



# WHISPERED CONFESSIONS

*Faith inspires people to charity, humility, and grace. To the Unknown, though, faith is fertile soil in which to nurture hate, fear, and pain. Buried in forgotten catacombs are the last remains of one man's faith. Pray that SAVE can lay them to rest.*

**Important Traits:** As usual, the information-based skills (Interview, Investigation, and Research) are important. Having at least a couple of combat-capable characters, and preferably one with the Feat of Strength discipline, is also highly encouraged. At least one envoy should be attuned to the Incorporeal School of the Art.

**Suggested Characters:** Tessie Dillon, Noriko Frost, Anaru Kamara, Christopher Monroe, Emily Montgomery, Jiro Saito

**Major Menace:** Apostate (the spirit of Donald Dabrowski)

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**Minor Menace:** Animated skeletons

## SETUP

Toledo Memorial Park Cemetery, established in 1922, presently encompasses almost 400 acres of land and over 86,000 burials. It gets about as much attention as any large cemetery — impressive, but it doesn't have the Old-World charm of some other graveyards. Locals sometimes ask about the “catacombs.” Rumors speak of tunnels running underneath the cemetery — are they real? Are they accessible? Are they safe?

The truth is that the Memorial Park catacombs are very real, but they are neither particularly accessible or safe. An unquiet spirit, tormented by its own guilt, lurks there, and thanks to an amateur ghost hunter, now it's free.

In 1930, plans were underway to build a massive mausoleum with space for 4000 bodies. It was meant to be an amazing feat of architecture, grandiose and gothic, but it never got further than a foundation and the cellars when the Depression halted the project.

Most of the workers took their misfortune gracefully and went in search of other work, but one of them did not.

Donald Dabrowski, a Polish immigrant and devout Catholic, snapped when he lost the job. It was the first work he'd found in months, and when he brought food home to his family in the weeks before the job evaporated, he'd felt that he was making progress. He'd been working towards opening a shop of his own someday. Now, it was gone, and what little money he'd saved wouldn't last. He fell into despair, got very drunk, went back to the construction site, and found a room containing supplies for the on-site chapel (which of course hadn't yet been built). He kicked open crates, tipped over pews, carved obscenities into the beams, and then set everything on fire. The blaze didn't spread far before it was extinguished and so the damage to the site was minimal, but Dabrowski, watching it burn from across the street with a crowd of onlookers, was horrified by what he'd done. That night, he had a dream in which Jesus turned His back on him.

He went to Mass the next day, confessed his sins to his priest, and went on to find more work. He carried the shame of what he'd done until 1955. Dabrowski, bored one evening and taken by his darker humors, snuck into the catacombs beneath the cemetery. He found that some of the cellars that he himself had dug were still intact — and, indeed, a pile of bricks that had been intended to form the walls of the cellars still waited under moldering cloth.

Dabrowski was not alone in the catacombs, though. He was horrified to find six teenagers drinking, smoking reefer, and vandalizing the walls with paint. Dabrowski yelled at the teens and threatened to call the police, but they roughed him up and threw him out, leaving him hurt and bleeding outside the cemetery. Dabrowski, incensed and with a reinvigorated sense of shame for his own past indiscretion, returned later that night with a shotgun and murdered all six of them.

Once again horrified and despairing, Dabrowski laid the teens to rest in a room in the catacombs. He then bricked up the room with himself in it, and slowly starved to death.

Over the years, the catacombs continued to be a hangout for bored teens, but apart from occasional charges of vandalism, trespassing, underage drinking, and public nudity, nothing untoward happened. In the 1990s, the cemetery's officials finally got around to sealing off the entrances to the catacombs. They remained so until recently, when an amateur ghost hunter (unaffiliated with SAVE) named Simon Baumf

knocked in one of the entrances with a sledgehammer and started exploring the tunnels.

While he was doing so, recording the process with his phone, he saw letters appear in blood on the wall, reading "REPENT AND BE HUMBLLED." He fled, and later posted the photograph and the recording to a "paranormal investigation" website.

## SAVE

The website in question is one of many that SAVE monitors for precisely situations like this. Shortly after Baumf's post, SAVE looked into it, and while the video recording is hardly conclusive, the Detroit HQ (the largest nearby SAVE HQ, unless your group wants to create one in Toledo), decided it was enough to merit an investigation.

