

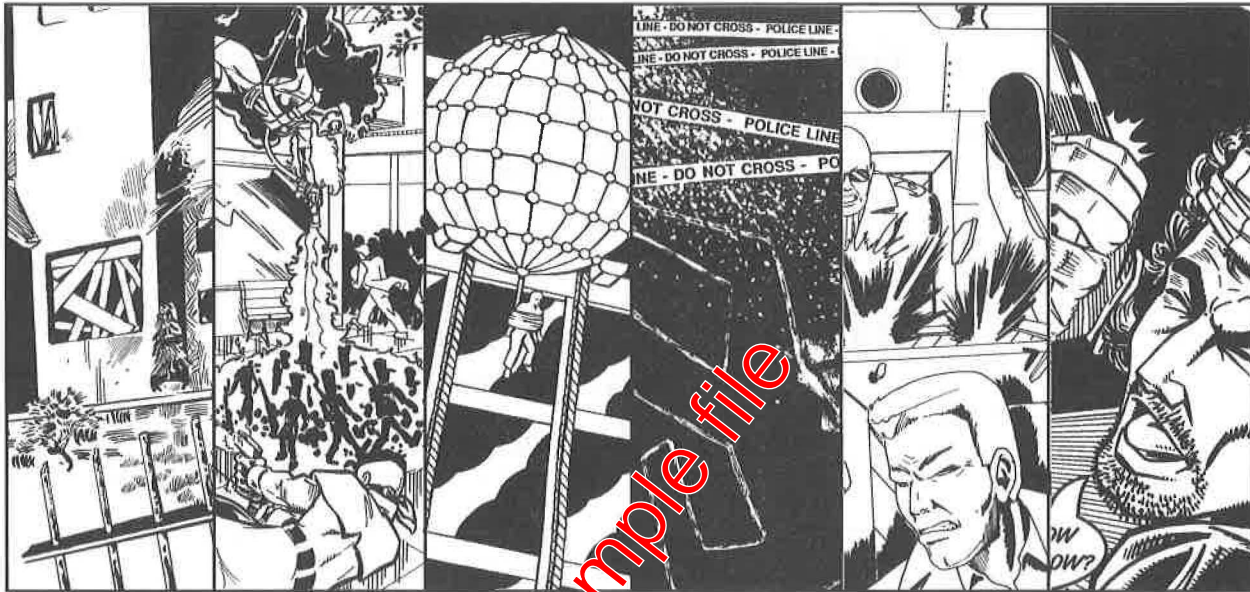
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Authors:

Steven S. Long, Chris Avellone, Amy Crittenden, Greg Lloyd,
Jim Crocker and Ed Carmien



Editor/Developer: Mark Arsenault

Cover Illustration: Stacy Drum

Cover Layout & Graphics: Mr. Ed's Audio

Cover Color Separations: InfoMania

Interior Illustrations: Storn Cook, Greg Smith, Tonia Walden, K.C. Lancaster, and Dave Wong

Project-Specific Contributions:

Pagemaking & Layout: Mark Arsenault

Editorial Contributions: Margaret Arsenault, Chris Avellone, Amy Crittenden, Greg Lloyd

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THE THING IN RADLEY MANOR



"C'mon, Kennie, I dare you!" the kid said.
"Yeah, I *double* dare ya!" sneered the one standing next to him.

The smaller child standing across from them looked nervous and afraid. He twisted around on his bike and looked at the mansion, still and quiet under the moonlight. Suddenly there was a brief flicker of light from one of the upstairs windows. Startled, he nearly fell off of his bike. "No way," he said, turning back to face the other two.

"Geez, Gardner, what are you, some kinda baby? All ya gotta do is run up there, touch the house, and come back. You're 'fraid to do *that*?"

Kennie looked at him, lip quivering slightly, but not so much that the big kid could see it in the dark. He looked back at the mansion again, but there were no more lights. "What do I get if I do it?" he asked.

The big kid grinned. "Like I *told* you, Gardner, you touch Radley Manor, and you can join our club. Me 'n' Johnnie'll tell you the password, let you hang out with us, all kinds of stuff."

