll against perception. Those that fail have tripped and take 1d6 of falling damage, in addition to having a 50% chance of breaking a limb.

### 21. The Tower

Unlike the rest of the house, the tower smells of old, wet earth and moss-covered stone. The dampness mixes with the cold, chilling you like the storm outside. Your footsteps seem to disappear into the gloom above, and the only outstanding feature besides the almost endless blackness is a narrow staircase that wraps along the outside of the tower.

The tower holds Mara's tomb, underneath the stairs at the very bottom, behind a crude brick wall. Any character searching the tower will notice the bricks at the base of the stairs do not match the rest of the stonework; should anyone inflict 70 points of damage on the brick wall, they uncover a small chamber with a skeleton in it. This does not count as an attack on the house, and firearms will have no effect on the wall.

Intrepid players may think that burying the skeleton may put the spirits in the house to rest, but this is not the case - the skeleton is not actually Mara, but her husband's, and the house itself is responsible for this discrepancy. Anyone examining the skeleton closely can make a roll against Intelligence or their Science skill; success indicates they realize the skeleton is male (its pelvis is too small to be a female's). This information alone will not lead the PCs to determine who the skeleton is, but will indicate that it is NOT Mara.

Climbing to the top of the tower represents only the threat of falling three stories from the small landing, and the possibility of finding an important clue to solving the riddle of the house. On the wall opposite of the stairs, a loose brick conceals a lockbox containing a simple letter folded into a yellowed envelope. That letter is Prop "B", at the end of the adventure, and should be photocopied and handed out to any player who happens to find it. This is not an easy task; climbing the stairs requires two consecutive successful rolls against Agility to avoid rotting pieces of wood; should one of these rolls fail, the player falls and takes 1d10 points of damage for each story (consider the first roll the second story, and the third roll the third story - European players might want to remember that Americans count stories of buildings from one, and have no "ground" floor before we begin counting, thus making our third story your second level).

## 22. The Upstairs

Narrow hallways spider off in almost every direction as you near the top of the stairs. For some reason, this area of the house seems bigger than the downstairs, despite the lack of moving room. Plush, red carpet crunches softly underfoot, and you can almost feel some of the moisture seeping out of it.

The upstairs, as one can see on the map, is divided into several suites of bedrooms. Each contain a four-poster canopy bed, a trunk or dresser, and other items of furniture like chairs or loveseats. This is the most likely section of the house for the PCs to attempt to spend the night. The larger suites, labeled for the colors in which they are furnished, have nicer beds that have actually managed to survive the decaying environment. They are remnants of a time before the War (in fact, LONG before the War), and many characters might have never experienced such opulence.

Individual room descriptions are not supplied or necessary; the GM can fill in the details as he or she sees fit.

## 23. The Children's Rooms

A sense of innocence fills you as you look around this small room, filled with old teddy bears, a cradle, and a tiny bed. Blue ducks are painted on the wall, and a small mobile hangs from the ceiling, but everything is faded, jaundiced, and covered with dust. You can almost imagine the sounds of children's feet and the toys that must have filled the toy box in the corner.

Although there is nothing of interest in this room (all the toys are, in fact, gone, and a search will turn up nothing), it will become the center of several phenomenon, described below.

## 24. The Attic

The wind outside whistles from unseen holes in the roof as you finish the narrow climb to the attic. The storm seems much

closer, and the timpani beats of rain on the roof sound almost as if it threatens to come down on top of you at any moment. Outlines of various pieces of furniture and boxes slowly come into view as your eyes adjust to the open darkness, and you can barely make out the windows at the front end of the house across from you.

There is nothing of interest in the attic except for some old pieces of junk. The GM might want to seed it with items, as described in "The Cellar," above, or provide some other reward for characters who manage to make it this far, such as an unusual weapon (that will, ironically, be of no use in the struggle against the house).

