



Artifact

A Horror Rules Adventure Script

by Chris Weedon

Horror Rules™
The Simply Horrible Role-Playing Game



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Special Thanks To: God, in whom all things are possible; also to Kimmy (and the rest of the family) for supporting the obsession; and finally, to all of the countless characters who have lost their lives, and continue to do so, so that the world may be safe from evil.

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* **Author's Note:** the makers of "Horror Rules" in no way condone the worship of or even a casual night out with any of the evil creatures, demonic beings or sinister demi-gods alluded to in this game or any of its supplements. We also don't condone wanton violence or destruction (in the real world) as an effective means of solving problems. In other words, it's just a game.



Horror Rules and Horror Rules Adventure Scripts are published by
Crucifixion Games
P.O. Box 654
Selah, WA 98942

Crucifixion Games

NO PAIN, NO GAME

Table of Contents

Story	4
Setting	4
Goal	4
Character Limitations	4
Style of Play	4
Cast	5
Bad Guys	6
Walk-Ons	7
Mood	7
Chain of Events	8

Story

The world-renowned archeology department at the University of Las Calamas has always been famed for making the past come alive - but this time it's for real. A rare discovery outside of town has prompted a dig and produced some remarkable finds - not least of which are a mysterious, menacing stranger with supernatural powers, a host of walking dead and a 3000 year old puzzle that could spell doom for the PC's. If they don't figure out the mystery before it's too late, they could end up dead - or worse. Someone should have warned them about Dr. Leakey's Archeology 101 - it's a real killer.

Setting

Las Calamas, CA

Located on the Pacific coastline near the middle of California, Las Calamas is a strange mixture of peaceful retirement communities and youthful energy. A truly diverse environment, the sprawling city boasts a wealth of both natural and economic resources, great for a leisurely stroll along the boardwalked beaches or for a night on the town.

Hot Spot 1 – University of Las Calamas

A dominant local feature for over 100 years, the ULC campus has produced great thinkers, fine athletes and very successful persons in many lines of work. Its Archeology Department, headed by Dr. Richard Leakey, has long been a particular source of pride for the school. The campus is a broad, sprawling complex of ivy covered brick buildings, fountains, tree-covered walkways and brooding dormitories.

Hot Spot 2 – The Dig

Located 20 miles north of Las Calamas, the dig is well outside city limits and off the beaten path. A narrow dirt access road leads to the fenced perimeter, which is usually locked. Several wooden utility shacks decorate the compound, clustered loosely around the large hole that marks the entryway. A sloped earthen ramp leads down into a small complex of partially excavated rooms and tunnels. The floors are bare earth and on the stone walls can be seen ancient and largely undecipherable pictographs, glyphs and other strange symbols. It was discovered by hikers

several weeks ago and has been under the care of Dr. Leakey ever since. The nearest efforts to date the find place it over 2000 years old, but no evidence as to its creators has been uncovered. Unbeknownst to the characters, the site is secretly home to a strange monolith which holds the spirit energy of a long dead race of people. Trapped in the monolith against their will, the souls can only be released by a stone cube "key." Ash seeks the key to harness the power of the monolith for himself, which is tremendous indeed, and which he plans to use primarily to dominate large parts of the world.

Goal

Mystery

The characters must figure out the puzzle of the stone cube and use it to free the spirits trapped in the monolith. If not, Ash will get ahold of it, harness their energy and do some really naughty things.

Character Limits

All PC's must have some connection to the Archeology Dpt. at ULC (students, lab technicians, assistant professors, security guards, etc.).



Style of Play

Limited Victims

Cast 1

Name: Dr. Richard Leakey

Char Type: Labcoat

Occupation: Head of Archeology Dpt., ULC

BLK: 2 **Morality:** Good

BRN: 5 **Health:** 6

COR: 2 **Grip:** 12

WIL: 4 **Move:** 4

Skills

Science 4 (9)

Technical 2 (7)

Detection 4 (8)

Description

An energetic and charismatic man in his mid 60's, Dr. Leakey is short and balding with grey hair and beard and thick black-rimmed spectacles. He wears ties, short-sleeved shirts and a white labcoat in class, but khakis and his trademark fedora in the field.

