

Kolchak: The Big Creep



Jerry Stratton

For The North Texas RPG Con
June 2, 2022

Kolchak: The Big Creep

Jerry Stratton

for the Daredevils RPG

Inspired by
"The Powers of Dr. Remoux"
Daredevils Adventures
Vol. 2 No. 1
by Stefan Jones.

Summary

Blurb

It's the fall semester at Illinois State Technical College. Carl Kolchak and his loose band of night stalkers investigate strange happenings as the school's sports team has a very good year. Choose a pregen from many of the regulars and guest stars of the Kolchak: The Night Stalker television series.

Carl Kolchak and guest stars investigate strange happenings at Illinois State Technical College.

Background

Setting: Illinois State Technical College

Time: Thursday, October 28, 1976.

Reason: Multidisciplinary UFO Conference. This requires experts in fields from journalism to anthropology to physics.

Character summary

Title	Name	Department	Notes
Doctor	Nelson Baker	Mathematics	Reed College, Oregon
Staff	Mary Davenport	Physics	Department Secretary
Professor	Robert W. Douglas	Mathematics	
Doctor	Spencer James Smith	Physics	Killed by ape soon after its arrival.
Doctor	Edward Johnson Swirlbach	Physics	The villain.
Professor	Arnold Lyle Waite	Physics	
Student	Jimmy Young	Electrical Engineering	Murdered. Crush on Rosalind Winters.
Student	Darla Cowling	Anthropology	Kidnapped. Crush on Michael Thompson.
Student	Davy Billings	Computer Science	friend of Young and Cowling's.
Student	Michael Thompson	Anthropology	Friend of Cowling.
Student	Rosalind Winters	Communications	Student Newspaper
Mobster	Jack McCallum	Thug	Likely to rat on his employer
Mobster	Clyde Martin	Thug	
Mobster	Reggie Blake	Safe-cracker	On retainer by Bannister.
Mobster	Frank Bannister	Boss	
Mobster	Louie "Perfessor" Mucci	Numbers	Swirlbach's gambling connection

Big Picture

Dr. Swirlbach has developed a **Quantum Vitality Superpositor**. The superpositor drains the energy out of living beings and stores it for other uses. He's testing it by giving student athletes increased vitality siphoned from animals. Anyone with anthropological or zoological background will recognize from the event films that these athletes are acting a lot like cats, dogs, and apes.

He hypnotizes or drugs his subjects before bringing them to his hidden lab. He then brings them back to the lab in the physics building before reviving them.

The experiments initially went on in the basement of Dr. Swirlbach's apartment, but he's now taken up residence in an old underground nuclear research facility connected to the steam

tunnels. He has quietly installed large amounts of equipment and has gained the confidence of the local mobsters by providing them with technical advice and with enhanced, temporary abilities useful for crime. He also shares information about which athletes have been “doped” by the superpositor, and takes a share of the local mob’s winnings.

Cross Country Runners: dog

Football: cat, and later the ape

Soccer: cat

Now that Dr. Swirlbach has charged himself up on quantum vitality he has become even loonier than usual and plans the demise of his rivals in the physics department. His acquisition of a killer ape has helped him in this task. Swirlbach had the ape secretly kill Physics professor Spencer James Smith several weeks ago, and the administration is getting worried over Smith’s prolonged absence. Swirlbach draws off the ape’s strengths, but has also endowed the ape with a rudimentary human intelligence from Jimmy Young and Darla Cowling. Unknown to him, it’s also giving the ape the victim’s emotions. The ape is stalking those students’ crushes.

Once Swirlbach suspects that the PCs are onto him, he will make increasingly bold attempts to kill them, or preferably kidnap them as research subjects. He is very clever and will pretend to help the investigation and lure one or more of the characters into his experiments through trickery and hypnosis.

The Adventure

Timeline

September 1976							October 1976							November 1976						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4						1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	(28)	29	30	28	29	30				
							31													

September 3: Davy Billings returns to school with a copy of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

September 6-9: Athletes volunteer for Dr. Swirlbach's tests of the basement superpositor.

September 9: Soccer team's surprise win against Loyola Ramblers. (Cat vitality.)

September 18: Record Cross Country performance at the Kankakee Regional. (Dog vitality.)

October 1: Delivery of new, bigger machine to secret workshop.

October 2: Football team's big win against the Eureka College Red Devils. (Cat vitality.)

October 7: Soccer team's surprise win against the DePaul Blue Demons. (Cat vitality.)

October 8: Delivery of killer ape.

October 16: 11:30 pm, Reggie Blake breaks into Lyons Bank. (Cat and bat vitality.)

October 23: Football team's surprise upset against Chicago State University Cougars. (Cat and ape vitality.)

October 22: Dr. Spencer James Smith kidnapped by ape just before leaving for the airport.

October 24: Sunday night was the ostensible date of Dr. Smith's lecture at Reed College.

October 25: Attempt on Professor Waite's life by ape.

Wednesday: Jimmy Young disappears while playing *Dungeons & Dragons* in steam tunnels.

Thursday: Darla Cowling kidnapped.

Thursday: UFO Conference draws player characters.

Thursday Evening: UFO Conference opening dinner, with films of the school's sports wins.

Thursday Night: Jimmy Young found dead in the campus lake. The body is badly scarred with what look like the teethmarks of a large animal (killer ape). Siska says the bite marks are from fish. Billings and Thompson are called in to identify the body.

Friday Morning: Ape starts stalking Michael Thompson and/or Rosalind Winters.

Saturday: Dr. Smith's body found in the lake; he's been dead for about 36 hours.

Reactions

The police will discount any theory that there's a killer ape running around on an idyllic Chicago campus. There are no apes missing from the zoo, which is about as far as they'll go investigating such an outlandish theory.

The Death of Dr. Spencer Smith

Swirlbach engineered a fake invitation for Smith to present a Knowlton Lecture at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, and then had the ape kidnap him. He used the larger of the Vitality Superpositors on him and dumped the emaciated body into the sewers.