## Phenomenon

While the characters are exploring the house, and while they settle in for the night, various supernatural phenomenon will begin to manifest. In the beginning, these will be simple distractions that can easily be dismissed as rodents, the storm, or an old building. Later, however, they begin to get worse, growing more personal and eventually more deadly. The house should have selected one of the PCs to be the focus of its attacks; the house will never try to hurt that character, but the only way for the manifestations to stop (and for the party to leave) will be for that character to willingly sacrifice himself (or herself) to the house. If you are planning on actually killing off the character (see "Endgame," below, for alternatives), *make sure* the player knows in advance - but don't tell that player the specifics of what will happen. This can be an excellent plot device for a campaign, allowing a character to make a noble exit, but it can be disastrous if you actually kill off a PC for no reason. If the party is traveling with NPCs, and the GM still wants to kill a character, then it's much better to pick an NPC for death.

The phenomenon listed below run in five categories, which happen in a basic, chronological order -

the harmless ones happen first, and the more intense and deadly ones happen later. This works because you can't immediately throw everything at the party at once - they will simply try to leave the house and realize they are trapped, which makes for more frustration than actual horror (and, if the party isn't aware of the nature of the adventure, they are in for a BIG surprise - it's best to keep it close to your chest as long as possible). There is also the believability factor: people are much more willing to accept strange stuff later on if you throw some gentle, possible things in front of it. For example, having walls drip blood immediately is just plain weird, but if the party heard a far-off sound outside that seemed to grow closer, until they realized it sounded like a heartbeat, and the walls started to pulse a little bit in time with the sound and *then* the walls dripped blood, it would be a more believable scenario. A tip to remember: if you toss a frog in a pot of boiling water, it will leap out. If you toss a frog in a pot of room-temperature water and slowly turn up the heat, it will simply sit there until it is completely cooked, because by the time it realizes what is happening, it's too late. The same goes for people when constructing a horror story.

Keep in mind that these phenomenon are only suggestions; GMs should be as devious and cunning as they wish, so long as it follows the storyline. Also, remember that you don't need to run every one of these mini-encounters or mini-puzzles; if you did, the adventure would take much longer than one session.

Some other techniques of producing tension can also be used. Asking for rolls against a particular stat or skill when it is not necessary, and then jotting down a fake "note" to yourself, is a great way to make the characters think something is going on. In addition, asking a character "What's your [stat] again?" and then making a secret roll yourself works, too. Passing notes to players creates a degree of suspicion, and can send the party on a wild-goose-

chase. Notes might include things like "You have a strong feeling that you should leave the room," or "[Player] seems to be looking very unusual." GMs will, no doubt, think of other ploys to create mood; the key, however, is that each technique should not be overdone.

### **Level One: Welcome Home**

1. When walking through a room, the party notices a cold spot. As the party stands in the room (or moves), the cold spot passes through them and out the door. Only characters who are inside the cold spot can feel it, and a roll against Constitution might be necessary to notice in the first place.

2. When a character opens a door, a wind brushes his or her face. Roll against perception is necessary to notice this.

3. Far off in the house, either upstairs or downstairs depending on the party's position, the characters hear a footstep or two, and then all is silent. Might require a roll against Perception to notice, and then a roll against Intelligence to determine the direction it came from (you can pull players aside and tell the group that made the successful roll against IT "You heard the noise from your left!" while the failing group noticed the noise from the right. It is important to make these rolls secretly, so the characters do not know who is right and who is wrong).

4. One of the characters, while dozing off, has an unusually vivid dream about being chased by a familiar enemy. This should be an enemy that bested the party in combat, or is too strong for the party to fight, such as a band of Super-mutants or a killer robot.

5. While walking down a hallway or through a room, anyone who rolls a successful Perception check notices a strange noise coming from the wall. It sounds like a faint scraping sound, much like a mouse or small animal would make if it were trying to scratch through something.

6. The entire party suddenly notices the distinct odor of pipe tobacco. Then, just as quickly, it is gone, and no trace of it can be found anywhere.

7. When in one room, a snuffling sound, like a dog sniffing the air, is noticed by all characters who make a successful roll against Intelligence with a -1 penalty. The sound disappears as soon as it is mentioned to another character.

8. One character, and one character only, hears a few piano notes. This encounter works best if the party is not in the same part of the house as the music room. If anyone goes to investigate, everything is undisturbed, and no piano music can be heard.