Brief

A deep thinker and accomplished scholar who always has time for his students, Richard Leakey is one of the more popular professors at ULC. He has personally mentored countless aspiring scientists over the years, and truly cares about both his students and his craft. Dr. Leakey teaches both Geology and Archeology.

Weapons & Equipment

Field archeology kit

Gradebook

Bad Guy 1

Name: Skeletal Servants

Grip Check: Freak

COR: 3

Health: 10

Fighting Skill: Punch 7

Damage: Contusion 2

Move: 5

Weak Spot: 5

Powers

- *Chill Touch* - Victims of their touch must pass a WIL check or suffer -2 on all actions due to bone-chilling, supernatural numbness. The effects last for one hour (non-cumulative).
- *Bony* - Guns and other small projectiles (arrows, slingshots, peach pits) have limited effect since they tend to pass between the bones; all such weapons reduce Damage by one level.

Skills

Watchfulness 5

Sneak 4

Vulnerabilities

Faith Attack - Smiting (Light Dmg)

Description

Mostly skeleton and gristle, these ghastly undead servants are created and sustained by dark magic. Some wear rags of clothing and have an eyeball or patch of skin or two, but most are devoid of flesh, emotion and mercy. They serve Ash with complete loyalty, following every command with mindless obedience. They possess a limited intelligence and are incapable of speech.

Bad Guy 2

Name: Ash

Grip Check: Startle

COR: 4

Health: 9

Fighting Skill: Hand to Hand 7

Damage: Contusion2

Move: 7

Weak Spot: 3

Powers

- *Strong as an Ox* - Magical energies imbue him with great strength, the equivalent of BLK 6.
- *Toss and Tumble* - Black magic allows him to supernaturally lift and throw objects without touching them. Medium Range, BLK 5, can attack as Contusion.
- *Eat My Blast* - Another dark spell that shoots dark sheets of electricity from his hands. Attacks at Skill 8, Long Range, Moderate Damage.
- *Iron Pincushion* - You guessed it - more magic. Ash can use this spell to absorb all damage from any attack which uses a weapon (knife, gun, flamethrower). Roll on Skill 8, and if successful he takes no damage.

Skills

Watchfulness 8

Sneak 6

Sweet Talk 6

Science 6

Vulnerabilities

None

Description

A distinguished looking gentleman who appears to be in his mid-50's, Ash is a true enigma. He wears dark grey suits, has neatly grooming silver hair and goatee and carries a strange looking walking stick of apparent African origin, but apart from this has no other distinguishing features (even a last name). He is smooth, arrogant and always looks at you as if he knows your every thought. He is a dark mage of great power, unknown age and short temper. It's best to stay away.

Walk-Ons

Perry O'dell

Dr. Leakey's receptionist, Perry is an attractive redhead who is both friendly and efficient. She is on good terms with the doctor and his students and knows the campus and the town very well.

Mood

1. **The Cube**

This little stone block gives off all kinds of creepy vibes and is surrounded by strange effects - moving on its own, whispering, giving off heat or cold, causing strange visions or hallucinations.

2. **Mysteries Abound**

The dig is like nothing anyone has ever seen or heard of before. The carvings and glyphs are indecipherable and the layout unidentifiable. It is as if a lost or unknown people built it.

3. **Ash - Who the Heck is This Guy?!**

The enigma of Ash is a fun one - he pops out of nowhere, intimidating and tossing the PC's around, offering no explanation or reasons. He wants the cube to unlock the power of the monolith, and nothing will get in his way.

