

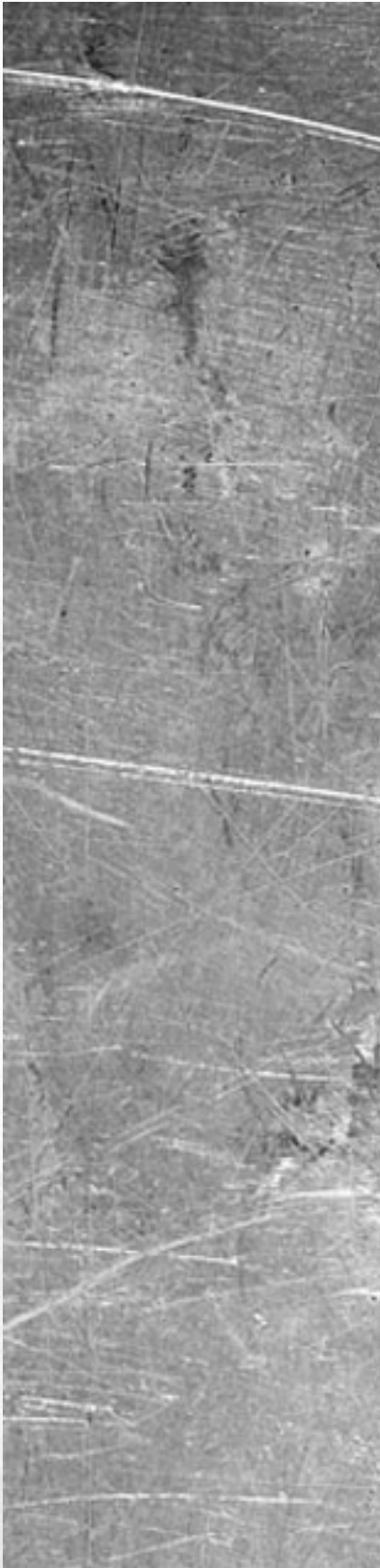
FOUL CONGERIES II



BY **KENNETH HITE**
TRAIL OF CTHULHU



Pelgrane Press



FOUL CONGERIES

Publisher: Cathriona Tobin

Author: Kenneth Hite

Layout: Cathriona Tobin

Cover: Tyler Clark

Artwork: Jeff Porter

KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

Foul Congeries is part of the Ken Writes about Stuff subscription series, featuring new and original Hite goodness every month for twelve months. A subscription costs \$24.95 and as well as giving you a generous 30% discount on the individual article price of \$2.95, we'll be offering an exclusive extra later in the year to all subscribers.

This PDF is that exclusive extra for subscribers to KWAS, Vol. 2.

Hideous Creatures: Introduction

Lovecraft created his various “shadowy congeners” because the stories of vampires, werewolves, and even ghosts had become too familiar and too formulaic to evoke true horror. Almost a century after he wrote, his own monstrous races have likewise begun to seem like comfortable story furniture rather than unnerving signals that the world is horrible and wrong.

Our goal with this series is to present a comprehensive look at Lovecraft’s hideous creatures, from as many angles as we can. Our goal is contradiction, surprise, and most especially the uncanny: the recognition of something familiar as something weird. As in the “Gods and Titans” section of the *Trail of Cthulhu* core book, this series deliberately contradicts itself, blurring boundaries and erasing certainties in the name of the uncanny. In your campaign, these variant truths might be misunderstandings, legends, heresies, or deliberate lies spread by the creatures to lull their foes into a false sense of familiarity.

Change anything and everything in these pages, most especially the ability scores. If you need a terrifying assassin, a brief but survivable fright, or a sanity-shattering horror, just add or subtract points at will.

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Foul Congeries

“OTHER THINGS IN THE DISMAL CRYPT WERE LESS DESCRIBABLE—ISOLATED PARTS OF PROBLEMATIC ENTITIES WHOSE ASSEMBLED FORMS WERE THE PHANTOMS OF DELIRIUM.”

