

The Clatterer

By AlHazred ([original post](#))

Just before dusk, shrieking brakes are heard in the parking lot. A youngish man, with wild hair and generally unkempt clothing, runs into the lobby, hastily arranges for whatever room the clerk has available, and flees into it, carrying two nondescript suitcases that clunk and jingle suggestively. As soon as he gets into his room, the shuts and locks the door, and moving furniture can be heard as he apparently stacks it up to block the entry.

Throughout the night, all sorts of strange sounds emerge from the room. Clacking noises almost like railroad noise, strange whistles and hums like a radio, electrical discharges, sizzles, and pops... Calls from the front desk to turn down the noise result in hasty assurances in a panicky voice and, at best, temporary abatement of the noise. (Psychic/mystic PCs get only a fuzzy “static” and a sense of barely-constrained panic.) By morning, the noise is at an all-time peak. Whether the PCs barge in themselves or get the hotel staff to do so is irrelevant.

As soon as an entrance is forced (it must be forced due to the fact that all available furniture except the bed has been stacked in front of the door) the noise stops abruptly. The room will be found to be empty except for the two suitcases, sitting open on the bed. The inside of one case has been thoroughly charred, as if a fire was started inside it, yet the smoke alarm never went off. The other seems to have a slight coating of glitter inside, which seems to be suspended in some sort of mildly-acidic slime.

Of the man, there is no sign. Nor does anyone fitting his description exist inside any current database. His description does match a missing person case from 1968; that case was marked as “Inconclusive” and closed more than twenty years ago...

And his car? If anyone bothers to check, they find a double set of skidmarks in the parking lot, but there is no sign of any car that might have dropped him off. Local traffic cameras or parking lot monitors show a brief period of puzzling blank tape right around the time he came in...

Plot Hooks:

1) *Mystical*: The man is the missing person from 1968, or at least, his ghost. The man was part of a group of friends that uncovered the Long-Term Occult Menace. They managed to find its Only Real Weakness and stole it, but were caught in the act. The man was the only one to escape; his friends were slaughtered to buy him time to escape. He flagged down a passing car and hitched to the Hotel, where he attempted to make his last stand. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough time to figure out how it worked, and the Long-Term Occult Menace vanished him from the face of the Earth. Perhaps the PCs latest caper caused some mystical fallout that bought him enough time to reenact his last hours in true ghostly fashion. PCs who investigate the suitcases (or Object Reading PCs) can perhaps glean a few clues as to the Only Real Weakness; perhaps this alert will be enough to enable them to defeat the Long-Term Occult Menace once and for all.

2) *Weird Conspiracy*: There is an ancient secret society that aids travelers from the Future/the Past/an Alien World, helping them to fit in with society to take notes/gather specimens/lay the groundwork for a takeover. The “man” was one such traveler, being dropped off for his ride home by a member of the

society - they have technology to enable them to cloak their movements from electronic surveillance for brief periods. In any case, the "man" had to make his transmission beam (or whatever) tonight, and used the technology in the suitcases to make it work. The last time he visited was back in 1968 - investigating his movements then might give a clue as to what he was about this time, and lead the PCs to uncover the conspiracy before it's too late.

3) *Fortean*: The man was from one of the "dimensions next door," an alternate universe where things are just a tad different. The device in the suitcases allows him to transport himself, an invention of his own or of some group to which he belongs (perhaps the screeching tires was the sound of the "dimensional hole" forming; also, perhaps the device also allows him to travel through time in a limited fashion, explaining his "previous" visit). He was on the run from other dimension-hopping beings known as the Wardens, who seek to prevent such "unauthorized" reality-hopping. The Hotel might get a great deal more interesting in a short while, when the Wardens arrive looking for the fugitive...

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