

Zgrozy:

# A GREATER GOAL

A scenario for Call of Cthulhu 7th edition



# Dreams and disappointments!

A *Greater Goal* is a standalone, non-linear scenario for *Call of Cthulhu* 7th edition. It can be run for any investigator team and should take one or two sessions. By default, it takes place in the Roaring Twenties, and it can be set in any country. The pre-generated characters from our *Investigator Archetypes for Zgrozy* are a good fit for this scenario.

A *Greater Goal* is a concise scenario that contains little data on the setting to make it fit easily into any campaign. The events of the scenario can happen in any city worldwide where a nurse who previously worked for the Red Cross during World War One could reasonably be present and currently works in a hospital. The Non-Player Characters (NPC) have names derived from various languages, and unless the setting is extremely cosmopolitan, you should rename them according to the local language.

Zgrozy scenarios, including this one, are usually composed of four parts: **Background**, **Hooks**, **Plot**, and **Investigation**. The **Background** describes the events leading up to the initial situation. **Hooks** suggest how to engage the investigators into the story. The **Plot** explains the initial situation in more detail and describes key Non-Player Characters. The **Investigation** describes key clues the investigators can use to solve the mystery.

A *Greater Goal* is an open-ended scenario with no preset scenes. How it plays out depends entirely on investigators' actions and the Keeper's reactions to them. To make those reactions easier, the **Investigation** section concludes with a list of sample **Threats** to the investigators. Introduce them when you're in need of an exciting plot turn!

A *Greater Goal* is a part of the Zgrozy series. To find out more about Zgrozy please visit [our Facebook page](#), see [our other releases](#) or subscribe to [our newsletter](#).

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## Background

The Star-Seekers were a group of heretical monks who stumbled upon traces of the Cthulhu Mythos lore centuries ago - they might have lived in the Middle Ages or were the first Christian missionaries to the country your game takes place in. It made them doubt the Christian God and try to understand and influence the world's true nature. Their search ended successfully when they summoned the Shepherd of Moths - a mysterious being whose sole purpose is to reveal the mysteries of the universe to humans.

It turned out, however, that cosmic revelations were too much for them - they were overwhelmed and driven to despair by the truth of the nuclear chaos of Azathoth pulsing at the center of the universe. They did gain a modicum of occult powers, but in the end, they magically dulled their minds and senses. Finally, they took their own lives to stop being haunted by the cosmic truth. Even that didn't save them, however - their experiences so altered their minds that they no longer depended on their physical bodies. They keep vegetating in their withered corpses to this day, though they suffer less after their senses died, they don't see the universe physically and are haunted only by their cosmic awareness.

Over the years, several churches have discretely kept notes about the Star-Seekers. One person who learned about them was Sandra Sobik, once a nun, now a secular burse after having experienced the Great War firsthand. Sandra doesn't know about the sad end of Star-Seekers, but she knows that they wanted to wield power that could really change the world, and that they found it. The nun has researched a ritual once used by Star-Seekers to try and wrestle their minds out of their bodies, and she misunderstood the intent behind the spell: she believes the monks created this formula to return one day in new bodies!

She has directed her friend Filipo Terrano, an archeologist, towards the place they were buried. After he found their surprisingly well-preserved bodies, she repeatedly performed the rite on them. The corpses became an archeological sensation, but more and more accidents are happening around them. The Star-Seekers feel that someone is trying to drag them out of their bodies and use their eldritch powers to protect themselves against it.

# Hooks

This scenario provides investigators with two significant hooks. The accidents in the museum become more and more common while unsettling visions haunt our investigators. This premise should be enough for many groups to launch an investigation, but stories with a personal touch are always better. Below you'll find advice on how to communicate the two core hooks to the investigators and create additional ones tailored to their backstories.

## Museum accidents

The whole city already knows that many accidents have recently happened in the museum - objects falling from walls and cases, lights going out, visitors feeling unwell. Management has issued a statement that the problems are under control, and there's no need to worry. After this announcement, the entire city learns that a falling painting has almost killed one of the guides. Many investigators will want to learn more out of sheer curiosity, and some might even be asked to investigate by friends or superiors.

You can also make this hook more personal by making the investigators or people important to them the victims of the accidents.

