

The Feast of Black Annis

BY JASON VEY

It was late when Asura came home, but the lights were still on in the house. In fact, it looked like every light in the house was on; she made a mental note to have a talk with Violet about that. Money was too tight these days to be running the electric up. Then again, maybe the girl just left the lights on to feel safer. Asura could forgive that. It was the first time Violet had been left alone to babysit.

"Violet? You here, baby? Any troubles with Sammy?" she called out. When there was no answer, she muttered, "Prolly sleepin'."

At least, she'd best be sleeping, or else Asura'd be handing out a whipping. Violet had thrown a tantrum when she found out she couldn't go to the movies with her friends tonight, but dammit, Asura hadn't been on a date in a couple years, and she deserved one night. It wasn't easy having a daughter only thirteen years younger than you, and Asura had done a pretty good job raising two girls, if she did say so herself.

She climbed the stairs and peeked her head into Violet's room, at the top of the stairs. That was when the first alarm bells sounded in her brain. No Violet. The sobbing from Sam's room was alarm #2, and Asura tore down the hall into Sammy's bedroom, only to hear a half-human wailing that it took her a few seconds to realize was in fact her own screaming.

Violet sat on the floor, crying, staring at the curtains flapping over the broken window...and the bloody lines scrawled upon the wall.

QUICK SYNOPSIS

In this episode, the Cast must investigate the disappearances of small children from all over the city, which they eventually trace to a druidic cult operating within Schenley Park. The druids have been tainted and the goddess they worship is not Danna,

but actually the Great Old One, Shub Niggurath. At the end of the Episode, a group of Rosicrucians arrives to cleanse the park, which it has become obvious over the past two years is a Tainted place.

ACT ONE: INTRODUCTION

RUNDOWN

The cast gets a call from Detective Joe Knonaem, to investigate a crime scene with occult overtones. There has been a rash of kidnappings lately, young children and infants all, and all of the disappearances have similar trappings: strange, runic symbols painted in blood on the walls of the children's bedrooms, and mysterious "thank you" notes left for the parents. Some research reveals that the inscriptions are oghrunes, the ancient language used by the druids. Further research reveals that there is a druidic "secret society" active in Schenley Park.

ACTION

Anita receives a phone call early in the morning from Detective Knonaem, asking if she has time to come down to look at a crime scene. He won't be specific, except to say that it is in relation to the inordinate number of Amber Alerts that have been issued lately, and that it has some trappings that are her area of expertise. The scene isn't far from where

she is; it's a small, run-down tenement home in Homestead, near the Waterfront.

Upon arrival, the Cast sees an ambulance pulling away. The house is taped off with Crime Scene tape, but Det. Knonaem has left a uniformed officer waiting for them, who greets and escorts them through the house, upstairs to the child's bedroom. As they walk past the living room, a pretty young black woman looks up at them, tears streaming down her cheeks. She is being questioned by police.

The victim's bedroom is on the second floor of the tiny house, and aside from the broken window, shows no signs of struggle. There are strange, linear symbols painted on the wall in blood. Joe is in the room waiting for the cast, with Lexie. He has the following information to share:

- The girl in question was Samantha Jackson, 5 years old.

- All the victims (Samantha is the sixth) so far have been between the ages of 3 and 10 years of age, and all girls.
- All have been taken from low-rent areas of the city.
- The blood symbols have been found at all the crime scenes so far. The police have no idea what they mean.
- The blood found at the site is not that of the victim, but is human. Or more specifically, a combination of blood from several humans.
- There have been identical letters left behind at each scene, always addressed to the victim's mother (which enraged one distraught parent—a single father—even further, by the implication that fathers can't be good parents). The letters are not ransom notes, but rather, read as follows:

HONORED MOTHER,

Fear not the safety of your child. She goes to a greater purpose than you can ever imagine. The Mother of Life and Death will honor your great sacrifice when she returns to bless and purify this world. You will receive a place of honor by her holy side in return for the child you lose this night. Thank you, and may the goddess bless you in all that you do.

- Naturally, the police suspect a cult of some kind. The trappings aren't indicative of traditional Satanism, however, so exactly what cult may be behind this is still a mystery.
- Lexie believes these kidnapers want to be caught; hence the obvious DNA traces in the blood, and the "thank you" notes. She thinks it's a power thing, where they are challenging the police much like serial killers do, looking for attention from the police and media.
- The ambulance (if the Cast asks) contained Samantha's sister Violet, aged 13, who was babysitting when the abduction occurred. Violet was found semi-catatonic and largely noncommunicative. She's off to the hospital for

examination, then possibly to Western Psych for evaluation. If they can get her talking, she's the only eyewitness to any of the abductions so far.

The Cast will be permitted to question Samantha's mother (the woman downstairs), named Asura Jackson, if Asura consents to talk to them (which requires a Willpower + Influence roll to overcome the woman's suspicions). Asura is a single mother (the father abandoned her just after Sam was born) of the two girls, and is only 28 years old (she was 12 when Violet was born). Asura will tell the Cast she was out on a date while the incident happened, and had left Violet at home to babysit her younger sister. This wasn't the first time Violet had been left to babysit, but the older girl had made it clear she didn't like the responsibility; she wanted to go to a movie at the Waterfront with her friends. Asura found Violet sitting on the floor by the doorway of Sam's room, staring at the broken window and quietly crying. She was unable to get Violet to speak coherently, though the girl seemed uninjured. All Violet kept saying was, "my fault," over and over again. Mostly Asura just wants her baby back.

