



HYPERGRAP

Issue 2 - August 2019

Special NecronomiCon Providence Issue

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CALL of
CTHULHU

HYPERGRAPHIA

Hypergraphia

Issue 2, August 2019

Credits

Editor and Publication: Matt Puccio

Writers: Adam Alexander, Jon Hook, Randy Jestice, Casey Kirkpatrick, Anthony Lee-Dudley, Noah Lloyd, Sean Murphy, Edwin Nagy, Ed Possing, Matt Puccio, Stephen E. Wall

Layout and Design: Badger McInnes

Cover Illustration: Dean Hodge

Additional Illustrations: Dean Hodge (Hello from Japan), Philip Hollett (Something in the Root Cellar), Jon Hook (Door Sigils), Dan Moran (The Old Man and his Dogs), Sarah Penney (Anthropophagite, Gateway), Crispin Vejlil (Ghroth Passing in the Night)

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Submissions

Interested in submitting content for Issue #3? See <https://weirdworks.org/index.php/hypergraphia-submission-guidelines/> for submission guidelines.

Beyond the Threshold

BY MATT PUCCIO

Welcome to Issue #2 of *Hypergraphia*, the 'zine dedicated to weird works in horror gaming. Within this edition, we explore the idea of "Gateways and Thresholds." When taken literally, the concept of an opening is a trope that can be found in virtually every game scenario: from the cliché iron-banded door that must be battered down, to the inevitable portal in space and time through which a dread entity is summoned, gateways are the stock-in-trade MacGuffins of many an RPG. And yet a threshold can also be an event, or a point in time, which upon crossing, one's entire life or existence may change. A barrier to the unknown, a point of demarcation, a means of sealing up that which should not enter...here our writers and artists explore these concepts both literal and figurative.

The temporal aperture through which this publication will issue forth is August 22nd 2019, at **NecronomiCon Providence**. Two years ago a group of creatives joined together at that same convention to present the first issue of *Hypergraphia*. Many of those original writers contributed their ideas to this issue as well, but I'm also very happy to feature the work of a host of new writers and artists.

I'd personally like to thank my collaborators at WeirdWorks (www.weird-works.org) and the members of the NecronomiConnection for their assistance, motivation, and support with this issue, and for getting the word out about us. Kudos also go out to Niels Hobbs and Jesse Gorton (and their hordes of underlings) at NecronomiCon for all the work they do in organizing the convention that brings us together every two years in the town where Lovecraft himself came forth into the world.

We hope to meet many of you at the convention, and perhaps you might choose to open the door and contribute something to a future edition of *Hypergraphia*.

Matt Puccio
July, 2019

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*...and told me he had seen
I asked him
remember me
I had
of the German
off and asked the first private to
to the rear. On the way a shell
with the...*

Il Varco

BY NOAH LLOYD

IL VARCO, "THE PASSAGE," HAS ALWAYS LOOKED LIKE A KEY, BUT MANIFESTS DIFFERENTLY AT VARIOUS TIMES THROUGH HISTORY, ALWAYS AT NEAR-ARTWORK LEVELS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP AND BEAUTY. WHERE IT GETS ITS CAPACITY FOR SELF-ALTERATION IS UNCERTAIN, BUT IT HAS APPEARED VARIOUSLY AS A THICK, GOLDEN WARD KEY; AS A THIN, FRAGILE, AND DELICATELY FILIGREED SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY, WORN ABOUT THE NECK; AND AS A SIMPLE, GROOVED HOUSEKEY, ALBEIT ONE WITH A HEAD THAT BEARS A FASCINATING, HYPNOTIC ENGRAVING PLEASURABLE TO THE TOUCH. IN ALL CASES, AN INSCRIPTION IN THE NAACAL LANGUAGE HAS SPIRALED INTRICATELY ACROSS AND AROUND THE KEY'S SHAFT.

History

An ancient artifact from the lost continent of Mu, the key was constructed by royal priests, philosophers, and magicians when a particularly insidious spy was

captured living with the royal family. Inscribed with words of power from Naacal, they used the key to rip open the infiltrator's mind and revealed an assassination attempt against the young princess, who would later rise to become the most powerful queen in Mu's long history.

Over the centuries, it has been held by monarchs and wizards and commoners, and during the Italian Renaissance was part of a Rosicrucian plot to murder Galileo Galilei (exactly why has been lost to history). It was during this period that it gained its most recent name, "Il Varco," the passage. The Rosicrucians believed that Il Varco was the key not only to the mind, but to all of perception, could they learn how to use it properly.

The Ritual

The ritual is horrifically simple. Place the teeth of the key into the victim's mouth, past the barrier of their own teeth (an ancient

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Rosicrucian legend suggests that the etymology of the word “teeth” in relation to keys stems from Il Varco). Historically, victims have sometimes been convinced to do this of their own will, but more than a few front incisors have been broken from a forceful insertion of the key. Next, intone the holy words, passed down these several thousand generations from the original lost continent:

*“V’WOAIQA HFRZU QA KL’DERU,
NIERU V’WOAIQA SKDRONIN QA.”*

The victim’s skull cracks open along the fibrous joints, and a brilliant blue light glows from

within. The interrogator can then physically insert their hands into the victim’s mind, sifting through the contents at will like a jeweler sifting through sand for diamonds. Every one of the victim’s thoughts, throughout the course of their life, becomes available. (More than one wayward magician has asked a friend to perform this ritual when they’ve forgotten something important; the results have left much to be desired.) Once the key is removed, the skull seals itself shut without sign of injury; the sanity lost from such an experience, however, leaves most human psyches cracked and broken.



IMAGE: COCOPARISIENNE, PIXABAY

Scenario Hooks

The following scenario hooks are meant to be (mostly) period-neutral, easily adapted to ongoing campaigns.

✘ The investigators uncover Il Varco in the possession of a local low-life, who says he stole it from the local mob boss. The language inscribed on the key points to its obvious nature as a Mythos artifact. When they investigate the mob boss, they quickly learn that he's been taken to the sanitarium, where he talks to himself in hushed tones. "It was open, it was all out there, everything, all myself was out there, everyone could see, they could see inside of me..." Who left the boss in such a sorry state, and what do they plan next?

✘ The investigators are captured while trying to prevent a horrific ritual from completing. While they watch, one of their number is dragged before an eight-foot tall, semi-human creature in priestly robes, and their friend is subjected to the torture of Il Varco. While

the priest digs through their friend's mind, they have a chance to try and escape. Can they save their friend, and if so, will they ever be the same?

✘ The investigators are hired by members of the federal government to track down the key itself, which is hidden beneath the ruins of a lost civilization in the Arctic. After surviving the blasting cold (and after having run ins with a mysterious creature guarding the artifact) they return to the U. S., only to have the same government agent attempt to use the key against them. Has the agent gone rogue, or have they been pulled into an even larger conspiracy?

✘ The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is a cuckoo candidate—a replacement—or so claims one of the investigators' less-stable contacts. When they're sent to investigate, they discover clues about the key hidden in the homes of several members of the House of Lords. Turns out, the key can also be used to implant thoughts, not just extract them, but to what ends has the Prime Minister been turned?

*...and told me he had seen
a survivor... I asked him
...I had
...warlet died... his foot
...off and asked the Irish private to take
...to the rear. On the way a shell
...the man's head...*

The Blooded Mirror

BY CASEY KIRKPATRICK

IT WASN'T DIFFICULT. SCHMIDT CERTAINLY DIDN'T EXPECT ME TO SLIT HIS THROAT IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR, AND THAT WAS ALL I HAD TO DO. IT STARTED AS A TRICKLE OF BLOOD, LEAKING THROUGH HIS GRASPING FINGERS, UNNATURALLY DRAWN TO THE MIRROR'S SURFACE, THEN INTO THE YAWNING BLACK THING BEYOND. SOON THE TRICKLE BECAME A TORRENT, TEARING OUT OF SCHMIDT'S THROAT, MOUTH, NOSE, AND EYES... THE CRIMSON STREAM TURNED PINK AND FROTHY, THEN THICK AND YELLOW, POURING INTO THE MIRROR WITH A DULL ROAR. THE RIVER OF VITAL FLUIDS EVENTUALLY ENDED, AND THE DESICCATED REMAINS OF POOR SCHMIDT FELL LIGHTLY TO THE GROUND. I LOOKED INTO THE MIRROR, TO THE SHADOWY THING. IT WAS MORE DISTINCT NOW, I COULD JUST MAKE OUT ITS LIPS FORM THE WORD MORE."

The Blooded Mirror appears to be a perfectly normal reflective surface, but is in fact a conduit or portal to some shadowy thing that hungers deep in the void behind reality. The shadow thing requires the life blood, and incidentally all of the other moisture, of intelligent beings to manifest in physical reality. To accomplish this, it makes a connection with someone who touches the mirror with their blood, then uses them, through whispers of power or psychic coercion, to bring it victims.

The mirror itself may be purposefully created, perhaps by a sorcerer using instructions from the insane writings of a centuries-dead abbot, or it can be a cosmic coincidence, created accidentally by the patterns and orientations of materials used in its manufacture. The shadow thing's pawn may be a willing volunteer or just a victim of chance, having accidentally cut themselves shaving, perhaps.

Regardless of the circumstances of the mirror's creation or the

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pawn's motivations, the shadow thing will compel its pawn, with promises of glory or mental domination, to bring victims to the mirror and slash or stab them to start blood flowing. After consuming five or six victims, the shadow thing has enough sustenance to fully form itself in the image of its pawn and crawl out of the mirror and into our world. Will it kill and replace the person who fed it? Will it work with its pawn to create more mirrors, and invite more shadow things through?

Consider a wizard who owns an antique shop, and has enchanted a beautifully framed Blooded Mirror. They carefully make contact with the shadow thing, and bring it victims. What is done with their supernaturally dried corpses, and who will miss them?



ROBERT BELL, GRIMM'S HOUSEHOLD TALES, 1912

Consider the poor soul who lives in a run down apartment building and just so happens to touch their bathroom mirror while trying to stop a bloody nose. A string of serial killings begins, mummified bodies being found in roadside ditches and in the woods. Will anyone put the pieces together before it is too late?

*...and told me he had seen
a survivor - I asked him
I hope
varlet did. They found the
of the German had his foot
off and asked the Irish private to cut
to the rear. On the way a shell
will be in his head but I will*

The Other Side

BY MATT PUCCIO

DOCTOR CAROLYN NEWBURY LET OUT A SPLUTTER AS AN UNEXPECTED SHOWER OF DUST AND GRAVEL RAINED DOWN ON HER UPRAISED GAZE, SMALL ROCK PARTICLES STICKING TO HER SWEAT-BEADED FACE. SHE YANKED HER TROWEL FROM THE HOLE SHE HAD JUST MADE IN THE SURFACE, TURNING AWAY FROM THE ROCK WALL AND GRABBING THE SMALL WOODEN STEP-LADDER, A SPASM OF COUGHS WRACKING HER BODY.

“Blast it!” she shouted as the coughing subsided, wiping the grit from her tearing eyes. “I *told* you to give me more light.”

“Sorry...the battery is failing.” Her student assistant, Ronny Jackson, struck the side of the electric lamp with his palm, and the light flickered back on. He strained to lift the lantern above his head with one hand, carefully keeping it out of her way. “These wet cell batteries just don’t last in this environment. I could-”

“Just hold it up! I felt something under the rock that time.” she cut him off. “Now, what’s this then?” She probed at the material beneath the rock surface, a faint metallic tap emanating from an object under the rock. “Something’s buried here.”

Impatience overcoming her training, she shoved the trowel between her belt and her faded khaki camp pants. “Pick,” she demanded.

Ronny bent over to grab the metal pick, awkwardly trying to keep the lantern raised above his head.

“I’ll be damned if I’m going to let Carruthers get back here and upstage me.” She grabbed the pick from him, easily raising the heavy tool above her head to strike at the stone. “This is *my* discovery, damnit, even if he did secure funding from the Regents. I’m the one who did the real wor-” She sucked her breath in a sharp gasp as more rock fell away from the wall, revealing a shiny metal arc, the width of

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her palm. She dropped the pick to the floor and grabbed the lantern from Ronny.

"Faint markings, etched into the metal," she held the lantern up to the wall, a finger tracing the precisely engraved runes, "and... an opening beneath. A lintel of sorts. Help me pull down more of this rock." She chucked the lantern back to him and began pulling at the rocks with her calloused hands, causing Ronny to leap away from the falling debris.

