

ALTERNITY®

by JD Wiker

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Urban Legends



Adventure Hooks for your DARK-MATTER™ Campaign

The Hoffmann Institute has a special file for cases they consider solved before an investigation even starts. A dozen dusty filing cabinets are filled with reports of sewer alligators, lake monsters, hook-handed serial killers, and vanishing hitchhikers—cases more commonly known as urban legends. They're the bane of the Institute—or at least they're the bane of the poor rookie agents assigned to them.



Sewer Alligator

STR 14 (d4+11) INT 1 (Animal 4 or d4+2)
DEX 9 (d4+6) WIL 10 (d4+7)
CON 14 (2d4+11) PER 11 (Animal 5 or d4+3)

Durability: 14/14/7/7

Move: sprint 30, run 20, walk 4, swim 18

Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Actions: 3

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite 15/7/3 d4+1w/d6+2w/d4m LI/O
Tail lash 8/4/2 d4s/d4+2s/d8+1s LI/O

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6+1 (LI), d6-1 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

Stealth [9]-hide [11], sneak [12]; Stamina [14]-endurance [16], resist pain [16];
Awareness [10]-intuition [12]; Resolve [10]-physical [12]

Alligators in Our Sewers!

"I'll tell ya ... the damn thing was fifty feet long if it was an inch. I saw Ed look at me kinda funny, then he just slipped right under the water, and up this thing came. It just looked at me, with Ed just hangin' in its jaws—still twitchin' a little! Then it went back under and sorta ... swam past me. I tell ya: I ain't messed myself since I was a baby, but I did then. Sewer alligator. You'll never get me back down there. I'm quitting right damn now."

Everyone has heard some variation of the story in which a family, vacationing in Florida, buys a tiny baby alligator to take back home as a pet. But within a few weeks, the little nipper becomes a nuisance, consuming ridiculous amounts of food and, worse, occasionally escaping to scuttle across the bare toes of their hapless owners. So, flush! Into the toilet it goes. Months later, the tiny alligator is a full-sized adult, tired of subsisting on garbage and the occasional rat—and eyeing care-less sewer workers as its next meal.

The story is so much nonsense—but the basis is true. Fully grown alligators prowl the sewer systems of larger cities, far outside their natural habitat, devouring cast-off refuse, stray animals, and—every now and again—an unfortunate derelict. Two major operations by sanitation officials—backed with funds from the Hoffmann Institute—have rid New York City of almost three dozen “sewer alligators.” But they keep reappearing.

Investigations in New York by Hoffmann agents have revealed that the source of these alligator infestations has nothing to do with humans. Nor are they finding their way in from outside, carried by freighters or La Niña tides. The alligators are coming from unknown locations inside the sewers themselves and apparently breaking through barriers from somewhere deeper in the sewer system. To the Department of Sanitation, this means a nest. To the Hoffmann Institute, this means the kinori.

In point of fact, sewer alligators were originally an attempt by the reptilian kinori to provide a kind of “guard-dog” against further incursions by Hoffmann agents, who had destroyed a major kinori nesting-ground under Manhattan in the 1930s. However, remains found recently in the digestive tracts of some

Despite the high incidence of “reliable witnesses” who turn out to be “the friend of a friend,” someone must investigate every report of tarantulas hatching from cactus plants, swarms of wasps nesting in beehive hairdos, and so on. Nearly every case proves to be the product of the overactive imaginations of gullible people who read too many tabloids, and the reports are filed with a thousand nearly identical reports, some dating back 40 years.

Even so, the vast majority of urban legend investigations tend to be so much drudgery; thus, only rookie agents pull the duty. The official line is that reviewing records, interviewing “witnesses,” and visiting the scenes of crimes and encounters teaches agents the skills they need to investigate more critical cases. The real story is that no field agent in her right mind enjoys poring over moldering newspaper articles, talking to attention-starved suburbanite housewives, or trudging around in swamps and sewers. It's hardly the glamorous life of an investigator that the Institute's *Annals of Cryptozoology* make it out to be.

But every once in a while, an agent stumbles onto something that turns out to be the real thing—sometimes frighteningly real. The Hoffmann Institute is beginning to notice a pattern to certain types of encounters, a

pattern that suggests that some creatures previously attributed to “urban legend” status are actually the new weapons—or worse, new breeds—of old enemies. This development has the Institute just a little worried.

The urban legend files represent confirmed encounters with creatures not human—or no longer human—that Hoffmann agents have discovered hiding behind a veil of modern mythology. The truly chilling thing is that some of them are consciously hiding, using the skepticism of the “intelligentsia” to discredit eyewitnesses and further their own ends—whatever those might be. Most are simply malevolent predators. In either instance, their prey are humans.

Each of the following creatures is based on an urban myth—some new, some very, very old. Gamemasters can use them as examples of ongoing Hoffmann Institute cases, or as “filler adventures” between regular DARK•MATTER sessions. Each creature's entry begins with a kind of eyewitness report and ends with an adventure hook to give the heroes a compelling reason to start an investigation. As with all DARK•MATTER adventures, solving the case should leave a few questions unanswered, giving the heroes a sense that even seemingly unrelated cases might be part of a greater conspiracy.

sewer alligators indicate that their diet consists largely of the kinori themselves.

