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GODSEND
AGENDA

Sample file

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GODSEND AGENDA

GODSEND Agenda: Mythos

ISBN0-9716234-3-0

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MOTHER'S MILK

SYNOPSIS

Mother's Milk is an adventure for 2-4 characters of power level 2. It can be adjusted for higher power levels by increasing the number of enemy NPCs.

For the sleepy Midwestern town of Pleasantville, the annual cheese festival is the absolute highlight of the year. This week-long event is the most exciting thing that ever happens around these parts, the backwater equivalent of Mardi Gras, and this year anybody who is anybody will be there. The festival even attracts revelers from the neighboring towns of Ten Commandments, Yellow Banks, and Small. To the folks of Pleasantville this makes it practically an international summit. The Mayor has hired a bouncy castle and some clowns, and Sheriff Byrne has even put together a band – the Boys in Bluegrass – to welcome the out-of-towners. This year's festival looks set to be the best ever.

Unfortunately for the unsuspecting cheese-fanciers, a monstrous threat lurks behind the innocent façade of Pleasantville. An ancient Chimeran has lain dormant for the last three centuries underneath the twenty acres of pasture that feed the Pleasantville cattle, saturating the grass with its genetic material and in turn infecting the cows. The cows are altered subtly on a genetic level by the infection, and anybody who consumes the products of said cattle in large quantities is likewise slowly changed over a course of several weeks. Now the Chimeran has awakened and has become aware of the presence of her genetic material in the animals above. She enthalls the infected with the power of her mind and speaks to them telepathically, commanding them to consume more and more of the tainted products. Hightower Dairies, the family-run business that owns the pastures and the cattle, is the largest provider of dairy products to the entire region. This year's cheese festival will provide hundreds of new slaves for the lurking monster.

The Player Characters become aware of the situation when one of their contacts makes a frantic telephone call for help and is suddenly cut off. This person was visiting Pleasantville for the cheese festival and stumbled across the corruption at the heart of the town, barely managing to reach the outside world before the thralls of the Chimeran caught them. Investigation leads the PCs to the heart of the Midwest and a town full of humans (and cattle) who are not what they seem. Under the Chimeran's power the thralls first try to infect the intruders, then to destroy them.

The obvious place to investigate first is the dairy itself, the apparent source of the thralls' obsession. When they arrive there the Players find the owner, Cedric Hightower, barricaded inside with his two children. Hightower and sons are lactose intolerant; Cedric only runs the business because he inherited it from his father, who loved everything about dairy. He provides the PCs with exposition about the strange behavior of the people of Pleasantville over the last few weeks and points them in the direction of the jailhouse at the center of town. This is where the thralls have been incarcerating tourists from neighboring towns, leaving them with nothing but milk and cheese to eat, and it is also where they will find the contact who telephoned them for help.

The only way to stop the thralls from spreading the infectious material without harming them unnecessarily – they are victims, after all – is to find the Chimeran and cut the problem off at the root. To do so the PCs will have to fight their way past not only the townsfolk, including Sheriff Byrne and his fantastic four-piece, but a handful of mind-controlled cattle led by an enormous bull. Angered by the strangers' audacity, the Chimeran at last erupts from the ground to do final battle. Once the monster is defeated the townsfolk and the innocent bovines are released from its influence. The town of Pleasantville will never be the same again. For starters, they will be eating a lot less dairy produce from now on . . .

ACT ONE: THE MILK OF HUMANS MINDLESS

The adventure begins when one of the Player Characters receives a telephone call from a friend, relative, or contact. This NPC must be somebody who is helpless enough on their own to need to call the PC to bail them out of trouble – any ordinary human with no extraordinary powers should fit the bill – and should be someone about whom the character in question cares enough to wish to rescue. When the PC answers the phone, read the following boxed text out loud:

On the other end of the phone is a clattering sound like it is being handled clumsily, movement in the background and the static rush of the outdoors. Then a familiar voice says "Hey, it's me, (insert name of NPC). Listen, I'm in Pleasantville. You know, with the cheese festival? It's really weird out here, there's something strange going on. These people don't like strangers. I mean, they like them too much, if you know what I mean. I'm stuck, I can't get out of town. You've got to come get me. Damn, it's the ice cream truck! I think the dairy owner is behind—"

There is a clattering sound, a scuffle, and the line goes dead . . . but not before you hear the strangely disturbing sound of rhythmic mooing.



