

LITTLE VALLEY BRANCH

SOMETHING'S WRONG

Two young women refuse the attentions of eligible bachelors and a third recently behaved scandalously, fighting a lawful marriage until the bitter end.

These three women have formed a cult. They believe that the King of Life will allow the Faithful to marry soul-mates who have died. They have become enmeshed in false doctrine that has led them to violence, disunity, and apostasy.

PRIDE

Sister Bethany was deeply in love with Brother Thomas and Sister Deborah was in love with Brother Matthew. All agreed these would eventually be good matches. When the two boys were killed in an accident on the river, Bethany mourned her suitor's passing excessively. Now she refuses to acknowledge men who come courting and turns them away. Deborah followed suit, but her father Brother Silas forced her to marry his recently-widowed business partner, Brother Cleophus.

A third boy, Brother Timothy, died recently in a logging accident, only days after the branch Steward announced that Timothy would be marrying his daughter, Sister Candace.

Since the death of Brother Timothy, Abiah also stubbornly refuses the attention of her gentleman callers, principally Cleophus Evans' cousin Mark. Unwittingly guided by demons, Abiah engineered Timothy's death.

INJUSTICE

The three women are not fulfilling their roles. Deborah fought tooth and nail to avoid marrying Cleophus and openly expresses her displeasure with him. Neither Bethany or Abiah will deign to be courted or marry.

SINS

Violence – The killing of Brother Timothy.

Disunity – “Stealing” Brother Timothy from Sister Candace, Deborah's behavior toward Cleophus, Bethany and Abiah's refusal to be courted.

Apostasy – the secret marriages (See corrupt worship)

DEMONIC ATTACKS

Sister Abiah's killing of Brother Timothy, aided by demons

Sister Zillah, once-loyal wife of the Steward, is having feelings for her pre-marriage old flame, Samuel Rutland, for the first time in many years. She is tormented by this.

Cleophus Evans is next to be killed as a “false husband”, with others to follow.

FALSE DOCTRINE

THE DEAD CAN BE MARRIED TO THE LIVING

CORRUPT WORSHIP

Bethany Rutland married herself, “before the King of Life and all creation” to her dead lover, Thomas Culver. She then performed the ceremony for Sister Deborah and the dead Brother Matthew before her actual marriage to Brother Cleophus. The two of them encouraged Sister Abiah to kill Brother Timothy rather than let him marry Sister Candace, then married the two of them, cementing the cult.

FALSE PRIESTHOOD

The cult is overseen by Bethany Rutland, who is drunk with her new-found demonic power. Sisters Deborah and Abiah are the other two cultists. In time Sister Zillah will join, oblivious to the fact that the cult destroyed her own daughter’s happy future.

SORCERY

Despite their false doctrine, the cult women still obey the central tenets of the Faith and place themselves in the stewardship of their “spirit husbands”. The demons bring the women vivid dreams and visions of the dead men, who instruct them to grow the cult. The demons also guide their hands and lend strength to the cultists. They sow marital discord and are currently working on Sister Zillah.

HATE AND MURDER

One man has been killed to prevent him marrying a rival, and two more (Cleophus and the Steward) are on the block.

WHAT DO THE TOWNSPEOPLE WANT FROM THE DOGS?

The Steward is truly at wits end and wants the Dogs to restore decency and sensibility to the young women of the town – and perhaps his own wife. His daughter Candace will eventually want a new husband, and would make a fine catch in a year or two for some enterprising Dog.

Brother Samuel wants the Dogs to persuade his daughter to give up her stubborn opposition to courtship and marriage. He also wants them to give Sister Zillah a gentle nudge toward fidelity.

Brother Nathan Clark, father of Sister Abiah, is a doddering old man who was once a Dog himself, and has the ragged coat to prove it. He wants to swap war stories, possibly offering some useful advice along the way.

Brother Silas Tanner, butcher and father of Sister Deborah, wants the Dogs to censure the Steward, who he quietly blames for all the trouble.

Brother Cleophus wants the Dogs to make his new wife to love and honor him.

Brother Jared and Brother Mark want the Dogs blessing and overt support in their efforts to marry.

Sisters Bethany, Deborah, and Abiah want to grow their cult. They see many advantages to marrying dead men, and would prefer that the Dogs either leave them in peace or, failing that, realize the righteousness of their newly-discovered doctrine.

WHAT DO THE DEMONS WANT?

The demons want the death-marriage cult to spread, and to flower into other radical doctrine. They want more men killed.

WHAT DO THE DEMONS WANT THE DOGS TO DO?

The demons serve the cult now, and want the Dogs to reach a sympathetic and soft solution – a stern lecture, a gentle nudge. They will do their best to ensure that Bethany and Abiah are seen as grieving victims who just need more time to get over their losses.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE DOGS DIDN'T COME?

Brother Cleophus would be killed to remove the stain of his “false marriage” to Sister Deborah. Sister Zillah would be recruited into the cult and kill her current husband, the Steward. Bethany would then hand over the reins to Abiah and leave to spread the false doctrine in neighboring Branches.

WHO'S WHO

Brother Ezra Watson, Branch Steward

Sister Zillah Watson, Ezra's wife

Sister Candace Watson, his unmarried daughter, was engaged to Timothy James and greiving his loss.

Brother Samuel Rutland, father of Sister Bethany, widower

Sister Bethany Rutland, cult leader and sorceress

Brother Nathan Clark, elderly father of Sister Abiah

Sister Abiah Clark, cultist

Brother Silas Tanner, butcher and father of Sister Deborah

Brother Cleophus Evans, hog farmer and business partner of Silas Tanner

Sister Deborah Tanner-Evans, unwilling wife and cultist

THE FRUSTRATED SUITORS

Brother Jared Milton, courting Bethany Rutland

Brother Mark Evans, younger brother of Cleophus Evans, courting Abiah Clark

THE THREE DEAD MEN

Brother Thomas Culver, beloved of Bethany Rutland, killed by accident

Brother Matthew, beloved of Deborah Tanner-Evans, killed by accident

Brother Timothy James, beloved of Abiah Clark and killed by her