## Visions

The Star-Seekers accidentally touch the minds of psychically sensitive people nearby and the scenario conveniently assumes that all investigators are sensitive enough to qualify for such contact. At the beginning of the scenario, before the real action starts, each of them will have a vision.

This vision takes place in the investigator's home or other location they consider safe. They observe their own body as if standing next to it and notice something alien in their own eyes - as if their body belonged to something not fully human. The strange presence in the investigator's body observes its surroundings with growing panic. After a moment, it looks to the sky, face filled with terror, and screams horrifically in the voice that belongs to the investigator and yet is strangely alien. The scream drags the investigator out of the vision, but if they

know Latin or pass an **INT** roll, they remember the words. The shout was Latin for "No! Begone! Don't remind me that you're there!"

## Other hooks

You can use more particular, personal motivations as well. Some of them will strengthen the investigators' engagement with the hooks described above; others will give them new reasons to engage with the scenario. If you create extensive personal hooks, you might consider introducing the visions a bit later, after a scene or two, as not to overwhelm the players with important information about their investigators.

- Investigators were the ones who helped Filipo Terrano unearth the Star-Seekers' corpses. Maybe they knew him before; maybe it was an accidental cooperation. This motivation should be used with caution if the group already has some occult experience because such groups can suspect unnatural forces behind the Star-Seekers from the start and, for example, steal the corpses instead of letting them be placed in a museum.
- One of Sandra's patients is a friend, loved one, or relative of one investigator. They contact the party with tales of strange visions and panic attacks in the hospital. In some cases, you could arrange it so that one of the investigators is a hospital patient themselves and sees it all firsthand.
- If the investigators have contacts within the Church, they can learn about Sandra's research into what could be called black magic or, not to make her a suspect from the very start, about a similarity between the corpses discovered by Terrano and a group of heretics condemned by the Church centuries ago.

# Plot

## Sandra Sobik

Sandra was extremely religious in her youth and joined a very cloistered and contemplative order. During the Great War, however, she ran away with her abbess' secret permission to join the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and work at the front as a nurse. The experience of the war was extremely traumatic for her – she saw the slaughter firsthand on a scale unimaginable before this conflict.

After the war, she was psychically devastated, but at least she had a place to go to – she had a great reputation as a nurse and easily got a job as a ward nurse in St. Alexandra, a big city hospital. She performed her duties conscientiously, but she was still tormented by her memories of the Great War – memories that took away her faith in divine order and justice. Losing her faith in both divine and human abilities to improve the world, she remembered the writings about the Star-Seekers she had read in secret in her abbey. She started searching for proof they really existed, and when she was sure she found it, she decided to return them to the world.

Sandra has discovered *Psyche Flux* – a ritual allowing the transfer of personalities between bodies if conditions are right. She used the ritual on the Seekers to loosen their bonds to their bodies, and she burns a special incense in her ward. This incense, she says, should calm her patients down, but in reality, it opens them to occult forces. She also takes her patients to the museum hosting the Star-Seekers' corpses. Officially, it's just recreation and education, but the truth is she wants her patients to have more direct contact with persons who, she hopes, will soon possess them.

Sandra is caring and kind but also very desperate. She cares for people and always offers a helping hand, but deep down she's sure her help and kindness are not enough to change anything. She wouldn't even harm a fly if she didn't believe she's working towards a greater and noble goal. She feels deeply disgusted by what she does to her patients, and yet she's sadly convinced that the world's wellbeing demands it. She obsesses about how the Star-Seekers will solve all of the world's problems and how they'll start by giving their hosts new, healthy bodies.

In the abbey, she was sister Alexandra; now she uses the recently popular, shorter form Sandra. She doesn't believe in God anymore, but she often ruminates about how mean fate can be and considers working in a hospital named after a saint with her former name as another example of this.

**STR 50 CON 60 SIZ 50 DEX 60 INT 80**

**APP 55 POW 75 EDU 80 SAN 49 HP 11**

**Damage bonus: - Build: 0 Magic Points: 15 Move: 8**

**Skills:** Credit Rating 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 6%, Dodge 30% (15/6), Fast Talk 45%, First Aid 70%, Language (other – Latin) 45%, Library Use 40%, Medicine 70%, Occult 50%, Persuade 70%, Psychology 50%

**Spells:** *Psyche Flux*, probably more if the Keeper so desires

## Psyche Flux

A ritual found by Sandra in an old church archive, transcribed from a Star-Seeker's writings by a monk later burned at the stake.

