

The Church on the Hill

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A Horror Rules Script
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Story

The pastor of the local church in the quaint, quiet, country town of Brownsville calls with a mysterious plea for help. Arriving on the scene, the characters are greeted by a distraught Pastor Shane Godwyn, who tells them the unbelievable truth - that he is being tormented by a band of sinister and malevolent spirits, bent on destroying him and the church. Five separate, shadowy ghosts have appeared to him in their various forms - Rita the seductress, Arthur the malicious child, Silas, a cloaked and stalking figure, Abner, the raging murderer, and Grandma Cotton, a vision of madness and despair. Sewing panic and discord among the townsfolk, and framing Pastor Godwyn for their own gruesome atrocities, the five ghosts seek the ruin of him and the church. Their motives? None can say, but the truth lies in the grim history of the town of Brownsville and the tragic events of over a hundred years before. To save their friend - and themselves - the characters must seek the horror that lurks beneath the Church on the Hill.

The Truth About the Church on the Hill

Shane's great-grandfather, Ira Godwyn, was pastor of the same church in the early 1820's, and was a great moralist and saintly man. Under his guidance, the church and the town prospered. Disaster struck, however, when in an overzealous effort to rid the town of "unhealthy influences," the local townsfolk rounded up all the troublemakers (Silas, Abner, Rita, Grandma Cotton and Arthur), packed them into a wagon and drove them from the town. They only made it as far as the bridge. Weakened by heavy rains and high wind from a storm, the rickety structure collapsed and dropped the five into the river where they drowned in the swollen, freezing waters. Drawn back by their burning anger and vile spirits, these five souls have returned after a long sleep to take revenge on Godwyn's family line and the Church on the Hill. The dark secret was covered over by the town and is currently known only by town historian Johnathon Crosswitch, who guards it closely.

Goal

Hunt

To bring peace to Brownsville, the characters must track down the spirits who are tormenting Pastor Godwyn and destroy them once and for all.

Setting

Brownsville, VA, USA

Population 4,000

A quiet, rural community with roots tracing back to the original colonies. Picturesque and rustic, with farmlands, some dairy, rolling hills and a smattering of forest. It is a typical Eastern American smalltown, with one hotel, a

Skills: n/a

Vulnerabilities: Faith Attacks only (Light damage); her physical attacks can be parried, however.

Description: a beautiful, faded image of a woman in a white dress with long, flowing black hair. Secretive, hauntingly beautiful and somewhat sad. A real man-killer.

Name: Arthur

Grip Check: Startle/Freak (see Powers)

COR: 4

Move: 9 (spirit - through walls, floors, disappear/reappear)

Health: 7

Weak Spot: 3

Fighting Skill: n/a

Damage: n/a

Powers: Good Boy/Bad Boy - Arthur's normal face is simple and innocent, but he has a spare; on the back of his head is a second, a hideous and nightmarish countenance which he swivels around when he's really feeling ornery (Grip Check: Freak)

Skills: n/a

Vulnerabilities: Faith Attacks only (Light damage)

Description: Arthur appears as the faded, washed out image of an 8 year old boy in short pants and a darling little hat. When present, he always hums a haunting and vaguely familiar children's song. He delights in teasing and practical jokes, usually the kind that get people killed (pushing them off the balcony, knocking a toaster in the bathtub, throwing hatchets, etc.). His favorite tactic is to lure folks away with a few ghostly hums, footsteps and closing doors, then finish them off.

Name: Abner

Grip Check: Scare

COR: n/a

Move: 4 (spirit - through walls, floors, disappear/reappear)

Health: n/a

Weak Spot: n/a

Fighting Skill: n/a

Damage: n/a

Powers: Possession - victim checks WILL or is taken over and consumed by the desire to kill (and worse). Can only be removed by a Faith roll.

Skills: n/a

Vulnerabilities: none

Description: Abner is a pure malevolent spirit, and always remains unseen. His presence is felt, however, and those closeby will become impatient and increasingly angry for no apparent reason.

Cast

Pastor Shane Godwyn - the pastor of the Church on the Hill. Humble, young and honest, he is beset by forces he does not understand. Faith - 4, Will - 2

Walter Cross - the Mayor of Brownsville, 61, lean, mean, grey haired, suspicious of outsiders and quick to judge. Wears brown 3-piece suits and keeps his long mustache well groomed.