The administration is aware of the invitation, and is beginning to be worried. His wife reported him missing Wednesday morning; the forty-eight hours will have passed on Friday morning. When anyone attempts to find out about the guest lecture (it was supposed to happen on Wednesday, October 27), Reed College will be unaware of any such lecture or invitation. It should be possible for someone astute in telephone systems to track that phone number 503-555-3495 actually comes back to the Illinois area—and with a critical success, to the Illinois State Technical College itself! The letterhead may also provide some clues.

The payment came by cashier's check, drawn on First National Bank of Chicago. It is one of the nation's largest banks.

When his body is found, it will not be wounded but will be very emaciated, as if he had been starved for weeks!

Investigations

Academic and Criminal subculture skills, as well as hanging out on Campus, will yield clues.

Value Number	Academic	Criminal	Campus
+6	A (Waite)	B (a Thug)	C
+4	D (Rumors)	D (Rumors)	E
+2	M (Legal)	D (Rumors)	E
+1	F (Rumors)	G	H
-2	I	J	L
-4	I	J	J
-6	K	K	K

- A. Professor Waite comes to the PCs and tells them of the attempt on his life Monday night. Waite had gone into his lab to get some notes, and was attacked by a man in an ape costume! Fortunately he escaped after frightening the thug with an electric device in the lab. Waite suspects that one of his rivals in the department, a Dr. Swirlbach, sent the thug after him. He has kept silent until now out of fear of reprisals. Campus politics is very petty, and a reputation for seeing apes in Chicago is hard to get rid of. He'd rather handle it unofficially, through unofficial investigators.
- B. The investigating PC learns that a local gangster has hired out two of his boys to a crazy ISTC professor. Jack McCallum has quit and can tell the PC of Swirlbach's secret hideout in the steam tunnels and the killer ape. The thug will also speak about the doctor's crazy machine—used to help some mobsters jump higher, fight tougher, and even improve their ability to pick locks. He knows of the small version in the Swirlbach's apartment.
- C. A distraught Michael Thompson or Rosalind Winters stumbles into the PCs late one night. They are hysterical and scared out of their wits. They are being stalked by a giant monkey which grabbed them and brought them to the old gym. The ape itself will make a short appearance at this time (peering in a window, etc.) then flee into the darkness. This will frighten the poor student and cause them to faint. If Rosalind is a PC, of course, she will be under the control of the player when the ape shows up.
- D. A couple of weird crates came through town the other night, bound for the physics lab. Some shady-looking characters were present. No one on the staff knows what the crates contained. If received from a criminal source, the PCs will get the information from their source that the crate smelled like it contained an animal of some sort.

- E. The investigating PCs overhear some student athletes discussing the pros and cons of accepting 'Boss Eddie's offer' (to help him in the lab at night). 'Boss Eddie' is the athletes' appellation for Dr. Swirlbach, who occasionally goes into bizarre fits of raving paranoia and self-aggrandizement. But he is otherwise helpful to student athletes, intervening on their behalf when grades fall low or behavior threatens punishment, and providing hypnotic assistance in overcoming mental blocks to better playing.
- F. The physics department has been shaken up lately, and there is intense competition for positions. It isn't helped by Dr. Smith's disappearance from his own conference.
- G. If you know who to go to for tips, you can make a lot of money betting on ISTC sports.
- H. Jimmy Young was seen by a janitor out by Allan Gymnasium last Thursday night, sneaking around the entrance to the old cogeneration facility.
- I. Dr. Swirlbach learns of the investigation and begins to take action to cover his tracks. His late-night experiments will be legitimate and those volunteering to help will not be harmed, nor subject to the machine. This may draw the ire of the local mob.
- J. The hoods Dr. Swirlbach is helping harass the PCs. The investigators will have rumors about them sown on campus that will hamper further investigation.
- K. The killer ape is set loose on the characters! The creature has gained enough intelligence to avoid blundering into traps, and will try to pick off the heroes one at a time.
- L. There's a group of students on campus engaging in very shady activities. Something about dungeons, and it involves the old steam tunnels. "Davy Billings was always weird, but he came back from summer vacation on some sort of a bondage trip. Something about dungeons." The informant is not aware of the group's use of the steam tunnels.
- M. Dr. Swirlbach stormed into General Counsel demanding that some Russian scientists be sued for stealing an idea of his. His proof was... a crackpot article in a UFO magazine. "Fortunately, I was able to tell him that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union are part of the Berne Convention." (The USSR didn't begin the process of joining until 1989, and didn't complete it until 1995; the US joined in 1989.) "He crumpled up the 'article' and threw it at me. (I tossed it. Something about a Spanish generator. Juanita? Paulita? Juanita or Paulita Generator or something like that.)"

The Riders on the Storm

Dungeons & Dragons was introduced in January 1974 by a small company up north in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, *Tactical Studies Rules*. In the Fall of 1976 it has just begun to take off. By May, 1976, they had sold 9,000 copies. *Eldritch Wizardry* was released in April. At this point, Tim Kask is the new *TSR Hobbies, Inc.*'s first full-time employee (periodicals editor). TSR has just taken over the *GenCon* gaming convention with GenCon IX on August 20-22, which Billings attended.

Davy Billings, Senior, Mathematics, accompanied Jimmy Young and Michael Thompson into the steam tunnels to play *Dungeons and Dragons*. While a bright young man, Davy is a nerd and spends much of his time goofing off with video games in the recreation hall, and *Dungeons & Dragons* with his friends. While venturing into the steam tunnels for a bit of live-action D&D, a huge form sprang out of the dark and tackled Jimmy Young. Davy ran like the wind and got out of the building. Davy is tall, skinny, with red hair, and favors t-shirts with *Lord of the Rings*

imagery. One t-shirt reads “Frodo Lives” in cursive. Another has a picture of a white-robed knight with a glowing sword standing before a flag with a white tree, and in cursive, “Aragorn”. His room contains a full set of D&D books and dice, including the three-book brown wood-grain box set as well as *Greyhawk*, *Blackmoor*, and the new *Eldritch Wizardry*. Judges Guild was founded on July 4, 1976 and sold from the trunk of Bill Owen’s Mustang at GenCon IX. Davy has a City State Map on his wall. If Davy realizes that Darla Cowling is missing, he will go to Michael Thompson; they are likely to realize that she went back into the steam tunnels to find Jimmy Young, and will go to the authorities with their experience. They will not be believed, and depending on circumstances may even be arrested for Young’s murder. Davy is the **Dungeon Master** of the group.