Joe is willing to give copies of the letter and photographs of the crime scene to aid in the Cast's research, so long as they keep it on the D&L. He asks the rest of the police to clear the room so he can talk to the Cast alone. He wants to explain why he was so adamant that they stay out of his way a few weeks ago. The department, he explains, has traditionally been somewhat tolerant of his unorthodox methods because he tends to get results, even if those results are the mysterious stoppage of crimes on occasion, rather than an arrest. However, they're starting to get suspicious due to the lack of arrests lately, and it seems that this new law firm in town has pulled some strings to audit his department, accusing the police of corruption and stepping outside the law whenever it suited them. Internal Affairs may be called in. He desperately needs the Cast to handle this delicately and keep him in the loop. Above all, he needs an arrest on this case, not a stack of bodies to explain away.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Not a lot to troubleshoot in this scene; the Cast gets a call to investigate a crime scene, has a talk with the witnesses, the detective, and the CSI, and then goes off to do their own investigations.

ACT TWO: COMPLICATION

RYNDOWN

In this scene the characters conduct research that leads them to an archaic religion...or at least a modern mockery of a long-dead archaic religion. They question Violet, which turns out mostly to be a dead end, have a run-in with some cultists, and get some threats by their new nemesis, Wolfram and Hart.

ACTION

Hitting the Books: Researching the symbols can reveal the following information, based on the number of success levels gathered from an Intelligence + Occultism roll, as listed below. Alternately, an Intelligence + Languages roll can be substituted, since the symbols are in fact a dead language. Characters with ranks in the Languages skill need not research to translate the symbols, but may make their roll upon viewing the symbols for the first time. However, as explained below, the runes at this crime scene comprise only one part of the prophecy.

THE SYMBOLS

1 Success: The symbols are some kind of runes. They didn't radiate any power, but it's impossible to translate them or even denote their origin. They must be fairly obscure.

2-3 Successes: The symbols seem to be Gaelic in derivation. The dialect, however, is impossible to determine. A dead language, perhaps?

3-4 Successes: The symbols are *oghrunes*, the ancient secret language of the druids. This language has supposedly been dead for well over a thousand years. Either someone has designed a new dialect, or the old one isn't as dead as everyone thought. No translations are available.

5-6 Successes: The runes refer to the coming of something called the "Black Mother." It's difficult to ascertain any more than that.

7-8 Successes: The runes read: "At the birth of the season of life, the Black Mother will rise"

9+ Successes: The runic inscription appears to be incomplete. Gathering photos of the other 5 crime scenes completes the prophecy: "...her thousand children spring forth from the blood of the Seven." (Crime Scene 1) "...A fortnight hence the Baptism of Blood," (Crime Scene 2) "...the Fire will leap forth from the Second Mouth of the Beast" (Crime Scene 5) "...to cleanse the world," (Crime Scene 4) "...and from the darkened Waters Life shall grow anew." (Crime Scene 3)

Putting the prophecy together in proper sequence is a puzzle for the Cast to solve. If they seem incredibly stumped, allow Intelligence (doubled) rolls for each clue to the proper order.

THE DRUIDS

Once the group figures out that the line patterns are runes, and Druidic runes at that, they may want to investigate the history of Druidism, and cross-reference with local occurrences. An Intelligence + Computers check reveals that there is a "secret society" of druids active at several local colleges. In the past, these Druids have conducted midnight parades through the streets, their faces veiled and robed. No one knows who the members of this cult are, but they've never been implicated in any criminal activities.

Intelligence + Occultism rolls indicate that historically the druids functioned as the high priests, lawmakers, and teachers of the Celtic peoples. While mostly a peaceful sect (they were as much political as religious-based) they did engage in sacrifice of both animals and human beings. It is likely, however, that traditionally such sacrifices were voluntary. The druids were mostly a peaceful sect, and this prophecy and these abductions don't seem to fit with the traditional ideology of druidism.

THE PROPHECY

Obviously, the Cast needs to figure this out, fast. The prophecy indicates "the blood of the Seven," and if the Cast hasn't realized that six children have been kidnapped, well...maybe they're a little slow to be doing battle with the Forces of Darkness. This leaves one victim left. The "Fortnight hence the baptism of blood" would seem to imply a sacrifice to precede the end of the prophecy. Intelligence + Occultism rolls can reveal that two weeks from this Sunday is the Vernal Equinox: the birth of the season of life. That would seem to indicate that the Cast has three days' time to solve this mystery and save the children. But what about the "Second Mouth of the Beast?" It would seem to indicate the location of the sacrifice and "Cleansing", but where is it? For that matter, *what is it?* Obtaining the answer to this question is difficult at best, requiring 10 Success Levels on an Intelligence + Occultism roll to find an obscure reference in the *Codex intuneric*, an ancient Romanian journal of a group of vampire and demon hunters from the mid-1500's.