The obvious conclusion is that the alligators once thought to be so useful to the kinori might have turned on their reptilian cousins, set loose perhaps by some accident unnoticed by humans. Now the alligators prowl at will, growing big and strong on a diet of their erstwhile masters. Another conclusion, though, is that the kinori have a much better handle on the alligators than they want mankind to believe, and that the kinori bodies were only the remains of kinori too old and weak to serve the creatures' society.

At this point, the conclusion of the Hoffmann Institute is that the "sewer 'gators" are real and that their presence likely indicates a hidden enclave of kinori. Whether the alligators are serving the kinori or victimizing them, agents pursuing tales of sewer-dwelling alligators should proceed with caution.

Description: The sewer alligator looks exactly as one would expect: a massive alligator, up to 8 meters long, with a mouth full of wickedly sharp teeth. Closer to the habitats of man they are shorter, forced to subsist mostly on rats and stray animals. But deeper in, closer to the kinori enclaves that spawned them, the sewer alligators grow quite large.

Encounter: Sewer alligators are encountered only in or near sewers and similar public water supplies. Because of their tendency to lie absolutely motionless in or at the edge of the water, waiting for prey, they gain a bonus to their Stealth—hide skill check: -2 steps when mostly submerged, -1 step otherwise.

If a sewer alligator manages to inflict Good or Amazing damage on a bite, it has grasped the victim in its jaws. On its next action, it takes the poor creature underwater, where it attempts to "subdue" its prey, gaining a -2 step bonus to subsequent bite attacks on the same victim. The victim can free itself with an opposed Strength feat check, although doing so while holding one's breath confers an automatic +1 step penalty.

Adventure Hook: Rookie agents pursuing an urban legend case enter a sewer to look for alligators. When they finally encounter one, it is attacking a screaming kinori. Shortly thereafter, more kinori arrive, answering the cries for help, and

Hook Killer Game Data

| | | | | | |
|-----|----|------|-----|----|------|
| STR | 14 | (+2) | INT | 9 | (—) |
| DEX | 10 | (—) | WIL | 14 | (+2) |
| CON | 14 | | PER | 7 | |

Durability: 20/20/10/10

Move: sprint 24, run 16, walk 6

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Actions: 3

Reaction Score: Ordinary /2

Attacks

| | | | |
|---------|---------|-------------------|------|
| Unarmed | 18/9/4 | d4+2s/d4+3s/d4+4s | LI/O |
| Claw | 20/10/5 | d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+2m | LI/O |

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

No resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [14]—climb [16]; Melee Weapons [14]—blade [20]; Unarmed [14]—brawl [18]; Stealth [10]—shadow [14], sneak [18]; Awareness [14]—intuition [16]; Investigate [14]—track [20]; Resolve [14]—physical [20]

realize that humans have invaded their base. Now the heroes must escape an overwhelming force of reptile-men by working their way back through several kilometers of dark, dank sewer tunnels.

"...And There, On the Door, Was a Hook."

911 *Please state the nature of your emergency.*

Ms. Stonewell *Oh my God ... Billy! Billy's dead! I think he's dead!*

911 *Where is Billy, miss?*

Ms. Stonewell *He's out ... we were out by the reservoir ... he's in the tree ... I think—oh, God, he was hanging from the tree! I, um, I don't know ...*

911 *Miss, I need you to tell me what happened.*

Ms. Stonewell *We were ... um, parked, um ... and we heard this noise, like, um, someone behind the car. And Billy, oh God, he got out, and he said, um, he said it was the psycho—the one on the radio ...*