The mysterious message should be enough to galvanize the Player into action, and he will naturally want to take his allies with him. The next step is to head to Pleasantville, a tiny Midwestern town in the middle of nowhere, to investigate. Inform the Player that the NPC who made the call mentioned the cheese festival before leaving for Pleasantville last night, and that the PC knows how to get there. Assuming all of the PCs are in roughly the same place, it is a few hours' drive from their current location. If they are capable of flying then it is a couple of hours in a straight line. Neither the distance nor the method of travel are not really relevant; nothing happens to change the outcome of events between now and the PCs' arrival in Pleasantville.

Pleasantville Sunday

However they get there, the PCs should arrive in Pleasantville later that day. Read the following aloud, or paraphrase:

It is Sunday, the second day of the week-long cheese festival, and the clement weather should be turning rural Pleasantville into a bright and innocent vista. But, as you enter from the small main road, the town seems eerily empty. The festival is taking place mostly in the meadows just outside of town, which are full of brightly-colored banners and stalls. All the typical trappings of a country fair in summertime are on show: clowns with bunches of helium balloons, stalls selling farm produce, a large bouncy castle in the shape of a ridiculous looming Friesian cow, a face-painting stall, and sundry other attractions. Most of the revelers look to be locals, although apparently the festival usually attracts visitors from the neighboring towns – Ten Commandments, Yellow Banks, and Small – and they seem to be a fairly typical small-town crowd.

They also seem oddly apathetic. The festival is quiet, devoid of the motion and the babble of sound that should accompany the town's biggest event of the year. A four-piece band stands on a small raised stage, silent and motionless, staring straight ahead with their instruments in their hands. Above them is a banner that says "The Boys In Bluegrass." The banjo player is wearing a sheriff's uniform. For some reason there are also several cows wandering freely in the crowd, demonstrating the same silent, glassy-eyed lack of enthusiasm as the people. As you pass, every individual in the crowd – human and bovine alike – turns to stare at you with expressionless faces. Something is very wrong here.

Dairy is, unsurprisingly, the overwhelming theme of the festival: there are samples of cheese on plates, men dressed as giant wedges of cheese, stalls selling yogurt from the local dairy plant, kids drinking milk from cartons . . . in fact, everybody here is either holding, offering, moving, or consuming a dairy product of some kind. There is even an ice-cream truck driving slowly around the perimeter of the fair, playing no music but simply cruising in a vague circle around the festival. Every visible human and cow is under the power of the Chimeran, and as such they all take a vested interest in the presence of strangers. They are also all locals, as everybody who has arrived in Pleasantville for the festival is currently being held in the town jailhouse until they join the fold.

The PCs are the newest targets of the Chimeran, who immediately uses her power over the townsfolk to try to force dairy products past their lips. This begins subtly, with the thralls offering them samples of cheese, milk, free milkshakes, and ice creams, slowly surrounding them while the ice cream truck backs up ready for them to be bundled inside. It quickly turns surreal when children start pelting the PCs with yogurt and clowns arrive to squirt them with

milk-filled fire extinguishers. The Chimeran genetic material present in these products makes them taste strange, but at this point is nowhere near enough to have any kind of effect even if the PCs end up swallowing a mouthful. It is simply the beginning of an intended long period of saturation.

The Player Characters, surrounded by the mind-controlled thralls, must fight their way out or be captured. Assuming they escape, the action continues when they take the next logical step: investigating the Pleasantville dairy.

It is possible that the heroes could be captured at this point and thrown in jail with the other tourists. In fact, the PCs may even allow themselves to be captured in order to get to the bottom of the plot and knowing that they could probably use their powers to free themselves later. If this happens, do not panic: simply skip Act Two and have the NPC who telephoned them in the first place provide the exposition that was intended for Cedric Hightower.