9. The pass the Focal Character's player a note saying "You hear a far-off voice whisper your name, although you can't be sure if it was in your head or not." None of the other characters heard it, and the Focal Character cannot pinpoint the direction the sound came from.

10. As the party wanders through the house, they can make a roll against Intelligence to notice that the drafts are not necessarily consistent; they tend to move back and forth across areas. This is, in effect, the house "breathing" as if it was a living thing, but do not tell the players this - let them determine it on their own.

### **Level Two: Take Off Your Shoes**

1. The players notice that certain shadows tend to flit along the walls *opposite* the direction the other shadows are moving, as if an animal like a cat or dog was running around, although no such animal can be seen.

2. A door the party just walked through slams shut on its own and cannot be opened, except with a successful lockpicking attempt with a -50% penalty. This can be a good way to separate the party to create tension and isolate certain characters (especially the Focal Character).

3. While upstairs, the characters hear laughter and the clinking of glasses coming from the ballroom. An investigation yields nothing.

4. The character's hear a baby crying in the Children's room at the back of the second story of the house. Investigation reveals an empty room, but the crib will be rocking slightly when the first character arrives.

5. When one character is away from the party, tap that person on the shoulder and say that another character is tapping his shoulder, trying to get his attention. This should create quite a stir when the other character denies it; simply inform the player that the character SWORE it was the other character tapping his shoulder.

6. While sleeping, one of the characters has a dream about the Focal Character. In this dream, the Focal Character is hanging from a tight noose, struggling in vain to get free. Waking from this dream causes the character in question to experience a great deal of trauma, dealing two hit points of damage due to the tightening of the muscles.

7. While the characters are in one room, footsteps are heard walking through the hall outside or the next floor up. An investigation yields nothing, but the sound was unmistakable. If the characters ask, tell them the footsteps are heavy, like a man's.

8. If the party walks through the dining room, the picture of Mara leaps off the wall and shatters at the feet of the Focal Character.

9. The entire party hears a strange voice whisper the Focal Character's name. It is impossible to tell whether the voice is a man's or a woman's.

10. The party's light sources all go out simultaneously, plunging the party into darkness. After two minutes, the light normally again. During that two minutes, the GM might want to drop some hints like "you think you see something, but can't be sure" via

notes to different players.

### **Level Three: Stay For Dinner**

1. While walking through the foyer, the characters find a noose dangling from the chandelier, just out of reach. Should the characters find a way to get it down, it is simply a normal length of rope, tied into a hangman's noose.

2. The house begins to communicate with the party, in the form of messages found scribbled on the walls. These messages say things like "Mara is Lonely" and "Mara is Sad."

3. When in the gallery, the characters actually notice one of the statues moving in a subtle way. This can either be an arm movement, an eye movement, or something else minute. Any examination of the statue reveals that it appears to be perfectly normal.

4. In the floor of the house the characters are not currently occupying, doors begin to slam shut (even if the characters shut them all). This sound progresses from the farthest point from the party to the nearest point, stopping when it gets directly beneath them. After a moment of silence (allow the party to discuss the occurrence), the door to whatever room they are in also slams shut; the GM might want to drop a heavy book on the table for emphasis here.

5. The sounds of a children's game follow the characters through a hallway; suddenly, the sounds of merriment stop, and are replaced by cries of "No! No, anything but that!" in a little boy's voice. Then, a long, low cry, which is choked off into silence.

6. While the characters are in a room, they hear footsteps belonging to no one begin to cross the floor. The footsteps advance towards the Focal Character, and stop right before they reach him or her. The party will notice that the dust on the floor is not disturbed by whatever is walking through it.

7. The Focal Character, if asleep, has a dream that he is sitting on a bed, and several pairs of hands pop out of the sheets and grab him, dragging him down into the pillowy softness. The grips are so strong, he cannot break free, and the character screams as he wakes up.

8. If the Focal Character passes by a mirror, she cannot see her own reflection. This effect only lasts for a moment, and everything is normal again as soon as she mentions it to the party.

9. A character who happens to be separated from the party is grabbed by an unseen hand at the ankle and trips; this fall might cause 1d4 points of damage (roll against AG to avoid).

