
'Normal Club

by Philip Armstrong

An Entry in the 2013 Windhammer Prize for
Short Gamebook Fiction

It's in an old storage loft located above the music room that the West C. High School Competitive Paranormal Investigation Club holds its weekly meetings. Right now it's 7th Period, just thirty-five minutes to go until school is out for the day, and the four-ish club members are chatting amongst dusty gym mats, cracked plastic chairs, and posters of UFOS and Frankensteins. Muffled strands of *Blue Cellophane* rise from the Jazz Band practicing below. In one corner stands a mostly empty trophy case; in another, a terrarium containing Jim Morrison, the Club's pet chupacabra and mascot.

Their conversations are cut short as the door bangs open and in storms Mr. Chadwick. In addition to coaching the 'Normal Club, he also teaches freshman astrology. He has a fondness for the Three Stooges and the Hitchhiker's Guide radio serials. He's been known to go on too long about Donovan. Today, he is wearing a tie with a picture of a fishbone on it.

"I just got an email from Professor Stonewalk at Buckcreek Academy," he says, addressing the students. He is met with a chorus of groans. "He was bragging that his Paranormal team have discovered something big. Really, really big,"

"Those jerks couldn't find stink on a butt!" says one of the students.

"Yeah, they said that Jim Morrison wasn't a real chupacabra," says another.

"Well, I'm sick of losing to them," continues Mr. Chadwick, "and with Districts coming up, a big discovery could knock us out. Stonewalk said we must be really dumb to miss something this big and dropped some hints that whatever it is, it's happening tonight. I want three of you to go out and try to find whatever this big discovery is. The rest of us will stay here and work on our entry for Districts." Chadwick points over to a half-assembled vampire skeleton that is, admittedly, pretty lame. It's nothing more than a regular skeleton with pointy teeth, after all. Whatever this thing Buckcreek Academy has discovered, it's sure to put the skeleton to shame. If the West C. High 'Normal Club has any hope at winning Districts, they've got to track down this big discovery themselves and-if possible-claim it for their own.

Rules of the Game

In this gamebook, you play as a team of three members of the West C. High School Competitive Paranormal Investigation Club as they investigate a big scoop and try to beat their academic rivals. If you're unfamiliar with gamebooks, they are basically Choose-Your-Own-Adventures with extra fiddly bits. If you don't know what a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure is, it looks like you've got a cave to spend some time in and also a shark to be.

Below the rules you'll find the Team Roster sheet. It's here that you'll keep track of the team and any discoveries they make during their investigations. Print or make a copy of it for reference as you play. You will also need a single six-sided die, equivalent random-number generating website, or smartphone app.

The Team Roster

The first step in filling out the Team Roster is to pick which 'Normal Club members will compose the team. Read through the member bios following the rules and chose which three you would like to play as. List them on your Team Roster sheet. Each of the members has their own strengths and specialties, so choose whom you would like to bring carefully.

Additionally, each member has an aptitude in two of four parameters. These Aptitudes indicate how well the team operates as a Paranormal Investigation unit and are as follows:

Sleuthiness - Practical detective skills. The ability to find clues, notice small details, and track footprints with an oversized magnifying glass. A person with zero in this Aptitude would not be able to tell who stole the cookies from the jar (it was me, I stole them), while a person with six would be able

to tell who stole your wallet *before the crime even happened*.

Intimidation - Physical presence. Sometimes, in the world of Paranormal Investigation, a well-toned beefy arm speaks louder than words. If I got punched by someone with an Intimidation of zero, I would be like, "Did I just feel a breeze? You've got to try harder than that, son." If it was by someone with a six, I wouldn't be writing this because I'd be a smoldering pile of ash.

Arcanability - Occult knowledge. Intimacy with the secrets of the afterlife, the underworld, and the in-between places. A zero in this Aptitude is your average schmuck, confident that the world he sees is all there is. A person with a six is a mad gibbering idiot, locked-up in a insane asylum, feverishly writing a forbidden tome about the true face of Xtharpalax, the galaxy-devouring space slug.

Artfulness - It doesn't always pay to play fair. This is the art of pickpocketing, trickery, and guile. A person with zero in this Aptitude would point and say, "Hey, isn't that Justin Bieber?" and when you turned back their hand would be halfway in your pocket and they'd have a sheepish grin plastered on their face. A person with a six is impossible to describe. They're so good you never even knew they were there. Your wallet's missing, by the way.

When you've decided who will be on the team, add up their Aptitudes and mark the totals on the Team Roster.

Inventory

There are three types of objects that are recorded on the Team Roster inventory.

Items - During the investigation, the team might find useful items they would like to take with them. Each member can only carry one item, for a total of three. If the team is already carrying three items and wishes to carry another, you must first choose to discard one of the team's current items. Once an item is discarded, it cannot be recovered (as it is immediately snatched up by a thieving magpie).

Clues - Clues point the team toward the mysterious paranormal event they are investigating and do not count towards the three item limit. They are mysterious and wonderful.

Trophies - The trophy case at the 'Normal Club meeting room is awfully bare. It sure would be nice if the team earned some achievements and proved they're not the bumbling losers the Buckcreek Academy kids say they are. Trophies are awarded for performing exceptional tasks or for finding hidden secrets. They do not count towards the item limit and are worth nothing beyond the pride of earning them.

The Fiddly Bits

There are two more special rules you'll need to know about before starting the adventure.

Aptitude Checks - When performing certain tasks you'll be asked to check one of the team's Aptitudes and see if you succeed or fail. Each task is valued at a certain difficulty: the lower the number, the higher its difficulty. A task with a difficulty of six would be easy for anyone to accomplish, like stealing cookies from a jar. A task with a difficulty of zero would be impossible for someone to accomplish without special training, like performing brain surgery or heart surgery or any surgery really.

To perform the check, add the team's Aptitude score to the task's difficulty to determine the target value, then roll a six-sided die. If the roll is equal to or lower than the difficulty value, then the team

has succeeded. If it is higher, they have failed.

Example: a team of 1920's goons have to shake down a proprietor of a speakeasy for a hot tip. The proprietor has seen it all and isn't impressed by the goon's brutish means. *Check Intimidation Difficulty 2*. The goons are a thuggish sort and have an Intimidation Aptitude value of 2.

$$(Difficulty) 2 + (Aptitude) 2 = (target value) 4$$

If the goons roll a 4 or less, they succeed at bullying the proprietor and he coughs up the info. If they roll a 5 or higher, he gives them the ol' grease eye and they'll have to find some other way to get the information.

Footnotes - Each 'Normal Club member has a specific footnote symbol associated with them. If you encounter a symbol for any of your chosen team members in the text, immediately turn to the associated footnote in the same section you are reading and follow the directions there. If there are no specific instructions, then return to where you left off.

That's everything you need to know to play. After you're done filling out the Team Roster *turn to 1*. Good luck and happy investigating!

West C. High Competitive Paranormal Investigation Club Members

Xander - If asked, Xander would describe himself as “easy-going.” Others would probably be more accurate in their estimation of him as a “layabout” or “slacker.” His lack of ambition and poor grades shouldn’t be mistaken for low intelligence. He has an intuitive view into human nature and can read people easily. He has an inquisitive nature and tends to poke his nose into other people’s business. This can get him into trouble sometimes, but he is generally well-liked by his classmates and is even considered cool by some.

Today he is wearing jogging shorts and shirt for a band you’ve never heard of.

Aptitudes: 1 in Sleuthiness, 1 in Artfulness Footnote: ✪

Anna - Anna wouldn’t be seen dead with these paranormal nerds if she didn’t need an extracurricular on her college application. Still, it beats cheerleading or Drama Club, and the subject matter is reasonably interesting. Anna sees herself as capable and direct. Others would call her forceful and overbearing. She speaks her mind regardless of the consequences and conforms to no one’s expectations. She can be hard to get along with but her no-nonsense attitude makes her invaluable in a crisis.

Today she is wearing a black tank top and wristbands patterned with skulls.

Aptitudes: 1 in Intimidation, 1 in Artfulness Footnote: ⚔

Jordy - Like his namesake, Jordy is an engineer. He is forever tinkering with machines and contraptions. Thanks to a general lack of social skills, he is something of a gigantic dork. As a young child, Jordy received a gift of *Time Life’s Mysteries of the Unknown: The UFO Phenomenon* and has seen himself as a real-life Fox Mulder ever since. He joined the ‘Normal Club in hopes of making contact with real extraterrestrials, but so far his search has been fruitless. Still, he continues to believe (and annoys everyone he meets in the process).

Jordy prefers to stay in the club room rather than go out on physically exhausting investigations. Instead he sends his custom made “InvestiDrone”-a custom- built, remote-controlled four-rotor copter equipped with a two-way radio, a webcam, and a grasping claw from a crane machine game. The drone has the capability to reach places that a normal person can’t. Additionally, Jordy has access to information at his laptop that the other team members in the field do not. On the other hand, the drone is very fragile and, to be honest, is pretty silly looking.

Today he is wearing a t-shirt proclaiming that he is a fan of a cartoon pony show made for little girls.

Aptitudes: 1 in Sleuthiness, 1 in Arcanability Footnote: ◆

“Brad” - Captain of the basketball team and straight-A student. Popular, friendly, and all-around nice guy. Any rumors that he’s actually a yeti disguised as a high schooler until he can find a way back to his native Tibet are completely baseless. Sure, he’s 7’ 2”, but that just makes him all the better at basketball. And the white fur that covers him head to toe is distinguished and gives him an air of maturity. These rumor mongers are merciless. Next thing you know, they’ll be saying that the football team’s quarterback is actually a giant chicken.

“Brad’s” tall stature and bestial presence make for an imposing figure. He’s the quiet type, preferring low growls to sophisticated discussion. When he does speak, he exhibits a wealth of knowledge about cryptids and other paranormal creatures. It’s almost like he has an insight into their

world and experience. Though of course it's ridiculous to think he's anything but a normal teenager.

Today he is wearing his team jersey and an expression of wistful longing.

Aptitudes: 1 in Intimidation, 1 in Arcanability Footnote: Θ

Grayson - Class of '98 and a member of the 'Normal Club for years. No, he's not some ignoramus who's continuously been held back. There was simply an unfortunate accident one day in gym class involving the climbing ropes, and Grayson's been haunting the school ever since. Being dead hasn't dampened Grayson's spirits, he remains his cheerful and fun-loving self. Something of a trickster, he's been involved in some epic senior pranks over the years. As can be expected, he has first-hand knowledge of the spirit world and the realms of death. Getting this insider info out of him can be a chore though, as he's as likely to tell a straight-up lie and laugh at your gullibility. Understandably, he has something of a fear of heights.

Today, like everyday, he isn't wearing anything but instead is physically manifested as a floating ball of ectoplasm.

Aptitudes: 1 in Arcanability, 1 in Artfulness Footnote: ❖

Jim Morrison - The 'Normal Club's pet chupacabra. Some people claim Jim Morrison is just a normal iguana, but anyone who was at last year's Bake Sale and Petting Zoo Fundraiser remembers what he did to that goat. Unfortunately, the judges at Districts last year didn't see anything special about him and the club lost to Buckcreek Academy's stupid vegetable. Jim Morrison spends most of his time in the terrarium eating crickets and the occasional goat liver. He isn't very smart, or active, or really even that interesting. Still, he is a real life cryptid and who knows, maybe he has some hidden skills that could come in handy.

Today he is wearing grayish-green scales and a ridge of spines.

Aptitudes: None. Additionally, as Jim Morrison is an animal, he cannot carry an item. The inventory limit is reduced to two if he is included. As such, a team with him on board can be thought of as a Challenge Mode. Footnote: φ

Team Roster Sheet

Team Members

	Footnote	Item
1. _____	()	_____
2. _____	()	_____
3. _____	()	_____

Aptitudes

Sleuthiness

Intimidation

Arcanability

Artfulness

Clues:

Trophies:

1

You know, for a perfectly normal American town, Buckcreek sure has an unusual amount of paranormal hot spots. While the team might be tempted to stake out the first spooky graveyard or haunted zoo they come across, it might be better if they narrow down their options and actually figure out the location of tonight's big discovery.

There are only a few teen hangout places in a town this size. It shouldn't be too hard to track down some Academy kids and maybe get some hints about tonight's location.

Where should the team investigate?

