

# Bloodlines



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# Bloodlines

by Preston P. DuBose

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# Section 0: GM Preparation

## 0.1: Introduction

Welcome to Pinebox, Texas. You have 24 hours to prove you can succeed where a generation of treasure hunters has failed. Be sure to watch your step, because some secrets are better left buried and some family trees are best left unshaken.

## 0.2: Levels

This adventure is written for four 5<sup>th</sup> level characters. Because combat is secondary to the unfolding mystery, game masters should find it easy to scale the adventure for any party. Refer to **Appendix 4: Experience and Mechanics** for information on how to scale the adventure. This adventure is written for a mature audience and includes sexual situations and graphic violence.

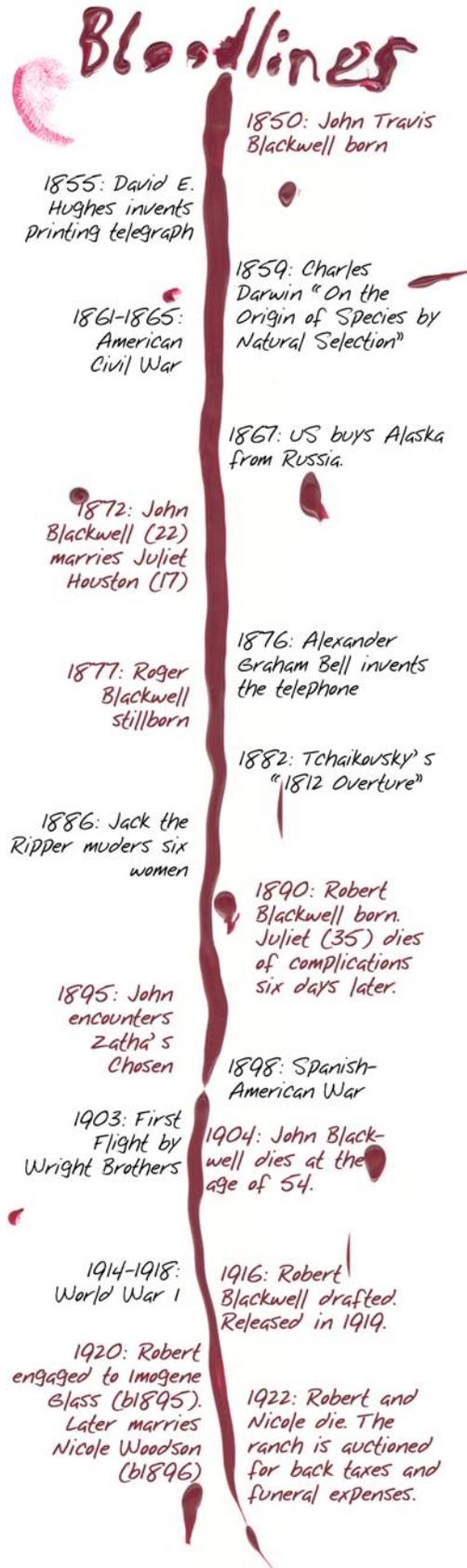
Because this adventure relies heavily on mystery and conspiracy, characters with mind-reading abilities should be considered game-breakers! Some measures have been taken to mitigate this problem (such as a warding brand described in **Appendix 3**), but the GM always best knows how to balance player fun with the needs of the adventure.

## 0.3: Play Notes

To get started, make copies of all player handouts and become familiar with the contents of this adventure. We also recommend that you visit our website, **www.12toMidnight.com**, for bonus support material such as extra maps, pre-filled initiative cards, and more.

Time plays an important role in this adventure. Assign one of the players to be the timekeeper and make sure he keeps a running track of the time of day. At the end of each encounter, give the players the time. Each part (The Cache, The Cult, The Haunting) should end roughly around midnight.

