



DEAD HEARTS

A soldier with a broken heart returns home. Transplant patients commit violent acts and die mysterious deaths. Can SAVE find the source of this spreading sickness before it consumes the life of an innocent girl?

Important Traits: Due to the medical settings in this case, characters with specialization in forensics are at an advantage. Characters attuned to the Restorative Art, who have the Emergency Medic or Background: Doctor Edges are also especially useful.

Suggested Characters: Miranda Chase, Hildegard Gudrun Berggren, Anaru Kamara, Nathaniel Powell, Thomas Simpson, Amy Veeres

Major Menace: Gullveig's Heart, currently possessing the body of Lieutenant Joel Russo, who serves as Gullveig's Host.

Minor Menace: Gullveig's vessels, human beings housing the transplanted organs or bone marrow of Lt. Joel Russo.

SETUP

During his second deployment in Iraq, U.S. Army Lieutenant Joel Russo's armored personnel carrier triggered an improvised explosive device. Lt. Russo suffered severe injuries in the ensuing explosion, including head trauma, a fracture in his right leg, second- and third-degree burns, and multiple puncture wounds to his chest and abdomen from metal shrapnel. The lieutenant was quickly evacuated to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where surgeons attempted to repair the damage to Russo's heart. The damage to his heart was too extreme, however, and he was placed on extracorporeal life support while awaiting a donor heart.

Lt. Russo needed a heart. Gullveig's Heart needed a Host.

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The donor heart arrived remarkably fast, especially by military-healthcare standards, and nothing in the donor heart itself or its accompanying paperwork indicated anything out of the ordinary. The heart transplant went smoothly, and Russo's quick recovery surpassed the medical team's expectations. Within a few weeks, Lt. Russo — now Gullveig's Host, under the complete control of the Heart — was considered healthy enough to be released for travel to New York to begin convalescent leave at his family home in Middle Village, Queens, where he would be cared for by his brother Marc, his sister-in-law Cathy, and Cathy's elderly mother, Edna.

Gullveig's Host began looking for a site to create vessels: human servants who would house Russo's other organs, now tainted and twisted by the Unknown. The Host found an ad for a clinical trial and research facility only a few miles away in Bedford, Brooklyn. That night, the Host loaded Lt. Russo's handgun and summarily executed Marc, Cathy, and Edna, stashing the bodies in the basement and discarding the gun. He then went to the ACCEPT Research Group facility, where he Influenced its director, Dr. Na Liu (43).

Dr. Liu provided the Host with access to the national transplant waiting list, patient files, and information on her professional contacts. The Host made Dr. Liu call her colleague, Dr. Calvin Ramirez (46), a cardiothoracic surgeon recently diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia, and invite him to participate in a promising clinical trial involving synthetic bone marrow. Instead, Dr. Liu transplanted bone marrow from the Host into Dr. Ramirez, infecting him as one of the Host's vessels. The next day, Dr. Ramirez set his apartment building on fire, killing six and injuring 20. No longer needing Dr. Liu, the Host made Dr. Ramirez kill her, leaving her body in a refrigerated storage cooler used for preserving tissue samples and other organic matter.

With the ACCEPT Research Group clinic as cover, the Host and Dr. Ramirez began reaching out to patients who had spent long periods of time on the national transplant waiting list and offering them a miraculous treatment in their private clinic. Each new patient received donated tissue from the Host's body, becoming a vessel and acting out violently as a result, with a new transplant every three days.

Devonte Wills (7) received a bone marrow transplant to treat his Fanconi anemia. He began acting violently, hurting neighborhood animals, and trying to escape the apartment, and was admitted to the Bellevue Hospital Child Psychiatric Ward. Jeon Kyung-Soo (75), who suffered from drastically reduced kidney function due to type 2 diabetes, received a kidney

from the Host, and soon after pushed a woman onto the tracks at the Morgan Avenue subway station, losing his balance and falling after her; both were struck and killed by an oncoming train. Errol "Buddy" Lansing (67), who received a liver from the Host, bludgeoned to death his partner of forty years, as well as their two schnauzers, and then died from blood loss after first clawing open his surgical incision, and then cutting the liver free with a kitchen knife. Finally, Dr. Ramirez transplanted the Host's other kidney into Kristal Beth Dormer (18), who had spent two years on the transplant waiting list for her polycystic kidney disease. With two vessel deaths calling too much attention to the Bedford clinic, the Host and Dr. Ramirez, aided by Kristal, changed locations to a second facility in Flushing, Queens.

Gullveig's Heart derives pleasure from its vessels torturing and killing, but its influence can only spread as far as the Host's body has organs. In order to continue the violence, the cycle has to start over with a new Host, in a fresh body. The Host and Dr. Ramirez plan to transplant Gullveig's Heart into the body of Janelle Mulroy (17), who was born with a congenital heart defect and has spent three years on the transplant waiting list. If Gullveig's Heart is successfully transplanted into Janelle, she will become Gullveig's Host, Joel Russo's body will die, and the new Host and its surviving vessels will seek a new locale and begin the cycle of control, transplants, and murder anew.