*The Buckcreek Mills Shopping Experience and Entertainment Center (turn to **15**)*

*The Convenience-Smart corner store (turn to **19**)*

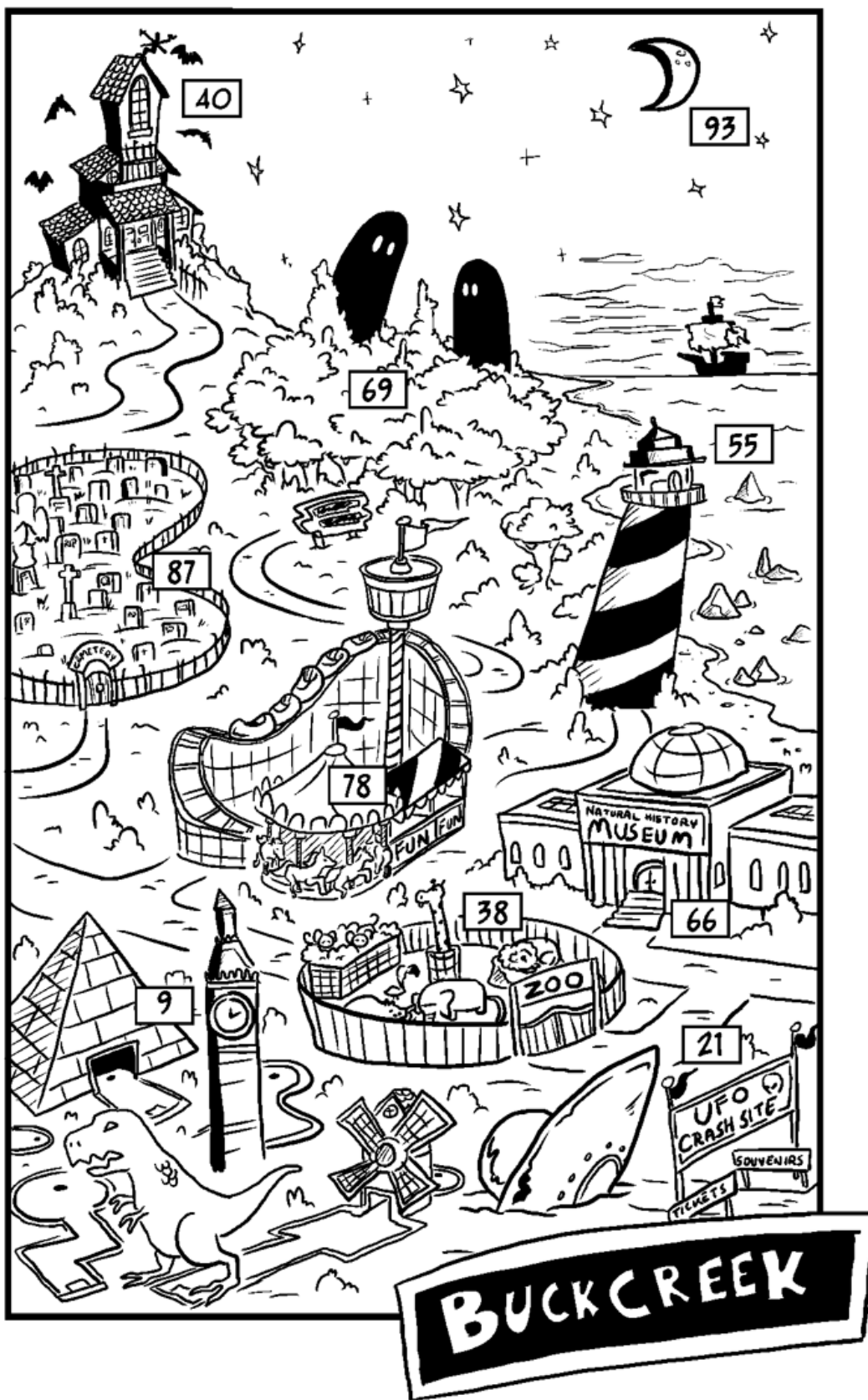
*The "Just Say Nope!" Skatepark (turn to **26**)*

*"Not Just Twilight!" occult bookstore (turn to **5**)*

*The Taco Stop (turn to **31**)*

*Buckcreek Academy (turn to **44**)*

Once the team thinks it knows the location of Buckcreek Academy's discovery, find it on the following map and turn to the appropriate section. A word of warning: once the team has chosen a place to stake out, they're committed for the night. Best be sure of their destination.



2

If the team has acquired more than one skateboard, they'll have to choose which to use before the competition can start. Otherwise, they must use what they have.

If they are using Zach's board, subtract 2 from the result of the following roll.

If they are using a borrowed average board, subtract 1 from the result of the following roll.

If they are using a board of their own construction, treat the following roll as normal.

If they are using a previously trashed board, add 2 to the result of the following roll.

The team then chooses an appropriate member to attempt the trick. Ⓒ That means someone who isn't a ghost, a lizard, or remotely piloting a drone. (If the team is composed of Grayson, Jim Morrison, and Jordy, immediately turn to 25.) This member takes the board, steps to the edge of the lip, then plunges down into the pool. Check Artfulness Difficulty 1.

If you succeed, turn to 11. Otherwise, turn to 29.

Ⓒ "Brad" grabs the board and steps to the edge of the pool. Without a word, he plunges in. His hulking frame looks too big for the board, but somehow he manages to stay perfectly balanced. That might have something to do with the way he is gripping the deck with his feet. He pushes at the pool's surface with his long arms, building up an incredible amount of speed. Check Artfulness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to 11. Otherwise, turn to 29.

3

Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, then while browsing the New and Notables section, the team finds a toy stretchy sticky-hand tucked behind a copy of *Breaking Dawn*. Looks like another patron forgot it here. If the team takes the stretchy sticky-hand, add it to the inventory as an item.

"Hey guys, can you come over here for a minute?" Janice calls, waving to the team over to the checkout counter. "I've been stuck on this one for like an hour," she says holding up her phone. "Can you guys give it a shot?" On the phone's screen is what appears to be a devious puzzle.

	5	6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	5	4	8	1	1	5					
0																						
0																						
3																						
2 1																						
1 4																						
3 1																						
3 1																						
10 1																						
11 1																						
2 3																						
2 3 5																						
2 2 5																						
2 2 1																						
20																						
20																						

“The numbers tell you how many squares to fill in each row or column, in groups. So that 5 in the first column means there’s 5 squares to be filled in with no spaces. That row with a 10 and a 1 means there’s a group of ten, then a single square with some unknown amount of spaces in-between them. When you’re done, the squares filled in should make a picture.”

If the puzzle is solved, turn to 24.

If the team is unable to solve the puzzle or if they choose not to try, they can investigate the occult section (if they haven’t already) by turning to 18.

or they can leave and investigate another location by turning to 1.

4

The team wanders the Mall for a while longer. After a bit, they come to a kiosk selling those pet hermit crabs that are so popular these days. Looking into the habitat, they notice a briar pipe laying amongst the crabs.

“Uh, yeah,” says the cashier... crab-wrangler... guy. “Someone dropped that in there. Haven’t been able to fish it out. The crabs have kinda taken a shine to it. I’ll let you have it for, eh... let’s say five bucks if you can get it out.” *Check Intimidation Difficulty 3. If you succeed the crabs are cowed into defeat, you can choose to add the briar pipe to the team’s inventory as an item. The pipe provides a +1 bonus to the team’s Sleuthiness Aptitude score as long as it’s being carried. Otherwise, the crabs are just too possessive of their prize. However, with their newly pinched fingers, the team has earned the trophy **Vicious Wounds**.*

Time is running short and there are other places to investigate. Wasting precious youth lounging at the Mall will have to wait for another day. Turn to 1.

5



If this is your first time visiting this section, put a check in the above box. If there is already a check in the box, immediately turn to 23.

“Not Just Twilight!” is Buckcreek’s premier repository for all information strange and forbidden... or so its owners would like you to believe. In reality, the occult section makes up just one corner of this otherwise normal used bookstore. Despite the shop’s name, there is a *significant* Twilight display in the front window.

Coming through the door, the team is greeted with the smell of musty literature. Dog-eared romance novels, old copies of National Geographics, and dubious cookbooks are arranged haphazardly on the wooden shelves. Stacks of hardcovers threaten to spill onto the dusty concrete floor and clog the narrow aisles. Janice, the clerk, looks up from her phone and smiles at the familiar faces of the ‘Normal Club as they walk by. ☞

If the team decides to check out the occult section turn to 18.

If they just browse around for a while turn to 3.

☞ “Hi Janice,” says Anna stepping up to the counter.

“Sup, little sis, here for the newest copy of Annoying Dorcs Monthly?”

“Shut up. Hey, has anyone from Buckcreek Academy been in today?”

“Yeah, a couple of kids came in just a few minutes ago. Should be somewhere near the back.”

“Thanks.” ☐

ϕ“Nice lizard by the way,” says Janice nodding to Jim Morrison riding on Anna’s shoulder.
 “Shut up.”

6

There’s a couple of classic games tucked away in the back of the store: Pac-Man, a Galaga cabinet that’s been out of order since anyone can remember, and a crane game that lost its claw under mysterious circumstances.

If they haven’t already, the team can check out:

Pac-Man, turn to 12.

The crane game, turn to 41.

7

With a vigorous jiggle and a solid thump, the bolt pops out of place and the window slides open. Crawling in, the team discovers this is the Academy’s trophy showcase. This entire room is dedicated to all the victories they’ve achieved over the years. The team recognizes that stupid eggplant that kind of looks like Warren G. Harding that somehow won districts last year. It’s not even paranormal, just kind of weird. Looks like the Academy went to the trouble of having it bronzed.

There are other trophies here, as well: a bronzed dinosaur femur, a bronzed ghost egg, a bronzed chunk of bigfoot fur, and so on. There’s even already a spot cleared for this year’s trophy. There’s nothing on it except for a small statue of a beetle pushing a ball of whatsit. *The team has found a clue: a beetle.*

*If the team would like to muss up the Academy’s trophy room while they’re here, Check Artfulness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, the team knocks over displays, turns over the wastebasket, and even draws a mustache on Harding in permanent marker. The team has earned the trophy **Subtle Sabotage**. Otherwise, they do all the same stuff, but don’t cover their tracks very well, greatly increasing the chances they will get dressing down from Mr. Chadwick at some point in the not-so-distant future.*

If the team would like to investigate the trophies further, Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 20. Otherwise, continue reading.

With nothing left to investigate in here the team will have to check another location. Turn to 1.

8

The team unwrap their meals and begin feasting on the nourishing tacos within.ϕ While eating, they discuss the best method of finding out whatever it is that has the Academy kids so invested.

If the team tries casually strolling by in hopes of sneaking a peek, turn to 37.

If they start chucking tacos, turn to 16.

ϕAs soon as the first wrapper is off and the taco meat is exposed Jim Morrison’s head snaps up and his spines start bristling. Uh-oh. Jim Morrison is usually a laid-back lizard, content to let the world drift by. In fact, he’s only acted like this once before, at last year’s Bake Sale and Petting Zoo Fundraiser. Immediately, Jim Morrison leaps onto the table and begins tearing into the tacos. That claim of all-beef was suspicious and now it’s clear: there’s got to be some goat in these tacos! Within seconds, Jim Morrison has devoured all of the team’s food, but it’s not enough to satisfy him! With a glint in his eye, he focuses on the other patrons’ meals. Before anyone can stop him, Jim Morrison is jumping around the room in a frenzy, sending chunks of taco shells flying in his attempt to get to every last goat morsel. Here’s the team’s chance! The Academy kids are distracted by Jim Morrison’s wild binge and the team can attempt to sneak a peek at their table. *Check Artfulness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to 47. Otherwise, turn to 28.*

9

All the clues point here: Buckcreek's Mini-Golf-Travaganza. The team spends the night searching the plaster windmills, dinosaurs, and famous landmarks for the Academy's discovery, all while enjoying some world-class mini-golf. In the end, the only thing they found out-of-the-ordinary was that hobo sleeping in Big Ben. Fascinating though his stories were, they're not going to win Districts. Better luck next year.

The End

10

"Mine? I dunno, it's kinda made special. I don't really like other people using it." *Check Intimidation Difficulty 0. If you succeed, Zach lets the team borrow his board for the competition. This does not count as an item and is returned once the competition is over.*

If the team has a board and is ready to start, turn to 2. Or, if they haven't already, they can: Ask the crowd if anyone's willing to lend a board, turn to 35.

Improvise, turn to 42.

Search the dumpster, turn to 17.

11

Launching up the side of the pool and into the air, the team representative knows they only have once chance to beat Zach: they have to attempt a brand new trick to throw him off. Spinning, arms splayed, legs kicked out, and back arched, they lose hold of the board. With a desperate flail, they manage to grab it and shove it back under their feet just before crashing back into the pool. Somehow, they stay on the board and roll to a stop.

Zach stares with his mouth agape. "What.. what. exactly was that?" Zach drops into the pool and performs a very respectable maneuver, but it's not the same trick. "Alright, I don't believe it, but you guys won. Look, I can't tell you much, but I can tell you where we won't be tonight. We definitely won't be at the old Crain Manor, the mini-golf course, or the UFO crash site." *The team has discovered a clue: not the haunted house, mini-golf course, or UFO crash site.*

Zach shakes his head as he walks away. "Those guys are crazy!"

With nothing more to be learned here, the team moves on to another location. Turn to 1.

12

Ah, the classic tale of delicious haunted cherries and even more delicious pretzels (though no less haunted). The team pops in a quarter and plays for a bit. ❖⊖ But all good things must end in time, and eventually the ghosts catch that wily yellow disc.

If they haven't already, they can:

Play the crane game. Turn to 41.

Interrogate the Academy kids. Turn to 33.

Investigate another location. Turn to 1.

❖ Grayson floats over to the joystick and starts to poltergeist it around. After a minute he stops. "I can't do it. I just can't. Eating those ghosts? You can't make me." Visibly shaking, he backs away.

⊖ "Brad" takes to the game with an animal-like ferocity, one massive paw gripping the side of the cabinet, the other slamming the joystick around with so much gusto that it threatens to break off. Despite his crude approach,

“Brad” is doing well. Really really well. “How’d you get so good at this?” the rest of the team asks.

“Donkey Kong,” he snarls. He’s able to get all the way up to the cantaloupe before getting a game over. The rest of the team gives him a round of applause as he inputs his initials. *The team has earned the trophy **High Score “POO”**.*

13

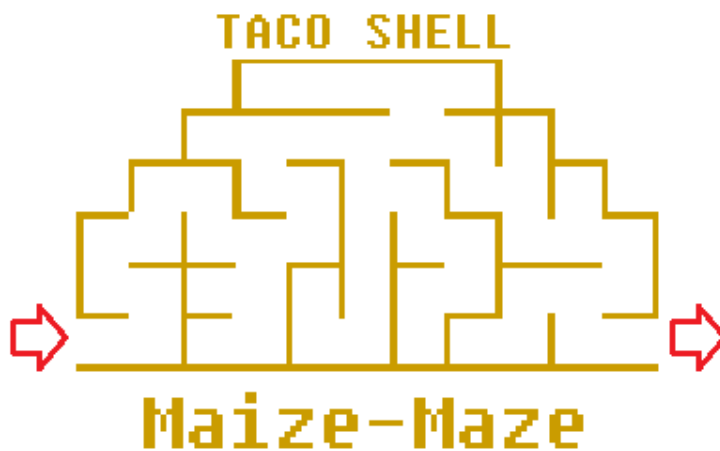
The team picks a book up off the floor. Yes... this could be the book the Academy kids were reading. It’s certainly the right shape: kind of a squarish rectangle. It appears to be about aliens who came to Earth thousands of years ago and taught people how to be civilized. *The team has found a clue: “From Pyramids to Moai Heads: How Ancient Humans Were Too Dumb to Do Anything and Needed Aliens to Show Them.”*

*If the team would like to browse around the store for a bit, and they haven’t already, turn to **3**. Otherwise, turn to **1**.*

14

Three Taco-Tot meals it is! The team makes their way to a table amidst whispered snickers and jeering laughs, but it’s worth it. Included with the kids’ meals are three prize antacid tablets. Score! *If the team would like to keep the antacid tablets, mark them on the inventory. The tablets collectively count as one item.*

Also, the kids’ meal bags are printed with a devious puzzle that the team may attempt if they are so inclined.