SAVE provides transport to Toledo, hotel accommodation, and a rental car. The Society also retains the services of a local attorney (since this case involves trespassing in a public, residential area, SAVE feels it better to plan ahead).

## TIMELINE

- May 2, 1930:** Construction project on Toledo Memorial Park Cemetery is shut down. Donald Dabrowski, among others, is laid off. Dabrowski gets drunk, goes back to the site late at night, vandalizes and sets fire to it.
- May 4, 1930:** Dabrowski confesses what he did to his priest.
- August 25, 1955:** Dabrowski enters the catacombs on a whim and finds six teenagers (Allen Fairchild, 18; Brian Dawes, 17; Victoria Mellencheck, 18; Priscilla Brince, 19; Calvin Van Sant, 16; Lucille Portnoy, 17) drinking and partying in the catacombs. They scuffle, and Dabrowski returns later that night with his shotgun. He murders all six of them and bricks himself and their corpses up in a small room in the catacombs.
- August 26, 1955:** Allen Fairchild's car, parked near the cemetery, is stolen. It is never recovered.
- August 27, 1955:** Dabrowski's son Michael comes to pick him up for Mass and realizes he is gone. He reports Dabrowski missing, but does not tell the police that his shotgun is gone, too.

**September 28, 2016:** Simon Baumf breaks down one of the brick walls to the catacombs and explores them, recording. He films the words “REPENT AND BE HUMBLLED” on the wall of the catacombs before fleeing.

**September 30, 2016:** Baumf writes up a description of his experience and posts it to Ghost Hunting Ohio, a paranormal investigation website.

**October 1, 2016:** SAVE sees Baumf’s post and contacts the Detroit HQ.

#### START OF CASE FOR PCS

**October 3, 2016:** SAVE team arrives in Toledo.

**October 4, 2016:** If not stopped or dissuaded, Baumf returns to the catacombs. Dabrowski uses Influence on him.

**October 5, 2016:** Baumf purchases a shotgun at a sporting goods store. Acting on Dabrowski’s instructions, he returns to the catacombs and waits at the broken doorway for “intruders.” He shoots the first people to approach him (which might be the PCs).

## THE CASE

The characters have two main avenues of investigation when they first arrive: speaking to Baumf, or investigating the catacombs directly. They might also choose to do some research on the catacombs or analyze the video file that Baumf posted to Ghost Hunting Ohio.

### PRESCIENT DREAM

If a player is taking on the role of Jiro Saito or another character with the Prescient Dream discipline, you can use the following:

*You are walking through a narrow, dank corridor with dirt floors. You hear sounds up ahead — laughter, moans, sex...sin. You round a corner and see a vast room with dozens of naked bodies, writhing together. The smell of reefer makes you cough and the sound of rock music deafens you. You feel a cold, comforting weight in your hands, and you find nothing in your heart but wrath.*

### SIMON BAUMF – INTERVIEW

Simon Baumf is a slim, scruffy, white man in his mid-30s. He lives alone in a studio apartment in north Toledo. He is happy to talk to the envoys, but assumes that his “extensive” knowledge of the paranormal dwarfs theirs, and that they are hobbyists. He has never heard of SAVE, but would jump at a chance to join the organization and teach them about ghosts. In reality, Baumf knows nothing that can’t be gleaned from pop culture, chain bookstores, and the Internet. Until his experience in the catacombs, he had never encountered a real ghost (though he thinks he has). Flattering him or framing the discussion as asking his advice gains the interviewing envoy a +10 target number, while contradicting him or openly dismissing his expertise imposes a -10 to the target number.