SAVE

A junior SAVE intelligence analyst at the New York headquarters, Eriqa Velasquez, recently became a student of the Sensing School of the Art. She experienced a recurring prescient dream in the nights leading up to a fire in the apartment building next door to her. Believing the two must be related, Eriqa brought her suspicions to the attention of her supervisor. Eriqa's supervisor, however, was unconvinced of the relationship between the dreams and the fire, and made the decision not to refer this case to their office's envoys for investigation.

Eriqa began compiling information that could be relevant to the case on her own time, accumulating digital and paper files. Without the approval of her supervisor or the assistance of the New York HQ, Eriqa reached out to an old college friend working in another SAVE office to work the case. The player characters, unconstrained by the bureaucracy of a huge traditional headquarters, can use Eriqa's file to start their investigation. While Gordon Pym is still somewhat wary of cell and lost HQs, the New York HQ is open to any SAVE envoy registered in North

America, provided they present compelling evidence of Unknown activity.

Eriqa arranges for a hotel and MetroCards for their visiting envoys, as well as access to “The Treehouse” and its lab and archives. If successful in their mission, the envoys may build goodwill with the New York HQ, strengthening their own headquarter’s ties to the organization (if desired), and forming potential allies and contacts for future cases.

If the player characters are already part of the New York HQ, this case will be assigned to them directly after Eriqa brings her prescient dreams to the attention of her supervisor. Eriqa and her files remain available to the envoys as a resource, but the envoys also have the advantage of working completely within the system of New York’s traditionalist headquarters.

THE TIMELINE

January 2, 2017: Lieutenant Joel Russo (26) is injured in Iraq and flown to Landstuhl Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany, where Gullveig’s Heart is transplanted into him.

February 6, 2017: Gullveig’s Host — formerly Lt. Russo — returns to New York.

February 9, 2017: Gullveig’s Host kills Marc Russo, his wife, and his mother-in-law.

February 10, 2017: Gullveig’s Host uses the Evil Way to Influence Dr. Na Liu, director of the ACCEPT Research Group clinic.

February 11, 2017: Dr. Calvin “Cal” Ramirez receives a bone marrow transplant from the Host to treat his acute lymphocytic leukemia.

February 12, 2017: Dr. Ramirez burns down his apartment building, returns to the clinic, and kills Dr. Liu, stashing her body in the storage cooler.

February 15, 2017: Devonte Wills receives a bone marrow stem cell transplant from the Host.

February 18, 2017: Jeon Kyung-Soo is discharged from the clinic after receiving a kidney transplant from the Host. On his way back to his apartment, he pushes a woman to her death at the Morgan Avenue subway station and falls after her, both struck and killed by an oncoming train.

February 19, 2017: Devonte Wills is admitted to a juvenile psychiatric facility.

February 22, 2017: Errol “Buddy” Lansing returns home after receiving a liver transplant from the Host. He kills his partner of forty years, then tears open his own surgical incision. While trying to remove his liver with a kitchen knife, Buddy effectively takes his own life.

February 24, 2017: Envoys arrive in New York.

START OF CASE FOR PCS.

February 25, 2017: Kristal Beth Dormer receives a kidney transplant from the Host.

February 26, 2017: The Host and Dr. Ramirez abandon the ACCEPT Research Group clinic in Bedford and relocate to the Flushing Clinical Research facility.

February 27, 2017: Janelle Mulroy is kidnapped by Dr. Ramirez and Kristal Dormer. She receives a transplant of Gullveig’s Heart, becoming Gullveig’s Host and gaining its powers.

February 28, 2017: Janelle Mulroy — now Gullveig’s Host — flees the city with the surviving vessels. They will begin the search for new vessels for Janelle’s organs in a new location.

THE CASE

Eriqa Velasquez meets the envoys at the subway stop nearest the Bachman Building on the evening of February 24th. With the promise of take-out and an opportunity to check into their hotel in the near future, she leads the envoys up into “The Treehouse” to set down their bags and delve immediately into the case.

Eriqa is still a beginner in the Sensing Art, but she shares the image from her dreams with the envoys: A stocky, dark-haired Latino man in a doctor’s white coat holds a pulsing heart in his hands. The heart bursts and sprays black ichor all over the doctor’s coat, Eriqa, and other shadowy figures. She had the same dream for three consecutive nights leading up to the fire. Each time, the number of shadowy figures in the dream increased by one.

After sharing this information, Eriqa leaves the envoys with her files while she orders dinner and checks on their hotel reservations. Her filing

and organizational skills could definitely use some improvement, but she's compiled a huge amount of information to comb through. She has collected newspaper clippings and digital files she believes might be related to the fire in her neighboring building, including a tenant list, as well as potential leads that have medical or surgical elements. Additionally, Eriqa informs the envoys that the New York SAVE office has subscriptions to multiple online information databases used by private detectives.