At the beginning of the adventure, make a note of which characters possess cell phones and other high tech equipment. An opportunity arises later in the game for a character to receive a phone call from a stranger. If a character carries a camera or recorder (either audio or video), make sure he tells you when it is in use. It may be useful as evidence later (See 2.1: *County Jail*). It is a good idea for the players to establish a standard operating procedure regarding the use of this equipment and inform you whenever they break this routine.



## 0.6: Setting the Mood

*Bloodlines* is both a mystery and horror adventure. Using props or controlling the gaming environment may enhance the mood in parts of this adventure. You have been provided with several player handouts to help give your players “clues” they can hold and read—you may want to suggest they keep these handouts in a binder or photo album. Many players also enjoy lowering the lights or playing by candlelight. Others enjoy listening to surreal music played softly in the background. When experimenting with these ideas, make sure to get input from the players—after all, they’re your “audience”. We hope you have fun playing.

## 0.7: Recommended Plot Hook—— The Contest

The following plot hook is recommended because it instills a sense of urgency from very early on. It works particularly well for low-level or new characters because it also establishes a common interest among characters even with radically different backgrounds.

The heroes are drawn into this roller-coaster ride as team members in a competitive geocaching team. See sidebar *Geocaching 101*. Geocaching is a hobby in which people bury waterproof containers holding items ranging from the mundane to the one-of-a-kind. The latitude and longitude of these containers are posted on Geocaching websites, where enthusiasts can search for coordinates in their area and try to find the hidden cache with the help of a hand-held GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) unit. Perhaps due to an earlier team victory, the heroes receive a personalized invitation to participate in a special geocaching competition in order to win sponsorship and a hefty cash prize (the amount of which is up to the GM, depending on how much it takes to entice your characters) from a major GPS manufacturer. One stipulation is that all team members must travel in a single vehicle, thus limiting the size of the team to six members or fewer. Give players **Handout 1: Apollo Contest Flyer**.

If characters carry cameras or other recording equipment, you may want to set some ground rules for knowing when they are in use. Part two includes an opportunity for such recorded material to be used as evidence.

The heroes should arrive the evening before and check into a motel, taking as many rooms as they wish, with reservations for at least one more night. When they arrive at the contest address the next morning (or

case it out the evening before), they find a strip-mall containing miscellaneous businesses such as an insurance agency, donut shop, real estate office, and a pair of empty spaces for rent. Read or summarize the following:

*Since you were instructed to arrive by 8:30 AM on a Saturday morning, the parking lot is mostly empty except near the donut shop. You find the exact address two-thirds of the way down the strip-mall. Only one other car is parked in front of the office—a very new-looking BMW. No sign adorns the outside of the business, and vertical blinds block the floor-to-ceiling front windows. The glass front door is unlocked and light pours from inside.*

*Upon entering the office, you see a bare area in what was obviously meant to be a waiting room. The only furniture consists of half a dozen folding chairs and a five foot long folding table draped with an Apollo GPS banner. A lone man dressed in business-casual clothing sits at the table with a stack of paperwork and a donut box.*

The man introduces himself as Tom Williamson, an Apollo regional marketing manager. He compliments the team on their performance in previous geocaching competitions and offers everyone a donut from the box. He apologizes for the lack of furniture, but explains that their company has rented the space only for this weekend, specifically for the competition.

Williamson glances at his watch and explains the rules for the competition. He asks that they hold off on questions until the end, then reads a prepared statement:

*Three teams have been invited to compete in the “Apollo Challenge”. Although technically the team can be any size, standard competitive geocaching rules apply—meaning you can only use one vehicle. Each team starts from a different part of the town so you don’t follow one another, but you each are starting an equal distance from the first destination. Each team is provided a set of coordinates leading to the first clue. That clue takes you to other clues, and eventually to a time capsule hidden more than 100 years ago. The challenge rating for this cache is 10—the maximum difficulty rating. You have 24 hours to find and return the time capsule.*

*Assuming you recover the time capsule, the contents must be returned to the starting point—me. I will then take the time capsule to the Texas Historical*

# Section I: The Cache

## 1.1: Old Pinebox Cemetery

The heroes investigate the Blackwell family plot at the Old Pinebox Cemetery and meet a helpful local. They learn of other clues at an empty lot and the local library.