"Okay, Harry, I'll do it," Kennie said after only a few more seconds' hesitation. "Watch my bike, okay?"

"Sure," the big kid said.

Kennie got off his bike and laid it on the grass off the curb. Quickly, before he lost his nerve, he dashed across the street to the driveway to Radley Manor. One of the big wrought-iron gates lay on the ground where it fell off its hinges years ago. He hesitated for a second, clenching his fists nervously, then dashed inside the grounds, running as hard as he could to get to the big beech tree in the yard. Reaching it, he stopped and hid behind it, hoping that no one — no *Thing* — in the Manor had seen him. He peeked out around the tree at the house, but didn't see anything, so he started running towards it.

Forty feet. Twenty. Ten. Suddenly he was there, right next to it! He slapped the side of the house, ready to run again, but something made him stop. Over the sound of his breathing, the house was quiet. The *Thing* hadn't seen him! This was his chance to *really* impress Harry and Johnnie. Slowly, quietly, he crept down the side of the house until he reached an old coal chute. Climbing up on it, he stood on his tiptoes to peek in one of the windows.

None of the kids had ever done *this!* he thought to himself exultantly.

Author
Steven S. Long

Illustrations
Storn Cook

"...tense for the action, long hair in the wind, beards and bandanas flapping, earrings, armpits, chain whips, swastikas and stripped down Harleys flashing chrome as traffic on 101 moves over, nervous, to let the formation pass like a burst of dirty thunder..."

— Hell's Angels

Then the rotten wood of the coal chute doors gave way beneath his weight, and with a yelp he fell down into the basement of the Manor, fear once again overriding his desire to impress the older boys.

Back at the street, Harry and Johnnie jumped when they saw Kennie fall in. Then they heard the screams. Leaving Kennie's bike behind, they rode away as fast as they could.

INTRODUCTION

For nearly a century it has stood alone, aloof from the houses surrounding it, empty of life — but not empty. The children of Starmount Estates have long known that Radley Manor is haunted, possessed of the spirit of old Avery Radley, last surviving member of the Radley clan — a man so mean-spirited and greedy that he refuses to give anything up, even in death. Tales told on warm summer nights as fireflies flickered overhead have confirmed his existence with each generation, so that only the bravest of children have dared to pass the rusted gates and touch the walls of the Manor. And none have ever had the courage to actually go inside; the Thing *eats* children who trespass in his house....

Or so they say. In truth, Radley Manor is simply an old mansion become decrepit through years of neglect. But now the neighborhood child grown old, if not wise, has returned to his former haunts to turn Radley Manor into something far more frightening than any image ever conjured by a child's tale.

The Thing In Radley Manor is an adventure for *Dark Champions*. It works best with characters who are "heroic normals," that is, char-

acters built on about 150-200 points with Normal Characteristic Maxima and Equipment Allowances. Characters should have Combat Values and Damage Classes averaging in the range of 6-9 at the most; if their abilities are higher than that, or if the group tends toward a high average in those categories, the GM should increase either the number or abilities of the criminals the PCs will face. This adventure can also be used with higher-powered characters, or even characters with low-level superpowers, provided that the GM reworks the NPCs so that they are able to face the PCs and give them a good fight. However, no character who has powers that would spoil the central mystery of the adventure (such as mind-reading or the ability to see through walls) should be allowed to take part in this scenario.

In this scenario, the PCs will be given the task of tracking down a new source of potent "ice" (crystal methamphetamine) that is turning up in their home city (whether that be Hudson City, San Angelo or some other campaign setting). Eventually they will track the drugs back to a peaceful suburban neighborhood, Starmount Estates, which is many miles outside the city. There they will have to fall back on the only source of information available to them — the neighborhood children — to pinpoint Radley Manor as the criminals' hide-out.

The GM should be sure to set this adventure during the summer months, so that the children will be out of school and readily available for the PCs to talk to. Since Hero Games's epic scenario *Hudson City Blues*, by Edward J. Carmien, is also set during the summer, the GM may wish to use *The Thing In Radley Manor* as a "filler story" during the events depicted in that book.