ACT TWO: THE WORD OF CHEESES

The dairy is located uphill from the festival, overlooking the town like Castle Frankenstein. It is also like Castle Frankenstein in that it is currently surrounded by an ugly mob of mindless drones. They have long since taken over most of the building in order to gain access to the milking pumps, the churns, and the storage facilities, tripling dairy output simply through zombie-like dedication. The owner, Cedric Hightower, whose name is plastered in cracked letters all over the side of the main building, has barricaded himself in the office with his two sons. They are, ironically, the only locals who have not been psychically enthralled by the Chimeran. Cedric is the first lactose-intolerant Hightower in the family's history, and his children inherited the gene. Their mother, Diana, hates the annual festival and is on holiday in France with her sister.

Infiltrating the dairy is simply a case of fighting or sneaking past the crowd of milk-distributing thralls. The PCs will have difficulty not standing out wherever they go, and after their initial escape the PCs will be on the most-wanted list. Any thrall that spots the milk-free infidels will rear up to its full height, puff its chest out, open its eyes wide, point at the strangers, and emit a high-pitched mooring sound that alerts all the other thralls within earshot.

The Cream of Society

The business office of the dairy is located at the end of a gantry on the second floor of the main building, overlooking the pumps and the cattle stalls, accessible only by a single staircase. A dozen of the Chimeran's thralls are standing on the gantry, awaiting the Hightowers' inevitable emergence with the endless patience of the mindless, simply staring straight at the door. They are clutching metal urns full of day-old curdled milk. Four more lie dead where they fell from shotgun wounds. The office door is sturdy and windowless, as are the walls. On it is a sign that says: "MANAGER'S (sic) OFFICE – KNOCK BEFORE ENTERING".

However they manage to get past these curd-wielding sentinels, the PCs' next obstacle is the office itself. Hightower and his two young sons have barricaded themselves within, piling office furniture against the door; they have enough supplies in Cedric's mini-fridge to last another day or so with rationing. Hightower senior keeps a shotgun in the office which he will happily use to fend off any attempts to break the siege. In fact, as the bodies outside the door testify, he has already done so. The Chimeran is all too happy to starve him out: sooner or later he will run out of food, and the thralls already severed the telephone line.

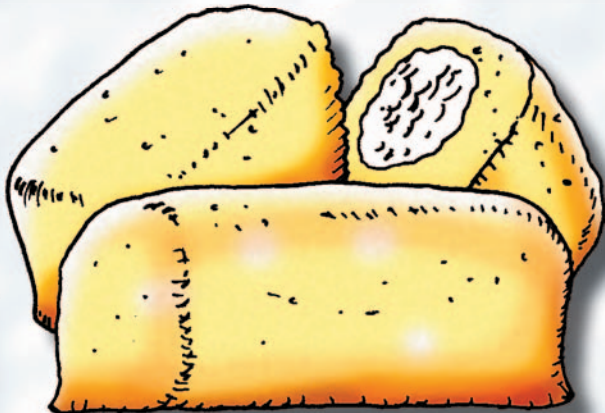
Any attempts to enter the office using force will be met with a round from Cedric's shotgun. If the PCs make enough noise confronting the thralls outside then Hightower might risk opening the door and venturing out, hoping that rescue has arrived at last. In this case he will assist the PCs against the drones, inviting them into the office afterwards if they are not easily winning. When the PCs get a chance to speak to Cedric Hightower properly, read the following boxed text aloud or paraphrase as appropriate:

The dairy manager is a balding man in his late forties, short but stocky with the bright red and sweaty demeanor of a man who's just spent a day locked in his office under siege.

