

# DIGGING DEEP

## A scenario for GURPS: Jazz Age Mythos

Suitable for starting characters



## OVERVIEW

*Digging Deep* is a 'meshing' scenario, intended and designed to introduce a new group of players to the setting and system, and to enable the players to establish their characters' relationships both with the other player characters and with some important non-player characters. The general idea behind 'meshing' is given in the accompanying text box.

The scenario is intended to occur one Saturday in early March, and is designed to immediately precede the scenario *Consumption*, available as a pdf in the pack 'Islands of Ignorance'. A lead into *Consumption* is given at the end of this scenario. The default scenario date is Saturday 06 March 1926.

### Meshing

'Meshing' is the process of immersing both players and characters in the campaign setting. It allows players to establish and strengthen their characters' social ties.

Each player should establish a background connection from his character to at least two other player characters. These must be to characters run by different players.

The connection ought to be friendly, or neutral in tone at worst, as the intention is that the first character might think of contacting or helping the others.

The scenario begins with the Investigators being invited to the memorial gathering of an old friend or mentor, Colonel Henry Houghton. At the gathering, the Investigators have opportunities to make social contacts and find out about themselves and each other. Deep background decisions are encouraged as they are drawn into some discrete investigation into a possible Houghton family scandal.

### KEEPER'S INTRODUCTION

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The decorated veteran and hero of the Civil War and Spanish American War, Colonel Henry Houghton, died seven days ago on Saturday 27 February, aged 81, losing his battle against the pancreatic cancer that he had been fighting for the last year and a half.

Born in 1844, Colonel Houghton was a long-serving Army veteran who married relatively late in life in 1878, aged 34. His younger wife, Loretta, died in a yachting accident in 1887 aged 37. Tragedy followed tragedy and both of Henry and Loretta's children died childless; Abigail of typhoid in December 1888, and Albert in a flying accident in June 1902. Henry's indomitable spirit was not broken but it had taken a heavy blow and he sought solace in spiritualism and the occult. Admitted to Arkham's Whitechapel Nursing Home [A808] in April 1922, Colonel Henry Houghton was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer on September 1924 and quickly degenerated into a hollow shell of his former self. See Colonel Houghton's obituary notice entry, reproduced as *Digging Deep* handout #01.

Col. Houghton's funeral was, as he had specified in his will, a private affair held at the Arlington Military Cemetery, Virginia. At his memorial party, on the other hand, Colonel Houghton specified that as many as possible of his former friends and associates should attend and enjoy the largesse he has provided for the event. Consequently, telegrams were sent out on Monday 01 March inviting those Henry had named, or to those who were still alive, at least.

#### Obituary entry for Colonel Henry Houghton, 01 March 1926. See *Digging Deep* handout #01.

HOUGHTON -- Colonel Henry, 81 years of age. Lost his battle against cancer at Whitechapel Nursing Home on Saturday 27 Feb. at 2:30 A.M.. Colonel Houghton was a veteran of the Civil War where he reached the rank of Captain in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. He was promoted to Major in 1882 and served as Lt. Colonel in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment in the Spanish-American War, where he took part the 1898 Siege of Santiago. Latterly, Colonel Houghton served as a magistrate in Arkham County. Colonel Houghton was a widower, his wife having drowned in a yachting accident in 1887. His daughter, Abigail, died of typhoid fever in 1888, and his son, Albert, was sadly killed in 1902 following an accident in an experimental aircraft of his own design. Colonel Houghton is succeeded by his younger brother, Edward, and by his grand-niece, Rebecca. Private interment at Arlington Cemetery, Virginia.

Unbeknown to anyone, however, one Charles Wool, a man claiming to be the illegitimate son of Henry Houghton, has secured entry to the memorial party and is threatening blackmail. It is down to the Investigators to sort out the problem and either try to clear the name of their former friend or mentor or prove Mr. Wool's claim to be true. Note that the truth behind the claim is not given in this scenario, rather it is intended that the meshing session will create a more detailed back-story for Henry Houghton and the strength of Charles Wool's claim will emerge as a result of the players creating and contributing anecdotes.

The NPCs Rebecca Houghton and Edward Houghton will both reappear in the scenario *Regiment of Dread* (in 'Tales of the Miskatonic Valley'). It is recommended that the GM read that scenario before running this one. Both Rebecca and Edward are represented by NPC Cards (*GURPS: Mythos – Important NPCs*).