*If the team solves the puzzle, they earn the trophy **Mindbending Maze**. Regardless if they solve it or not, turn to **8**.*

15



*If this is your first time visiting this section, put a check in the above box. If there is already a check in the box, immediately turn to **23**.*

The Buckcreek Mills Shopping Experience and Entertainment Center, otherwise known as “the Mall.” This is a popular place for teens to visit after school and, like, hang out or whatever. The

'Normal Club team members spend some time window-shopping, loitering, and being a nuisance. Eventually they find their way to the Mall Courtyard. This central plaza serves as a hub to the Mall's various regions. A large skylight overhead provides sunshine to foliage arranged in tiled basins, and a decorative fountain sits beneath a glass elevator which, along with several escalators, provides access to the Mall's second floor. Sitting on the fountain's edge and tossing pistachio shells into the rippling water are two members of Buckcreek Academy's Paranormal Team named Winston and Harvey.

"You know, there's a trash can right there."

"Like I care," says Harvey, reaching into a bag of pistachios and cracking open one of the nuts. He's a short kid with a bowl cut and mean disposition. Today he is wearing a maroon Academy blazer with a sprinkling of pistachio dust. "What do you nerds want?"

"We heard you guys think you found some kind of big paranormal discovery. Probably just farted and thought you heard a ghost."

Harvey grins, bits of pistachio stuck in his teeth. "Oh, you think you're funny, but what we've got going is so big it'll destroy your stupid team. Better just give up on whatever joke you're putting together for Districts, 'cause there ain't no way it's going to beat this."

"Heh, they're probably gluing fake teeth to a skeleton," says Winston. He's the taller of the two, in the lanky and awkward sense. Today he's wearing a maroon blazer which nicely compliments his acne.

The team advances. "Look, you two are going to tell us what you've got going down or you're going to be wearing that bag of nuts as a hat."

"Threaten us all you want," says Harvey, the grin dropping from his face, "But there's no way we're going to tell ya nothing." **⌘ Check Intimidation Difficulty 1. If you succeed, turn to 32. Otherwise turn to 49.**

⌘ Anna rushes forward and grabs Harvey by the lapels of his jacket. She pushes him back until he's hanging just above the fountain's waters. "Unless you want to take a second bath this month you'd better spill it," she says through gritted teeth. *Check Intimidation Difficulty 3. If you succeed turn to 32, otherwise turn to 49.*

16

Inspiration strikes the team. With careful aim and a hearty throw, they bullseye a taco right into the back of one of the Academy kid's head.

"Hey! What the? Who threw that!?" The sheepish grins on the team's faces provide a quick answer. "Oh, you're going to get it for that, West C." The Academy kids start chucking tacos back at the team. Due to the wet, splattery nature of the taco meat, some of the other patrons inevitably get caught in the crossfire and seek retribution of their own. Within seconds the whole dining area has transformed into an all-out food fight. Here's the team's chance to sneak a peek at the Academy's table. *Check Artfulness Difficulty 1. If you succeed, turn to 47. Otherwise, turn to 28.*

17

What luck! Looks like someone threw away a skateboard not too long ago. The wheels are bald, the grip is practically gone, and the deck appears to have been snapped in two and repaired with duct-tape, but it should work for now. *The team has acquired a trashed board. This board does not count as an item and falls apart once the competition is over.*

Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to 46. Otherwise, read on.

If the team has a board and is ready to start, turn to 2. Or, if they haven't already, they can: Ask Zach to borrow his board. Turn to 10.

Ask the crowd if anyone's willing to lend a board. Turn to 35.

Improvise. Turn to 42.

18

Turning a corner, the team spies a pair of teenagers wearing the maroon blazers of Buckcreek Academy. They are absorbed in a book presumably pulled from a nearby bookshelf labeled “Occult.” One of the kids glances up from the book as the ‘Normal Club nears and gives a startled yelp. He throws the book to the ground and pulls a large stack of hardcovers down on it. Before anyone on the team can say a word the two Academy kids push past them and run for the door. “Hey! You punks!” yells Janice as the kids race out of the store. The team looks down at the mess of books on the floor.

Trying to find which one the Academy kids were so interested in seems an impossible task. ♣ *Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 1. If you succeed turn to 13. Otherwise, turn to 30.*

♣ Xander steps over to the spot where the Buckcreek kids were standing and positions himself so he’s facing the same direction they were. Looking down, he kicks several of the books out of the way until he has uncovered three volumes.

“I’m pretty certain the book they were reading is one of these. I didn’t get a very good look at it, but none of the others are in the right spot. It’s got to be one of these.” *Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to 13. Otherwise, turn to 30.*

19



If this is your first time visiting this section, put a check in the above box. If the box is already checked, immediately turn to 23.

The Convenience-Smart is a popular place for teens to visit after school and, like, hang out or whatever. It has all the normal corner store conveniences: soda pop, sugar sweets, suspicious meats, and Bic lighters of every color. It even has a couple of old arcade cabinets in the back.

As the team walks through the sliding glass doors, they see a couple members of Buckcreek Academy’s paranormal team chatting over by the slushy machine.

If the team confronts them about tonight, turn to 33.

Video games! Forget the Academy kids, the team plays video games instead. Turn to 6.

20

Among the trophies the team finds a bronzed crowbar, apparently once used to open a crate with a genuine alien corpse inside or something. Yes, this won the Academy “Best Regional Paranormal Investigation Team” in 1973, but that doesn’t make it sacred. It might come in handy later. *If they would like to take the crowbar, add it to the team’s inventory as an item.*

With nothing left to investigate here, the team will have to check out another location. Turn to 1.

21

This is the “world-famous” Buckcreek UFO Crash Site. Supposedly, a UFO crashed here in 1948, shortly after Roswell became famous for a similar incident. Here you can go on tour of the crash site, see a life-sized replica of what the UFO presumably looked like, and even get your picture taken with the site’s lovable mascot: Gregory Gray. The team spends all night investigating alien activity. ♦

However, like thousands of conspiracy nuts before them, they find no evidence of extraterrestrial activity. No evidence of Buckcreek Academy either. When the Academy kids win Districts the West C. High team really wishes they hadn’t wasted their time probing scrub and dirt for traces of alien goo.

The End

◆Jordy really gets into it. He takes samples of the soil, scans the crash site with the drone’s infrared and night vision, and even calculates the trajectory the UFO would have come in at to search for scattered shrapnel. Not that any of this does any good, of course.

22

Grayson prods and smears his electroplasm all over the lock, but he’s unable to get the window open despite his enthusiasm.

“Uh... I’ll just check around a bit and report what I find.” He floats away, only to return a moment later. “This looks like their trophy room. There’s all sorts of stuff in here from past years. I didn’t really find anything that would help with tonight, though. There is a place for this year’s prize, but all that’s there is some kind of weird bug. Sorry, guys.” Grayson floats back out through the window. *The team has discovered a clue: some bug.*

With no other obvious way in the team will just have to investigate some other location. Turn to 1.

23

As helpful as it would be to give this place another look-over, the clock is ticking and it will be evening soon. Better to use the time left to check out places the team hasn’t investigated yet.

Turn to 1.

24

“Wow, it’s a sphinx or something,” says Janice, staring at her phone. “You guys are like, way super smart. Thanks.” She takes three candy bars from one of the displays on the counter and hands them to the team. “Here, on the house.” *The team receives the trophy **Delicious Chocolate** for helping Janice get past a puzzling roadblock.*

*If they haven’t already, the team can check out the occult section (turn to 18)
Or they can leave and investigate another location (turn to 1)*

25

Jordy picks up Jim Morrison using the drone’s claw and sets him on the skateboard. Grayson then gives it a nudge and it slips down into the pool. It travels a little way up the pool’s opposite side, then rolls back to the center before slowing to a stop. Jim Morrison blinks a few times but otherwise seems unaffected by his journey.

Zach breaks out in laughter. “Yeah sure, I can do that one.” He leaps into the pool, skates up and down it a few times, and even does a kickflip over Jim Morrison for good measure. The team leaves the skatepark in disgrace and are no closer to discovering what Buckcreek Academy is up to.

Turn to 1.

26



If this is your first time visiting this section, put a check in the above box. If there is already a check in the box, immediately turn to 23.

The “Just Say Nope!” skatepark was built by the city to provide a safe, temptation-free place for teens to come to after school and, like, hang out or whatever. The presence of cigarette butts and empty beer cans littering the grounds is a testament to how well that plan worked. This afternoon the

usual assortment of skaters, punks, and skater-punks are here riding the ramps, grinding the rails, kicking the flips, and so on.

Among them is one lanky fellow who is commanding much of their attention. As the team nears the skatepark's bowl, they recognize him as Zach: teen-dream cool guy and member of the Buckcreek Academy Paranormal team. Today he is wearing a sporty pair of sunglasses and his Academy blazer tied around his waist. The team watches as he skates in and out of the bowl, performing various turns and grabs. The crowd is suitably impressed. Zach makes a few more passes, and ends his run. As he pulls himself up onto the lip of the bowl he sees the team watching him.

"Oh. Hey," he says in greeting, "what do you guys want?"

"Hey Zach. That was pretty cool. You're good."

"Uh, yeah. Thanks."

"So, hey. We heard you guys might have found something interesting that you're checking out tonight. You know anything about what's going on?"

"You guys know I can't tell you. My team would be pissed. Sorry, dudes."

"What if- what if we skated against you? One of us does a trick, if you can't repeat it then you tell us what's going down." Zach looks over the team for a moment.

"Heh. Yeah, okay. Let's see what you got. You guys have a board?"

If the team asks Zach if they can borrow his, turn to 10.

If they ask the crowd if anyone is willing to lend one, turn to 35.

If they improvise, turn to 42.

If they dumpster dive, turn to 17.

27

Carefully... Carefully... But, not careful enough. Christy feels a tug at her pocket and slaps a hand over it.

"Hey! You jerks! I can't believe you would do that. Come on, Daisy, let's get out of here." The two girls stroll out of the store. However, as they leave, Christy takes something from her pocket and tosses it into the trash can.

The team waits a few minutes until the girls are out of sight, then runs to the trash can. Resting on top of the rest of the garbage is a crumpled receipt for a round of mini-golf. *The team has acquired a clue: mini-golf receipt.*

If the team hasn't already, they can play some video games, turn to 6.

Or, they can investigate another location, turn to 1.

28

Amidst the chaos, the team sneaks over to the Academy table. Laid across it is a map of Buckcreek, but it's saturated with globs of meat and sour cream. It's hard to tell through the muck, but it looks like the Academy kids circled something on it. Before the team can get a close look, the map is snatched up by a very angry and taco-covered Academy student.

Maybe it was the lighthouse? It kind of looked like it might have been the lighthouse. *The team has found a clue: the lighthouse.*

In another couple of minutes the tumult has died down^φ, and after being forcefully expelled by the management (with a lifetime ban no less), the team is free to continue their investigation around town.

Turn to 1.

^φ As soon as the last scrap of goat meat disappears down his gullet, Jim Morrison stops his wild frenzy, allows himself to be picked up by the other team members, and falls into a contented sleep.

29

Launching up the side of the pool and into the air, the team representative knows they only have once chance to beat Zach: they have to attempt a brand new trick to throw him off. Spinning, arms splayed, legs kicked out, back arched, they come crashing to the ground.

Zach breaks out in laughter. "You know what? That took guts. I guess I could give you guys a little hint after all. I can't say much, but it would be smart to be at the carnival tonight." Chuckling, Zach turns away. "I can't believe they tried that!" *The team has discovered a clue: at the carnival.*

With their reputation soiled, there's nothing more to be gained here. Turn to 1.

30

The team waffles a bit, then pulls a book out from the bottom of the pile. Maybe this is the one? It's got a cover and pages inside. The book the Academy kids were reading definitely had a cover and pages. It seems to be a history of local haunted houses. Interesting. *The team has found a clue: "Bloody Boudoirs and the Haunts who Haunt Them: A Walking Tour of Buckcreek's Most Haunted Homes."*

If the team would like to browse around the store for a bit, and they haven't already, turn to 3. Otherwise, turn to 1.

31



If this is your first time visiting this section, put a check in the above box. If there is already a check in the box, immediately turn to 23.

The Taco Stop is the number one place for inexpensive food just on this side of edible. It's a popular place for teens to come to after school and, like, hang out or whatever. As the team enters they pass a poster proclaiming: "You'll Want to STOP for Our All-Beef* Tacos!" Unnervingly, there doesn't seem to be an annotation explaining what that asterisk means.

As the team queues up at the counter, they notice a group of Academy students huddled around a table. They seem to be intently focused on something laid out before them, but it's impossible to tell what that something is.

In time, the team reaches the front of the line and is now faced with the difficult choice of what to order. They need to decide quickly too, for the cashier is giving the sort of apathetic stare that cuts right to the bone.

If the team orders twenty tacos for less than the cost of a pack of gum, turn to 8. Or, if they order three slightly more expensive but infinitely more embarrassing kids' meals, turn to 14.

32

"D-don't... don't hurt me!" says Harvey. "I'll tell you ev-everything. Near the Z-zoo, at the-" Before he can go any further there's a shout from across the courtyard.

"Hey! What's going on here?" A group of five Academy kids are stalking towards the fountain. In an instant, the 'Normal Club is outnumbered and is forced to let Harvey and Winston go. As they're walking away, one of the other Academy kids smacks Harvey on the back of the head. "I can't believe you were about to give away our secret!"

"Don't worry, I wasn't gunna tell them nothin'." Then they are around a bend and out of earshot. *The team has discovered a clue: going down near the Zoo.*

If they'd like, the team can check the fountain for any other clues by turning to 34.

*Or, they can continue to explore the Mall by turning to 4.
Otherwise, they can investigate another location by turning to 1.*

33

The team recognizes the two Academy girls as Daisy and Chrysanthemum (Christy for short). Today they are wearing Buckcreek Academy blazers. Daisy has augmented hers with maroon hair clips while Christy is sporting a pair of trendy knee-highs.