The book discusses a center of mystical convergence (that's a Hellmouth, to the uneducated out there) located in the Black Forests of Wallachia, and a group of Knights Templar and a druidic pilgrim were allied with a young Slayer and her Watcher to defend the portal. They fought many battles and obtained great victories. Unfortunately, the entire group met a tragic end from a massive demonic assault they never saw coming, after they believed they had sealed the portal. The last entry is in the hand of the druid, and reads as follows:

Soon shall the forces of the Outer Dark be upon me. I am all that remains of my intrepid band of warriors, for in our shortsightedness we became complacent, convinced that the gates to the Beyond had been forever shackled and barred. Even when we sensed a new rise of mystical energy did we fail to take proper precautions. So long as we guarded the portal, we knew that our safety, and the safety of the region, would be secured.

What fools we were not to see.

The black-hearted Prince of Wallachia, the dark Impaler, called together the blackest magicians in Europe to drive us from his forests. In their black visions, they uncovered something none of us in our wildest nightmares would've imagined, but that makes perfect, terrifying sense.

The convergence is not limited to one spot. Hell springs forth from elsewhere, now; the Beast has a second mouth.

The demons came at us in the night, an army that even the Slayer and her intrepid band of Knights Templar could not ward away. They came from the rear, having spilled forth from the second Mouth of the Beast even as we guarded the seal upon the first.

The battle quickly became a slaughter.

I am all that remains.

But not for long. I hide this tome in the walls of a ruined castle in the hope that some future generation will find and remember our valiant struggle, and that our experiences may save others from the same fate.

**Adair, Keeper of Law and Wisdom
Mouth of Cuijthe
1532, Gregorian Calendar**

It shouldn't be difficult for the Cast to figure out where the second opening to the Hellmouth is, considering all the dark powers that have emerged from Schenley park over the past two years, and from Panther Hollow specifically. Chances are they'll want to check it out...and likely do it fast and during the daytime.

A TRIP TO PANTHER HOLLOW

A trip to Panther Hollow during the daytime yields what it usually does: not a whole lot. Aside from the sick feeling gained by Cast Members with Supernatural Senses, it's peaceful and pretty to look at: a small lake, a nearby pond with a memorial, woods, a walking/bicycle path. But here is where it gets interesting, nevertheless.

As the Cast explores the area, looking for clues, a voice rings out of the forest, saying, "You won't find anything."

At this point, a young man of about nineteen emerges from the forest. He's got tousled, sandy brown hair, blue eyes, and wears a red hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and hiking boots. He looks like any normal college student: handsome, but not drop-dead gorgeous; somewhat preppy, and casual. His hands are stuffed into his pocket. He walks up to the Cast, attempting to maintain an air of casualness, but Perception + Notice rolls will pick up the fact that he's nervous. His eyes keep darting around, as though he expects to be assaulted at any moment. He reads as a normal human to those with Supernatural Senses.

When he reaches the Cast, he extends his hand to whoever the most imposing member seems to be and says, "Hi, I'm Greg. I think I know what you're looking for...and I think I can help. But not here. They could be anywhere."

He's willing to talk, and in fact is willing to spill his entire story without any sort of coercion, but wants the Cast to take

him somewhere safe. If they ask who he's running from, he replies, "from my brothers."

The young man is **Greg Stoltz**, and the brothers he's talking about aren't blood relatives. Greg is a (now former) member of the Tao Delta Delta fraternity, a newish organization on campus, having only been chartered in the past two years. Some basic research (Intelligence + Computers) reveals that there are no other chapters of Tao Delta Delta anywhere in the United States.

The kicker is this: Tao Delta Delta is a druidic fraternity, with all members required to be baptized into the druidic religion. It's also co-ed, with both male and female members, though only the male members live in the frat house for the organization. At least, as far as anyone outside the fraternity knows. Certainly the female members keep enough of their stuff there, just in case they need to crash after a kegger...or a ritual.

Greg joined the fraternity on a whim as a freshman (he's currently a sophomore) and at first was quite taken in by the rituals and rites they performed. He found the secret meetings and magickal ceremonies exciting, and the fact that the brothers (both male and female members are referred to as "brother") performed sex magick didn't hurt matters one bit.

But then, about six months ago, a girl named Brigit Cleary was elected president of the fraternity (High Priestess inside the frat house walls), and began talking prophecies and cleansing. She claimed that the Earth Mother, Black Annis, was angry at the complacency of the druids, and that it was time for them to take back the world. She claimed that she had seen Annis in her dreams, and had been promised wealth and power to all who followed her teachings. She claimed that she had been granted power over life and death...and then proved it by performing bizarre rituals in which she created grotesque, new life forms.

Such a promise of power instantly lured many of the brothers to Brigit's call; those who spoke out against her simply vanished. Greg believes they were subject to dark, late night experiments. After the first few disappearances, Greg decided to keep quiet until he saw a chance to get out.

Then the kidnappings started. Brigit was ranting about a great Cleansing, and a prophecy about Black Annis being made flesh. Suddenly this wasn't the peaceful mother deity that Greg had come to know as Danna, but something much

darker and more sinister. He knew that he couldn't stand against Brigit, but he had to get out and find someone who could. He's been in hiding ever since, but it didn't take him long to hear rumors about the Cast, who by now have a reputation for their dealings with the unusual.