Len Boscoe - owner of the local repair shop ("Boscoe's"), he is the town bully and firmly in the Mayor's camp. Red-faced, burly and decked out in grease-smearred coveralls, he's quick to pick a fight and not above swinging at a preacher. Len is also a favorite target of Abner, and under his influence has become physically (and secretly) abusive toward some of the women in town.

Chelsea Turner - an 8 yr old girl, and one of Pastor Godwyn's best Sunday School students and staunchest supporters. A red-haired, freckled cutie who will speak out on his behalf in front of anyone. She has met Arthur,

and can sometimes be heard humming his song absentmindedly, although she is quite frightened of him. Chelsea is Johnathon Croswitch's only friend, and is currently being raised by her grandma, Lotta Turner.

Johnathon Croswitch - Brownsville's historian and resident crotchety old man. People avoid him, but he is often seen lurking near the scene of any action, leaving behind a scuff of pipe ash and a few boot prints. He is crusty and sullen (and old), but he alone knows the full truth of what happened those many years ago. It will take some doing to make him talk, but anyone who Chelsea trusts will be at least given a chance to speak. A firm believer in evil spirits and the power of God.

Walk-ons

Lotta Turner - Chelsea's grandmother and the local librarian, who doesn't know what to make of Pastor Godwyn or her daughter's devotion to him; a quiet spinster not looking for trouble, she might nonetheless be persuaded to help the characters with research.

Franklin Burns - police chief of Brownsville, a fat, paunchy, spineless man who owes his career and paycheck to Mayor Cross. He is well aware of who truly holds power in Brownsville and is usually gone when trouble happens.

Sally French - Pastor Godwyn's secretary, prim, efficient and a firm unbeliever in any ghost business (although she's heard a great deal of strange things).

Chain of Events

1) *An Old Friend*

Pastor Godwyn calls one of the characters who happens to be an old school friend of his, preferably a Selfish or Sinful one. Although he was once a ruffian and a troublemaker, a change of heart has led him into the ministry. He will make small talk for a few minutes, then make a nervous and hesitant plea for help. Trouble has come his way, and although he will not discuss it on the phone, he begs the character to come to Brownsville and help him. He will encourage his old friend to bring as many others as he can. All he will say is that it is urgent.

2) *The Haunted Bridge*

The trip to Brownsville takes several hours (or at least long enough for the characters to arrive at night) and leads far out into the sparsely populated countryside. The lone bridge that leads into town confronts the characters at this point, a rickety and unstable-looking affair. Drivers require a test of Will in order to cross. While the bridge is quite safe, it is also haunted by the tragic events of the past, and a vivid impression of them will strike three characters at random: one with blurred vision, another with shortness of breath and throat constriction, and the third intense cold and chills. (The five ghosts were killed by drowning in the river.) Everyone witnessing these attacks must make a Startle check on Grip. The longer the victims are on the bridge, the worse the symptoms. There is no apparent cause, but everything clears up as soon as they leave the bridge. During the excitement, have someone spot Johnathon Croswitch watching from the shadows on a nearby hilltop. It should prove almost impossible to catch him, though, as he will slip away during the encounter. (It doesn't hurt to make the characters think he's somehow responsible.)

3) *The Church on the Hill*

Arriving at the church, the characters will find Pastor Godwyn gone and the secretary (Sally French) just locking up. She will tell them that Shane is away on some business but ask them to wait for his return. As night deepens outside, the five spirits, sensing that reinforcements have come for the beleaguered pastor, will

attempt to frighten the characters off. Activity is limited to minor frights and a few bumps, and perhaps an appearance by the shadowy Silas, a goose-chase with Arthur or even a first encounter with Rita if any men happen to wander off alone. If things get really crazy, one or two of the characters may end up joining the ghosts in the afterlife or at least very thankful they brought an extra pair of boxers.