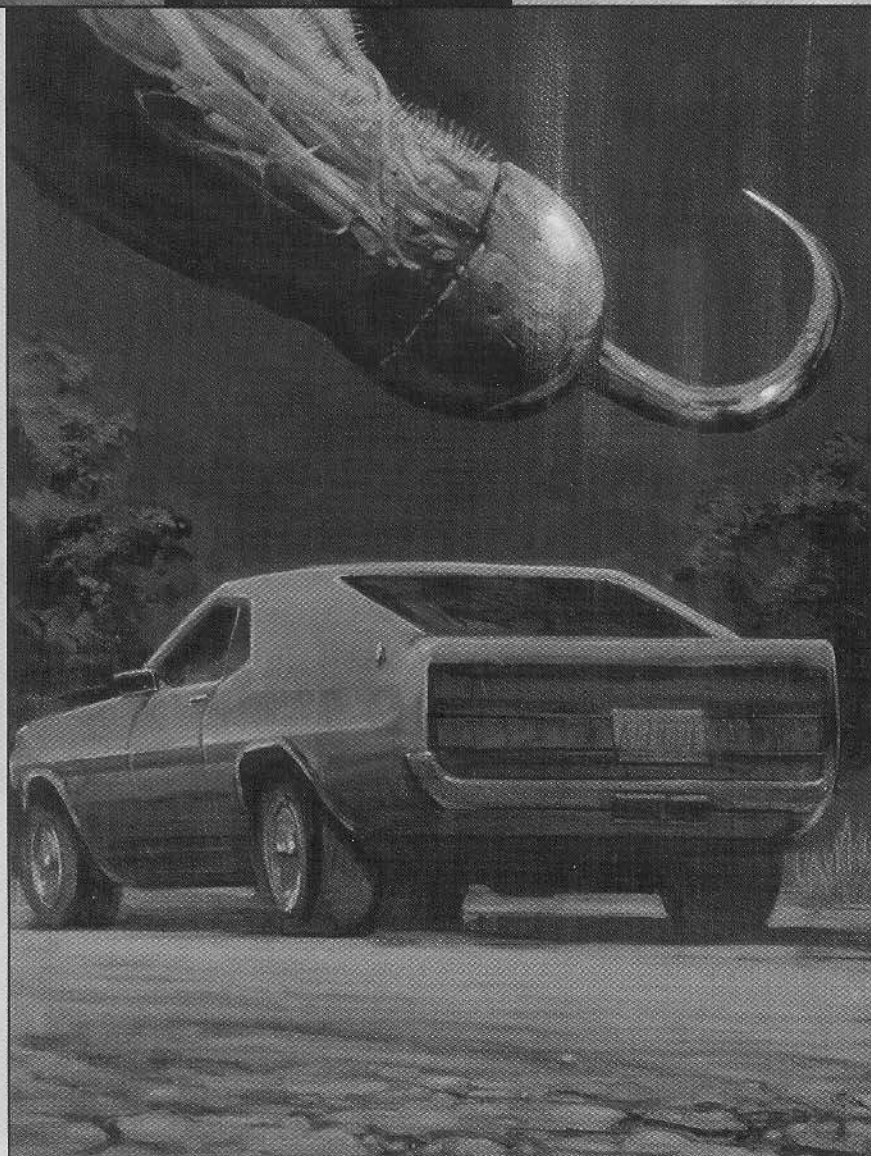
911 *On the radio?*

Ms. Stonewell *Aren't you listening? The guy with the hook!*

One of the most enduring urban legends is the tale of the teenage lovers who park on a lonely country road to make whoopee but who then hear on the radio about an escaped mental patient in the area—a man with a hook for a hand. The young man hears a noise and goes to investigate—but fails to return. Soon, his girlfriend begins to hear a rhythmic scraping noise from the roof of the car, and when she sees blood running down the windshield, she starts the car and drives away in a panic. When she arrives home, her family discovers a bloody hook hanging from the door handle. The police find her boyfriend's disemboweled corpse hanging from a tree over the exact spot where the car was parked.

The basis of the story lies in the public's fear of serial killers (and a rather overblown depiction of the dangers of teenage sex). But despite a lack of verifiable evidence—including the obvious piece, the hook—the Hoffmann Institute has uncovered a pile of unsolved cases involving disembowelments by a weapon judged to be a "hook or similar instrument." None actually involve young lovers on deserted roads but rather a wide variety of circumstances and victims.

These cases appear sporadically over a 50-year period, the first having been



reported in the rural Midwest, the most recent in Sacramento, California. And not a single one has produced a witness, a description of the killer, or even a useful psychological profile. It is as though the killer arises from the collective paranoia of the country and manifests when that paranoia requires approbation. If this is indeed the case, then the killer might not actually be a homicidal maniac but rather an unstoppable phantom, appearing only to those who fear him most.

The Hoffmann Institute is particularly interested in solving this case—or rather, these cases—because unlike most “urban-legends-come-true,” this particular monster combines the worst aspects of psychopathic killer and supernatural entity. In effect, this is a killer who can never be caught because he exists only when he is killing.

Description: The hook-handed killer looks more or less like an ordinary human being, though with a frighteningly intense expression and a large, rusted hook screwed directly into the bone, in the place of his right hand. Witnesses often describe the killer as wearing soiled hospital scrubs and a filthy robe, or blue jeans and a grimy denim jacket.

Encounter: Despite being a brutal homicidal maniac, the hook-handed killer is no fool. He appears only in response to the fear of his appearance—not merely to the presence of potential victims. This makes it especially hard to set a trap; if the victim isn’t genuinely in dread of the killer, the killer does not show.

The killer vanishes after he has killed, or been killed, and always in an “impossible” fashion. His trail simply ends, for

example, or his body vanishes when no one is looking directly at it. Sometime later, the hook-handed killer returns, elsewhere, to claim a new victim.

Adventure Hook: The heroes are contacted by a Hoffmann analyst who tells them of the hook killer legend and that he has discovered a pattern to the appearances of the killer. The pattern leads to an appearance in their area, coincidentally at a time when the area will be full of teenagers (prom night, homecoming, spring break, or the like). The only way to be certain the killer does not strike is to shut down the event—which, of course, rankles the teen population. The heroes are then faced with a dilemma: They can try to curtail the night-time activities of hundreds of young adults without a reasonable explanation, or they can tell them the truth—and possibly awaken the fear that summons the killer. While they deliberate, is the killer ignoring the teens to strike at a completely different target?

