

2024 WoW Anthology Handbook

Details of Mystic Springs, MO

*Town name:*000

Mystic Springs (located in Missouri Ozarks)

Location:

Small fictional town of around 1500 residents in the middle of the state to the south of Highway 44 in the Mark Twain National Forest. Located on a highway that used to be a more main road, but is now off the beaten track.

Setting Specifics:

Mystic Springs has a few businesses, is primarily residential with your typical K-12 school, churches, city hall/rural police, fire station, beauty shops, barber, doctor's clinic, veterinarian office, park, a few small restaurants (including the *Deer Stand Café and Honky Tonk*), a psychic parlor called *Mystic Visions*, and a souvenir shop. Social media has recently really put the area on the map.

What makes this location different is the mystical elements of the town:

The springs have been around for many generations and people have always come to Mystic Springs to take advantage of the special powers people associate with them—think Psychics, Tarot Reading Parlors, “Medical” Spas, Music Festivals, and even Writing Retreats—similar to Eureka Springs vibe with Ozarks suspicion.

More recently, due to the efforts of a local social media influencer, many people have been visiting the area out of curiosity. Thanks to social media, many strange stories have emerged regarding the weird powers of the local springs. Marriages have been saved. Wounds have been healed and illnesses cured. Depression and suicidal thoughts have been vanquished. Financial misfortunes have been reversed. On the other hand, it is said that the springs might also make your life worse, depending on your sincerity and circumstances.

Is it the water? Is it the rocks surrounding the water? Or is it all just a myth?

Our anthology title:

Mystic Springs

A Collection of ????? — to be determined.

General Guidelines for Story Inclusion

Limit: One story per author accepted.

Theme:

Fictional small-town stories set in a town with a long history of mythology regarding a local so-called mystical spring. Stories will all take place in the small town of Mystic Springs, focusing on local characters, or people visiting the area from elsewhere, or a combination of locals and visitors.

Target Audience Age: Age 12 through adults

Target Audience: Stories will overall be positive (not derogatory toward small towns or small-town residents), to appeal to the majority of small-town residents. Bad guys should get their comeuppance.

Tone: PG 13. No erotica, explicit sex or gore, and very limited *mild* profanity (damn, hell, bastard, crap, etc. but nothing stronger or more offensive).

Length: 3,000-5,000 words

POV: Varied

Timeframe:

Varied past, present, or future

Genre: Varied. No erotica or stories for young children.

Format: Text. No illustrations.

Writing Stylesheet Guidelines:

Primarily, Chicago Manual of Style and Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, but may make some changes by final editors.

Final Word: Procedures and Publication comes from Stan and Goldie

Story Exclusivity:

We do not want to have to unpublish our anthology at any time in the future.

We will enroll the ebook in Kindle Unlimited for one year. During this year, we ask that you not publish your story anywhere else (KU is exclusive). After this one year, we will remove the book from KU, and you may publish your story elsewhere, *as long as it is non-exclusive*. This means that you should only publish the story in such a way that it does *not* preclude us from continuing to have the story in our anthology. For example, you must not include your story in a collection enrolled in Kindle Unlimited. Or, you cannot enter your story in a contest that requires the story *not* be published anywhere else.

Buying and Selling Author Copies of the print version:

- Author copies cost will be determined by number of authors participating and total page number (plus shipping). Previous anthology cost was approximately \$5.00.
- Author copies will be ordered in bulk to minimize shipping costs per book. Each of you will indicate how many copies you want to purchase.
- Authors will pay for the number of copies they wish to order (\$\$ for each book: printing cost + shipping cost + sales tax (on author copy price)).
- When you sell the books you ordered, you keep *all* the money (unless you have to pay a % to a bookstore or city taxes).
- For obvious reasons, we ask that all authors sell their own print copies for the *same price!* We will determine this price at a later date. Probably \$15.
- Ebook royalties are donated to Writers of Warrensburg, to pay for cover design, promotional efforts, projects, taxes, etc.

We want everyone who can meet the guidelines and can get their stories to a publishable level of quality included in our anthology!

Editing suggestions will be provided by the group, and the editing process will be approached as a learning opportunity for all.

Further Information on the Anthology Version of PG 13

Our goal is to produce an anthology that will appeal to the greatest number of readers who would have an interest in small town values. We believe the following guidelines will help the group achieve this.

Our anthology is going with a PG 13 rating focusing on middle school age through adult readers. We are leaning more toward intriguing our readers and making them think, rather than scaring or grossing them out.

This means stories can ONLY contain material suitable for readers ages 12 through adult.

Violence can be included, but it should be used more as a part of the story rather than the whole plot. This means you can have a fight or a punch or even a death, but no truly detailed or graphic descriptions.

No selections will be accepted that include excessive profanity or sexual content including nudity and explicit situations. This anthology would be classified as “Sweet” in romance. No action beyond entering the bedroom door and nothing that would indicate an unwilling partner.