**Cost:** 4+ Magic points, 1D6 Sanity

**Casting time:** 30 minutes

The caster focuses on a person or group - up to one person per 10 points of the caster's POW. The targets can be up to three miles away, but every full mile increases the Magic Point cost by 1. If the targets are normal humans, the caster needs to win an opposed **POW** roll against each of them to affect them, but Star-Seekers' psyches are so twisted already that they can't resist this power.

The bond between the targets' bodies and minds weakens. Their minds start touching those of others - those in close proximity and those further away but very sensitive psychically (like the investigators) - causing both to lose 1/1D4 Sanity and gain a short glimpse of each other's emotions and personality. Such contact can happen once per day for each person touched by the spell. The Keeper should introduce it the first time an appropriate opportunity appears on a given day.

If the person coming into contact with the spell's target is especially vulnerable to psychical influences, the spell can lead to long-term or even a permanent mind switch. Such vulnerability is caused by Sandra's incense and can also be caused by having POW lowered by some magical effect or indefinite insanity. If, during a mind touch, both parties lose their Sanity rolls and one of them is vulnerable that way, you can decide that the more powerful one - the one with higher POW - gets into the other one's body as if they had cast the mind transfer spell. For the purposes of this effect, assume that Star-Seekers always fail their Sanity rolls because they have no Sanity left.

After a single casting, the flux effect lasts for 1D4 days. The ritual can be repeated daily at the same cost to extend its duration by another 1D4 days.

Sandra has destroyed the writings she learned this ritual from, and learning it by an investigator would require thorough research in church archives or having Sandra as a teacher.

## Star-Seekers

By trying to kill themselves, the Star-Seekers merely limited their contact with the world - their selves, altered by cosmic truths, still vegetate in their dead bodies. Their senses are gone, so they no longer see the terror they saw when alive. They are not really happy but relatively serene. They just want not to feel anything anymore and to have no contact with the world.

That's why they panic after being subjected to Sandra's spell. They feel something dragging them out of the serene nothingness, they get glimpses of the world as seen by mortal eyes, and they can't help notice the deeper, terrifying layers of reality hidden beneath the mundane. They unleash their arcane powers all around them in powerless frustration, hoping they will hit the one casting the spell or chase people away.

The Seekers need only a few stats:

**INT 85 POW 115 EDU 90 SAN 0 MP 23**

Cthulhu Mythos 60%, Language (other - Latin) 80%, Language (own) 90%, Occult 85%

In their dead bodies, the Seekers have no contact with the outside world. However, they sense the people they already contacted, so after the opening vision, they'll sense the investigators whenever they are nearby.

Terrano has discovered corpses of five Star-Seekers. By default, that's the entire group, but you might invent further ones if you want them to appear in other scenarios. They retained only tiny bits of their human personalities. Their names and traits are:

- **Anselm:** protective and patronizing, gets impatient quickly.
- **Klemens:** passive and pensive, always sees the other side of the situation.
- **Otto:** inquisitive and insightful, his mind was opened by their experiences the most.
- **Sylvester:** arrogant and active, still believes that their experiments might lead to something good.
- **Wilfred:** unstable and alien, his mind became the most remote from the human perspective.

# Investigation

## Other important characters

### Professor Felipe Terrano

A museum director and an ambitious archeologist. He's been researching local finds for years, but the Star-Seekers' corpses are his biggest discovery.

Terrano is a very friendly and energetic man; he'll treat investigators with a lot of sympathy. If any of them is an academic, he's surely heard of them and wants to learn everything about their research. The professor doesn't believe in the supernatural and has no idea what could be causing the accidents in his museum. The more they happen, the more nervous and sad he becomes.

**STR 60 CON 70 SIZ 65 DEX 50 INT 70**

**APP 60 POW 60 EDU 85 SAN 56 HP 13**

**Damage bonus: +1D4 Build: +1 Magic Points: 12 Move: 7**

**Skills:** Archeology 75%, Credit Rating 55%, Dodge 25%, Language (other - Latin) 30%, Language (own) 85%, Library Use 60%, Persuade 50%

### Ludwig Saldrige

Manager of the hospital Sandra works in, very engaged and badly overworked. He tries to manage this institution as best as possible, but he lacks money and personnel, so sometimes he can't do much.

