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Native American Spirits Angered at La Bonita Espiritu Flores

By Jackson Green

Investigators from *12 to Midnight* spent the first three days of Spring Break 2003 researching the possible haunting of the old Spanish Mission in south Texas. Not even we were prepared for what we* found.

History of La Bonita

La Bonita dates back to the 1730's, as Spanish Friars and Missionaries came to Texas in the hopes of converting the Native Americans to Christianity. La Bonita was built to serve the Aranama and the Tonkawa Indians, but many tribes came into the Mission at different times in its history, including Comanche, Apaches, Karankawa and Cajoles. Between the 1740's and 1840's, many fights and sieges were staged at La Bonita. The Apaches often raided the Missions' herds of cattle and horses, and small skirmishes took place between the various tribes.

In the 1770's, the Spanish authorities built Fort Flores approximately one mile from the Mission, and a small force of about 30 soldiers protected the area. In the late 1790's, smallpox ravaged the native tribes and almost led to an end of the Mission, but the leadership of Father



Painting of present-day La Bonita, as a state park and museum.

Joseph Escalante and Commander Luis Ramirez protected the natives who remained and nursed them back to health.

After the Texas revolution, the Mission was abandoned and fell to ruin, only to be rebuilt as a state park in the 1930's and 1940's as part of the Works Projects Administration. The Mission of La Bonita and Fort Flores are now part of the Texas State Park system, and contain small museums showcasing artifacts from the area. See sidebar, *19th Century La Bonita* for more Mission history.

Saturday

Setting up the Hunt!

A site with such history held great promise for our first ghost-hunt. Upon arrival at La Bonita, we met with the Park Ranger, Evan Harris. He told us very few came here to camp, and that we would pretty much be left alone. We chose a campsite near the North woods and within sight of the Mission. I immediately set up our cameras, one facing the woods the other facing the Mission, and took some quick

*Participants also included are Lance Carson, Brandi Carson, and Melissa Collins.

pictures of the area. Later that evening the rest of our party arrived and we began our hunt with pictures and attempted to catch some Electronic Voice Phenomna (EVPs) with our recording equipment. The first night was uneventful, but we did get a picture of one Atomospheric Ball of Energy (ABE) near our campsite.

Sunday

Fort Flores

After waking early the next day, I set out on my daily run. There is a great hiking trail at the park and I enjoyed the exercise. On the way back to camp, I met a Hispanic male named Joseph. He only spoke Spanish and said that he was here visiting

his family. He accompanied me back to camp and I told him about our mission to hunt ghosts and the paranormal. Joseph was very interested in what we were doing, but did say that we should proceed carefully as there “was a lot of violence here.” He said he would visit with us later and left to be with his family. We then set out to learn more about the area and began by visiting Fort Flores.