Darla Cowling, Senior, sometimes accompanies the boys when they game. She was with them when they went into the steam tunnels, and escaped with Billings and Young, but went back into the tunnels the next day to look for Young when he never showed up. This is when she was captured. Darla is a pretty brunette and a charming girl. Everyone liked her, and the D&Ders were all smitten. She has a crush on Michael Thompson, especially after he saved her from the ape. She is now in the bigger superpositor in the underground lab. She is near death from being drained of her vitality. Even if the PCs bring her conscious, she will be of little help and will swoon at the slightest provocation. She can direct the players toward the lab, though groggily. Darla is a **Poor Quality Extra**. Darla was the **Magic-User**, Tahmine Craven.

Michael Thompson, Senior, is another D&Der. He was with Davy Billings and Jimmy Young when Young was captured by the killer ape. As the **Elf thief**, Durlandel of Rendel, he was supposed to be on the lookout for enemies, and feels guilty for thinking about Darla Cowling instead of the game. He did rescue Darla when the ape appeared. He is not as nerdy as Davy, and will not likely help the investigators until the ape starts stalking him. Then he will fold like a cheap suit. He’s still not sure this isn’t some prank by Billings and Young to freak him out. There can’t really be an ape in the tunnels, it had to be someone in a gorilla suit. If Thompson realizes that Darla Cowling is missing, he will realize she has gone back into the tunnels, and will go to the authorities without Billings. He will not be believed, and may even be arrested for Young’s murder. Michael is **Average Quality Rabble**.

Rosalind Winters, Senior, Communication Studies, is friends with the group, and has sat in on a game, but she spends most of her time dreaming of being a great journalist like Woodward, Bernstein, and Kolchak. She is aware of Kolchak’s reputation as a brilliant but eccentric reporter—very much like Dr. Swirlbach in the physics department. She’s somewhat positively inclined toward Swirlbach, because his intelligence is obvious and his ostracism makes him a romantic figure. She thought D&D might make a story but it was silly and boring. She is not aware that the group was going into the steam tunnels. She occasionally dated Jimmy Young, and the ape has absorbed some of Young’s feelings toward her. When the ape is not stalking Michael Thompson, it will stalk Rosalind Winters.

Jimmy Young, Senior, was the **Paladin**, Sir Roland the Second, leading the group into the tunnels to fight evil, when the ape grabbed him. Jimmy managed to escape from the underground lab, and this enraged the ape. Jimmy occasionally dated **Rosalind Winters**, who was fascinated by the D&D games but has no knowledge of the steam tunnel escapade.

The Conference

The Illinois State Technical College Conference on Unidentified Flying Objects and Poster-Modern Parapsychology is the brainchild of Dr. Spencer James Smith. Smith is—or was—reasonably smart, but he was much better at gladhanding than at physics. That’s how he became department chair, and it’s how he both recognized that a UFO conference would be a lucrative idea and was able to get government and institutional grants for it. It helps that Governor James Earl Carter has made UFOs popular gain.

That’s also why Dr. Swirlbach saw Smith as an enemy, and as Swirlbach’s mind faltered, his growing paranoia focused on Smith.

Smith was supposed to return on Tuesday night. The College has been unable to get in touch with him since then. Professor Waite has been tapped to emcee the conference. It’s obvious he isn’t a good fit for such a front-facing job.

The Police

Police Captain Joe “Mad Dog” Siska is usually the man assigned to crimes in Lyons. He’s pretty much given up on therapy at this point. The officers who work with him include Carstairs, O’Neal, Murdock, Ricco, Lawson, Anders, and Benson.

“You put that on the wire and I’ll have you 86’d permanently.”

“You want to take another trip in a police car, Kolchak?”

“Look, Kolchak, I gotta tell you something. Some people dream about retiring. I dream about breaking your face.”

“Another word out of you and I will book you on illegal entry.”

The last time Siska and Kolchak met was the weekend of May 10-11, 1975, on this campus. Don Rhiner died about 11:05 pm May 10, and Kolchak showed up the next morning when they discovered the body.

The police will also determine that:

Spencer Smith’s photos are not recognized by anyone at O’Hare.

Jimmy Young was probably anorexic.

There was no lecture at Reed College.

No one remembers that particular cashier’s check at First Chicago. (At least one teller would recognize Dr. Swirlbach if they saw him or a photo of him.)

Death of Jimmy Young

When Jimmy is found, the wounds are easily recognized as ape wounds by anyone with knowledge of such, but the other two will think it’s a real D&D monster, and of course the authorities will blame it on fish. A close examination will reveal that he was slightly emaciated, as if he’d been not eating for a few days, which his friends can say isn’t true.

The ape dumped Young’s body in the underground water supply beneath Aickman Arboretum. The body migrated to Cermak Lake and then surfaced.

Sports Clues

The ISTC Bobcats are not known for their sports prowess. While they did almost have an All-American player in Don Rhiner last year, he died a mysterious death alongside a woman who'd already died several hours earlier. Recently they've been doing better, but only at certain games. Somehow the coaches have been able to inspire them, and it's catching! In men's sports only: Dr. Swirlbach and the mobsters don't touch women's sports because the betting isn't lucrative.

Men's Soccer. (Cat) There are several soccer games per week. The two surprise victories have been against the Loyola Ramblers and the DePaul Blue Demons.