"Ma'am, don't you think we should be more careful? Don't want to damage anything we find. The museum would prefer-"

"Don't be such a killjoy," her mouth twisted into a frown. "There's no rust - no corrosion. Anything buried this long that's still this pristine isn't going to be damaged by *my hands*," she said sarcastically. She pulled down a slab of stone that hit the ground with a thud, releasing a cloud of dust that filled the air of the tunnel, a faint blue glow streaming out of the gap and illuminating her face. "My...god..." she said, staring over the top of the remaining rock.

Jackson raised on tip-toes, trying to peer over the lip of rock. "Can you see anything?"

"To quote Carter, 'Yes, wonderful things...'" she mumbled, her eyes falling on a room that, to her eyes, appeared to be a laboratory of some kind, the walls lined with

metal-and-glass tanks and storage containers. "Quickly now, let's move the rest of this rock out of the way."

Crouching in the debris they had cleared from the circular metal portal, she peered at the boundary between the tunnel she was in and the room on the other side of the doorway. A faint barrier appeared to exist between the two spaces, noticeable only when dust particles from the excavation drifted into the opening and were briefly lit up like tiny stars as they passed between the two spaces.

"Nothing happens when I push the trowel beyond the barrier," she mused, pulling the trowel back and examining its surface for flaws.

"Perhaps there is some kind of static electrical field...or some kind of air pressure difference?" the sophomore physics major speculated.

"Whoever built this place knew what they were doing...it's been buried for...eons! And perfectly preserved." She dusted her hands off, standing up and moving her hand toward the faint barrier.

Suddenly, the rough sputter of a Model T echoed from outside the tunnel. "Damn it! Carruthers is back." A determined look took hold of her face. "I'm going in." Before Ronny could get a half-formed protest out of his mouth, she leapt through the barrier, which offered no apparent resistance, and landed

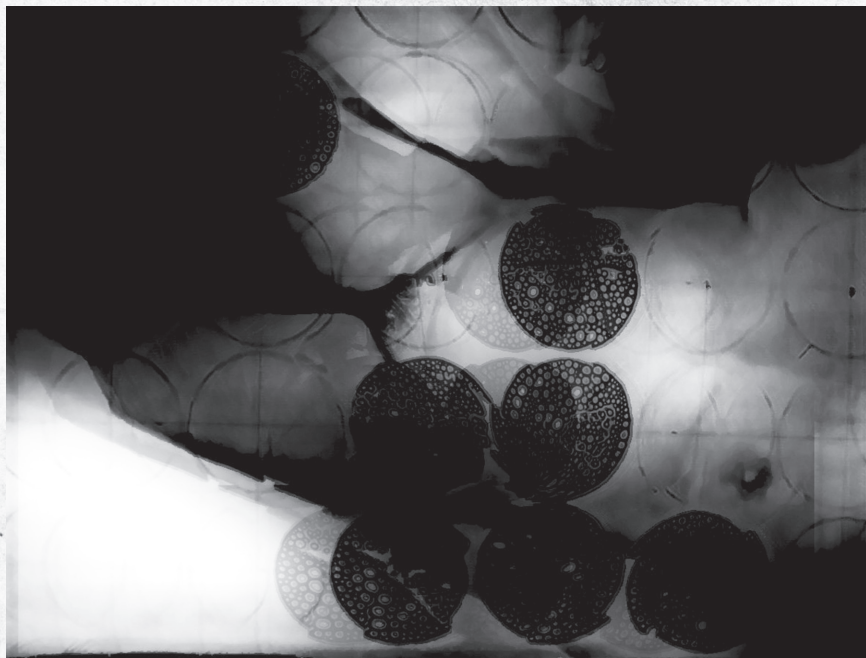
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with one knee and one hand on the smooth metal floor of the room beyond.

Ronny turned toward the tunnel entrance, calling out “Professor Carruthers, look at what we’ve found!” He turned back to see Doctor Newbury on her knees, one hand reaching back toward the barrier. Her mouth was open and her lips were moving, but no sound crossed through the barrier. As he tried to puzzle out what she was saying, her hands went to her throat, and he could see her chest spasming as she tried to gasp for breath, her face frozen into an ag-

onizing mask. It was the first time that Ronny had seen anything but determination in her eyes.

“Professor, she can’t breathe!” he shouted at the approaching footsteps. Ronny reached out for her, pausing just short of the metal portal, too afraid to reach through the barrier. As he stood there, paralyzed into inaction, a panel in one metal wall beyond the doorway slid open and an articulated, winged form flitted into the laboratory, a trio of unwholesome antennae straining in the direction of Doctor Newbury.



GATEWAY: SARAH PENNEY, 2019

Cooter Wainwright

PIANO PLAYER AT THE GATE OF MADNESS
FOR THE DOWN DARKER TRAILS SETTING

BY ED POSSING

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AT A PECULIAR SALOON ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN RESIDES A SINGULAR PIANO PLAYER. COOTER WAINWRIGHT PLAYS PIANO, BUT NOT FOR CUSTOMERS. ABOVE HIS PIANO IS A CURTAINED WINDOW. BEHIND THE AGE-YELLOWED DRAPES A DIMENSIONAL PORTAL THROBS AND GROWS LIKE A CANKER, THREATENING TO BURST AND GAPE OPEN. ONLY COOTER WAINWRIGHT PREVENTS THE VILE HORRORS FROM AN UNKNOWN WORLD FROM ENTERING THROUGH THE TEAR. HIS UNSETTLING CIRCULAR MELODIES ARE A RITUAL. SHOULD HE FALTER, ALL IS LOST.

Born in 1801 to Virginia sharecroppers, Samuel “Cooter” Wainwright had dreams of becoming a concert pianist. With hopes of studying music in London, he was finally able to buy passage to Europe as a young man. But there were few willing to take a poor Virginian under their tutelage and his piano

playing ability remained mediocre at best.

That was until he met a strange Frenchman, Augustin Delafose. A master pianist, Delafose was surprisingly eager to take Wainwright as an apprentice. Wainwright's skill grew amazingly, almost impossibly, fast. What Wainwright didn't realize until later was that Delafose came from a long lineage of eldritch musicians trained to bar a dimensional door to another world, a hostile alien world threatening our own. Wainwright continued his training in both piano and the arcane and eventually equaled his teacher's skill. But the nightly lessons proved to be too much and after one particularly traumatic night, he fled back to America.

Wishing to forget everything he saw and experienced in Delafose's studio, he took up a job playing piano at a weathered saloon on the edge of a western town. Normalcy

returned for Wainwright. But ultimately he couldn't hide from his fate, even in the American west. When Delafosse died a decade later, the role of guardian was passed to his apprentice. The gate and gate-keeper are inseparable. One raucous evening at the saloon where he played, the gate appeared in the window above his piano. Madness poured through the window and killed everyone except Wainwright. Cooter played the old rituals and eventually resealed the passage. Now Cooter Wainwright plays every night to keep the nightmare door closed.

Scenario Seeds

✧ **Until the Break of Day** – The investigators happen upon Cooter's saloon. By fate or unlucky circumstance, this is the one night of the year when the

veil between their world and Azathoth's is thinnest. Cooter will need to play all night to keep the worst of the other world from entering through the gate. But notorious bounty hunters, the Prescott Brothers, have other ideas. They've been hired by an apocalypse cultist to bring him in dead or alive. If the heroes can keep Cooter alive for the night, the world will be safe for one more year.

✧ **The Successor** – Cooter Wainwright knows his days are nearly over. After decades of staving off the horrors of the universe, he is finally dying of a more natural affliction, consumption. But as Cooter Wainwright replaced the guardian before him, so must someone replace him. After spending one horrible night with the investigators fighting creatures pouring out of the rift, the old piano player



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hopes to convince one of their number to take on his duty and his curse.

✧ **Don't Play it Again Sam** – While Cooter's manic notes prevent an apocalyptic breach into our world, they have an unfortunate effect upon those that hear them. Enraptured listeners lose their minds and go on crazed killing sprees. Cooter knows how his music affects the unsteeled mind, and casts spells to obscure his saloon while he plays. But his spells

have lost their effectiveness and some townsfolk have stumbled across his saloon during his private performance. The investigators follow a trail of clues to find out why seemingly regular folk have gone mad and zero in on Cooter's location. Cooter is not in the mood to talk and is not about to be stopped. The well-meaning, but foolish, investigators discover he has terrible resources at his command. A missed note and nameless terrors hungrily flow forth.

SAMUEL "COOTER" WAINWRIGHT, piano player/Eldritch Guardian, age 67

STR 40 CON 35 SIZ 45 INT 65 POW 75
DEX 55 APP 45 EDU 60 SAN 35 HP 8
DB: none. Build: 0 Move: 5 MP: 15

ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 35% (17/7), damage 1D3 + db

Firearms (Handguns) 40% (20/8), damage 1D8. (.44 Derringer)

Dodge 40% (20/8)

Skills: Art and Craft (Piano) 85%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Fast Talk 25%, Gambling 40%, Intimidate 50%, Language (English) 60%, Language (French) 40%, Listen 60%, Persuade 30%, Ride 45%, Sleight of Hand 55%, Spot Hidden 45%

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Spells: Cast Circle, Circle of Warding, Cloud Memory, View Gate, and any two others at Keeper's discretion.

Equipment: .44 Derringer hidden under his stool

Backstory:

Description: Appears to be much older than he really is, bent and shriveled, and one eye permanently shut.

Ideology: The gate must remain closed. Nothing else matters.

Traits: Gruff and to the point, sometimes hits a sharp key on his piano to accentuate a point.

Quote: "Well you picked a helluva night to come in for a drink partner! Don't just stand there. Bar the door and grab yerself a bottle from the shelf. Grab one for me too! I have a little ditty I want to play and I damn well don't want to be sober whilst I do it."

...and told me he had seen
a survivor - so I asked kind
... I had
... the
... of the German ... had his foot
... off and asked the Irish private to carry
... to the rear. On the way a shell
... the ...

Hello from Japan

BY RANDY JESTICE

WITH THE POPULARITY OF J-HORROR IN BOTH FILM AND PRINT, SOME JAPANESE HORROR TROPES HAVE BECOME PART OF THE VOCABULARY OF WESTERN AUDIENCES. ARGUABLY THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE OF THESE TROPES WOULD BE THE ONRYO, A VENGEFUL SPIRIT. THE CENTRAL ANTAGONIST IN FILMS LIKE *RINGU*, *JU-ON* AND *DARK WATER*, THE ONRYO IS A SPIRIT THAT LASHES OUT AGAINST THE LIVING TO EXACT REVENGE FOR A WRONG.

Another, possibly less familiar, Japanese cultural item is the *umikuji* machine. Placed near Buddhist and Shinto shrines, *umikuji* machines dispense fortunes. These fortunes can be good or bad. When one receives a bad fortune, it is customary to tie the fortune to strings held taut in a frame and leave the bad luck behind.

What follows is the origin story of an *onryo* who uses an *umikuji* machine as a gateway into our world. This *onryo* and her story could form the basis for a scenario

or provide a GM with inspiration for an antagonist in another setting.

Ayuka's Story

Miyazato Ayuka lived alone and lonely in a medium-sized industrial Japanese city. She had no living relatives and had given up on making friends long ago. In social situations her nervousness caused her to laugh at inappropriate times and to smile so hard her face hurt. Others sensed her discomfort and were uncomfortable also. Gradually, co-workers stopped inviting her to parties and picnics and dinners. She was frequently left out of events at the workplace or included only as an afterthought. Ayuka slowly, quietly faded into the background while life happened around, but apart, from her.

The one bright spot in her life was her boss, Mr. Nishihara. He was kind and thoughtful to Ayuka. He remembered her birthday and the date she became his assistant and gave her gifts and flowers to



IMAGE: CORPSE REVIVER (CROPPED)/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS [CC-BY-SA-3.0]

honor those dates. He smiled and greeted her each day. He even asked if she had done anything interesting during her days off even though he knew the answer was “No.” Always no.

Ayuka was in love with him.

She told him she loved him every day with every glance and word. She did her job with such devotion that he could not help but see the love she poured into every task he asked of her. She had no doubt that he shared her feelings. She could feel his love wash over her when he smiled at her, when he asked her to bring his appointment book, when

he gave her flowers on her birthday. The fact that he was married and had two children were all that kept him from returning her love. His strong sense of duty and obligation constrained his ability to openly return her affection. In Ayuka’s mind, he was simply waiting for the right time to begin his new life with her.