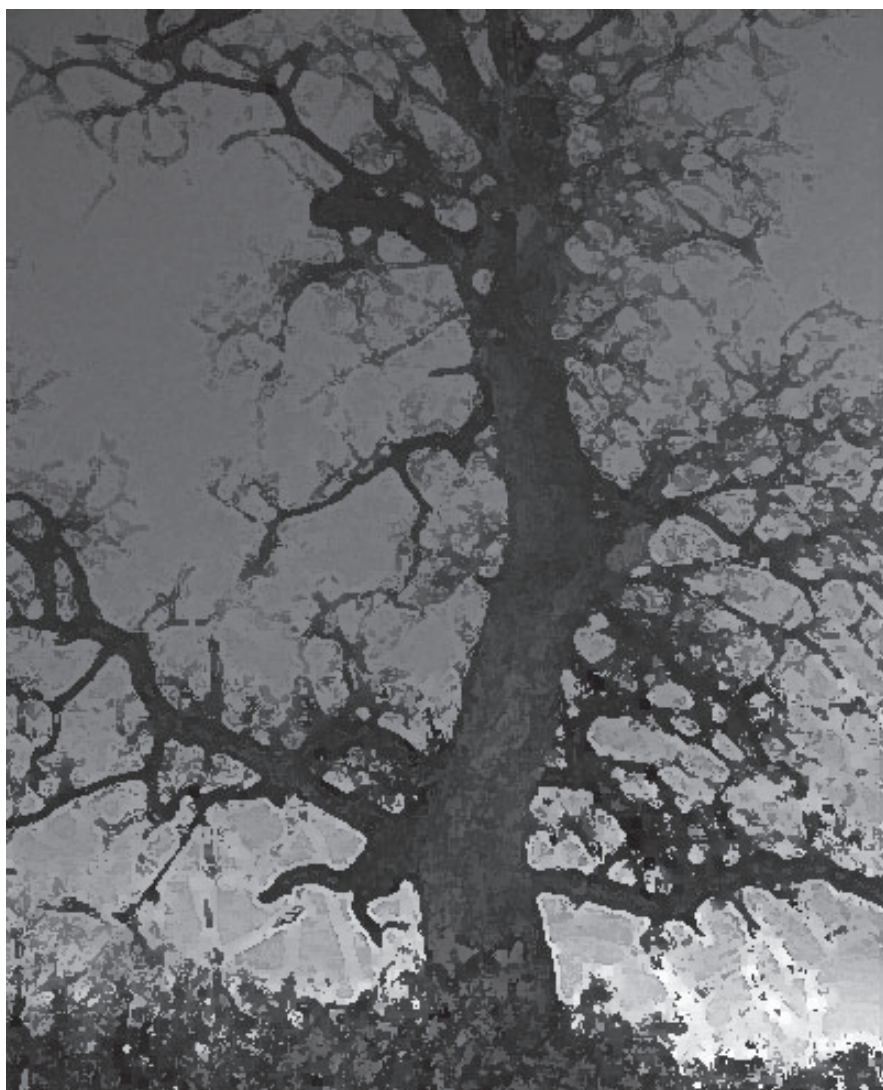
Fort Flores is now a large museum, and we were honored to be given the grand tour by local historian Mark Vintage. He told us of several ghostly encounters that have been reported, but one that caught our interest regarded a local lady who saw a man drowning in the Saba

River, approximately 2 miles east of the Fort. Her name was Ethel Garson, and she reported seeing a man drowning in the river and called for help. The river was dredged for a week, but no body was ever found. When giving information for the police report, she accurately described the clothing a Texan would have worn during the Texan Revolution. Some believe she had seen the ghost of a Texan who had drowned trying to escape the Mexican massacre outside of Fort Flores in the 1830’s. We then walked the fields where the massacre took place and took many photographs. I decided to come back that night and further the investigation.

Earl’s Treasures

We visited a local antique shop named Earl’s Treasures. I was surprised to discover several Native American artifacts for sale, including a Cayman, which is a hollowed, flute-like instrument played during Metote ceremonies. Metotes were special dances that were generally performed for celebration. However, when the cayman was used the dance became one of sorrow or anger. Spanish missionaries wrote that these Metotes were “dreadful” and “scary.” The cayman is very disharmonious, and the natives would dance around a central pole and “gyrate wildly”, while screaming as if the “devil was in them.”

In extreme cases, victims would be tied to the pole and during the Metote, the natives would slowly cut pieces from the victim, cook and eat his/her flesh, and celebrate as the victim slowly died. The cayman was rare indeed, and I thought it was a steal at \$200. I bought it hoping that by playing it, we might interest some



lingering spirits. I asked the woman (Mrs. Barbara Vijcik) working in the shop about the artifacts and she told me that they were local artifacts bought by her husband from a collector who comes in from time to time.

Vincent Garstock

We next visited with long-time local resident Vincent Garstock, husband to Ethel—the woman who had made the report of the drowning man. Vincent told us about Ethel's sighting and how the local law-enforcement agencies were upset with her, accusing her of making up the story. However, Vincent insisted that if his wife said she saw it, then "she damn well saw it!"

Vincent told us that as a child in the 1930's and early 1940's, they often heard "Indian music and screams from the woods outside of the Mission, but no one ever found the source of that racket." He also said that, "the ghost sounds ended when the reconstruction of the mission was completed."

Back at Camp

Upon returning to camp, we were surprised to find that Joseph had returned. I spent the evening talking to him about ghost hunting and the history of the area. He appeared very surprised when I showed him the cayman, and warned me that it was an "instrument of evil" and to be careful with its use. I asked him about his beliefs in the supernatural and he said that his culture "believes in many things, such as the evil eye and spirits." He left shortly thereafter.