Men's Cross Country. (Dog) at the Kankakee Regionals.

Men's Football. (Cat, Ape) They've had two wins that surprised everyone. First, against the Eureka Red Devils and then against Chicago State University (a historically black college).

Mob Clues

Jack McCallum and **Clyde Martin** are two thugs from local gangster **Frank Bannister's** mob. If event B comes up, Jack will defect and may rat on his former employer. He is more anxious to get out of town than to make trouble for the professor, but will provide the information described in the rumor. He is also aware that the professor is working with "Louie the perfesser" to fix the school's sports games, but is not aware of how this works. He assumes Swirlbach is somehow bribing the athletes with better grades, though he'll be confused about how this translates into winning rather than throwing games.

Jack is worried that Professor Swirlbach is becoming more and more erratic and will either turn on them, or do something so egregious that the authorities have to get involved—such as kill someone. Even without a murder, they are starting to draw too much attention. McCallan liked being a small fry in a small pond.

The Bank Robbery: **Reggie Blake** is a very good safecracker. But he's not good enough to break into the best combination lock in Chicago. He did it on Saturday night, October 16, hopped up on cat vitality (for breaking in) and bat vitality (for listening to the lock). He thus was able to get through with no metals or electronics on his body and leave with only the plates.

Louie "Perfesser" Mucci handles the **sports betting fixes**. He tells Swirlbach which games would be most lucrative if ISTC won, and Swirlbach decides which team member would be easiest to hype up using quantum vitality.

Academia

Illinois State Technical College is a small state college in Lyons, Illinois, part of the greater Chicago area in Cook County. It is a small, bustling Eden about ten miles southwest of dirty, corrupt Chicago. The college grounds are covered sparsely with ivy-covered brick buildings on the shores of Cermak Lake. Their mascot is the bobcat.

Lyons doesn't have its own police force. It has a contract with Chicago, and crimes in Lyons are usually handled by Captain Joe Siska.

Dr. Nelson Baker is chair of the Reed College Mathematics Department, Oregon. He's never heard of ISTC or Dr. Spencer Smith. Swirlbach used Baker's name to lure Smith to his death.

Mary Davenport is the Physics Department secretary. She's the one who worked with the fake Dr. Nelson Baker to schedule Dr. Smith's lecture at Reed College. The "nominal honorarium" was \$100, or about \$500 in today's money. That's a large figure for something like this.

Rose Heit is the Humanities secretary. She's generally willing to help student journalists.

Professor Arnold Lyle Waite (62, born 1914) is an absent-minded old physics professor, who uses outmoded teaching methods and can drop a student at fifty paces with his lecturing style. He should not be the Master of Ceremonies, but he's been tapped because of Dr. Smith's disappearance. Not only is he not up on quantum mechanics, he's still not sure relativity is anything more than a useful fiction. Black holes, for example, cannot possibly exist. They're an affront to reason. Conversations with him will be long and tedious, full of digressions and asides on his physics projects. He can prove useful for information on the school and on office politics, which is mostly against him. He will be able to correctly determine the nature of the device in Swirlbach's boarding house as a quantum device based on the principles of Swirlbach and Penrose, but he won't believe it works: there's no way Swirlbach's theories can be real and Penrose is one of those modern physicists who believe more in mathematical fictions than in real observation. Waite is an **Average Quality Rabble**.

Professor Robert W. Douglas (35, born 1941) in mathematics is more up on what Penrose was doing, and how it relates to Swirlbach's research.

Dr. Spencer James Smith (53, born 1923) is the Physics Chair and the organizer of the conference. He was Swirlbach's main antagonist within the physics department. His death is not currently known; he is assumed to have disappeared.

Coach Toomey is a tuna-fish health nut. He'll actually hand out cans of tuna fish to his athletes, or anyone else he can harangue. Tuna fish would have saved Smith's life. "Did you see the autopsy? Kid needed more protein."

Dr. Salem Mozart is the Department of Classical Ethnology, no longer accredited. He's old, he sleeps when he pauses, but he's also quite knowledgeable about mystical archaeology. He sells magazine subscriptions on the side. "You have to admit it's a nice theory, isn't it?"

Dr. C. Evan Spate (a potential PC) is a professor of archaeology, specializing in excavations in Iraq. He's unlikely to play a roll unless one of the players chooses to play him.

Cermak Lake

The lake is more than 18 feet deep. It is stocked with largemouth bass, sunfish, bluegill, and bullheads. It's named after Anton Joseph Cermak, 1873-1933, born in Kladroj, Czechoslovakia. (There are a lot of Czechs in Chicago. I'm not sure if this can be made to relate to the Czech paranormal science Swirlbach is using.) Cermak made his money on "Haulage" and then as a politician. His wife was Marie Cermak, 1875-1928. Anton was killed in an assassination attempt on FDR, at which point many things were named after him.

The lake used to be a limestone quarry (there are many in the area). It, and the land, were donated by the quarry owner, Gerhart Bumstein. His stipulation was that the school must be a technical school that emphasizes the whole student. It must have sports as well as academics.

Dr. Edward Swirlbach

Dr. Edward Johnson Swirlbach (36, born 1938) is a loner on campus. No one knows his background, other than that he is a frequent contributor to physics journals—mostly in the field of quantum mechanics. A search of his academic records will reveal that he was hired by the university in 1966. He lists no emergency contact. He studied at the University of Cambridge (St. John's College) from 1958 to 1963; his doctorate thesis was on the use of matrix rings in understanding quantum effects. Out of school, he was an Assistant Lecturer at Bedford College, London, from 1963 to 1966.

Dr. Swirlbach is the son of Professor Edward Millhouse Swirlbach, a famous scientist of the early 20th century. His mother was American. Both parents were killed in World War II by German buzz-bombs. He grew up with a guardian who was uninterested in him, but did not squander his inheritance too much. Swirlbach remains independently well off, but not wealthy.

