

Anthony Mayhew, and The Power.

You are fighting to hold on to the little of you that still calls itself Anthony Mayhew, but you can feel him slipping away.

Your mind still appears to be the '*you*' you remember, but the fear and desperation of the entity inside you is like an ocean swell that will soon smother completely the man you once were. You know you're only alive because it has possessed you, that it has given you a second life, a world of seeming immortality, but that you are going to die again all the same. Once it ascends, you'll be gone - and if you can convince it to leave, you'll die without it. But that wouldn't be so bad. With heaven so close at hand, that'd be just perfect. So you have to help it get what it needs. You need to find a new God.

When the attack hit the shelter last night you saw only a moment of it before the world went out. The wall crashed down on you and that's all you know. It seems that the father of one of the angel inspired children could not be abandoned so they picked you up and carried you here. You never woke up, at least not until the Power entered your body. It is a childlike thing, so lost and scared. So hurt. It tells you it was once the pure might of God himself, but that He has gone, his intelligence has left the universe to leave us to our own devices, and that it has been sent to serve His replacement. That was meant to be the Reverend, but he rejected it. It doesn't know why, it's all confusion and chaos. It fears him though, and will not go to Lucas again.

It needs a new host, and new individual to wield the Power of God. You don't really understand what it means, what it's saying - the thing has a splintered mind, it seems to be many creatures at once, and there is more of it, more minds and rootless ideas in the walls and stones of this cave. This was its hiding place, the place where the children found it - your daughter Briony and Sarah Barry. They are its friends. It loves them, but they are not the one's either. Someone here must be its new master, then it can let you go free. You are one of the dead, it cannot choose you.

It is the one that has protected Sarah and Briony from being possessed by the angels of God. They are not, as much as the townsfolk want to believe it. The gifts they have are actually performed by the Power, through them, to delight them. It loves them. But fears the others. The reverend and his people don't understand, can't fathom what God wants of mankind. Neither do the angels out there ordering them about. And the demons are worse. But none can't threaten you here, the Power keeps their abilities of all things numbed in here.

Time is slipping away. They've sealed themselves in. All well and good, that means you can watch them and choose. But who to choose? What are the necessary qualities for one who would be God? You have very few people to choose from, but you'll have to make do with what you've got. You need to hide from them what you are until you are sure of the one you want to bestow this gift to. And you need to be right, and quick, because the war out there is in your hands now. The person you choose to end it had better be the right one. The things in the walls get more desperate by the second, they call piteously to the creature inside you, urging it, and you, to choose. You don't have much time. But the choice is impossible...

Look at them: suspicious of each other, wrapped in fear and ignorance and aggression. They tend to you, a wounded man, at least the gentler of them do - but are they too weak to lay down the law if they ruled the world. You can't decide.

You need to keep the children quiet, stop them revealing your secret. Briony is a sensible and attentive child, but Sarah is a dreamer and more of an innocent. She revels in the healing gifts The Power gave her in return for leading people to it, and she keeps your secret for that sake now, but she may yet expose you too soon. Before it can pick a new God for this world, and you can pass to the next with a clean conscience. You. It. The line is so blurred now. But becoming less so as one side takes the rudder. You can feel yourself slipping away to the madness of the masterless Power...

Tips for play

Yes, I know. This character is a handful. Mayhew and the Power are in an uncomfortable symbiosis, with Mayhew seemingly on top, but only because the Power is such a directionless mishmash of thoughts rather than an intelligence in its own right. But it is united by a common passion, an instinct to form a proper union with a living intelligence which it will allow to dominate it in the way you currently cannot. The result is an edgy character who feels the weight of the war and the epic proportions of his decision on him, and is close to breaking. He is just holding on to the hope that the others will think it's his wounds and fear that are affecting him, and that the children don't blow his cover.

Briony Mayhew - The lawyer's daughter

Everyone thinks you're an angel. Sweet and bright and well behaved. An angel. And now they think it for real. Which is fine. Which is good. Keeps them in their place. Keeps them all in their stupid places, and underneath you. Because you're going to kill them all. And you can't wait.

You came to the cave days ago. Drawn by the thing inside. You've always had powers, ever since you were little. Your mother kept it all secret, from everyone, even your father. She made you hide how special you were, and she was stronger so you couldn't resist. But she's dead now, so now you'll have your way.

The thing in the cave is a vampire: it yearns for the living - to possess their lives, drain their bodies. But it loves you, agrees that you're special. Wants to make you its friend, make you its queen.

Last night it took your father. You helped it by stabbing your fingers into his wounds throughout the night and tearing the life out of him. Now the thing pretends to be your father, maybe it thinks it is, but you know it's not. You'll keep close to it; guide it, make it kill all the moron people of this town. Then it'll be strong, and sweep you away from here and the war that rages.

It does not want the angels to find it, or the demons. So it'll kill all the witnesses, and then you'll slip away. You might keep Sarah. The thing is afraid of Sarah's father, but it likes Sarah - just not as much as you. It gives her powers, makes it look like she can heal when really it's doing it itself. Let them play the game. You'll just keep whispering to it that killing these people makes the most sense, and then it'll do it for you.

It has to. It just has to.

This time you will be the only special one.

Tips for play

Briony is 14, and twisted as all hell, so feel free to make her as freaky and creepy as you like. Very Wednesday Addams. A psychic all her life, she has been shut away from living and expressing herself by her mother since infancy and has subsequently gone quietly and politely mad in the meantime, especially with all the adult mental content she has been able to get her hands on.

Tony Mayhew, her father, now houses this bizarre entity that she discovered in this cave. She doesn't know what it is for sure, but has decided it's a vampire of some sorts and in her insanity sees it as a means to some kind of retribution against the town and people who made such a special little girl so trapped and ordinary.

Sarah knows Tony has the thing inside him, and she'll need gentle controlling so as not to blow things before the thing can gather enough strength to attack the rest of the people. Also the thing and her father seem a little mixed up, so she has to go carefully with it also until the vampire is strong enough to wipe the rest of Tony out.

She's finding using her psychic powers in here difficult, but can still sense many things. Consult secretly with the GM, and I'll see what I can get for you. She'll be very careful not to blow her cover, and the people in town have never seen her show miraculous powers as Sarah has, so be careful not to tip your hand OOC as well as IC.

Sarah Barry - the Reverend's daughter.

Sarah is an angel. Everyone tells her so. Always have. Now God says she's an angel, so it must be true. Sarah met God in a cave a few days ago with her friend Briony, just before the attacks from the devil. He was so lovely, but he was scared and hurt. They stayed with him all day, and took away his fear and promised to always be his children and do his good works for him.

Oh it was definitely God. You could tell from the moment he came near you. Somewhere in your head and your tummy all at once something said - *This is God*. Even before he spoke. He needs people, needs his people to be near him, to help him end the war and fighting. But it's a secret, because people always want things from God if they think he's nearby, and before he can fix everything, they have to prove to him that they're the kind of good people who deserve helping. Which makes sense. Daddy is a preacher, and he's been telling folks they need to show God they believe in Him and love him, even when they can't be sure he's there, coz they can't see him or touch him. That's what Faith is all about. So when God came to you in the centre, and asked you and Briony to lead some good people to the cave for him to see, you knew this was the right thing.

Your father has always been a good man, the best man in town. But he's been sad and angry and scared for the last few days, even before the devils came. Angry at God you think. Now you have a chance to bring them back together. When God sees how your Dad has led the people and kept them safe, God will show himself to your father and to the other townspeople and it'll all be like it was before. Everyone will know that your Daddy is God's child too, and a special child at that, and they'll love him, and he'll be so happy and it'll all be because of you. Won't that be excellent?