### INVESTIGATOR INVOLVEMENT

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Each investigator should establish a link with Colonel Houghton which will result in them being invited to the memorial gathering. Some suggestions are given below for how characters with particular backgrounds might have had contact with Houghton. Ideally, these links should be worked out before the session so that the GM has an opportunity to produce personalized Western Union telegrams.

**Military** – Colonel Houghton was a lifelong military figure who always had time for the men around him. He retired from the regular Army in 1910 and served as depot commander for B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Massachusetts 23<sup>rd</sup> Volunteers (National Guard) until 1920.

**Occultists** – Following the death of his son in 1902, Houghton frequently turned to spiritualism.

**Journalism** – Colonel Houghton was a popular local hero with much to say about the progress of the Great War. Older journalists may even have accompanied him in Cuba as attached reporters.

**Historians, Writers and Artists** – Houghton was a keen collector of local art, and was also happy to act as a consultant for writers covering military matters.

**Medical** – Houghton had contact with the medical profession both for his personal medical issues and in relation to his family losses.

**Law enforcement and Pls** – As a Colonel in the State National Guard, Houghton was frequently involved in tackling civil disorder, especially the 1919 industrial disputes. As magistrate, he dealt with many minor criminal cases from 1910.

**Dilettantes and entertainers** – The Houghtons were one of Arkham's prominent families and Colonel Houghton was both a patron of the arts and central figure in society.

**Explorers, sportsmen, teachers, academics and scientists** – As befitted his social position, Houghton was a benefactor and patron of various projects, and he took a keen and informed interest in their progress.

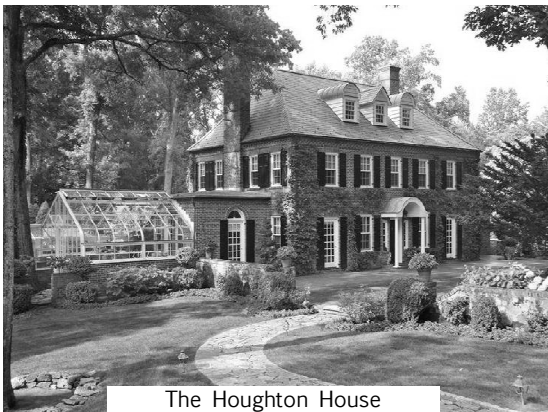
**Criminals and low-lives** – Houghton came into contact with plenty of people skirting the law, both as county magistrate and as part of the National Guard. He also funded several rehabilitation programmes with the aim of giving potential career criminals a second chance.

Any characters whose backgrounds or occupations really do not suggest any believable connection might want to consider knowing Rebecca Houghton, his grand-niece, although it is preferable for the scenario that the player characters have a connection to Henry. Suitable characters might even be hired as part of the evening's domestic staff or the string quartet. As a very last resort, characters may accompany another player character (or even NPC) who has been invited.

All characters invited will receive a telegram from Rebecca Houghton, inviting them to the memorial gathering which will be held at the old Houghton house, around ten miles west of Arkham along the Aylesbury Pike, just east of the railroad crossing. The gathering is to be held on the Saturday following the receipt of the telegram, beginning at 1PM. Characters who are known to be struggling for money are either paired with a suitable driver character with the suggestion that they share transport, or told to present themselves before Saturday at the office of the attorney, E. E. Saltonstall and Associates of 511 Gedney Street, Arkham [A124]. There they will receive \$3 from Colonel Houghton's estate in order that they might hire a taxi (ten miles at 25¢ per mile, plus a 50¢ tip). Less salubrious and/or hygienic characters will be dealt with with barely-disguised disdain in a small side-room. Saltonstall is ever aware of the high reputation of his practice and wishes to maintain it.

### ARRIVING AT THE MEMORIAL PARTY

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The Houghton House

Reaching the Houghton house from Arkham, the nearest large town, drivers will need to use the Aylesbury Pike which begins as a good metalled road and slowly deteriorates as you travel west. Potholes and cracks in the surface make fast driving something of a challenge, especially at night. A light snow is falling as the characters approach.