“Ugh. It’s those West C. losers,” says Daisy to Christy as the team nears. ✪

“Get away, you weirdos. You’re not going to learn anything from us,” says Christy, while stuffing a piece of paper into her blazer pocket.

“Look, we were just wondering-.” the team starts, but Daisy cuts them off.

“We said leave!” The two girls turn their backs to the team and start to converse with each other in hushed whispers. ♦

Check Artfulness Difficulty 1. If you succeed, turn to 43. Otherwise, turn to 27.

✪ “Hey girls,” says Xander, putting on his best smile.

“Ugh.” Christy replies. “Why are you public school dorks always bothering us? What’s with your school anyway? West C.? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Actually, it’s “Wes C.” really. Everyone just pronounces it wrong.”

“Wes C.?”

“It’s short for Wesley Crusher High School.”

“Who’s that? Some lame-o?”

“He was an astronaut.”

“So lame.”

“Yeah, super lame,” says Daisy.

♦ There might be a way to get that paper. “Uh, hey girls, what do you think of Harvey? He’s pretty cool, right?”

“Ugh, no! Just the other day in class he...” While the rest of the team distracts the girls with juicy gossip, Jordy pilots the drone behind them. Carefully, he lowers the crane to a corner of paper sticking out of Christy’s pocket, visualizing it as a stuffed bear, ripe for the picking.

Check Artfulness Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 43. Otherwise, turn to 27.

34

Searching around the fountain, the team doesn’t find anything besides bits of trash and a few wayward receipts. Lying at the bottom of the fountain is a scattering of pennies, nickels, and pistachio shells. ♦ Looks like Winston and Harvey didn’t accidentally leave any clues behind.

If the team would like to explore the Mall, turn to 4.

Otherwise, they can investigate another location. Turn to 1.

♦ Jordy pilots the InvestiDrone out over the center of the fountain, further than even the lankiest arm can reach. “Not seeing anything different out here,” he says over the drone’s speaker. “Wait... that doesn’t look like it belongs...” *Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to 48. Otherwise, continue reading as normal.*

“Ah... no. I guess I was mistaken.” Jordy flies the drone back to the rest of the team.

35

“Anyone willing to let us use their board?” the team asks the gathered spectators. *Check Intimidation Difficulty 2. If you succeed, several people offer theirs--though none of them are above average quality--and the team accepts one. This board does not count as an item and is returned once the competition is over.*

If the team has a board and is ready to start, turn to 2. Or, if they haven't already, they can: Ask Zach to borrow his board. Turn to 10. Improvise. Turn to 42. Search the dumpster. Turn to 17.

36

No amount of jiggering or shaking is able to shake the bolt loose, and the window remains closed. Pressing their noses up against it, the team can make out some hazy details of the room inside. It looks like this is where the Academy team showcases all their wins from previous years. Off to one side and kind of hard to see at this angle is a display labeled with this year. It's empty except for a small sphere, about the size of a golfball. Any further details are impossible to make out. *The team has discovered a clue: a golfball?*

With no other obvious way in the team will just have to investigate another location. Turn to 1.

37

Easy, right? Just act casual, stroll on by, and see what Buckcreek Academy is up to. However, as soon as the team approaches the Academy kids' table, they sweep up what appears to be a map of the town along with their uneaten tacos. With a huff and their noses turned up, the Academy kids make for the exit.

There's nothing left to do but finish the tacos and investigate another location. Turn to 1.

38

The Zoo's haunted, right? The team's pretty sure they read that somewhere. The team spends all night trying to break in and having madcap encounters with the after-hours security guard. In the end, it all came to no consequence. ^Θ For their troubles, the only thing West C. High won was a lifetime ban. That's a poor consolation for a prize at Districts, no matter how you shake it.

The End

^Θ Except for when “Brad” got sneezed on by a sleeping giraffe. That was pretty hilarious.

39

The team leaps onto the knackwurst and it immediately starts to roll beneath them. They struggle to keep their balance, running on it as if it were a log. Eventually they are able to slow the spinning and get it under control. However, all the activity seems to have irritated some bacteria. They swarm all about the knackwurst, just under the surface of the acid. It'd be wise not to rile them up any more.

The team scans the waves for any foodstuff that might make for a more stable perch. *Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 89. Otherwise, turn to 70.*

40

Buckcreek Academy's big discovery has to have something to do with the ol' Crain Manor on Haunted Hill Knoll. The spooky rumors about this place are unending. Perhaps the Academy kids found a clue to where Crain hid his millions? Or they discovered the cause of those strange lights seen emanating from the attic late at night? Needless to say, the 'Normal Club can't help but check the place out. Over the course of the night, they have all sorts of haunted house adventures that could fill a whole gamebook with excitement and thrills. But in the end, there was no sign of Buckcreek Academy's team or their big discovery. Looks like West C. High will be the laughing stock of Districts. Again.

The End

41

Due to the claw having mysteriously vanished, there are dozens of stuffed toys and prizes inside the crane game that will never be claimed. The quarter-crammed coin slot suggests that hopeful children haven't let this stop them from trying. The team tries fishing a few out to buy a soda or something, but the coins are stuck tight.

Inspecting the game closer, the team discovers a pair of aviator sunglasses teetering right on the edge of the prize chute. They won't be able to grab them, but maybe there's another way... *Check Artfulness Difficulty 3. If the team succeeds, they give the game a solid whack and the aviator sunglasses fall into the chute. The sunglasses give the team a +1 boost to their Intimidation Aptitude score as long as they are being carried. If the team wishes, they may add them to their inventory as an item. The whack also dislodged some quarters from the coin slot. The team has acquired the trophy **Fifty Cents**.*

If they haven't already:

*The team can play some Pac-Man Turn to **12**.*

*Or they can interrogate the Academy kids. Turn to **33**.*

*Or they can investigate another location. Turn to **1**.*

42

The team searches the skatepark for anything they can use. *Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, the team constructs a board with a plank of wood as the deck, coat hangers as trucks, acorns for ball bearings, and discarded chewing tobacco cases as the wheels. It's not pretty, but it seems sturdy enough. This board does not count as an item and falls apart once the competition is over.*

*If the team has a board and is ready to start, turn to **2**. Or, if they haven't already, they can:*

*Ask Zach to borrow his board. Turn to **10**.*

*Ask the crowd if anyone's willing to lend a board. Turn to **35**.*

*Search the dumpster. Turn to **17**.*

43

The piece of paper is carefully extracted from Christy's pocket. "Okay! See you girls later!" The girls just roll their eyes in response.

Hidden at the other end of the store, where the girls cannot see them, the team investigates the paper. It appears to be a ticket stub for admission to somewhere, but what somewhere isn't indicated. *The team has acquired a clue: a ticket stub.*

*If the team hasn't already, they can play some video games. Turn to **6**.*

*Otherwise, they can investigate another location. Turn to **1**.*

44



If this is your first time visiting this section, put a check in the above box. If there is already a check in the box, immediately turn to 23.

The hallowed halls of Buckcreek Academy stand before the team. The dominating steeple of this converted church stretches high overhead, casting its long shadow over the grounds. Classes are out for the day, but there are plenty of faculty around. Walking in the front doors would be a surefire way for the team to get caught.

The team sneaks carefully along the school's rough stone walls, navigating around the occasional bush or tree, peering in windows one by one. Eventually, they come to a window looking into a darkened room containing that horrible vegetable that won Buckcreek Academy first place at Districts last year. This must be the Paranormal Club's meeting room. Thankfully, it looks like there's no one around.

Testing the window, the team discovers it is locked. ❖ However, the bolt doesn't seem entirely secure, so they might be able to jiggle it open with a bit of craftiness. *Check Artfulness Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 7. Otherwise, turn to 36.*

❖ "A lock? Pfft. Who do they think they're dealing with?" Grayson mocks as he floats through the window. "Now let me just unlock it from this side... hm. This might be harder than I thought, with no corporeal body and all. Let me see..." *Check Artfulness Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to 7. Otherwise, turn to 22.*

45

The team rolls the barrel to the ship's edge and tips its contents over the side. There is a sickening sound as gallons of chopped fish bits splash into the water.

"My best chum!" cries the fisherman. The wrestling of the giants becomes more violent as the whale shark descends into a blood frenzy. As the whale shark thrashes about, not only does the squid lose its grip, but the jar is worked free as well. Sensing that it'll never win its prey now, the squid disappears below the waves. The whale shark continues to splash around, enjoying the unexpected chum bath.

Fishing the jar out of the sea, the team finds that it is capped with a sculpture of a baboon's head. *The team has acquired the trophy **Baboon Jar**.*

"I've never seen its like before," starts the fisherman, but already his voice is growing fainter and fainter as the rocking of the ship stops and the spray of the ocean dissipates as the Nature Diorama Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

46

Scrounging around in the dumpster some more, the team discovers a pack of cherry bombs under a soggy pizza box. *If they would like to take the pack of cherry bombs, add it to the team's inventory as an item.*

If the team has a board and is ready to start, turn to 2. Or, if they haven't already, they can: Ask Zach to borrow his board. Turn to 10.

Ask the crowd if anyone's willing to lend a board. Turn to 35.

Improvise. Turn to 42.

47

Amidst the chaos, the team sneaks over to the Academy table. Laid across it is a map of Buckcreek on which the Academy has circled a location. Before the team can get a closer look, a very angry and taco-saturated Academy student snatches the map up. But he wasn't quick enough; the team clearly saw that a building or house had been circled on the map. *The team has found a clue: located in a house or building.*

In another couple of minutes the tumult has died down ϕ . After having been forcefully kicked out by the management (with a lifetime ban to boot), the team is free to continue their investigation around town.

Turn to 1.

ϕ As soon as the last scrap of goat meat disappears down his gullet, Jim Morrison stops his wild frenzy, allows himself to be picked up by the other team members, and falls into a contented sleep.

48

Slowly, Jordy lowers the drone's claw into the water. Its propellers whine as Jordy makes small adjustments to its position. "Got it!" he exclaims, and immediately beings reeling in the claw. Piloting the drone back, he releases the crane's catch onto the fountain's edge. Out of the claw drops a small handful of coins: 38 cents in change and a strange brass-colored one. On one side is the US seal with the letters "EB" stamped on the eagle's wing and the date 1787 underneath. The reverse is embossed with a sunrise cresting a mountain peak and some words in Latin. "Neat!" says Jordy. *The team receives the trophy **Old Coin**. It might just be worth a buck or two.*

*If the team would like to the explore the rest of the mall, turn to 4.
If they would rather investigate another location, return to 1.*

49

"Okay, okay," says Harvey, holding up his hands and grinning. "You got me. I can't say much, but tonight over on the west side of town-" Before he can go any further, there's a shout from across the courtyard.

"Hey! What's going on here?" A group of five Academy kids are marching towards the fountain. In an instant, the 'Normal Club are outnumbered and are have no choice but to let Harvey and Winston go. As they're walking away, one of the other Academy kids smacks Harvey on the back of the head. "I can't believe you were about to give away our secret!"

"Don't worry, I wasn't gonna tell them nothin'." Then, they are around a bend and out of earshot. *The team has discovered a clue: going down on the west side of town.*

*If they'd like, the team can check the fountain for any other clues by turning to 34.
Or, they can continue to explore the Mall by turning to 4.
Otherwise, they can investigate another location by turning to 1.*

50

Minutes tick by as the team works on the lock with a pair of paperclips, but it refuses to open. Ten minutes pass, then fifteen. Finally, the lock clicks and the door swings open. The team makes their way into the museum, and down an access hallway. They're starting up a set of stairs into the main Atrium when they hear a shout behind them. Looking back down the hall, they see group of Academy kids running towards them. They turn to run themselves, but one of the team members trips on the stairs and falls.

The remaining two members make it to the atrium safely, but their teammate has been captured by

the Academy team. *Roll to find out which. If the result is a 1 or a 2, it is the team member in the first slot of your Team Roster. If the result is a 3 or 4, it is the second member. If the result is a 5 or 6, it is the third. Mark that they have been caught. While missing, their Aptitudes do not apply to any Difficulty Checks. Likewise, you no longer have access to the item they were carrying.*

Turn to 63.

51

The Academy kids keep the team tied up and under close watch in the Medieval Torture exhibit. There, they don't have much to do except struggle against their bonds and admire the imaginative ways historical man had to inflict pain on itself. Eventually, word comes that the mummy has been found and captured. The Academy kids take the team to the exit. "Better luck next year!" they call as they shove the team into the night. With mummy in hand, Buckcreek Academy goes on to fame and fortune, and the West C. High School Competitive Paranormal Investigation Club is left contemplating what might have been.

The End

52

The team makes their way through the museum and back to burial chamber display in the Ancient Egypt exhibit. At first, the mummy is nowhere to be found, but then a sarcophagus creaks open and the mummy emerges from its hiding place. It rushes over to the team with great excitement, hands trembling as it takes the four animal-headed jars. Holding the jars in the crook of one arm, it accepts the Was staff, then gives the team a deep, grateful bow.

It turns away from the team and begins placing the jars one by one into the stone chest. Now's the team's chance!

If the team captures it with the mummy trap, turn to 99.

If they let it continue placing the jars, turn to 67.

53

If you've already found a jar in this wing, there's no reason to search here any further. Return to 75.

No self-respecting museum is complete without a hall dedicated to old habitat displays. These things are unnerving enough during the day with their silent, towering creatures and forever frozen moments of time. At night, they're positively terrifying. Without illumination, each diorama is a dense wall of darkness, with just enough light to outline silhouettes of the hulking beasts lurking within. Occasionally, a glint of light will reveal a fearsome claw or staring glass eye, giving the team the impression they're being watched.

Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the hall is a whale shark entangled with a giant squid. As they near it, the Was staff begins trembling. Looking up, there appears to be something lodged inside the whale shark's mouth. ♦

Standing on one of the many benches and reaching as high as they can, the team is just able to tap the Was staff on the shark's tail.

