

Something's Just Not Right

By AlHazred ([original post](#))

Sure enough, despite the fact that you're in the lobby at a quarter to two in the morning, there're two people ahead of you in line for the night attendant. The guy at the head of the line is in his bathrobe and pajamas, and smiles apologetically at you and the other guy for the delay he's causing you. He offers you both pieces of jerky from his depleted bag of snacks.

As you chew thoughtfully on the tough meat, you try to put a finger on whatever it is that's bothering you about the guy ahead of you, the second man in line. He looks like he's lost a lot of weight recently - his skin hangs in folds on his neck - and his suit is probably fits him strangely because of that. Of course, it's really only half a suit, you realize: he's wearing a suit jacket, white business shirt, and silk tie, but also a pair of colorful hawaiian shorts and flip-flops. He carries a briefcase, with papers sticking out of the crack; the briefcase is scraped and banged up like it's been dragged behind a car. Possibly the most strange thing about him is his cigarettes. They're black and smell very strange, and he has three of them, one behind his ear and two in his mouth, all lit and smoking. With a start, you see something white disappear in his mouth, and realize that he's eaten the bag of dessicant instead of jerky. He coughs once, but seems to show no immediate ill effects.

You look at the guy in the bathrobe who stares back at you nonplussed, awkwardly pause with your mouth open trying to find the right thing to say, when the odd man smiles so widely you think his head is going to split open, and says, "Very good jerky, yes?"

Plot Hooks:

1. *Mystical*: The odd man is a simulacrum, an artificial human created and aged alchemically in a vat. He has the knowledge of human culture you'd expect of someone who was created a year ago - mostly the absolute basics, without any of the common sense stuff you learn by experience. He managed to escape the lab, convinced that he's human enough to pass in regular society.

After he checks into the hotel (during which he'll show he has no idea what he's supposed to do), there will be a weird disturbance shortly before dawn. An odd glow-worm-like phenomenon will appear in many hotel rooms, crawling sideways over every surface as it phosphoresces a grayish green. Later, the odd man will appear in the public area, with an odd gray blotch on his face and looking extremely haggard - he knows it's his handler(s) looking for him by alchemical methods. If the players assist him or interact with him in any way, they may become targets as well, as the alchemist(s) try to contain the odd man and any who tumble onto his secret.

2. *Weird Conspiracy*: The odd man is a replicant, a clone of a specific individual. Unfortunately, he was poorly manufactured, and is starting to degrade - he's dropping weight at a prodigious rate, losing parts of his memory, and in general starting to go to pieces. Among his other problems, he's become convinced that he's the original man he was supposed to replace, and that what's happening to him is caused by some toxin introduced into his system by the Conspiracy. He's fled to the hotel to try to escape them. While in the hotel, he'll undergo a psychotic break, losing his hold on reality as his mind unhinges at last. What happens then is up to the GM, but the author has a mental image of a stormy night, with the odd man mutating wildly as his body begins to lose cohesion. He begins to stalk the halls, lashing out at passersby in retaliation for his pain and suffering. As the PCs begin to deal with this problem, three black limousines pull up in front of the hotel, disgorging twelve men in black suits and sunglasses, who turn as one

toward the hotel and begin the task of “cleaning” the site and containing the clone, along with anyone else unlucky enough to be caught in their net...

3. *Fortean*: The man is a researcher in unusual phenomena. He investigated a reputed haunted site nearby, where people had reported strange lights rising from the ground and odd animal noises. While there, he was engulfed by one of these lights, which exchanged him for... something else. Something not of this earth. The inhabitant isn't an invader, but rather another victim - just as everyone can tell there's something odd about him, he can tell there seems to be something odd about the world. He continues to do really bizarre things to try to “fit in” with the people around him - the alien's idea of logic doesn't quite match up to regular human thought patterns. Gradually, he'll come to realize that whatever happened started when he was at the haunted site, and he'll make his way there to try to go back. If he does, will the original researcher make it back? Or will something even more bizarre, and malevolent toward mankind, inhabit his body next? Or will the researcher come back with some... improvements... that show just how insane that place was that he went to?

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