God has made you an angel, with powers and everything. You can heal with your hands when you want to. When God says its okay. He's hiding in Mr. Mayhew at the moment, Briony's dad. But you can't tell - that'll spoil his plan to watch the people secretly. See who's good and bad. But there's nothing to fear. Your Dad blowing up the entrance gave you a scare, and made you nervous, but its not like God can't just open it again and make everything fine again. God is going to fix everything, so there's nothing to be afraid of. Just wait for your Dad to show how good a leader he is, and for all the people to behave and then God will fix it all.

If only Daddy wouldn't shout at them...

Tips for play

Sarah is 12, and an innocent. She is a sweet child who empathises with everyone, feels for everyone and is open to everyone. The situation scares her a little, but she has faith in God, who hides in spirit form in the wounded body of Anthony Mayhew, the father of her best friend Briony. Briony is the only other one who knows the secret. Sarah is used to doing what Briony says, and is enjoying the limelight that being seen by the townspeople as "*touched by God*" gives her. She likes that; being the reverend's little girl, she is seen as the greater angel, better than Briony, with powers that Briony didn't get. But inside she knows that Briony is still in charge and won't push it too far in case Briony gets mad. She does think God likes Briony a bit better than her, but reckons when God appears to her father that things will be quickly reversed.

Reverend Lucas Barry

You have sinned, and now you are making amends. Or perhaps you have been tested, and are fulfilling the task God ordained you for. Either way, you have a job to do here: it's not for the faint hearted, but you have the heart of a lion these days.

As a young man you were passionate about your relationship with God: you questioned and examined and were open to learning. You became a minister to be closer to Him, and He was a supportive partner in return. He gave you love in the form of Clara, your rock, and in your beautiful daughter Sarah, and he showed you all His wonders, and all the darkness He beheld as well. You were on an exploration, you and God, and one day this close relationship brought you to a startling conclusion, born of a simple notion. God did not want evil: He neither founded it nor suffers it nor accepts it. Yet it persists. And that meant only one possible truth – He didn't know it was going to happen, and he couldn't just make it go away. God, you came to understand, for all His immense knowledge and wisdom, and all his impossible power of creation, was neither omnipotent nor omniscient. He was Supreme Being, but in essence, no different from humans. And that's why He loves us so. The simple clarity of this idea was awesome; God was just another Man or Woman, simply with unimaginable responsibility. The certainty with which you understood this new truth brought you to a whole new plateau of peace, and love for your Lord.

But it also brought the Devil. Arrogance. Ego. What was it that had made you think to question the supreme and infinite perfection of God? It could only be the Devil – because he surely came to make good on his manipulation. He never admitted to his true name, but you knew who it was. He appeared to you, one night not long before the war began, and he offered you the world. He said that as surely as you had understood that God was no greater than a man, so a man, you in fact, could be as great as God. He offered you the mantle of godhood for yourself, the command of the entire universe. All you had to do was accept.

But you were not the puppet Satan had expected. You called on all the faith that made you who you were and you compelled him to leave. The demon shrank from your sight and vanished, screaming its fury.

Then the war came: demons walking the earth, angels possessing the children and taking them to battle, sights of unimaginable horror and hate. It almost broke you. But God, in His divine goodness, stayed with you. The angels placed His orders with you, and He touched your own child, and the child of your friend Anthony Mayhew, Briony, to be your celestial guides. Sarah had miracles in those small hands; healing bodies, healing your broken heart. They put the fire of the One True God back into you, and they showed you the way. The girls told you of this cave, and the rendezvous you would have with God. There would be a Second Coming, and you would finally be in the presence of God: God the Almighty, God the All-Knowing. You would be forgiven, the spirit of the demon would be wiped from you, the unclean mark you can still feel inside would be washed away. You believe this completely, and you will do anything to secure that.

Even sealing the people in here, so they cannot wander into the Devil's hands. Even keeping them here at gunpoint to ensure their safety. Even sending their souls to heaven, rather than risk a single one to Hell. There are those here who oppose you – Ian Calvert, Deputy Stiles, the Godless Carlisle – but more stand firm with faith in your leadership, and you stand firm in your faith in Sarah. You know there's an angel in there; that she speaks with the very voice of God Himself. You will be a rock: solid, unflinching, unforgiving – and should need arise, the weapon needed to dash the skull of the wolf before he harms your flock.

And yet, the feeling that the Devil has still marked you as his own, haunts you almost to despair.

Tips for play

What can I say? This guy is a Waco wannadie religious cult nut whose only future lies as the bad guy in a Poltergeist sequel, plaguing blonde children and very short psychics. He is fire and brimstone and unwavering certainty on the outside and a festering maggot ridden wound of doubt and self-loathing on the inside. Quite mad now, he has just blown up the entrance to this cave. There is absolutely no way out, except for divine intervention, which he is absolutely certain will be along presently.

He feels completely safe in here; he has shut the war and the Devil out, and has Sarah to tell him what to do. And this is the crux of his character – he is so removed from reality and responsibility now, that he is leaving all his major decisions to his child, whom he completely equates with God.

Psychotic, delusional, childlike. Feel free to wig out all you want, but you must try to keep control of all the people in this room, try to keep them all safe as long as you can, and try to maintain your image as the unshakable man of God. But if pushed too far, it's David Koresh in the blink of an eye.

Clara Barry – the Reverend's wife

Clara is a preacher's wife: modest, efficient, homely and sweet. She bakes the perfect apple pie, knows every fundraising trick in the book, and enjoys a simple faith – God in His heaven, Lucas in his Church and each day flowing seamlessly into the next. She is a loving mother to Sarah, who is a gift and a joy, and the perfect companion to her husband, keeping his home, balancing his books, keeping his schedule and sharing his load. Clara has honestly and truly loved the life she has been given, and in thanking God for all He has seen fit to reward her with she has worked every day to make her family and her town as proud of her as she is of them.

But still the Devil came. Not just the war - although that has all but sapped what strength she had – no, before that.

She saw Lucas call up the Devil; at least she thinks she may have.

The Devil certainly appeared to him. One night as she made her way to bed and Lucas was praying in their room, she saw from the landing the glowing thing appear. At first she did not know what it was, but then she heard it offer her husband the power of God Himself and she knew her Bible well enough to know where she had heard that line before. Lucas called it Satan, and ordered it to leave, and it did – but it left in such a fury that she could not help but think it was...surprised; that it had truly expected him to take the offer seriously. What had Lucas done to make the Devil think so of him? She has reminded herself over and over that Lucas cast the thing away – he cast it out - but she cannot help but fear what it is in her once gentle, compassionate husband, that the demon thought so open to temptation.

Now she fears Lucas utterly, though she remains devoted to him and has stood by him and helped him do God's work as laid out by his angelic Guides. The war came, shattering her faith in her kind and giving God, and she now believes only in Lucas, for as long as she can carry on believing in him. Even Sarah is lost to her, seemingly touched by God and now his instrument along with that sly bitch Briony *God forgive her for thinking such cruel things*. But it's true. She has never trusted that child; so quiet, so intense – she cannot bring herself to truly believe it is the hand of God that guides their prophecies and the healing powers her daughter has developed. But she cannot say any of this. She has to stay true to Lucas, she's too afraid of the zealot he has become to do anything else. But if she really is a faithful Christian, how long can she keep silent with her fears? Is she still a Christian, though, still saved by Jesus Christ? Does she still believe in God, in the face of such horrors?

Clara has a dark certainty that she will die in the airless tomb that her husband has created for them all. If this is to be her last day on earth, she needs to decide in what state she wants her soul to leave it. But the thought of betraying the wonderful life Lucas and Sarah had given her until now, of betraying the faith the other people here have in her for the faith she shows in Lucas, of betraying the love he has always shown her, the kindnesses she has never repaid him – can she really do such a terrible thing?

Tips for play

Clara is in a terrible dilemma – she knows her once loving husband has become an insane zealot, but she cannot currently fathom betraying or even simply not supporting the man she truly loves. She is convinced they are going to die, but how can she have been a faithful follower of God all her life and doubt His power now, in the darkest and most testing of times. She feels weak and scared and pathetic, but knows in her gut, that she can either do something about this or die a woman that never really had the courage of her very public convictions.