Research or contacts in British sources might reveal that he is an orphan. That five years is a long time to get a Ph.D at Cambridge. That he was brilliant but prone to divert himself with subjects tangential to his studies—much of it in the philosophies and occasionally even parapsychology. Bedford College was happy to be rid of him—he was prone to obnoxious behavior during lectures, rarely collaborated with his colleagues, and treated them disdainfully when he did. He was brilliant but erratic. Not at all appropriate for England. He really does belong in the United States. He was initially influenced by John Lucas (“Minds, Machines and Gödel”) but broke with him on the subject of the reducibility of consciousness. His paths occasionally crossed with Roger Penrose. He was also disdainful of Penrose, but with less reason. Penrose is probably the closest to Swirlbach's intelligence.

Deeper research will reveal a Czech student at Cambridge named Ivan Jaroš who he used to partner with for lab work that didn't meet Cambridge academic standards. Jaroš returned to Czechoslovakia to work with Milan Ryzl and Robert Pavlita.

It only comes up because there was something of a scandal involving a mental ion reflector. Nobody understood it—it sounded like mumbo jumbo. But his one test subject went temporarily insane, and another dropped out completely and eventually died of a heroin overdose.

Dr. Swirlbach's boarding house

He lives on the first floor of a boarding house on Maple Avenue near campus. The manager and landlord are Dolores and Carlos Alvarez; Dolores also works at a hospital. She is too conscientious to talk about the doctor behind his back, but might mention in passing that he is a good tenant and has often helped her fix things around the house (his colleagues would be surprised at this side of Swirlbach). **She will more than once ask them to keep an eye out for her cat.** Suzy-cat disappeared several weeks back.

If she is somehow convinced to let someone into his room, she will watch them closely while they are inside. It's a standard college professor's home—books, little in the way of cooking utensils, he is a smoker—but **a detect hidden will turn up a small, button-covered box under the carpet.** A cable leads from the box, through a hole in the floor, into the basement. Mrs. Bernard will mention at this point that the device is part of the ‘electricity saver’ the doctor put in in lieu of one month's rent. The device is in the cellar. It is the original, smaller, superpositor.

Mrs. Bernard also believes in UFOs, and has a subscription to **UFO World**. She asked Dr. Swirlbach's advice about an article on Czech science, and he tore the article out and stormed off. The October issue is on her coffeetable. The lead-in page to the article is still in the magazine. The rest of the magazine has been tossed by General Counsel, but diligent search might turn up a newsstand that still has a copy. Kolchak and others likely also know UFO enthusiasts who would have copies. Someone at the conference might have one on a successful Academics BCS. Because it's the October issue, it's unlikely to be on most newsstands—10% in general, 25% for a good stand—as it's been cleared away for the November issue.

Dr. Swirlbach's original superpositor is in the cellar of the boarding house where he stays. It is a large metal box covered in dials, coils of sparking glass and copper wire, and spinning bars around a crystal globe. An electrical engineer can determine that the device generates electricity. A small trap door on the side of the device encloses a drawer containing an emaciated and dazed house cat, rigged with a wire harness and provided with an automatic feeder. If Mrs. Bernard is with them, she will go into hysterics at the sight. This is her Suzy-cat. It is well-fed and undiseased, but drained of energy, as limp as a rag doll and listless as a muddy river.

The public typewriter at the boarding house matches the typewriter used for the Reed College letter.

Rumors about Swirlbach

He's been buying a lot of meat.

He works very late, but recently is not found in his lab.

He got into an altercation at General Counsel a few weeks ago.

Vitality Superpositor Research

The Quantum Vitality Superpositor

For the last year, Swirlbach has been working on his superpositor, and using the collected quantum vitality from animals, students, and mobsters on himself, making him a superman at the expense of his sanity and intelligence. He has not realized that he's also taking on fragmented bits of every victim's consciousness, and as his sanity fades he's less and less likely to both realize this and to care if it's pointed out. He now has a reputation among students of being a megalomaniac—his nickname is “Boss Eddie”, both because of his persecution complex and because of his random rants about saving the human race from its own stupidity. He tones himself down considerably during those rare occasions when he interacts with colleagues, but he has no respect for his students.

The **Quantum Vitality Superpositor** uses what we would now call quantum entanglement through a network of specially-designed quantum cells to sap the juices of consciousness from living creatures. In operation, the superpositor removes 1d6 points of Strength, Health, and Will per hour of operation, as well as unquantifiable portions of consciousness. These are converted into a quantum superimposition analogous to Hilbert space ray states, a previously unknown state of conformal symmetry. The process can be reversed into a new subject. Every six drained points equals one point added onto the Strength, Will, Health, and Speed of the person receiving

the points. These bonus points last for one month. They are accompanied by a superimposed consciousness of the source of the points.

Those who have lost points regain them at one point per month.

The device is dangerous. There is a 5% chance that the small one will explode with each attempt to transfer stored vitality into a subject, and 2% with the more advanced, larger one in the old gym. This will kill (50%) or super-power (50%: add 2d6 to each of Strength, Will, Health, and Speed) the person in the device while also making them mentally unstable because of the fragmentary personalities absorbed from the stored vitality. The explosion is otherwise equivalent to one stick of dynamite.

The device appears as a globe-type table lamp atop a very retro-punk wooden cabinet in bronze trim. Vertical bars are coiled in bright metal wire, and horizontal bars spin at very high speeds.

Quantum Physics approach

Can physics transfer the minds of animals? Waite or math professor Robert W. Douglas, if asked, will say, of course not. But they are aware of Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics Roger Penrose at the University of Oxford and his speculations about why man and animal consciousness cannot be explained by physics. Douglas can more reasonably explain it.

According to Penrose, consciousness is not algorithmic, and consists of changes at the quantum level. It cannot be explained by modern physics, biology, and neuroscience, and it is why computers cannot imitate consciousness. To understand consciousness, you must study quantum effects.

Penrose delivered “Is Nature Complex?” at the British Society for the Philosophy of Science on December 3, 1973.