Then Greg drops the real bombshells. The first is that he knows where Brigit works; she's an intern at an accounting firm in the downtown area. The second is that he knows where the children are being held! They're in the basement of the Tao Delta Delta fraternity house. He is willing to testify against his fraternity brothers, but will not come forward until after they're arrested and in prison without bail.

The Cast now has two choices: call the police or talk to Brigit. Either choice will lead to the demon attack that night. Brigit doesn't take kindly to her plans being interrupted.

BRIGIT

Brigit is a pretty girl of Irish descent, with curly, flaming orange hair, gray eyes, freckles, and glasses. She works at the accounting firm of Katstag and Byrd (subtle joke; get it?) downtown as an intern, helping to maintain the company's website and records. This also means she has access to all of their resources, and she has pulled off the old, "siphon off the penny fractions" computer virus, to the tune of forty-five thousand dollars so far. She's got more than enough resources to disappear for a couple of weeks until her ritual is complete and Black Annis comes forth. If the Cast decides to question her, Brigit will take an early lunch and accompany them. Her story is that Greg is a liar, jealous because she spurned his advancements and angry because he was, in fact, rejected for admission into Tao Delta Delta. The very idea that the fraternity are some kind of druidic cult is ludicrous; they're a service fraternity, and she can provide numerous examples of the different community service projects the frat has undertaken, from cleaning up parks in the Hill District to repairing low-rent housing in Homewood to "Keep the Highway Clean!" projects to fundraisers to fight AIDS. All of these claims will check out; Tao Delta Delta has indeed done a great deal of community service work. If the Cast mentions the kidnapped children in connection with Tao Delta Delta, Brigit will begin talking lawsuits for slander (and guess who her lawyers are?) In any case, Brigit will always seem genuine and friendly to the Cast; this is due to her Emotional Influence power, which the Cast are at -6 to resist, though she'll only resort to using it if the Cast seems suspicious (she's also a naturally convincing liar). However, the moment the kidnappings are mentioned, Brigit

will make every effort to end the conversation; she wants to call her fraternity brothers and warn them to move the children. If unable to end the conversation, Brigit will excuse herself to go to the bathroom; if a Cast Member accompanies her, she will use her Emotional Influence to convince the Cast Member to become tired and fall asleep, even spending a Drama Point if she must. In any case, Brigit vanishes shortly after the Cast speaks to her.

The truth is that Brigit is half-demon; her father was human and her mother is an Oden Tal assassin. Brigit began receiving visions from her "goddess" at an early age; these visions slowly corrupted her and drove her quite insane. She is obsessed with bringing Black Annis into the world at any cost. Her eventual plan is to destroy all the men in the world (including those who have helped her achieve her goals) and believes that Annis has the same goal. Brigit takes the idea of "girl power" a little too far.

She has spent much of her life cultivating the worship of Annis among a small sect of the Oden Tal assassins, and eventually brought her plans to the world of humans when she fell in with a girl from the Tao Deltas. It wasn't difficult to twist their goddess Danna into Brigit's ideal of Black Annis and she used her emotional influence to work her way up to president of the Fraternity. Now the time has come to finalize her plans. Stats for Brigit and the Spawn of Black Annis can be found on page [?]. Stats for Oden Tal Assassins can be found in the *Angel Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*.

CALLING THE COPS

If the Cast call the police, Detective Knonaem gets a search warrant and a team invades the Tao Delta Delta frat house. The children are gone by the time they get there, however (If the Cast hasn't talked to Brigit, she received a psychic vision of the raid from Annis). Even still, the police find left behind a Barbie doll and a baby blanket. They arrest all of the occupants of the house based on the evidence, and send in a crime scene team to sweep for DNA evidence (which is plentiful; the Tao Deltas haven't had time to properly wash away all the evidence.) Det. Knonaem calls the Cast and gives them the report, that the children have been moved. Brigit is nowhere to be found, but they have her book of shadows, which the detective will turn over to the Cast. The book contains valuable information, including a description of the ritual that Brigit plans to use to baptize the Hellmouth, and the ritual she plans to use to call forth her goddess. He'll go to work on the Tao Deltas, but wants the Cast to keep their

investigation going. If this kidnapping ring is broken up, he'll see to it that they get their proper accolades.

BLACK ANNIS

It's possible that the Cast will wish to research Black Annis. Intelligence + Occultism rolls provide the following information, based on the number of success levels achieved:

1-2 Successes: Black Annis is one of the many names for the Celtic Goddess Danna. Other names include Gentle Annis, Anu, and Anna.

3-4 Successes: Black Annis in Celtic legend is a crone who lives on the Scottish moors and is said to eat children.

5-6 Successes: Black Annis is said to turn to stone in the sunlight.

7-8 Successes: Black Annis can be held at bay by certain combinations of common herbs, which act towards her like crosses do to vampires.