"Thank Heaven you folks got here in time. All we got to eat in here is Dinkie bars, we were gonna have to make a break for it soon. I don't know what's gotten into everybody. Must be some kinda drug. I heard about this sorta thing happening in France on time when some ergot fungus got into the wheat, but not with dairy before. Not here or anywhere. Who are you folks, anyhow? You can't be the Sheriff's department, 'cause the Sheriff and his boys are all gone lunatic too. Are you FBI or somethin'? Tell me you ain't just tourists. Oh, I'm Cedric Hightower, by the way, and these are ma two sons, Benjy and Reed. This here used to be ma dairy before it turned into cuckoo-land central."

He indicates the two overweight young boys behind him, both around twelve years old, sitting next to a mini-fridge among dozens of discarded cake wrappers. Dinkie bars – "we take the cream out of the cream cake" – are not known for their nutritional value, despite what the comics say about their power over super-villains.

If anybody asks, Cedric is happy to explain about his and his sons' lactose intolerance. This should be a pretty big clue as to the source of the madness, as if it isn't pretty clear already. Unfortunately Cedric himself is otherwise a dead end, as he is the owner of the dairy and he knows nothing about how his products are turning everybody insane. He hadn't really noticed the strange behavior of the townsfolk until the festival began yesterday. When people started trying to force cheese and milk on every stranger who arrived in Pleasantville, Cedric went straight to the Sheriff, thus revealing himself and his boys to be the only people in town who were not like them. He grabbed his kids and ran for the dairy, where he keeps his shotgun. They barely made it. That was almost twenty-four hours ago, roughly Cedric knows that the tourists were being taken to the jailhouse, but apart from this he has no more useful information. He might be persuaded to join the PCs and help them investigate, provided they can convince him his sons will be safe in the office without him. He will not relinquish his shotgun.



The Dinkie Bars

Astute Players might recognize the sly reference here: Dinkie bars sounds somewhat similar to a certain other famous cream-filled cake that was once heavily advertised in comic books. The theme in every advertisement was that these snacks were so delicious as to be able to distract the villains just long enough to capture them. This could also work with the Dinkie bars if you choose to allow it – they are filled with a cream substitute that is said to taste exactly like the real thing but contain none of the ingredients, and the thralls outside have an unnatural attraction to dairy products because of the Chimeran's need to constantly supply them with her tainted genetic material. Throwing the Dinkies at the thralls or stuffing them into their mouths could serve as a handy momentary distraction. Once they taste the bars they will recognize the absence of the contaminated produce and be repulsed, horrified, insulted, or any other appropriate reaction that you think is funny or dramatic.

This theme could also act as a red herring when the PCs confront the Chimeran in the final showdown. If they make the mistake of thinking that the Dinkie bars are somehow the antithesis of the tainted milk, they will be sorely disappointed when the delicious sponge-and-cream-substitute snack bounces harmlessly (and squishily) off of the creature's hide.

ACT THREE: MILKING IT DRY

Now that they know where the thralls are keeping the tourists, the PCs should formulate some kind of plan. The jailhouse is the best place to look for the NPC who contacted them in the first place, and freeing the other prisoners before they can be likewise infected is also a priority.

Got the Jailhouse Moos

The jailhouse is right at the center of town. If they can evade or defeat the thralls around the dairy, and circumvent the fields where most of them are concentrated, the PCs must go right through Pleasantville to reach it. The town is constantly patrolled by two ice cream trucks and three milk floats from Hightower dairies (one of which is being driven rather clumsily by a mind-controlled cow), all of which will attempt to raise the alarm and intercept any strangers whom they spot. The sun is starting to go down at this point; if they leave it a little while longer, the PCs can use the incoming darkness to their advantage.

The Chimeran is not stupid enough to leave the jailhouse unprotected, and Pleasantville is a town whose people exercise their right to bear arms. There are six townsfolk (one elderly grandmother, two teenagers, and three middle-aged police officers) loitering around the building, armed with rifles that they are perfectly willing to use. They are not necessarily well prepared though, so they might not be expecting to have to use lethal force. They may not even be aware that the PCs are around, depending on whether or not the Games Master thinks the Players can handle that much armed resistance. The PCs should also bear in mind that the thralls are not themselves: they are under the control of an evil power, and if the Players realize this then the heroic thing to do is to try to incapacitate them with as little injury as possible.