She has to tread carefully, see what allies she can make cautiously – there are people here who are looking to her for guidance, who feel disconnected from Lucas and the brilliant fires of his new faith. He is beyond them now, and they need someone to act as a go between to stay connected to God. That remaining responsibility is an anchor to her in her storm of doubt, she doesn't want to give that up too or she may be drowned by her despair.

Dr. Ian Calvert – the family doctor. The Atheist.

Ian Calvert is Rock Ford's resident doctor. A pillar of the community, he is respected and well liked. His lovely wife Amber works tirelessly for charity and to better the quality of life of the town, as does he in a way that is personal to every man, woman and child. Ian has friends here, the people around him now are his friends, even though he never joined their favourite club.

Ian Calvert is a good man, has always been so – but he sure as heck has never needed a long out of date instruction manual to tell him how to be that way. Ian has trained with science as his guide, and it has left him in no doubt that the world can function just fine, keep spinning on its axis in a perfectly reliable way, without some supernatural grandparent to give it a shove.

There is no such thing as God. But if there were, he'd be pretty ticked off at what is being done in His name right now.

Yes, there a horrifying things terrorising the country, maybe the world. Ian feels we should be out there meeting that threat, not dying from it in an airless tomb. Horrors they may be, but not from some Old Testament fiction. Aliens, genetic mistakes, hoaxer terrorists, mass delusions from chemical contamination – these ideas he is willing to consider. Not Armageddon. Not some inevitable purging of mankind for the sake of remote judgement. And while he may have no chance of defeating these things, he certainly won't entertain the notion a God that would rather he starved or suffocated away in a hole rather than put up a fight.

He's in the minority here, guns are aimed at him, and they'll probably fire if he tries to make a move. He doesn't even know if the opening can be cleared at all. But he will not end his life here, waiting for Lucas Barry's imaginary friend, and bowing down to the fatal mercies of this town's delusions. Lucas is cuckoo, his daughter and Tony Mayhew's daughter are no more angels that he is, and there is no Second Coming on the way today – just a cold and unpleasant death by asphyxiation or dehydration in a dark cave to the sound of pitiful weeping.

Ian Calvert isn't going out like that. Deputy Stiles is with him, so is Shiela Maguire, wife of one of Lucas's heavies, Barney Maguire. Amber will back him he is sure, as will his nurse Shannon. Maybe more can be persuaded. They don't have the guns, but they have the argument that speaks of life and safety. Lucas' shine is not so bring in the grime of this hole, he does not glow in the dark, and the more insane he gets, the less people will follow him.

Ian Calvert is going to get out of this place, and he's not going to wait for God to help him do it.

Tips for play

Ian is as passionate about atheism as Lucas is about his faith, and in his own way is just as much of a scary zealot. He rants and argues and will bow to no one. He's arrogant and sarcastic, and he'll get people's back up, especially in this atmosphere of high stress, where any sign of capitulation or wooly thinking or weakness will incite his anger. But he needs to be careful not to push his luck – the reverend and his men are clearly under immense pressure, on a hair trigger, they have guns and he's the main target. He could get himself shot very easily – indeed, he'd be the first to go. And there are sick and wounded here. The reason he came along was for their sake, he cannot forsake them now, and has no faith in little Sarah's so called healing powers.

Ian is the war-film born English captain in the Nazi concentration camp: give no aid to the enemy, do not bend your principles to please him, and take it as your duty to look for any means of escape – just don't hurt the other men while doing it.

Stan Hutton – The businessman and More.

Stan Hutton is a wealthy man, the owner of a string of convenience stores across the county, former mayor and chairman of the town council. He's a widely respected man who has done everything he can to improve the quality of life for the people who live in the town he has spent his entire life in, even though he could afford to live anywhere else – somewhere fancier, more exciting. No, Stan Hutton has remained true to his roots, and stuck by the people he grew up with. Stan Hutton is a remarkable man who owes his success to a single, simple concept. The lifelong worship of Satan.

Yes, as one might suspect, Stan Hutton has gotten where he has by being a rotten bastard. He pledged himself to the prince of lies as a young man, and as enjoyed an unparalleled rise in power and status ever since. He plays the pillar of respectability while underneath being as depraved and twisted a man as anyone could imagine. He has hidden his abominable misdeeds well, men such as he always do, and the rumours of his slut of a wife playing around behind his back only serve to increase public sympathy toward him. What would those people think if they knew for whom Stella was luring those young boys home? And to what ends their drunken willingness was put? Stan Hutton has been a bad man for a long time. But now he's gone.

You see, you may be wearing the flesh of Stan Hutton, who was bad, bad man, but you're something else entirely, something much, much worse.

You are Ziel, Demon Prince of consternation and contention, and you've just despatched the soul of Stan Hutton to give you access to this most remarkable time and place. You are on a hunt, the most important hunt of all time, and you are sure it is about to end here. God has gone missing, all of Hell is trying to get It back from whichever human slimebag has overcome It, and maybe then It will realise what a terrible mistake it made in putting Its faith in them and mend the universe once and for all. Then the Fallen and their Father can be reunited again, forever.

A little theological background, with apologies for brevity: God's first creation was Lucifer, Lucifer then created the angels with God, and between all of them they created the rest of the universe and mankind in it. One day God reveals to Lucifer that It created all this in the search for a special being to share Its existence with.

Lucifer, a little shaken that this being is not him, asks Who? And God tells him *It Doesn't Know*. Lucifer realises at that moment that God, for all its omnipotence, is not *omniscient*, no more truly knowing than Lucifer himself, and so he Falls, telling many other angels on his way, who experience the Fall in the same way. The Fallen angels in their despair, eventually make a pledge to keep this secret from the other angels, to spare them this suffering, and place all the blame for this situation on the sacrifice God has made for humans, the race from which It hopes this companion being will rise.

Having found someone to blame, they begin a campaign to stop humans achieving this ascension, in the hopes of restoring God to Its true stature. Zip to the present, following millennia of tormenting human souls and keeping them from God, and the worst has happened. Humans have finally got the better of God, despite all your machinations. God is gone; missing, presumed captured by one of these cunning mortals. You and the rest of the Fallen have taken it upon yourselves to tear through their mortal resistance, in a far less subtle fashion than usual, to free your Maker, and finally set the universe to rights.

The Celestials have opposed you, but they are restricted to inhabiting human child hosts, so they must know by now that the humans are behind the disappearance, with their power suddenly so inextricably tied to humanity. It is their blind ignorance that makes them fight on against common sense, but you have an oath not to burden any of your former brethren with the terrible truth about God. You must free It soon, therefore, lest more needless carnage of angel kin goes unchecked.

The last vestiges of Its Power you have traced to this cave, to these people. One of these mortals is behind God's incarceration, and you need to find out which, but with care and cunning. You see, from the moment you stepped into the cave, your demonic powers were gone, you were trapped in this flesh, and may as well be a mortal human for all intents and purposes. You cannot die, but you can't do much else either. The power of God is being used to enforce someone's will over this whole place. You need

to figure out which of these people is keeping the Maker captive; only then can you hope to come up with a plan to free It and yourself.

You have two lackies - Hutton had formed a circle of three to support his sacrifices. His wife, Stella, and her lover Barney Maguire, the math's teacher, both served the dark powers as well. You revealed yourself to them just after you took Stan's body and just before you lost your powers, so they should be easy enough to keep in line - you just need to avoid them finding out you have been bound in this hole with them. They both think you can get them out, even though the passageway has been sealed by the Reverend.

For the time being you are masquerading as Stan Hutton and vaguely throwing your lot behind the Reverend. You have a notion of where those miraculous powers of his daughter's may have come from. Barney is acting as one of the Reverend's heavy handlers and will feed back to you any confidences the pastor wishes to make to his closest supporters.