Parapsychology approach

- Here, as in most things paranormal, it's the Soviets who everyone looks to. The older researchers in psychotronics regard this as a problem in philosophy and psychology. The younger generation are not satisfied with describing the phenomena, but want to model, amplify, formulate, and compute. They define the problem as an interdisciplinary science. Soviet research now has two poles: **philosophical-psychological**, and **technical-physical**.
- The First International Conference on Psychotronic Research was held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1973. 49 out of the 91 papers presented were authored by Soviet or Eastern Communist Country researchers.
- Czech “Coordination Group for Psychotronic Research” established in 1967.
- The **Pavlista model**: (a) living organism (man), (b) processing of energy, (c) performance.
- The emphasis of Soviet and Czechoslovakian parapsychologists has not been on telepathy so much as biological energy transfer between animals and between man and animals.
- Originally, quantum-level vitality superposition was called “bioradiational sight ray” and was assumed to be a concentration of biological energy along sight channels; they no longer believe this; current thought assumes **quantum tunneling** or **advance potential**.
- In the sixties, researchers such as Parnov hypothesized a **special telepathic field**, conveyed by subatomic particles such as the neutrino or the tachyon (the latter might explain certain other forms of parapsychology of interest to the Soviets) or the **luxon**.

- L.D. Landau suggests **quantum entanglement**, based on the law of conservation of combined parity; according to that law, symmetry is preserved in any system whenever the “left” is substituted by the “right” and a particle by an antiparticle.
- The Soviet-Czech approach to parapsychological research will advance into direct man-machine communication, allowing not just creative computers and computerized men, i.e., cyborgs, but the storage of biological energies using physical psychotronic “batteries”.
- Soviet and Czechoslovakian researchers are not trying to prove paranormal events; they’ve accepted them. They are primarily concerned with creating a unified theory to describe the basic energy transformations involved.
- “Frantisek Kahuda of Charles University, Prague... calls them **mental ions**, or **mentions**... In agreement with the laws of the electron’s quantum field theory, Kahuda assumes that an entire conglomerate of elementary mention fields, specific to the individual mentions, forms through interaction and transmutation, a single common mention field in which the mental material motions take place—a sort of metaetheric environment that is linked to man’s living organisms and exists in nature independently of the will of all human beings... For high velocities Kahuda thinks that it will now be possible to actually develop **quantum mentiodynamics** as the quantum theory of mention fields... In Kahuda’s opinion, it is indisputable that mentions do exist.”—p. 26
- “The bulk of recent telepathy research in the USSR has been concerned with the transmission of emotional or behavioral impulses and the study of physiological responses... **Control and manipulation of the human consciousness** must be considered a primary goal.”
- “Psychotronic generators (also called Pavlita generators after the inventor) are small devices said to be capable of drawing biological energy from humans; the energy is accumulated and stored for future use... The concept of man as a source of unusual energy dates back at least as far as ancient Chinese and Hindu teachings, in which it was called **vital energy** or “prana”... The Czechoslovakian rediscovery of biological energy is credited to Robert Pavlita, an inventor and businessman from Prague who began work on his devices over thirty years ago.”
- “The Czechs claim that a direct transfer of biological energy from healthy to diseased or injured muscle is not only possible, but proven. The Soviets do not restrict the possibility of such energy transfer to any one physiological system, but state that biological energy transfer can be utilized to relieve human functional disorders of the nervous system, the internal organs, and the mind.”
- Robert Pavlita was born in Hungary and is a Czech engineer, at Lazne Belohrad, Czechoslovakia. Born 1911. (Dies in 1991.)

References

- **Paranormal Phenomena— Briefing on a Net Assessment Study**, P.T. Van Dyke and M.L. Juncosa, WN-8019-ARPA, January 1973, Rand, Santa Monica, CA 90406.
- **Soviet and Czechoslovakian Parapsychology Research**, Mrs. Louis F. Maire III and Major J.D. LaMothe, MSC, DST-1810S-397-75, September 1975, Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC 20301.

The Campus

Campus map

Lyons, Illinois, is at G4 on the Illinois map's Chicago area. In real life, it's on the location of Cermak Woods. In Kolchak's world, the Cermaks gave it to the Illinois State College network, with the stipulation that it be a technical college that emphasized the whole person. That's why this technical college has a full array of sports teams and even occasionally an All-American.

GM key

1. Alvarez Boarding House (Dr. Swirlbach) 4139 Maple
2. Fraternity Row (4200 block of Wyland Ave)
3. Visitor Housing (4000 block of Wyland/Maple, 7600 block of 41st Place)
4. Professor Robert Aickman Arboretum and Botanical Gardens
5. Dr. Henry Davenport Student Park. On an artificial hill.
6. Shelley Allan Gymnasium
7. John Shirley Moore Field (Baseball/Softball)
8. Old cogeneration facility. Lower level is the steam generation machinery and access to the steam tunnels.
9. Auxiliary steam tunnel access and reheater.

GM addendum to player key

- A. Administration Building
- B. Merritt Norton Hall (Natural Sciences: Physics, Chemistry, Biology)
- C. Phillip Ashton Hall (Humanities: English, Psychology, Philosophy)
- D. Wiener Hall (Mathematics, Computer Science, Engineering)
- E. Lloyd Carter Library
- F. Olin Auditorium and Conference Center
- G. Ray Wellman Hall (Men's Dormitory)
- H. Merritt Norton Hall (Women's Dormitory)
- I. Algernon Blackwood Student Center (dining, pinball games)
- J. Jack Plunkett Observatory

Steam tunnels



Entrances

1. The old cogeneration facility's basement is locked, but Dr. Swirlbach has opened it again. The basement is where the old oil-fired burner, still there pumps steam into the steam pipes that run through the steam tunnels. The cogeneration facility doors look rusted shut. There are no lights, but a detect hidden roll or direct question will reveal that the partially underground electric lines are new and humming with power. The lines can be followed into the steam tunnels and from there to the old gym.
2. The auxiliary access point and reheater attached to the library basement was blocked off, but the Riders re-opened it.
3. There is an underwater entrance in the northwest of Cermak Lake; it's about fifty feet long underwater to the tree roots in Aickman Arboretrum that lead into the tunnel.
4. Of course, with enough force, any of the place where a pipe comes into a building could be broken open, too.