ERIQA'S FILES AT "THE TREEHOUSE" – RESEARCH

- *Extraneous*: Ricardo Olivera (66) strangled his wife after learning she had an affair; he then shot the wife's lover, then himself. He had received a heart transplant six months prior to the incident.
- *False Lead*: NYPD has been investigating reports of an illegal organ-harvesting ring, with clippings indicating the ring may have started over two years ago. One detective suggests the organs might be used in an occult ritual of some kind. If the envoys follow up on this lead, they can talk to the detective, who recently retired. The detective wasn't able to find the alleged ring.
- *Vital*: The tenant list for the burned apartment building includes Dr. Calvin Ramirez, an attending physician at NYU Langone Medical Center, who is a well-respected cardiothoracic surgeon. He has not reported for work since the fire in his apartment building.
- *Interest*: Errol "Buddy" Lansing (67) bludgeoned his partner and their two dogs to death several days after a liver transplant. He then apparently clawed or cut open his surgical incision and died from the resulting blood loss.
- *Esoteric*: A February issue of the New York Times contains a human-interest story: "Hero Comes Home with New Heart, Purple Heart" about Army Lieutenant Joel Russo, who received the Purple Heart and a heart transplant after an accident involved an IED during deployment.

RAMIREZ'S APARTMENT BUILDING

If the envoys decide to visit the site of Ramirez's burned apartment building, they don't find any clues. Sense Unknown (+10 modifier) will show a slight, lingering Unknown presence.

BUDDY LANSING'S APARTMENT – INVESTIGATION

Other than the obvious signs of a struggle, and the large bloodstain on the faded Persian rug in front of the sofa, Buddy Lansing's apartment feels worn and cozy. The overstuffed, slightly threadbare sofa and matching recliner have a framed set of schnauzer paintings hung on the wall behind them. Most of the visible furniture is real wood, scuffed and dinged from decades of use, including a roll-top desk, where a pair of bifocal glasses rest on top of *The Guides to North American Birds*. Packed tight on the sagging bookshelves are a wide array of novels, nonfiction, stacks of old *National Geographic* magazines, and a full leather-bound Encyclopedia Britannica set. In the middle of all this comfortable domesticity, the dark stain on the rug and the toppled end-table with its broken lamp stand out starkly.

- *Extraneous*: Buddy's anti-infective and anti-rejection prescriptions have been filled, but have not been taken.
- *Vital*: Buddy's desk has a stack of admission and release paperwork from the ACCEPT Research Group clinic, with notes about surgical aftercare.
- *Interest*: Buddy's desk contains a hidden compartment with a leather-bound journal inside. The journal contains Buddy's notes from his time as a SAVE contact back in the '90s before the communication blackout. In the most recent entry in the journal, he documents his struggle against an Unknown influence after his surgery and his increasing compulsion to attack his partner, Leonard. He notes his belief that the transplant was the source of the Unknown.
- *Esoteric*: The envoy notices a loose baseboard. Buddy's phone has become wedged there, hidden underneath. The phone has a few photos on it, including a selfie of Buddy in a hospital gown and a disposable medical hairnet, with a man in military dress in the background. The phone's email inbox contained a bounced-back email that Buddy had attempted to send to his old SAVE handler. The selfie of Buddy in his hospital gown is attached. The email asks for the handler's help, and states that the man in the photograph's background is called Russo, and that Buddy thinks he is somehow involved in what went wrong with his surgery.

JOEL RUSSO ONLINE SEARCH – RESEARCH

If the envoys search for Lt. Joel Russo online, they find more articles about the explosion, his injury, subsequent heart transplant, and Purple Heart. The online PI databases Eriqa has access to have his home address, as well as schools attended, and that he is unmarried.

DR. CALVIN RAMIREZ'S OFFICE AT NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER – INVESTIGATION

The envoys may choose to visit Dr. Ramirez's office during business hours, or they may choose to sneak/break into the office after hours. Dr. Ramirez's office seems orderly to exactly one person, the doctor himself. To the envoys who don't know the doctor's mental filing system, books and files seem to be placed on surfaces at random, with all the file drawers in his desk stuffed full; the files are sorted by date, but the dates themselves aren't on the tabs of the files, only the patients' names. The walls are covered in a variety of artwork featuring hearts. A small plant wilts in its pot on the corner of the desk.

- *Extraneous:* Dr. Ramirez has a hidden safe in his bookshelf behind books. If the envoys get it open, it only contains Dr. Ramirez's passport and some racy pictures of him with his ex-girlfriend.
- *False Lead:* In the locked bottom drawer of Dr. Ramirez's desk, the envoy finds a box with a highly-detailed fake silicone heart and a note that says "Dr. Heartless" on it. Should the envoys follow this lead, they will learn that the return address is for Dr. Ramirez's old classmate, who sent the gift over a month ago, before the case began. The heart and nickname are references to a long-running inside joke.
- *Vital:* The light on Dr. Ramirez's phone is blinking. He has multiple voicemails dated February 10th and 11th from Dr. Na Liu asking for him to call back as soon as possible or meet her at the ACCEPT clinic.
- *Interest:* Dr. Ramirez has a printed partial-copy of the organ transplant waiting list in his office. Jeon Kyung-Soo's name and address are on the list. The envoys remember that Jeon Kyung-Soo was also in Eriqa's file of possible leads.
- *Esoteric:* The envoy is able to hack his computer password, finding an email from Janelle Mulroy's father, Jacob Mulroy, asking for confirmation of the address of the transplant clinic. Jacob's phone numbers are included in the email.