*Your clue leads you to a small, very old cemetery with tightly packed headstones. Steel posts block the graveyard's driveway. The drive is flanked by an arched sign, which labels the site as the Old Pinebox Cemetery. A dozen senior citizens with plastic bags slowly wind their way among the stone markers picking up trash. Beyond them a pair of sheriff's deputies stand watch over a half-dozen prisoners in white jumpsuits running lawnmowers, weedeaters, and leaf-blowers. Even the buzzing sound of the small gasoline engines does little but underscore the heavy feeling of solitude and neglect.*

The guards eye the investigators as they enter the cemetery, but otherwise make no move to approach. At the front of the cemetery, the dates on the tombstones are as recent as the 1950s, but the coordinates (or appropriate clue from the alternate plot hooks) lead to the rear of the cemetery where the dates on the tombstones are older.

*Your GPS unit is accurate within 20 square feet—enough to narrow the location down to a series of graves all from the same family—the Blackwells. A couple of the tombstones appear to have been vandalized, for the engravings are roughly chipped away. Rebecca Blackwell died in 1890, and her husband John died in 1902. There is also a William Blackwell (d1877), Geoffrey Blackwell (d1860), Stanley Blackwell (d1862), and two more tombstones with the names and dates defaced altogether.*

Based on Tom Williamson's description of a "100 year old" buried treasure, the heroes should consider John Blackwell's tombstone as the most likely clue. Give players **Handout 3: Tombstone**.

A successful *Knowledge: Theology and Philosophy* check (DC 24) reveals that the Bible verses carved into John Blackwell's tombstone do not exist. With a successful *Spot* check (DC 20), the heroes notice a defaced symbol at the top edge of the broken tombstone.

### 1.1a: Enter Vera

After a few minutes, the team is approached by one of the senior citizens—Vera Bock. Read or summarize the following:



*As you examine the family gravesite, you notice one of the senior citizens bustle over. She appraises you as she removes leather work gloves from her hands. "Good morning. I noticed y'all over here checking out the Blackwell graves. Are you in that contest too?"*

# Steven Fuller

## Character Statistics

### Smart 1 / Charismatic 1 Ordinary (CR 1)

STR	13 (+1)	Hit Points	7	Defense	11
DEX	12 (+1)	Initiative	+1	Save Fort	+0
CON	8 (-1)	BAB	+0	Save Ref	+2
INT	15 (+2)	Wealth	+0	Save Will	+1
WIS	10 (0)	Reputation	+3	Damage Threshold	8
CHA	14 (+2)	Action Points	-		

**Attacks:** *Melee +1; Ranged +1*

*Baretta 92F:* Atk -3 / Dmg 2d6; Crit 20; Rng 40;

Notes: RoF S; 15 box; Non-proficient

**Skills:** Bluff +7; Diplomacy +5; Investigate +6; Knowledge: Business +7; Knowledge: Civics +10; Knowledge: Current Events +7; Knowledge: Popular Culture +9; Knowledge: Technology +6; Research +8; Sense Motive +2;

**Talents & Feats:** Deceptive; Educated: Knowledge (Civics) & Knowledge (Popular Culture); Simple Weapons Proficiency;

**Languages:** English (speak; read/write)

**Occupation:** Lawyer (White Collar)

**Possessions:** Ford F150 (1987); various personal items; small law office in downtown Pinebox

## Character Profile

*(Feb. 5, 1955 - present)*

Fuller is a down-on-his-luck-drunk. He is also a defense lawyer in Pinebox. His wife left because of his addiction, and he currently sleeps in his office. He is heavysset and short, but surprisingly strong. He is also a pretty good lawyer when he does not have a beer buzz—which is not often. Unfortunately, his connections in the Pinebox justice system were not much help when a DWI led to the revocation of his driver's license. Now he is reduced to begging rides from clients, neither of which he can afford to be too selective over. However, no matter how down on his luck, 20 years of experience practicing law in Pinebox could be a big break for the characters.