– “THE HORROR IN THE MUSEUM”

Welcome back to Rogers’ Museum of Monstrous Curiosities! As we did this time last year, we present still more burblings from the imagination of Lovecraft thus far un-translated (or at least un-compiled) into game-adapted beasties. That’s right, three more neglected, honest-to-Yog Lovecraft monsters.

The previous iteration of *Foul Congeries* adapted the Ultraviolet Devourers from “From Beyond,” the Vampirish Vapours from “The Shunned House,” and the Worm-Cultists from “The Festival.” This collation strains a bit, reaching into the ghost-written “Medusa’s Coil” and a cobbled-together macedoine of poetry, fragmentary notes, and suchlike – but two of the three creatures at least glancingly suppurate from “The Call of Cthulhu” itself. Again, a shout-out to obsessive illustrator Michael Bukowski, whose *Yog-Blogsoth* series helped me reach, cobble, and lance.

For each creature, at least a few alternate possibilities present themselves. They don’t get the full *Hideous Creatures* treatment, but at least they get to flop and gibber onto the table, emerging from “the obscurer corners” at last.

Scenario Starters

With Lovecraft’s more familiar monsters, familiar scenarios immediately suggest themselves: the remote fishing village tainted with Deep Ones, or the Mi-Go keeping a hyperspace gate open in the high hills. A cult of Druids summons a Dark Young; a mad biologist extracts shoggoth serum.

For those creatures, new takes and new scenarios provide refreshing variety to the Keeper’s palette.

But these obscurer creatures are barely present on our story horizon. For them, even the clichés remain fresh. This section in each creature writeup gives several simple, punchy suggestions – “scenario starters” – pointing out the possible role of these new beings in Lovecraftian adventure stories, rather than only one or two full scenario seeds.

BAT-THING

“WHILE NEAR HIM SHAPELESS BAT-THINGS FLOPPED AND FLUTTERED IN IDIOT VORTICES THAT RAY-STREAMS FANNED.”

– FUNGI FROM YUGGOTH, “AZATHOTH”

Gods and titans cannot exist in the universe without tearing it. The shreds and fragments of reality the titan calves off swirl around it, banking and tumbling in the god’s ineffable cosmic radiations. Imprinted with the titan’s consciousness, those shreds of reality most “aerodynamic” and most attuned to perceptible reality sometimes climb the updraft of idiot madness into our dimension, like moths trapped inside a house.

Those shreds resemble bats, flopping and fluttering in movement around those places and idols most tangent to the titan or god they orbited. Most often seen at a distance, or in the darkness, they might even be gigantic bats or pterodactyls, membraneous wings stretching across the moon or blotting out the mouth of the tunnel behind you.

Seen close up, their bodies resemble tapering newts or mudfish, with long bat-like wings flowing out of the things’ sides rather than from a common point on the back. According to certain hints in *De Vermis Mysteriis*, their coloration depends on the titan they reflect: blackish-green for Cthulhu, muddy gray for Azathoth, pallid for Hastur, ebon for Tsathoggua or Nyarlathotep. But Ludvig Prinn may have imposed his own medieval alchemistic order on these essentially chaotic beings.

A more reliable guide to a bat-thing’s god is its head, warped by perceiving (and being perceived by) its titanic, accidental maker. Tentacles imply Cthulhu or Hastur, unless the latter leaves only a vacuous smoothness; bat-ears and wide mouth are the stigmata of Tsathoggua; pock-marks and ripples like hail on mud show the idiot attention of Azathoth; a leering human face is the blessing of Nyarlathotep.

Bat-Thing

The number before the slash indicates the bat-thing’s ability rating on the ground; the number after the slash is the same while in the air, space, etc.

Abilities: Athletics 4/16, Health 9, Scuffling 6/12

Magic: 2-5; bat-things have Call Azathoth or Contact Cthulhu (or other appropriate spell for their associated titan), and can cast spells collectively.