Check Arcanability Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 91. Otherwise, if this is your first attempt at this check, turn to 71. If it is your second attempt, a Academy patrol rounds a corner. A team member of your choice volunteers to lure them away. In the process, this team member is captured by the Academy team. Mark that the member has been caught. While missing, their Aptitudes do not apply to any Difficulty Checks. Likewise, you no longer have access to the item they were carrying. If this was your last team member, immediately turn to 51. Otherwise, the team member's sacrifice has given the

rest of the 'Normal Club time to experiment with the Was staff until they get a result. Turn to 91.

◆Jordy pilots the drone up to the shark. “Yup, looks like there’s a jar in here,” he announces through the drone’s speaker. “Let me see if I can get it out.” They watch as the drone disappears into the shark’s mouth. A tense moment passes before the drone comes whirling back out, carrying a clay jar in its claw. “It was actually really roomy in there,” Jordy says as he brings the drone down. As it lowers, the team sees that the jar has a large stopper shaped like baboon’s head. *The team has discovered the trophy **Baboon Jar**. Turn to 75.*

54

The team tap the Was staff lightly on the side of a brazen bull. The exhibit seems to grow even darker than it was before and the team’s breath becomes visible in the sudden chill. The plip-plop of dripping water echos off the stone walls. A tortured scream can be heard far off in the depths of the dungeon.

Daisy and Christy stare around at the dank torture chamber.

“What’s going on?” says Daisy.

“Let’s get out of here!” says Christy, pulling on her friend’s hand. The two girls take off down a stony passage. After a few minutes they find themselves back in the museum, afraid and confused by what happened. Meanwhile, the 'Normal Club has used the opportunity to rescue the rest of the team.

Any captured team members have been rescued. Their Aptitudes again count during Difficulty Checks and the team has access to their item, if they had one.

Turn to 75.

55

The old abandoned lighthouse out at Buckcreek Bay--that must be where the Academy kids have made their big discovery. The team spends the night searching tide-pools and skipping rocks. They even glimpse the legendary Buckcreek Bay ghost ship, but their camera-phones capture nothing but fog like they always do.

Unless the Academy team has discovered a way to turn themselves into seaweed and fiddler crabs there’s no sign of West C. High’s rivals. Not until their spectacular win at Districts that is. Maybe West C. will have a better showing next year...though it’s unlikely if they continue wasting their time bumming around the beach.

The End

56

"Come and worship my father Osiris for me, just as you went that you might worship my mother Isis in your name Duamutef."

The walls start to pulse rhythmically and a great gurgling fills the air. The displays are gone, replaced by a sea of acidic bile. The team finds themselves on a fleshy membrane just above the caustic ocean. All about them, stomach lining contracts and wrenches, sending great waves through the gastric acid. ☹ The smell is best left undescribed. ❖

Giant pieces of foodstuff bob around within the acid. A slice of pizza floats by the team, and laying on top of it is a clay jar. However, the tide carries the pizza away before they are able to leap onto it.

Scanning about, it looks like there are several other pieces of nearby food large enough for the team to use as stepping stones to get to the pizza. *If the team has some antacid tablets, immediately turn to 92.*

If the team decides to jump to a passing knackwurst, turn to 39.

If the team decided to leap to bobbing turkey club sandwich, turn to 81.

⌘ Anna's hands come up to her mouth. "This... this... is... so COOL!" She begins jumping about on the membrane. "Hahaha! Wild!" She starts punching the lining of stomach. "Ho ho. Hey, I wonder who's stomach this is..."

❖ "Ha ha!" says Grayson as the rest of the team is retching around him. "I have not once ever missed having a nose."

57

By throwing an item away from them, the team can use Newton's third law to propel themselves towards the jar. Lining themselves up with the jar at their back, they've got to make a precise judgment of the angle or risk missing the jar entirely. *Check Sleuthiness Difficulty 1. If they succeed, turn to 88. Otherwise, read on.*

Making their best guess, the team sends an item out into the void, pushing the team backwards. *The team has lost an item. Remove one of your choice from your Roster sheet.* However, the toss must not have been a good one, because they start to turn in a tumbling spin with no way to right themselves. As they drift towards the planet, they desperately look for the jar. They've lost sight of it in the confusion. They'll have drifted past it shortly. Panicked, they scan all around: the starfield, the horizon, the bulk of the planet. No... no... there! It's just barely in reach. The team grasps for it and barely manages to snag one of the animal's ears with their fingertips. Having grasped it, they can see that the animal stopper is sculpted into the shape of a hippo. *The team acquires the trophy Hippo Jar.*

Jar in hand, the stars dim and fade, and the inky blackness of space is just the regular blackness of the Planetarium once again.

Turn to 75.

58

The team takes the cup of björr and share it between them. Loptr makes a small grunt at the choice and seems to be judging the team, but says nothing. The opponents start drinking and the contest begins.

The björr is mostly water with a slight taste of alcohol, though not entirely unpleasant. The contest continues long into the night, and the cups are refilled many times. Though it is not strong, so many cups of the björr eventually take its toll on the team. Just when they are struggling to stay in their seats, Loptr gives a small hiccup and slides to the floor.

"I should have your heads for... for choosing such a weak drink. Ha, but when I am beaten, I am beaten. Here, take it, and do well by it." Loptr hands the jar up to the team. Up close, they can see that it has a stopper shaped like a falcon. *The team has acquired the trophy Falcon Jar.* They turn to thank Loptr but he has fallen fast asleep. The sound of his snores soon fade to silence as the Exhibit Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

59

There's presumably one place the mummy will be. The team heads to the Ancient Egypt exhibit. Amongst glass cases filled with precious artifacts and gilded sarcophagi, they find the mummy upon a display of a burial chamber. It's about five feet tall, and scatters sand and dust as it moves. Today it is wearing thousand year old wrappings that cover it head to toe and leave no skin or feature exposed. The mummy is furiously tapping its staff against a stone chest inscribed with hieroglyphics, but nothing is happening. The mummy suddenly startles when it notices the team and starts to back away.

The team stops advancing and holds up their hands in placation. The mummy relaxes a bit when it sees the team isn't carrying any nets or rope. The team slowly comes forward to the edge of the

display. The mummy mumbles something to itself in a harsh, dry voice. It looks over the team carefully. When they don't immediately leap forward to grab it, the mummy seems to decide

something for itself. It steps forward and begins talking excitedly in a foreign language. ♦ It points to the stone chest, taps it with the staff, and shakes its head. It then touches itself in four places: the sternum, stomach, lower abdomen, and side. It then points to the chest, mimics putting something in it four times, taps the chest again, and nods.

The mummy then holds out the staff to the team. "Was." it says, "Was." The team gingerly take the staff. It's got an angled bar at the top and splits into a fork at the bottom. The mummy points to the staff, then into the darkened museum, then to the chest. Then, before the team can say a word, it slinks off into the shadows. *The team has acquired the trophy Was Staff.* If the team has understood the

mummy correctly, it wants them to find four of something and bring them back to this chest. ★

With no choice but to begin looking, the team returns to the atrium. Turn to 75.

♦ "Let me try to run this through Google Translate..." says Jordy. The rest of the team can hear him typing away energetically. "Uh, this isn't super clear, but I think it's saying it needs... devices? To go... somewhere. But it can't get the devices for some reason. Something dangerous? It wants us to get the devices for it... I think."

★ "But why is it here?" ponders the team. "Did one of the mummies on display just spontaneously get up and start walking around?"

"I read in the news that the museum just got some new artifacts for this exhibit," says Xander. "Maybe this mummy was one of them? Maybe this is the first night it's been in the museum? If that's the case, maybe it's always been mobile?"

"But where did these new items come from? Are they from a different museum, or from an archaeological find?"

"I dunno. Didn't really read the article. I more just skimmed the headline while looking for the comics section."

60

The team lights a cherry bomb and toss it over several displays. A moment later, there is a loud pop. "What was that?" says Christy.

"Come on!" says Daisy, and pulls her friend towards the sound of the explosion. The team uses this opportunity to rescue the rest of the 'Normal Club.

Any captured team members have been rescued. Their Aptitudes again count during Difficulty Checks and the team has access to their item, if they had one.

Turn to 75.

61

If you've already found a jar in this wing, there's no reason to search here any further. Return to 75.

The Planetarium has that sterile loneliness that all empty movie theatres share. The rows of chairs all have their adjustable seats arranged neatly, and the dome overhead is a uniform beige. φ The Was staff gives a twinge as they near the projection system in the center. Looking down into the projection well, they can make out a jar wedged among the gears and servos. It's too far to reach and the squeeze is too tight. With no other options, the team gives the projector a tap with the staff.

Check Arcanability Difficulty 2. If they succeed, turn to 94. Otherwise, if this is your first attempt at

this check, turn to **71**. If it is your second attempt, a Academy patrol rounds a corner. A team member of your choice volunteers to lure them away. In the process, this team member is captured by the Academy team. Mark that the member has been caught. While missing, their Aptitudes do not apply to any Difficulty Checks. Likewise, you no longer have access to the item they were carrying. If this was your last team member, immediately turn to **51**. Otherwise, the team member's sacrifice has given the rest of the 'Normal Club time to experiment with the Was staff until they get a result. Turn to **94**.

ϕ Jim Morrison's head snaps up. He leaps from the team's shoulders and onto the floor. Before they can grab him he scurries under a row of seats. Pulling him back out by his tail, they find he is chewing on a glass eye. Some poor crone must have lost it here. *The glass eye give the team a +1 boost to their Arcanability Aptitude score as long as it is being carried. If the team wishes, they may add it to their inventory as an item. The glass eye can only be acquired once.*

62

All four jars are collected. All that's left is to return them to the mummy. The team races for the Ancient Egypt exhibit. Rounding a corner, they run straight into a patrol of ten or so Academy team members, with Harvey and Winston at their head.

"Just where do you think you're going with those?" Harvey asks with a smirk. Winston pounds a fist into his open palm. The team reverses direction and starts running back the way they came, thinking that maybe they can loop around and get to the Egypt exhibit from a different way. But coming down the hall towards them is another Academy patrol.

"You can't get away from us. Make it easy on yourselves," calls Harvey from behind.

With no other option, the team ducks into the nearest exhibit. They find themselves at the entrance to the museum's dinosaur exhibition, *Prehistoric Pilgrimage: A Trek Through Time*. It's composed of several large rooms, each devoted to a particular prehistoric era. The team rockets into the first of these, a room smaller than the rest, detailing the creation of the universe up through the Devonian age.

Before they can progress any further, the way is blocked by several tough-looking Academy members. The rest of the Academy team files into the room, cutting off the entrance.

"Nowhere left to go," says Harvey. He holds out his hand. "Now hand over those jars. It's okay, there was no way you were going to get that mummy before us, anyhow."

The team is trapped, surrounded by Buckcreek Academy on all sides.. There's only one way out of this: they've got to find a way to distract the whole lot of them. The team feels the Was staff twitch and leap in their hands as it fills with power. The choice now is what to use it on:

*There are three likely looking displays in this room. Choose which you'd like to try and Check Arcanability Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to the indicated section. If you fail, the Was staff does nothing and that display is no longer available to you. You must now pick from the remaining displays. If you fail the Arcanability Check for all three displays, turn to **74**.*

*If the team taps a display about the Big Bang, turn to **96**.*

*If they tap an exhibit on the first formation of life, turn to **76**.*

*If they tap a placard explaining the Cambrian Explosion, turn to **80**.*

63

The main atrium of the museum is dominated by the skeletons of a T-Rex and an Ankylosaurus locked in battle. The fearsome scene is even more impressive in the dim nighttime lighting. Heavy shadows obscure the far reaches of the atrium, but the team knows from a childhood of field trips that exhibit halls branch off in the four cardinal directions.

From out of the gloom runs a small figure wrapped in bandages and carrying a wooden staff. Following it is a sizable portion of the Academy team brandishing their nets and so forth. A mummy! So that's the Academy's big discovery. They've found a real-life animated mummy. It would win

Districts in heartbeat. Heck, it could even take Nationals!

The Academy team nearly catches up to the mummy as it reaches the skeletons. It stretches out with its staff and lightly taps the Ankylosaurus. Then, for an instant, it doesn't seem like the team is standing in the museum anymore. Instead, they get the impression they are in a vast, dense jungle. The stench of rotting foliage fills their nostrils and they begin to sweat from the oppressive heat. Strangely, they feel like this jungle isn't composed of vegetation, but rather from bones. Everywhere they look, they think they see palm trees made from vertebrae and ferns of rib-cages. Cartilage insects crawl through the dust around their feet and overhead a skeletal Pteranodon soars through the sky. There is the sound of something heavy crashing through the brush nearby.

Then, as suddenly as it appeared, the illusion is gone. The atrium is as it was... except that the Ankylosaurus has stepped down from the display. Wait, that's not right. The skeleton of the Ankylosaurus is still there, engaged in timeless battle with the T-Rex. No, there's a new Ankylosaurus skeleton in the room, and it's advancing on the Academy kids.

The Academy team, seeing the dinosaur, skids to a halt and starts to run in the opposite direction. The Ankylosaurus charges after them into a darkened hallway. Chuckling to itself, the mummy makes off down a different hall.

*If the team would like to follow the Academy kids, turn to 85.
Or, if they'd like to follow the mummy, turn to 59.*

64

The team lifts the cup of öl and shares it between them. Loptr nods his head in approval. "A contest it shall be then." The two opponents start drinking.

The öl is a strong, slightly bitter drink. The team and Loptr take turns draining and refilling their cups. It isn't long before the team is feeling the drink, but Loptr is looking tipsy as well. *Check Intimidation Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 72. Otherwise, read on.*

The team stare Loptr in the eyes as he drinks from his cup. He wavers to one side a bit, but then finds his resolve and sits up straight. The team tries to finish their next cup, but it is too much for them. The next thing they know they are sprawled on the dusty ground.

Loptr lets out a hearty laugh and helps pull them to their feet. "That is it, then. Now come, let me see my prize." *The team has lost the contest and must give an item to Loptr. Pick an item (if you are carrying any) and remove it from your Team Roster.*

"Still, I am impressed by your courage. Not many would dare to wager against I. A gift, then." With a wink, Loptr hands the jar to the team. Up close, they can see that it has a stopper shaped like an ibis. *The team has acquired the trophy **Ibis Jar**.* They turn to thank Loptr but the sound of his laughter is already fading as the Exhibit Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

65

The team lines up one of their members with the jar. Then, with a wish of good luck and a salute, they push them towards it ★.