You need to find where God is hidden and free It soon. Then you can enjoy tearing all of these monkeys to shreds for the stuffy inconvenience they have caused you.

Tips for Play

The guy is a demon, but he's reduced to being a man. He knows he's cornered by the human who has stolen the power of God, and he's currently without a plan of what to do even if he should be able to figure out who is the guilty party. He's quite lost without his powers, but needs to keep Barney and Stella under control and between him and trouble should tensions rise, so he cannot let them know his powers are gone.

What is certain is that the power that remains in this room is at the behest of the guilty party, and that puts little Sarah Barry and the Reverend at the head of the list of suspects. But the air in the cave is thinning all the time, and pretty soon the list is going to be much shorter, so if in doubt, Ziel can afford to wait and just push buttons looking for reactions.

Barney Maguire - The high school maths teacher

Barney is scum. Even he knows it. He just hasn't cared much until now. But, just at this moment, there's a heavenly war going on outside the cave, a demonic master calling the shots inside the cave, and there's a very real chance that God himself could be turning up any second, presumably wanting to know *just exactly what Barney thought he was doing worshipping Satan all these years*. Suddenly being scum is proving to be a very real issue of concern.

Barney has had a life of doing whatever he chooses and has consistently chosen to damn the consequences. He drank to excess, womanised every opportunity he could and all the while denied it all to those around him, until lying became such a comfortable activity, that he would fill his days with things he could lie about later. Eventually his philandering ways brought him to the long, luscious legs of Mrs. Stella Hutton, wife of the mayor and the most glamorous lay in town. She was a passionate and exotic lover, and she would prove to be his downfall. After a month together, after he had become completely obsessed with her, her husband turned up in the bedroom one night when they were together. Barney had expected all hell, and he had got it. Stan Hutton smiled, took a seat in front of the dressing table, and urged them to continue. When they were done he offered Barney a lifetime of screwing his wife, and an eternity of power and blameless depravity. All he had to do was agree to worship the Devil.

Now Barney had never taken the smiling devotion of the town he had grown up in very seriously, and had about as much belief in God as he did in the likelihood of Stan's crazy offer bearing fruit, and therefore saw no big loss in selling his soul for the chance to keep screwing Stan's wife while the freak turned a blind eye. Of course after his first night of ritual that blasé was long gone. He saw the spirits that appeared at Hutton's command and the riches and power they gave him. Barney was scared shitless, but underneath that was an iron shield of greed, and Barney stayed in for the payoff.

He could whore and booze and no one stood up to him, except maybe Shiela his wife, but she no longer mattered. No one was willing to fault him for his lifestyle, and you could see they were more than a little afraid of him now. He loved it. And he worshipped the Devil all the more for it.

He and Stella and Stan had a nice number going for a couple of years. Then the war arrived, but the demons assured them their safety, and told them to keep out of sight and not to get involved. So they hid with the rest and waited for it to end. But then Ziel came.

On the night of the attack on the shelter, a demon prince called Ziel came to the three of them and possessed Stan, consuming his soul forever. A powerful Duke of Hell, he commanded them to keep his presence a secret, telling them he was here to watch these people: the Reverend and his daughter in particular. When the attack came, he followed them to the cave and came in with them. He told you to ally yourself closely with the Reverend, so you took the Deputy's gun, and helped Lucas carry the bag of explosives to the cave mouth and set them. When the explosion screamed through the tunnel you emerged from the smoke to cover the group should anyone get any ideas about retaliation against the Reverend, especially Ian Calvert.

Your main job, though, is to try and glean from Lucas what information you can about his assertion that God will be coming to save them. Mostly because Ziel has commanded you to be the Reverend's confidante, but also because a creeping fear has come to you. Hell is here. Heaven could be here soon then. God Almighty *could* very well turn up. *How pissed at you is He going to be if he does?*

Can't piss off Ziel: he's a demon prince, and should God fail to turn up as the wacko Reverend thinks, then your only hope for survival will be to have him open the tomb to free you. However, if God does turn up, whose side will you want to be on? Sure you'll stay close to the Reverend. *Just in case.*

Tips for play

Scumbag Barney is in a right pickle. Has to be seen to be obeying the demon Ziel currently inhabiting Stan Hutton's body or he'll use his grand demonic powers to reduce Barney to dust. So your primary concern will be to ferry back to Ziel any titbits of info about the coming of God you might get from the Reverend, and any info you can get on his angelic child and her miraculous powers. You have to be seen to be in complete support for Lucas therefore, but if you do want to be able to cover your bases should God really make an appearance, then presumably you're going to need top do something about your dodgy background to date. Something to get you back into someone's, anyone's good books. But what? And what if Ziel found out your faith in him was less than complete? What about Stella? Will she be thinking the same things as you, or are her ties to her husband and her Devil more concrete than yours? Do you care even what she intends to do?

Stella Hutton - Society wife, of ill repute

Yes it's true. You're a slut. If that's all the breadth of vision these people have. Yes, you like to drape your slender body with luxurious cloth and intricate gold tokens and find simple minded but gorgeous young men to have sex with. You are very rich, you regularly frequent the finest spots on the planet for the pursuit of pleasure and you are very beautiful - why shouldn't men be attracted to you?

Because it's all founded on a rotten pile of evil, and now, confronted with the consequences of such evil, its festering stench on every inch of your body and inside, you cannot overcome the screaming in your own head as a way out of this mess seems ever more impossible to find.

When you married Stan Hutton he was rich and powerful, and you liked that. You were shallow and grasping and determined not to live the meagre, abusive life your own mother had. You were intent on being subservient and beautiful and an unquestioning trophy to secure your comforts. As it turned out that wasn't what Stan wanted from you. He was happy for you to wallow as deeply in your own desires as you as you wished, enjoying the money and men with abandon if that's what you wanted. All he wanted from you was your love. And your soul.

Stan made it clear not long after you married him. He got everything he had from Satan. He showed you his little temple, the blood, the symbols, the black velvet, gold and steel. He didn't expect you to understand it, just accept it, and embrace it. He wanted you to worship Satan with him, and he'd give you anything to secure that promise from you. At first you were horrified - you'd been brought up a Christian strictly. Too strictly maybe. But Stan didn't seem evil for all his belief in the love of the Devil; he was a kind and gentle man, he was polite and generous and funny. You could talk to him for hours about anything and he just smiled and chatted back, as if you were the wittiest woman who ever lived. And he spoke differently about the Devil than the stories you had been terrified by as a child. He spoke of personal freedom, and being all you could be, and never having to be second best. He spoke of a deity who was a companion, an equal, rather than some distant absolute to whom you would never be any more than a flawed invention. In the end, you really did fall in love with Stan Hutton, and in your heart your marriage has never been the sham people think it is. How, then, could you deny him what he wanted? So you joined his prayers, and in time you lured a third in, as he asked you to. You seduced Barney Maguire, a local maths teacher at the high school, and when he was besotted with you, Stan talked him into making up the magical third element of his ritual circle. And the rewards have been great. Stan gets ever richer, and you enjoy the life of a queen, having anything you desire to hand as and when you want it. Men adore you, want you, and you can enjoy them and discard them as you please. But your heart remains with Stan.

Or it did, until the Devil took him.