Hit Threshold: 4 (5 at night or in caves)

Alertness Modifier: +2 (+0 against unmoving targets)

Stealth Modifier: +1 (+2 at night or in caves)

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Weapon: +2 (bite or proboscis or facial sucker; drains Health damage to its own pool, no maximum), -1 (wing buffet)

Special Attacks: Some bat-things (again, perhaps depending on the titan that spalled them off reality) generate or emit clouds of sound: skreeking of bats, chiming of bells, grinding of stone, slow liquid exhalation, hissing of interstellar radio, deep infra-bass metal echoes, piping flutes, etc. Human hearers lose 1 Stability per round exposed to it; casting the Call or Contact spell for the appropriate deity costs -1 Stability or Magic per round spent immersed in the sound.

Armor: None, but: in the presence of its titan it regenerates all damage the next round; in the presence of a true idol or

other representation of or connection with its titan it regenerates 6 Health per round; otherwise it regenerates 3 Health per round.

Stability Loss: +1

Humanoid Bat-Thing

A bat-thing born of a titan's congress with a human, or of some extrusion of the titan's will re-forming a traumatized human, resembles a normal person in outward respects, save for a certain pointed quality to the ears and thick, bristly hair. The teeth are hollow, of course, and the bones and organs hopelessly disarranged. Worst of all is the hideous flap of skin depending either from the base of the brain or from

the lymph nodes under the arms; it can extend to allow the bat-thing to glide once dropped from a height. A gliding bat-thing must make an Athletics test to keep flying after attacking a target on the ground.

Reverse the ability ratings for ground and air, and probably increase its Magic to 10+ (humanoid bat-things tend to be sorcerers of inhuman genius). Its "normal" physical attacks with hands, feet, or melee weapons (add Weapons 8) take a +2 bonus to damage because of its freakish, alien strength. It has no wing-buffet attack, however.

Bat-Thing Familiar

This horrid creature is the result either of a bat-thing extruding itself into an earthly bat, or of a human sorcerer's congress with a bat-thing. It resembles a bat with a leering, twisted human face and grotesquely misshapen hands instead of the bat's extremities. This is the bat-thing form described by Lovecraft in the fragment "Of Evil Sorceries" (p. 6).

Lower Health to 3 and bite damage to -2, increase Stealth Modifier by +1. Bat-thing familiar bites may carry hideous disease such as the Hoggar Plague: Difficulty 4 Health test to resist the virus' onset (in 1-6 hours); failure lowers victim to Hurt and drains 1 Health per hour until death or hospitalization.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS

"THERE WERE LEGENDS OF A HIDDEN LAKE UNGLIMPSED BY MORTAL SIGHT, IN WHICH DWELT A HUGE, FORMLESS WHITE POLYPOUS THING WITH LUMINOUS EYES; AND SQUATTERS WHISPERED THAT BAT-WINGED DEVILS FLEW UP OUT OF CAVERNS IN INNER EARTH TO WORSHIP IT AT MIDNIGHT."

-- "THE CALL OF CTHULHU"

These theories, truths, revelations, and lies are intentionally contradictory.

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They are intended to keep over-reductive Investigators (and Keepers) as blind as, well, bats.

- Byakhee are a type of bat-thing, spalled from reality by Hastur. They dwell beneath Lake Hali and in the high Andes, and infest Celaeno.
- Shantaks are a type of bat-thing, ground from the edge of dimensions by the passage of Gol-Goroth, or grown by Nyarlathotep in the Dreamlands from buds left by mad nightmares.
- The Black Winged Ones (p. 7) are a type of bat-thing, deliquesced from Cthulhu when the stars changed.
- Bat-things are shadows cast by Tulszcha, the Green Flame, upon the walls of reality. At the Yule death-festival, they carry the worm-cultists who worship It up the river of night into communion.
- Bat-things are alchemical constructs, grown from vats of lizard matter, shoggoth ichor, the milk of Shub-Niggurath, or some other abhorrent medium. Impregnated with the spells and signs of a titan, they provide the alchemist a conduit to that entity.
- A bat-thing begins as the desire of a human to perceive a god or titan. First, the human warps internally and grows a membranous skin flap, becoming a humanoid bat-thing (p. 5). Then (usually after death or some other major phase change event) it shrinks down into a bat-thing familiar (p. 5). Finally, after the familiar attains complete understanding of the titan entity it craves, that understanding cannibalizes the familiar from within, emerging like a butterfly from the desiccated cocoon of its flesh and flying to join its god.