9+ Successes: Throughout the years, bizarre cults worshipping perverted, tentacled demons have claimed to be children of Black Annis. These cults often refer to themselves as Tuatha De Dannan, after the mythical god figures of ancient Ireland. Many cults have tried to bring forth an ancient prophecy that the goddess will come forth from her realm beyond the world to cleanse the earth of the filth of man, and restore the planet to a pure form.

Wild Card (Mythos):

1-2 Successes: Black Annis is the name by which some obscure cults refer to the Great Old One, Shub Niggurath.

3-4 Successes: Most Great Old Ones, and servitors of the Great Old Ones, can be repelled or held at bay by the Elder Sign.

5-6 Successes: Black Annis is not Shub Niggurath itself, but an avatar of the Old One who represents the corruption of life. She hails from the same dimension as the Mad God Leviathan.

THE DEMON ATTACK

By now the Cast is just itching for some action, and Brigit doesn't like having her plans interrupted. That night, the Cast comes under assault by a group of elite Oden Tal assassins hired by Brigit. Their orders are simple: kill them all, then find and kill the cop leading the investigation. The number of Oden Tal should vary based on the number of Cast Members, and the average power level; figure one per Champion in the group and one per every two Investigators. If there are Veterans in the group, they each get two Oden

Tal. The demons are vicious, but not stupid or suicidal. If they're badly overpowered, or it looks like they're going to lose, they'll make good their escape. It's not outside the realm of possibility for the Cast to get a prisoner. What happens in this case is entirely up to the Director. How much does she know? What's she willing to tell? Does she spend a Drama Point on Plot Twist to escape? A prisoner scene could very nicely send the Cast running to Detective Knonaem's rescue just as another group of assassins attack him.

AFTERMATH

The following morning, another kidnapping will be reported. Brigit has vanished, and all seven victims have been obtained. The inscription on the seventh victim's wall reads, "Today is born the seventh one; the circle is complete."

If the Cast have not yet brought Detective Knonaem into the game, then Greg (if he survived the battle) can inform them that the ritual to sacrifice the children must be performed at midnight; the blood of the children is to be used to baptize the Hellmouth so that it might open a gateway to Black Annis' dimension. Brigit plans to call forth her goddess to cleanse the world of the filth of humanity; she believes that Annis' chosen, the druids, will be raised up to rule as gods amongst men.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The key to this scene is getting Greg involved, and that's not all that difficult. If the Cast fails to translate the runes, Greg knows the prophecy. If the Cast fails to determine that there is a second Hellmouth in Pittsburgh, Greg knows that Panther Hollow is a "center of mystical convergence." Greg can be used to fill in any vital information the Director wishes to convey that the cast fails to gain through their research. He's the plot device lucky break.

So what if the Cast doesn't go to Panther Hollow? The easiest solution is to have Greg approach them somewhere else. Choose somewhere that the Cast is largely alone and away from prying eyes: a parking garage, a knock on a Cast Member's back door (assuming they live in a house) or apartment door. If the Cast runs a private investigations agency, Greg can simply show up there looking for help.

What if the Cast doesn't trust Greg? That's a bit more difficult. In this case, Greg will make good his escape (particularly if the Cast acts outright hostile to him) and phone in an anonymous tip about the Tao Delts to the police. Detective Knonaem will then call the cast and inform them about the tip, after the cops raid the Tao Delts' house. Greg will still be hanging around and will later come forward again to admit to having phoned in the tip, to prove he was telling the truth.

ACT THREE: CLIMAX

RUNDOWN

The Cast arrives at Panther Hollow to defeat Brigit's ritual, only to discover that she is not there; some quick thinking (and good rolls) reveal that she has opened a portal through which she can conduct the ritual. The Cast faces Brigit in her basement temple and does battle with her servants from the Outer Dark as she attempts to effect the ritual murder of the innocents. Hopefully, in the end they save the day.

ACTION

The police are frantically attempting to find Brigit before midnight, thanks to the evidence in her journal and the information provided by Greg and the other cultists. The next morning, Brigit's photo is all over every television station, phone pole, and in every shop window in the city. She is the subject of one of the largest manhunts in history.

On the Cast's recommendation, the police will close off Schenley Park for the night; Detective Knonaem will manage to clear the Cast through as "special consultants," and see to it that they make their way to Panther Hollow.

11:00 comes and goes, with no sign of Brigit or the children. By 11:20, the Cast should be getting worried; after all, Brigit has seven children to secure and a rather complicated ritual to set up, which must be started at exactly midnight.

At 11:30, they get their answer, and it's not the answer they were hoping for. Cast Members with Supernatural Senses (the Sight) are the first ones to notice the strange ripple in the air, a disturbance that generally means a portal of some kind is opening. Moments later, the portal is visible to the naked eye, its edges glowing red, though it is only a few inches in diameter and never seems to widen. Cast members with Supernatural Senses (Basic) or (The Sight) will soon detect

a flow of tainted mystical energy flowing through the portal from Panther Hollow. Brigit is drawing energy from the place through the portal to conduct her ritual!

Peeking through the pinhole is possible; Cast Members who do will see what appears to be a basement filled with discarded crosses, an old, tarnished golden tabernacle, and various religious odds and ends. They can see the edge of an altar, upon which a statue of the Virgin Mary has been set up and cleaned off...and painted black. A couple of the children are clearly visible, tied down and gagged, tears streaming down their faces. Quiet chanting sounds from within.