The inside of the jailhouse is an ugly scene. The half dozen small cells are filled to capacity with people, tourists who arrived in the last day or two for the cheese festival and were captured. The jailhouse is only designed to hold a couple of dozen people at the most, Pleasantville being a small town with a correspondingly low crime rate, and so the conditions are pretty unpleasant. This is compounded by the fact that the thralls have been using hosepipes to spray them with milk for the last day or so. The prisoners have also been given nothing but cheese and yoghurt to eat, and many of them have given in. Those

who have eaten of the tainted dairy are beginning to feel strange. Soon they will join the thralls in servitude of the Chimeran. The total effect is one of surreal horror – surreal horror that smells of milk. In the Sheriff's office, at the front of the jailhouse where the keys and the records are kept, is an enormous pile of the captives' confiscated belongings. Among them are several dozen cell phones that occasionally ring, chime, beep, or play tunes. This is the best chance anybody in Pleasantville has of contacting the outside world any time soon.

The way this scene unfolds is up to the PCs. They can try to sneak in and free the milky prisoners quietly, they can attempt to storm the jailhouse directly and by force, or they can use whatever special powers they possess to induce some kind of breakout. They could also leave the captives where they are while they try to locate the source of the mysterious threat. Whatever happens, they will attract more and more attention as time passes. Besides the guards there are still patrols to worry about, and any attempt to crack open the jailhouse will certainly cause the thralls to raise the alarm. Once the Chimeran decides that the PCs have become too much of a threat she will send in her big hitter: a massive bull that is capable of flattening or goring anybody who gets in its way. This should happen fairly soon into the proceedings so that the bull's attack complicates the breakout attempt and endangers the NPCs as well as the Player Characters. Remember, the Chimeran has no qualms about sacrificing its thralls – or the uninfected humans – in order to maintain control over Pleasantville.

Ultimately the Chimeran will grow tired of the PCs' interference and decide to take a more hands-on approach to eradicating the nuisance (see the Giant Udder the Earth, below). If the PCs ignore the jailhouse altogether while they try to locate the alien threat, the same thing will happen.

The Giant Udder the Earth

Eventually the time will come for a final showdown. The Chimeran realizes that the PCs must be prevented from causing any more trouble, and the PCs should realize that the danger to Pleasantville needs to be cut off at the root. The PCs are already seeking out the source of the threat; unless they discover a way to locate the Chimeran – which is entirely plausible – she will instead choose to cease attacking them through her minions and instead face them directly. She is an enormous burrowing creature, capable of moving at great speed through the soft fertile earth underneath Pleasantville. Wherever they are when the moment for the showdown arrives, the first thing the Players notice is a rumbling sound and a vibrating sensation beneath their feet. This is followed by an almighty crash and a shower of dirt as the giant creature bursts through the nearest available patch of ground and rears up in the air, stretching her powerful appendages and raining dirt down on the PCs. She then proceeds to make the following grandiose speech (unless she is interrupted by violence from the direction of the PCs):

"Great moons of Jupiter, you people are annoying! You're like children who've had too much sugar and won't stay still. You couldn't just let me get on with it, could you? No, you had to start running around breaking things and stopping me from doing what I have to do. I'm on a timetable here, you know. This isn't a game. You're all the same, you people, sticking your nose in everywhere something isn't exactly normal. I remember when I tried this over in New York in '83. Same story. Everything's going swimmingly, then that bloody fool Byrne and his Baxter friends start interfering and knocking everything over. You should have seen what I did to the four of them. It was fantastic."



The Chimeran then attacks without another word – assuming, of course, that the PCs did not interrupt her unnecessary speech. The thralls gather round the edges of the field like gladiatorial spectators, under orders from the Chimeran not to interfere, closing in around the battle.