One wintery day, Ayuka visited a shrine to ask blessings for Mr. Nishihara. Before she left, she stopped at the *umikuji* machine for her fortune. On this day, her fortune told her that the time to begin her new life was now. Excit-

edly, she called Mr. Nishihara and begged him to come meet her; she had exciting news. Mr. Nishihara arrived, puzzled and more than a little concerned.

Electrified by her epiphany, Ayuka poured out her soul to Mr. Nishihara. She spoke openly of their love and her plans to build a new life together. She told him she could call his wife and tell her it was over; that he loved Ayuka and was leaving his old life behind. She showed him the fortune that freed them from the life they lived now, that gave them permission to start anew and be happy. Vibrantly alive and happy. Together.

As she excitedly held the unrolled fortune up to Mr. Nishihara's view, Ayuka saw his face and she knew she had been wrong, so wrong. His expression of horror turned to fear and then to rage as Mr. Nishihara shouted at her, "Have you lost your mind? Are you insane? Do you want to ruin my life?" He raised his hand as if to strike her and, in a wave of shame and panic, Ayuka fled into a nearby grove of bamboo.

After a second of hesitation, Mr. Nishihara ran after her, calling her name. Blinded by tears, Ayuka left the footpath and ran faster into the ever-thickening bamboo. She didn't see the tangle of roots that tripped her, nor did she see the stone that her forehead crashed into as she hit the ground. What

she did see was stars and then blackness.

When Mr. Nishihara reached the spot where Ayuka had fallen, he saw blood. Lots of blood. He reached out to help Ayuka, to see if she was still alive. There was so much blood. And she didn't appear to be breathing. Panic overcame him. He thought she was dead and he would be blamed. Body trembling, eyes glancing in all directions for witnesses, Mr. Nishihara turned and walked quickly out of the bamboo grove, away from Ayuka and back to his life.

Ayuka drifted in and out of consciousness. The sun set. A gentle rain began to fall. The temperature dropped and the rain turned to sleet and then a soft snow. Her frozen, snow-covered body was found days later by a group of hikers.

The Onryo: Appearance and Abilities

According to folklore, an *onryo* may be created when a person dies while experiencing intense passions or suffers a horrific or wrongful death. In this case, Ayuka's mixed emotions of fear, jealousy, humiliation and rage, along with the way she died, are sufficient to tie her spirit to this plane of existence.

Typically, an *onryo* appears as a pale woman with wild, jet black hair wearing white funeral robes. The *onryo* is able to move in ways

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IMAGE: DEAN HODGE, 2019

not possible for the living. Ayuka can contort her form into impossible shapes and is able to fit into small spaces, crawl through grates or vents, and under doors. She can also crawl up walls or crawl upside down on the ceiling or in trees.

An *onryo* is able to manipulate objects or forces in the physical plane and cause harm or death to the living. Ayuka can not only attack the living, she can manipulate objects. She can lower the temperature in a room or an outdoor space.

She can create rain or snow over a wide area or in a very localized spot, e.g. inside an electrical outlet. The ability to cause localized freezing in an electrical connection can cause a number of issues with lighting, backup generators and anything requiring electricity. This can also affect vehicles and cell phones.

An *onryo* is able to lengthen or shorten its hair at will. It can use its hair to manipulate or grab objects. Often, strands of long black hair are precursors of the appearance of an

onryo. In physical attacks, the *onryo* may bite or use her long fingernails as claws or even knives. At the GM's discretion, the *onryo* may also use supernatural attacks, e.g. draining a victim's life force, using mind control, etc.

The Umikuji Machine

Because the *umikuji* machine is strongly associated with religious sites, when using it in a horror

scenario it would be a good idea to distance the machine from such a site, and instead place it in a neutral space. It could be outside Japan in a museum as part of a cultural exhibit or in a Japanese-style garden. Perhaps Ayuka's connection to it has caused the machine to malfunction and it has been removed from its original location and resold or repurposed for use outside Japan.



IMAGE: ROMAN SUZUKI (CROPPED)/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS [CC-BY-3.0]

Scenario Settings

The action could take place in an enclosed space like a museum or other building. Such a space lends itself to a claustrophobic atmosphere; the piping and ventilation systems are great ways to get the *onryō* from one place to another.

It could also work well in an outdoor space like a Japanese style garden or park. While possibly less confining, an outdoor setting can provide an opportunity to separate the player characters and have them deal with the *onryō* individually or in small groups.

Clues

The time period in which a game is set will determine whether specialized skills are required to obtain information regarding the nature and purpose of the *umikujū* machine. Contemporary settings may require a basic internet search. Settings earlier than the 1990's may require research at a library or seeking someone who has specialized knowledge of Japanese culture.

The same is true for the *onryō* itself. If your setting is contemporary, then a character that has seen a J-Horror film may have the background information necessary to identify the supernatural antagonist. The further back in time the setting, the more that research or specialized knowledge are critical for correct identification of the spirit.

Players can uncover the *onryō*'s tie to the *umikujū* machine in several ways. The *onryō*'s hair is an important element in folklore, so strands of long, black hair wrapped around a fortune or flowing out of the *umikujū* machine would be the most direct tie. The *onryō* becomes more aggressive and will attack with more violence when the players are close to the *umikujū* machine.

If researching the *umikujū* machine's history, they can find old newspaper clippings or internet blogs about sightings of a woman with black hair, dressed in white robes in the area around the *umikujū* machine. They may also find reports of Ayuka's death in the bamboo grove near the *umikujū* machine's original location.

Resolving the Scenario

While the *onryō* used the *umikujū* as a gateway into this world, she is no longer bound to the machine. Destroying the machine will not free her or alter her goal; an *onryō* is motivated by anger and revenge, not justice or balance. Even if the machine is destroyed, she may continue to attack and terrorize people in the vicinity.

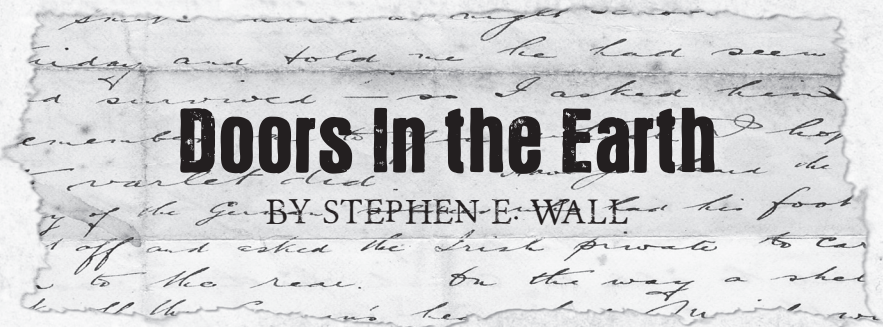
The players might not be able to fully resolve a scenario involving an *onryō* - just as in J-Horror films, there may not be a happy ending, and the spirit may go on to pursue its own incomprehensible goals. However, for player groups that

would not be satisfied with a lack of resolution, the GM may allow the players a way to release the *onryo* or dispel her completely.

Through research into Japanese culture, the players may discover how to dispel bad luck and release the *onryo*. One of the ways to deal with a bad fortune received from an *umikujii* machine is to tie the fortune to a frame or a tree and leave the bad fortune behind. Doing this with the fortune associated with the *onryo* could be a way to dispel it. Of

course, the *onryo* would do its best to prevent this from happening.

Alternately, the GM could allow the players a way out, by destroying the machine. This may not dispel the *onryo*, but the GM may choose to use the destruction of the machine as a signal that the gateway used by the *onryo* to enter our world is closed; it may sever her connection to the area around the machine and allow her to roam freely away from it.



Doors in the Earth

BY STEPHEN E. WALL

THE HILLSIDE ROOT CELLAR IS ONE OF THE OLDEST, STRANGEST, AND YET MOST PRACTICAL FORMS OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE BROUGHT TO THE NEW WORLD, AND PARTICULARLY TO ATLANTIC CANADA, BY COLONISTS FROM ENGLAND'S WEST COUNTRY. VIEWED FROM BEHIND OR AT A DISTANCE, ONE SEES NOTHING UNNATURAL, JUST A STONY OUTCROPPING OR HILLOCK OVERGROWN WITH WET GRASS AND WEEDS. BUT UPON CLOSER INSPECTION THERE IS A WEATHERED WOODEN DOOR SET

IN A ROUGH-HEWN FRAME THAT LEADS INTO THE DAMP EARTH. THE SIMPLE RECTANGULAR OR ROUND ROOM ON THE INTERIOR HAS WALLS OF STONE, A ROOF OF WOODEN BEAMS, AND A DIRT FLOOR. THE LARGEST EXAMPLES ARE UP TO NINE FEET WIDE AND REACH AS FAR AS TWENTY FEET DEEP INTO THE HILLS THEY OCCUPY.

The rural folk will tell travelers that this is how their ancestors preserved their food stores before re-

HYPERGRAPHIA

frigeration, and many communities still maintain this practice into the modern era as an homage to tradition, a statement of environmental politics, or even as tourist attractions. Hillside root cellars can be isolated structures or numerous, as in the case of Elliston, on the island of Newfoundland, which boasts over a hundred such structures that are designated for private or public use.

For those of us with knowledge of the Mythos horrors that lurk beneath the sun-lit world, the hillside root cellar can evoke feelings of apprehension and menace, as we know one does not have to dig too deep into the surface of the earth to find something abominable. These root cellars can easily endure for up to two hundred years with little maintenance. Meanwhile, cellars left untended will collapse in on

themselves leaving curious pit-like depressions in the landscape. Such a find in the forests of Newfoundland would indicate a farm or homestead that was abandoned and reclaimed by nature.

While these cellars have a very practical purpose, their isolation from the household and curious construction has lent itself to the development of folklore. There are numerous hints of the supernatural interwoven with the root cellar traditions of England, Ireland, and Wales. Spirits, faeries, and ghosts are said to haunt older cellars, and more vivid tales depict them as the abodes of Leprechauns who will assist women in difficult or auspicious births. In a twist on changeling folklore, some stories tell of strange infants that are found within cellars and taken in by childless families—for good or for ill.



Accidental Encounters with the Mythos

Human beings have a curious habit of building atop the remnants of previous structures, often unintentionally. A farmer might decide a curious mound on his property as an ideal place for a root cellar without considering it was once the burial place of a sorcerer or creature from a bygone age. Digging in the earth for the sake of storing consumables might scrape away the barrier between a happy homestead and the ghoul warrens or Hyperborean shrine that lies beneath it. The Mythos-haunted world beneath the cellar might react to the food kept inside it, tainting the foodstuffs as a means of spreading its corruptive influence. Strange chanting or music heard within the walls of the cellar might drive the owners to bizarre action. The story of accidental Mythos exposure through a root cellar might not be so simple to pick apart or divorce from folklore of ghosts or the risen dead: a lean year and frozen ground might lead to storing a dead relations remains in the cellar until the spring thaw, and perhaps the spawn of Tsathoggua find Aunt Mabel's body of convenient host for moving about above ground unimpeded by the light of the sun.

Intentional Encounters with the Mythos

Cultists hiding in the midst of communities would doubtlessly find themselves exposed if they built shrines or altars to their dark gods where curious folk could see them. Witch-hunting villagers would make quick work of those taking such bold action. The root cellar, on the other hand, is a familiar site both in rural areas and where towns and cities have grown to consume lonely farmsteads and cabins. If you wish to devote yourself to a dark god slumbering beneath the earth, a shrine that looks like a root cellar would provide you the space and privacy you need to commune with any number of Cthulhu Mythos horrors and perform your rituals and sacrifices away from prying eyes. As an added benefit, the stone walls and in-ground design are going to ensure your screams and chanting aren't heard by nosy neighbours or investigators.

Concealing Mythos Creatures and Activities

A hillside root cellar is the ideal place to grow or maintain a sorcerous creation. Rather than taking the walls out of your house to make space, thereby causing rumor and



gossip among people in town as an infamous Dunwich family did, a root cellar can be dug deeper as a creature grows, extending downward into catacombs like those of Joseph Curwen's laboratory or into the Shoggoth Pits about which Edward Pickman Derby raved. The door and walls can be warded with arcane sigils to calm and silence a creature from beyond as it grows and feeds.

Scenario Seeds

✧ The Osborne Farm has an old root cellar that dates back to early 1700s. The cellar is unusual in that it has a lock that can be opened with two keys. There's an old brass key that opens onto a traditional stone

chamber, but rumor has it Old Man Osborne had a second key made of silver and that when he opened the cellar door with it there was "somewhere else" inside. Somehow, this mysterious key might end up in the hands of an investigator or their friend; willed to them, sold to their curio shop, or part of a collection donated to the historical society where they work. Perhaps someone wants it and is willing to do violence to get it.