Chain of Events

1. The Assignment

All of the PC's are somehow connected to Dr. Leakey's archeology class, (see Character Limitations), so the story begins with them all packed into the ULC van heading for another day of work at the dig site. This should give the players a chance to get acquainted with each other's characters and chat a bit. Although the dig has been underway for several weeks, Leakey is taking his time and has made slow progress and no conclusive finds. His only assessment so far is that the dig is over 2000 years old and of unknown origin. He is very excited (as should the PC's be), even though there have been no material finds and he has been unable to decipher the strange pictographs on the walls. Once they arrive, describe the site and have them get to work doing whatever it is they do. Shortly after lunch Leakey will put one of the PC's in charge and announce that he has to leave for an appointment. Anyone passing a Watchfulness check will notice Dr. Leakey climb into a long black limousine with Ash and drive off. That character should make a Startle check due to a strange sense of foreboding. Everyone else will experience odd, inexplicable sensations from the dig, too, such as chills, a sense of *deja vu*, loss of time or mild hallucinations. If they share information, they will realize that that they are not the only one experiencing the phenomena. Although nothing earthshaking, this is weird. Have everyone roll a Startle Check.

2. The Dig

When the day is done everyone returns home. Dr. Leakey calls one of the PC's and asks her a mysterious favor - to go out and pick up his notebook from the dig site. He sounds distracted and somewhat agitated but will brush off any questions with a simple "I'm tired, that's all." He will sidestep any questions about his appointment with Ash, claiming that it was nothing of importance and just to forget it. At this point Leakey will end the call abruptly, thanking the PC and telling her he has "a lot of work to do." Before hanging up he makes one

last request, a note of nervousness in his voice: "Don't go alone." If the PC passes a Watchfulness or Detection test, she can deduce that Leakey has ulterior motives in sending them out to the site, which he was unwilling to share (in reality he is nervous about his confrontation with Ash, and wants them to check up on the dig). Arriving at the site, the PC's will be surprised to find the chain link gate ajar. Closer inspection will reveal that the padlock has been cut (Detection, Thief or Technical). Have everyone make a Watchfulness check to notice movement inside the compound, near the entrance to the dig. Unbeknownst to the party, a team of Skeletal Servants has broken into the dig at Ash's command and is scouring the site. If the characters proceed, check to see if they are detected. Successful Sneak checks will prevent this, since the Servants aren't too observant. If they are discovered, the PC's will be attacked (one Skeleton for each character), but only while trying to stop the Skeletons. The creatures are under orders to avoid conflict and will retreat into the night when possible. If the PC's choose to wait and watch, the Skeletons will leave after about 30 minutes, marching up out of the hole and off into the night. Make sure the characters get a good look at them (you wouldn't want to miss out on a good Grip Check). However things go with the undead visitors, there are important clues waiting inside. Anyone with Detection or even Watchfulness can find signs down inside that the intruders were searching for something down in the digsite proper, even doing a little digging themselves. During the search, the character with the highest Morality (roll for ties) will notice a rough, unmarked stone cube about two inches on a side sitting in the middle of the floor. It is faintly warm to the touch and when they pick it up a breeze whispers through the dig, even though there is none above. After everyone makes a Startle check, they are free to go.

3. Spooky Night, Spooky Day

The PC's will probably puzzle over the cube for awhile, then go home. There is nothing to discover about it - no markings, no buttons or lids, nothing strange at all. Dr. Leakey will be unreachable and the school labs closed, so

Artifact

eventually they should turn in. Later that night, whoever ends up with the cube will have a strange experience. The PC will be awakened sometime after midnight by bizarre and disorienting chase dreams. As he comes to his senses, he will hear a "drip, drip" sound from the nearest bathroom. When the character investigates, things only get weirder - regardless of where he put the stone cube earlier, it is now sitting on the bathroom sink. The dripping sound is coming from the hot water tap, which has caused the mirror to steam up. Written in crooked letters in the steam are the words "help us." This will prompt a Scare Check. Nothing else happens that evening, but doubtless the next day will prompt some further investigation of the cube. Again, there is little to discover, but lab equipment and successful Science checks will reveal the following: the cube is around 2000 years old (matching the dig), solid, and was apparently shaped by metal tools. The type of mineral the stone is composed of defies analysis, not matching up with any known material. As the day continues, so do the bizarre events - everyone in possession of the item will experience a strange phenomena, including but not limited to the following: cube moves on its own, gives off heat, cold or tingles, prompts visions of shadowy, ghostlike figures, evokes powerful emotions such as fear, anxiety, loneliness or paranoia. Each of the PC's should experience at least one of these events, requiring a Scare check. Dr. Leakey, if consulted, will be quite interested in news of the previous night, but is obviously distracted and worried by something. He will not confide in the students, but instead advise them to continue working on the mysteries of the cube. The work at the site, he will announce, has been temporarily halted. The only explanation he will give is that he is troubled by some discovery and that he must "investigate a few theories." Leakey will then excuse himself. The PC's have the entire day to puzzle over these events.