The entrance to the Houghton estate driveway is marked by two stone gate pillars, once imposing but now badly

overgrown. Negotiating several hundred yards of unkempt and tree-overhung driveway, the impression of lost glories continues with ill-tended garden until approaching closer to the house where the gardener has made a brave attempt at taming the vegetation. Cars line the driveway, suggesting a large attendance at the memorial gathering.

The large Georgian-style two-storey Houghton house is old and dilapidated, and a knowledgeable surveyor or builder (i.e. a character making any suitable building/engineering skill roll) will realise that it is unlikely to last another decade without significant financial investment. Colonel Houghton lost all interest in maintaining the house after his son died in 1902, and instead spent his money on charitable projects.

As they enter the house, guests are greeted by a hired staff who take their hats and coats and announce them. Rebecca Houghton, hovering by the door from the hallway to the parlour, will glance across and acknowledge new guests as they are announced, moving over to speak with them as soon as she can politely disengage from whoever she is speaking to at the time.

Drinks (including alcohol for those who specifically request it) and a lavish buffet are laid on in the dining room, with white-gloved caterers attending. An up-market string quartet plays background music.

The parlour, dining room and library are the focus of the gathering but other ground floor (i.e. US first floor) rooms are available to drift into for more private conversations. The first and second floor rooms are closed but unlocked. In all rooms aside from two bedrooms being used by Rebecca and Edward for a couple of nights (i.e. the previous night and the coming night), the kitchen, parlour, dining room and library, all furniture is covered by dust sheets. All small items, books, paintings, valuables and Henry's personal possessions have been removed.

### REBECCA HOUGHTON

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Rebecca Houghton

Rebecca Houghton is the granddaughter of Edward Houghton, and Colonel Henry Houghton's grand-niece. Rebecca's parents died in the 1912 Titanic sinking and she was raised, and spoiled rotten, by her grandparents. Her grandmother died in the 1918 Influenza epidemic leaving her grandfather, Edward, to raise her alone. Edward was named as Henry's executor but did not believe that he was capable of arranging his elder brother's affairs, so passed the duty on to his granddaughter.

Rebecca Houghton is a strikingly attractive woman of 22 years old [in 1926] who currently works as a high-end designer for a Beverley firm making ladies' shoes. [She will move to Arkham when her grandfather enters the Veterans' Home



later this year]. Rebecca is very aware of her family name (she is Status 2) and is quick to value others based on their own social status. This makes her something of a snob, and she would like nothing better than to rebuild the family fortune. Rebecca is unmarried but has a somewhat mercurial ‘understanding’ with a wealthy young Boston man, Joe Basildon, who currently has a position as a junior executive at his father’s firm, ‘F. Basildon Insurance.’ Rebecca sees Joe as a useful rung on the ladder towards regaining her family’s old status. [Should a player character of Comfortable or richer wealth, and Status 2+, claim a relationship between his character and Rebecca then he might replace Joe as her paramour].

If Rebecca is questioned about money, including her great-uncle’s legacy, she will visibly bristle. Henry shared much of the family assets with Edward but Rebecca believes that his patronage of so many spiritualists and support for so many charitable organisations frittered away the remainder. Various behests, the funeral and the memorial party represent the majority of what money was left, and the house is unlikely to sell for many years and even then its current condition means that it will not sell for much, possibly just the value of the land.

If the condition of the house is raised, Rebecca will sigh and explain that she understands that her great-uncle allowed it to deteriorate after losing Albert, his son, in 1902. Any genuine offers to buy the house will be met with obvious surprise and gratitude, but time-wasters beware; Rebecca’s displeasure could freeze Hell over and she has enough social clout in Arkham to cause characters some problems.

Should a player character seriously consider buying the Houghton estate then they will be referred to the Houghton’s attorney, E. E. Saltonstall [A124] and to Manton and Manton real estate brokers [A118] in Arkham. The asking price is not high for such a large brick-built house and several acres of land (*just* about affordable with a Comfortable wealth level), but the cost of necessary restoration (or demolition and redevelopment) puts the price beyond anyone lower than a Wealthy wealth level. Buying the house secures a large brick house with six acres of land ten miles from Arkham, and the gratitude and friendship of Rebecca Houghton. The GM and player may add appropriate and believable detail to the house and estate, but nothing of Mythos or important occult significance is to be found there.