This fact has two important consequences for the investigation. First, Saldrige is constantly busy and will have time for the investigators only if they can convince him it's really important. If after a meeting, he decides it was a waste of time, he'll be irate! Second, he's grateful to Sandra and trusts her completely because she devotes an enormous amount of time and effort to the hospital, which makes his life much easier.

**STR 40 CON 45 SIZ 50 DEX 60 INT 75**

**APP 70 POW 70 EDU 80 SAN 68 HP 9**

**Damage bonus: - Build: 0 Magic Points: 14 Move: 8**

**Skills:** Dodge 30%, First Aid 60%, Language (other - Latin) 50%, Language (own) 80%, Medicine 85%, Persuade 50%

This scenario has a straightforward structure, with all clues leading to either the museum or the hospital. This section presents information and clues pertaining to these two locations that the investigators can gather and what they can with them once they have the clues. The section concludes with a list of sample **Threats** you can introduce to raise the stakes and make the mood tenser.

## First clues

Let's start with general clues the investigators can gather to gain a better understanding of the case. Those facts can easily be gathered by browsing newspapers or talking to people in the city in which the story takes place - in other words, by **Library Use** or **social skills** rolls. Each success can give one of the facts below. If the investigators look for information on a particular topic and will give a reasonable explanation on how do they do it, you can even give it to them without rolls.

- Patients of St. Alexandra Hospital have been recently plagued by panic attacks and nightmares. Ludwig Saldrige, the hospital manager, blames it on the poor condition of the institution and asks affluent citizens for help.
- The accidents at the museum started after Felipe Terrano began exhibiting a group of surprisingly well-preserved corpses of long-dead monks. The museum, of course, denies any suggestions that the find might be cursed.
- The accidents happening in the museum make many guests extremely nervous, irritable, and prone to strange behavior (in fact, the accidents and this problem are two separate symptoms of the Star-Seekers' activity).

## The museum

The key location of the scenario, most scenes will probably take place here. The investigators will likely be interested in the museum right from the start of the scenario, and as the story progresses, you might want to introduce additional crises here that will draw their attention even more.

### Talking to the staff

Investigators wanting to question the museum staff can choose between a few people:

- Felipe Terrano, the museum director
- Hans Waldren, security guard
- Emily Tornaque or William Lorian, guides
- One of the regular guests, like art student Livia Schmid, governess Alice Tazbir with her ward Darius Gladall or Erik Svenson, Terrano's student.

The museum staff knows more than the guests, but they're reluctant to reveal anything that could threaten the museum's reputation. If they find investigators' pry too much, they might ask them to leave the museum or even call the police. Learning one of the facts below requires a Hard **Charm** or **Persuade** roll when talking to a worker or a Regular success when talking to a guest, but a worker might share additional facts from the list or other information the Keeper finds fitting.

- The mysterious incidents started five days ago, two days after the corpses discovered by professor Terrano were put on exhibit in the museum.
- It started with a hunter's horn falling on Hans.
- A day later, lights went out three times in one day.
- Two days after – that is, yesterday – Emily almost fainted at the exhibition, and a painting almost fell on her. Fortunately, she wasn't seriously injured.
- If asked about her fainting, Emily will mention she felt as if something was dragging her out of her body. She attributes this strange sensation to being overworked, and it will take a Hard success on a **social skill** roll to make her believe in any supernatural explanations.

- Sandra Sobik, a nurse with an outstanding reputation and Terrano's good friend, sometimes takes the patients she cares for to the museum. During the last two visits, however, the patients complained about feeling worse than usual. Yesterday one of them even had a panic attack. Sandra quickly returned them to the hospital.

As you can guess, Sandra will keep visiting the museum with her patients despite their problems – she badly needs them to enter a deeper and deeper contact with the Star-Seekers. She'll explain to them that fears have to be faced and not evaded, and in stark violation of her position's ethics, will take them on another trip. You can decide if this trip happens when the investigators are in the museum or if they're trying to find Sandra in the hospital.