Profanity should be highly limited and integral to the plot. Do not employ harsher “sexually-derived words” and none directed repeatedly toward a person or group.

No selections will be accepted that include anything that could be perceived as political or hate speech toward any individuals or groups as a whole. This includes races, ethnic groups, age groups, genders, religions, occupations...

Stan and Goldie will determine what violates the anthology tone we are seeking. Basically, we want our readership to think about and enjoy our anthology.

Town Characters

Samantha Simpkins - Police Chief

Age: 31 Caucasian

Samantha is single and lives alone. She moved here from St. Louis four years ago, after attending a police academy there and then getting this job offer to be a police officer.

Samantha feels that she is young for this police chief job, less experienced than she would like to be. She's nervous about being proficient at it. She basically inherited the position eight months ago when the other police chief (Russell Bagshaw) mysteriously disappeared. Russell hired Samantha (Sam) four years ago as a police officer (the department has only the two positions).

The two got along well, and Samantha was just starting to be comfortable in her role, then Russell left for home at the end of his shift one day, but he never showed up at home. No one has seen him since. Russell was 57, and his wife (Tonia) still lives in their home—still hoping he will show up soon.

Being from a city, Samantha still doesn't understand all the quirks of small-town life, and she feels a bit like an outsider. Samantha wants to fit in, and she often tries to be buddy-buddy with the residents, but it doesn't always come across as genuine.

Samantha's main hobby is handgun marksmanship, and she has set up a shooting range in her basement, which some of her neighbors find to be noisy and disturbing.

The new police officer is now Shad Redfern. 29 years old (overall, this is a very young two-person police force). Shad grew up in this town, and everyone likes him (he's outgoing and always positive), which Samantha finds to be somewhat frustrating.



Anita Dunstan - Veterinarian

Age 38 African American

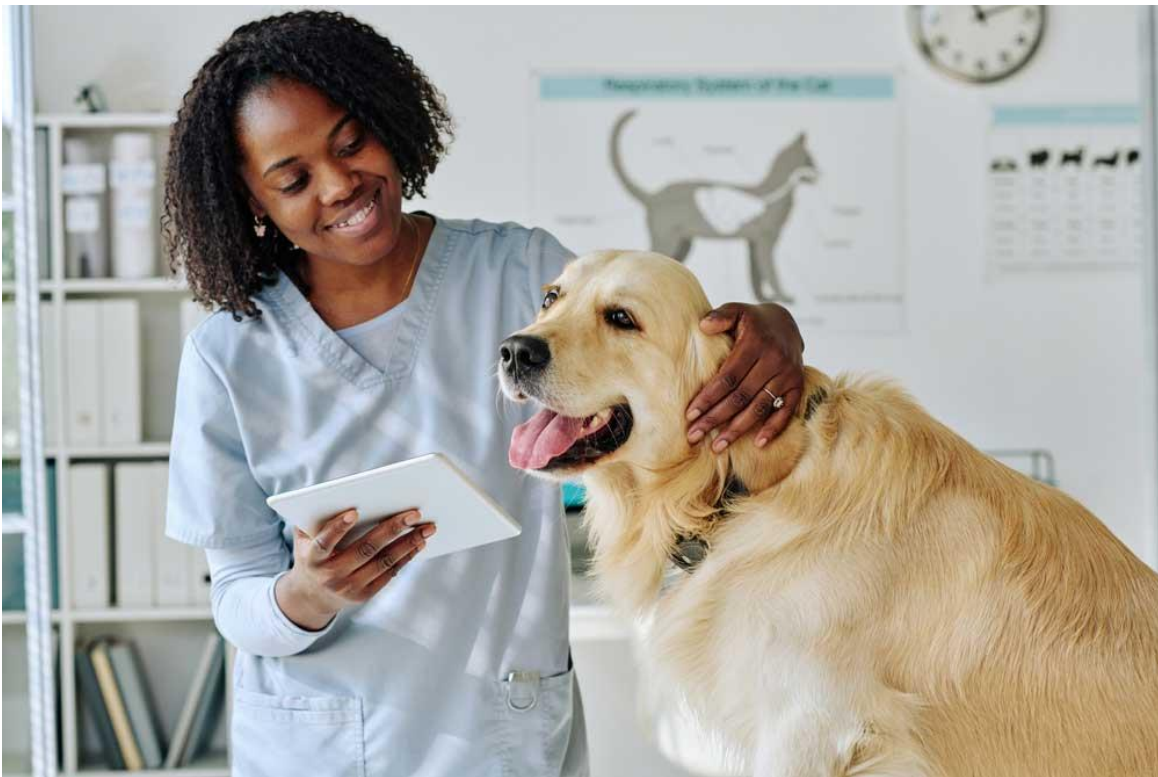
Anita, her husband Garrick, and their daughter Cecilia (8) are locals, all born and raised in Mystic Springs. Anita commuted to get her vet degree at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine in Columbia, and she started her practice here seven years ago.

Garrick works at the practice also, working at the front desk and taking care of all clerical and financial business.