### THE MEMORIAL GATHERING GUESTS

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As previously noted, Colonel Henry Houghton was a man who knew people from many different backgrounds and professions. The following are some of the more interesting guests at the memorial gathering although the GM is free to insert others as required. The main aim is to introduce new players to some of the personalities and organisations of Arkham, allowing them to develop a deeper role in the social setting. Some of the following NPCs appear in later scenarios or as

entries in Chaosium sourcebooks (these scenarios or entries being noted within *[square brackets]*), others are potential friends or contacts (or, indeed, enemies). All PCs listed below have a corresponding card with a photo and short description, either in the file *Important NPCs* or in *Scenario NPCs*.

**Edward Houghton** – *[Regiment of Dread]* Retired company executive and Civil War veteran. Edward, brother to Henry and grandfather to Rebecca, retired as a mid-level executive of the Arkham Baler company [A127], leaving before that company began to flounder. He has found retirement somewhat frustrating and longs to be useful. Ironically, when his older brother died and left him as executor, he was too emotionally shaken to take the responsibility. Edward is fiercely loyal to his brother's memory and proud of his military record. He is also ashamed of his own weakness in not being able to act as executor and mumbles half-hearted excuses if questioned about this. Edward holds court in the corner of the parlour, seated in an old and tatty armchair with rather frequent and unsteady trips to the downstairs bathroom. In any conversation about the Civil War, veterans or the passing of old families, Edward will mention in passing that only he and Upton Weedon *[Regiment of Dread]* are now left out of those Arkhamites who fought in the Civil War. He will not elaborate and hurriedly moves on. His own Civil War record will be downplayed, emphasising that he was only a young drummer boy and that his older brother was the one who did the fighting. He will happily discuss his brother's service for as long as listeners will listen. It is obvious that Edward hero-worshipped his older brother and that Henry's death has truly shaken him. The old man gruffly tries to hide the tears that come to his eyes when talking of his brother.

**Dr. James Bell** – *[Consumption]* Colonel Houghton's physician for ten years through to the end. He is the consummate professional this evening, expressing the appropriate sympathy and sorrow and happily discussing the medical pathology with fellow physicians. To non-medical-profession enquirers he will merely confirm that Colonel Houghton died from pancreatic cancer, diagnosed by Bell 'around 18 months ago'. Dr. Bell continued as Colonel Houghton's physician during his time in the Whitechapel Nursing Home. Despite his involvement with the cannibal society (see the scenario *Consumption* in 'Islands of Ignorance'), Dr. Bell dealt with Colonel Houghton with complete professionalism. Should Edward Houghton or any long-established Arkham medical professional be questioned about Dr. Bell, they will pay homage to the changes in the man over the last couple of decades. Dr. Bell has slowly grown from being a kindly but rather second-rate, insecure and diffident doctor to becoming the respected, confident and self-assured family physician and consultant that he is today. Most attribute it to experience and emergent self-belief.

**Elizabeth Brundage** – Artist *[Fade to Grey and Dreams and Fancies]*. Elizabeth attends along with several of Kingsport's artist community (some of whom may be seen looking distinctly out of place or covertly secreting food into pockets). Elizabeth knew Colonel Houghton as a patron of the arts and buyer of several of

her better (and more expensive) landscapes. She is accompanied this evening by her friend, **Laura Kipple** ('call me Larry' – Elizabeth introduces her as such), who scandalously wears male evening dress this evening. Laura/Larry is a strong-minded photographic artist from Boston and a relative newcomer to Kingsport. Although she sells a few surrealist photographic prints, she makes more money from her sideline, photographing naked models to sell to discerning adults. The pair should be an interesting test of how players view their characters' reaction to cross-dressing and homosexuality. No reaction is 'wrong' although players should be reminded that their characters live in a 1920s culture rather than a more enlightened modern one.

**Dr. Martin Fen** – [A611] Head of the History Department at the Miskatonic University, specialist in Modern History. Dr. Fen had many conversations with Colonel Houghton and occasionally consulted with him on historical matters. A frequent visitor to the house for long conversations, he considered Houghton a friend.

**Colonel William Hathorne** - [A216] Commander of B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Massachusetts 23<sup>rd</sup> Volunteer Regiment since Colonel Houghton's retirement from that post in 1920. Also present and always at his superior's side this evening is his executive officer, **Lieutenant Colonel Aubrey Bridgeton**. Both Houghton and Bridgeton are veterans of the Great War. Bridgeton lost the use of his left lung following a gas attack and now wheezes frequently and avoids clouds of cigarette smoke.