✧ While journeying in a quaint country village for business, ancestral research, or pleasure, the investigators overhear a group of children singing a strange and unsettling rhyme as they dance in a circle:

*"IN ANN-IE'S CELLAR LIVES A FELL-ER
A WEE LITTLE MAN WITH GOAT-EN HOOVES
FEED 'IM THE HEARTS OF LAMBS AND DOVES
HE'LL TAKE YA' NEETH THE GROUND
TA' SIGN THE BOOK A' THE DE-VIL."*

Many a children's game can contain an odd rhyme or a harsh message, but this seems out of order. Local gossip speaks of a woman named Black Anna, who was accused of witchcraft in the late 1700s. The lore says her house was burned down but her root cellar exists somewhere in the overgrown woods. What could be found within the ruined structure? Is it still standing? And why do children occasionally go missing near the old calendar festivals of May Eve and Hallow'een?

✧ "Root Cellars Rule!" is a modern activist/preservation group at a local university composed of students and faculty from the Folklore and Environmental Science Departments. The aim of the group is to map root cellars in rural communities, help with maintenance, and encourage the construction of new cellars to lessen environmental impact and foster sustainable "seed to spoon" culture. A group of students earning university credit over the summer uncover the remains of occult activities in a root cellar that is said to belong to the decayed branch of a family with an evil reputation. Did the family leave

behind a monster it summoned from within the earth? Or did the family join the denizens of N'Kai in the warrens beneath the hills? And what will they do when the students open a door that has been locked and sealed for more than a century?

More Information on Root Cellars

Exploring Our Roots: A Heritage Inventory of Newfoundland Root Cellars:

https://www.mun.ca/ich/Occasional_Paper_03_1.pdf

Elliston Community Website: The Elliston Root Cellar:

<https://www.townofelliston.ca/2at/rootcellars.html>

Elliston, the Root Cellar Capital of the World:

<https://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/trip-ideas/travel-stories/elliston-the-root-cellar-capital-of-the-world>

Canada's Historic Places: The Tom Porter Root Cellar Municipal Heritage Structure:

<https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=7496>

13 Cursed Sigils

BY JON HOOK

CALL OF
CTHULHU
FOR USE WITH

DOORWAYS CAN BE WARDED WITH SIGILS THAT HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH MAGICAL ENERGIES. THE ENERGIZED SIGILS ARE DESIGNED TO EXPEL THEIR ENERGY INTO WHOEVER CROSSES THE WARDED THRESHOLD WITHOUT DISPLAYING THE APPROPRIATE COUNTER-SIGN. A SIGIL CAN ONLY BE CHARGED AND MANAGED BY THE WIZARD THAT ORIGINALLY INSCRIBED IT TO THE PORTAL. THE SIGIL CAN BE APPLIED TO THE THRESHOLD, JAMB, CASING, TRANSOM, OR EVEN THE DOOR ITSELF.

Charged sigils may be etched, drawn, or painted on the doorway. The sigil may be small, subtle, or otherwise camouflaged into the doorway, or it may be large and obvious. Concealed sigils may require a successful Spot Hidden to be discovered. Because the sigils are runes based on the Aklo language, a successful Cthulhu Mythos skill roll informs the investigator of the nature of the sigil and the

correct counter-sign that allows for safe passage. The spell, *Warding Sign*, also grants the caster access through any of the warded portals listed below. Any attempt to deface a charged sigil causes it to erupt and inflict double the damage on the culprit, and any non-lethal effects last twice as long.

EVIL EYE

Similar to the spell of the same name, this sigil curses the victim with bad luck.

Targets have their Luck rolls halved; any Luck roll above half of their current Luck is a failure. In addition, the victim must add one penalty die to all skill rolls; nor can the victim spend Luck points to augment skill rolls. The curse subsides on its own with the rising of the next new moon. The sigil's power is completely dis-



charged when it is triggered by the first victim.

Evil Eye Counter-Sign: Display the Voorish Sign and expend 2 magic points as the threshold is crossed.

VERTIGO

This sigil curses the victim with a sudden sense of vertigo. The victim must make a CON roll; with a



successful roll, the victim is afflicted with a debilitating sense of vertigo, with a failed roll, the victim immediately vomits and passes out for

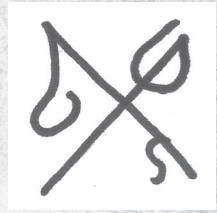
3D10 minutes and is also afflicted by a sense of vertigo. Vertigo victims must make a successful CON roll before each skill roll; a failed roll inflicts a penalty die on the attempted skill roll. Also, the victim's Move rating is reduced by half (rounded down). The vertigo curse lasts for one day plus one hour, after which the effects of the curse fade away entirely. A charged vertigo sigil is capable of affecting each person that crosses the threshold as long as it remains: the sigil, once charged by the wizard, remains empowered for one year plus one day.

Vertigo Counter-Sign: The person must close their eyes and hold their breath as they step through.

FUGUE

The fugue sigil is designed to inflict temporary amnesia in the victim.

The victim must make a



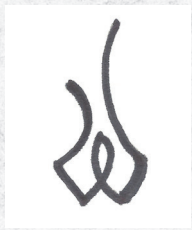
POW roll as the warded threshold is crossed; with a successful roll the amnesia lasts for 1D12+12 hours; while a failed roll lasts for 3D12+12 hours. The victim of the fugue curse has difficulty recalling any details about themselves or any events within the last 1D3+1 years. A Hard POW roll is required when the victim attempts to recall any memory; the Keeper dictates how much of the memory is successfully recalled. Due to muscle memory, the victim may attempt physical skills without a penalty, but any mental skill roll is made with a penalty die. Once the amnesia has passed, if any of the newly recalled memories included sanity-blasting encounters with Mythos creatures, then the victim must reroll that sanity loss as the victim vividly recalls that horrific event. The sigil is completely discharged after one victim has been afflicted with amnesia.

Fugue Counter-Sign: The individual must knock three times on the door frame while expending 3 magic points.

HYPERTYPHIA

COMBUSTIBLE

This sigil is designed to immolate any victim that dares to cross the warded portal. This sigil is so powerful that it glows with a warm, ruddy inner light while it is charged. The victim must make a Luck roll as the threshold is crossed; with a successful roll, the explosive force of the sigil knocks the victim back and only inflicts half damage, but a failed roll inflicts full damage on the victim as their flesh bursts into flames. The sigil inflicts 2D10 damage. If the victim survives the explosive damage, their clothing and flesh are also on fire, inflicting 1D6 damage each subsequent round until a First Aid skill roll is performed on their behalf. Anyone who helps extinguish and smother the flames on the burning victim may roll First Aid with a bonus die. This sigil is completely exhausted once it is triggered.

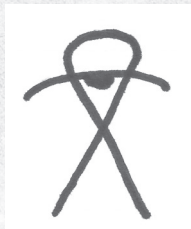


Combustible Counter-Sign: Cross the threshold with a lit match held out before you.

BLINDNESS

This sigil has the power to inflict blindness in the victim. The victim's blindness cannot be explained medically; a successful Medicine skill roll confirms that the victim

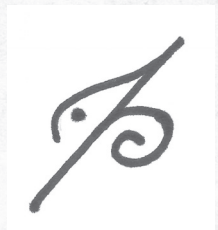
does not have a physical ailment that would result in blindness. The sigil invokes a psychosomatic blindness. The victim can be cured of the blindness after a month of psychiatric treatment, and a successful Psychoanalysis skill roll with the treatment's conclusion. The sigil is completely discharged after successfully blinding one victim.



Blindness Counter-Sign: A person may pass without triggering the sigil if they place a penny under their tongue and expend 1 magic point as they cross the threshold.

AGING

This sigil warps time as it prematurely ages the victim that crosses the threshold. A POW roll is required as the victim steps through the portal; with a successful roll the victim is aged 2D6 years, but with a failed



roll the victim is aged 4D12 years. The Keeper and player must consult the Age modifiers on page 48 of the *Investigator's Handbook* and update the investigator's characteristics (without rolling EDU improvement checks). Witnesses must make a Sanity roll (0/1D3 loss) if the victim

ages ten or more years, or a Sanity roll (1/1D4+1) if the victim ages more than twenty-five years. If the victim's new age is greater than 90 years old, a CON roll is required; with a failed roll the victim dies of old age. Witnesses must make a Sanity roll (1/1D6) if the victim dies from this effect. The sigil is fully discharged after aging one victim.

Aging Counter-Sign: The person must walk through the portal backwards.

BEFUDDLEMENT

This sigil scrambles the victim's thought processes making it nearly impossible to communicate. A POW roll is required as the victim steps through the doorway; with a successful roll the victim's mind is befuddled for 2D6 hours, but with a failed roll the victim is befuddled for 2D6 days. While befuddled, victims are unable to clearly communicate their thoughts through speech, writing, or any other form of communication. An Extreme POW roll is required to successfully communicate each brief sentence. A penalty die is also applied to all of the victim's skill rolls. Once charged, the befuddlement sigil is strong enough to impact anyone who crosses the warded thresh-



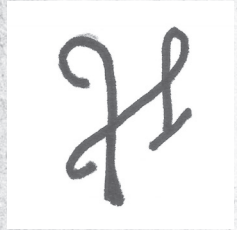
old. The magick in the sigil is not exhausted when inflicted against a victim. Unless renewed by the casting wizard, this sigil dissipates on the next summer or autumn equinox.

Befuddlement Counter-Sign:

Anyone who desires to cross the threshold must make a small blood sacrifice (two or three drops, zero hit point loss).

DROWNING

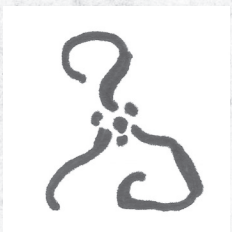
This sigil is charged with the *Breath of the Deep* spell, and floods the victim's lungs with seawater. A POW roll is required as the victim crosses the threshold; with a failed roll, the victim's lungs are suddenly filled with briny water. The victim suffers 1D8 damage, and must attempt an Extreme CON roll at the end of the round. The victim will continue to suffer 1D8 damage each round, and must attempt an Extreme CON roll at the end of each round until the CON roll is successful and the water is vomited out, or the victim dies by drowning. A successful First Aid roll will also expel the water, but the victim may not attempt to first aid themselves. The sigil is completely discharged once it has been triggered.



Drowning Counter-Sign: A person can safely cross the threshold if they spit through the portal and expend 1 magic point.

THE YELLOW SIGN

This sigil is the mark of the King in Yellow. Anyone crossing the threshold is literally marked with



The Yellow Sign, allowing the King in Yellow to now be aware of them. The victim gains a strange and finely detailed bruise in the shape of The Yellow Sign at the nape of their neck. The victim must immediately make a Sanity roll (1/1D4 loss). Each night thereafter, as the victim attempts to sleep, a Sanity roll (0/1) must be made as the King in Yellow briefly turns its attention to the victim. Once the victim has made a successful Sanity roll, no further nighttime rolls are required, but until a bargain is made with the King in Yellow that would release the victim, the victim must make a Hard POW roll to resist any commands given by the King in Yellow. Once charged, the sigil of The Yellow Sign can never be dispelled.

The Yellow Sign Counter-Sign: The person must be protected by an Elder Sign.

MADNESS

This sigil is designed to overstimulate the victim's fear impulses. A Sanity roll (0/1 loss) is required as the victim steps over the threshold. Regardless of the Sanity roll result, the victim's fear instincts are stimulated by the sigil; the Sanity roll result determines how long the victim's fear governs their actions. With a successful Sanity roll, the victim is temporarily insane for 1D10 minutes; with a failed roll, the temporary insanity lasts for



1D3 hours. The victim must roll on Table VII: Bouts of Madness – Real Time to determine the nature of their temporary insanity. The madness sigil is completely discharged after it has been triggered.

Madness Counter-Sign: The person must pour salt from their hand as they step through the portal.

POX

This cruel sigil infects the victim with a foul pox. A CON roll is required as the victim steps through the doorway; with a failed roll, the investigator's Major Wound box is checked. The victim is now diseased, but the exact nature of the disease cannot be identified by



current medical science. The victim develops tender sores that easily split and bleed, causing 1D2 damage each day for the first week, 1D4+1 per day during the second week, 1d6+2 per day during the third week, and 3D4 each day beyond that. If the victim has not gained a Major Wound from the sigil, the pox can be cured if the victim is hospitalized in solitary confinement for two weeks and the doctors make a successful Medicine roll at the end of the victim's confinement. The sigil is completely discharged after one use.