The Gods Are Angry

“Now what we have over here, Lieutenant, is one Mrs. Rita Nicholas. No children, separated. Um ... sorry. I mean, she and her husband are separated; it’s obvious that she’s ... um. Well, you know what I mean. Anyway, Mrs. Nicholas was waiting for him—her estranged husband—to give him a present. Something she picked up in Brazil. Don’t know where that is. The present, I mean. I thought it might be with the husband, but we won’t know that until the forensics guys get him out of the ... um, the oven.”

“I gotta tell you, Lieutenant: nights like this, I’m glad I didn’t make detective.”

A common modern legend based on the unfortunate conjunction of archaeological treasure-seeking, pulp adventure stories, and Hollywood B-movies concerns the acquisition of an artifact from the ruins of a lost civilization. The story goes that the explorer discovers an item—usually an idol—and desires to take it away with him. The locals warn that the ancient gods will be angry, that the “plunderer” risks their wrath. The warning is ignored, the idol is carried back to “civilization,” and the new owner suffers a mysterious and gruesome death.

But trifling with ancient civilizations, at

least where the Hoffmann Institute is concerned, does not equal an untimely and macabre demise. In fact, despite being asked to investigate scores of mysterious antediluvian artifacts found at murder scenes, the Institute has never found connecting archaeological relics with what inevitably prove to be perfectly ordinary homicide cases. Further, the Hoffmann Institute has actually begun to suspect that some private collectors manufacture tales of horrible curses to convince the Institute to research the origins of their artifacts free of charge.

The Hoffmann Institute would dearly love to close the file on these cases, but reports of ancient curses continue to arise year after year. Agents investigate and spend countless hours translating ancient inscriptions, unearthing forgotten references, even traveling to remote locations, only to turn up absolutely nothing. In fact, the only common thread is the perfectly innocuous nature of the artifacts. The owners aren't turning up dead or even vanishing mysteriously. The idols don't get up and stalk people with stray cutlery. Their eyes don't so much as follow people as they move about the room. Their only activity appears to be the assiduous collection of dust.

One aberration appears in the file, however. The Institute has only in the last few months noticed a connection between several as-yet-unsolved murder cases: stolen archaeological artifacts. The cases, some dating back several decades, had previously been classified as burglaries gone bad; the assumption was that the deceased stumbled upon thieves ransacking his house and was murdered. Careful scrutiny of the police reports, however, turned up only one item missing in each and every case: a small, stone idol of an Aztec deity. There is no description of the item more complete than that—because no one has seen it except the murdered owners—and, presumably, the thieves who stole it. Still, the Institute is convinced it's the same idol each time.

Description: The idol in question is a representation of Imxictl, a forgotten deity that predates the Aztecs by centuries. It is made of granite, stands approximately 35 centimeters tall, and weighs about 10 kg. Though the figure wears a feathered headdress and carries what appears to be a drum, it has no rec-

Angry Idol Game Data

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|---------|-----------------------------|----|----------------------|
| STR | 8 | (d4+6) | INT | 12 | (Animal 15 or d6+11) |
| DEX | 12 | (d4+9) | WIL | 14 | (d4+12) |
| CON | 12 | (d4+10) | PER | 2 | (Animal 5 or d4+2) |
| Durability: 12/12/6/6 | | | | | |
| Move: run 18, walk 12 | | | | | |
| Action Check: 13+/12/6/3 | | | | | |
| # Actions: 3 | | | Reaction Score: Ordinary /2 | | |

Attacks

Bite 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4w LI/O

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d4 (LI), d4-2 (HI), d4-1 (En)

Skills

Melee [8]; Stealth [12]—*hide* [14], *sneak* [14]; Stamina [12]—*resist pain* [14]; Awareness [14]—*perception* [16]; Resolve [14]—*physical* [15]

ognizable weapons. Its eyes are made of turquoise, the only spots of color on the entire idol.

Encounter: The idol finds its way into the homes of its victims usually via purchase at a second-hand store, where it was sold as a curious if somewhat tacky knick-knack. Placed in the new owner's home, it merely waits, quietly observing the behavior of its owner. Then, when its owner commits an action that the idol perceives as a sin of some kind, it acts. First it isolates its owner (disconnecting telephone lines, locking doors and windows), then it arms itself with whatever weapons it can carry. Finally, it proceeds to stalk the hapless victim in a home that has now become a deathtrap.