Investigation

This section provides some possible clues to the being or its activities. Feel free to adjust them to suit your campaign or your conception of the monster.

Anthropology: The description of the things matches that of the Keen Keengs, tall bat-like winged men in Aboriginal lore descended from primordial giants, who worshipped a central fire inside a mountain. Perhaps that volcano is the source of the trouble?

Evidence Collection: The papers are blown all over the room, as though a wind came into the office. But they weren't blown away from the window – instead, the papers spiraled away from the shelf with that weird little statuette.

Forensics: The body is pale and covered in concave depressions, the long bones broken inside the skin. There is a largish, somewhat circular wound above the clavicle. The blood and marrow have seemingly been drained away, as have some pockets of fat, the vitreous humor in the eyes, most of the liquid in the liver and spleen, and the contents of the various glands.

History: In March of 1512, a bat-winged monster was reported born in Ravenna, Italy. Pope Julius II ordered that it be starved to death, but his sentence was prevented by the French sack of the city the next month.

Outdoorsman: There is no guano in these caves, although you've seen bats fly in and out of them all week. Instead, there are little trace scrapings of iron oxide everywhere, almost like powdered blood. (Chemistry)

Sense Trouble: As if from nowhere, wind gusts and spirals around you, as though you've been suddenly lowered into the eye of a miniature tornado. You hear the faint beating of great wings, or perhaps the sound of bells.

Scenario Starters

"BUT IN RESPECT OF GENERALL INFAMY, NO REPORT MORE TERRIBLE HATH COME TO NOTICE, THAN OF

WHAT GOODWIFE DOTEN, RELICT OF JOHN DOTEN OF DUXBURY IN THE OLD COLONIE, BROUGHT OUT OF THE WOODS NEAR CANDLEMAS OF 1683. SHE AFFIRMED, AND HER GOOD NEIGHBORS LIKEWISE, THAT IT HAD BEEN BORNE THAT WHICH WAS NEITHER BEAST NOR MAN, BUT LIKE TO A MONSTROUS BAT WITH HUMANE FACE. THE WHICH WAS BURNT BY ORDER OF THE HIGH-SHERIFF ON THE 5TH OF JUNE IN THE YEAR 1684."

-- "OF EVILL SORCERIES DONE IN NEW-ENGLAND OF DAEMONS IN NO HUMANE SHAPE"

- The above quote turns up in a copy of *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New-English Canaan*, by the Rev. Ward Phillips. (The original 1794 edition, not the expurgated second printing of 1801.) That copy turns up, open to that page, in the library of a prominent society gynaecologist who has committed a spectacular murder-suicide in his office – almost as if he wished to guarantee a thorough and embarrassing investigation of his previous patients.
- A wizard in a remote district breeds his wife with Yog-Sothoth, spawning twins. The more-human twin has strongly bat-like features (p. 5); the invisible monstrous twin can only be seen by the shadow of its enormous wings. (Multiply all ability ratings by 3.) It flies only on cloudy days, when it vampirizes cattle and horses or simply abducts lone travellers and devours them, raining their viscera and flesh below.
- First solitary bat-things, then whole flocks, appear above a church or mountain, dismissed as drunken illusions or mistaken sightings of migratory birds. The eyewitnesses show signs of idiocy, religious mania, blindness, madness, or other spoor of the Mythos entity these bat-things herald. The church or mountain begins to enter dreams

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and art of sensitive folk, as does the titan slowly emerging from it.

BLACK WINGED ONE

“ALL DENIED A PART IN THE RITUAL MURDERS, AND AVERRED THAT THE KILLING HAD BEEN DONE BY BLACK WINGED ONES WHICH HAD COME TO THEM FROM THEIR IMMEMORIAL MEETING-PLACE IN THE HAUNTED WOOD.”

- “THE CALL OF CTHULHU”

These semi-insectile, semi-humanoid entities carry out murder at the behest of Cthulhu or his deathless cult masters. Implacable and unstoppable, they are born of terrified human nightmares of oncoming death.