- *False Lead:* Simon already has a pet theory about the catacombs: He believes that a ghostly nun haunts them. He has historical records to back this up (the nun’s brother is buried in Memorial Park) and refuses to let go of it. Feel free to make up the details (and change them) as you go; Simon’s theory doesn’t have to hold up under scrutiny.
- *Vital:* Simon was in the catacombs looking for ghosts. He had been in the catacombs for about 10 minutes when he saw the words REPENT AND BE HUMBLLED appear in blood on a wall in front of him. He did not think to try and get a sample of the blood. He started recording the incident immediately after he saw the blood. He remembers feeling a sense of guilt and scrutiny while he watched the letters form.
- *Interest:* Simon remembers that the hallway he was in came to a dead end, and that he smelled wet cement or mortar. He didn’t remember seeing any excessive moisture, though.
- *Esoteric:* The envoy notes that Simon’s overall demeanor isn’t consistent with feeling guilt or judgment; he’s a generally arrogant person. If he was feeling guilt, it may have been from an outside source or an effect of the Evil Way. Simon also mentions that the wall at the end of the dead end was a brick wall, as opposed to the raw stone of the rest of the catacombs.

## VIDEO FILE – INVESTIGATION/RESEARCH

The video file that Baumf posted to the Ghost Hunting Ohio site was recorded on his cell phone, in a dark tunnel illuminated only by a flashlight. The video shows the wall of the catacombs with the letters “REP” already formed in blood. As the video goes on, the full message (REPENT AND BE HUMBLED) appears. The video picks up the sounds of Baumf moving his feet and narrating the video (he says where he is and what is happening). Characters can make Information checks for the video using Investigation or Research, depending on their methods.

- *Vital:* The blood forming the letters does not run down the wall, but stops after the letter is formed. After Baumf stops talking, another voice is audible. The voice is whispering the Lord’s Prayer in Latin (*Pater noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum. Adventat regnum tuum. Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra. Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie, et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo. Amen*).
- *Interest:* SAVE refers to the ability of some creatures of the Unknown to cause bloody letters to form as a discipline of the Evil Way called *Write*. It is commonly seen in ghosts and other incorporeal creatures. The voice whispering in Latin is mispronouncing it, as though reading it phonetically.
- *Esoteric:* The voice whispering the Latin prayer is speaking with an Eastern European accent, possibly Hungarian or Polish. Toledo has a large number of Polish-Americans and descendants of Polish immigrants.

## HISTORY OF THE CATACOMBS – RESEARCH

The characters can research the history of the catacombs at any of the libraries in Toledo, though the main branch downtown has the most extensive local history section (+10 to target numbers). The characters may also wish to delve into SAVE archives on the subject; results of that investigation are covered here as well.

- *Vital:* SAVE has no record of any cases involving the catacombs or Memorial Park Cemetery. The Cemetery was founded in 1922. The catacombs were dug in the late 1920s/early 1930s as part of a planned expansion, and were sealed up in 1993 to keep trespassers out. The characters discover three entrances to the catacombs (all of which have been sealed). One is on the west side of the cemetery and is accessible by

walking through a residential area into the grounds (this is the one that Baumf used). One is on the east side of the cemetery and involves driving offroad or walking through a large, overgrown field and under a power station tower. The other is in the central part of the cemetery and presently has one of the office buildings on top of it, and is therefore inaccessible.

- *Interest:* An editorial in the *Toledo Blade* from 1955 decries the tendency of “teenage delinquents” to go into the catacombs beneath the cemetery and drink, or smoke reefer. The envoys can find references to sneaking into the catacombs for similar purposes in memoirs and blogs from Toledo residents. Some refer to seeing ghosts or feeling eerie presences, but SAVE has no follow-up on any of these (and they don’t show any signs of being real; no one was threatened or harmed, which is uncommon for the Unknown).
- *Esoteric:* A local history book discusses the aborted expansion/mausoleum, and mentions that after a number of workers were let go the site was vandalized, and supplies for the chapel were defaced and burned. No arrests were made.

## INVESTIGATION THE CATACOMBS – INVESTIGATION

If the envoys use the Eastern entrance to the catacombs, they need to be prepared to knock in a brick wall (General Prowess check). Finding the area that Simon was in from this entrance is likewise difficult; you don’t need to have the envoys make checks to find it, but you might turn a token light to have them get lost for a while. If they use the entrance that Simon used, they can simply walk in; he’s already knocked in the wall.

The tunnels in the catacombs are narrow; two characters can walk next to each other, but they’ll be cramped. The ceiling is low enough that most characters will need to stoop. The catacombs have no source of light, which means that the characters cannot see at all if they don’t bring a light source (or if the one they do bring stops working). The walls of the catacombs are stone and floor is bare earth, and the tunnels are cold and dank. Sensing the Unknown in this area carries a +30 to the target number.