This second option might be especially interesting if the investigators already suspect the nurse of something bad because upon hearing that she's in the museum, they will probably want to go back there as fast as they can!

In both cases, the meeting in the museum can be made more interesting using the information on the next page.



## Star-Seekers' corpses

Five corpses are exhibited in glass cases in the museum's central room. They are in amazingly good condition - blackened skin still keeps on their bones, two of them have hair, and although their eyes are gone, their faces are preserved enough to clearly read an emotion of terror on them. It's hard to see a cause of death at first glance. Emily and William can suggest that they were probably poisoned; a **Medicine** roll confirms this suspicion.

Everyone feels uneasy around those corpses due to their strangely well-preserved condition and expression of terror. An **Archeology** or **Medicine** roll confirms that old corpses shouldn't look that way and a **Psychology** roll allows them to understand that these people must have been subjected to fear so intense as to leave a permanent expression on their faces.

Star-Seekers are intelligent and generally compassionate people, but the pain of being in contact with the world again overwhelms them. They can't overcome their fight or flight instinct, and they cannot flee. When they feel something dragging them out of their bodies - Sandra repeating the ritual, an investigator having a vision, or someone susceptible to their influence entering the museum - they usually react by invoking chaotic and destructive energies.

Treat their attempts as using the **Cthulhu Mythos** skill for spontaneous spellcasting. Notice that their rating in this skill (60%) is high but does not guarantee a success. Make a **Cthulhu Mythos** roll each time they try to use their powers because both passed and failed rolls can push the plot forward. In fact, failed rolls are even more revealing, so if you feel the investigators need additional clues, feel free to decide that a Seeker's attempt fails automatically.

### Sample successes:

- Lights in the few nearest rooms suddenly go out.
- An exhibit falls on one of the guests - if they don't pass a **Dodge** roll, it deals them 1D4, 1D6, or even 1D8 damage depending on its size.
- An investigator's gun fires on its own.
- An electric object explodes, dealing 1D6 damage to

the person carrying it or nearest to it.

- 1D6 characters (starting with the investigators) suddenly feels terrible and has to make a **POW** roll or leave the museum immediately.

### Sample failures:

- One of the investigators gets a vision of the Court of Azathoth and realizes it's a memory from one of the corpses! They lose 1D3/1D10 Sanity but gain a brief telepathic connection with one of the Seekers. They can ask the Seeker one question which he answers. Additional questions may be asked with each successful **POW** roll. The first failed roll breaks the connection.
- Shouts are heard around the Seekers' bodies - their force gave voice to their panic instead of hurting anybody. They are a mix of Latin and an archaic form of the Seekers' native language. Someone understanding one of those languages can hear pleas like "I don't want to see this!", "Let the world end!" and "Leave me!". Everyone hearing this loses 1/1D4 Sanity, but NPCs will consider this event a trick or a hallucination.
- A Seeker bathes the room in his dark thoughts. Everyone on the room loses 0/1D4 Sanity, and those who fail will try to destroy the Seekers' corpses as their brief uncontrolled reaction.

The Seekers' proximity can be dangerous to the investigators regardless of those actions. Remember, they are psychically sensitive enough to be touched by the *Psyche Flux* effects. Each Seeker can make such a contact once per day - enough for introducing this situation each time the plot needs a new twist! Remember that an investigator touched by *Psyche Flux* has a brief glimpse of thoughts and emotions of one of the Seekers (and vice versa) and loses 1/1D4 Sanity. Such contacts are the greatest source of the Seekers' pain, so if it happens, it will surely be followed by another use of their powers.

On the other hand, you can decide that a Seeker who contacts an investigator will decide that this person seems potentially helpful and tries to establish contact on his own - it's the investigators' only chance to actually talk to these characters. Such communications should be difficult, interrupted continuously, and psychically draining. It might well cause another 1/1D4 Sanity loss.



## St. Alexandra Hospital

Sandra works in one of the city's bigger hospitals. She landed this job via a contact - the hospital's director, Ludwig Saldrige, who met her in the Red Cross during the Great War. It doesn't change the fact that she's extremely devoted to her job and adored by the patients.

Of course, you can change St. Alexandra Hospital to a hospital that really existed in the city you set this scenario in.