10. A woman's scream rips through the entire house, so loud that the party must cover their ears or suffer 1d4 points of damage from the intensity. Any party member who didn't cover their ears (warn them that they feel like they should - if the players simply pantomime this action, that's fine) suffer from temporary hearing loss for 30 minutes.

#### **Level Four: A Little Dessert?**

1. Walking past the piano, a wire breaks and injures one of the PCs for 1d8 points of damage. This slice will also result in a scar, possibly lowering the character's Charisma by 1 point until the wound heals. This attack automatically hits, and bypasses any armor.

2. If the characters are in a room with the door shut, they hear stomping footsteps outside and in another part of the house. They come closer, and whatever is causing the noise stops to pound on every door along the way. Finally, the footsteps, so loud they cannot possibly be human, arrive at their room and the door almost bends from the force of the pounding. Any character stupid enough to open the door at this point suffers 3d8 points of damage from inhaling a toxic cloud that reeks of decay, but sees nothing outside. If the

characters wait, nothing else happens.

3. The house leaves messages for the Focal Character, in the same charcoal-burn style; these messages will read things like "Welcome Home, [Focal Character]" and "Do You Want to Play With Me?"

4. If the characters wander through the gallery again, one of the statues stabs a passing character for 2d8 points of damage. After that, the statue always wears a grimace of hatred and anger on its face, but remains nothing more than a statue if examined. The attack automatically hits, but damage is dealt with normally.

5. When in the library, the characters are bombarded with books that fly off the shelves. Each character caught in this storm of books suffers 2d8 points of damage; roll against Agility for half damage, but otherwise this attack automatically hits. This might be a good time to drop Prop "A" if the party has not found it yet.

6. As the Focal Character passes a mirror, instead of her own reflection, she sees the sad, tearful reflection of Mara staring back at her. This happens long enough for Mara to beckon with her finger, after which she vanishes, leaving the character's normal reflection; any other party members looking at that moment see this phenomenon, too.

7. A cold spot moves through the room with the party, causing 1d8 hit points of damage to anyone who comes into contact with it (once the party realizes what is happening, allow them to "fight" as normal, moving out of the way. The cold spot can move ten hexes per round, and vanishes after three rounds).

8. The party begins to hear the sounds of a heart beating, and they realize that the house appears to be pulsing in time with those sounds.

9. The party realizes that the drafts moving through the house are more regular, and are coming at a faster pace, as if the house

is "excited."

10. The sounds of a man's laughter echo throughout the house, stopping with "[Focal Character] Is Finally Home!" and immediately cutting off.

### **Level Five: Leaving So Soon?**

1. As the characters are coming down the stairs, the entire staircase shifts, sending the party tumbling to the bottom. Characters suffer 2d10 points of damage, and armor does not stop any of it.

2. Messages scribbled in blood appear on the walls, including "[Focal Character] Will Die!" and "No One Escapes!" No amount of rubbing removes the bloodstains.

3. Floorboards curl up and stab at the characters; this attack bypasses armor and only hits for one round (in other words, it is a surprise attack and combat immediately ends, and is an automatic hit). The floorboards pierce skin and armor for 5d6 points of damage - roll against Agility for 1/2 damage.

4. A guillotine blade falls from a doorway as a character walks through it; this attack has a 50% chance for a critical hit, and instantly inflicts 6d6 points of damage. If the critical hit succeeds, the character is knocked comatose and cannot be revived without medical attention (use of Doctor skill for 4 hours - see the Core Rules for details). After the bloody attack, the blade is nowhere to be found.

5. Furniture flies up and hits the characters; these attacks have a 90% chance to-hit, and get no modifiers for light or range. Each successful hit deals 4d6 points of damage from the force of the impact. As this can be potentially lethal to the entire party in a short period of time, the GM might want to consider keeping the active furniture confined to one room.