Now your life is in ruins, and the Devil's to blame. The war came and everyone lost their way of life, even you and Stan who had always been obedient to the demons. They cast aside your petitions, told you to keep out of the way, that you would be spared, but only if you stayed clear and kept silent. It was clear that your hopes of a position of equal power come the war with heaven were not as you had expected. Stan was confused but would not argue with his masters, rather plodding along with the rest of the chattel like a mindless sheep. Then, on the night of the attack on the shelter, huddled with the dross of this nowhere town, Stan was consumed by Hell. In his place came Ziel, a demon prince with whom Stan had dealt in the past, a powerful Duke of Hell with powers beyond reckoning. He took Stan's body as you would an overcoat; something to wear, didn't matter what. Your heart went dead in a moment, but fear of this beast stopped you registering. It had come to watch these people, to watch the Reverend and his daughter in particular. It doubted the divine origin of her miraculous powers and it wanted to discern the truth. It followed them to the cave, with you in tow. It ordered Barney to stay close to Lucas Barry and support him and learn what he could from him. It let them blow up the entrance and trap you all in here and then it hunkered down to watch and wait, but with all the coiled tension of a thing that really does believe that God will show up any second. It doesn't say so, but you can see it in the eyes you once loved.

You, it seems disinterested in, except to warn you to keep your mouth shut, your eyes and ears open, and to bring to it whatever information you can find about what is going on in here.

You are alone in here, for the first time since you met Stan. Your heart is breaking for the loss of him, but there's no one to tell and no one to care even if you could tell them anything. They think you're nothing but a slut, one who'll get her comeuppance in the next world.

It occurs to you suddenly that if God does turn up tonight, you might very well get it before then.

Tips for play

Stella is in a bad place. She's lost Stan, is under the thrall of the creature who destroyed him and must do as it says, and has the prospect of meeting her final Judgement in this dark, cold, unpleasant hole. She can either get close to the demon to ensure it will take her out of here once it is done, or if she really believes that God is coming then she would need to do something to make up for her dodgy background. But what is Ziel works out that she's trying to cover her bases; she cannot imagine the horrors the thing has at its command. Failing that she can sit in a corner and cry at the waste she has made of her life and the emptiness that surrounds her.

Despair, desperation and loss fill her selfish heart; but this is a woman who has always known how to get someone to take care of her. But whom should she pick?

Phillippa/Philip Han - The school bus driver

Han (to avoid the multiple possible gender issue) is an immigrant Chinese national, only three years in this country. The driver of the school bus, Han is a kindly, optimistic soul, who believes in God, in a practical kinda way, and gets about life doing the best they can, and doing right by the people of Rock Ford. Never truly accepted by the white population of the town, despite sharing a religious faith with them, Han has always turned the other cheek; been polite and considerate to them when they just walked by without noticing the person beside them, taken the abuse and vandalism of their youth with quiet dignity. But enough about Han - you're not Han, you're a mighty angel of God, and you're not here to bow down to anybody but God Itself - just as soon as you find out where Hell has put It.

Now don't go telling just anyone, but you are the angel Raziel, Angel of Lore and Keeper of the Word of God. You are here on a hunt, probably the most important hunt of all time, and you hope you are near to its completion. If you're not, it may well spell the end of the universe, no matter how much you have been telling the humans that this is not Armageddon.

A very brief background: God's first creation was Lucifer; Lucifer then created the other angels along with God, and between all of them they created the rest of the universe and mankind in it. So that's fine until one day God reveals to Lucifer that It is waiting for one of Its human children to become enlightened and join It as a companion. Lucifer, it would seem, takes this a bit personally and gets the idea that since he made a whole chunk of the universe himself he should be on even footing with God, and decides to head off and establish his own kingdom and do all he can to keep worthy souls from God, thus ensuring his supremacy over humans. He convinces a bunch of fellow angels to his line of thinking and they too Fall with him. Those of you who remained loyal could not fathom why God would allow such a revolt, but surmised that God, in Its omniscience, knew that the Fallen posed no threat. God, in Its omniscience, refuted this notion saying that Lucifer and his Devils did indeed pose a very real threat. So the angels asked God why It did not simply destroy them for their pride, and God, enigmatically replied, *I can't*. To their horror, the angels realised that for all Its omniscience, God was not omnipotent, all-powerful, and that was why It could not overcome the Fallen with the mighty Lucifer at their head. They quickly followed this with the realisation that if Lucifer ever discovered that God was not omnipotent then he would surely lead his revolt against the Maker directly. Maybe Lucifer already knew, and maybe God was still too powerful for him, but either way, the loyal angels couldn't take the chance and swore to keep the true secret of God for all eternity, and defend It against the prideful Morning Star.

Until now. God is gone - obviously captured by Lucifer who has learned the truth of Its nature. Its essence has been traced to this place and these people, so here you are after it. The Devils have taken advantage of the absence of God to wage war on humanity outright, all the while lying to their angel kin that they have had nothing to do with it. But you don't believe that for a second. You have met that threat, although Lucifer's thrall over God has meant that you have been forced to use human hosts, in this case innocent children whose souls are not so experienced and developed, to give you material hold in the world, so much has the Power of God been perverted. Why Lucifer wants to bind you to human flesh you cannot be sure, but it most likely

You have followed the lead to these people because of the Reverend and his daughter. She demonstrates real power, but you know for a fact that neither she, nor her little friend, is actually possessed by angels. So where is she getting it from? And what makes them so sure that God will come here? It smells like some bizarre trap, but you'd rather see what's happening than protect yourself from possible harm And harm it has brought.

Han died last night in the attack on the shelter. It allowed you to take a body without harming the soul, and meant you could get close to the Reverend and his strange child guides. You feel sure that the truth behind God's disappearance lies with them somehow, or those near to them, you could feel the trace of Its presence about the group last night. When you reached the cave those suspicions were soon borne out, but the proof has left you in a real pickle.

All your powers are gone. You are trapped in this body and cannot get out. And now the damn fool Reverend has sealed the cave, ensuring all will die unless a miraculous intervention comes to pass. But there is definitely a Power of some kind here, exerting its will over the place and all in it. Whoever seems free of that oppression must be either the course or in league with the source. Until you can ascertain who that is, you cannot really come up with a plan to sort the situation out. But sort it out you must - God must be returned to Its throne, the war ended and humanity set back on its path.

One lead presents itself. While the power of Sarah Barry evades your understanding, there is another who may prove useful to speak to: Theo/Thea Carlisle. Nothing like the criminal the townsfolk seem to believe, this very sensitive soul is partially psychic and very much in tune with their surroundings. It may be that Theo/Thea can shed some light for you if you take him/her into your confidence. You read him/her as a genuinely good person, if a little narrow minded about the world.

But can you trust your senses now your divine insight is gone? What you surmised about them all last night might have been an illusion if the puppet-master of this drama is as powerful as they seem in here.

But with the Devils outside, probably dying to get in, you'll need to do something.

Tips for play

You're an angel, aloof and mighty, reduced to mortal shell. You can't die, but you can't do much else either. You don't really know who you can trust so announcing your true identity might be a dodgy move, and anyway, how do you back up your claim? You are currently without a plan, you'll have to play by the seat of your pants, which you are not used to doing and its bound to make you more than a little testy, a very non-Han personality trait.

Where to side in the beginning is hard to gauge - most people are with the Reverend and believe that God is coming. Maybe It is, but under whose control? The few opposing voices - Ian Calvert, Deputy Stiles etc. - are in a very disadvantaged position and, in their own way, are just as zealous and unreasoning as the faithful. Carlisle might be an asset, but is a passionate and overconfident type who could blow things for you as readily as be a useful ally. You'll need to weigh the room for a while before making any move that presents itself. Presuming you get a move at all.

Stephen Soames - The quiet high school English teacher

Stephen Soames is a quiet little man. When he speaks at the top of his English class it is in the hushed tones of the ever reverent. He does not know when he last raised his voice. He hasn't, to the best of his knowledge, had to. When Stephen speaks, people, students, friends; they all listen. Because Stephen speaks with the calm certainty of a man at peace, and it shows. Unassuming and reserved, Stephen nonetheless exudes the strength that comes with the surety of faith. When Stephen speaks, even God listens: because they understand one another.

Stephen is a rock of faith. He believes in the Lord with every fibre of his being and it makes him feel invincible. He attends church every morning, spends an hour in prayer each evening and has built his social world out of his work for God - church fetes, Christmas choral services, Christian camps and trips. Stephen is introverted, but not without friends and happiness. He laughs. Regularly.