4. Attacked

That night, all hell breaks loose. Sometime after sundown, the PC's will be attacked by a large group of Skeletal Servants who are attempting to

recover the cube. There are three for each PC, and their intent should quickly become obvious. Hopefully the PC's will be able to escape or defeat the Skeletons. If not, that's okay - after all, it's just a game (and the unspeakable evil that will soon be unleashed won't really affect you or I or anyone we care about, thank the Lord). Immediately after their victory (hopefully), Dr. Leakey will call from his office, obviously frantic, but all he manages to get out is "Do you still have it? For goodness sake, don't let..." then the phone cuts out. If they investigate the office, they will find the door smashed open, everything in a mess, blood on the floor and Leakey quite conspicuously absent.

5. Back to the Dig

At this point, the PC's begin to feel a strong urge to return to the dig. The longer they wait, the stronger it becomes. After a short while it becomes quite obvious that the sensation is emanating from the stone cube, and that the only way to satisfy it is to give in. Undoubtedly our fearless heroes will make their way to the excavation with fitting haste. Once at the site, the cube will continue tugging at them until they have gone down into the hole. There they will be surprised to see some new digging - a fresh opening has been tunneled in one wall, revealing a secret chamber behind. In this room stands the monolith, a tall, dark, rough-hewn pillar of stone festooned with strange symbols and bizarre shapes. Roughly six feet high, the monolith gives off an odd sensation, a warm chill and a deep, faint humming sound. There is little that can be discovered about the strange pillar of rock, except that the humming sound intensifies when the little cube is brought near, and that they both *appear* to be made of the same mineral (Science check). After the PC's have examined the monolith for a moment, Ash will appear in the secret opening, accompanied by several Skeletal Servants. He will confront the party, clearly impatient and angry and demand "the key," explaining that the characters will be destroyed if they do not surrender it. He will exchange a few words, but won't tolerate insolence or insult and will rapidly weary of the chit chat. After a little banter, he will use his magic and supernatural strength to start tossing



Artifact

the characters around, demanding the stone. Although they might possibly be able to overpower him, the Skeletal Servants will jump in if things start going poorly, so fighting probably won't accomplish much. The only way to get out alive is by making a successful Detection check on the monolith. This will reveal a small square hole on the back side, exactly the same dimensions of the stone cube. If the cube is placed in the hole (an exact fit), the monolith will begin to vibrate, shudder and glow brightly. The room rumbles as if hit by an earthquake, and streams of white wispy mist begin to pour out of the monolith. Faint human forms and dimly seen faces can be made out within the mist, which envelopes Ash and his Skeletal Servants, dissolving the undead completely and shaking Ash like a rag doll. After a few moments, everything stops - the earthquake dies, the light fades and the strange mist rushes out of the room and disappears. Ash is left shaken and disheveled, and he will beat a hasty retreat, mumbling incoherently and with a wild, vacant look in his eyes. A little searching will reveal Dr. Leakey tied up in a nearby chamber. He will explain that Ash was threatening his life if he did not abandon the dig, and that he had managed to decipher some of the pictographs. What little he could piece together indicated that the monolith was some sort of storage device for spiritual energy, and that it was a great potential source of power (see Hot Spot 2 - The Dig). His guess is that the souls inside were trapped, and had now been freed to continue their journey. At this point, the PC's will feel a strange sense of fulfillment and perhaps an impression of gratitude. Time for some chocolate milk.