Now the Cast is in a bind; they have several options. Obviously, they need to get to Brigit. But where is she? If the Cast doesn't figure it out on their own, an Intelligence (doubled) roll reveals that the contents of the room would seem to indicate the basement of an abandoned church. Intelligence + Occultism rolls will reveal that the spell Brigit used to create this portal is powerful magic, and would need to be relatively nearby to work (it's not long-range mojo). Each success on the roll reduces the area by 1 mile, starting at 5. Thus, a single success reveals that she is within five miles of the Cast, while five or more successes reveals that she is within a mile. A quick call by Detective Knonaem can call up all the abandoned churches in the area; there are three within four miles, two within two miles, and only one within a mile of the Cast's location.

Any characters in the group with the Sorcery Quality can attempt to close the portal by matching their Intelligence + Occultism against Brigit's. This at least will buy the Cast some time.

The church Brigit is using is in a run-down area of town, the windows boarded up and the door barred from the inside, requiring six successes on a Strength (Doubled) roll to break; up to three characters can try simultaneously to do so. Brigit is in the basement, the children all chained to the ground in a $\frac{3}{4}$ circle around the base of the altar. Brigit sits naked on the altar, covered blood. A sheep lies dead on the altar, its throat cut. She smiles at the Cast as they walk in.

"Hello there. I've been waiting for you," she says. "But not alone."

She waves her hands, and shadowy portals open up around her. From the shadows step more Oden Tal assassins. The fight is on.

Brigit is seriously juiced up with dark magic. She can perform Supernatural Attacks at a range and erect mystical armor about herself (AV equal to Brigit's Willpower x Success Levels on her Int + Occultism roll). She has been blessed by her demonic goddess and has free use of most of the supernatural powers in the core rulebook as she needs them. On the down side, she is subject to all of the weaknesses of Black Annis (if the Cast researched the demon); this means if they have made talismans with "witch herbs" (anise seed, crushed willows, oak bark, and sage), Brigit cannot approach them; in addition, the Cast gains +4 to resist any of Brigit's powers, and her supernatural attacks deal half damage against them. The Elder Sign has the same effect. Likewise, sunlight and fire affect Brigit as they do vampires.

The Oden Tal are well under Brigit's Emotional control; unlike those that assaulted the Cast earlier, these ones are fanatics, and are in love with Brigit.

The Cast has played right into Brigit's hands. It's true they've foiled her plan to summon Black Annis into the world physically; But for her backup plan she's already gotten what she needed from the children; later examination of the kids reveals that while they are largely unharmed, each has a pinprick on their inner elbow, just as one would expect to find when blood had been drawn at a blood bank. The blood is hidden inside the pond at Panther Hollow. Now all Brigit needs is the blood from the Oden Tal warriors. The Director should describe the blood flying everywhere as the Cast does battle with the Oden Tal; the Cast and Brigit are all soaked in the stuff. When half the Oden Tal are dead, Brigit laughs maniacally, throws her hand forth, and a portal appears behind her...back to Panther Hollow. Brigit jumps through. Dexterity + Acrobatics, Sports, or Kung Fu rolls will allow the Cast to follow before the portal closes.

It's going to be tough to take down Brigit; no villain worth her salt goes in without a backup plan; if Brigit failed to sacrifice the children and open the Hellmouth in a literal sense, she can still draw forth her goddess' essence from it, into herself, making her a living embodiment of Black Annis. When she arrives back at Panther Hollow, Brigit leaps into the pond. A few minutes later, she bursts forth from the water, floating in the air and covered with weeds and muck. Her eyes are

coal black, and her hair hangs in strings around her face. She holds a sealed bottle filled with blood aloft and upends it, drinking the blood she drew from the children. If she succeeds in this task, she becomes Black Annis, though it will take several weeks for her powers to manifest fully; until then, she needs to lay low.

Brigit is set up to be a recurring villain. For Directors who want this to be more of a one-shot, the Cast can defeat her with the aforementioned gunshot to the bottle; this ends her magic powers, leaving her a pumped-up combatant, but not with unlimited access to demonic powers. In this case, her Natural Armor AV becomes set at 10 and she retains a ranged Supernatural Attack dealing 20 points of damage, and claws that deal 3 X Strength damage. Her attributes and Life Points remain unaltered.

Even still, the fight isn't close to over when the Cast follows Brigit through the portal; once in natural surroundings, she has the power to create spawn of her goddess. She holds her hands out and calls to the forest to rise, and all around the Cast, mounds of muck, ichor, and rotted plant life ooze together to form grotesque horrors, covered with vagina-like mouths. There should be at least one of these spawn per Cast Member; any Cast Member who happens to die from

Name: Brigit
Critter Type: Half Demon, touched by a Hellgod
Motivation: Bring Annis into the world, one way or another
Attributes: Str 4 Dex 7 Con 8 Int 4 Per 3 Wil 5
Ability Scores: Muscle 14 Combat 18 Brains 14
Life Points: 93
Drama Points: 10
Special Abilities: Access to all supernatural powers, Emotional Influence 6, Fast Reaction Time, Hard to Kill 5, Increased Life Points 2, Natural Armor AV 25, Natural Weapon (claws), Sorcery 5, Supernatural Attack, Zealot
Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Claw	18	17	Slash/Stab
Heat Blast	18	30	Can use Ranged
Sorcery	14	--	By Magic

battling these monstrosities is absorbed into the mass, which grows larger and more powerful (gains the Cast Member's Life Points, Strength, and Constitution scores in addition to its own).