LAURA PETERS, RN, CARDIOTHORACIC CHARGE NURSE AT NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER – INTERVIEW

Depending on when and how the envoys visit Dr. Ramirez's office, they have the opportunity to talk to Laura Peters, the charge nurse of the cardiothoracic unit. She is an attractive older woman with bleached hair and short, manicured nails in a muted pink that coordinates with her scrubs. She seems eager to talk about Dr. Ramirez and seems concerned for his well-being. While Nurse Peters doesn't know Dr. Ramirez well, she has worked for his department for several years and speaks highly of him. Lately, he's cut back on his hours significantly and has been short-tempered with the staff, which is atypical for him.

- *Extraneous:* Dr. Ramirez has a girlfriend he may be staying with. Calling her is a dead end, as they broke up a month prior.
- *False Lead:* Recently, a strange man has been hanging around the waiting area of the cardiothoracic unit. He left a business card for Dr. Ramirez that just has a name and number. The name on the card turns out to be the name of a law firm that specializes in malpractice lawsuits. If the envoys contact the firm, no one there will speak with them beyond denying any knowledge of Dr. Ramirez or the surrounding mystery.
- *Vital:* Dr. Ramirez was consulting with Dr. Liu at a clinical research facility in Brooklyn.
- *Interest:* Dr. Ramirez had recently been diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia and had been looking into treatment options, including a bone marrow transplant. He indicated he was investigating clinical trials for several experimental treatment options.
- *Esoteric:* The hospital had received multiple angry phone calls from a Monique Wills looking for her son, a recent bone marrow transplant patient. The staff explained that Dr. Ramirez, as a cardiothoracic surgeon, wouldn't have been the surgeon performing the transplant, but Mrs. Wills was very insistent that he was, and that her son, Devonte, is missing. Mrs. Wills stated she knew that Dr. Ramirez was responsible.

ACCEPT RESEARCH GROUP FACILITY – INVESTIGATION

The ACCEPT Research Group clinic takes up the entire bottom floor of a six-story building. The entrance is below sidewalk level, with steps down to the door, so little natural light enters the clinic's front windows. When the envoys arrive at the facility, they will need to break in somehow. Once inside, they

see the clinic is in disarray, with papers and medical equipment strewn everywhere. It has a small waiting area with one door leading back to multiple rooms. Most of the rooms have an examination table and basic medical equipment (blood pressure cuff, jars with Band-Aids, etc.) in them.

A small operating room still has blood-soaked gauze pads and surgical equipment (scalpel, retractors, hemostatic forceps) on the tray next to the operating table. The blood on the table itself is still tacky. The room smells strongly of blood and faintly of urine. If the envoys successfully Sense the Unknown (+10 modifier), they hear the distant echo of a beating heart, but the Heart and its Host have not been in the facility for several days.

They find Dr. Liu's body inside a small refrigerated storage room used to hold medical samples and other organic matter. She has been stabbed in the neck with a scalpel, which is still stuck in the wound (Revulsion Resolve check, Minor Trauma). Investigation of her body can yield clues (also noted below); Specializations in Forensics and Murder apply.

- *Extraneous:* The envoy finds a file for Cammie Lucas, a 12-year-old in need of a kidney transplant, in a box of files. The contact number for Cammie's parents will yield that she already received a kidney donation the previous month and was never contacted by the clinic.
- *False Lead:* The envoy finds shipping orders for transplant coolers to be sent directly to Dr. Liu's home address. If the envoys follow this lead, they can spend a scene taking a cab to Dr. Liu's house, finding nothing incriminating, or any further clues.
- *Vital:* Devonte Wills' file is on top of a messy stack of paperwork, along with Jeon Kyung-Soo and Buddy Lansing's files. It has contact information for Devonte's parents, as well as his medical history. *Dr. Liu's Body:* She died from a single, precise stab wound to the neck. Her body was then dragged to the cooler and stuffed in it.
- *Interest:* On the inside of a folder in Dr. Liu's office, the envoy finds a handwritten note with Janelle Mulroy's name, birth date, parents' names, phone number for parents, and the date 02/27. *Dr. Liu's body:* There is no sign of a struggle, but based on the positioning of the wound, Liu had to have seen the attack coming. She has no defensive wounds, however, indicating that she did nothing to prevent the strike.