The results of the Investigation apply once the characters reach the area where Simon saw the letters appear.

- *Extraneous Clue:* The characters find evidence of bats nearby. They might even find

some little brown bats hanging from the ceiling as they look around, which might be good for a Terror check (Superficial Trauma). The bats are not supernatural in any way and just want to be left to sleep.

- *Vital Clues:* The blood on the wall has vanished without a trace. No residue or stain is present. The characters notice that the hallway ends in a brick wall. The brick is markedly different than the stone of the walls of the rest of the catacombs.
- *Interest Clues:* The temperature of the catacombs drops sharply as the characters approach the brick wall.
- *Esoteric Clues:* Graffiti is visible on the walls of the catacombs, though it has faded considerably over the decades. The characters notice that graffiti seems to continue on the walls of the catacombs past the brick wall, indicating that the brick wall was added later. The brick wall itself boasts no graffiti at all.

### DONALD DABROWSKI – RESEARCH

The characters aren't likely to find this name until after they've been down into the catacombs and confronted the ghost once, but if they encounter it and retreat, they might wish to look into the man's life.

- *Vital Clues:* Donald Dabrowski was born in Poland sometime before 1918 (when his family emigrated to the United States). He had no criminal record. The characters find no obituary for him, but do find one for his wife Marta (1908-1983), which mentions she is survived by her daughter Anya (who died in 2001) and her son Michael (who is still alive and living in Toledo; the characters can track him down and talk to him). The service was held at St. Clement Catholic Church, not far from the cemetery.
- *Interest Clues:* Dabrowski was reported missing in August of 1955. He was declared legally dead in 1957. Newspaper archives of the time barely mention him, however, as they were preoccupied with the disappearance of six local teenagers.
- *Esoteric Clues:* The envoys turn up a newspaper clipping from 1950 that shows Dabrowski winning a trap and skeet competition. They find a grainy photograph of Dabrowski cradling a 12-gauge shotgun.

### MICHAEL DABROWSKI – INTERVIEW

Michael Dabrowski, now 87 years old, lives in a nursing home. He has no living family left (his wife passed away in 2010 and they had no children), so he is happy to receive visitors. If the envoys are too aggressive with their questions, though, Michael becomes confused and fearful (-20 to TN if the character uses an Interrogation specialization of Interview).

- *Extraneous Clues:* Michael tells the characters about visiting Poland with his father in the early 1950s, and talks about the damage the war did to the places his father grew up. This is moving, but not especially relevant.
- *Vital Clues:* Michael talks about his father and underscores that he was a kind and devout man. He says that his father went missing in August of 1955. Michael (who was 25 at the time and working at a factory) went to pick his father up for Mass on Sunday morning, and found him gone. He'd left no note and his car was still at his house. Michael can point out his father's old house on a map or give the envoys an address; the house is less than a mile from the cemetery.
- *Interest Clues:* Michael reveals that his father worked at the cemetery when he was younger (Michael was born in November of 1930, so his mother was pregnant when Dabrowski was employed there). He says that Dabrowski was working as a bricklayer, but got laid off when funding ran out. He remembers hearing his father rant about that whenever the subject of unionized labor came up — Dabrowski was firmly in favor of the workers uniting to protect one another.
- *Esoteric Clues:* Michael whispers that his father's shotgun was missing from his house. He believes that his father might have walked into the woods at a nearby Metropark and killed himself. This is why he and his mother never allowed an obituary to be printed; if Dabrowski committed suicide, he died with a mortal sin on his soul. Better that he's permanently "missing."

## GHOSTS AND HOW TO BANISH THEM – RESEARCH

If the envoys look for answers in the SAVE archives or among other contacts in the Society about how to fight or banish ghosts, they can learn the following.