Pox Counter-Sign: The doorway can be crossed safely if the person sacrifices a chicken over the threshold while expending 2 magic points.

TINDALOS

This sigil is designed to tag and expose the victim to the Hounds of Tindalos. The victim feels a sharp pain in their wrist, and will notice a small blue dot is now visible where once there was not. Each day, the blue dot begins to grow as it transforms into a blue line. It takes



a total of 35 days for the blue line to fully encircle the victim's wrist, and it is on that day that the hound of Tindalos finally catches up to the victim's timeline. If the victim sacrifices their hand, and has it amputated anywhere above the blue line, then the hound will "lose the victim's scent," and return to its own time. The sigil is fully discharged after tagging one victim.

Tindalos Counter-Sign: A person may cross unharmed if they press silver to their bare skin, just over their heart, as they expend 1 magic point.

NAACH-TITH

This sigil is charged with the *Barrier of Naach-Tith* spell. While charged, the sigil protects the doorway with an invisible barrier. The barrier protects all aspects of the portal, so the sigil cannot be marred while it is charged. The barrier is capable of defending against both physical and magical assaults. Due to the compact nature of the spell, the barrier has a mighty 6D10+10 points of STR. This version of the barrier also has an 'adhesive' property. Anything that makes physical contact with the barrier become stuck, and can only be released once the barrier falls. Once charged, the sigil can only be discharged once



HYPERTYPHIA

the barrier is battered down, or when Aldebaran and Celaeno are in alignment, which is once every thirteen years.

Naach-Tith Counter-Sign: A

portal protected by this sigil can be successfully crossed if the person speaks aloud the name “Nyarlathotep” and expends 2 magic points.



Entamaphobia

FEAR OF DOORWAYS AND OPENINGS

BY SEAN MURPHY

"THERE ARE THINGS KNOWN, AND
THINGS UNKNOWN, AND IN BETWEEN
ARE THE DOORS."

-ATTRIBUTED TO JIM MORRISON

THIS ARTICLE IS ANOTHER IN A SERIES INTENDED TO ASSIST KEEPERS WHEN GUIDING PLAYERS IN HOW TO MANIFEST A PHOBIA. IN THIS SESSION, WE TAKE A PHOBIA THAT IS VERY UNCOMMON IN NORMAL LIFE BUT WHICH SEEMS AS IF IT SHOULD BE PREVALENT AMONG THE INVESTIGATOR SECT.

As he put down his sandwich wrapper and jammed his arm into his lab coat, Mark lamented, not the first time, his situation. “It isn’t fair,” he muttered. “It wasn’t my fault my grand mama died and I had to attend her stupid funeral on the day we picked our topic. If anything, I

should have gotten special treatment but instead I got the bottom of the barrel.”

Hope Jarvis breezed into the changing room, her smile a perpetual fixture on her face. “Hi Mark,” she said brightly. “Hope you get some good stories today.” Of course she could be cheerful, he thought as he jealously watched her sauntering through the clinic’s entrance with the summer sun still in the air outside. *Arachnophobia* – a fear so common that they could name a movie about it without confusing the unwashed masses. I bet she had volunteers lined up this morning, all wanting to tell their stories.

He made his way down the hallway to his office, his face still knotted in a grimace. He passed by Steve Cook’s office, where he could see

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his fellow graduate student laughing with a young woman dressed in stylish clothes. *I bet he just loves talking to that debutant about the funny things she does to avoid public speaking. Must be great to have been assigned glossophobia – he'll be able to leave in time for dinner with all the subjects he needs, without having to wait for the weirdos to show up like I do.*

Mark arrived at his room and there on the door a paper sign proclaimed his shame: entamaphobia. It still rankled him every time some genius made a joke about having to go through a doorway to talk about the fear of doorways. They all laughed like it must have been the first time anyone had ever been that clever...idiots. He stepped inside

and settled in for a long wait.

At first he thought he might have discovered a hidden gem of a topic. Lots of people experienced that version of agoraphobia where they were afraid of being outside of their house, so he thought he might be able to use that to rack up subjects. And Matthew McConaughey once told a reporter that he got nervous being near revolving doors, so maybe Mark would meet some cool people who would take a shine to him and take him to exotic parties.

But his few sessions went beyond boring. His first interviewee was a housewife describing how she could only sleep in a bed next to a wall, never near the door. She recounted stories of forcing hotel staff to shift her bed away from the door even



IMAGE: DAN4TH NICHOLAS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS [CC BY 2.0]

HYPERTROPHIA

just a few feet so she was closer to the room's window. Or when she forced her daughter (an only child, he hoped) to sleep next to the door when they went on a trip to some country...Peru, maybe? She kept looking to him for some sign of reassurance, but it was all he could do not to yawn.

And she turned out to be one of the more reasonable ones. One elderly gentleman wandered in, interrupting Mark's lunch, and described becoming twitchy whenever he heard a car door lock, out of concern that he might be trapped inside and suffocate (Mark thought this might be claustrophobia but didn't press for more information because he needed the numbers). There was the teenager who came by after school to talk about how he felt compelled to close every door as he walked by, the ambiguity of a half-open door being too much for him to handle.

An attractive woman walking in after work momentarily captured his interest, but then she proceeded to tell him about her panic attacks when walking by a door that is stuck open because, you know, you might need to close it in a hurry. He nodded as if he sympathized, but he couldn't stop thinking about what a pain it would be to walk with her down merchants' row in the summer when all the shops had their doors propped open. And he still couldn't believe the nutty woman

who made him get up from behind his desk to let her in because she didn't like touching doors or door handles. "Even glass doors?" he asked incredulously and could only stare when she forlornly nodded her head. He brushed her out of the room quickly so he could get his pathetic dinner of a sub sandwich and some old chips.

But as the evening wore on, no one else came by to talk to him and he found himself drifting off. He startled awake to see a youngish woman sitting in the chair opposite his desk, apparently patiently waiting for him. There was something familiar about her...maybe her perfume. "You keep thinking of a door as a physical object, like a chair. But doors are entranceways to new experiences, where you leave the security of the here to go to the unknown *there*." She stood up, straightened her dress, and walked to the door. As she started to turn the door knob, she turned to him and earnestly said "The question, Mark, isn't why people are afraid of doors but why anyone in their right mind *wouldn't be*?"

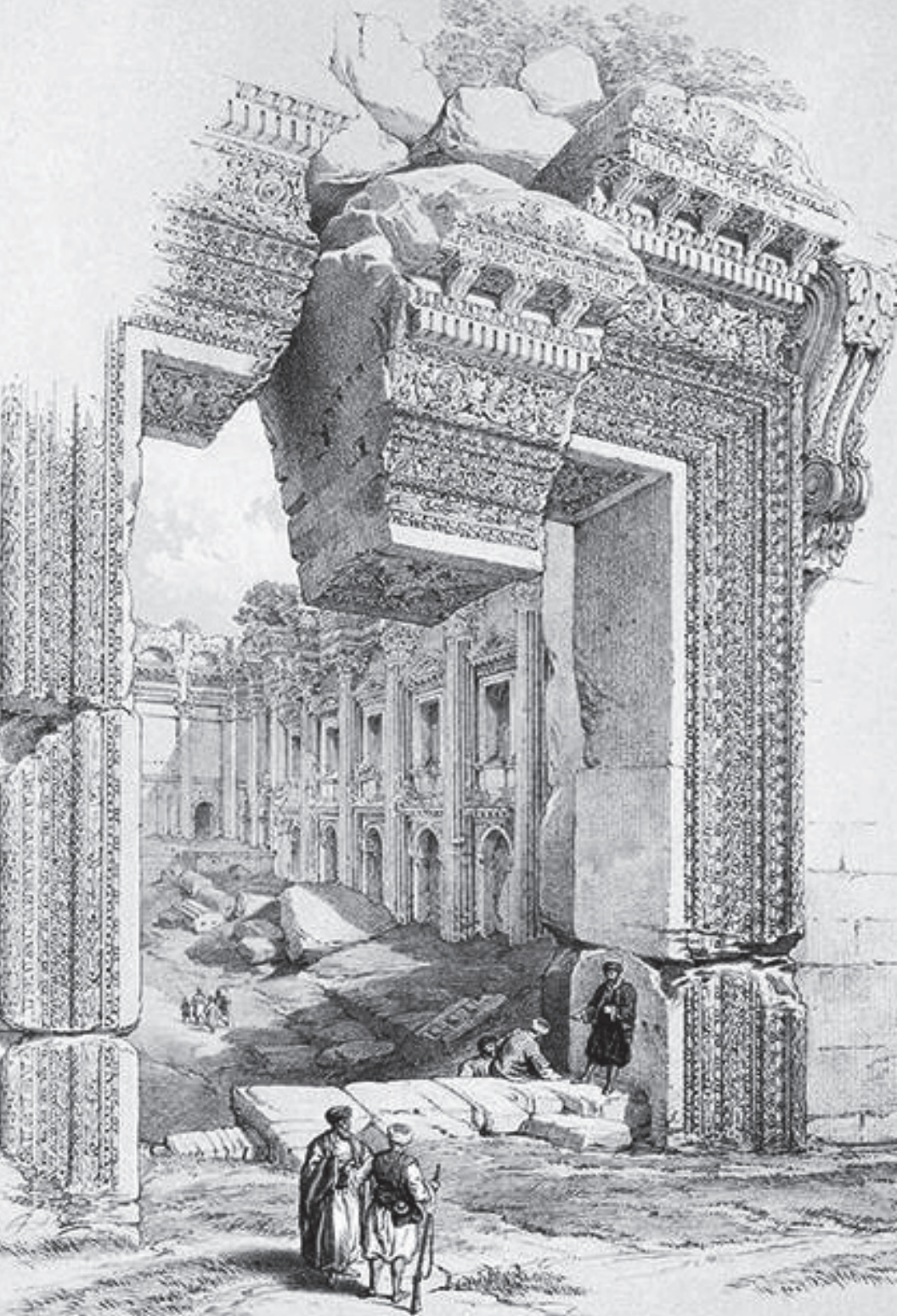
A long suppressed memory opened before him. He couldn't be more than five years old as he reached up to twist the handle. As the door creaked open, he could see his mother lying pale and sickly in her bed, with her doctor shaking his head and his father sweetly holding her hand. He could feel his leg re-

ISSUE TWO

luctantly moving forward, knowing even in his child's mind that once he crossed the threshold, his young life would never again be the same. He could feel the tears running down his face as he walked to his mother's side for the last time. And the next memory, even more vivid. A child who missed his mother, burying his face in the clothes his father could not bear to throw out, breathing in the faint scent of her that still remained.

He jolted out of the memory, his eyes still wet, and jumped up to pursue this disturbing figure. Yet when he approached the door he felt himself trembling and he could hear the thump of his heart in his head. He forced himself to take another step, only to fall to his knees as the contents of his stomach spilled upon the floor. As he clutched the nearby chair, his breath shallow, he felt a rising hysteria as he realized that the door in front of him was the only way out of this room.





Mythos Tomes in Literature: The Club Dumas

BY ADAM ALEXANDER

THE THEME FOR THIS ISSUE OF HYPERGRAPHIA IS GATEWAYS, SO IT ONLY SEEMED FITTING THAT THIS EPISODE OF MYTHOS TOMES IN LITERATURE DELVE INTO LITERATURE THAT FEATURES OCCULT TOMES THAT CAN BE USED TO OPEN PORTALS TO OTHER REALMS. IN THIS EPISODE, WE LOOK AT ONE OF MY FAVORITE NOVELS, *THE CLUB DUMAS* (1993), BY ARTURO PÉREZ-REVERTE. THE NOVEL WAS ALSO ADAPTED INTO THE FILM *THE NINTH GATE* (1999). THE CENTRAL PLOT OF THE BOOK IS A QUEST TO VERIFY THE AUTHENTICITY OF *DE UMBRARUM REGNI NOVEN PORTIS* OR *THE NINE DOORS OF THE KINGDOM OF SHADOWS*, A BOOK SAID TO HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY ANOTHER BOOK WRITTEN BY LUCIFER HIMSELF, THE *DELO-MELANICON*. THIS ARTICLE USES *THE NINE DOORS* AS DEPICTED IN THE NOVEL AS AN EXAMPLE FOR A WAY TO USE AN OCCULT TOME IN HORROR GAMES. BE WARNED THAT SPOILERS ABOUND BELOW.