Makeshift nuclear research facility

This underground research facility used to be a gym. It was converted to nuclear research in World War II in conjunction with the University of Chicago's role in the Manhattan Project and the Red Gate Woods project upriver. It was abandoned and buried after research moved to Los Alamos. Access is forbidden and trespassers completely ignored. There is still a small amount of radiation present in the facility. The upper level has been removed and turned into the Dr. Henry Davenport Student Park, with one historic marker describing what the area was once used for. It does not mention that the research facility is still there. Barring major excavation, the site is only accessible through the steam tunnels.

Doors to the outside lead to dirt, because the building was buried in 1952.

Basketball Court

1. This is the **entrance tunnel** used by the doctor and the mobsters he hires. The tunnel is hidden by a rubber-bottomed layer of sod, and leads about ten yards to the gym's concession area. Examination will reveal that the door to the building has been used recently. It is locked, but a good hard bashing will knock it down. Barrier Value 10.
2. **Storage room**, with a door opening on a flight of stairs leading to the basement and the steam tunnel. There are well defined footprints leading to these stairs.
3. The **concession room**. There is a large window, closed now, that would be used for selling concession items. Opening it will cause dirt to tumble into the room. There's also a table and chairs, and several preparation areas here.
4. **Storerooms**. Several boxes of fresh food in all of them, and small refrigerators in the ones north and south of the bleachers. A crate of bananas and a box of cheap meat pieces are in the one south of the bleachers.
5. A **locker room for the Killer Ape**. It uses the stairs to get to the other part of its cage down in the basement. The ape knows this territory very well and will take advantage of this to ambush the characters if they burst in.
6. The **gym** is equipped with bleachers on the right, basketball hoops (the nets have been removed), and a wall on the left where uranium rods were once stored. There were bleachers on the left, but they've been turned into workbenches. It's an eerie site, bleachers faintly dust-covered, silent, the occasional drop of water echoing in the shadows, and footprints through the dust that never disappear because the air is so still. If all lights are off, there's a very faint white glow from the old uranium rod holes.
7. A **locker room for prisoners**. The room is equipped with a cot and chairs. During the day, Darla is here lying on the cot in a state of near catatonia, tied to the cot with leather straps.

Unculator Lab

1. This is the **steam tunnel** access door. It will be used by Dr. Swirlbach for a quick getaway if necessary.
2. This **cluttered area** contains broken crates, garbage, old gym equipment, and other refuse. A tripwire on the stairs rings a bell in the quantum superpositor room, alerting whoever is inside. The door to the superpositor room has a Barrier Value of 30, a

Complexity of 5, a Barrier 20 lock, and a peephole. The door to the Ape lair is locked, blocked, and concealed by rubbish.

3. This **storage room** contains extra unculator parts. It is locked, in case the ape gets into the hallway. The door has clearly been used recently and regularly.
4. **Billy the Ape's lair** is junk-filled and very ripe of smell. The door to the stairs is open, the others are remotely operated from the laboratory. The ape has built a nest in the corner of the room, and there ought to be something interesting in it but there is not. Possibly something stolen from Rosalind or Michael Thompson.
5. **Billy the Ape's lab access** opens onto the laboratory via a barred entrance. The door and the gate can be opened via remote control in the laboratory. Billy is brought here when needed for the superpositor, and for feeding.
6. The **quantum superpositor laboratory**. This area is filled with mysterious gadgets, tables full of notes and half-assembled gizmos, and other mad-scientist stuff. There is a bat in a cage. The cage is designed to be inserted into the superpositor. Notable among the gadgetry is a device similar to an iron maiden: a metal shell which closes upon an occupant seated inside. Instead of spikes, this contraption has electrodes and other stuff rigged in it. This is the newest version of the Quantum Vitality Superpositor. The doctor's victims are placed inside and have their vital energies drained out and stored in quantum jars that look remarkably like Leyden jars. The west wall is equipped with shackles and chains for the restraint of people awaiting their turn in the device, though these are currently not used: he uses hypnosis. There are three door controls here, for the doors in the ape's lab access room and the ape's lair. There is also food here for the ape.

Non-Player Characters

Jack McCallum and Clyde Martin, thugs

WT	WL	STR	DFT	SPD	HLH	CDA	DRT
10	10	15	15	15	12	3	25

Skills: nightstick/club (16); knife (15); pistol (11); brawling (10).

Weapons: knives, pistol, club.

Clothing: street clothes

Dr. Edward Swirlbach

WT	WL	STR	DFT	SPD	HLH	CDA	DRT
(10)	30	25	35	25	25	4	51

Skills: physics (20); electrical engineering (12); French (12); English (16); academic subculture (14); research (12); pistol (11); fencing (13); brawling (14).

Advanced hypnotism: Must catch the eye of the victim. If the victim is not passive, he must make a Will AST or stand mesmerized while Swirlbach attempts to achieve control. Range is Swirlbach's Will Group in meters (4). Achieving control is a Task with a Period of the target's Will Group in minutes. Each successful throw will reduce the target's Will by Swirlbach's Will Group (4). When reduced to zero trance is achieved. Will is restored when the trance is broken. Swirlbach can ask questions or implant six suggestions: Wit Group (2) plus Will Group (4). The victim is allowed a full Will CST for any question or suggestion; an AST for one which he could be expected to show greater resistance, and a full Will ST for suggestions that would violate normal behavior or ethics. Swirlbach can repeat suggestions; they count against his total and he will not know if it's been successful until the trance is broken and the victim either follows it or not. Victims may be woken from trance by violent physical handling or actual damage if the target is fighting Swirlbach's control.