If the Cast manages to stop Brigit from drinking the blood (say with a well-placed gunshot at Dexterity + Gun Fu with a -6 penalty) she's been beaten, but she's still got enough magic left to summon a few spawn and open up one last portal, through which she disappears (this one opened well out of reach of the Cast). Likely she'll be back to cause trouble in the future.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest potential problem here arises if the Cast fails to look through the Portal to the church; in this case, the police can receive an anonymous tip. If the Cast chooses not to pursue Brigit to the Church, the police certainly will; unfortunately, the Oden Tal will make short work of the police. Still, the interruption will be enough to save the children. Brigit will still leap through the portal to face the Cast at Schenley park, likely with several Oden Tal in tow. Whether the children are rescued in this case, or whether the Oden Tal decide that the girls make good recruits is up to the Director.



Name: Spawn of Black Annis
Critter Type: Demonic creation
Motivation: Serve mistress; destroy
Attributes: Str 8 Dex 3 Con 8 Int 0 Per 2 Wil
Ability Scores: Muscle 22 Combat 16 Brains 6
Life Points: 94
Drama Points: 2
Special Abilities: Increased Life Points 2, Poison, Reduced Damage (1/10 bullet, fire; 1/5 blunt)
Maneuvers

Name	Score	Damage	Notes
Branch Slash	16	26	Slash/Stab
Grapple	21	n/a	Sets up bite
Bite	16	19	Slash/Stab
Poison	n/a	*	Strength 7, 2 Con Damage



ACT FOUR: RESOLUTION

RUNDOWN

Brigit makes good her escape, the park is cleansed, the Cast gets some ominous news and some long overdue accolades.

ACTION

Following the battle at Panther Hollow, there are still the children to deal with. The Cast can return to the abandoned Church, to find Detective Knonaem already there with Lexie; if the Oden Tal haven't decided to kidnap and raise the girls, all are safe. Though for some of the older ones, it will take therapy to get over what they've been through, Lexie doesn't think the psychological damage is irreversible, largely due to the very young age of most of the children.

Another journal is found at the site, this one the beginnings of a Book of Shadows, detailing the 2-part ritual to summon forth Black Annis and the backup ritual that enabled Brigit to summon the goddess' power into herself. The Cast should be

left wondering if Brigit succeeded (even if she did not); the final part of the notes discusses an Ascension rite that will allow Annis to rise through Brigit if the original ritual fails. Brigit could be out there somewhere, still...

The next morning, the Cast gets a call from Det. Knonaem asking if they can meet him at City Hall at noon. When they arrive, they discover to their surprise that the mayor, the media, and a crowd of people are waiting for them. They are to be presented the keys to the city and given Civilian Awards for heroism. In addition, the police department wants to keep the Cast on retainer as independent consultants for unusual and occult-related cases such as these.

TROUBLESHOOTING

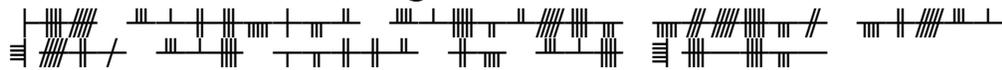
Nothing to troubleshoot, here. This is your standard denouement, and hopefully everyone goes away happy.

HANDOUTS

HONORED MOTHER,

FEAR NOT THE SAFETY OF YOUR CHILD. SHE GOES TO A GREATER PURPOSE THAN YOU CAN EVER IMAGINE. THE MOTHER OF LIFE AND DEATH WILL HONOR YOUR GREAT SACRIFICE WHEN SHE RETURNS TO BLESS AND PURIFY THIS WORLD. YOU WILL RECEIVE A PLACE OF HONOR BY HER HOLY SIDE IN RETURN FOR THE CHILD YOU LOSE THIS NIGHT. THANK YOU, AND MAY THE GODDESS BLESS YOU IN ALL THAT YOU DO.

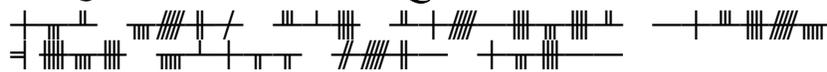
CRIME SCENE 1 RUPES:



CRIME SCENE 2 RUPES:



CRIME SCENE 3 RUPES:



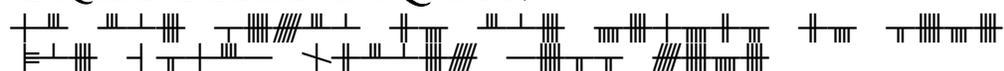
CRIME SCENE 4 RUPES:



CRIME SCENE 5 RUPES:



CRIME SCENE 6 RUPES:



CRIME SCENE 1 RUPES:

Her thousand children spring forth
From the blood of the Seven.