Investigators will likely visit to talk to Sandra or her patients. Depending on whether they already suspect Sandra of something, they might approach the hospital in various ways. When deciding what it will take for their plans to succeed, consider the following:

- One can enter the hospital only when invited by a staff member or if visiting one of the patients.
- It's reasonable that investigators with an academic background might know members of the hospital staff, and those from the upper classes might know Ludwig Saldrige. You can decide this with **Credit Rating** or **EDU** rolls.
- The hospital is overcrowded, and as a result, the staff only admit new patients who genuinely need hospitalization. Getting in by pretending to be ill requires a **Hard Charm** or **Disguise** success.
- Both Ludwig Saldrige and Sandra Sobik are extremely busy. They'll find time to meet with the investigators only if they present a matter that seems urgent. **Hard** successes on **social skill** rolls or solid proof of their case's urgency are a minimum.
- Nurses and doctors will ask any suspicious guests to leave. However, they're all overworked and can't watch over the entire hospital. Once the investigators are in, they can explore the building freely with **Stealth** rolls.

## Talking to the staff

Investigators can find a few important clues here and most of them are already known to staff members or patients. People they may meet include:

- Talia Angelos, an observant but tired receptionist.
- Richard Smith, an overworked and cynical surgeon.
- Gregor Bukin, an overactive and emotional intern.
- Ágnes and Nikolett Kovacs, sisters, working as nurses, often arguing about the future of the hospital and its patients.
- Parsa Saeedi, Einar Hansen and Katerina Hrabal, patients convalescing after various operations and visiting the museum with Sandra.
- Aldona Kairys, the patient who has experienced a panic attack in the museum.
- Ludwig Saldrige, the devoted but exhausted manager of the hospital.

## Asking about Sandra

All of the hospital's employees and patients have good things to say about Sandra. Investigators can learn the following simply by asking about her:

- She always works late and has time and kindness for each patient. She seems not to have a life outside the hospital.
- She was a nun before the Great War, but now she keeps away from religion. She doesn't criticize it but is reluctant to speak about it. It seems she lost her faith due to the War's atrocities.
- She is a ward nurse here, but no one remembers which ward she belongs to. She is simply always where she is most needed.

Learning less flattering facts about Sandra is more difficult, requiring a tactful approach and an appropriate **social skill** roll. If the person investigators are talking to knows they suspect Sandra of something, add a penalty die to this roll. Each success allows them to gain one of the following facts:

- Sandra wants to return to the museum with her patients despite Aldona Kairys's panic attack to prove to them there's nothing to worry about there.
- Sandra curses God and religion when she's badly overworked. She complains about what God does, how God doesn't exist, or about losing years of her life in the abbey. Recently she started mentioning that she believes people could arrange this world better.
- Sandra seems to want to forget her time with the Church, but surprisingly she's recently visited a few monasteries and churches. She said she's just visiting old friends, but she returned from those visits with tons of notes; she then browses in her rare free time.
- Sandra is a good friend of Ludwig Saldrige, the museum's manager. Some say his last discovery was made possible by her connections with Church archivists.

## Talking to the patients

- The patients can give investigators a slightly different perspective on recent events in the hospital. If they want to talk to a random patient, let it be one of those who visited the museum - Parsa, Einar and Katerina. Let them find Aldona only if they ask specifically about the patient who experienced a panic attack.

Each of the patients can share any of the information below. If they believe the investigators want to harm Sandra in any way, getting them to talk will require an appropriate **social skill** roll.

- For the last week, Sandra appears even more tired than usual - maybe because she devotes even more time to her patients! Additionally, she came up with the idea of museum visits. She's an angel!
- After the last trip, Sandra has spent a lot of time calming her patients. At the same time, however, she already announced another trip - they shall see there's nothing to be afraid of in the museum.
- Strangely, the most vehement supporter of the new trip is Aldona Kairys, the patient who fainted during the previous one! It seems she's very ashamed of her panic attack and doesn't want to talk about it.
- If asked if there's anything unusual happening on the ward, the patients will mention a strange new smell, something like incense. The smell doesn't resemble typical medical odors, but here you smell something new and strange almost every day, so people didn't think too much about it.