Which is why when the war came, Stephen was not phased. He knew before ever an angel spoke with the tongues of babes, that this was but a test. He has calmly accepted God's will in this, and taken up his sword of Faith and shield of Hope and gone to fight for Christ. He helps the others to pray, follows the Reverend unswervingly, and Blesses the Lord for giving him the chance to do so. His is a world of straight lines, wrong and right in absolutes, Good and Evil clearly defined. Nothing worries Stephen, nothing scares him. God is his Father, Jesus Christ is his Salvation, and this is his time of Judgement. He does not question what surrounds him but rather accepts what will come with quiet dignity.

And should anyone screw with this set-up, he'll pull the gun he has secreted on his person and blow that blasphemer to Hell where they obviously came from and clearly belong.

Stephen is God's favourite little soldier. With all the cold hard steel of spirit necessary to back that statement up.

Tips for play

What can I say? Stephen does exactly what it says on the tin. Quiet, calm, sure and at peace, all this is God's will to Stephen and wacko little Bible bashing nut that he is, *God love him*, he's decided already that the word of the Reverend and his angels is the very word of God, that this is a test and he must simply remain firm. Should the devil interfere with this he has no qualms about pulling his secreted gun and saving the souls of anyone he decides has strayed from the path of the righteous, or consigning them to Hell. Not his place to judge the outcome, he leaves that to God. He is but God's instrument, and it'll take a massive shift in his reality to unseat him from this idea.

Surface: unassuming, sweet and full of Samaritan care. Underneath: Soldier of Christ, as unwavering in his holy wrath as the Archangel Michael.

GM note: I have the gun. If and when you want it, give me the word and I'll give it to you. You'll have dragged it from an underarm holster. Anyone getting close to you before then has the chance of coming across it though so watch out if you want it to remain hidden.

Shaun Standish - Sheriff of Rock Ford

Shaun Standish is a simple man, with a simple outlook on life, whose life has been thrown into a chaos of complexities that defy his simple understanding.

His quiet, friendly, devout community has been thrust into the centre of a war that seems as near to Armageddon as Shaun has been given to understand it. He has spent his life in faithful service; to his family, his community, his friends and his Saviour, but for all his time in service, he is completely unsure what he is supposed to do in this time of horror and terror. He is one of the leaders of this town, a figure of authority, of discipline, of safety and hope. They expect his leadership and his defence of them, and he feels wholly inadequate to meet this challenge. He simply doesn't understand how all this has happened.

For that reason he is throwing all his support behind Reverend Barry, who does seem to know what is going on. That makes him the only voice that can carry any real authority at this time. Sarah and Briony, his child angel guides, are like living icons of surety, and would convince even the most sceptical that they know where they are going. And so you have placed your trust in these people. Despite your doubts.

Now the Reverend has blown up the mouth of the cave and sealed you in here: buried you all alive. He and Barney set the charges while the rest slept, and you held the torch and let them do it. You never even questioned him about it. You have run so far on the philosophy that this man knows best, and you can't give that up now. If the Reverend and the children say God will save you, you have to believe him. All the others believe him - 'cept maybe the doctor and that fool Carlisle. And Stiles. And maybe a couple of the others. Your faith is teetering on an abyss. You have to cling on to something in all this madness, and right now Lucas Barry and his daughter are the only alternatives on offer.

So here you stand, incredulity on the faces of the people who have placed their trust in you, your service revolver hanging somewhere between Ian Calvert's leg and your Deputy's head, and you have to get them to stay clam, because that's what the Reverend wants. All those faces, looking at you and waiting for your continued leadership, but now questioning their faith in your wisdom. Making you feel about 3 inches tall. You have to get them back on your side.

That way you won't have to question whose side you are on.

Tips for play

The sheriff is in a moral minefield. He has faithfully put his trust in the leadership of the Reverend as the angels told them to, but now he's not so sure. Of course he cannot bring himself to admit these doubts to even himself, which makes him all the more bottled up and ready to explode. Arm a man like that and we have a doozy of a situation.

At the end of the day, you're all sealed in a tomb, waiting to die, and left questioning your lifelong faith in God to save you. Lucas says God will save you, miracles abound to support his supernatural notions and he has no reason to lie - presuming he's not the insane religious cult zealot David Koresh nutter he is currently doing such a fabulous impression of.

Shiela Maguire - The neglected wife

You feel like the world just decided to be honest about life, and stop pretending that it was any kinda bed of roses. Your life has been Hell for years now, and finally its just showing its true colours by turning up on your doorstep. The hordes of Hades are raping the planet - you couldn't give a crap. Nothing new here for you: betrayal, abandonment, despair - what they now feel from God, you've spent your adult life feeling for your husband. You are in love with Barney Maguire, and there's no worse feeling in the world.

He drinks all your money. He ignores you the little time he spends at home, and sleeps around when he's not there. He ridicules you to his so-called friends, and to his slut mistress, Stella Hutton. Oh yes, you know who he's cheating with - they're quite blatant if you know which bars to check. But no one else but you ever bothers to, and no one believes you when you tell him or her what he's really like. They don't believe you even when your standing, shaking in the middle of the bar, screaming and crying to his face to stop treating you so badly, and all he can do is laugh, then sneer, then shove you out the door. Still they drink with him, joke with him, think him the big man.

You know how pathetic you are. You can't make him love you; you can't even stand yourself. You can't leave him; you've nowhere else to go, no one else who even knows you're alive. You can't kill yourself because you're a goddamned coward. And anyway, Dr. Calvert keeps an eye on your stocks.

Dr. Calvert is the only kind thing in your life. He really cares, and not out of some dumb Christian sense of duty like the rest, but because you're a human being to him, and that matters. You wish you had found a man like him to love instead of Barney Maguire. Sometimes you think...maybe if you could love him, then Barney would just fade away. And so you have begun to convince yourself you are in love with Ian Calvert: after all, he's a fine man, and handsome. It's not been hard to do. Your trips to the clinic have been more frequent, and life has indeed been easier, and now - now when the world is crumbling about you, now is just the time when society and convention and what is right and proper mean as little as they ever will, and he might just find you a better companion than that cold fish Amber, more concerned with her position and career than her wonderful man. They don't even agree on religion, his most passionate topic. You'd spit in the face of God if he asked you. You are waiting for the chance to tell the world of your love for him. And his for you.

You would be exactly the companion Ian needs, and then his love for you would finally free you of your love for Barney, which still burns as bright as they day you met him. You are sure of this. At least you tell yourself you are sure.

Tips for play

This is a broken woman, deep in her depression and deluded about the world. Her husband's abuses have broken her utterly, and in the midst of this breakdown she has latched onto the only solid thing set before her - Ian Calvert. Her fantasy of being his wife plays out as unquestioning support and devotion, utter scorn and hatred for his wife and any who try to come between the pair of them, and an illusionary set of lies where they are lovers, designed to re-enforce her fantasy and hurt Barney as he has hurt her. Couple this with throwing herself at Ian and offering herself any way he wants her, and we have the beginnings of a fine Fatal Attraction femme fatale fruitbat case.

The details of the war, the cave, the people and the dilemma are secondary to this, and only affect her in how they play in the fantasy of her role as Ian's partner. If he gets worked up, then she'll get worked up to agree with him, but beyond that she doesn't care.

An important thing to note though is that she still loves Barney. He still has sway over her, and his demands, indeed any attention at all that she gets from him will tear confusingly through the veil of her delusional world with Ian.

Kane/Jane Stiles - Deputy sheriff of Rock Ford

You are a passionate young officer, with big ideals, trapped in Smallsville USA. Rock Ford is nice (or was) and the people are friendly, plus it'd be a good place to bring up a family (as people keep hinting heavily), but you have always hoped for a bigger life, a bigger challenge. So when the universe delivered this one, you made ready. You took to prayer with the rest, even though you'd never been that devout, and worked hard with the sheriff and the Reverend to keep the town together and the people safe. When Lucas dubbed you The Lord's UN Peacekeeper, you took it to heart, and felt a direction enter your life. The horrors around you have become a cause to fight for, and given you new faith in your Saviour.