It has been a very long time since the Chimeran has seen the sun, and she is not well-equipped to deal with daylight at the best of times. Her tiny eyes, her mole-like appearance, and the fact that she lives underground, should be enough for the Players to figure out that using light to gain an advantage might be worth a try. A sudden bright flash such as that of a camera, any kind of fire, a flashlight, and light- or fire-based superpowers will all cause the Chimeran a great deal of pain (see the Achilles Heel: Environmental Incompatibility disadvantage). Failing that, the heroes will just have to fight her the hard way.

EPILOGUE

As soon as the Chimeran is rendered incapacitated or dead, all control she exerted over the townsfolk ends and they start to slowly return to normal. This is not a pleasant experience by any stretch of the imagination: their memories of recent events remain intact, including the sensation of slowly surrendering their free will to the monster that they just saw defeated. The sense of horror they feel is obvious; panic and despair set in quickly, the atmosphere rather similar to that which follows a disaster. People start crying, hugging, shouting, fighting, and generally failing to understand. Most of the tourists who were being held prisoner have little or no notion that their captors were under alien control. Moreover, everybody is stuffed with—and covered in—dairy products. Once the first couple of people start to throw up, everybody else follows. This may be as happy an ending as is possible, but it certainly is not pretty.

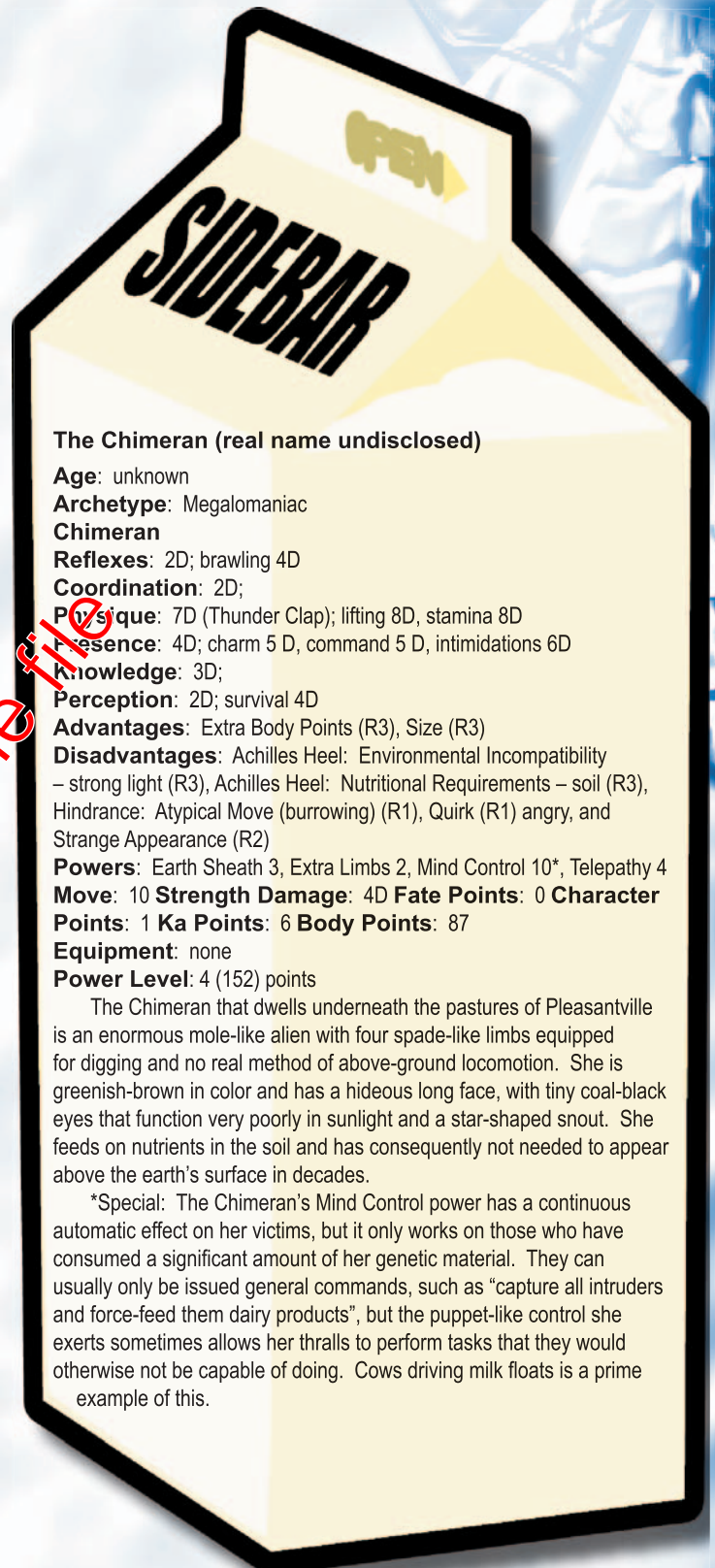
Eventually the NPC who first summoned the Player Characters to Pleasantville finds them and congratulates them, then suggests they get out of Pleasantville quickly. The follow-up to this nasty little episode will involve a lot of awkward questions, and even more awkward answers, before order is restored. On the other hand, the people of Pleasantville are at a loss. The Sheriff and his men were complicit in the “troubles” and are therefore in no position to take charge of the cleanup, the captured tourists are all either fleeing like the wind or demanding restitution (sometimes violently), and nobody local to Pleasantville is remotely equipped to handle the aftermath. The disaster is far from over if they stay and help, the PCs could really make a difference. Whether the PCs choose to stick around and help clean up, or to hightail it out of town before the questions start, one thing is for certain: Cedric Hightower had best start looking for a new job, because Pleasantville has permanently lost its appetite for cheese.