4) *The Troubled Pastor*

Shane will show up after a short while, completely unsurprised by tales of risen dead and ghostly happenings, and very concerned that the characters were left alone. He will apologize profusely and relate the tale of his own misery. Pastor Godwyn claims the spirits have been haunting him for the past several months, although he doesn't know why. Quite minor at first, the appearances have become much more aggressive in the past few weeks, and the Pastor feels they are pushing towards something big. Already many strange things have happened in town for which he has been blamed, from minor criminal acts such as shoplifting and peeping to the slaughter of livestock, evidence of witchcraft and an assault against a local young lady (actually Len Boscoe under the influence of Abner). Shane has only actually *seen* Silas, but he has heard Arthur's song and Grandma Cotton's cackle, as well as being struck once by the Devil's Kiss and Chill Freeze. At the height of the discussion, a crowd of hostile townsfolk arrive, led by Mayor Cross and Len Boscoe (and, behind the scenes, Abner). They will openly threaten the pastor and his friends, accusing him of all the wrongdoing and citing evidence planted by the spirits - footprints from his shoes, scraps of his pastor's robe left at the scene, money disappearing from the church, shadowy figures fleeing toward the parsonage, etc. It won't take much to start a fight at this point. There will be one villager for each character, plus Len.

5) *Long Day, Long Night*

After a restless night in the church, the characters have the next day to explore Brownsville and look for clues. Townsfolk are less than talkative, especially if there was a blowout at the church the night before. If they get lucky, the party might catch a glimpse or two of Crosswitch mysteriously watching, pick up a hint from library records or idle talk (a "dark event" in the town's past, reports of strange experiences by the bridge, etc.) or even discover that Len Boscoe is the real culprit behind recent assaults. Nothing solid will appear, however... except the five spirits. They will make only occasional brief appearances during the day (a few Startle rolls), but as night falls, they return with a vengeance. It is clear that the characters are friends of Pastor Shane now, and thus need to be removed. The five will be quite aggressive, and make last night's spookings seem like a Sunday School picnic. If the characters thought the day was long, wait until they turn in. It would be surprising if everyone lived through the night.

6) *Chelsea (*Point of No Return)*

At last the characters catch a break. Sometime during this next day, if any are still sane enough to connect a rational thought, they will encounter young Chelsea Turner and someone will recognize that she is humming Arthur's song (which will require a Startle roll all by itself by this time). She will talk openly of her encounter with him (make up something simple) and take them to her grandmother to learn more. At the library, if they can convince her to help, Lotta will release a few hesitant and sketchy details, then refer them to Mr. Crosswitch, who "might know more." Getting Crosswitch to talk, much less open the door, will be a true challenge. The rewards are great, however, as Crosswitch knows the full tale and will tell the characters everything if properly motivated (see *The Truth About the Church on the Hill*, Overview).

7) *The Banishing*

Once Pastor Shane knows the truth, he will realize the only way to rid the church and town of the plague of spirits is to perform a Banishing ceremony. Although he has never done one before, he will insist on carrying it out, and ask the characters to guard him while he does it. It will take Shane several hours to prepare for the rites, which will begin promptly at 11:30 at night. The character's job is simple - protect the Pastor while he completes the Banishing. Unfortunately, the spirits know what is at stake and will come in force. This

time they will throw everything at the characters (literally), starting with a fully possessed and berserking Len Boscoe/Abner, if he's still around. Len/Abner will burst in promptly at 11:50, at the very height of the Banishing, followed closely by the other spirits. They will stop at nothing to prevent the ceremony. It should prove to be the longest (or shortest) 10 minutes of the characters' lives.

Mood

1. Brownsville - the town itself is a great source of mood, with its turn-of-the-century architecture, brooding eaves, narrow streets and looming trees. A sense of age and history hangs about the place. Fall is a great
 2. Old Buildings - buildings in Brownsville are very old and very creaky. Houses "settle" a lot, shutters tend to
 3. The Church - beautiful and stoic, it is nevertheless a bit scary at night, with its stained glass windows, narrow
 4. The Locals - the townsfolk will not be too accepting of the characters, and will largely avoid them or be rude, suspicious, and not above a little graffiti warning outsiders to leave, or maybe even a threatening note.
 5. wanders off alone.
 6. things. The townspeople themselves have grown accustomed to such things and unconsciously avoid going there, but the characters (especially Saintly and Good ones) will be decidedly uncomfortable.
- Weather - for some reason, Brownsville tends to get more than its share of wind and thunderstorms, especially on the night of Banishings.
- The Spirits - never underestimate the power (and presence) of the five spirits. Although they will not appear all together until the night of the Banishing, they will fill the character's lives with ghostly reflections in the picture.