It's a good push and within moments the teammate has the jar in hand. However, the push has also sent the other members of team backwards and out towards open space. Damn you, Newton! A look of terror falls on the teammate's face as the rest of the team floats further and further away.

As the teammate's features become lost in the distance, the team notices that the planet is also losing definition. It gradually fades away, along with the stars and the rings, until the team finds themselves back in the Planetarium, standing on the opposite end from their thrown teammate.

Meeting up in the middle, they now can see that the animal stopper isn't shaped an animal at all, but rather is sculpted into the shape of a man. *The team acquires the trophy **Human Jar**.*

Jar in hand, the stars dim and fade, and the inky blackness of space is just the regular blackness of the Planetarium once again.

Turn to 75.

★ "No! What are you doing!? Get away from me! Ahhh! AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

66

Individually, the clues are pretty vague, but added together there's only one place to which they could point: The Buckcreek Natural History Museum. The team waits until nightfall then hides themselves in a bush across the street. After an hour or so, a bus pulls into the parking lot and the Buckcreek Academy Paranormal team emerges. Most of them are carrying implements of entrapment: lengths of rope, butterfly nets, large cardboard boxes, and so on. Instead of heading to the entrance, they move around to the side of the building and are soon out of sight.

The team disentangles themselves from their bush and quickly follows the Academy team. Around the side of the building, they find an emergency exit that has been propped open. As the team nears, Harvey appears at the door. The team jumps into some nearby shadows just in time to avoid being

seen. Harvey looks around and, satisfied no one followed the Academy team, pulls the door shut. ★

The team move forward to the exit and pull on the handle, but it's no use. The door is locked tight. ⊖

If the team has a crowbar, they can pry open the door. Turn to 63.

Otherwise, the team can attempt to pick the lock. Check Artfulness Difficulty 1. If you succeed, turn to 63. Otherwise, turn to 50.

★ "But how did the Academy get in without tripping off the alarm?" says Xander.

"Isn't Winston's dad one of the curators here? They probably took his keys-" one of his teammates starts to respond..

"I know! One of them must have hidden inside during the day. Probably in an ancient Chinese urn. Then they crept out at night and disabled the system. Yes, that's it. Ha ha. I'm the best detective."

⊖ "Brad" steps to the door and wedges his claws between it and the frame. There is a loud groaning as he pulls on the door. His large frame strains under the effort. It doesn't seem like he's making any progress until suddenly the lock snaps and the door bangs open. Turn to 63.

67

The team waits patiently as the mummy places the four jars in the stone chest. It then takes the Was staff and ceremoniously raises it above its head. It mumbles something that sounds like a prayer, then brings the staff down with a sharp rap onto the chest. *If the team has the Baboon, Jackal, Falcon, and Human Jars, turn immediately to 100. Otherwise, read on.*

A tense moment of expectation and...

Nothing happens. The mummy hits the chest again, and again, and again. Still nothing. The mummy pulls a jar out of the chest and examines it. It hands the jar to the team and shakes its head sadly. One or more of the jars must have been a decoy.

The mummy takes the team's hands one by one in thanks (those who have hands anyway). With a sad little wave it disappears into the shadows, presumably off to find the legitimate jars. At least it will have an easier time of it with the Academy team out of the way.

The 'Normal Club leave the museum and life carries on. They don't place at Districts (their vampire skeleton loses to Buckcreek Academy's entry: a genuine mummy-catching net, once used to hunt an actual mummy!), but there's always next year. Whenever they drive by the museum they can't help but to wonder if the mummy ever found a way back home, or if it's still in there, searching night by night

for those last elusive jars.

The End

Thank you for playing 'Normal Club. Make sure you check out the Additional Trophies afterward to see if you earned any extra achievements.

68

The team grabs the long pole and angles it into the water. To steal the jar right out of the thrashing whale shark's mouth would be the greatest purloin of all time. *Check Artfulness Difficulty 0. If you succeed, turn to 84. Otherwise, read on.*

The team prods and pushes the pole, but are unable to hook anything. The squid and whale shark get some nasty pokes, though. Within a few moments, the two sea creatures sink below the waves.

"Yarr... you'll never be seeing that pottery again, I'm afraid," says the fisherman. But then, just as he's offering a consoling pat on the shoulder, the jar comes bubbling to the surface. It must have worked itself loose in the struggle. Fishing it out of the sea, the team finds that it is capped with a sculpture of a crocodile's head. *The team has acquired the trophy Crocodile Jar.*

"I've never seen its like before," starts the fisherman, but already his voice is growing fainter and fainter as the rocking of the ship stops and the spray of the ocean dissipates as the Nature Diorama Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

69

All sorts of crazy stuff is out in the woods: bigfoots, windigos, giant hulking shadow beasts, uh... unusual owls, and so on. The team heads to Buckcreek Forest National Park only to discover it's kind of super scary at night. They spend the night searching the fringes of the woods but don't find Buckcreek Academy's team, only a bunch of creepy owls. Come Districts, it turns they were barking up the wrong tree, the Academy kids weren't anywhere near the woods at all. And no amount of terrible puns will take the sting out of West C. High's last place showing.

The End

70

The team scans around, but there are no stable looking foods about. The bacteria are starting to climb up the sides of the knackwurst. With no other choice, the team leaps onto a passing cherry tomato.

It proves to be even less stable than the knackwurst was. The tomato rolls and spins as the team desperately tries to stay above the waves. A few drops get on their jeans, which gives them a delightfully worn-in look, and otherwise the team stays safe.

The tomato's splashing has really agitated the bacteria, though. Even more are bubbling to the surface. They swarm about the tomato and are slowly surging up its sides. All about the team, the acid bubbles with writhing bacterium. Already they are most of the way up the tomato. In just a few seconds they'll be at the team's feat. But then, the team spots the pizza floating amongst the microbes. With a desperate leap, they abandon the tomato and land neatly on the pizza's edge.

Racing forward, a host of bacteria on their heels, the team makes for the jar. But the swarm has already overcome it. Reaching into the wriggling mass, the team grope about for the jar. The bacteria crawl up their arms and legs, and just when it seems the team will be drowned in them, their hands grasp the jar.

Instantly, the bacteria, giant pizza, and acid sea begin to fade away. The pumping of the wall slows to a stop. The team finds themselves back in the *Hall of Healing*, safe and microbe-free.

After taking a few moments to calm themselves and shake off the willies, they examine the jar. It is

stopped with a carved ram's head. *The team has acquired the trophy **Ram Jar**.*

Turn to 75.

71

The team taps on the exhibit with the Was staff, but nothing happens. For whatever reason, they're just not able to channel its mojo. Before they get a chance to try again, they hear a shout of alarm. Turning, they see a patrol of Academy kids sprinting through the hall towards them. The team cease their investigation and start running. Now that Academy knows the team is interested in this exhibit they will watch the area more closely. Further attempts to investigate will be more dangerous.

Check Intimidation Difficulty 2. If you succeed, the team fluster the patrol enough that they're able to slip away. Turn to 75. Otherwise, the patrol manages to nab one of the team members during the pursuit. Roll to find out which. If the result is a 1 or a 2, it is the team member in the first slot of your Team Roster. If the result is a 3 or 4, it is the second member. If the result is a 5 or 6, it is the third. If that member is already captured, roll again. Mark that the member has been caught. While missing, their Aptitudes do not apply to any Difficulty Checks. Likewise, you no longer have access to the item they were carrying. If all three team members have been captured, immediately turn to 51. Otherwise, turn to 75.

72

The team stares Loptr in the eyes as he drinks from his cup. He leans to one side, hiccups, starts straighten himself out, but then seems to lose his resolve and topples the rest of the way over.

"You... you have won like true Jotunn. My father would be impressed." *The team have acquired the trophy **Pride of Loptr**.* "Here, take it and do well by it." Loptr hands up the jar to the team. Up close, they can see that it has a stopper shaped like a falcon. *The team has acquired the trophy **Falcon Jar**.* They turn to thank Loptr, but he has fallen fast asleep. And soon, the sound of his snores fades to silence as the Exhibit Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

73

As the team is preparing for the attempt, one of them stumbles and crashes into a pillory.

"Hey. Hey! It's those West C. jerks!" Daisy calls loudly. Within moments, a group of additional Academy kids appear from around a corner. The team is now outmatched and are forced to retreat.

The rescue attempt was a failure and now the Academy team is on high alert. The 'Normal Club will have to wait until things die down before trying again. In the meantime, they might as well continue their search. The team will not be able to attempt another rescue until after they've found another jar.

Turn to 75.

74

The team shakes the Was staff, bangs it against the floor, and holds it above their heads while speaking words of power. But, despite their best efforts, they aren't able to channel its mojo. Winston yanks the staff out of their hands. Harvey collects the jars while the team's hands are tied behind their backs.

"It was a good try," Harvey says, "But did you really think you public school brats could really steal a win from Buckcreek Academy?" He laughs as the Academy team leads the 'Normal Club out of *Prehistoric Pilgrimage*. "Enjoy the rest of your night."

The Academy kids keep the team tied up and under close watch in the Medieval Torture exhibit. There, they don't have much to do except struggle against their bonds and admire the imaginative

ways historical man had to inflict pain on itself. Eventually, word comes that the mummy has been found and captured. The Academy kids take the team to the exit and releases them into the night. "Better luck next year!" they call. With mummy in hand, Buckcreek Academy goes on to fame and fortune, and the West C. High team is left contemplating what might have been.

The End

75

The clicking of the team's footsteps echoes around the empty atrium. Dim lighting illuminates a pair of dinosaur skeletons and shadows obscure the various exits. The museum is a big place with lots of ground to cover, and because the team doesn't know where each exit leads, they will just have to pick arbitrarily from several identical and featureless choices.

Nah, just kidding. There's a sign here that clearly labels where everything is.

If the team heads to the north wing and searches the Nature Dioramas, turn to 53.

If the team heads to the west wing and searches the Historical Cultures exhibit, turn to 90.

If the team heads to the east wing and searches the Body and Nutrition exhibit, turn to 79.

If the team heads to the south wing and searches the Planetarium, turn to 61.

If the team heads to that new medieval torture exhibit they've been meaning to check out, turn to 86.

Once the team have acquired four jars, turn to 62.

76

The Was staff knocks against a display theorizing about how life was formed. Instantly, the 'Normal Club and the Academy team find themselves on a tiny rock, devoid of anything but sand and dirt. All around them stretches featureless ocean and empty sky.

The two teams stare at each other for a few moments. When nothing happens, Harvey pipes up incredulously, "What is this supposed to be? Some sort of trick? Tie them up!"^φ The Academy team closes in and begins tying the 'Normal Club's hands behind their backs. Out in the ocean, not far away, acidic strands are bonding with each other to form the very first proteinoids, which then through millennia of specialization and adaptation, will become proteins, then protocells, then the very first organisms of life. It all starts here, though it's not very exciting for the would-be observers on the island.

Eventually the vision fades, and the Academy kids keep the 'Normal Club under close watch for the rest of the night. After an hour or so, word comes that the mummy has been found and captured. With mummy in hand, Buckcreek Academy goes on to win Nationals. The West C. High School Competitive Paranormal Investigation Club disbands the next year and the ex-team members go on with their lives, to varying degrees of success.

The End

^φJim Morrison's spines begin to bristle and he gets that wild look in his eyes. There's no goats here on pre-life Earth. But something about this moment has awakened his primal instincts. Something deep down is telling him that it's his time to shine.

As the Academy kids close in with their lengths of rope, Jim Morrison launches towards them. Clawing and scratching, he leaps from kid to kid. Panic erupts as the Academy team desperately tries to protect their sensitive organs from the rampaging chupacabra.

Even as the rocky island and empty ocean fades back into the museum, Jim Morrison doesn't stop his attack until all of the Academy team are fleeing from the room. "That lizard is a monster!" screams Harvey as he backs out of the room. "You'll be hearing from my lawyer about this!"

Picking up a suddenly calm Jim Morrison, the team also collects a butterfly net dropped by one of the Academy kids. *The team has acquired the trophy **Mummy Trap**.* The only thing left to do now is deliver the jars

to the mummy. The team head for the Ancient Egypt exhibit.

Turn to 52.

77

Working together, the team and the fisherman pull the heavy net to the ship's edge. With a heave, they send it sailing out into the waters where it soon gets tangled in the squid's tentacles. The team hauls back on the net's rope, but they are far too weak to pull in the great cephalopod and its opponent. Within a few moments, the two sea creatures sink below the waves and take the net with them. The team is nearly pulled overboard as the rope is yanked through their hands. *The team has acquired the trophy **Painful Rope Burns**.*

"Yarr... you'll never be seeing that pottery again, I'm afraid," says the fisherman. But then, just as he's offering a consoling pat on the shoulder, the jar comes bubbling to the surface. It must have worked itself loose in the struggle. Fishing it out of the sea, the team finds that it is capped with a sculpture of a crocodile's head. *The team has acquired the trophy **Crocodile Jar**.*

"I've never seen its like before," starts the fisherman, but already his voice is growing fainter and fainter as the rocking of the ship stops and the spray of the ocean dissipates as the Nature Diorama Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

78

All sorts of creepy weird stuff happens at carnivals, and this one is no exception. The team spends the night dealing with creepy carnival workers and playing weird skill-games they just can't seem to win. ☚ There's no sign of Buckcreek Academy or anything that could be remotely considered paranormal. Looks like the vampire skeleton will just have to do for Districts. And when the time comes, it doesn't. West C. High suffers another humiliating defeat. I hope the night of carnival fun was worth it.

The End

☚ Except for Anna. She's a pro at the Frog-Flip and wins a giant stuffed animal. *The team has earned the trophy **Adorable Octopus** for skillful mallet manipulation.*

79

If you've already found a jar in this wing, there's no reason to search here any further. Return to 75.

The *Hall of Health* is the museum's health sciences exhibit. It's full of interactive displays that teach how the body works and stays healthy. It's geared more for kids than adults, who are just going to ignore the science and eat the mashed potato sandwich anyway.