Approximately fifteen minutes later, Ranger Harris came by and asked how the "Spook hunting" was going. I told him about what we had learned, but did not mention the cayman, as I didn't want to be in trouble

for owning an artifact that may have been illegally obtained on state property. He reiterated that he had never seen anything extraordinary here and did not believe in ghosts.

Return to Fort Flores

Late that night, we returned to the killing field outside of Fort Flores. We parked next to the river and hiked from the forest into the field. We took many photos and were very pleased with the number of ABEs we saw. They seemed to be everywhere. I spent several hours with the recording equipment trying to register some EVPs. We soon returned to our camp, very excited about what we had found and documented. I took several pictures of the Mission and found the top of it covered with an Ectoplasmic Mist. We decided that Monday we would concentrate our efforts here.

Monday

Startling Realizations

Monday morning we toured the Mission itself and met a retired priest, Father Joseph Escalante. He arrived recently from Mexico City and had decided to settle here in Flores, Texas. He wrote several books on the history of La Bonita and was an excellent guide through the Mission. When asked if he had ever seen anything out of the ordinary, he reluctantly told us that at night, when he was locking up, he often felt as "if someone were watching me."

Father Escalante went on to say that it was ironic he retired here as the caretaker of the Mission, as one of the early priests of the Mission had also been named Father Joseph Escalante. Upon returning to camp, we began discussing everything that we had found, and Lance Carson

19th Century La Bonita

In the early 1800's, several groups of North American Freebooters invaded Texas hoping to take Texas from Spain and make it part of the United States. Many Americans believed that Texas was part of the Louisiana Purchase, and as such belonged to the United States. In 1809, the Grey-McKenzeny expedition invaded Texas and took control of Fort Flores, while the Spanish soldiers retreated to San Antonio for reinforcements.

The Spanish counter-attacked and laid siege to the fort using the Mission as their base of operations. The end of the three-week siege left the Grey-McKenzeny expedition defeated, and only a few men managed to return to New Orleans.

During the Mexican revolution against Spain, Fort Flores and La Bonita remained loyal to the Spanish Imperial government, and was the site of a small battle between the Royalists and the Revolutionaries from San Antonio.

Finally, during the Texas Revolution against Mexico, a group of 49 Texans took control of Fort Flores and used its nine-pounder artillery gun to hold off a Mexican force of 200 soldiers. Captain James Shell finally surrendered the garrison and he and his men were marched onto a field and shot. Only three Texans escaped to tell of the massacre.



Atmospheric Balls of Energy (ABEs), caught on film!

came to the realization that the Hispanic “Joseph” that had been in our camp visiting us was a ghost! He made this observation based on the following:

1) I had met Joseph on the trail jogging, but he was dressed as I had been dressed the day before, in a flannel shirt and blue jeans.

2) Joseph spoke very proper Spanish and used the “usted” form in all of our discussions. He had said that he was from “here” and had returned to visit “family.” Had he been born in Texas, it is logical to assume that he could have spoken some English. He never did.

3) The discussion we had with Father Joseph Escalante of the Mission, suggested that it was odd that he served here like the previous Padre of the same name in the late 1700’s.

4) After checking my history book on La Bonita, we discovered that the original father Joseph was known to be “charitable, affectionate, gentle, cheerful and nice to the Indians,” which he believed were his family. One story told of Father Joseph saving an accused Native American

from being hung for stealing a horse from a Spanish soldier.

5. Finally, we consulted the EVP recordings we had made the first morning I had spoken with Joseph. His voice did not appear on the tape, but ours did!

Excitedly, we prepared for the night to come. This was by far our biggest breakthrough and we suspected something big was about to happen!

Monday Night

The Metote Ceremony

Melissa and Brandi were understandably “freaked out” and left to await us in a hotel in a nearby city. Only Lance and I remained to witness the evening’s events. As night fell, we checked all our equipment and immediately found cold spots and photographed many ABEs and Ectoplasmic Mist around our camp and the Mission. I recorded EVPs while Lance filmed with the video camera.

Around midnight, I blew some notes on the cayman, in the hope that something would happen. Seconds after I quit playing, we heard drums,

flutes, caymans along with wild screaming and yelling coming from the woods. We rushed towards the sounds, hoping that we could find the source of the noise and capture it on video. We ran for several minutes in the thick undergrowth of the forest, the Metote ceremony growing louder as we approached.

Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped. We heard nothing as we entered a small circular clearing deep in the woods. We counted approximately 12 to 15 mounds in the area and one of the mounds had freshly turned dirt. In the center of the circle stood a large pole. We approached the pole and discovered what we appeared to be fresh blood dripping down its side. We deduced that the spirits were very angry and guessed that someone must have been digging for artifacts in the burial mounds. I promptly approached the freshly turned earth, dug a quick hole and buried the cayman. We apologized to the spirits and quickly returned to our camp. This had been a very scary experience and we decided to pack up that night and join our companions at the hotel.

Lance and I began to debate about what to do regarding the stolen artifacts, and we both agreed that the Park Ranger should be notified. Lance found Ranger Harris’s home phone number, but as soon as he tried to call, the phone went dead. We left the campground and headed out onto the highway.

At this point, Lance and I both witnessed an Atmospheric Apparition in the woods. He was definitely a Native American, wearing little clothes, his body painted in bright red and black circles. He looked very angry, but when we stopped the truck, the apparition disappeared. We felt the spirits were angry and had con-

tacted us to do something about the stolen artifacts.

Lance again tried contacting Ranger Harris at his home, and this time the phone worked. Ranger Harris was very understanding and asked us to meet him at his home.

We met with Ranger Harris and told him what occurred. He asked to see our evidence. Unfortunately, when we showed the videotape, none of the Metote ceremony could be heard and even the blood that we had seen on the pole was not visible on the video. He asked if he could see the cayman, but I told him we no longer had it as we had buried it in the mound. He became agitated with us and told us that we could get in a lot of trouble for making a “false report.” We left Harris’ home, and drove to the hotel. Lance was very upset that we had little evidence of what had occurred, but agreed with me that Ranger Harris was the likeliest suspect for the thefts since he knew the park well enough to find the burial mounds deep in the woods. I decided that I would return to Flores, Texas in the morning and would investigate Earl’s Treasures for evidence of the theft.

Tuesday Morning **Returning to Earl’s Treasures**

Upon returning to Earl’s treasures, I was surprised to find all the artifacts were no longer on display. I asked the gentleman behind the counter about the Native American artifacts and he stated, “We have never sold Native American artifacts here!” Needless to say, I was very angry and luckily Lance pulled me from the store.

Outside, we met Ranger Harris, who warned us that we had better

“leave Flores, and not return.” We took him at his word and got back in the truck to leave. On our way past the Mission, we had one last ghostly encounter. In the woods, approximately in the same location we had seen the warrior the night before, we spotted Joseph. He was dressed in classic Priestly robes and he smiled at us. He turned and vanished into the woods.

We ran to where we had seen him and called to him, but to no avail. Lance found a golden cross necklace on the ground, and we took it with us. We later discovered that it dated back to the 18th century. We left Flores, thinking we had failed in aiding the spirits, but had done all we could.

The Rest of the Story

We spent the rest of Spring Break at Padre Island, trying to put some distance between us and the haunting we still felt. The following Sunday,

on our way back to Pinebox, Texas, we heard on the radio that Ranger Harris had been found dead at La Bonita State Park. Apparently, he did not heed our warnings about the spirits there. At home, we were interviewed by police regarding the murder, and for a while we may have been the prime suspects. However, our stories regarding our activities at Padre Island checked out and they determined we could not have been the killer. Our story did lead to the arrest of Earl and Barbara Vijcek of Earl’s Treasures. They were found to be in possession of illegally attained Native American artifacts from a State Park. This story has gotten a lot of publicity for *12 to Midnight*, and we would like to thank “Joseph” and the Native American spirits. We hope they can rest now.

Now Available **Last Rites of the Black Guard**

Last Rites of the Black Guard is a modern-day ghost-hunting adventure using the d20 System. Your PCs find themselves the only ones willing to help a single mother deal with the terrifying hauntings tormenting her family. But before you can put them to an end, you’ll have to investigate their origins by spending an evening in the house yourselves. If you dare.



Available in the Modern d20 section at www.rpgnow.com.

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La Bonita Character Info

Run your own *La Bonita* adventure using the plot hook in these pages and the character stats below. For even more free creature and NPC stats (including the ABEs mentioned in the adventure), visit our website at www.12tomidnight.com. Also be sure to visit our forums and check out the "plot hooks" threads.