Their true appearance is a mystery; their outer form seemingly drinks light or at least sheds perception like an oil slick. The few surviving witnesses don't generally mention eyes or even number of limbs, but they all mention the wings. Those black wings resemble those of obsidian spearheads, or ravens, or dragonflies, or experimental aircraft.

When not carrying out abductions, killings, and ritual mutilations for a cult, the black winged ones dwell in the closest waste place: a still lake in the bayou, a rocky outcrop in the desert, an abandoned warehouse in the city's worst neighborhood. Three or five usually service any given cult; a solitary wizard or theurge makes do with a single black winged one. If you ever see more than five black winged ones in one place, that place is powerfully sacred to Cthulhu, and you likely won't see anything else ever.

Black Winged One

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 9, Scuffling 12, Weapons 12

Magic: 2-3; generally only Contact Cthulhu

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (improvised weapon or claw), +0 (neck snap or killing pressure-point blow); a Black Winged One can make two attacks per round.

Armor: -2 vs. any (inhuman carapace, no vitals); bullets do only 2 points damage maximum

Stability Loss: +0

Possible Variations

These theories, truths, revelations, and lies are intentionally contradictory, all the better to keep the black winged ones in the shadows.

- The black winged ones are actually byakhee, or shantaks, or star vampires, or (winged) dimensional shamblers, or bat-things (p. 4).
- The black winged ones are a special caste of mi-go that worships Cthulhu instead of Nyarlathotep. They wear special cloaking surfaces that render them black, both as religious symbol and to conceal their vibrations from their more orthodox kin.
- The black winged ones are mutant or variant shugoran constructs created by the Tcho-Tcho from beetles rather than fish. Only a



Hideous Creatures

Tcho-Tcho epopt can control them for long; otherwise the constructs wipe out their own cult within three to five years. This is part of the Tcho-Tcho plan to remove possible pure-human competition.

- Cult leaders control the black winged ones through telepathy, or in dreams.
- The black winged ones have no real physical existence; they are visible dream sendings of Cthulhu. They possess his chosen (or random) worshipers and kill for him (or at random, or whomever the worshiper secretly desires to kill). Replace the worshiper's abilities with those of the black winged one during possession. Possessed worshipers still suffer wound damage, but can continue to fight until they hit -12 Health and recover from their wounds the next night if possessed again.
- Even seeing a black winged one causes a run of bad luck, paranoia, disaster, and persecution (lose 1 Stability per month after seeing the thing; only killing it or being Blasted ends the drain).
- The black winged ones are black flies on the Goat of the Woods; they are Shub-Niggurath's bringers of madness and contagion, inspiring the ancient rite of *sparagmos*, the tearing to pieces of a human sacrifice or victim.

Investigation

This section provides some possible clues to the being or its activities. Feel free to adjust them to suit your campaign or your conception of the monster.

Cop Talk: "From a wide circle of ten scaffolds set up at regular intervals with the flame-girt monolith as a centre hung, head downward, the oddly marred bodies of the helpless squatters who had disappeared." That's from the report of the New Orleans (St. Bernard Parish, actually) voodoo

mass-murder case of 1907, but you didn't hear it from me.

Evidence Collection: That's leaf-mold crushed into the carpet near the body. The cleaners would have spotted anything that evening, so it must have been left after midnight, probably tracked in by the killer. It must come from a fairly large wooded patch, or even a forest; there's lots of different matter of different ages here. (Biology, Outdoorsman; *1-point spend of either to source it to a specific forest patch*)

Forensics: The victim died instantly of a snapped neck; the various mutilations were all done post-mortem. The cuts are clean and sure, but seemingly random: a psychopath with no knowledge of human anatomy, perhaps.

Intimidation: Even after everything you've threatened to do, he refuses to name the cult meeting place or identify the high priest, only the next target. You've done this enough to know that he absolutely fears the threat of death by his cult, and that he's seen it carried out. *1-point spend:* When he names the next target, he pretends he's broken -- but you can tell he expects you to die when you try to save her. (Interrogation)

Sense Trouble: You have an overpowering sense of déjà vu: You dreamed of doing exactly this activity, in exactly this spot, just before you died.