- *False Leads:* The envoys learn that burying or destroying the ghost's physical remains will banish it. The mission report they find is very firm about this being “the only sure way” to destroy a ghost. This isn't true, of course; some ghosts might be vulnerable to such treatment, but not all (and not Dabrowski).
- *Vital Clues:* Ghosts are notoriously hard to banish because the methods to do so vary. Some require a proper burial, others fixate on a goal that must be achieved before they can rest. Some ghosts have a “focus item” that needs to be destroyed, while others can be exorcised with a séance.
- *Interest Clues:* SAVE has a record of a specific type of ghost called an “apostate,” the ghost of a very devout person. According to the record, apostates do not have specific goals that they wish to achieve and cannot be put down with a séance or ritual. They wallow in their own guilt, unwilling to let go of their sins, and their link to the living world (generally a focus item) must be severed.
- *Esoteric Clues:* Powerful ghosts (including apostates) demonstrate a wide variety of disciplines of the Evil Way. Most exhibit some ability to alter perceptions or beliefs (such as Influence or Lure), and others are able to animate the dead.

## CONFRONTING THE UNKNOWN

Once the characters are down in the catacombs and investigating the brick wall, you can have Dabrowski show up and start making things spooky. Dabrowski doesn't want to kill the characters necessarily... unless they say or do anything he perceives as blasphemous or sinful (which casts a pretty wide net). If he's trying to scare them off, he'll use Change Temperature to make the area colder, Lure to separate them, Confession to start friction between them, and Apparition or Write to talk to them directly. If he wants to harm them, he uses Halt, Haywire (to remove their light sources), and Influence.

If the characters knock down the brick wall (General Prowess check with a sledgehammer; using the Feat of Strength discipline is possible but done barehanded inflicts a Minor Injury), they find a small room (really the end of the hallway). Inside are six skeletons lined up along the left side of the room, and a seventh sitting in a chair directly in front of the wall. A rusted trowel sits under the chair. On the right side of the room is a pile of old bricks, covered in a decaying cloth tarp. Next to the bricks is a 12-gauge shotgun, long rusted into uselessness.

If the characters knock down the wall while Dabrowski is just trying to scare them, they have enough time for one Investigation check before he animates the skeletons (see above). If he's already angry, he activates the Animate the Dead discipline as soon as they breach the wall, and the skeletons stand up and attack.

Fighting the skeletons in close quarters is difficult unless the characters are prepared for them. If they have tools such as rakes or pitchforks, or even shovels, they can hold the creatures at bay or shove them. If they have guns, though, they're liable to have a bad time of it. Shooting a gun in the catacombs leaves everyone without ear protection deafened temporarily (-30 to all hearing-related checks for the scene and -10 for the next day), and gunshots don't really hurt the skeletons anyway. Axes, sledgehammers, and other blunt instruments are much better options. Note that because the hallways are so narrow, only two envoys at a time can engage skeletons, but the skeletons can all bunch up and attack those two envoys. They might also grapple an envoy and drag them into the room to beat them to death.

Destroying the shotgun (which can be accomplished with a General Prowess check or automatically upon activating the Feat of Strength discipline) immediately banishes Dabrowski. Any skeletons still animated collapse at that point. If the envoys retreat, the skeletons don't follow them out of the

hallway, though Dabrowski might use Halt or Master Element (fog) to prevent the envoys leaving, at the CM's discretion.

Dabrowski will talk to the envoys if they approach him respectfully or use the Voice of the Dead discipline. He'll reveal his name if asked, but after that only talks about how he is being punished for his sins and, being dead, he is beyond absolution. Protracted conversation with him inevitably leads to violence.

### DONALD DABROWSKI (APOSTATE)

**EWS:** 97 (Deadly)      **REF:** 50      **STA:** 65

**Injury:** N/A

**Disciplines:** Animate Dead, Apparition, Change Temperature, Confession, Halt, Haywire, Influence, Lure, Master Element (fog), Unknown Light, Write

**Aspects:** Incorporeal, Invisible, Special Weakness (focus item), Spectral Attack

**Special Weakness (focus item):** The apostate's focus item is Dabrowski's shotgun. If it is broken or burned, Dabrowski is banished to the Unknown forever.