If the investigators talk to Aldona herself, she'll pretend that the panic attack was simply due to her general post-operation fatigue. Investigators must make a Hard **social skill** roll or tell her about their own visions to make her open up and honestly tell what happened. In the museum, she suddenly got the feeling that something strange was trying to force her out of her body and mind! Aldona is religious and a bit superstitious; she's afraid that something might have tried to possess her. She wonders if it might be a punishment for Sandra's desertion from the abbey and her embitterment towards faith but at the same time blames herself for such suspicious thoughts about such a good person.

## Sandra's rituals

Sandra performs the *Psyche Flux* rite each evening when the patients are asleep. She does it in her duty room on the second floor, explaining to her colleagues that she takes a nap there. This explanation is made more plausible because the ritual requires no words, and Sandra is a known workaholic, so nobody wants to disrupt her well-deserved rest. Investigators poking about the hospital in the late hours or trying to catch Sandra alone might well find her just as she's performing the rite.

It's even easier to find the source of the scent Sandra uses to make her patients vulnerable. It's well-concealed behind other hospital odors, but the investigators might have heard about it from the patients or smell it themselves after a Hard **Chemistry** or **Medicine** roll. Once they smell it they'll easily find a few copper censers hidden on shelves and cupboards in a few rooms on the second floor. Staff members have no idea what they are and why they are there, and Sandra explains she uses them to burn calming herbs given to her by a nurse she met in the Red Cross. A successful **Occult** roll or a Hard **EDU** roll makes an investigator remember that this scent is, in fact, used mostly by spiritualists - it's a common belief that they open up the soul to influences from beyond. Sandra will, of course, pretend never to have heard this nonsense.

Anyone exposed to this scent for at least an hour gets a penalty die to all **POW** rolls made to resist occult attempts to influence their mind. The penalty disappears once a person moves away from the scent for an equal amount of time. (e.g., one hour of exposure requires one hour of fresh air.)

## Meeting Sandra

When Sandra meets the investigators for the first time, her reaction depends on whether or not she considers them a threat to her plan. She might do the following:

- If she doesn't consider them a threat, she presents herself simply as an overworked nurse devoted to her job. She answers their questions but keeps stressing that she has little time. Asked about the museum accident, she'll tell them that everyone in the hospital, patients, in particular, are simply tired.
- If she realizes the investigators might know something about the occult background of the current events, she'll try to finish the conversation as soon as she can. She'll then start trying to learn more about them from other hospital staff members, Felipe Terrano, or anyone else she knows. If she considers them a threat to her plan, she'll try rather unethical ways of removing them from the picture. She can start using the *Psyche Flux* rite on them or try to have them committed to a mental illness ward - more on those plans in the Threats section.
- In any case, Sandra will try to keep any guests away from the patients she took to the museum. She'll stress that they're tired and that any more trouble is the last thing they need.

If openly accused of occult practices or hurting her patients, Sandra can use one of these tactics:

- Retreat out of the situation if there's a way to do so. She might call other nurses hoping the investigators won't talk about it with others around or pretend she is urgently needed by one of the patients. Of course, such attempts can fail - the investigators are free to keep talking to her despite the nurses' company, restrain her with force, and so on. If they are aggressive, Sandra will probably call for help, but if she decides she has no way out of the situation, she'll try honesty.
- In a hopeless situation, Sandra will explain her plan, repeatedly stressing that her intentions are noble, and her success will elevate humanity into a new, happier era. It's no lie - she sincerely believes so and hopes to convince the investigators to join her cause. She even feels bad if she's evaded them, lied to them, or tried to stop them before. How this conversation goes is fully up to the investigators.

Sandra is passionate about her plan, but she's also a genuinely caring person, and arguments or evidence can dissuade her from her current plan. If the investigators prove to her that the Star-Seekers have no wish to return among the living, she'll be totally broken for some time, but of course, she'll end her plans.

One of the meetings with Sandra will probably be the climax of this story. Emphasize her emotions and her earnest conviction that what she does is for the best. Show that she genuinely cares about her patients and would like to do more for them. After revealing her plan, don't portray her as a soulless villain but as a stray idealist trying by any means to repair the world and not believing in any higher benevolence anymore.

## Threats

Introduce one of the situations below when the investigators provoke it or when you feel the plot needs an additional, exciting event.