**Robert Ramsden** – [*To Sleep, Perchance to Dream*]. Store salesman. Robert knew Colonel Houghton through a shared interest in the occult. He appears under strain, suitably skilled Investigators will note that he is suffering from Depression. Robert is a secret homosexual and increasingly depressed at the emotional strain he is forced to live under. Robert is an experienced Dreamer. Although Robert keeps his sexuality a secret, Investigators familiar with contemporary homosexual codes and secret signs might discover it if they initiate a suitable conversation. Note that Robert is confused by and ashamed of his feelings (suicidally so, it transpires) and will not appreciate crude or clumsy attempts at seduction by men. He commits suicide in *To Sleep, Perchance to Dream*, scheduled for April 1929.

**Edmund E. Saltonstall** – [A124] Attorney. Mr. Saltonstall (never 'Edmund', not even – it is mischievously rumoured – to his wife), has been the Houghton family attorney for many decades. He has shown up for the memorial gathering out of respect for his client, but will leave after a suitably polite length of time (a couple of hours).

**Darrell Slocum** – [A217] Town Manager. Attending the memorial to represent the Arkham Town Council, but will leave early. Accompanied by his wife, **Marla Slocum** [A1007], who is taking the rare opportunity to attend a social event with her husband. Marla will idly flirt with young and attractive male characters. Her husband tolerates it, as he has for several years, indulgently viewing it as his wife reaffirming her self-confidence and sex appeal within a largely lonely marriage. Should Marla publicly overstep the mark, such as taking the flirting too far, then there will be



rows later. There will be no reputation-harming displays of domestic disharmony in public. If a young, interesting and attractive male (or, conceivably, female) player character responds positively to Marla's casual advances then they will find that she is only too happy to begin an covert affair. Her aggressive sexual dominance and perverse experimental tastes (hidden from her husband but befitting of a cultist), will likely be an education for a well brought-up and sheltered young Investigator!

**Charles Wool** – Charles seems polite and slightly diffident. His clothing is clean and carefully pressed but observant characters will spot fraying of the cuffs and collar, thinning of the knees and seat of the trousers. Charles is quite obviously there alone and, whilst polite, avoids conversation. Persistent characters will discover that his connection with Colonel Houghton is personal but rather vague. Charles has no wish to be cross-examined before confronting Rebecca or informing Edward. He tries to maintain a polite front but will become visibly frustrated if pressed too hard. If he is brought to Rebecca's attention as a possible gate-crasher, Rebecca will frown and move to confront him Edward will ask that Charles is brought to his chair and then begins a hushed conversation. Go straight to the appropriate scenes below. None of the hired staff know or care about the people attending. The other guests simply shrug and mention that they are all drawn from disparate areas of society and know few of their fellow attendees.

**Madame Yolanda** – [*Trail of Yig*] Spiritualist and (genuine) medium. Madame Yolanda, from 'somewhere' in Eastern Europe (actually Joan Clark from eastern Pennsylvania), held regular séances for Colonel Houghton and occasionally managed to pass along messages from the spirits of his dead family. Madame Yolanda is destined to commit suicide in *Trail of Yig*, scheduled for September 1928.

### CHARLES WOOL, SCION OR SCOUNDREL?

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At some point in the proceedings (preferably when the players are just tiring of chatting to the NPCs), one of the player characters notices that Charles is deep in conversation with Edward. The old man appears more animated than he has been all evening, and even lets out an occasional laugh. They make it clear to those approaching that the conversation is private. Anyone overhearing them realises that Edward is happily telling Charles anecdotes about Henry's life. If questioned following the conversation, Charles demurs and explains that he can't explain until he has spoken to Rebecca. Edward, on the other hand, although sworn to secrecy until Rebecca is told, is visibly uplifted and just keeps muttering about Henry returning in spirit. Paranoid observers might misinterpret this!

When Charles speaks to Rebecca, she has a very different reaction to that of her grandfather. She angrily drags Charles to the scullery, the most private area on the house's ground floor. Anyone following or attempting to listen in are left in no

doubt that Rebecca wants this conversation to remain private. There may, inevitably, be Investigators who nonetheless manage to overhear the conversation. The angry whispering is hard to make out, but a character who does manage to come up with a creative way to listen in will realise that Rebecca is adamantly refuting Charles's claim to be Colonel Henry Houghton's illegitimate son.