- *Esoteric:* Lieutenant Joel Russo's wallet, containing his license with a home address, is discarded on the floor. *Dr. Liu's body:* There is no blood spatter in the room. The condition of her body clearly indicates that she was stuffed into the cooler post mortem, but she apparently didn't start bleeding until *after* she was stuffed in there. This is because Ramirez (or rather, Gullveig's Heart acting through Ramirez) used the Halt discipline of the Evil Way on her and immobilized her. An envoy who has been subjected to this discipline previously might gain this context by using Insight.

THE RUSSO HOME

The Russo family home is a brick row house in Middle Village, Queens, that belonged to the Russo brothers' parents and now belongs to the brothers. Marc, his wife, and his mother-in-law live in the home full time, and Joel lives in the home when he is not deployed. The home has three bedrooms, one full bathroom, a half-bathroom, and a small cellar beneath it.

Upon entering the Russo home, the envoys are overwhelmed by the smell of death inside. If they search the home, they will find the bodies of Mark Russo (Lt. Russo's brother), his wife, and his mother-in-law in the basement (Revulsion Resolve check, Serious Trauma). They have been dead for at least two weeks and appear to have been killed in the home and moved to the basement. The handgun sits openly discarded nearby. If an envoy makes any effort to investigate the bodies, the player can roll a General Investigation check. If successful, the envoy notices Lt. Russo's Purple Heart medal stuffed into Marc Russo's mouth.

If the envoys take the time to search Russo's house, they find Lt. Russo's belongings in the smallest of the three bedrooms. A copy of a locally-circulated magazine sits open on his nightstand, turned to an ad for a private research program. "Are you waiting for an organ transplant? You may be eligible to participate in this free trial of a new anti-rejection drug!" It lists a phone number, but no address. The phone number is disconnected. None of Lt. Russo's personal effects seem to have been taken, none of his clothes packed. Lt. Russo's anti-rejection medications are in the bathroom medicine cabinet.

Envoys with a Background Edge in a medical field or medical skill specialization will know, or if the characters take the time to research the drugs online or through a source/contact they will learn, that the prescription for prednisone has been used, but the

tacrolimus hasn't been taken at all. Russo would need to take tacrolimus for the rest of his life to prevent rejection. Full prescription bottles of trimethoprim, nystatin, and valganciclovir remain unused, lined up on the medicine cabinet shelf. These medications are supposed to be taken regularly for at least the first full month following a transplant.

JEON KYUNG-SOO'S APARTMENT PROPERTY MANAGER, RICK VOLLES

Jeon Kyung-Soo's apartment building is old and rent-controlled. At Jeon's apartment, they can speak to Rick Volles, the property manager, a short, balding man with a sour disposition. Jeon has no known next-of-kin. Volles donated the furniture and most of the clothing to a group that offered pick-up service, but still has a box of Jeon's belongings that he is eager to get rid of. Players can roll a General Communication check (Persuasion, Charm, or similar specialization) or the envoys can concoct a convincing story (or offer him \$20) to get this box from Volles. The box mostly holds knickknacks and Korean-language romance novels, but a manila folder of personal documents has paperwork from the ACCEPT clinic in Bedford, including sheets with pre- and post-surgical care instructions, and photocopies of standard medical release forms.

TALKING TO DEVONTE'S MOTHER, MONIQUE WILLS – INTERVIEW

Through whatever means the envoys discover Devonte Wills' contact information, they can speak with Monique Wills, Devonte's mother, on the phone first. She is so upset about what has happened to Devonte since the operation that she will meet the envoys at the waiting room of the Bellevue Hospital Child Psychiatric Ward regardless of the story they give her.

Monique Wills has the appearance of a woman who has aged significantly in a short period of time. Her dark hair, worn in a short, natural style, is streaked with grey. Her clothes look slept-in, suggesting she has spent most of her time lately in this waiting room.

- *Extraneous:* Monique tells them Devonte had hurt or killed several neighborhood cats. She found blood on the hem of his jeans. After they took Devonte to the hospital, Rasul found a dead cat in Devonte's closet, all its legs broken.
- *False Lead:* One of Devonte's friends went missing around the same time that Devonte was committed. She gives the envoys the friend's contact information. If the envoys follow that lead, they will learn the friend

has already returned home. He had been playing at another friend's house and had forgotten to tell his parents.

- *Vital:* Devonte has been sick for a long time, but they've been unsuccessful in finding a suitable match for bone marrow. Monique isn't a match with Devonte. Devonte's biological father is deceased, and Monique doesn't know of any paternal relatives to look for a match. They reached a point of desperation, which is why they brought Devonte to ACCEPT for the transplant when Dr. Ramirez contacted them. Devonte's behavior changed rapidly after his bone marrow transplant. He kept trying to leave the apartment at all hours. Rasul Ebeid, Devonte's step-father, and Monique took turns sleeping on the sofa to prevent Devonte leaving. When Devonte disappeared, they tried to call the clinic, but the phone was disconnected, and when they went to the facility, it was closed and locked, with the lights off.
- *Interest:* Devonte has always been an artist, but since his transplant, his drawings have become morbid. Most of his drawings feature a man in military dress and a doctor in a white coat (who Monique has identified as Dr. Ramirez). Most of the drawings he has made since being admitted to the psychiatric ward include a third figure, a black girl with carefully-drawn braids. Several of the drawings depict the doctor or the man in the military garb standing over the girl holding a cartoon-style heart, dripping red, over the girl's chest.
- *Esoteric:* Monique remembers that Devonte had been shouting one night when Rasul wouldn't let him leave the apartment. She calls Rasul and puts him on speaker with the envoy(s). He tells them that Devonte had repeatedly shouted "Protect the heart! Protect the heart!" and when Rasul asked Devonte why, Devonte suddenly calmed and told him, "Because it's in my bones."