But now the Reverend, the sheriff and the rest of the crazies in this living tomb, have taken that purpose from you, betrayed their Maker's holy word and almost certainly certified your death as well as their own. Last night, when the attack on the shelter came, you were beside the wall when it fell, and under it when the last mote of consciousness left you. You awoke, briefly, sometime later, a blurry figure tending to your leg, which, even doped up as you were, was clearly bust to hell. The pain flared and you went out like a cheap light bulb.

Now you have woken, pained and drowsy, to the sounds of an explosive roar. Even with your head swimming you can imagine what has happened. You had been coming to the disturbing realisation that the Reverend was breaking under the pressure for some days now, and that he was leading the rest, the sheriff in particular, down the path of unreason along with him. His child seems ever more the tool of darkness to you. Now you're all sealed in a living tomb to die, and hope is running out for the last stand of humanity. And that asshole Barney Maguire not only has your gun, he's pointing it at you? What the hell does the moron think you're going to do with a broken leg?

You have few you can rely on for support: Dr. Calvert, surely, your religious differences aside, unimportant in this new struggle, and maybe his wife. Theo/Thea Carlisle might well oppose the Reverend on principle, but can you trust someone reputedly so close to the enemy? How much exaggeration is there to those stories?

Whether united with others or alone, you cannot just lie here and die in this cold, dark hole. You can either try to convince the others of their folly, or get someone to put you on your one good leg and hop to that entrance. There may be more explosive left that you could undo the damage with, or failing that you'll dig yourself out if you have to, or die trying.

In the coldest part of your stomach a voice says, *Broken leg, without support: you haven't a hope of surviving. Who's to say that God won't come?*

But you don't believe that for a second. God doesn't ask people to lie helpless and expect Him to intervene when they go astray, and the hordes of Hell wouldn't be here if humans hadn't invited them. And God has played His hand by sending His angels. No, this is a David Koresh, subterranean Waco nightmare come true. But you do know that you'll never make it alone. You need help, and ideally, you'd like it to be from the one man you have always had complete trust in, until now. Shaun Standish. There's genuine goodness, and solid reason in that man, if only his fear would let him see it. He doesn't need to blindly follow the Reverend; maybe you can make him see that.

Tips for play

Passion. Integrity. Honesty. Guts by the barrow load. Faith like a rock. Confidence in spades. Stiles shoots from the hip, and is honour made flesh. This is precisely the kind of mythical person made mythical America great.

The left leg is bust and the pain is severe, but the grit and determination make you overlook it for now. But you cannot walk alone, *cannot walk at all really*, and can't even consider moving, while that pistol remains levelled at your head.

Shannon Miles - The kindly clinic nurse

The Walking Hug. That's what people call you. The kindergarten children call you Shannon Hugs. The grocery boys call you Smiles - a play on your name and initial. You smile for them all, show them endless patience, and care for them with respect and affection. And you **do** hug; hugging could be described as your clinical forte, that and laughter, which has very real medical benefits. You try to spread as much happiness as you can from the moment you leave your home in the morning until you get back, late in the evening.

Because God knows, Miriam is going to be spreading nothing but hatred in the basement storeroom all through the night. You have to lock her in there so she can't do herself, or you, any harm. Indeed the combination lock on the door has been a double blessing since it focuses and occupies her for hours each night as she tries to work out the code to open it, a code only you know. She screams and spreads her mess up the walls and describes the depraved things she wants to do to your family and friends. She thrashes and fits in her fury until she wears herself out completely. Only then does she sleep, late into the night. Only then can you sleep. Having silently listened to her evil all evening.

Blessedly, morning comes, and you can open the door to her cell. Clean the mess again, clean yourself up, and go to work, where life is bright, and has meaning, and smile and hug, and do the best you can for people, just in case that day becomes the last memory of you they have. Because someday you'll have to put Miriam out of her misery. Which, of course, means you'll have to kill yourself.

But since the war came, you haven't had time or energy to spend on Miriam. The needs of the hurt and dying have given you the strength to keep her inside, to lock her in your brain, maybe for good. You have found a new lease of life with the freedom your vocation has given you, and you hope, in time that this new skill will develop to the point where you can keep her locked away for weeks, maybe months at a time. You could build a whole new life. All you need do is keep busy, too busy to give up control to her vileness.

So this entombment couldn't have come at a worse time. The walls even look like the cell, ragged and scored with age old filth. Trapped in a box is her natural habitat, and she is screaming in your head to be loosed. She has been locked away for so many days now, that she is weak. But she is getting stronger the longer you remain in here, and soon she's going to be angry enough to break the hold you have. You have got to get out. In the meantime you keep busy, tending to Tony Mayhew and Deputy Stiles' wounds, seeing to the health of the rest and hoping that someone will convince the Reverend to see the error of his ways and open the entrance again. Otherwise you can only pray to God, pray with all your might, that he comes to save you all soon. To save you from Miriam.

And in your head she tells you, *You know, there's another person who'd be able to get you out of here, should your precious Nazarene fail to make the cut. CUT! TEAR! SLASH! Someone...elsewhere. Someone below.*

Tips for play

Lucky you - you get the split personality disorder, staple of every good horror story. Shannon is the primary persona, and wasn't she good to be true anyway? Patient, affectionate, non-judgemental and loving, she is a skilled nurse and has more saccharine than a truckload of artificial sweetener, with Miriam as the bitter aftertaste.

Miriam is the depraved opposite and lives inside her skull. If it's bad, if it's evil, if it stinks of depravity, then Miriam is into it. She also has had the unique pleasure of being locked up for the very most of her entire life, either inside Shannon's head, or in a small soundproofed room. She has never touched another human being, but she thinks she'd like to try. And if this imprisonment lasts for any more than a couple of hours longer, then she's going to get the chance to realise that desire. And more. Go very very mad. And bad.

Amber Calvert - The doctor's wife

Amber Calvert has never been just Mrs. Dr. Ian Calvert, and she works hard to make sure that that is never what she becomes. Fiercely independent, she has pursued her own career in local politics for the last few years now, and is gratified to be seen as a person of influence in her own right. Now a local councilwoman, she has her eyes set firmly on being Rock Ford's first mayor, and then...who knows? Governor, Senator, first female President. Amber is young, and very ambitious. Which is why, though she loves her husband dearly, she has risked the integrity of their relationship, their partnership, by stepping somewhat on his principles.

In college, Amber would have described herself as a lapsed Catholic. In fact she was more of just a plain lazy Catholic. She idly believed in God, went to Mass when she vacationed with her folks, but otherwise didn't think about it much. When she met the handsome and intelligent Ian Calvert, an almost evangelical atheist, the issue wasn't such a big deal that she couldn't go along with what he said while focussing more on the contours of his chest than the textures of his argument. She continued to allow room for the possibility of God existing while not pushing the idea at Ian, who tended to get quite steamed up about these things. In time, he mellowed and let people be what they wanted, and the issue became moot. But then he opened his practice in Rock Ford, and you discovered the desire for your own life and status, and things got complicated.

Rock Ford was God's own country, and in order to fit in, to empathise with these people, you needed to understand their faith. So you began to attend services, and consult with Reverend Lucas about issues of faith, and explore that forgotten side of you. You're still not a fanatic, and you retain scepticism about certain bible issues, but you have found that faith is no bad thing, and belief makes for a new found confidence that you have come to rely on in your work. Some people scoff at you, as you take your seat on Sunday; accuse you of political spin. But you know your own heart, and you are now in a position to respond sensibly to those accusations, and usually win those people over to your side. And now, for the first time, when Ian decides to take you to task for believing in God, you can honestly, and intelligently argue your case. God, after all those years of being ignored, has been a true friend to you when you finally came to need him. And while the truth of what is out there still escapes you - be it Catholic, Methodist, Muslim or Hindu - you have remained a child of God as He intended you: working it out as you go along.