Charles Wool claims that Henry had a brief relationship with his late mother, Daphne Wool. His information is vague as his mother was reluctant to divulge much, but the family are desperate for money and Charles is asking for money from the Houghton estate, roughly half the legacy. If denied then he intends to approach the press. The exact year of the affair, and thus Charles's age, are deliberately left vague at this stage. If pressed, the GM should explain to the players that the details are up to them to create. In any event, the relationship will have occurred after the death of Henry's wife, narrowing the likely dates to anywhere from 1888 (making Charles 38) and about 1900 (making him 26).

The scandal of an illegitimate child will likely blacken Colonel Houghton's name, especially if the woman was of an unsuitable background or a prostitute. On the other hand, if Charles is really Houghton's son, he might reasonably be due a share of the estate. Charles explains that the threat of exposure is made reluctantly, and will be a last resort. If informed, or if Charles has already spoken to the old man, Edward is more than willing to accommodate his newly discovered nephew and even adopt him into the family as Henry's son.

Rebecca, on the other hand, initially believes that Charles is a con-man simply out to blackmail the Houghtons. An innate disdain for those with less breeding than her own, an assumption of criminality from the poor, real fear that the family name will be ruined, combined with the thought that Charles Wool is out to grab the small legacy that was left to herself and her grandfather, all come together to make Rebecca instinctively hostile to Charles and his claim.

## THE PLAYER CHARACTERS' ROLE

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Whether or not Charles Wool's claim is genuine depends on the players and their own story contributions.

Rebecca will approach the most suitable and sober player character. With so many of Colonel Houghton's friends and acquaintances in one place, there is an ideal opportunity to test Charles's claims. She asks that the Investigator, perhaps aided by a trusted friend or two, discretely asks around to see if they can prove Charles's story false. If prompted, Rebecca grudgingly agrees that they should also look into the possibility that he is telling the truth.

After this, it is up to the players to build the back-story. Their characters should compare notes both with the other player characters and the NPCs. They

should create interesting back-stories and anecdotes involving their characters' past relationship with Colonel Houghton. The GM should veto the more ridiculous stories, possibly through NPC reaction. The NPCs will build off of these anecdotes, adding, prompting and enhancing where appropriate. The players should then judge these stories and decide how far they prove or disprove Charles Wool's claim.

See Appendix 1 below for an example of how the creative storytelling might work. It may be worth mentioning that the rest of the campaign is more structured!

## CONCLUSION

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Rebecca will accept whatever conclusion the player characters reach. Should they find in Charles's favour then she will reluctantly accept that he deserves something after all. She works out a deal with Charles that satisfies them both. Edward is delighted to have a new nephew, something that helps to sway Rebecca's change of attitude. Obviously, Charles will also be grateful and could become a Contact.

Should the player characters decide that Charles is a fraud, Rebecca will threaten him with legal action and possible imprisonment for blackmail. Charles, unable to afford a long legal battle, will likely back down. Rebecca will explain the situation to Edward who will become visibly upset but sadly accept that Charles was nothing to do with his brother after all. Charles Wool might reappear to take revenge, becoming an Enemy, if the GM so chooses. Who knows who Charles Wool really is and what his real motive was?

Either way, Rebecca is grateful to the player characters and becomes available to buy as a Contact (Savoir-Faire 15), or even an 45-point (75% of PC points) Ally. The GM will have to create Rebecca Houghton's character sheet if she is taken as an Ally. She is not wealthy or politically powerful enough to qualify as a Patron.

If the players manage to reach a conclusion without conflict or other major social *faux pas*, and were entertaining, they should receive 2 CP. If only one of those goals was achieved then only 1 CP is earned (although the GM should be aware of players being new to storytelling gaming and take this into consideration).

## THE END..?

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The gathering is over, the guests are leaving or have left, Edward has fallen asleep in his chair, and Rebecca supervises the staff clearing things away.

The player characters should sort out who is driving them home and should all end up either in the same car or in convoy. A light snow has fallen and the fog gathers. In the dark, cold, March night, the car or cars head down the Aylesbury Pike towards Arkham when a young woman suddenly staggers into the road. Welcome to the next scenario, *Consumption*....

## APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLE OF STORYTELLING GAMING

Not everyone is familiar with the gaming technique of creative storytelling so this gives a short example of how it might play out. The players and characters involved here are: **Annie, playing Abigail**, an office stenographer; **Bob, playing Benjamin**, a black ex-soldier now a hospital orderly; and **Chris, playing Clem**, a children's book writer and part-time store worker. The GM plays all the NPCs, as usual.

Clem, the writer, has been asked by Rebecca to establish the veracity of Charles Wool's claims by talking to the other guests.

**Chris:** I'll move over to Benjamin, he may have known Henry from his time in the service.

**Bob/Benjamin:** *'Ah yes, I first met the Colonel in France when I was a pioneer in the 101<sup>st</sup> Engineers in the 26<sup>th</sup> Division.'*

**GM:** <Knowing that Henry Houghton didn't serve in France>. Lt. Colonel Bridgeton overhears you and wanders over, *'Sorry my man, but you may be mistaken. To my knowledge, Colonel Houghton was never in France. Perhaps you met him at the training depot here in the US?'* Bridgeton then nods and walks away again.

**Bob/Benjamin:** <Curses himself for not reading the obituary properly> *'Thank you sir, my mistake. Yes, it was at the Boston depot before we departed for France. Colonel Houghton was a regular visitor there, always doing what he could to cheer us up and pass on advice. I remember one occasion when he warned us about the dangers of foreign women. Well, we were all young and such dangers seemed to offer a paradise. Anyway, I can't see such a man dallying with a young woman.'*

**Chris/Clem:** *'He warned you against getting involved with women? Hmmm. I wonder if that was just following the Army's party line? I knew him back when I was a struggling English student at high school, that would be <checks dates and ages> 1900 or so. He had established the Houghton English scholarship that I managed to win, so I met him a few times in that regard. He seemed terribly old to me back then but I do recall that he had a twinkle in his eye and an old-fashioned charm. One of my teachers, Miss Haldicott, was particularly taken with him and they spent a lot of time chatting and laughing together.'*

**Annie:** <To GM> Am I close enough to overhear?

**GM:** You were talking to Elizabeth Brundage and Larry, I believe? Yes, you're close enough to overhear a key word or two if you wish.

**Annie/Abigail:** I excuse myself to Elizabeth and Larry then turn to the others. *'Sorry to overhear you, but would that be Miss Euphemia Haldicott of <checks town directory> Arkham Public High school?'*

**Chris/Clem:** <Sees that the story is advancing and decides to roll with it> *'Uh, yes, that's her. A very distinctive name so you're not likely to forget it. Did you know her?'*

**Annie/Abigail:** *'I did. She was my first supervisor at "Rogers and Evans", a real sweetie. That was a few years back now, of course, '22 or '23? She would have been in her late forties or so. I seem to remember her mentioning that she'd been a teacher in her younger days but had then had to leave for some reason.'*

**Bob/Benjamin:** *'I don't suppose you know more? Like, did she have a child? Was she a single mother?'*

**GM:** <Steps in to establish some period flavour>. Elizabeth Brundage follows Abigail over to your group, tailed by Larry who is nonchalantly lighting a cigarette, quite scandalous for a woman at the time.

**Chris/Clem:** Everything about Laura/Larry disturbs Clem's sense of acceptable social behaviour. He's definitely a man of his time, or possibly of the previous decade. I think Clem will take a step back, flustered and not trusting himself to be polite.

**GM:** Larry smiles tightly but Elizabeth eagerly joins your conversation. *'Single mother? I doubt that her family would have allowed such a thing. It is more likely that any baby would have been sent for adoption or had its name changed and be raised as the baby of a married relative.'*

**Annie/Abigail:** *'Of course. The baby wouldn't necessarily be called Haldicott. It might have been renamed ... Wool!'*

**Bob/Benjamin:** *'It would certainly explain why Charles's family are reluctant to go into details. He probably doesn't know that Daphne was not his biological mother, the woman he claims had the affair with Colonel Henry.'*

**Chris/Clem:** *'Slow down a bit. We don't know that Euphemia actually had a baby, let alone that it was Henry Houghton's. We need to ask around some more to see if anyone else knew her. Right, who here might have known a high school teacher around the turn of the century and might be able to confirm a pregnancy. Let's start with Dr. Bell'*

And so the investigation continues, with GM and players building up the story together as they go until they reach a convincing conclusion.