As the interview concludes and the envoys prepare to leave the hospital, the door into waiting area opens, and a child, with a tall orderly holding his hand appear. The little boy is drawn and ashen, too thin, with large, vacant eyes. He rips his hand away from the orderly's and begins to run across the room, seemingly into Monique's open arms, but then darts past her and tries to escape out the door. If an envoy intervenes and grabs him, the player rolls a General Close Quarter

Combat check. If the check fails, the envoy suffers a Minor Injury from Devonte biting and scratching her. Should the envoys choose not to intercede, the orderly will chase Devonte down and bring him back inside as Monique sobs, the envoys forgotten.

SAVE ARCHIVES – RESEARCH

The player characters may choose to return to the Treehouse and make use of their archives to research Unknown entities related to transplants or to hearts specifically.

- *Extraneous:* The envoys find many accounts of cannibalistic consumption of the heart or other organs.
- *False Lead:* The envoys find a SAVE file on an organ trafficking ring, complete with an address. If the envoys follow-up they find a long-abandoned warehouse with no new clues or leads.
- *Vital:* The envoys find the mythology of Gullveig’s Heart, a variation on a Norse myth involving Loki. According to an old file written up by a SAVE envoy in the 1920s, Gullveig’s Heart travels from Host to Host through ingestion of the heart by the new Host. The Heart controls the body of its Host and supposedly gives it immortality.
- *Interest:* A first-hand account from the 1970s describes a man waking up from a liver transplant and finding he could not control his body. He had an overwhelming compulsion to travel to another location to find and protect someone there. He was intercepted by envoys who removed the newly-transplanted liver, at which time the compulsion and lack of control abruptly ended. The man said that he could clearly remember the time during which he was being controlled, and he was aware that something was wrong. Other than needing a second liver transplant, however, he sustained no significant lasting physical harm.
- *Esoteric:* The envoys find a piece of parchment with a beautifully illustrated heart and a caption that reads: “The immortal heart must be destroyed outside the body.”

TALKING TO JANELLE MULROY’S PARENTS, JACOB AND KIM – INTERVIEW

If the envoys find Janelle’s contact information before February 27th, they are able to speak with her parents at their apartment. Jacob and Kim Mulroy are both fairly young, and 17-year-old Janelle is their only child. Their apartment is small, but nicely decorated, with many photographs of a smiling Janelle at various ages. Janelle is sleeping during this interview, as her health has been rapidly declining, which is the reason why Jacob and Kim had been willing to consider the offer of a below-board transplant through Dr. Ramirez.

- *Extraneous:* Dr. Ramirez never followed through with submitting the anti-rejection drug prescription to the pharmacy.
- *False Lead:* When the Mulroys canceled Janelle’s appointment with Dr. Ramirez, they forwarded the doctor’s contact information to the parents of Janelle’s pen pal Sarah, another girl on the transplant list, who needs a lung transplant. If the envoys follow this lead, the girl’s parents inform them they haven’t yet contacted Dr. Ramirez. They can shed no additional light on the case.
- *Vital:* Jacob gives the envoys the contact information for the new clinic, Flushing Clinical Research, in Queens.
- *Interest:* Janelle’s parents were just contacted by her regular cardiologist and told Janelle was next on the transplant list, with a heart expected within the next two weeks. They were given an admission date for Janelle to come to the hospital and prepare for an above-board transplant. They had just contacted Dr. Ramirez a few hours earlier and canceled the appointment with him for the 27th.
- *Esoteric:* Janelle told her parents someone had been following her.

JANELLE MULROY’S HOME CRIME SCENE – INVESTIGATION

If the envoys fail to reach Janelle’s home before the evening of February 27th, they find a very different scene awaiting them. The apartment door is ajar. Janelle’s parents, Jacob and Kim, are dead, and Janelle is gone. Her parents have been stabbed [Revulsion Resolve check, Minor Trauma], the bloody scalpel discarded near the bodies. Jacob’s body is near the door in the living room, while Kim’s body is in the hallway in front of Janelle’s room.