## Character Speak

*"Why don't we discuss this over drinks?"*

*"So tell me again why you're innocent of these charges."*

*"Don't count on those folks to clear your name. They like easy answers. You're gonna have to get your own proof."*

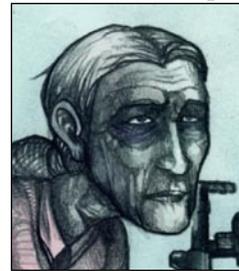
*"Did you suffer that injury while on the job? Cause if ya did, I can help you!"*

*"Uh... can you give me a lift back to my office? I sort-a lost my license because of a little misunderstanding. It's under appeal!"*

# Imogene Glass

## Character Profile

*(March 3, 1895 - present)*



Imogene is Pinebox's oldest resident and the former fiancée to Robert Blackwell. She and Robert grew up together, having attended the same church in Pinebox. As they matured, Imogene found her fondness for Robert had grown. Fearing that

her feelings might not be reciprocated she did not reveal them until Robert received his draft notice for World War I. For the next few years they wrote one another, and six months after his return in 1919, they became engaged.

Then, with little warning Robert broke off the engagement. Imogene was devastated. Eventually Imogene married and spent 12 years happily married to Evan Smith. Her new husband had also served as an Army officer during the first war. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army recalled him. He died in a train-accident six weeks later while still on American soil. Childless, Imogene reverted back to her maiden name and swore she'd never marry again.

Partially paralyzed by a stroke four years ago, Glass has outlived all her relatives with the exception of one nephew (Kevin Martin). She now lives in the Travis Nursing Home in Pinebox. Considering her advanced age, her mind is not in bad shape. However, the stroke has left her with a problem distinguishing time and processing short-term memory. Consequently, it is easier for her to remember events from her childhood than a conversation five minutes ago. Imogene spends her twilight days in a wheel chair watching game shows. Her skin is wrinkled from old age, but her eyes sparkle as she speaks of the past—especially Robert.

# Do you have what it takes for the Apollo Challenge?

**A** **POLLO PRECISION INSTRUMENTS** are known for their dependability and toughness. Are you? APOLLO GPS products have been used by Geocaching enthusiasts for almost 10 years. In celebration of the anniversary of Apollo's role in this growing sport, we're looking for a Geocaching team just as smart, tough, and dependable as Apollo's line of GPS instruments. We think your team just might have what it takes. That's why you are invited to compete in the **APOLLO Challenge.**

The **Apollo Challenge** is a Geocaching challenge like none you've ever experienced. The goal: a time capsule hidden more than 100 years ago! Follow the coordinates, track the clues, retrieve the time capsule, return it within 24 hours, and your team will prove themselves true Apollo champions.

**WHEN:** The registration deadline is September 21. Qualified teams will be contacted no later than October 1st with details on the challenge's time and location.

**FIRST PRIZE:** The team that returns with the time capsule will win a \$50,000 cash prize, three Apollo Platinum hand-held GPS systems, and full team sponsorship for six American Geocaching Alliance sanctioned events in the coming year.

**SECOND PRIZE:** There's no such thing as second-best at APOLLO. To the victors go the spoils, to the losers, NOTHING.

**To register:** Send your team name, previous competitive Geocaching experience phone number, and a \$25 registration fee to:  
The APOLLO Challenge  
PO Box 3345623  
Austin, TX 78629



1002 Rocky Way  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109  
[www.apollogps.com](http://www.apollogps.com)

# Lure of Gold, History Still Draw Interest

Pinebox, TX—Who can resist a good legend about hidden gold? Certainly not Tony Hidalgo, vice president of the Pinebox Historical Society and local expert on the Blackwell Gold legend.