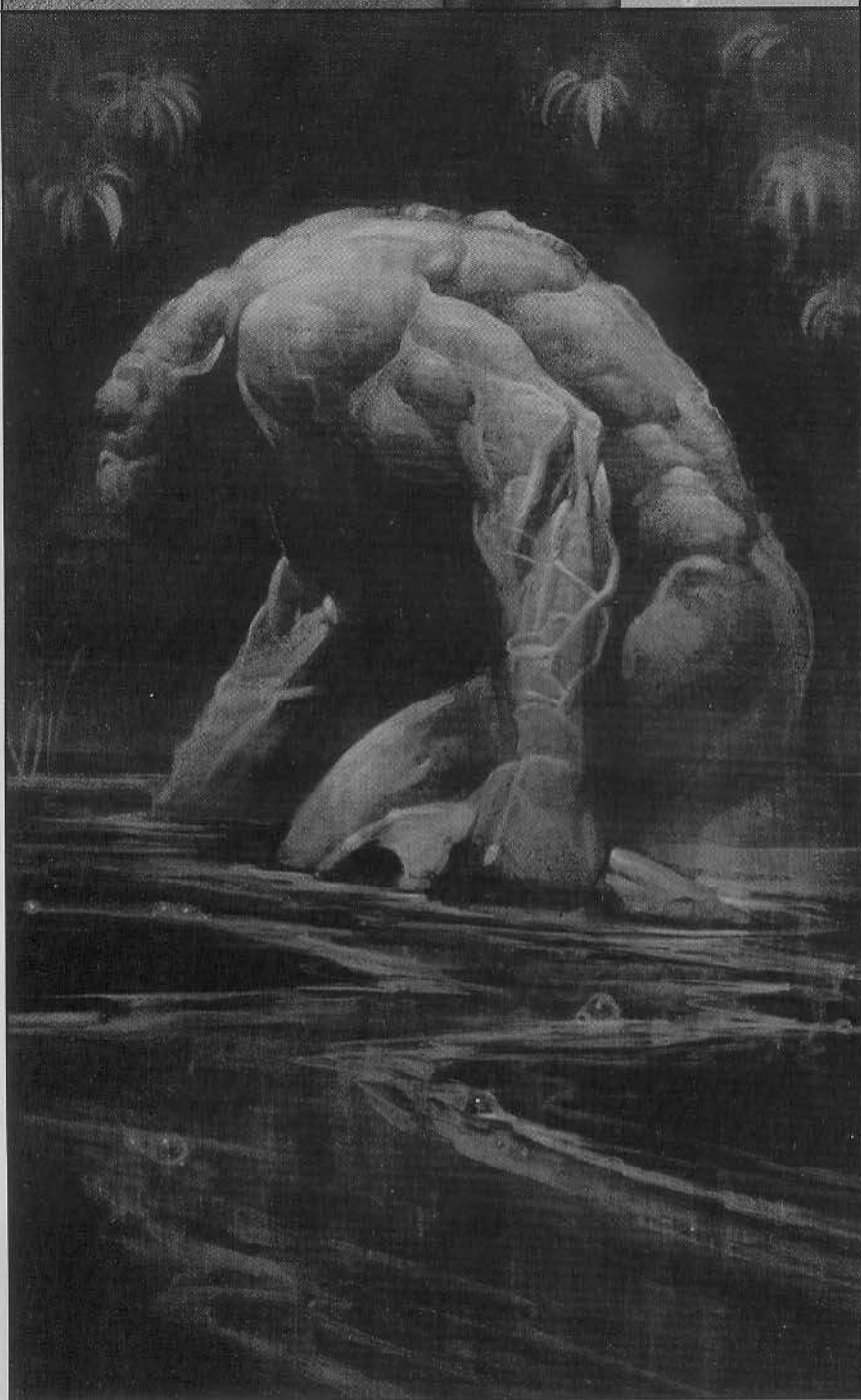
Adventure Hook: The idol begins making the rounds through a series of dealers in antiquities. As each of the dealers turns up dead in some mysterious and macabre fashion, the police notice the pattern and ask the Hoffmann Institute for a copy of their "cursed idol" file. The Institute agrees, but only if the heroes are allowed to participate in the investigation. As the heroes begin to follow the trail of the murderous idol, they discover that each of the idol's victims had purchased it from the same pawnbroker: an unscrupulous fence of stolen goods, who coincidentally subscribes to an ancient, pre-Columbian religion.



The Legend of Blackwater Swamp

"Sure, I'll tell ya about the Creature.

"I ain't never seen it myself, but I swear I heard it a time 'r twice. It's got this sorta deep, grumbly noise it makes, like a cougar in a real bad mood. But it ain't no cougar. I seen folks pulled outta the swamp missin' they whole head. Not ate off, not sliced off like a



knife. I mean pulled off. Like if I was to put one foot on your shoulder and pull real hard on your chin. But I mean real hard, see?

"What's that? No, I ain't got no earthly idea why it'd want just their heads. Maybe it collects 'em. Or maybe it only eats the brains. Search me. I ain't the Creature—y'know what I mean?"

If one were to take every account of mysterious ripples, bubbles, or shapes in the water seriously, then there would have to be at least one aquatic monster in every lake, stream, or pond in North

America. Legends in this country alone date back centuries, to well before the first Europeans set foot on the continent.

The stories can involve just about any body of water, but the most enduring ones revolve around remote or largely unmapped swamps or marshes—places where as-yet-undiscovered species seem considerably more likely. As always, the least element of possibility is all it takes for a tale to advance from rumor to accepted fact.

Only the most dedicated outdoorsmen among Hoffmann Institute agents

enjoy assignments to track reports of bog monsters. Faced with a choice between slogging through decades of fetid muck and mire, or sifting through a similar amount of hall of records documents, most agents will happily choose the latter. At least searching every inch of a library is likely to turn up something—and the mosquitoes aren't nearly so bad.