All the displays are powered off for the night, so the team doesn't get to see how babies are made or what causes Hay Fever. However, one display appears to have been left on. It's a glass sphere filled with a churning liquid and little replica foods. It's supposed to teach how the stomach breaks down food, but in reality it's just really gross. Tonight, sloshing around with the little plastic pieces of pizza and chicken drumsticks is a clay jar with a stopper shaped like an animal's head. Every time it sloshes near the team, the Was staff gives a twinge. Cringing, the team taps the staff against the sphere.

Check Arcanability Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to 56. Otherwise, if this is your first attempt at this check, turn to 71. If it is your second attempt, a Academy patrol rounds a corner. A team member of your choice volunteers to lure them away. In the process, this team member is captured by the Academy team. Mark that the member has been caught. While missing, their Aptitudes do not apply to any Difficulty Checks. Likewise, you no longer have access to the item they were carrying. If this was

your last team member, immediately turn to **51**. Otherwise, the team member's sacrifice has given the rest of the 'Normal Club time to experiment with the Was staff until they get a result. Turn to **56**.

80

The staff knocks against a placard detailing the various forms of life that appeared during the Cambrian explosion. Instantly, great torrents of water rush into the room, turning it into a shallow undersea basin. The Academy team scuffs their feet against the sandy bottom and stare about in amazement at the swaying algae fronds and sunlight filtering down through the waves above.

The 'Normal Club has some expectation of what's coming. They crouch down and cover their heads with their hands. Then, a magnificent diversity of life explodes into the sea. Thousands upon thousands of animals swarm about the two teams. Bizarre creatures not seen on Earth in millennia swim and crawl and fight and eat and die. Trilobites with their three-lobed carapaces and probing antenna crawl over the sandy ground. Wiwaxia, walking shells sprouting leafy feelers, slowly march about the Academy team's feet. Giant armored leeches called Halkieriida undulate through the water. Hallucina, spiny worms that more closely resemble coral than animals, walk among the Ottia, needle-covered worms buried in the sand that grasp about with spike covered tentacles. But worst of all are the Peytoia, giant segmented shrimp-like creatures, each as long as an arm. They thrash through the water, grabbing prey with bristle-covered jaw appendages, pulling the poor animals into the gaping

holes that are their mouths. ✱

All around the teams, these creatures live their horrible, brief, strange lives. The Academy kids can do nothing but stare with wonder and revulsion at the medley of Cambrian life. Even as the waters dissipate and the alien life forms fade from existence, they still are in shock. The 'Normal Club slowly make their way through the stunned Academy kids to the exit. Along the way, they pick up a butterfly net one of the Academy kids dropped. *The team acquires the trophy **Mummy Trap**. It'll make a good souvenir of this victory.*

Turn to **52**.

✱ B. Theta cowers from all these armored proto-arthropods swarming about that might like to snack on a nice, ripe, unprotected bacteroid. It huddles in the team's arms and makes terrified little squeaks.

81

The team leap onto a club sandwich, which bobs up and down in the acid thanks to their weight, but otherwise remains a steady and pleasant ride. From there it's just a hop to an oatmeal cookie, a skip to a bagel, and a jump to the pizza.

Sitting in a glob of cheese is the jar, and chewing on the jar is a small bacteroid. Well... chewing isn't quite the right term, as the bacteroid doesn't have a mouth. It's more like it's slowly trying to absorb the jar through its cellular wall. The bacteroid is about eight inches in length, shaped like a jellybean, and covered in short purple fur. When it senses the team approaching, it turns to them and says "Meep! Meep!" In a way, it's kind of cute.

The team pulls the jar from the cheese. Up close they can see it has a Jackal-head stopper. *The team has acquired the trophy **Jackal Jar**.* The bacteroid hops around the team's feet, meeping. The team members reach down and give it a friendly pet and it responds with a low purr. But already, the stomach is disappearing. The giant pizza and acid sea begin to fade away. The pumping of the wall slows to a stop. The bacteroid lets out a long, low "Meeeeeeeeeeep." It seems to want to come with the team. *If the team would like to bring the bacteroid along, Check Arcanability Difficulty 2. If you succeed, the mojo of the staff allows the bacteroid to travel with the team. The team acquires the trophy **Bacteroides Thetaiotaomicron** (or *B. Theta* for short). *B. Theta* has a footnote symbol of ✱.*

Turn to **75**.

82

The team reaches back and snaps the sticky-hand towards the jar. It's just barely long enough as one finger just manages to stick onto the jar's side. Carefully, the team reels in the jar. Now they can see that the animal stopper isn't shaped like an animal at all, but rather sculpted into the shape of a man. *The team acquires the trophy **Human Jar**.* Also, it appears the sticky-hand picked up some other junk as it snapped through the void. *The team as acquired the trophy **Space Dust**.*

Jar in hand, the stars dim and fade, and the inky blackness of space is just the regular blackness of the Planetarium once again.

Turn to 75.

83

"Come refresh my father; betake yourself to him in your name of Qebehseuef. You have come that you may make coolness for him."

As the team tap the staff against the display there is a subtle shift to the dimensions of the hall. The ceiling seems to lower and walls, once plaster, now appear to be made from tightly fitted logs. The air becomes smokey and there is a crackling of fire.

"Ah! Welcome to the Salr. Come, sit with me. The women have brought drink for the sumbel tomorrow and no one will mind if we have a cup or two tonight." The team looks around the hall and sees a lone figure sitting at one of the long wooden tables. The team sits across from him, where several cups have been laid out. "I am Loptr," says the man. He is as large as a stag and has a beard like tangled brush. He is dressed in furs and tucked into the belt at his waist is a jar topped with an

animal head. ✱

"This is what you came for, is it?" Loptr says with a wink and gesture to the jar. "You may have it yet, but first let us drink. A contest, perhaps! We will drink until we can no longer stand. The first to fall shall give the other a prize. Me, this jar; you, one of those trinkets."

Loptr takes three cups and fills them from several barrels at his side. He sets them before the team, touching and naming them in turn. "Öl. Mjöö. Björr." ♦ He then places a fourth cup in front of himself.

"I shall have vin, as fits my station. Now take your drink and let us begin." ❖ ⊖

If the team chooses the öl, turn to 64.

If the team chooses the mjöö, turn to 95.

If the team chooses the björr, turn to 58.

✱ B. Theta squirms its way over to one of the cups and sniffs it. "Ah," says Loptr, moving the cup out of B. Theta's reach. "This, I think, is not for you, Little Eir." B. Theta mews disappointingly, then sensing the proceedings might not offer much in the way of excitement, curls up and appears to sleep.

♦ "Let me just Google that real quick," says Jordy. "Okay, looks like this is ancient Scandinavian for ale, mead, and beer respectively. The beer is probably small beer, a weak drink that was consumed instead of water. The ale is probably closer to the modern beer we're familiar with. Hope that helps."

If Jordy is currently the only member on the team, read on.

"Sorry, big guy" says Jordy. "I'm not physically present. There's no way for me to try your booze. Not that I would anyway, I don't drink." Loptr stares uncomprehendingly at the hovering drone. "You might as well just give me that jar," Jordy contintunes. "I mean, what's the harm?"

Loptr doesn't do anything for a moment. Then he slowly places the jar on the table, never taking his eyes from the drone. Jordy scoops it up with the claw. "Many thanks!" *The team has acquired the trophy **Ibis Jar**.* Loptr says nothing. A moment later, both he and the rest of the smoky room fade back into the exhibit hall. *Turn to 75.*

❖ Grayson floats to one of the cups. “I don’t know if I can participate, I’ve never really tried to eat or drink anything. You’d think I would have at some point.” He superimposes himself over one of the cups and, with a loud slurping noise, the liquid inside disappears. Grayson hiccups, spraying protoplasm all over the table. “Guess that answers that.”

Θ “Brad” confidently lifts the cup of öl and drinks it in a single gulp.

“Ha ha! I like you, boy,” says Loptr, who drains his cup likewise. The two settle into their drinking, matching each other draft for draft. As the night wears, on Loptr is clearly feeling the effects of the booze, but “Brad” remains as steady and silent as ever. Eventually, Loptr slides off his seat and onto the dirt floor.

“Y-you’re no man, but a monster. Ha, but when I am beaten, I am beaten. Here, take it and do well by it.” Loptr hands up the jar to the team. Up close, they can see that it has a stopper shaped like a falcon. *The team has acquired the trophy **Falcon Jar**.* They turn to thank Loptr but he has fallen fast asleep. And soon, the sound of his snores fades to silence as the Exhibit Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

84

Though the team pushes and pulls the pole, they aren’t able to grab the jar. Soon, the two sea creatures start to sink back under the waves. With one last desperate attempt, they thrust the pole into the water. When they pull it back, a jar is nestled in the pole’s hook.

Bringing it up, the team finds that it is capped with a sculpture of a baboon’s head. *The team has acquired the trophy **Baboon Jar**.*

“I’ve never seen its like before,” starts the fisherman, but already his voice is growing fainter and fainter as the rocking of the ship stops and the spray of the ocean dissipates as the Nature Diorama Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

85

Following the sounds of stomping and terrified screams, the team finds the Academy kids perched on top of a stuffed Giant Ground Sloth. The Ankylosaurus paces around the sloth’s feet, gazing up to the kids with its hollow eyes.

“Don’t worry!” one of the Academy members is telling the others--it sounds like it might be Zach, “the dinosaur will disappear in about ten minutes, then we can track down that mummy. It can’t leave until it’s got all of its parts, and we’ve got them hidden around the museum. It can pull these tricks all it wants, but we’ll get it eventually.”

The Academy team is tied up for the moment, now is the 'Normal Club's chance to find the mummy. Turn to 59.

86

If no team members have been captured, the 'Normal Club spends a few moments admiring the iron maiden and the thumbscrew displays before moving on with their search. Turn to 75. Otherwise, read on.

Approaching the new Medieval Torture exhibit, the team hears a pair of high-pitched voices. Sneaking through the displays, they find the missing portion of their team tied-up and guarded by

Daisy and Christy. ❖ The Academy girls are making snide remarks and insulting the captive’s hygiene. Now is the team’s chance to perform a daring rescue.

If the team has a pack of cherry bombs, turn to 60. Otherwise, the team can use the Was staff and

see what happens, or they can confront the girls directly.

If the team uses the Was Staff, Check Arcanability Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to **54**. Otherwise, turn to **73**.

If the team confront the girls, Check Intimidation Difficulty 3. If you succeed, turn to **97**. Otherwise, turn to **73**.

❖ Grayson has been stuffed in a soda bottle and seems quite content.

87

There's no more likely spot for a paranormal encounter than Buckcreek Cemetery. The team spends all night camped out amongst the graves, searching for ghosts and learning about local history. It's a downright Spoon River Anthology in here. Come daybreak, all they have for their troubles are some exquisite rubbings. *The team has earned the trophy **Exquisite Rubbings***. But a rubbing is not a win at Districts and never will be.

The End

88

Making their best guess, the team sends an item out into the void, pushing the team backwards. *The team have lost an item, remove one of your choice from your Roster sheet.*

The toss is a steady one and the team is able to keep their eyes on the jar as they float closer. They grab it easily once it comes within reach. Getting ahold of it, they can see that the animal stopper isn't shaped an animal at all, but rather sculpted into the shape of a man. *The team acquires the trophy **Human Jar***.

Jar in hand, the stars dim and fade, and the inky blackness of space is just the regular blackness of the Planetarium once again.

Turn to **75**.

89

There! Cresting a wave is pita chip that looks perfect. The team leaps to it and leaves the knackwurst to the bacteria. And not a moment too soon--the bacteria swarm over the sausage and within moments have dissolved it to nothing.

The team rides the pita chip over the gastric sea. After a while, they see a sandwich which will make for another good jumping point.

Turn to **81**.

90

*If you've already found a jar in this wing, there's no reason to search here any further. Return to **75**.*

The Historical Cultures exhibit is a series of halls showcasing what everyday life was like for various peoples around the globe. From clay bowls to wooden spoons to woven baskets, these displays are a venerable cornucopia of unending tedium (there's some cornucopias in them as well). The team

wanders the halls, searching desperately for something of interest. ❖ As the team is passing through a section dedicated to the ancient Scandinavians, the Was staff begins to vibrate slightly. They search the glass display cases and soon find a clay jar topped with a carved animal stopper that looks out of place amongst the collection of silver bowls and cups. The team brings the Was staff nearer to the jar and the vibration grows stronger. Tentatively, they tap the staff against the glass.

Check Arcanability Difficulty 2. If you succeed, turn to **83**. Otherwise, if this is your first attempt at this check, turn to **71**. If it is your second attempt, a Academy patrol rounds a corner. A team member of your choice volunteers to lure them away. In the process, this team member is captured by the Academy team. Mark that the member has been caught. While missing, their Aptitudes do not apply to any Difficulty Checks. Likewise, you no longer have access to the item they were carrying. If this was your last team member, immediately turn to **51**. Otherwise, the team member's sacrifice has given the rest of the 'Normal Club time to experiment with the Was staff until they get a result. Turn to **83**.

❖ “Ugh, this is awful!” says Grayson. “These exhibits are boring me to tears here. Literally.” *The team has acquired the trophy **Ghostly Tears**.*

91

“You are the great runner; come, that you may join up my father Osiris and not be far in this your name of Hapi, for you are the greatest of my children – so says Horus”

At first nothing seems to happen, but then the room begins to rock from side to side. The darkened dioramas fade from view as salty spray trickles against the team's faces and a cold wind tassels their hair.

“Arrr, there's a sight that's for once in a lifetime,” says a grizzled sailor standing at the ship's rail.

The team runs across the wooden planks to join him. * He lifts a lantern to illuminate a choppy sea, where a whale shark leaps in and out of the froth. It appears to be tangled in the tentacles of a giant squid. The two leviathans battle as the team and the fisherman look on. Their thrashing churns the waves and makes a thunderous roaring. Amidst the waves and foam, the team spies a small jar caught in a corner of the whale shark's mouth.

“We need that jar!”

“Yar!” replies the fisherman, “it'd be suicide to jump in the sea normally, let alone with those two great beasts crashing about.” A large tentacle slaps down on the water near the ship's hull, sending up a great spray of water. “But you're welcome to any of my tools, if they'll help.”