“I don’t think a story like this springs up out of thin air,” Hidalgo says. “I’ve traced this thing all the way back to the source—John Blackwell’s own son. He was convinced his father had left him buried gold, and so am I.”

The legend of Blackwell’s Gold began with the death of John Blackwell. Soon thereafter, a story circulated that Robert Blackwell’s father had told him of buried gold. After the tragic deaths of Robert and his wife, it quickly became apparent that Robert had spent much of the rest of his life searching for it.

While that search only intensified after Robert Blackwell’s death and the public sale of his ranch, to date treasure hunters and historians alike have been left disappointed. Many now question whether there was

ever any gold, although a few historians such as Hidalgo still believe that there’s a kernel of truth in every legend.

Historians like Hidalgo place their faith in two articles—first that the legend is true, and second that if the gold were found it would become public knowledge.

“I would hope that most people realize that the real value in the gold is its historical significance.” Hidalgo says. “My worst nightmare is that someone would try to melt it down and resell it, but these days with drug money laundering and stuff I think people are on the lookout for that kind of suspicious behavior.”

For those unfamiliar with the legend, below is a summary reprinted with permission from the Pinebox Historical Society’s *Complete History of Pinebox (1979)*.

“Another legend, second in popularity only to the Curse of the Courthouse Clock (page 237), is that of the Blackwell’s Gold. John Travis Blackwell served as County

Surveyor from 1878 until his death in 1904. While details about Blackwell’s life are sketchy, his obituary indicated that at one time he had been a deacon in his church, a Freemason, and a strong supporter of public education. Other sources say that in his last years he became reclusive and morose.

Upon his death, John Blackwell’s homestead was inherited by his only son Robert, 14, who subsisted by renting the land to sharecroppers until his death in 1922.

A rumor of hidden gold began to circulate the community shortly after John Blackwell’s death. Most attribute the rumor to local preacher Jacob Townes, who had been present at Blackwell’s deathbed.

The rumor stated that as John Blackwell lay dying he told his son of a buried golden treasure. Unfortunately, Blackwell senior became delirious in his final hour and would only tell his son that everything he needed to know

would be written on his tombstone. Years later, Townes’ story was corroborated by Mrs. Imogene Glass (then Imogene Linton), who had been briefly engaged to Robert Blackwell.

The story quickly spread that Blackwell, as county surveyor, had discovered a hidden cache of gold—possibly left by Spanish Conquistadors or a “lost” Confederate shipment—and had been hiding it until he could figure out a way to claim it as his own.

Nor did John Blackwell’s tombstone, as dictated in his will, shed any light on the mystery. In fact, just the opposite is true.

It reads, “John Travis Blackwell / 1850b – 1904d / Lamentations 29:35-42 / Luke 97:36-78”.

Once the story of the treasure became widely known, amateur treasure hunters deduced that the verses were code for latitude and longitude. However, the coordinates lead to nothing more than an empty lot miles

from the Blackwell ranch.

In the decades since the story of Blackwell’s gold first circulated, treasure hunters have dug up every square inch of the small parcel of land dubbed “Blackwell’s Lot”. Nothing but a few stacks of bricks from the foundation of an old house have ever been found. However, some have reported a fellow treasure hunter keeping them company—the ghostly form of Robert Blackwell forever searching for his father’s gold.

“It makes a great story,” says Mayor Lauren King. “But I’d say that if there was ever any gold to begin with, it would have been found by now. Either a rancher would have come across it or one of those university teams would have.”

“Let’s face it—there are no more clues to be found, and every likely spot has been dug up a dozen times or more,” King adds. “John Blackwell took the truth about that gold to his grave.”

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