Unfortunately for most agents, the Hoffmann Institute is all too aware that there is a wide variety of monsters roaming our world—and some of them could dwell in swamps. Perhaps the Greys have misplaced an armodont, or maybe the kinori have unleashed some horrible new beast. Or maybe a sasquatch has gotten lost and strayed into a marsh, where it finds itself unable to depart without attracting attention. So the Institute must investigate, just in case the report has some foundation in truth—though in 50 years of swamp expeditions, only once did the agents find something. (And that turned out to be a sasquatch that had already starved to death by the time they found it!)

These missions are so unpopular among Hoffmann agents that the Institute has turned them into a kind of administrative punishment. Agents who have behaved recklessly on other cases are assigned to "Bog Hunt" duty, with the intent of making them appreciate the luxuries available to them while on ordinary cases—luxuries like fresh food, laundry facilities, running water, and indoor toilets.

Description: The average bog monster is a dark, warty bcreature resembling a furless bear. It has webbed, four-fingered hands in place of claws, however, with similarly amphibian feet. The bog monster's teeth are short but sharp, and plentiful. It stands approximately 2.5 meters tall and weighs in the vicinity of 800 kg.

Encounter: The bog monster generally hunts in the waters of its wetland home, lying mostly submerged as it scans above and below the surface for prey. Although it usually shuns contact with humans, it has no compunctions about attacking anything that comes too close. Its tactics are brutal but effective: It tears the victim's limbs from their sockets until the victim stops moving. (Incidences of heads having been pulled off

are actually quite rare, despite being a popular theme in the legends.) The monster generally hurls the pieces away, unless it happens to be terrifically hungry. Otherwise, it eats only fish, snakes, and the occasional stray sheep or goat.

Adventure Hook: If the heroes have recently drawn the attention of another organization—or worse, the media—the Hoffmann Institute reassigns them to “Bog Hunt” duty to let them “lie low” for a while. During a search of the remote Blackwater Swamp, they discover the dismembered remains of a hunter who has clearly been pulled apart by something extremely strong. Unfortunately for the heroes, the starving bog monster has devoured parts of the poor hunter and has now acquired a taste for human flesh. Unless they locate and dispatch it quickly, it begins stalking them, seeking another meal. If they should prove too much for it to handle, it starts making forays outside the swamp, into nearby camping grounds, at the height of tourist season.

Like Father, Like Son

“No, I will not calm down! I am his mother and I know that ... thing in there is not my Andrew! I don’t know if he—he might have never been my son! Don’t you see? I have to kill him! He’s not human! He’s something evil! A monster! I’m warning you: Just stay away from me! Don’t make me shoot you, too!”

The feeling that one’s children are of a completely different species is such an ageless motif that one finds references to the “generation gap” in the writings of Socrates. The inability to relate to one’s own children was so prevalent in the Dark Ages that tales arose of faerie children being left in the place of human ones. In some cases, an illness or injury results in a radical personality shift, but in most instances, the problem is simply a failure to communicate.

Today, psychologists work long hours trying to help adults and children reconcile their differences. Some families might never learn to identify with one another, but talk of faerie children is a thing of the past—mostly. Not all people accept such utilitarian psychological

Bog Monster Game Data

| | | | | | |
|-----|----|---------|-----|----|---------------------|
| STR | 18 | (d4+16) | INT | 4 | (Animal 7 or d4+4) |
| DEX | 8 | (d4+5) | WIL | 10 | (d6+6) |
| CON | 18 | (d6+14) | PER | 8 | (Animal 10 or d4+8) |

Durability: 18/18/9/9

Move: sprint 26, run 16, walk 6, swim 6

Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

#Actions: 3

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

| | | | |
|------|--------|-----------------|------|
| Bite | 12/6/3 | d4+1w/d4+2w/d6w | LI/O |
| Tear | 14/7/3 | d4+2w/d6w/d4m | LI/O |

Defenses

+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor: d6-1 (LI), d6-1 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

Stamina [18]—endurance [20], resist pain [20]; Stealth [8]; Awareness [10]—intuition [12]

buzz-words like “phobia” and “disorder.” Some cling to the notion that alien creatures mate with human women to produce “changelings”—offspring that appear human but who in truth are just as alien as their fathers. The possibility is whispered from mother to daughter, doctor to nurse, father to therapist. It is perhaps the quietest of the new millennium’s urban legends—for what mother wants to accuse her own child of not being human and risk spending years in an asylum?

Lately, a surprising number of families undergoing group therapy for just such relationship problems are turning up dead, every family member a victim of apparent spree killings—all but one. A pubescent son is always discovered missing and presumed abducted by the killers. The fact that none of these children has ever been found, living or dead, tells the police that they are being murdered at secondary crime scenes that simply have yet to be discovered. However, those who know of the changeling legend merely nod grimly, knowing full well that the shy, intelligent boy is even now selecting his next victims, disguised as a loving wife’s amorous husband.

The Hoffmann Institute is slowly compiling a growing list of changeling cases but has yet to form a working theory of the crimes. Evidence has been difficult to assemble; the incidents still appear to

have more to do with child abductions and multiple homicides than they do with anything paranormal. Local law enforcement is notoriously uncooperative when Hoffmann agents suggest that the murderer might have been the missing child, that the child was not actually abducted but rather left the scene after removing all evidence of its supernatural origin.

