

Maxinkuckee Township, Indiana

Located -- unsurprisingly -- on the eastern shore of Lake Maxinkuckee in North Indiana, this township (population 6,000) harbors a dreadful secret. Starting in 1973, Maxinkuckee's water supply was tampered with by agents of a high-obligatory sinister corporation (McKinley-Shreck Biological Solutions) for flagrantly illegal purposes. The entire town was regularly dosed with an experimental, untested heart disease prevention drug that was **absolutely not cleared by the FDA** before it was indiscriminately tested on everyone. No corner was left uncut. No safety precaution was not ignored. All worries about possible side effects and unforeseen results were airily brushed away as meaningless.

And, tanjit, they got away with it. *Clean*. The heart disease drug? It works perfectly. No, really. It absolutely prevents heart disease of all sorts; the drug even seems to have some beneficial effect on lung cancer and leukemia. You can feed it to babies, the elderly, people with compromised immune systems, all with nary a worry. Nobody got as much as an unexpected gas pain during the tests themselves.

This was apparently a disappointment to McKinley-Shreck; they were apparently hoping for something suitably awful to happen, for basically cult-like reasons. They spent twenty years trying to do **something** with the drug that would show a horrified world the hubris and folly of the corporate-capitalist paradigm, and utterly failed. In the end, despondent, the board of directors decided to force matters by engineering a hostile takeover in 1992 by the infamous Garfield Investments. Surely a corporate raider could succeed where they failed!

...CEO Laurence Garfield instead called in the feds, who were duly horrified. Unfortunately, the scandal was considered too, well, *scandalous* to let the public know about the drug, which immediately went into FDA approval purgatory with the expectation that it would be firmly and unofficially kept there for at least twenty-five years. The former owners of McKinley-Shreck made it easy on everybody by going through with a comprehensive, yet ultimate futile, suicide pact before the federal government could arrest them for **something** public. The whole thing was swept under the rug, and if anyone thinks that was an unusual and impossible response? Well, brothers and sisters, let me tell you: life in general from 1988 until about 1994 or so was downright surreal. You could hide a coverup, back then.

The problem is, the last person in government service with personal knowledge of the coverup (Ollie Rose, who is a Washington lawyer-bureaucrat with **far** too much pull to casually hassle) retired last year, and is uninterested in spending his golden years keeping things covered up. Absent unofficial official interference, the drug is going to get final FDA approval next year. And wouldn't *that* historical dossier fascinate and horrify people, assuming a whistleblower ever really sees it.

Fortunately, there's still a discreet overwatch of Maxinuckee Township for anything 'odd.' Well, sort of. The 'overwatch' is local author Joan Colton; she and her husband Jack are retirees running a lake marina and bed and breakfast. They're former Company 'illegal' agents, of course. It got wild and woolly during the end of the Cold War; both Joan and Jack got recruited by the CIA as deniable assets during one of the agency's more cowboy periods, so they know what freelancers look like. And they're not exactly *bored* in Maxinkuckee; but if something or someone shows up, they're going to notice. And have a certain skill set.

The strangest thing about all of this? There's a giant hole in the middle where normally one might expect High

Weirdness. Any competent group of adventurers will find that they're unconsciously expecting a shoe to drop, High Weirdly speaking. There *should* be a long-term effect to the drug or strange powers manifesting among the people who took the most of it or a secret cultist presence still in Maxinkuckee or a lake monster, surely there is a **lake monster** around here, right? But there isn't.

But on the bright side? Any site that has this much potential for High Weirdness is going to attract those who are willing, and perhaps able, to fill it up with something suitably Highly Weird of their very own. Note that this is a rather generous definition of the term 'bright side,' but at least it gives more virtuous (or lazy) groups something to prevent.

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