- *Extraneous:* The envoy finds Janelle's diary on her nightstand. Her most recent entries have been about her nightmares regarding the impending transplant.
- *False Lead:* Janelle keeps the letters from her transplant list pen pal Sarah under her mattress. They have a return address. If the envoys use this address to locate Sarah and her parents, however, the parents inform the envoys that Dr. Ramirez has not initiated any contact with them.
- *Vital:* Jacob's smart phone has multiple text and email exchanges with Dr. Ramirez. Dr. Ramirez contacted Jacob with the clinic address and details about the procedure. The most recent messages include Jacob declining the transplant at Flushing Clinical Research in favor of an above-board transplant from the official donor registry at the local hospital.
- *Interest:* The living room has multiple pictures of Janelle on the walls and on surfaces, some of which have been disturbed or knocked over. The envoys notice that in every picture of Janelle that appears to have been taken within the last three years, she is wearing a necklace with a large, heart-shaped rose quartz pendant. Kim clutches the quartz pendant, its chain broken, in her lifeless hand.
- *Esoteric:* Jacob's cause of death is identical to Dr. Liu's, a single scalpel stab to the neck. Like Dr. Liu, Jacob does not appear to have resisted or fought back against his assailant. The envoy recalls that some creatures of the Unknown have the ability to freeze or stop a victim in place. The lack of police presence or concerned neighbors suggests that Janelle was similarly incapacitated. Kim's body, however, shows signs of a significant struggle. She has stab wounds to her abdomen, arms, and throat, and two of her fingernails have broken off. She appears to have tried to block the door to Janelle's room with her body.

CONFRONTING THE UNKNOWN

The Flushing Clinical Research facility is on the second story of a mixed-use building, with its doorway facing into an internal hallway. The office is composed of a small front reception area and one large operating room with a supply closet at the back. A window in the the supply closet leads to a fire escape.

Based on when the envoys arrive at the Flushing Clinical Research facility, the confrontation with Gullveig's Host and vessels will vary.

If the envoys are able to track Gullveig's Host to the facility before Janelle Mulroy has been taken (02/27), then their final confrontation will be with Gullveig's Host (Joel Russo) and vessels, Dr. Ramirez and Kristal Dormer.

If Janelle has recently been taken (evening of 02/27), then Dr. Ramirez has not yet been able to transplant the heart from Russo to Janelle. Janelle is in the clinic and has been strapped to the gurney. The Host has used Halt and Mute on her, so she lies frozen in place and unable to speak.

If the transplant is complete, the final confrontation will be with Janelle Mulroy as Gullveig's Host and the two vessels. The nearly empty husk of Joel Russo's lifeless body is open for display on a gurney in the room.

The vessels aggressively defend Gullveig's Host with no concern for their own life. When the envoys arrive, the vessels try to prevent them from reaching Gullveig's Host, while the Host attempts to flee the clinic. Dr. Ramirez likely has a scalpel on hand or nearby which he uses to attack the player characters. Kristal picks up any nearby improvisational weapon such as an IV pole or metal surgical tray, focusing on delaying the player characters while the Host escapes.

If the vessels are killed or become incapacitated and the Host cannot flee, only then does the Host engage in direct combat with the player characters. Gullveig's Host tries to identify the most serious threat among the envoys and use Halt or Influence on that envoy. Its goal remains escape if it sees a way out. In a physical confrontation, the Host's supernaturally enhanced strength and immunity to pain give it the advantage of continuing to fight until the Heart is ripped from its chest.

GULLVEIG'S HEART (NOT IN HOST)**EWS:** 100 **REF:** N/A **STA:** N/A**Injury:** Lethal only (Gullveig's Heart survives outside of a body indefinitely, but is otherwise not any more resistant to physical destruction than a normal human heart when outside of a Host)**Disciplines:** Blunder, Eyes of Minion, Halt, Influence, Mute**Aspects:** Expendable, Master**GULLVEIG'S HOST (JOEL RUSSO OR JANELLE MULROY)****EWS:** 100 **REF:** 90 **STA:** 100**Injury:** Superficial, Minor, Serious, Major, Critical, Lethal**Disciplines:** Detachable Parts, Eyes of Minion, Halt, Influence, Mute**Aspects:** Unfeeling, Unkillable, Unliving, Vigor, Master

If Gullveig's Host is presented with an item of special meaning to the person serving as Gullveig's Host, the Host and the vessels are all unable to act for one turn, and the CM turns one token light to represent Gullveig's Heart reasserting its control during that turn. This effect can only happen one time in a scene. In this case, the item for Lt. Russo is the Purple Heart, and the item for Janelle Mulroy is the pink heart pendant.

The only way to cause a Lethal Injury to Gullveig's Host is to remove the Heart from its body.

Gullveig's Host does not speak nor attempt to mimic normal human behavior.

DR. CALVIN "CAL" RAMIREZ (AS GULLVEIG'S VESSEL)**EWS:** 60 **REF:** 70 **STA:** 50**Injury:** Superficial, Minor, Serious, Major, Critical, Lethal**Disciplines:** Gullveig's vessels have no disciplines of their own, but Gullveig's Host can use its disciplines through them when using Eyes of Minion.**Aspects:** Unfeeling, Vigor, Specialization (Knife +30)

When Gullveig's Heart is destroyed, its control over the vessels is immediately severed and all tissue or organs transplanted from the Host into the vessel dies/fails. Any mortal serving as Gullveig's vessel immediately suffers the effects of no longer having this tissue or organs.