Evan Harris, Texas Park Ranger

Local Texas State Park Ranger at La Bonita, Texas. He has been secretly digging up native artifacts to sell to make some extra money. He generally uses his friend's antique store to fence the items. Unbeknownst to him, this has angered the native spirits and has put him and everyone in the park to be in danger. He will go to any means necessary to keep his stealing artifacts secret, as it would mean his job, and possible prison time if he was caught.

Statistics: Strong 2; CR 2; Medium-size human; HD2d8+2; hp 16; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 14, touch 12, flat footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 class); BAB +2; Grap +2, Atk +4 melee, (1d3+3 nonlethal, unarmed strike), or +4 melee (1d4+3 tonfa), or +4 ranged (2d6, Beretta 92F); FS 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AI self; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Occupation: Law Enforcement (Class Skills: Drive, Gather Information)

Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animal +3, Jump +3, Knowledge Law +3, Knowledge Nature +3, Knowledge Local History/Lore +3, Read/Write Spanish, Speak Spanish, Repair +2, Swim +2, Drive +3, Gather Information +2.

Feats: Simple Weapons, Power Attack, Personal Firearms, Point Blank Shot

Talent: Melee Smash

Possessions: Beretta 92F (9mm Autoloader), 50 rounds of 9mm ammunition, 12 Gauge Shotgun, 10 12-gauge rounds, tonfa, various gear and personal possessions.

Ghost of Padre Joseph Escalante

Otherworldly spirit that can take physical form and interact with modern environment.

He has come back to guide the PCs in discovering what has made the native spirits angry and will do his best to protect them from harm. However, he cannot take any overt actions against Ranger Harris, and must hope the PCs can discover what is happening and put an end to it. He may only speak Spanish and he always uses it in the Usted form. He may appear and dress anyway he wishes and may even take the form of another.

Revenant Ghost of Native American Warrior

The Revenant ghost is a spirit consumed with anger and when manifested, can cause harm to the physical world. It's has a guiding reason to exist, which may be to harm the world of the living, or to correct a wrong that was done, such as avenging a murder, robbery or rape. Revenants may appear as they did in life, but many times they take on a darker, scary one, their anger manifesting itself as pustules and fetid skin lesions. They are often mistaken for zombies by Paranormal Investigators.

Traits:

Undead-Receives all the basic traits of an undead creature as listed on page 223 of Modern d20. (Darkvision, Immunities, Healing, and Special.

Constitution Reduction (Su)- On a successful hit, the Revenant causes 1d4 temporary Constitution reduction, unless a successful Fortitude save (DC 14 is made). If a person is killed by this attack, the person will rise as a ghost and be bound to this world as punishment forever.

Damage Reduction (Su)- Ghost may only be struck by a blessed item, magical item, or spell. -/+1.

Turn Resistance (Ex)-This spirit is so single-minded in it's mission, that it is very difficult to turn. +2 Bonus to HD total.

Incorporeal (Su)- Spirit may pass through solid objects.

Limited- Revenants may only manifest once per day for 1 round/every year the spirit has lingered on the earth. (The Native American spirit may only linger for 223 rounds, or a little over 20 minutes).

Revenant: CR2 ; Medium sized ghost; HD 1d12; HP 6; MAS -; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 12, touch 10, Flat-Footed 10, (+2 Dex); BAB +1; Grap -, Atk +1 (1d4 Constitution); FS 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Darkvision, Immunities, Constitution Reduction, Turn Resistance, Incorporeal; SV Fort -, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con -, Int 2, Wis 2, Cha 2.

Skills: None.

Feats: Simple Weapons.

Advancement: None.

Chupacabra

The Chupacabra is a savage aberration and stealthy carnivore. It has the face of a wolf with gray or scaly facial skin, coarse body hair that provides a chameleon-like natural coloring to the creature, and a row of quills runs down the length of the beast's back. The creature has two short forearms that end in three-fingered claws, bat-like wings, and powerful kangaroo-like legs. Two sharp fangs extend several inches from the creature's snout and their eyes are generally reported to be black, orange or red.

These twisted creatures' range throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America as well as the southern United States. They generally prey on small fowl and animals, such as chicken, geese, ducks, goats, dogs and cats. The Greater Chupacabras have been known to attack cattle and occasionally human beings. The Chupacabras are masterful predators and are very difficult to track, hunt, or kill. Typically they attack at night and leave the bodies of their prey ravaged, and bloodless. Investigators claim that the creature uses a hissing noise and gives off a natural musk that lulls the prey into a sleeplike state. Then it attacks the victim with two straw-like fangs, which allow the beast to suck the blood from its prey.