The Tome

The purpose of *THE NINE DOORS* is to summon Lucifer by opening a series of mystical doorways - nine of them - with the act of opening the ninth doorway and completing the ritual finalizing a bargain between Lucifer and the mystic. The story of the tome is that the creator, a printer named Aristide Torchia, wrote the book after years of occult study. He was burned at the stake by the Inquisition for publishing the book and all copies were destroyed. Over the years rumors persisted that three copies remain, but each that turns up is a clever forgery.

The truth of the matter is that nine engravings in the book are the key to opening each of the nine doors and that Aristide made two sets of engravings, placing three accurate engravings in each copy so that anyone who wanted to use *The Nine Doors* to travel the path to summon Lucifer would have to figure out that two-thirds of the en-

gravings in each book are incorrect, gather all three books, and figure out how to use the real engravings in the ritual.

There are many possibilities for using this approach in any investigative game and they need not be limited to summoning Lucifer. In a Lovecraftian horror game, different copies of the *Necronomicon* could hold a part of the key to unlocking a portal to Ry'leh or the Court of Azathoth. The keys the characters need to collect do not even have to be limited to engravings from a book. The keys could be variations among several copies of what seems to be the same painting or perhaps sheets of music. Another use could be several different versions of the same orchestra piece, where the answer lies in assembling the variations into the right order, which must then be played in order to open a gate and summon a Great Old One. Following is a description of an occult tome that draws inspiration from *The Nine Doors*.

Mythos Tome

Et Regnum Claves ad Tenebras (The Keys to the Kingdom of Darkness)

The origins of this tome are lost to time and the most learned occult scholars believe it to be either a myth or the result of those who

have encountered other occult tomes conflating them into a single, master volume. The truth is that *The Keys to the Kingdom of Darkness* is real and is the source of incredible power. One initiated with the secrets of the book holds the power to open a gate into the outer realms and gain contact with Yog-Sothoth, The Key and Guardian of the Gate and The Opener of Ways. While there are other tomes that provide this same access to Yog-Sothoth, the rituals in *The Keys to the Kingdom of Darkness* give knowledge on how to approach the Outer God as a willing supplicant and initiate a bargain to obtain Yog-Sothoth's favor but at a price. After a period where the supplicant obtains their desires, they must reopen the gates to allow Yog-Sothoth into the world and facilitate the transition of Earth into the home of Yog-Sothoth and its minions.

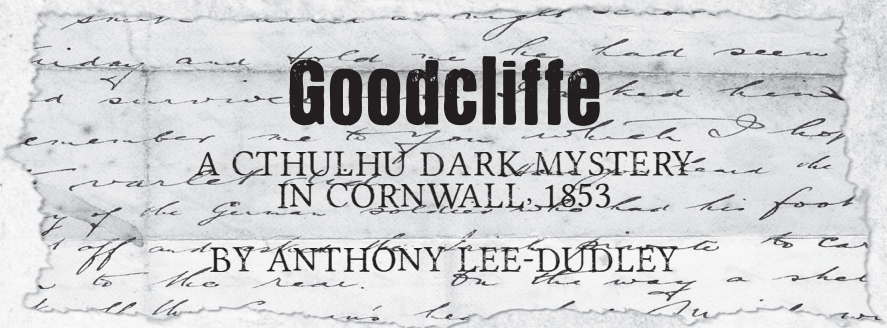
The book also contains a trap. There are actually multiple versions of the *The Keys to the Kingdom of Darkness*, with each having minute variations. Careful study of these variations reveals a pattern that allows the scholar to identify a second book that is an overlay of the other copies. This secret second book is the true fountain of power and knowledge.

Game considerations

The Keys to the Kingdom of Darkness requires a significant amount

of study and may take many years of poring over other occult tomes just to have sufficient knowledge to being understanding the hidden meanings and rituals within. Successful use of the book requires a high degree of skill in the occult

arts. The contents of the tome also drive the reader past the brink of madness. The effect varies, but the insight obtained about the true workings of the cosmos are sufficient to shatter the sanity of all but the strongest minds.



Goodcliffe

A CTHULHU DARK MYSTERY
IN CORNWALL, 1853

BY ANTHONY LEE-DUDLEY

ATOP THE BLUSTERY CLIFFTOPS OF THE CORNISH COAST, THE NEW 'MODEL' VILLAGE OF GOODCLIFFE HAS OPENED ITS DOORS. BEHIND THE FAÇADE OF THIS SEEMINGLY IDYLIC LOCATION, THE INVESTIGATORS DISCOVER A MALAISE WITHIN THE POPULATION. FEAR AND MADNESS ARE RIFE AMONGST THOSE THAT LIVE IN THIS SPLENDID ISOLATION, AND IT APPEARS TO BE SPREADING!

Goodcliffe is a Cthulhu Dark mystery about the encroaching dark, insomnia, and unassailable power. It is set in Cornwall 1853, where a long-forgotten portal has been inadvertently reopened, and an ancient menace has found its way back through.

The Hook

Mary Chenoweth, the lady's maid to Sarah Trevellyn, wife of industrialist William Trevellyn, is removed from her position. Without a job or reference, and her reputation ruined, she is on the verge of being ejected from Goodcliffe. She lets slip that her former mistress had nothing to do with her fall from grace, and that Sarah has not in fact been seen for a little while.

Sarah Trevellyn is acknowledged to be a strong, positive influence on the ambitions of William and without her influence, life in the already rigid moral atmosphere of Goodcliffe would become unbearable.

Perhaps due to affection for the mistress, the desire to improve their

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personal situation, or another more personal reason, the players decide to investigate.

The Final Horror

Goodcliffe is an area where the barrier between the mundane world and the Dreamlands is porous.

It is said by those that Know, that the ways to enter the Dreamlands are many and various, travelled by humans in search of the Enchanted Wood and beyond.

Mentioned less often are those things that travel in the other direction. One such entity is the so-called Dreaming.

The Dreaming enters the mind of the Sleeper, either directly from the Dreamlands or from the Dreams of another, slipping between the layers of the Sleeper's conscious and unconscious mind. Once inside, it begins to feed on those thin walls that separate dreams and reality.

The initial symptoms of a Dreaming infection include disturbed sleep patterns and vivid, life-like dreams. The Sleeper will also exhibit all the symptoms normally associated with poor sleep – irritation that leads to frayed tempers, exhaus-

tion, accidents, outright anger, and paranoia.

As the infection progresses, and the Dreaming continues to tear down the walls between reality and dreams, the Sleeper will begin to suffer the kind of dreams that bleed into reality; the kind that make you think you've woken up, until the doorbell rings and the monster is at the front door.

The Sleeper will suffer these dreams over and over again. Most horrifically they will also retain the knowledge of the two states, but will be unable to tell the difference between them.

The Dreaming is far from a passive parasite however. As it in-



IMAGE: GEORGE KRUIKSHANK, OLIVER TWIST, 1839

vades the dream space of its host, it watches their dreams; learning from the thoughts and images. The strongest of those images are usually of family, close friends, and co-workers.

By this point in the infection there will be little of the Sleeper's original walls left for the Dreaming to feed upon. The Dreaming will use the intimate knowledge it has drawn from the Sleeper to impersonate their family and friends. Taking advantage of the Sleeper's inability to differentiate between dream and reality, the Dreaming will attempt to control their dream, creating more and more intense situations within them. When the Sleeper finally realises it is a dream, the disjunction creates the substance the Dreaming needs.

In an added insult, the impersonation of a loved one also begins to create an empathic bridge; enabling the Dreaming to infect the loved one.

When not actively impersonating a loved one or co-worker, the Dreaming appears in dreams as a dark figure, usually in the background, or glimpsed out of the corner of the eye.

Goodcliffe - A Company Town

Goodcliffe is a tin mining town, an example of a 'Model' village. It was built and is run by William Trevellyn, owner of the Trevellyn Deep Mining Company.

Model villages were company towns, usually built by philanthropic company owners who saw that happier, healthier workers were beneficial to their employer. Some owners however, like William Trevellyn, see the enterprise as a mark of their social status more than an altruistic gesture, ruthlessly applying their own personal beliefs as to what is 'best' for their workers.

Set amid Cornwall's dramatic north coast with its steep cliffs and endless granite gorges, exposure to westerly storms and pounding surf has created a landscape carved and sculpted by the sea, not to mention the numerous tales of smuggling and shipwrecks that abound in her isolated fishing ports, coves and caves.

In the winter, those same storms often lash the sparsely populated countryside inland, all of which makes travel to the larger population hubs a time consuming and dangerous activity.

His strict moral code notwithstanding, William has actually created a decent place for his workers to live. Neat stone houses, washhouses with tap water, a bathhouse, and even a small hospital are available.



Back Story

A few days ago, one of the small exploratory mining teams of the Trevellyn Deep Mining Company was following a promising tin seam some distance from the main tunnels when they broke through into a cave filled with strange carvings and images. At the centre of the cave sat a rock pedestal. Their work day done, they reported the discovery to Trevellyn. Concerned that 'busybodies' will interfere with his mining operations while investigating the chamber, Trevellyn ordered them to seal up the chamber.

Trevellyn's wife Sarah overheard this conversation; curious because of her artistic interests, she took her lover (Fidelia) to see it. On the pedestal, they found a silver artifact that was missed by the discovery team. They split the artifact, fashioning it

into two pendants, each one taking half. The pendants when together act as a lock and key to seal a portal to the Dreamlands. Splitting the device and removing it from the pedestal opened the portal, allowing the Dreaming through.

When the exploratory team returned the following day to seal the entrance with 'Danger' and 'Keep Out' signs, one member went inside to collect their tools. He noticed something had been disturbed on the pedestal but, being the junior member of the team, he simply followed his instructions. Now all the members of the team are suffering from Dreaming infection.

Sarah has been badly affected by the effects of the Dreaming because the piece of the pendant she has attracts the Dreaming, while Fidelia's piece actually protects her.

William has been having dis-

turbing dreams of Sarah and a faceless lover - this is the Dreaming affecting Sarah, and her guilt creating a bridge with William. In his dream, the lover is faceless because Fidelia's pendant is obscuring her.

Using Sarah's deteriorating mental health as an excuse, William locked her up in a room only he has access to and banished her closest personal servant, Mary.

The Story - An overview

After their working day has ended, the investigators are gathered in the Methodist Institute for Recreation and Education attending a mandatory improvement activity - an art class. There the investigators notice Mary Chenoweth, the Lady's Maid to William's wife Sarah Trevellyn, come into the room, looking exhausted and visibly distraught. She is looking for the Goodcliffe arts and crafts teacher, Fidelia Newton. Mary explains to Fidelia that she has not seen Mistress Sarah for several days. Additionally, Mary mentions that the other house staff, already known for their superior attitude, are behaving more and more erratically, even aggressively. Fidelia notes that Sarah has not attended their regular art classes. Fidelia seems more upset about this than one might expect and puts pressure on the Investigators, by exploiting any links they have to Sarah for

example, to try and find out what is wrong.

A lead from Mary points the Investigators to the exploratory diggers who they discover are all suffering from some sort of mystery mental illness, similar in nature to that of the house staff, and that it may have spread to their families.

Questioning the exploratory team and their families bring a few things to light - including mentions of the Dark Figure, the silver items, and Reverend Angwin's interest in the situation.

If questioned, the Reverend reveals that William is suspicious of Sarah's fidelity, and that William has a piece of evidence that he thinks may link to her potential lover. He also reveals that Sarah is suffering from the same type of malaise as the exploratory team.

All clues regarding the cavern, the malaise, and the infidelity now point towards Goodcliffe House. The Investigators can find a way to enter the House and search - possibly enlisting Mary to help.

Searching William's study reveals Sarah's half of the pendant and its obvious similarities to the one owned by Fidelia who, if confronted, will break down and tell her story.

Further investigation of the study will reveal a hidden door behind which Sarah is locked up.

The Investigators can then enter the cavern in the mine and replace

the items. This will stop the Dreaming, but it's madness will remain in those infected.

Creating the Investigators

The Investigators are Goodcliffe residents – miners, family members, or one of the many workers who support the community. None should be managers or in a recognised position of authority, but all are employees of the Trevellyn Deep Mining Company.

Given the time period, it is entirely possible for Investigators to be quite young children – women and children were used to pound the rock ore that was brought to the surface, making it small enough to pass through the extraction machinery. By the time of this scenario, legislation prevented women and children under 10 years old from working underground; males 10 and up however, are still going down into the mine. Working children are treated as workers first and children second.