The Institute realizes just how delicate these particular investigations are. How does one suggest that a child is not only *not* his father’s son but also a supernatural serial rapist and murderer in the making? A great many families ignore the advice of the agents until it is too late, and the Hoffmann Institute is left trying to guess where the changeling might have gone—if not back home, wherever that might actually be.

Description: Although a changeling can disguise itself as an ordinary human child, its true form is unearthly. A coat of short, pale fur covers its entire body, lengthening and rising to a point on its head. Its ears are long and pointed as well, and its mouth is filled with a double row of short, needlelike teeth. If not for the look of evil intelligence in its narrow, bright eyes, the changeling might be taken for a particularly large, if diabolical, monkey.

Encounter: Once a changeling child has integrated into a human family, it

Changeling Game Data

| | | | | | |
|-----|----|--------|-----|----|---------|
| STR | 8 | (d4+5) | INT | 8 | (d4+6) |
| DEX | 10 | (d4+8) | WIL | 12 | (d4+10) |
| CON | 10 | (d4+8) | PER | 14 | (d6+10) |

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4

Action Check: 14+ / 13/6/3

Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary / 2

FX energy points: 10

Attacks

Unarmed 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Defenses

No resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

No resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Armor: none


Skills

Athletics [8]; Stamina [10]—*endurance* [11]; Stealth [10]—*sneak* [12]; Knowledge [8]; Animal Handling [12]; Awareness [12]; Resolve [12]; Deception [14]; Interaction [14]—*charm* [16]

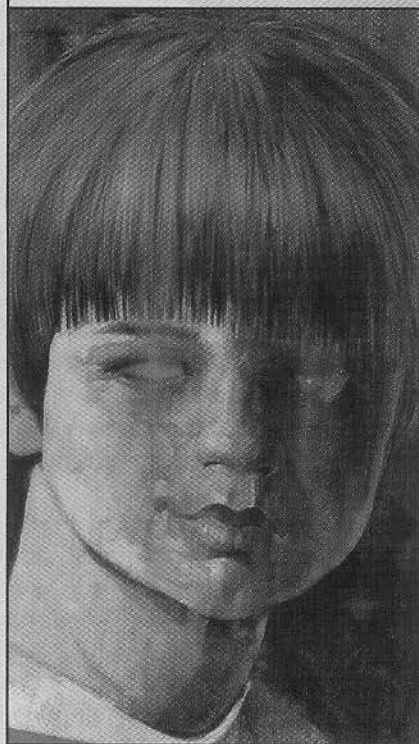
FX Skills

Arcane Magic (shamanism)—*animal voice* [16], *hunter's stare* [16], *spirit of the beast* [18], *venom spirit* [15]

tends toward a quiet disposition and even seems shy. It is only when it reaches adolescence that the changeling's true nature becomes so strong that it can no longer hide its otherworldly origin. When that time comes, its erstwhile family falls to its bloodlust, one by one.

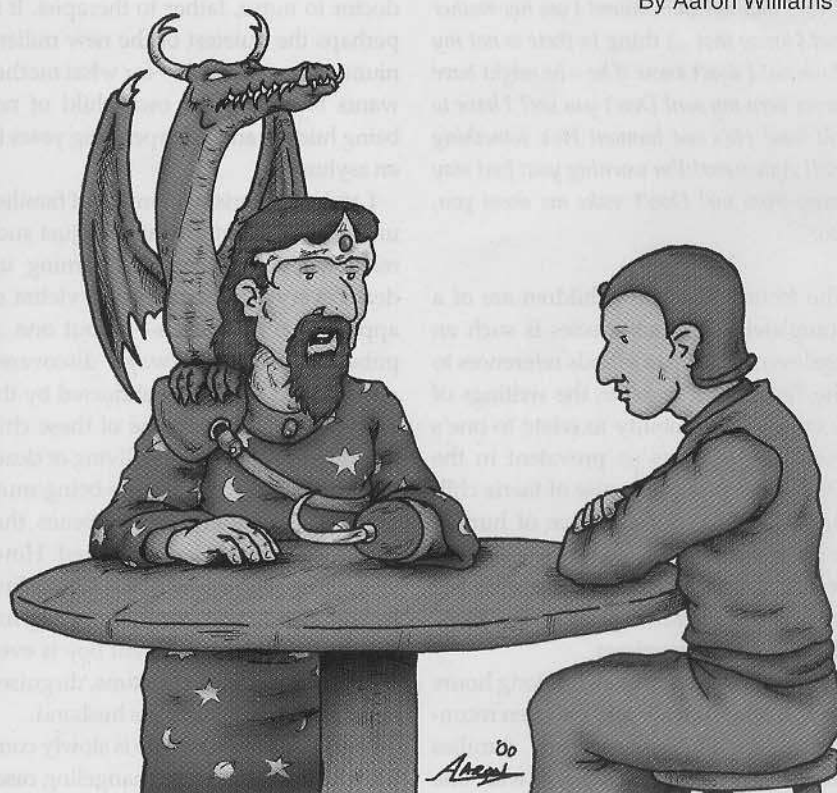
Adventure Hook: The heroes are asked to investigate the suspicious death of a teenage girl. The devastated family has another child, a ten-year-old boy of unusual intellect and extraordinary shyness. The heroes soon learn that the boy—the only witness to his sister's death by drowning—might be not entirely human. He is, of course, a changeling, who has been forced to kill his sister earlier than expected because she guessed the truth about him. But now, with the investigators getting close, the boy decides to finish off the rest of his family early. 