Scenario Starters

"BLACK WINGED THING FLIES INTO ONE'S HOUSE AT NIGHT. CANNOT BE FOUND OR IDENTIFIED—BUT SUBTLE DEVELOPMENTS ENSUE."

-- COMMONPLACE BOOK

- The descendant or relative of a Cthulhu cultist is possessed by a black winged one, after it flies into his house as in the Lovecraft quote above. He grows to prefer darkness and still water, swimming

in a nearby pond. When he begins killing, he plants the bodies in the bottom of the pond, waiting for them to blacken and sprout wings.

- A cult summons black winged ones to capture and kill ritual sacrifices, but the cult priests succumb to the temptation and begin ordering the murder of their enemies, spouses, etc.
- An accused murderer blames "a black winged demon" for the deaths. Upon looking into his story, the Investigators find that he, too, once battled the Mythos. One of his enemies has summoned this entity to frame and discredit a too-effective pursuer — and it does the same to the Investigators some months after they think the case is closed.

MEDUSA

"IT WAS NOTHING HUMAN, THIS ROPY, SINOUS ... FLOOD OF SERPENT DARKNESS. VILE, INDEPENDENT LIFE PROCLAIMED ITSELF AT EVERY UNNATURAL TWIST AND CONVOLUTION, AND THE SUGGESTION OF NUMBERLESS REPTILIAN HEADS AT THE OUT-TURNED ENDS WAS FAR TOO MARKED TO BE ILLUSORY OR ACCIDENTAL."

- "MEDUSA'S COIL"

The medusa is a sentient colony creature closely resembling a long, thick coil of human hair with hundreds of shadowy serpent heads at one end. It can be any color common to both human hair and snakes: deep jet like the black snake, bright red like the immature clelia, rich blonde like the gold motley corn snake, chestnut like the Australian brown snake, white like an albino python.

It attaches itself to the brain of a sapient female host, of a species with hair such as humans, voormis, yeti, etc. Its tendrils grow through the skull and link the host brain to the medusa's ancestral memory stream back to Mu or even to R'lyeh. Such hosts usually become cult priestesses, magi, or

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other Mythos scholars if they don't go completely insane and become puppets of Hydra or other telepathic monsters.

Even after its host dies, the medusa continues to thrive undecayed, in partial hibernation until it chooses a new host.

Medusa

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 12, Hypnosis 20, Scuffling 13

Magic: The medusa can only do magic while attached to the braincase of a female human, voormis, or other hairy sapient mammal. In those

circumstances, it has Magic 10+ and any spells thought needful, including Contact Deep Ones, Contact Cthulhu, etc. So does its host.

Hit Threshold: 3 (2 for those crushed in its coils)

Alertness Modifier: +1 (can see 360° around itself)

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: +1 (crush)

Constrict: When the medusa attacks, its target gets a Difficulty 4 Athletics test to keep one arm free of its coils. Once the medusa has succeeded in the first attack, it does its crush damage

automatically each round until killed or pulled off. A medusa can only attack one target at a time. To free oneself requires three Difficulty 6 Athletics tests in a row.

Hypnotic Presence: The medusa can hypnotize anyone in its presence with a test of Hypnosis at Difficulty 4. The total of the medusa's roll and spend becomes the Difficulty of the Stability test to resist. (-1 Difficulty for each simultaneous target.) Hypnotized targets cannot attack or resist the medusa in any way until it either ends the mesmerism or loses 4+ points of Health at once.

Symbiosis: The medusa grows into the scalp of its host. (Unwilling hosts must make a Difficulty 7 Stability test each hour to resist until they reach Stability -12 and total cooperation. This is a Mythos shock.) Cutting the medusa out of the host's head requires damage equal to half the medusa's Health; damage applies both to the medusa and the host. While attached, the host is immune to snakebite, can use the medusa's Hypnosis and Magic pools, and gains 3 Cthulhu Mythos.

Armor: can only be damaged by fire or cutting weapons (-1 against the latter). Acids and alkalines do nothing.

Stability Loss: +0 on a human head; +1 separated

Possible Variations

These theories, truths, revelations, and lies are intentionally contradictory. They are intended to keep the medusa captivating.