As the players make their Investigators, make sure they have:

- ✧ A horrific incident in their past that robbed them of friends or loved ones – perhaps they were a soldier whose entire squad was killed fighting in a far-off land. Or maybe they lost a sibling or friend in a fire, or a mine collapse. Make sure the

investigator was central to the loss, although not necessarily responsible, even if they might feel they were.

- ✧ At least one living person who they care deeply for. This significant person may not even reciprocate their feelings. They may indeed not even realise these feelings exist at all. While having a significant person within the investigator group is absolutely fine, at least some of these significant people should be elsewhere.
- ✧ A positive relationship with Sarah Trevellyn. This can be as simple as 'she was nice to me once' or could be more involved.

During character creation ask the players these questions:

What is your character's relationship to Sarah Trevellyn? Remind them to keep the answers positive. Feel free to have them use Mary Chenoweth or Fidelia Newton as links in some way.

How did your character come to be at Goodcliffe? Were they born locally? Are they running away from something, or are they searching for someone perhaps?

Use their answers to establish their horrific incident and significant person, and their choices and answers as fodder for fueling their Nightmares!

Creeping Horrors

There are several Creeping Horrors in this mystery.

- ✘ **Tiredness:** Between long hours in the mine, church, and the burden of Trevellyn's 'Moral Framework', the inhabitants of Goodcliffe are always tired. Emphasise how tired everyone looks; red-rimmed eyes, drawn faces, yawning and slumping postures are all good descriptions.
- ✘ **The Encroaching Dark:** Emphasise the dark rather than the light in all situations; i.e.

in a candlelit room describe the shadows the flame creates, rather than the light it sheds. Make descriptions gloomier as the scenario progresses.

- ✘ **Being Watched:** Whether by Authority Figures, other Infected, fearful or hateful inhabitants, or the Dreaming itself; make the players feel they are not free to act openly.
- ✘ **Nightmares & The Dark Figure:** Always behind or in the periphery, this figure is the Dreaming. At the start the figure will only be in the dream scenes but as the scenario progresses,

RUNNING THE INVESTIGATION

There are a few things to bear in mind when running this game.

The sad truth is that the Investigators are almost certainly already infected! Perhaps have one that isn't, but they can become infected at any time. Don't let them know this immediately, the creepy fun of this scenario is the gradual realisation that they are infected, the nature of the infection, and trying to halt the progress of the infection in both themselves and in the wider world.

Work still beckons each day for the Investigators. Although you don't need to play out everyone's day, every day, take some time to elaborate on the effects of infection when describing co-workers and the environment in which they work. Use the increase in pressure to set the deteriorating mood for each period of investigation.

Use the work periods to break up the opportunities to investigate. The tight constraints of work, religious observance, and sleep means that only one lead can realistically be investigated each day. This will allow you to build the effects of the infection and the tension gradually.

Work time is also a great opportunity to run a dream scene, have your Investigators start a day at work and then twist it with the dream, before having them wake up in their own beds again. Use this sparingly - it can add to the investigators not being able to differentiate between dreams and reality.

Later on, as the effects of the infection worsen, you can start having dreams spill over into the waking world - Impossible people, nightmarish incidents, and the Dark Figure appear when the Investigators are still awake! Remember that they are not tangible, and few others will be able to see what the waking dreamer sees. Perhaps another Investigator can as they are all linked by the Dreaming.

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and the infection begins to take hold of the investigators, it will begin to be seen during waking times. It can only be seen by the person who is central to the moment; no-one can see another's Dreaming.

Begin introducing the Creeping Horrors early on, during the prologue even, but subtly at first. Have the weather worsen and the days shorten as the game goes on, to increase the darkness. Being watched begins with a general sense of being noticed. Tiredness gets worse with each night of poor sleep. Then the nightmares begin!

Themes

The main themes of this mystery are:

- ✘ Descent – The descent could be physically into the mines, mentally into insanity or even morally. Refer to the deepening of things like winter, or the shadows.
- ✘ Exhaustion – Describe how tired everyone looks. Have people asleep in their chairs in inappropriate places like the church, describe their sleep as troubled with much tossing and turning. As the investigation progresses, have people looking drawn, their behaviour surly and angry. People will cry out in their troubled beds.
- ✘ Unassailable authority – The homes, jobs, and almost everything else are provided by

the Trevellyn Deep Mining Company. All inhabitants are 'encouraged' to 'keep an eye' on each other. Everyone is expected to toe the line or run the risk of being kicked out with nothing, and no place to go.

Refer to these themes whenever you can, trying to evoke feelings of them in the language you use.

Prologue

Winter is settling in, and the days are getting shorter. Frequent squalls and storms lash Goodcliffe and its surrounds, further isolating the already hard to reach village.

The closing-in of the season changes little of the working life of those who call Goodcliffe home. The colder weather however begins to seep into bones, the warmth of the hearth diminishes, and the corners of rooms retreat into darkness; sputtering candles no longer able to pierce the gloom.

Whatever job the investigators have within Goodcliffe, have them describe their day. If they are miners this is a good time to describe the cold, damp, and dark conditions they toil in. If they are employed above ground, emphasise their place in the hierarchy of Goodcliffe. Whatever they do, make sure they feel less than significant and without much in the way of power.

This is a good time to introduce

any non player characters (NPC) that the investigators might have contact with in their day to day lives.

This might also be a good time to introduce the Creeping Horrors of the mystery; keep them low-key at this time. Detail the looks of exhaustion on the faces of other villagers. Describe the sense of fear and concern throughout Goodcliffe when the bosses and company men are around, which can happen at any time. Mention how the sky is overcast and the nights are drawing in.

Once the investigators have introduced themselves and described their day, they must gather at one of Trevellyn's mandatory Improvement Activities, an art class in this case, after work.

This is where their story begins.

Scenes

There are three types of scene in this scenario:

1. **Investigative Scenes:** These are the usual type of scene; they take place in the 'real' world, while the Investigators are awake. At the start of the investigation these will be the most common type of scene, but that will probably change as things progress.
2. **Dream Scenes:** The second type of scene is more unusual. Dream scenes occur in the mind of one of the Investigators. For more details on running Dream scenes see the nearby box.
3. **Mixed Scenes:** The final type of scene is a combination of the other two. Images, elements and characters from the Investigators dreams begin to bleed into the 'real' world.

When the investigation begins, most of the scenes will be standard investigative scenes. Later, as the



DREAMING INFECTION AND RUNNING DREAM SCENES

Any of the investigators are susceptible to the effects of Dreaming infection, beginning with focusing on how tired they are and then moving onto the associated dreams and nightmares.

The contents of the dreams should be dictated by the dreamer's answers during character creation. Play off their fears and experiences as well as the actual people they have mentioned.

There are several options for introducing dream scenes:

- ✘ At night. When the Investigators decide to pause for the night, this is a good time to start a dream scene. These will probably start with the current dreamer waking up (or thinking they do) and then something unusual happening.
- ✘ During a lull in the action when someone could have fallen asleep – keeping watch for example. Remember, they are all very tired.
- ✘ Micro naps. During the day but when someone is inactive – sitting down to eat a meal perhaps – these would be a good chance to have someone from an Investigator's past walk by a window, or pass across the street. These could blend in with the Mixed dream scenes.

Pick times to begin dream scenes that don't seem unusual – bedtime or late at night – to begin with at least.

INVOLVING OTHER PLAYERS

If the dreaming player involves other players, or the situation involves them, then let the players react and behave as normal. When the dream scene is over, their possible recollection of the dream depends on dice rolls (see below).

DICE ROLLS IN A DREAM SCENE

If any Investigator, current dreamer or otherwise, involved in a Dream Scene attempts to perform an action that requires a dice roll, they should use the regular dice they would normally use PLUS the Insight dice. This includes actions to consciously affect the dream - attempting to wake up, becoming aware it is a dream, or controlling it somehow.

POST DREAM

If the dreamer mentions their weird dream to the other investigators, have any other player who featured in the dream make a human condition roll WITH Insight dice as well. Any success (1-4) with their normal dice gives them vague recollections of the dream, or perhaps similar dreams, but no details. Success (5) gives more details: they can remember the dream and whoever else might have been in it. It remains a curiosity though, perhaps they all overheard the same thing? Success (6) gives more information BUT the character realizes that it's a shared dream.

In all cases, both during and after the dream, the players should then make any Insight roll that arises as normal.

Investigators fall further under the influence of the Dreaming, some of them will suffer nightmares and dreams. Towards the end, Dreams and Reality will become one.

Key Locations, Items, and People

Goodcliffe House

Built in the early Elizabethan period, Goodcliffe House is a rambling stone manor house, set in undulating pasture interspersed with ancient woodland. Through it all runs a stream that eventually fills a small pond flanked by two stone barns.

The main house is an imposing pile of flagstone floors and old fireplaces, its many bedrooms and long hall marking it as the highest status building for many miles around.

There is an indeterminate but appropriate number of staff members in the house. All are beginning to suffer badly from the effects of Dreaming infection.

William's Study

The study is an opulent affair, dominated by a large stone fireplace, a huge mahogany desk, and several luxurious leather chairs. Thick curtains cover the windows and, a little curiously, the far wall. A locked wooden box sits on the desk next to the leather blotter and inkwell that are the only other items in view.

Opening the desk will reveal nothing of interest - mainly financial ledgers. The mine is doing well.

The locked box contains Sarah's pendant, a key, and a page of mine schematics showing roughly the area the cavern is in. A hand written note on the schematic simply says 'Archeology ???!'

Looking behind the curtains on the far wall reveals a door. Locked and not precisely hidden, it is opened with the key from the box. Within, the investigators will find the comfortable but plain room containing Sarah Trevellyn.

The Methodist Institute for Recreation and Education

The centrepiece of the village, with the exception of the Chapel, is this largish community building incorporating a Library and Reading room, a gymnasium, music rooms, an arts and crafts room and a small school for the children too young to work. There are art and craft classes, bands, anything wholesome.

As there are none of the 'usual' meeting places - there are no pubs or inns for example, drinking being banned in Goodcliffe - the Institute would make a good place for the Investigators to meet without raising too many suspicions. The Institute is also offered some small protection by virtue of Fidelia's pendant.

The Mine

The scattered buildings of the Trevellyn mine at Goodcliffe sit atop the rocky, storm-washed cliffs, clinging limpets of grey stone defying the constant battering of the North Atlantic below.

The Main Shaft is the hub of mining activity, it is through this portal that the miners descend into the abyssal depths each day. The constant clanking and creaking of the cage that accompanies their descent, also works to bring forth the lode-bearing ore, before a constant run of carts moves it to the various calciners and other processes used to remove arsenic, copper, and of course tin.

Other surface buildings include the Tin Mill, Pumping Engine House, Miner's Dry (a changing room of sorts), chimneys, and some administration buildings.

Dominating the skyline however, is the skeletal tower of the Head Frame housing the huge Sheave Wheel and winding gear that makes up the mine's Head Gear, standing ready to raise and lower the cage into the Main Shaft.

Reaching far out under the sea, the underground portion of the diggings are cold, wet, and dangerous. The many tunnels are difficult to access and easy to get turned around in, particularly the exploratory tunnels and exhausted workings.

Hidden amongst the dead ends and dangerous areas and protected by 'Danger! Keep Out' signs, is the cavern discovered by the exploratory team.

The rough-hewn cavern walls are covered with badly worn carvings and faded paintings (*Keeper's note: Make your description of these as in-depth or vague as you like. Choose images that will resonate with your own players. If you wish to have actual words, they would be a mixture of Cornish - by this point barely spoken in Cornwall - Old Cornish, Breton and other Old Brittonic languages. An older resident, Mary's mother Wenna or Reverend Angwin perhaps, might be able to pick out some key words and phrases. If you play this as a one shot then in-depth translation is not required, just allow the Investigators to learn how to align the pendants to close the gate*). On one side a short tunnel, that possibly once led to an exit to the surface, is blocked by an old collapse.

In the centre of the cavern, carved from the very rock, is a pedestal or plinth. In the centre of the pedestal, a small peg juts up. It is empty now, but this was where Sarah and Fidelia found the two parts of their pendants, one circle inside the other and both fitted over the peg.

The Chapel and The Reverend Angwin

The Chapel in Goodcliffe is a relatively new affair. Built from local stone in the plain, utilitarian style of the Methodist Chapel, it sits in the very centre of the village across the small green with its bandstand, from the Institute.

A small cottage attached to the rear of the Chapel is where Reverend Angwin lives.