6. One of the characters actually falls into the floor of the house, swallowed by the wood (note: this CANNOT be the Focal Character). The wood simply becomes pliable

enough so that the character is trapped between floors; it looks as though the character is up to his waist in floor, and if the party explored below, they see legs dangling from the ceiling. The floor then begins to constrict the character, squeezing the life out of him. The character takes 1d8 points of damage for every minute in the floor, and after 8 minutes, finally falls through to the level below - if he or she is still alive. All attempts to free the character fail, although the house might begin to bleed and spawn a Blood Monster (see above).

7. One of the windows breaks out, showering the party with tiny shards of glass for 2d8 points of damage. The glass will worm its way into the skin, causing all characters near the window to suffer -10% penalties to all to-hit rolls for the next week. If the characters attempt to escape, they find a new pane of glass already in place in the window, unbreakable as all the other glass in the house.

8. The party's light sources go out, and no longer work for the remainder of the adventure.

9. The Focal Character begins to feel cold to anyone who touches him, and his breath makes frost clouds even if the room is warm, although he does not feel any differently.

10. If the party walks through the foyer, the front doors are suddenly open. As the party approaches, they slam shut and a giant, invisible fist punches everyone who was running for them. The force of the blow knocks the party back and inflicts 4d10 points of damage from the powerful hit and the velocity at which the characters hit the wall. This attack is an automatic hit, although armor works normally.

### **Part Three: The Driving Wind**

Eventually, the players will begin to piece together the puzzle of escape: one of them (the Focal Character) must sacrifice himself so that the party can leave. The

actual game mechanics of this can vary; the most likely scenario, especially if the GM is running this adventure as a way for one of the players to bow out of a campaign gracefully, is that the character will actually die. Other possibilities include: the character becomes comatose for three weeks, but manages to survive; the character loses one point of Strength and one point of Constitution permanently; the character loses his will to live, becoming a walking zombie who flies into rage during combat, or whatever. The sacrifice, if it is not to be death, must be something debilitating that will have a major effect on the character's person - or that character's psyche. This presents a great opportunity for the player to roleplay well, and can also be a way to trim a "super-character" down to size a little bit. It is also very good karma, and the person who makes the sacrifice (if it's made willingly and without complaint) gets 300 Karma points (if they manage to survive - and this survival should be in question up until the moment the character "gets up" and walks away, if that's the GM's wish).

The sacrifice must be made by the Focal Character lying down on the dining room table. As soon as this happens, the character writhes in pain and immediately takes 3d10 points of damage (or dies). Read the following:

[Focal Character]'s body writhes and twitches, and you can almost imagine clawed hands coming out of the table and tearing flesh and spirit from [him/her]. Then, as quickly as it began, [focal character] lies still, and you can barely make out the first signs of sunrise out of the windows. You also notice the storm has passed, and can smell the pleasant scent of fresh rain.

The party will likely check to see if the Focal Character survived; either way, the party can now leave the house at their leisure. It should have been a furious struggle, and the party will be changed forever, either for the better or the worse. Each

surviving player gets 10,000 experience points as soon as the party leaves the house. If the GM wants to add a little comic relief and give the party a "reward," read the following special encounter:

### **Special Encounter: Man With a Plan**

Walking down the path towards the road, you never felt so happy to feel the warming rays of the Wasteland sun. As you bid the house one last look, you almost skip as the familiar, dry dust fills your nostrils. The storm has passed, and here and there, tiny green plants are poking their way out of the ground.

Standing on the road, next to an ancient boat of a car, stands a dark-haired man, his face covered with dried blood. He gives you a wan smile, and says, "oh, that place, huh? There's a cabin in the woods about a hundred miles to the east - if you thought that house was bad, you should try staying there for the night!"

Getting closer, you see that his right hand has been replaced with a robotic fist, and he's got a sawed-off shotgun and a chainsaw strapped to his back.

"The name's Ash," he says.

