

woods' edge

a short encounter for ongoing *Call of Cthulhu* campaigns
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A small hovel borders the forest on the outskirts of Gravesport, WA. In the earliest days of settler habitation, this one-room cabin housed loggers and trappers who were moving through the forest, slowly consuming it for capital gain. Over the years, the hovel was home to a family whose son would become they mayor of Gravesport; various squatters; dens of rodents; and most recently an old man named **Jedediah Graves**. Jedediah's family has claimed for several generations that they founded the town, but the historical records attest to a different "Graves" family in the early nineteenth century. Jedediah's hate for the town he grew up in and loved, but which left him in squalor, has seeped through the floorboards into the filthy, damp, and moldy crawlspace beneath it, congealing into a creature of malice and loathing. **Graves' Malice** has thick red fur, digitigrade legs, the torso of a man, and the horns of a mountain goat. Its face is a thin pall of skin pulled across a human skull with extended mandibular bones, resembling a muzzle.

involving the investigators

The investigators are driving through the woods outside Gravesport, late at night, when an animal leaps in front of their car. In the milliseconds between sight and collision, it looks like a very large buck. Only an **Extreme Drive** roll can avoid hitting the animal (really Graves' Malice), but in this case the car careens off the road. If the Malice is struck it takes 1D6 damage, the car is totaled, and the creature runs off into the dense forest. Call for **Luck** rolls, any failures automatically taking 1 point of damage in bumps and bruises.

In a modern campaign, there is poor cellular reception in Gravesport to begin with, and deep in the woods there is effectively none. If they decide to wait out the night till morning, morning never comes: this close to the house of Malice no daylight can penetrate the night it produces. With **Track**, investigators can follow the wounded animal into the woods with ease—it leaves behind a thin trail of blood, broken branches, and moss brushed off from trees and stones. Some of these traces are rather high, too high for a deer to have made. Failing **Track**, successive **Spot Hidden** rolls can notice these remnants, and lead investigators in the same direction. In either case, they eventually come to the hovel,

with candlelight shining from the windows. A beaten-up bicycle is propped next to a stone well, but there's no other vehicle. If they continue down the road instead of into the forest, investigators come to a dirt driveway leading off into the trees, which eventually arrives at the hovel.

Inside, Graves is happy to welcome them into his home, where he makes them hot coffee and feeds them beans that he has cooking in a cast-iron pot hanging inside the fireplace. By now, investigators may have noticed that none of their electric light implements are working; Graves doesn't know anything about that, but fire seems to work fine. He eventually turns conversation to the town, initially speaking of it with pride, but soon laying out his complaints: the taxes don't benefit the common man, too many newcomers, and the recognition. No one recognizes the Graves family anymore for all it's done. With each new complaint—and Graves will seize on any positive put forward by the investigators and turn it on its head—a slight rumble comes from the floorboards, which Graves seems to no longer notice. Graves doesn't have a basement, only a crawlspace, has never seen the Malice himself and will cower in fear if he does. Eventually, if the investigators are hesitant to explore the crawlspace or attempt to leave, the Malice attacks, bursting through the floorboards. If it manages to incapacitate the investigators, it turns on Graves, killing him and ending its own existence. Once the Malice (or Graves) is dead, the sun immediately appears in the sky, the curse on the land lifted.

stats

Jedediah Graves, age 84, old man

POW 70 STR 40 DEX 35 HP 7

Graves' Malice, 12-foot tall monstrosity, resembles a satyr

POW 100 STR 125 DEX 95 MP 20 HP
34 Attacks: Horns 65%, Hooves 70%;
Spells: *Call the Night*, expends
8 MP and all light sources
are extinguished save for
the moon, the stars, and
firelight