### SKELETON

**EWS:** 50 (Common)      **REF:** 55      **STA:** 70

**Injury:** Minor -10, Serious -20, Major -30, Lethal

**Disciplines:** None.

**Aspects:** Bloodless, Deadly Attack (bludgeon, Minor), Expendable, Special Weakness (breastbone), Unfeeling, Unliving.

**Special Attack:** The skeletons rip off their own arms to use as clubs. If disarmed, as it were, they switch to punching and scratching, and inflict Superficial Injury.

**Special Weakness:** Any targeted injury to a skeleton's sternum shatters the rib cage and destroys the creature.

### SIMON BAUMF

**STA:** 50      **WPR:** 45      **REF:** 50

**Specializations:** Folklore (B60)

**Drive:** Be the center of attention.

## RUNNING WHISPERED CONFESSIONS

**Whispered Confessions** is a little different from a lot of the other free cases in that instead of going investigation → confrontation it tends to go investigation → confrontation → retreat → investigation → confrontation. This is just because a lot of the vital information isn't available until after the characters have already been down into the catacombs, but that stirs up the ghost.

A few things to be aware of when running this case:

**Simon:** Simon can be as much or as little of a pain the neck as you want him to be. If you feel like the PCs need more to do, have him sneak along with them and get himself Influenced or just lost. Likewise, if the players are having trouble finding their way or if they get caught up overthinking their strategy (one of my groups jokes that "we're overthinking this" should be SAVE's motto), Simon can do something stupid like go down into the catacombs on his own and send the envoys a text message right before something bad happens to him.

**The Skeletons:** Don't underestimate these things. They wouldn't be any real threat in a wide-open area, but in the cramped quarters where they can gang up on which envoys are in front, they can be deadly. I've run this case with and without someone who can use Line of Defense or Sphere of Protection, and "with" is definitely the safer choice. That said, it's good to know when to cut and run, and although the skeletons can kill the envoys they probably aren't going to kill them *quickly*.

**Dabrowski and How to Banish Him:** Far and away the most consistent place groups get hung up in this case is how to banish Dabrowski. There are some clues to the case that mention the shotgun, so that it's in the player's heads, but you still might wind up with players looking to get a priest down into the catacombs to hear Dabrowski's confession or drag his body up to the surface to give it a real burial. If you're running this as a one-shot and you're on a time budget and the players put a lot of effort and energy into a scheme, let it work. Give Dabrowski some way to scare them, sure, but let them banish him and maybe induct the priest into SAVE. If you're running this case and taking your time, let those efforts fail. It's a good way to hammer home how dangerous and diverse ghosts really are, and Dabrowski isn't going anywhere.

**The Neighborhood:** Memorial Park cemetery is in a pretty affluent part of Toledo, and people walking through the neighborhoods with shovels or hammers might cause suspicion. That said, getting arrested isn't fun, so I usually just use the thread of getting noticed to make sure the players don't get too crazy with their shopping trip.



More...

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## ENVOY ACTIVATION NOTICE

tags: **Inbox****SAVE**

### S **SAVE Detroit**

(October 1, 2017, 8:45)

to: &lt;Recipient List Blocked&gt;

Yesterday, a post on a website called "Ghost Hunting Ohio" caught the eye of a SAVE envoy, who forwarded it to the Detroit HQ. The post is transcribed below:

OK, so, there are these catacombs below the Memorial Park Cemetery in Toledo. I used to go in there when I was in high school, and it always felt creepy, but like, I didn't know anything back then. So, I figured I'd check it out now, but they'd bricked it up. I broke in, and walked around for a while kinda feeling the place out. I saw words start appearing on the wall in blood. Check out the video. Something's definitely down there. Trying to do some research and figure out who or what it might be.

The video the user refers to consists of cell phone footage of the words "REPENT AND BE HUMBLLED" appearing spontaneously on a stone wall, apparently written in blood.

SAVE has contacted the user, whose real name is Simon Baumf. He is expecting you.

Your mission is to contact and debrief Baumf about his experience and determine if further investigation is warranted. If so, please investigate the catacombs and determine whether any Unknown threat exists, and, if possible resolve that threat.

Since the cemetery is private property, SAVE has retained an attorney in Toledo. Her contact information is attached. If you are arrested, remember: stand on your right to remain silent and say only that you wish to contact your attorney.

Hotel accommodations and a rental car have also been arranged.

Please refer any questions or problems to the Detroit HQ.



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