JD Wiker is hard at work modifying his car to use a jet engine for propulsion. Tests are scheduled to begin this summer in the New Mexico desert.



lives its life more or less as one would expect of an ordinary human child. It goes through infancy, the toddler years, and even school without ever giving any indication that it is anything other than what it appears to be. Certainly, the child

By Aaron Williams



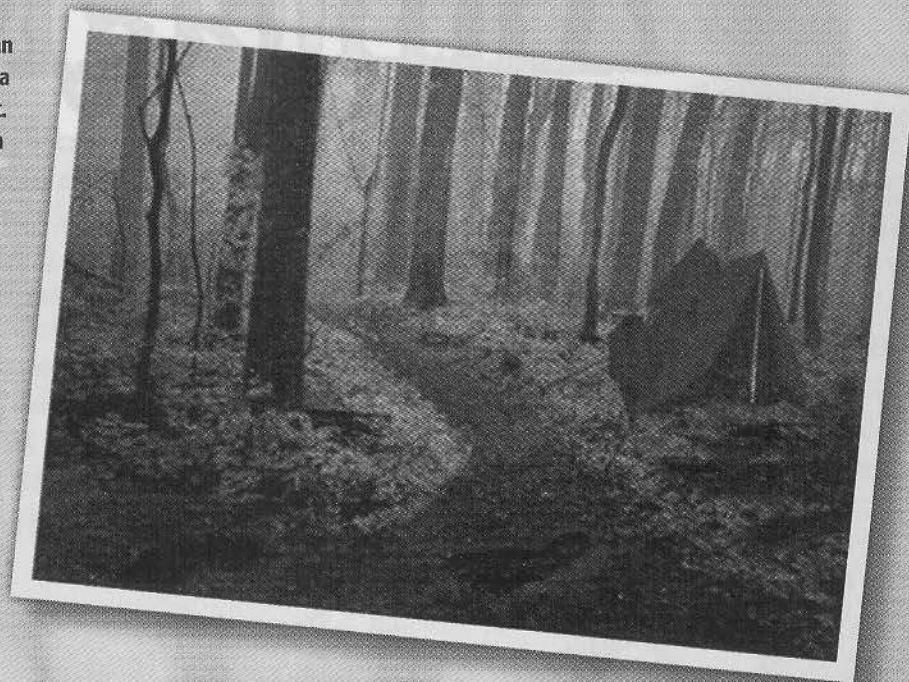
"How should I know if he's finger-tame?
I tried to find out five times and gave up."

By Andy Collins, JD Wiker,
and Jeff "Zippy" Quick

Gamemaster Hints

This photo was picked up by the Hoffmann Institute off a wire service as part of a report of "animal attacks" in the Mt. Rainier National Forest in Washington State. According to the piece, three separate campsites have been attacked in the past month. No injuries are reported. In each case, the campers had a good scare but didn't actually see the animals responsible.

A wild sasquatch is responsible for the attacks, but his motives are anything but murderous. The sasquatch's mate is pregnant and close to delivery, and he seeks to prevent anyone from venturing too close to their cave lair. Investigators might run into other interested parties (such as a team hired by the Center for Xenological Studies) and ultimately encounter the sasquatch themselves. A hero with Medical Science or Knowledge—*first aid* might aid in the delivery!



DARK MATTER™

Gamemaster Hints

A planet with large, mobile, carnivorous plants is an adventure unto itself. Use the "Primate" statistics in the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide* (substitute "bite" for all other attacks), or look inside the *ALTERNITY ALIEN COMPENDIUM® II* accessory for commensurate creatures. Potential story elements include:

- Feeding the evidence to a carnivorous plant would be the perfect cover-up for a murder.
- Most people believe Shamondendra to be roughly as intelligent as dogs. Some could be smarter.
- Political dissidents might use the symbolism of the celebration to launch another coup.
- Brave or foolhardy heroes might enjoy a recreational fling in a Shamondendra running, protein tosses for distance, or other physically challenging "fun" activities, without any extra danger or subplots.

Get Away to the Shamondendra Days Festival for Only \$1,099!

Tired of the day-to-day grind? It's time for a vacation! Come to beautiful Simon's Leap in the Annahoy system for the sesquicentennial Shamondendra Days Festival.

Named for the mobile, carnivorous Shamondendron plant indigenous to Simon's Leap, the yearly festival celebrates the Simonians' independence, attained in 2353, when the native rebellion struck against the occupying regime in concert with the plant's 30-year bloom cycle. The decisive timing of the strike resulted in most of the government forces being devoured. Soon after, the planet returned to native rule.

The two-week long celebration is open to everyone. Festivities include parades, daily Shamondendra runnings, balcony feedings, and a full-scale recreation of the victory 150 years ago.

STAR DRIVE®