Then the war came. Unlike the rest who were crippled by their inability to understand how their model of God and his mercy could fit with this horror, you let an open mind deal with the theory while you focused on the practicalities. Get the people together, keep them safe, contact the remote, calm fears, help in the clinic, hold the scared and weeping. Civic duty has ever been the core of your direction in life, and you have pleasantly surprised yourself to find that when all that ambition was stripped away, the duty remained.

But now you're in a tight spot. You have sided against your husband and with the Reverend in all this so far, forcing Ian to stay with the group and help the wounded rather than try to move them away to a more secure site with better facilities. You have put your faith in the pastor and his child, and seen first hand that she really can achieve miracles no matter how much wants to deny the proof of his own eyes. But now the man you trusted has blasted you into hole that will certainly spell your doom if God does not choose to show up, and your more liberal interpretation of His divine plan would suggest that personal appearances aren't high up the list of priorities. Ian is like a man possessed, as crazed as the reverend appears to have become. What should you do? Continue to back the Reverend in what may turn out to be an elaborate delusion of grandeur, or try to aid your husband's cause, risking the wrath of the zealous gun toting acolytes. Will he even trust you now after your neglect?

You help the scared, try to calm the room, hope to save yourself. God had better be as good the friend you think he is.

Tips for play

Building bridges, negotiating calmly and diffusing the situation is where Amber's strength lies. Patience will be vital if they are to survive. She'll be focusing on allegiances and getting in on decision making.

Connie/Cooper Brubaker - The high school physics professor and novelist

Former professor of astrophysics and planetary sciences at NYU, you retired here to Rock Ford some years ago to write, taking a job teaching physics to high school students more for the pleasure of teaching than the monetary concerns. A well respected novelist of both science fiction and science fact, you are a world authority on UFO sightings, hoaxes and theories. While you enjoy entertaining the idea of ET contact, you have, until now, been something of a sceptic about the likelihood of contact, and the veracity of any of the far fetched accounts you have heard.

This situation has given you pause, however. Brought up an Episcopalian, you have long since let that life go, and now remain largely agnostic, refusing to rule anything out, but not willing to confirm either in a fairly sound scientific manner. The current conflict and its myriad marvels, horrors and miracles has done nothing to change that outlook of agnosticism no matter under what banner the aggressors purport to travel. This may very well be the proof of ET contact that the world has both feared and sought for decades. An invasion by ET forces could very well come under the auspices of a strike from a deity, a sure way to scupper the resolve of those who might think to retaliate no matter how overwhelming those forces may seem.

You have stayed with the Reverend and his group, because you acknowledge the level thinking, practical skills and genuine group cohesion they have between them, along with the safety and security offered by the child Sarah and her new found abilities for healing. Ever an open-minded person, you are willing to see the world for what it is before you, and now make judgements until you fully understand that which you are looking at. You have for this reason been able to keep your friend Theo/Thea Carlisle with the group as well, despite feelings of mistrust and suspicion toward each other from both sides of that coupling. Pagan belief structures fit as readily into your comprehensive and humanist world views as any other, and Carlisle remains an intelligent and remarkable individual, with more going on in that head than is readily known.

You are not afraid to die, but you do object to dying senselessly from an act of thoughtlessness or ignorance. You cannot simply put agree to go along with the masses in what may have been a stupidly fatal decision to seal the cave into a tomb, but with the guns in the hands of zealots, and possibly no means to reverse what has been done, you must make the thoughts and actions of the whatever time and air is left count, and decide how you want to exit this life, should there indeed be a next one to account for.

Tips for play

Open-mindedness and an inquisitive, curious streak mark Brubaker out, along with great patience and confidence. Remember you are in your late sixties, unlikely to be phased by threats of violence, and unlikely to resort to histrionics should tensions rise. Conflict resolution will be appealing to you, since lack of communication teaches us nothing and only stunts our growth as human beings. There are no sides to be taken in your view. Fundamentally you are a person of dignity and honesty; and if you do die here, then it's likely that this is how you would like to be remembered.

Theo/Thea Carlisle - The wicked warlock/witch

They call you a witch. They say you worship the devil - which is ludicrous, because the Devil is a christian construct and therefore entirely outside your sphere of belief. Of course explaining this to them only seems to annoy them more. They say you recruit their children with offers of drugs. You do not. Their kids are interested in alternatives to mindless christian dogma and like being in a non-judgemental environment. And while there are various incenses and herbs to be found in your home, you do not deal drugs. What you have for personal use is a separate issue.

You area pagan. Nothing more nor less, and they simply can't handle that. Which is their problem, not yours. The cops know you're doing nothing illegal, you know you've done nothing immoral, and the whole town can kiss your ass before you'll let them run you out of your home just because you won't join their club. You have found a place of beauty and energy, and the Goddess know those are few and far between these days, and you have taken joy in the air and open spaces, to the point where you now loathe the time you have to spend indoors, becoming just a little bit claustrophobic in the process. You have found true joy in the woods and fields of the quiet palm of the Mother. But more than that, you have found a spot where you feel at peace within yourself - at peace enough to discover incredible depths of spirit.

You have gained an empathy in this place of power that you never experienced before - you sense the rain before it comes, feel the storm's arrival in the sunlight days in advance, and when you see a person, brush by them, you know their soul for a moment, and can tell who is well and who is ill. Old fashioned wisdom, from deep in the heart of the earth has come to you here, the kind of wisdom they burned midwives for at Salem. Though you'd not give the townsfolk the satisfaction of letting them here you say it, you really have become a witch, in the very best essence of the word. And you've learned. Learned the broken souls, the blackened hearts that masquerade as law and divinity in this town.

You hid from the war as long as you could, but eventually you had to seek better shelter. You wer going to flee the town completely, but Brubaker, one of your few friends in town, convinced you to stay with the Reverend's group as the safest place, even though it was clear the unease between you and them was palpable. You have been dragged along since by Brubaker, whom you trust and care for, but that concern may now have spelt your doom in this living tomb. And still they glare at you, maybe knowing you can see the darkness within them.

The reverend's guilt, that has overwhelmed him for days, the kindly nurse Miles in whom flashes, moments of hidden evil are clear to you. The shifting veil of camaraderie that hangs like some kind of fairy glamour about Barney Maguire, making people forget what crimes he has committed, the disconnection from reality his wife is experiencing. None of these things are concrete, vague notions without explanations, but they caution you against people you should fear. Right now though the beacon is dulled in this place, a heavy oppression hangs over it, a spirit of chaos and uncertainty. The only glimmers of insight you can get now are that Briony Mayhew, the little girl, means you terrible ill, and that protection lies with unassuming Han the bus driver, in whom a power for good, and an interest in you in particular, has suddenly arisen.

Tips for play

Carlisle is a free spirit; passionate, outspoken, idealistic and imaginative. Play the character as overtly or subtly pagan as you like. You have issues of isolation to deal with here, and a definite problem with being closed in, almost a claustrophobic reaction borne as much out of being in a room full of people who dislike you, maybe mean you ill, as being disconnected from the natural world you love so dearly. The overriding sense of danger from Briony Mayhew, and compassion from Han is clear though and may provide real distraction from the debate about freedom and the actions of Lucas Barry. Clearly the character is a little bit psychic, clearly empathic to the environment, but this is a passive ability rather than an active one - if I think there's something you can pick up I'll tell you, please don't try badgering me for mind sweeps or aura reading updates. You can tell that this ability has been greatly, almost completely, neutralised in this cave, and having got used to it pinging away like a background radar for so long, Carlisle is very disorientated and unsure without it.