Many South Americans blame US scientists working for NASA and an undisclosed US Agency for creating these aberrations and letting them loose on an unsuspecting, and unbelieving world. Many have reported that American soldiers have come to claim any carcass that has been harvested by hunters. These are secreted away to hidden bases deep in the Amazon Jungle. Officially, the US government disavows any knowledge of these creatures.

Species Traits

Darkvision (Ex): Can see in total darkness out to 60 feet. **Musk (Ex):** The creature may exude a powerful musk or scent three times a day that forces every creature within a 20 feet radius to pass a fortitude save against DC 12. When this save is failed the victim is paralyzed for three rounds.

Chameleon Skin (Ex): The chupacabra's skin can change color and texture to adapt to its surroundings. This provides a natural bonus of +5 to the creature's hide skill.

Vampiric Bite (Su): The chupacabra's fangs allow the creature to bite and suck the blood from its victims. This is done at 1d4 points of Constitution per round. If the victim loses more than half its Constitution, the victim must pass a Fortitude save DC 12, or lose consciousness, unless a transfusion of blood takes place in the next ten minutes of game time. Once the victim loses all its Constitution points death occurs. The Chupacabra gains 1 temporary hit point for each point of Constitution it devours, and the hit points last for one twenty-four hour period. The temporary bonus is limited to a maximum of 10 points above its normal hit point level. Chupacabra's may heal damage through their vampiric bite. Damage healed in this way is permanent and without limit.

Lesser Chupacabras

CR 2 ; Small aberration; HD 2d8; hp 10; MAS 10; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (Poor); Jump 20 ft; Defense 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +2 natural); BAB +1; Grap -5; Atk +0 melee (1d4-2, claws (2), or Atk +1 (1d6-2 bite), or Atk +0 (1d6-2 kick)); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ darkvision, musk, chameleon skin, and vampiric bite; AL none; SV Fort +0, Will +2, Ref +3; Str 7, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: Hide +10 (Includes +5 Species bonus), Move Silently +5, Listen +4, Spot +4

Feats: Weapon Finesse (Bite)

Advancement: 2-3 HD (Small), 4 HD Greater Chupacabras.

Greater Chupacabras

CR 4; Medium aberration; HD 4d8; hp 20; MAS 10; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., Fly 50 ft. (Poor); Jump 30 ft; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +3; Grap -3; Atk +2 melee (1d4, claws (2), or Atk +3 (1d6 bite), or Atk +2 (1d6 kick)); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ darkvision, musk, chameleon skin, and vampiric bite; AL none; SV Fort +0, Will +4, Ref +3; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: Hide +15 (Includes +5 Species bonus), Move Silently +10, Listen +8, Spot +8

Feats: Weapon Finesse (Bite)

Plot Hooks

Title: Chupacabras Investigations

Player Levels: Low to Intermediate

Plot Hooks: *Setup A:* The PCs have been called upon to investigate a chupacabra attack in a Mexican Village in the Yucatan. For the last several weeks, chickens and goats have been found killed and lacking any blood. Superstitious villagers are making fetishes to ward off the "Evil Demon". The pcs meet with a local Policeman and investigate the remains. That night, an old woman is attacked outside her home and is killed. The attack is witnessed by several villagers, who describe a awful demon like being. Eventually the PCs track or set up the Chupacabra and have to a. kill it b. capture it c. track it to it's lair. If successful, the PCs meet with Agents of the US government, who will come and attempt to take the carcass or the animal. Force may be used. Perhaps they are knocked out and all their evidence is stolen.

Setup B: Camping in the Big Thicket of East Texas, the PCs are stalked by the Chupacabras in the middle of the night. Could be similar to Blair Witch for effect.

Setup C: A girl is missing from her village. The PCs agree to track her and rescue her. She is lost in the woods and is currently being tracked by a Chupacabras. Can the PCs rescue her before it's too late?

Designation of Product Identity:

The '12 to Midnight' company name and logos and in-game versions of the same, the Journal of American Paranormal Research name, all artwork, trade dress, and graphic design elements, the following characters: Jackson Green, Lance Carson, Brandi Carson and Melissa Collins.

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