Appendix

NPCs

The majority of the NPCs in Mother’s Milk are ordinary human beings, too many and too varied to be given individual statistics. Assume all of the adult human NPCs to have attributes of 2D; those who possess particular skills, where it comes up, may have a +2 or even +1D bonus to those skills as the Games Master sees fit. Which skills are appropriate depends upon which townsfolk the Players bump into and whether or not their applicable skills become relevant. A bank clerk’s accounting ability is not likely to come up, nor does the ice cream man have much of a thrown weapons skill (probably . . .). Children and the elderly should often have attributes as low as 1D.

As for Cedric Hightower, his only skills above the baseline are marksmanship (shotgun) 3D+1, business (dairy) 5D, and scholar (dairy products) 4D+1.



The Chimeran (real name undisclosed)
Age: unknown
Archetype: Megalomaniac
Chimeran
Reflexes: 2D; brawling 4D
Coordination: 2D;
Physique: 7D (Thunder Clap); lifting 8D, stamina 8D
Presence: 4D; charm 5 D, command 5 D, intimidations 6D
Knowledge: 3D;
Perception: 2D; survival 4D
Advantages: Extra Body Points (R3), Size (R3)
Disadvantages: Achilles Heel: Environmental Incompatibility – strong light (R3), Achilles Heel: Nutritional Requirements – soil (R3), Hindrance: Atypical Move (burrowing) (R1), Quirk (R1) angry, and Strange Appearance (R2)
Powers: Earth Sheath 3, Extra Limbs 2, Mind Control 10*, Telepathy 4
Move: 10 **Strength Damage:** 4D **Fate Points:** 0 **Character Points:** 1 **Ka Points:** 6 **Body Points:** 87
Equipment: none
Power Level: 4 (152) points

The Chimeran that dwells underneath the pastures of Pleasantville is an enormous mole-like alien with four spade-like limbs equipped for digging and no real method of above-ground locomotion. She is greenish-brown in color and has a hideous long face, with tiny coal-black eyes that function very poorly in sunlight and a star-shaped snout. She feeds on nutrients in the soil and has consequently not needed to appear above the earth’s surface in decades.

*Special: The Chimeran’s Mind Control power has a continuous automatic effect on her victims, but it only works on those who have consumed a significant amount of her genetic material. They can usually only be issued general commands, such as “capture all intruders and force-feed them dairy products”, but the puppet-like control she exerts sometimes allows her thralls to perform tasks that they would otherwise not be capable of doing. Cows driving milk floats is a prime example of this.