CRIME SCENE 2 RUPES:

A fortnight hence the Baptism of Blood

CRIME SCENE 3 RUPES:

And from the darkened Waters
Life shall grow anew.

CRIME SCENE 4 RUPES:

To cleanse the world

CRIME SCENE 5 RUPES:

The Fire will leap forth
From the Second Mouth of the Beast

CRIME SCENE 6 RUPES:

At the birth of the season of life
The Black Mother will rise

Soon shall the forces of the Outer Dark be upon me. I am all that remains of my intrepid band of warriors, for in our shortsightedness we became complacent, convinced that the gates to the Beyond had been forever shackled and barred. Even when we sensed a new rise of mystical energy did we fail to take proper precautions. So long as we guarded the portal, we knew that our safety, and the safety of the region, would be secured.

What fools we were not to see.

The black-hearted Prince of Wallachia, the dark Impaler, called together the blackest magicians in Europe to drive us from his forests. In their black visions, they uncovered something none of us in our wildest nightmares would've imagined, but that makes perfect, terrifying sense.

The convergence is not limited to one spot. Hell springs forth from elsewhere, now; the Beast has a second mouth.

The demons came at us in the night, an army that even the Slayer and her intrepid band of Knights Templar could not ward away. They came from the rear, having spilled forth from the second Mouth of the Beast even as we guarded the seal upon the first.

The battle quickly became a slaughter.

I am all that remains.

But not for long. I hide this tome in the walls of a ruined castle in the hope that some future generation will find and remember our valiant struggle, and that our experiences may save others from the same fate.

Adair, Keeper of Law and Wisdom
Mouth of Cuithre
1532, Gregorian Calendar

October 20, 2004

I swear, it's so easy it's criminal.
That's funny when I think about it
because, you know, it kind of is
criminal. But they all just bow to my
every whim. Soon I'll run this
organization, and then they'll all see the
glory of Annis.

Mother be praised,

Brigit

November 30, 2004

It's happened. I'm the High Priestess, now, and all the boys in the fraternity are falling over themselves for my attention.

I own them.

They'll make wonderful food for the Goddess when she arises.

But first, the ritual. I'll need seven children. Convincing the dupes to kidnap them for me won't be a problem. A few sexual favors should do the trick.

Goddess be praised

Brigit

January 18, 2005

The police are involved. I GUESS I should've expected that would happen, what with bits of the prophecy needing to be left at each site. The boys were so nice to hand over pints of their blood every few weeks to make that happen.

It's no matter. Soon we'll have the SEVEN we need, and their blood will baptize the Bower so that Black Annis can be free to cleanse this world of the human filth.

February 15, 2005

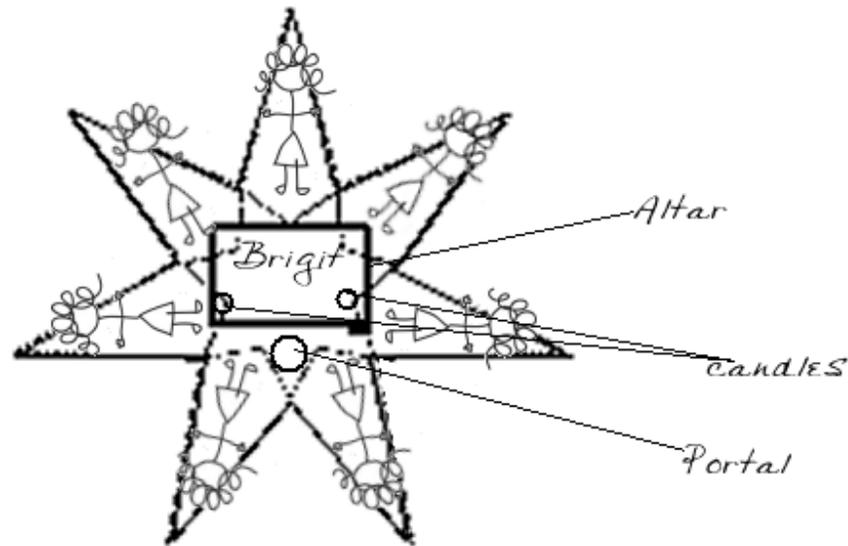
Police are covered. I've managed to use my special gifts to seduce some of my sisters from Oden Tal to assist me. With enough conditioning, they'll be as devout as I myself am.

And I've been working on the backup plan. If this falls through, Annis can always rise through me.

It has to be me. No one else is worthy. I am worthy. The Goddess is in me already.

I will be the Goddess.

Ritual notes:



1. Draw strength from the Mother through the portal.
2. Kill the goat and bathe in blood. Begin the recitation of the Rites of Annis.
3. Sacrifice the offerings, one by one.

4. Collect their blood in the Sacred VESSEL.
5. Backup: If ritual interrupted, summon Sisters from Oden Tal. Their blood will baptize me that I can begin the ASCENSION when the time is right. Then, enlarge portal and leap through to the Sacred Place, where the children's blood I have already harvested hides beneath the water. Drink blood to sanctify the baptism.