Anita most loves working with cats and dogs, but in such a rural area, she must also work with a lot of horses and other farm animals. Anita is the only vet in the area.

Anita's main hobby is making quilts, including quilts created from old logo t-shirts. She does this for people for free, and there is a long list of locals who have brought her their old t-shirts and are waiting for her to make their quilts. She also makes pillows and other items from old t-shirts, baby bibs, and any other nostalgic pieces of fabric.

Anita is outgoing and cheerful, but locals know that she suffered a terrible experience when she was in high school. She was attacked by two large dogs while walking on a gravel road to a friend's house. She suffered numerous bites on her legs, and she was lucky to survive the attack—a local man happened to drive by and was able to help her. Most locals remember this event, and they show her extra kindness as a result. Anita has learned to put the event behind her as well anyone could be expected to, and many people suspect she became a veterinarian as a way to get past her fears.



Rico Cerna - Social Media Influencer

Age: 22 Mexican descent.

Rico is the only child of Octavio and Ana Cerna. He still lives at home with them, and he is making an undisclosed amount of money as a social media influencer. No one in town knows how much he makes, nor do they really understand *how* he could make money doing such a thing, but they *do* know he recently purchased a shiny new SUV, and his parents bought a new minivan. He regularly creates videos that go viral, sometimes with millions of views.

Rico makes videos about almost anything, but his specialty—the videos that get the most followers—are those about the goings on in the small town of Mystic Springs, particularly featuring the odd assortment of people visiting the springs from all over, drawn by the strange legends and stories related to the springs.

Rico is a local, having gone through the school system here and graduating from Mystic Springs High School. He was a popular kid in school, mainly because of his sharp wit and outgoing personality. He did not participate in sports or other school-sponsored activities, other than being an enthusiastic member of the video production club, which he was instrumental in starting.

Rico is popular with the local girls, but he is often seen flirting with the out-of-towners—the ones he meets to talk them into being in his videos.



Flaminia Tempest - Professional Psychic, owner of *Mystic Visions*

Age: 55 Caucasian

Flaminia may have had a different name at some point, but no one remembers what it was before she changed it to Flaminia Tempest, and no one really cares.

Flamina moved to Mystic Springs twenty-three years ago, with the notion that this town was the perfect place to establish a professional psychic service, which she considers to provide a legitimate service to those who want to know their future, to contact their dead loved ones, or to simply get personal advice pulled from a mystic realm.

She has a few local clients who come to her frequently. Most of her in-person clients are visitors drawn to the area by the mysterious legends of Mystic Springs, and who happen to become curious about what she offers. Part of the experience of visiting Mystic Springs is paying a visit to Mystic Visions to see Flaminia. She also provides psychic services to people on Zoom and over the phone. In the last few years, these remote, technology-assisted services have become her financial bread and butter.

Flaminia may have hobbies that she engages in at home, but no one knows what they are because no one ever goes to her house, except for a particular mysterious man who visits her a few times per week, arriving in the evening and leaving early the next morning. The man is definitely from out of town because no one knows who he is.

Flaminia tends to stay “in character” even when she is shopping, eating at the Deer Stand Café, or anything else she does around town.



Judd Rusbridge - Owner of the Deer Stand Café and Honky Tonk

Age: 40 Caucasian

Judd is the consummate “good old boy.” He’s quick with a joke, many of them on the raunchy side, and everyone in town is fair game when it comes to good-natured teasing as well as harsh criticism.

The *Deer Stand Café and Honky Tonk* is his pride and joy, and he considers the place to be a “gosh darn respectable establishment that brings a bit of culture to Mystic Springs.”

The Deer Stand is open from 8:00 AM until 10:00 PM on weekdays, but on weekends it’s a rather wild place with plenty of dancing and “whooping it up” until well after midnight. He likes to say “The beer is always cold, and the food and ladies are hot.”

During the morning and afternoon, the place is a gathering spot for locals, where gossip is shared, coffee is served by the carafe, and plenty of pork tenderloin sandwiches are consumed.

After 6:00 PM, the beer taps start flowing, and the conversation get livelier.

Judd, who is unmarried, is an avid deer hunter and fisherman, and he has a never-ending supply of hunting and fishing stories to tell, some of which might be of questionable accuracy.



Allen Sweeting - Pastor of the Mystic Springs Methodist Church

Age: 50 Caucasian

Allen and his wife Myra, and their two kids Karina (18) and Chance (16), are involved in almost all social events and causes in Mystic Springs. They are well respected by most, but some people consider them “newcomers” because they moved to this town only five years ago.

Allen is the pastor of the Mystic Springs United Methodist church, although many of the residents refer to him simply as the “minister.” He is prone to correcting them on this point, and so are Myra, Karina, and Chance.

Allen’s primary pastime is community service of any kind, but he also has a passion for reading romance novels, and he goes through at least two per week. Some members of the church see this as humorous. Others see it as downright strange, or even scandalous.