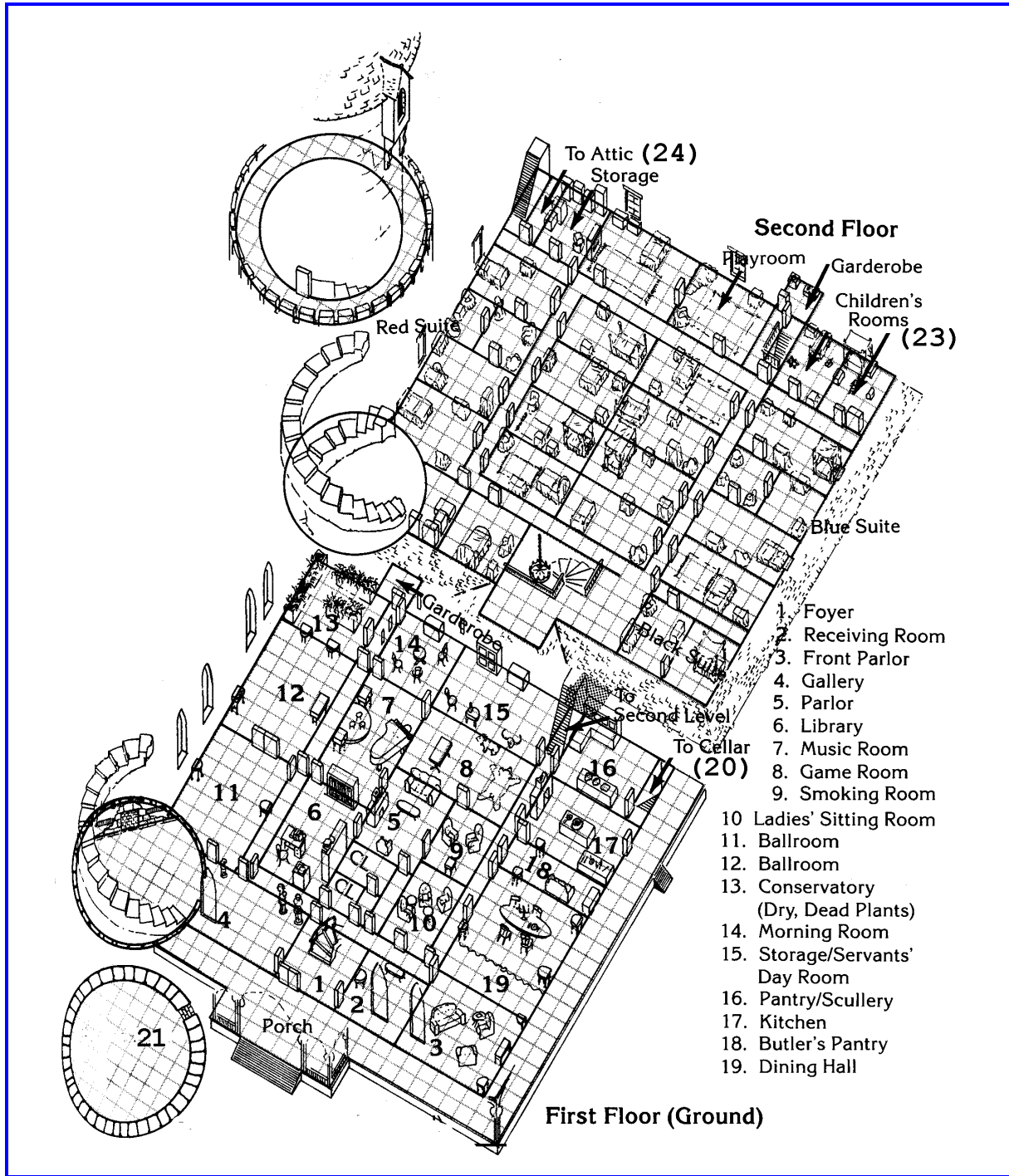
Ash doesn't know much about anything, but will stay and talk with the party for a while. He'll try to figure out where he is, as he's lost (as usual). He'll ask if they've seen an ancient, bound book called the "Necronomicron"; when they answer in the negative, he quickly loses interest.

"Good luck, then. You'll need it." With a nod and a smile, he turns away, heading back the way you came the night before - or was that a lifetime ago?

As the mysterious man disappears into the wastes, you cannot help but think, "Groovy."