Police Continue Search For Missing Boy

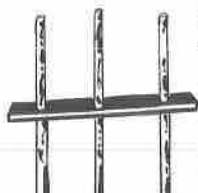
By Danica Easley
City News Staff Writer

Authorities are continuing their search for an eight year old Starmount Estates boy, reported missing earlier this week. Members of the Hudson City Police Department's Missing Persons Bureau and canine officers, along with local volunteers, have been combing the parks and fields in and around Starmount Estates, a middle class suburban neighborhood near Hudson City.

So far, police say they have no leads in the disappearance of little Kennie Gardner, and that they have not ruled out foul play. "It's certainly possible that he was kidnapped," said police Sergeant Marcus Weber. "However, we have reason to believe that he is still in the local area."

"Kennie," as he was known by friends, was reported missing after he failed to return home, according to his Aunt, Angela Gardner, speaking on behalf of Kennie's parents. "It's so unlike him," Ms. Gardner said. "He's never run away before. His parents are just sick with worry. You know, you hope for the best but I'm afraid something really bad has happened. There are a lot of sick people out there."

The Police Department will soon have the advantage of high-tech, as the newly refitted H.C.P.D. "Aero 5" helicopter, equipped with Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) equipment, is scheduled to reenter service for the first time since last month. The FLIR system is capable of picking up heat patterns.



GOINGS-ON ABOUT TOWN

The player characters, whatever their roles in the war against crime, should first become aware of the existence of a new player in the underworld because of the existence of a new form of “ice,” or crystal methamphetamine, a smokeable drug which provides quick, intense, long-lasting highs. Users often become violent and reckless, and may hallucinate. (For more information on ice, the reader should refer to Hero Games’s *An Eye For An Eye*, page 33.)

Typically, ice sells for about \$50 per “paper,” which is a penny-sized cellophane or plastic baggie holding one hit. However, the ice being sold on the streets by this new group sells for only half that, \$25 per hit, and is exceptionally pure. This has led to more episodes of violent behavior and more deaths due to overdose and overuse. It has also led to greater use of ice; the cheap price and greater availability has allowed many people, including children, to try ice for the first time. New markets are opening up.

For maximum effect, the GM should build up to this scenario by providing the PCs with evidence of an increase in ice distribution and use in the city over the course of several game sessions. Some suggestions:

- a PC sees dealers (outlaw motorcycle gang members) selling to kids near a school
- one or more PCs have to deal with various crimes committed by users high on ice (violent assaults, rapes, robberies, incredibly reckless driving)
- one or more PCs have to cope with a user who is suffering from hallucinations that are making him dangerous and violent
- someone tries to give or sell some ice to a character’s DNPC

These episodes could be used as “opening vignettes” for an evening’s game session, as solo adventures, or as distractions when the GM wants the PCs to be occupied so that the main villain of a particular scenario can do something without their interference.

After a few episodes such as these, the PCs should be interested in tracking down the source of this new ice. The police certainly are, but so far they have had no luck developing any leads.

Player characters with the appropriate resources should be able to find out that the scum dealing this drug are almost always outlaw motorcycle gang members, though not from any particular gang. It’s as if several different gangs have formed a joint venture to market the “new ice.” However, PCs who gather data carefully



will discover that each biker gang seems to have its own “sales territory” — the Speed Demons have the western half of the south side of town, the Road Warriors have the wharf district, Satan’s Seraphim sell in the Hispanic ghetto, and so forth. The gangs are careful not to stray into one another’s territory.

Further digging should lead the PCs to the information that these gangs aren’t working together to create and sell the new ice; they are simply the “retail outlet” for whoever is manufacturing it. The maker brings the stuff to various biker bars in and around town where it sells it to the gangs, who then package it and sell it.

If the characters capture and interrogate a dealer or two, they will learn that there is more than one person who delivers the stuff to the bars — they will get varying descriptions of the person who makes the drop-off, so varying that they are obviously different people. In other words, the maker is an organization, not an individual.

Sooner or later the player characters should realize that the only way to find the source of the new ice is to stake out one of the biker bars where deliveries and then follow the deliveryman.

If the PCs decide to watch the bar from the outside, the GM should have them make PER Rolls or Streetwise rolls to spot the right biker.