### *Psyche Flux*

Sandra can start performing the *Psyche Flux* rite not only on the Star-Seekers but on the investigators as well, and it can lead to many complications. If they fail the **POW** rolls to resist the rite, they'll start experiencing sudden glimpses of the thoughts and feelings of the people around them. It will not only cause Sanity loss (1/1D4) but also can lead to them discovering unexpected, dangerous, or very personal things about each other and the NPCs around them. Those NPCs might have difficult questions for them or believe that someone - they or the investigators - is going mad.

*Psyche Flux* doesn't specify what happens when two groups that are affected by the spell meet. You can decide that investigators who don't resist this spell become more susceptible to contact with the Star-Seekers, losing more Sanity upon contact (ex. 1D3/1D8) but can then exchange thoughts with them and thus understand their predicament better.

### Fear of madness

This scenario has ample opportunities for the investigators to lose Sanity in public spaces and thus to behave strangely in front of other people. Sandra can use this to diagnose them with a mental illness and try to have them committed. If Sandra considers the investigators dangerous to her plans and learns about a public bout of madness, she'll ask the police or similar agency to bring the "dangerously insane" person to St. Alexandra Hospital. Two public officials will start looking for the person in question to politely to escort them. If the investigator's behavior is dangerous or starkly violates social norms, they can meet this fate even without Sandra's intrigue.

## Return of the Shepherd

You can also decide that the Star-Seekers' use of their powers calls the being who caused their misfortune – Shepherd of Moths, an enigmatic cosmic messenger who has shown them the mysteries of the universe all those centuries ago. When the Shepherd appears somewhere, it begins turning people into moths, preparing to take them on another journey into the cosmos. This Threat is a link to my first Zgrozy scenario, *Shepherd of Moths*, and you might want to read it, but feel free to develop this hook in a different direction and re-imagine the Shepherd in any way you want.

If you've already played *Shepherd of Moths* with this party and the entity was destroyed, you can use this Threat in other ways. Maybe the Shepherd's moths appear around the museum? Maybe the people it kidnapped arrive in the city, answering a mysterious call?

### A bitter triumph

The biggest Threat is, of course, the possibility that Sandra's plan succeeds, and the Star-Seekers get new mortal bodies. *Psyche Flux* description purposefully makes it easy but stresses that it might but doesn't need to happen – use this option when the session is already too long, and the investigators still haven't stopped Sandra. Choose one of the Seekers and decide he possesses the body of a susceptible human – maybe Aldona, maybe a different patient, a museum worker, or even an insane investigator! If it's an investigator, the possession lasts for as long as madness would; in other cases, it's permanent.

A Seeker dragged back into a mortal, feeling body will enter total panic, wanting just to hide somewhere where he sees as little as possible. He can keep casting destructive spells just as he did in his own corpse, or he can start using magic to cut the place where he is from the rest of the world. Making him calm down for a while will require an Extreme **Persuade** roll.

## Aftermath

This scenario ends when the crisis around the Star-Seekers finds a conclusion – maybe good, maybe bad, perhaps ambiguous but surely final. A good sign that the scenario is nearing its end is having answered the following questions:

- Did Sandra finish her plan?
- If so, what has happened to Star-Seekers in their new bodies?
- Did someone other than investigators know about Sandra's plan? If so, what did they do?
- Did accidents in the museum stop?
- What happened to Star-Seekers' corpses?

The events of this scenario can have many further consequences. Maybe it will end simply by stopping Sandra and removing or destroying the Star-Seekers' corpses. Perhaps the investigators gain exciting new allies, enemies, or possibilities as a result of this scenario. Sandra really works for the greater good, and if she becomes convinced that her hidden plan wasn't a good way to try to help humanity, she might become a trusted and competent ally to the investigators. Star-Seekers also mean no harm, but they probably can't be of help – contact with them is very hard in their current form, and in a human body, they'd become totally overwhelmed and only rarely able to do anything.

As always, in open-ended scenarios, it's hard to say what exactly the investigators should be awarded Sanity for. I suggest simply allowing them to regain 1D6 Sanity, adding an additional 1D6 for each troublesome situation they successfully resolved, up to a total of 3D6.

# A Greater Goal

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