# Appendix A: Map of the House



## Appendix B: Bestiary

### Blood Monster

The blood monster is a unique creature, an avatar of the negative energy in the house with one purpose: defend it against those who seek to destroy it. The blood monster has no definitive shape, and can range in height from 1 meter to 4 meters, depending on the room it's in. It looks like a gigantic, slightly humanoid creature made entirely from blood, although it has no legs - more of a single "foot," like a snail, that it moves around on. The monster reeks of the copper smell of a fresh wound. Anything it touches has a thin layer of red blood on it, and the sight, smell and presence of one of these monsters can cause even the most steadfast of characters to turn tail and run. When the blood monster initially forms, every character within 10 hexes of it is forced to make a roll against Endurance; failure means the overwhelming urge to flee out of sight of the monster for 1d10 rounds. During that time, the character will do everything in his or her power to avoid the blood monster, and if trapped, cannot function enough to fight. When the horror of the creature has worn off, then the character can fight normally.

### Blood Monster

HP: 100  
SQ: 9  
AP: 9  
XP: 1  
CC: 10%  
AC: 30            DR            DT  
Normal:            0            100%  
Laser:            10            30%  
Fire:            5            20%  
Plasma:            10            30%  
Explosion:            5            50%  
PR: 100%        RR: 100%        GR: 100/100

Special defenses: cannot be harmed by regular melee or projectile weapons (100% DT), only AP bullets hit normally.

Attacks: Punch (110%, 3 AP, D:2d8+2); Strangle (90%, 5 AP, D:3d6+2, roll against EN. or go unconscious for 1d4 rounds)

## Appendix C: Props

### Prop A

To Whomever is unlucky enough to find this letter,

Know that I am Squire Nathan, of the Brotherhood of Steel. Four members of my company, myself included, have been trapped in this accursed house for what seems to be but one evening, although by my reckoning it has been several days. We took shelter from a violent storm here, the likes of which I have never seen. Only three of us are left: myself, Brother Alphas, and Scribe Beeman. Beeman is plagued with horrible nightmares, and the writing on the walls... no man should have to endure that horror.

Our morale is weakening and we can no longer sleep, except in ten-or-fifteen minute segments as the nightmares have grown too bad to do otherwise. I know the key to our escape is at my fingertips, but damn all if I can't figure out what it is!

If you find this letter, and can identify our condition, I implore you only to listen, as the answers must be right in front of us.

Signed,

Squire Nathan

### Transcript:

To Whomever is unlucky enough to find this letter,

Know that I am Squire Nathan, of the Brotherhood of Steel. Four members of my company, myself included, have been trapped in this accursed house for what seems to be but one evening, although by my reckoning it has been several days. We took shelter from a violent storm here, the likes of which I have never seen. Only three of us are left: myself, Brother Alphas, and Scribe Beeman. Beeman is plagued with horrible nightmares, and the writing on the walls... no man should have to endure that horror.

Our morale is weakening and we can no longer sleep, except in ten-or-fifteen minute segments as the nightmares have grown too bad to do otherwise. I know the key to our escape is at my fingertips, but damn all if I can't figure out what it is!

If you find this letter, and can identify our condition, I implore you only to listen, as the answers must be right in front of us.

Signed, Squire Nathan

Prop B

July 24, 2021,

Dear Diary,

Richard's anger burns like the storm that rages outside. I worry that he's found out about Jacques; Richard is downstairs, and he's drinking; I can smell his cigar smoke up here. Occasionally, I can hear thuds. I know that soon I'll have to go downstairs and find out what's the matter with him.

He keeps talking about a "housewarming present," and something about "sanctifying" our new home. I never should have married the old man; if only I had the strength to tell my father "no!"

It's nothing you haven't heard before, dear diary. But tonight, I fear Richard might actually act upon his impulses.

Jacques, if you find this, know that I'll love you always, you and no other.

Mara

Transcript.

July 24, 2021,

Dear Diary,

Richard's anger burns like the storm that rages outside. I worry that he's found out about Jacques; Richard is downstairs, and he's drinking; I can smell his cigar smoke up here. Occasionally, I can hear thuds. I know that soon I'll have to go downstairs and find out what's the matter with him.

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Jacques, if you find this, know that I'll love you always, you and no other.

### Notes

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