A vocal proponent of William's Moral Framework, Angwin's sermons recently have taken a more 'Fire and Brimstone' nature.

The Reverend has long been William's confidant about many things and is aware that William is suspicious that Sarah is being unfaithful; he's also aware of Sarah's current condition, as well as that of the exploratory team who he has also visited.

He is aware that William has a piece of jewelry that he believes was given to Sarah by her lover, but he has not seen it.

William Trevellyn

Industrialist, landowner, owner of the Trevellyn Deep Mining Company, and self-styled Lord of the Manor.

A follower of Methodism and creator of the Moral Framework - a set of strict guidelines that combines the more extreme tenets of Methodism regarding alcohol, gambling and acceptable and modest social

behaviour with the 'Betterment' of the individual worker (also, and probably not coincidentally, the best way to maintain physically able and productive workers) through physical and cultural activities.

William is not suffering from the effects of the Dreaming as severely as his wife, at least not as obviously. Close examination reveals the dark bags under his eyes and drawn complexion of one who has not slept. His mental state is even more fragile, the Dreaming's attention has taken his already superior and jealous attitude and mixed it with suspicion and paranoia to create a maelstrom of emotion seething just below a brittle social layer.

Directly approaching William, even on his best day, is a delicate affair for Goodcliffe residents. In his current state of mind any inquiry will be met with anger and complete rejection. His paranoia has taken control. If not immediately, William will act to punish the Investigators if they question him.

William loves his wife, but his need for control and respect overrides even that. He has been drawn into his wife's dreams since her infection and because of this is aware that she has a lover. When Sarah fell sick he found the pendant and, having seen it in her dreams realises that it is linked to her lover and the mine; infuriatingly for William any physical details of Sarah's lover remain shrouded.

Once Sarah fell ill, William moved

her to a locked room only reachable by going through his study. He is concerned both that Sarah's condition will adversely affect his social position and that she will continue to see her lover if she remains accessible.

Sarah Trevellyn

Wife of William. Well respected, even beloved, by the residents of Goodcliffe. She is seen as a strongly moderating figure of William's plans. Sarah comes from local stock.

Sarah has a lover, Fidelia, who she secretly sees under cover of Art lessons.

Sarah took Fidelia down into the mine to see the cavern. Whilst there they found the silver items that they used to create their pendants. Currently William has taken possession of Sarah's Pendant.

Sarah is in a terrible way. One of the earliest infected, her pendant also has the unfortunate effect of focusing the effects of the Dreaming, perhaps it makes her psyche tastier somehow! Whatever the reason, Sarah is almost completely incoherent. Ranging between catatonic and hysterical, and utterly unable to separate dreams from reality, Sarah mutters, mumbles, and shrieks about seemingly unrelated things. She also fears the Dark Figure that she sees almost all the time.

William has moved Sarah to a room only accessible via his private study, an area that Mary would not be able to get to.

The Dark Figure

The Dark Figure is the manifestation of the Dreaming. It will always be in the background, the elusive figure that can be chased and never caught. It is faceless and without gender or other physical characteristics.

Unlike all other aspects of the shared dreaming experience, the Dark Figure is never seen by anyone other than the primary dreamer. No-one can see another's Dreaming.

The Exploratory Diggers

Made up of three of William's most experienced and loyal men, this is the small team that initially found the cavern.

Any investigation into this team will reveal they are all suffering badly from the effects of Dreaming infection. The team are:

- ✧ **Jago Pendrik** – The leader of the Exploratory team. Jago is currently sequestered in a side ward at the small hospital in Goodcliffe, watched over by his wife, Morwen. He is almost catatonic, only occasionally being aware enough to ask about the Dark Figure who comes to see him.
- ✧ **Madern Treen** – A single man, badly affected by the Dreaming. He has locked himself in his cottage on the edge of Goodcliffe. Madern will respond to the Investigators unpredictably;

talking to seemingly empty spaces, being aggressive, and he will also mention the Dark Figure who is always watching him.

✧ **Gerren Polzeth** – The youngest member of the exploratory team. He is being looked after at home by his young wife Kerra. Gerren is the least affected of the team but is still definitely under its influence. He returned to the cave to collect the team's tools after it was sealed off. He noticed the two pieces of the pendant were missing as this was after Sarah and Fidelity had visited.

As the wife of the team's leader, Morwen knows about the team's discovery of the cave and that they met with Trevellyn. She will not give any information to the Investigators under any circumstances unless they can prove it will directly help her husband. She is also infected, so

is likely to be extremely volatile.

Kerra is also infected, her early stage paranoia manifesting currently in concern for her husband's well-being. She will note that Reverend Angwin has visited all the team members recently, and that he seemed to have some prior knowledge of their condition.

Fidelity Newton

An attractive woman in her 30's, Fidelity came to Goodcliffe in answer to William's advert for an arts and crafts teacher to run his Methodist Institute for Recreation and Education. An accomplished painter, Fidelity is also well-versed in many other art forms and craft techniques.

Fidelity is the secret lover of Sarah Trevellyn, whom she met whilst giving her painting lessons. She fears that Sarah's disappearance



means that William has discovered their relationship. She wears her pendant at all times, often playing with it when she is nervous or thoughtful.

Fidelia is able to help the Investigators find their way to the cavern, but she is extremely loath to disclose this as it would reveal her relationship with Sarah and further jeopardise Sarah's safety.

Although currently protected by her pendant from the ravages of Dreaming infection she is, somewhat ironically, quite paranoid about keeping her secret hidden.

Mary Chenoweth

Mary is the Lady's Maid to Sarah Trevellyn. While she usually spends a lot of her time up at the main house, Mary also has a cottage in the village that she shares with her aging mother, Wenna.

Mary provides the initial impetus to begin the investigation and points the Investigators in the direction of the exploratory team when she mentions that Sarah disappeared just after William's unusual meetings with the team.

Mary tells the Investigators that Sarah hasn't been seen since just after William had some unusual meetings with the members of the mine's exploratory team.

Mary is suffering from Dreaming infection just like everyone else and will continue to deteriorate as time passes.

The Pendants

Of a simple, even naïve design and made of beaten silver, the pendants are two concentric circles - the smaller fitting inside the larger. Once together they both sit over a central peg (the one on the pedestal in the cavern) and, correctly aligned they are the lock and key that keeps the way to the Dreamlands closed.

The larger circle attracts the energy of the portal, drawing it in and focusing it. This is the reason that Sarah has succumbed so quickly to the Dreaming. The smaller circle locks the focused energy in place, effectively shutting the portal down. The smaller circle creates a small area, barely big enough for one person, around itself that Dreamlands energy, and the Dreaming, cannot enter.

Sarah's pendant is the larger circle, Fidelia's the smaller.

The Moral Framework

All aspects of life in Goodcliffe are governed by William's Moral Framework, and all residents are expected to adhere strictly to its rules regarding alcohol, gambling, and 'proper' social conduct. Emphasis is placed on a hierarchical structure and an individual's place within it.

Use the aspects of the Moral Framework to create additional pressure on the Investigators.

Given these constraints, make sure the Investigators feel the pres-

ence of watchers whenever they pause in their investigations.

The Framework has created a society of fear, and other residents will simply bow to the pressure from Trevellyn and his men. The horrific effects of The Dreaming is stripping the remaining skin of civilisation from Goodcliffe residents. Consequently, if the investigators obviously disregard the constraints of the Framework or the general Goodcliffe hierarchy, reactions could be extreme, even physical.

Resolving the Situation

The future is bleak for the residents of Goodcliffe.

The 'best' result is that the pendants are replaced in the cavern and correctly aligned to relock the gate. Returning to Goodcliffe after doing this will reveal ... that precisely nothing has changed!

The Dreaming may be locked out and unable to spread further, eventually people may even recover a little, but the damage has already been done. If, in the future, the lock is opened again the Dreaming will immediately seek out its foodstuff and start where it left off before.

Both the Dreaming and William Trevellyn have good reasons (to them at least) to prevent the investigators from returning to the cavern.

William will bring his tangible authority to bear and the Dreaming, while not intelligent as humans

measure intelligence, has access to the innermost thoughts of its prey and will act to protect its nourishment. It will do this by focusing on the investigators and plaguing them further with dreams and nightmares. Normally the Dreaming wants to keep those it infects alive for as long as possible, they are its food source after all. When it protects itself it pulls out all the stops, crafting images to drive the Investigator crazy, even creating situations that could be fatal if in real life. If you die in your dream do you die in real life? Are you driven to catatonia?

Whatever the Dreaming does, it still has no tangible body so cannot physically affect the Investigators directly, though it could extend its influence to the physical world by affecting others.

An Alternative

As an alternative to the bleak uncertainty above, this scenario could be used as an introduction to entering the Dreamlands.

Aligning the pendants differently—the paintings and carvings on the cavern wall could be further deciphered to show how (See the **Keeper's Note** in The Mine section above)—opens the portal from the Goodcliffe side and allows passage the other way.

The first thing the investigators will have to do is destroy the link

with the Dreaming.

Entering the portal, they will be drawn to the spawning grounds of the Dreaming; a dark and desolate swamplands, sat in the shadows of a looming peak.

On an island in the foetid waters, a pulsating green mass sits; strangely brain-like, it exceeds the size and mass of the Head Gear of the mine.

Each Investigator will be drawn to one of a number of pustules protruding from the surface of the mass. This pustule is the source of

the Dreaming that infects them, and destroying the pustule will break the connection and end the infection. Somehow finding a way to follow the path from other pustules would enable the Investigators to locate others similarly infected. Perhaps even those that are not even human!

Those whose link is severed will be able to gradually rebuild their mental walls; although they may never quite return to normal.

From here on their adventures are yours to shape. Pleasant Dreams!



Doorways to Adventure

BY EDWIN NAGY

1. Not everybody makes it into the lobby from the revolving door at the Hotel Absinthe.
2. The side door at the local church has a Latin phrase carved over it, "Tantum hic homines possunt intrare" - 'Only humans can enter here.'
3. In the living room of the Gordanza estate an ornately carved oaken door awaits travelers on the ceiling, framed by heavy crown molding.
4. Each time she walked through the door, she aged a month or so. But it was so worth it.
5. Beaded curtains hang across the entrance to M. Blanc's dressing room. Each bead reflects the light of a different star.
6. A man in green velvet walks out the side door of the dollhouse and greets you in an old form of German.
7. An incredibly long tentacle hangs out of the hole in the tree, its tip

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searching for something. The creature it belongs to couldn't possibly fit inside the narrow birch.

8. All the houses along the road look the same, and all the garages too. Except one. This garage has a lead-lined steel door that is chained along its length to hooks in the concrete driveway. The windows are barred with steel and shuttered.

9. "This is the door from the original house. It dates back to the 1200s, at least that's what Pa says. There's been lots of houses here, but always the same door."

10. The door opens. The light comes on. Inside the fridge are thirty jars of mustard and oh so many hands.

11. The doors each fall gently open. Behind each one, a different strain of unearthly music slowly crescendoes.

12. The servants pull the cloth roll out of the jet black tube. After they unfurl it and hang it from the silver hooks, she gestures for you to follow and steps through the doorway painted upon it.

13. Sean tells you about the old temple entrance, framed on both sides by ancient trees, "Take this draught on a moonless night, then pass between the trees and into the land of dreams beyond."

14. From the doorway, everything slopes together, like a forced perspective. The next door must be smaller, but you seem to fit through with equal ease. And the next. And the next.

15. With a low clank and a high, whistling sound, the safe door swings open. A brown haze of orange and green smoke spills out, revealing, or perhaps concealing, a moving shape within.

16. An archway appears in front of you, the blue light that streams out forming a path, a bridge. Squinting against the light you see a tall building, impossibly slender, twisted and knotted about itself.

17. You traveled for hours in the spherical ship, and now the round porthole awaits you. Pass through it into the realm beyond.

18. Through the ribbons hiding the hatch comes the luggage, one bag after another. Black, green, red. A cage comes out, its door hanging open, the hinges torn. You hear a scream from behind the wall.

19. You get into the old rattletrap and slam the door. Behind you, all the other cars' doors shut in unison. You lead this procession of automata down the road to the coast wondering if they will follow you into the sea.

20. Turn *this* door to see what lies beyond.

PAGE: 58:: GHOROTH PASSING IN THE NIGHT: CRISPIN VEJIL, 2019

PAGE: 59: ANTHRAPHAGITE: SARAH PENNEY, 2019





Your spine is

a whole.

world.



THE OLD MAN AND HIS DOGS: DAN MORAN, 2012

DAN MORAN