Weapons: Colt 1911. 7 shots 45ACP, BDG 11 DUR 5 +1 Inherent Accuracy PB/S/M/L 5/10/30/50.

Clothing: lab coat, street clothes (Armor Value 2)

Dr. Swirlbach's WIT is falling because of all the human and animal vitality he has absorbed. At this point, every time he absorbs from a new human his WIT drops by 1.

Billy Bobo, killer ape

Perc	Coor	HLH	DFT	DRT	Movement	CDA	Str Group
16	15	14	28	70	2/7/21	3	8
AV	Size	Fer.	Attack	Freq.	BCS	Damage	Notes
2	1	3	bite	1	9	1d6	Hug
			2 claws	2-6	15	1d10+1	

Billy has also been receiving charges of quantum consciousness. He has double the Damage Resistance Total and a Strength group of 8. The device and Dr. Swirlbach's training have also increased the beast's intelligence. He won't charge into melees or walk into gunfire. Treat Billy as a clever killer, able to rip people apart but more likely to grab them one at a time and drag them into hiding to play with.

Because he has taken on some of the consciousness of Jimmy Young and Darla Cowling, he has a strange connection to Rosalind Winters (via Young) and Michael Thompson (via Cowling). He will not harm them, although he may kidnap them. There is a good chance that Billy will turn sides if he sees Dr. Swirlbach mistreat either Thompson or Winters.

The smugglers named him after Billy Carter, and Swirlbach kept the name as it is as good as any other.

Random Names

Male

Scott T. Mills
Kip Hayes
Randall D. Robbins
Kirk A. Evans
Maxwell Adkins
Chris L. Hutcheson
Samuel Y. Hunt
Lynn Noble
Morgan Lester
Mel Sutherland
M. A. Evans
Roy M. Wilkinson
Marcos Jones
Jonas M. Hunt
Friedman Baker
Murphy Arlington
Tex Kelley
Scott Whitcomb
Gray Nelson
Dennis Clark
Michael Flanagan
Leo Robbins
Lee Chris Thurston
Steve Kirk Friedman
Aaron Dennis Bower
Frank Lee Stuart
Randall Baker
Madison Noble
Oskar Navrátil
Vladislav Krejčí

Females

Adrian McKenzie
Gina M. Jones-Sutherland
Kitty Wilma Brown
Ginger F. Wilkinson
Juanita L. Brown
Karen N. Hayes
Kelly Withers
Jill Stratford
Terry Stevens
Gabriel Anderson Friedman
Kerry K. Brown
Tess Robbins
Wilma Lucille Lewis
Ricki Boon
Joline Mildred Lester
Joe Flanagan
Dylan Smith
Tracy L. Farr-Travis
Charlene Lane
Carolyn A. Draper
Ginger Travis-Stratford
Tammy A. Stevens
Dale Philips
Elena Adkins
Erin Noble
Patricia Bradford
Carolyn Lewis-Barr
Fay Morgan
Xenie Mikešová
Ludmila Komárková

Player Handouts

Kolchak's opening monologue

October 28, 10 AM. When Illinois State Technical College asked the leading lights of Chicago journalism to recommend panel participants for their Conference on Unidentified Flying Objects, Vincenzo naturally turned to me. I gave him a few names, and if it happens to feed a few sources whose only reward to now has been ruined reputations, well, that's the Chicago way.

"Keep it light, Carl," said Vincenzo. "Little Green Aliens. People like humor. Don't make a big deal of it."

Why is a respectable college holding a conference on Little Green Men? Election year greed. A presidential candidate made UFOs part of his campaign. That's news, and news brings newsmakers to the college. The pursuit of truth... and a lot of grant money.

But publicity has its dangers. In the midst of the nuts, crazies, and academics who have no idea what mysteries lie hidden in the earth and stars... a body washed up on Cermak Lake.

Another dead student.

And another cover-up.

Item: Police Captain Joe Siska called the boy's wounds "fish bites".

No fish ever had teeth like that.

Item: He was wearing a sheet over his chest. A sheet painted with a cross... Siska's comment: "college students these days".

A young man in a white sheet, mauled to death by something... big...

You might say it's a big deal.

Kolchak's safe-cracking monologue

Item: There's a safe in the Bank of Lyons that cannot be cracked, in a building that cannot be broken into. That's how it was advertised to the shareholders.

Item: The safe that cannot be robbed was robbed two weeks ago. The thief either had the combination already—the police theory—or he was the best cat burglar and safecracker in the business. Which is what I was hearing from the underground. "He had feet like a cat and ears like a bat," said one source. But he got his training from a crazy professor. A crazy professor at Illinois State Technical College.

Reed College letter

Nelson Baker
Mathematics
503-555-3495
Reed College
Portland, Ore.

Professor Spencer Smith
Department of Physics, Illinois State Technical College
3900 Wyland Avenue
Lyons, Ill.
July 15, 1976

Dear Professor Smith,

On behalf of the Knowlton Lecture Series Organizing Committee, we are honored to invite you to present a lecture of your choosing at Knowlton Hall, Reed College. The Knowlton Lecture is presented in October of the Fall Semester at a weekday of your choosing.

The topic is your choice, in recognition of your accomplishments in relativistic quantum field theory and is sponsored by the Reed College Mathematics Department. A nominal honorarium accompanies the event.

Thank you for your consideration, and we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Dr. Nelson Baker
Knowlton Lecture Series
Reed College, Oregon

Pavlita Generator article

From UFO World. The author, Monica Garcia Alexander, is a pen name of one of the regular stringers for the magazine who writes many of its articles, Benjamin Lasalle. Lasalle can tell them of the government reports, and that he's recently discovered that some related research might be being performed at Illinois State Technical College. It is not government-funded, and they do not take it as seriously as they should. Lasalle is both a true believer and an opportunist. That is, he believes this stuff at the same time as he is putting together fake articles to make money and provide the public with the conspiracies that titillate them so much.