KRISTAL DORMER (AS GULLVEIG'S VESSEL)**EWS:** 50 **REF:** 50 **STA:** 70**Injury:** Superficial, Minor, Serious, Major, Critical, Lethal**Disciplines:** Gullveig's vessels have no disciplines of their own, but Gullveig's Host can use its disciplines through them when using Eyes of Minion.**Aspects:** Unfeeling, Vigor

When Gullveig's Heart is destroyed, its control over the vessels is immediately severed and all tissue or organs transplanted from the Host into the vessel dies/fails. Any mortal serving as Gullveig's vessel will immediately suffer the effects of no longer having this tissue or organs.

AFTERMATH

If the envoys successfully destroy Gullveig's Heart before it is transplanted into Janelle Mulroy, Lt. Joel Russo's body — now little more than a husk — perishes along with it. When the Heart is destroyed, the connection to its vessels vanishes and the Unknown relinquishes its hold on them. Any organs or tissue transplanted into vessels go into immediate failure and the former vessels will require emergency medical care. Dr. Ramirez suffers an immediate recurrence of his leukemia. Kristal goes into renal failure. Devonte (still in the psychiatric ward) is free of the Unknown influence, but again suffers from Fanconi anemia. Janelle Mulroy's parents are safe, and Janelle, next in line for a heart transplant, probably never knows how much danger she was in.

If Gullveig's Heart has been transferred into its new Host, then Janelle Mulroy dies when the Heart is removed and destroyed, and the vessels experience the same tissue or organ failure as with Russo's death.

If the envoys are not able to reach the Flushing Clinical Research facility before Janelle, Dr. Ramirez, and Kristal leave the city (the morning of 2/28 or later), the cycle of transplants and murders begins again in another city in the near future. They find the empty husk of Russo's body, the surgical tools used for the Heart's transplant into Janelle, and Janelle's own discarded, broken heart.

RUNNING DEAD HEARTS

Gullveig's Heart is a malevolent creature with a singular goal. It can exert some control when outside of a Host that ensures its transplant into a new Host body, but it can't fight or defend itself. Like a pathogen, its drive is to consume and spread, going from Host to Host. Once inside a Host, however, Gullveig's Heart can draw upon its Host's knowledge and skills, making it a much more cunning and dangerous creature. It has complete control over the Host's body and mind. The Host experiences no pain, hunger, thirst, or exhaustion.

This case is *heavy* on body horror, much of it in a medical setting, so play up the gore aspect and throw in details that highlight the grotesqueness of the transplant surgeries. All of the victims are people whose health had deteriorated until they're left at a point of such desperation that they resorted to blatantly shady methods to get treatment. Three of the victims are children or teenagers relying on transplants to put an end to prolonged illness that would inevitably be followed by death, and their parents thought they had finally found a way to save their kids, only to have them become vessels for an Unknown creature.

If Gullveig's Heart is transferred into Janelle Mulroy, the envoys may be left in a position where the only way to "win" is to kill an innocent teenage girl by removing the Heart from her chest. Joel Russo is already a lost cause, and the vessels will probably survive, even if it means they have to go back to square one with seeking donor organs. If the envoys do not reach Janelle in time, she dies, either at the hands of the vessels or the envoys.

If Gullveig's Host escapes, either in the body of Joel Russo or the body of Janelle Mulroy, the play session ends. The group of players can decide whether to continue the case in a new session, tracking down Gullveig's Host and vessels, or whether their envoys hand the case file over to the New York SAVE office for continued investigation off screen.



More...

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NEED HELP, CAN YOU GET TO NYC?

tags: [Inbox](#)[SAVE](#)[Eriqa](#)**E Eriqa Velasquez**

(February 21, 2017, 12:21)

to: <Recipient List Blocked>

I know we haven't talked in a while. I wish this were an email just to catch up. We both know the job, though. While I've come to enjoy the resources that working at the Treehouse provides me, sometimes the bureaucracy thing gets in the way of the real work. Since we last talked, I have begun studying the Sensing Art. I recently experienced what I believe to be a prescient dream with sinister implications, possibly connected to a string of surgical mutilations and deaths.

Unfortunately, my supervisor disagrees with that assessment and says that beginning practitioners of the Art are "more miss than hit." I have information on as many potentially related deaths as I can find, and I can provide access to resources, but I'm not ready to go back into the field yet. I've only just gotten back into SAVE's good graces, and I don't want to screw that up again. If I'm right about the nature of these deaths, your team needs a doctor, or at the very least, someone with medical experience. The photographs I've seen have been gruesome.

It's a lot to ask, but if you can get into town, I'll make sure to set you and your team up with a hotel and hook you up with a MetroCard. It probably goes without saying, but dinner's on me.

Thanks,
Eriqa

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