Looking about the deck the team notices several objects that might be useful: a fishing net, a long boat pole with hook on the end, and a barrel labeled CHUM.

*If the team grab the net, turn to **77**.*

*If they grab the boat pole, turn to **68**.*

*Or, if they use the CHUM barrel, turn to **45**.*

* The cold wind seems to disagree with B. Theta. It snuggles into team's arms for warmth. A spray of ocean water splashes over the ship's side and douses the bacteroid. “Meeeeeeeeep.” it mews miserably

92

The team drops the antacid tablets into the rolling acid. As soon as they hit the waves, they start releasing fizzing bubbles which spread throughout the sea. They may seem like too small a dose to affect these turbulent waters, but these are *Taco Stop* antacids. Within seconds, the waves calm to gentle ripples and the air is filled with a fresh lemon scent.

The team easily makes it's way over several foodstuffs to the pizza. Sitting in a glob of cheese is the jar, and chewing on the jar is a small bacteroid. Well... chewing isn't quite the right term, as the bacteroid doesn't have a mouth. It's more like it's slowly trying to absorb the jar through its cellular wall. The bacteroid is about eight inches in length, shaped like a jellybean, and covered in short purple fur. When it senses the team approaching, it turns to them and says “Meep! Meep!” In a way, it's kind of cute.

The team pulls the jar from the cheese. Up close, they can see it has a Jackal-head stopper. *The team*

has acquired the trophy **Jackal Jar**. The bacteroid hops around the team's feet, meeping. The team members reach down and give it a friendly pet and it responds with a low purr. But already the stomach is disappearing. The giant pizza and acid sea begin to fade away. The pumping of the wall slows to a stop. The bacteroid lets out a long, low "Meeeeeeeeeeep." It seems to want to come with the team. *If the team would like to bring the bacteroid along, Check Arcanability Difficulty 1. If you succeed, the mojo of the staff allows the bacteroid to travel with the team. The team acquires the trophy **Bacteroides Thetaiotaomicron** (or *B. Theta* for short). *B. Theta* has a footnote symbol of ✱.*

Turn to 75.

93

The Moon! Of course! Buckcreek Academy has discovered the fabled milk and honey mines of Mare Nectaris! That's the only possible thing their discovery could be. But how to get up there? Maybe a really long ladder? Or the team could jump hard on a trampoline? An all-night brainstorming session produces no tangible results. Buckcreek Academy's inevitable win at Districts is made all the more bitter by the realization that the moon idea was pretty dumb, when you really think about it.

The End

94

"You have come to Osiris; betake yourself beneath him and lift him up, do not be far from him, Osiris, in your name of Imsety."

The tapping of the Was staff echoes about the otherwise silent Planetarium. Looking around, the team notices a star on the dome overhead. Then ten. Then ten thousand. Great rings of ice and rock thousands of miles across swing overhead. Startled, the team look down and, instead of the Planetarium's floor, find the dusty brown and tan cloud systems of Saturn spread some miles below them. ♦

Perhaps it's due to the magic of the Was staff, perhaps it's all an illusion, but whatever the reason, the team finds they can breathe as easily as if they were sitting in Taco Stop enjoying some below-par burritos.

The majesty of the view captivates for a few minutes ✪ ✱, but then the team's thoughts turn to other concerns. Like, how they're going to get out of this situation. No matter how they struggle and swim, they can't seem to change their position. Searching around for anything that might help, they notice a small clay jar with an animal head stopper floating in an orbit of its own a few degrees below them. It's about eight feet away, and appears to be traveling at the same speed they are. The team needs to get that jar. ❖ *If the team has a stretchy sticky-hand, immediately turn to 82.*

If the team throws an item (if they have one), turn to 57.

If they throw a teammate (as long as there's at least two members currently on the team), turn to 65.

If they reach out with the Was staff, turn to 98.

♦ "Wow! WOW!" says Jordy as he pans the drone's webcam around. "This is unbelievable! Do you think we'll see some aliens? I bet we see some aliens!"

✪ "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!"

✱ "Meep! Meeep!" B. Theta appears to have no problem adjusting to a zero-G environment. It happily

somersaults about and even attempts a barrel roll or two.

❖ Grayson floats towards the Jar. “Ha ha! I’m a ghost! Science doesn’t apply to me.” He scoops up the jar and floats it back. Now they can see that the animal stopper isn’t an animal at all, but rather sculpted in the shape of a man. *The team acquires the trophy **Human Jar**.*

Jar in hand, the stars dim and fade, and the inky blackness of space is just the regular blackness of the Planetarium once again.

Turn to 75.

95

The team picks the cup of mjöö and shares it between them.

“Aha, fancy yourselves royalty, do you? Very well, so be it.” says Loptr, who begins drinking as well.

The mjöö is a sweet beverage that tastes of honey and cloves. It is also very strong. The cup is only filled twice before the team are slurring their words and having trouble sitting upright.

“For royals, you can’t hold your liquor very well,” laughs Loptr. “That is it then. Now come, let me see my prize.” *The team has lost the contest and must give an item to Loptr. Pick an item (if you are carrying any) and remove it from your Team Roster.*

“Still, I am impressed by your courage. Not many would dare to wager against I. A gift then.” With a wink, Loptr hands the jar to the team. Up close, they can see that it has a stopper shaped like an ibis. *The team has acquired the trophy **Ibis Jar**.* They turn to thank Loptr but already sound of his laughter is fading as the Exhibit Hall returns to normal.

Turn to 75.

96

The team knocks the Was staff against a display about the Big Bang and in an instant the room is plunged into pitch blackness.

“Turning out the lights isn’t going to do you any good,” calls Harvey from nearby. Knowing what’s coming, the team covers their eyes. Even through the palms of their hands, the light is blinding. An explosion brighter than all the suns and all the suns that ever will be launches a universe worth of dust into space.

Millions of years pass within seconds. The dust consolidates into clusters, which then compress and ignite, creating the first stars. The stars live their brief, millennia-long lives, and begin exploding in a brilliant fireworks display. The elements formed in those galactic furnaces spread throughout space, melding, spinning; forming new stars, galaxies, clusters, nebulae, planets, everything.

Some of those elements end up in a small planet orbiting a small sun. On that planet, some chemical bonds will figure out how to harness the energy of that sun to grow and diversify. Some years later, descendants of those chemicals will be trapped in a museum late at night. And those descendants will remove their hands from their eyes and blink away the last remaining effects of the most spectacular light show they’d ever witnessed.

As the after image of the universe fades away, the team finds that the Academy kids have collapsed to the ground, stunned by the vision. Looks like they’re going to be out of commission for a while. One of the Academy kids has dropped their butterfly net nearby. *The team acquires the trophy **Mummy Trap**. It’d make a good souvenir of this victory.*

Stepping over the prone bodies of Harvey and Winston, the 'Normal Club makes its way out of *Prehistoric Pilgrimage* and towards the Egyptian exhibit.

Turn to 52.

97

The team steps around the displays and quickly advances on the two girls.⌘

“Don’t even think about it,” the team says as the girls open their mouths to call for backup, “or you’ll get to try out these torture devices firsthand.”

Daisy and Christy stand by meekly as the 'Normal Club unties the rest of their team. *Any captured team members have been rescued. Their Aptitudes again count during Difficulty Checks and the team has access to their item, if they had one.*

Turn to 75.

⌘ “Well, if it isn’t the queen bees of Buttcrack Academy,” says Anna as she cracks her knuckles. “You two are in for a world of hurt.”

“That’s not very clever, you know. ‘Buttcrack Academy,’” says Christy.

“What are you talking about? I’ve been saving that one up for months. It’s solid gold.” Christy just rolls her eyes in response.

98

The team reaches for the jar with the Was staff. By holding it by the very tip they should be just able to reach the jar. Stretching out, they angle the staff towards the jar. Yes! It’ll reach, with inches to spare. But how to pull it back? Maybe if they twist the staff this way... And in trying to retrieve the jar they end up pushing it down towards the planet. The jar, now in a slightly different orbit, begins moving away from the team. Within minutes, it is out of sight. The only hope is to wait for it to come around the planet from the other side and hope it isn’t now out of reach.

An uneventful hour and twenty-nine minutes later the jar floats into view. This time, the team hold onto the head of the staff and try to grab the jar with the forked end. It’s close, and the team almost nudges the jar completely out of reach, but they manage to snag it between the forks. Carefully, they pull the jar to them. Now they can see that the animal stopper is sculpted into the shape of a hippo. *The team acquires the trophy **Hippo Jar**.*

Jar in hand, the stars dim and fade, and the inky blackness of space is just the regular blackness of the Planetarium once again.

Turn to 75.

99

Whoosh! The butterfly net comes down over the mummy’s head, pinning its arms to its side. It just stands there for a moment before its shoulders slump and it lets out a long, dusty sigh. It slowly turns around and gives the team a betrayed, hurt look. It doesn’t say anything as the team frogmarch it out of the museum and back to West C. High.

The next morning Mr. Chadwick is delighted to find a real mummy tied up in the 'Normal Club meeting room.

“Fantastic job, team!” says Mr. Chadwick (today he is wearing a tie with a picture of Einstein sticking out his tongue on it), “You’ve surpassed my expectations. With this mummy, there’s no way we won’t win Districts. In fact, I bet this little fella takes us all the way to Nationals!”

And indeed it does. The mummy is called the most significant paranormal find of the decade. The West C. High Competitive Paranormal Investigation Club even makes the cover of *Cryptids Quarterly* (“Mummies in Your High School? It’s More Likely Than You Think!”). The team goes on to have the rich and rewarding careers of teenage celebrities. Xander spends a few years as the host of a ghost hunting TV show where he jumps at shadows and creepy noises. Grayson becomes a star on a much more successful show where he torments hapless ghost hunters. Anna releases a couple of singles and gets a little radio play but finds her true calling in academics and eventually gets her masters in microbiology. Jordy goes down the rabbit hole, claiming the existence of the mummy proves the existence of aliens. He eventually ends up hosting a late night talk show where crackpots discuss the

latest conspiracy theories. “Brad” goes missing during a visit to the Himalayas and, tragically, is never seen again. Jim Morrison goes on to live a life of comfort filled with all the goats he can eat.*

Despite the 'Normal Club's success, the mummy never speaks to them again. It does, however, write a scathing tell-all which, once it's translated from hieroglyphics, paints the team as conniving back-stabbers. It spends fifty weeks on the New York Times Bestsellers List. But despite its popularity no one *really* believes that the 'Normal Club would be so heartless as to deny a lost mummy its chance to return home.

They're not monsters, after all.

The End

* B. Theta becomes a marketing superstar. Its likeness adorns T-shirts, notebook covers, and plush dolls. The B. Theta brand eventually becomes so popular that a chain of stores devoted to selling only B. Theta products invades the nation's malls like an infection of some sort.

Thank you for playing 'Normal Club. Make sure you check out the Additional Trophies afterward to see if you earned any extra achievements.

100

There's a tense moment of expectation and...

The team is blinded by a blistering bright light. As their eyes adjust to the merciless desert sun, they find that they are in a plaza with towering golden pyramids on all sides. Hundreds of mummies of all shapes and sizes are bustling about. They run about on urgent undead business, or call out greetings to longtime friends. Dusty, ancient voices rise from market stands proclaiming sales on bandage-wrapped pineapples and durians. Royal progressions of super-mummies make their way through the throngs.

There's a shout of joy from the team's mummy, who runs forward to embrace a taller, more muscular mummy, and then a squat toddler-sized one at its side. For the first time the team notices how their mummy kind of curves in places and has a soft, lace-like quality to her wrappings.

The mummy turns back from her husband and child. She hugs each member of the team and plants a kiss of their cheeks with her dry, flakey lips. Then with one last wave, she departs with her family into the crowd. *The team have acquired the trophy **Mummy Slobber**.*

The scene fades and the team finds themselves back in the museum. The mummy, Was staff, and chest of jars are gone. A heavy silence hangs over exhibit. With nothing left to do, and nothing to show for their troubles, the team departs into the early-morning.

Life carries on. The 'Normal Club doesn't place at Districts (their vampire skeleton loses to Buckcreek Academy's entry: a genuine mummy-catching net, once used to hunt an actual mummy!), but there's always next year. And who knows, maybe this time the team will find a Frankenstein!

The End

Thank you for playing 'Normal Club. Make sure you check out the Additional Trophies afterward to see if you earned any extra achievements.

Additional Trophies

After finishing the game, check and see if you earned any of these trophies for special achievements.

The Lizard King - Included Jim Morrison on your team despite his shortcomings.

Regular Joes - Formed a team of Xander, Anna, and Jordy.

Cryptids 4 Ever - Formed a team of Grayson, "Brad," and Jim Morrison.

They Stick Out a Little - Formed a team with no humanoids: Jordy, Grayson, and Jim Morrison.

The Mundanes - Formed a team with zero Arcanability: Xander, Anna, and Jim Morrison.

Speed Runner - Went to the museum before visiting all six locations around town.

Reductive Reasoner - Found all the red herrings (mini-golf receipt, the lighthouse, the carnival, "Bloody Boudoirs", a golfball, west side of town), made it to the museum anyway.

Actually It Was Bitter and Kind of Stale - Didn't solve the Picross puzzle, claimed the chocolate anyway.

Good Waffles - Didn't lose any team members to the Academy patrols.

The Worst Graverobber - Found all four decoy canopic jars (Hippo, Ibis, Crocodile, and Ram).

Lone Hero - Finished the game with only one team member left.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Adam Perry, Adam Mowery, Colin Bridges, Andy Keener, Jonathon Howard, Muir Freeland, Shayne Valencia, and Christian Lowery for playtesting the game and ensuring its quality.

Special thanks to Christopher Boies for going above and beyond while proofreading, and for help smoothing out the game's roughest spots.

Special thanks to John Davis for assistance with designing a fair and fun Picross puzzle.

'Normal Club would not be what it is without Tyler Koltak. He provided support during late nights of writing, polished the text to a sheen, and fixed far more grammatical errors than I would ever like to admit.

Lastly, thank you to my loving wife for putting up with months of choice structure and probability talk, and for encouraging me to write in the first place. This game would not exist if not for her.