- "She brushed it incessantly, and seemed to use some sort of preparation on it. I got the notion once — a curious, whimsical notion — that it was a living thing which she had to feed in some strange way." The medusa requires blood, or the fat of infants, or essential oils and rare resins, to feed. This prevents it from feeding on its host.

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- The medusa is a creation of lizard-man sorcerers trying to reinstate Yig's spiral gene plasm into human females so that the lizard race can breed itself true upon them.
- The medusa is a teaching tool (or subjugation device) created by Deep One genetic technicians to inculcate a proper sense of perspective into female human partners.
- The medusa uses human brains as local processors, linking tens of millennia of possessed humans through time in a massive parallel computer mind. This mass-medusa mind acts as a navigational system for Great Race time travel, or as a brief prophylactic against incursion by some monstrous other consciousness, or as a conduit for Deep One telepathy, or as the colony intelligence called Mother Hydra (with many heads), or as the true storage medium for the Cthulhu-concept.
- The medusa is "Spanish moss" or similar, parasitic upon Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. Its symbiosis with humans produces seriously dislocating hallucinations of elapsed time, memories of people who never were, and highly colored events that disguise the stages of a ritual initiation into the Dark Motherhood.
- The medusa ties its victims to it in time. Where it has inspired a scene of great and fervid horror, that scene continues to manifest for years, even reconstituting a burned house or a dead witness to testify and tell the medusa's story.
- Gazing at the medusa for days at a time allows an initiate to see along its timeline into the distant past of 75,000 years ago or even further back to the days of R'lyeh.
- The way to control the medusa is to show it its own image: in a painting, motion picture, mirror, or photograph. Successfully capturing the image requires a Difficulty 5 test of Athletics (mirror) or a

3-point spend of Photography or Art (with the appropriate specialty). Adduce other requirements (to project the film onto a screen in the thing's sight, etc.) accordingly. This revelation prevents the medusa from attacking the image-wielder as long as it continues.

Investigation

This section provides some possible clues to the being or its activities. Feel free to adjust them to suit your campaign or your conception of the monster.

Archaeology: We know that Lady Charlotte March visited Chott-el-Djerid in Tunisia and Ayvalik in Turkey, before stopping off in the Cape Verde Islands: all sites associated with the Greek myth of the Gorgons. (Occult)

Art History: "Frank Marsh, of New Orleans. Disciple of Lafcadio Hearn and Gauguin and Van Gogh — regular epitome of the yellow 'nineties. Poor devil — he had the makings of a great artist, at that." Marsh was associated with the occult society Les Gorgoniens in Paris before the War, and disappeared mysteriously in 1916 in Cape Girardeau, Missouri at the house of his childhood friend Denis de Russy. Some of his 1912 sketches depict figure studies of women with curiously animate-looking hair. (Occult)

Evidence Collection: "As I studied the floor I saw that a line of sticky footprints like the one on the body led away from the horror to the door. There was another blood-trail, too, and of a less easily explainable kind; a broadish, continuous line, as if marking the path of some huge snake. At first I concluded it must be due to something the murderer had dragged after him. Then, noting the way some of the footprints seemed to be superimposed on it, I was forced to believe that it had been there when the murderer left. But what crawling entity could have been in that room with the

victim and her assassin, leaving before the killer when the deed was done?"

Forensics: The victim's body showed severe ligature marks all over, as though he was bound with a very long sheaf of very thin wire, methodically tightened. Cause of death was asphyxiation from crushed lungs. Strangely, there is no sign of a struggle or even much physical reaction on his part, even though the pain must have been agonizing.

Sense Trouble: "A suggestion of motion among the underbrush at a point some distance back along the deserted drive. Unmistakably, the weeds and bushes and briars were swaying as no wind could sway them; swaying as if some large, swift serpent were wriggling purposefully along on the ground in pursuit of me."

Scenario Starters

- A medusa-host has enthralled and seduced a young friend or relative of the Investigators or their client. She intends to use his position in society to advance herself by adultery and hypnosis, and to re-create an ancient cult in the modern world.
- The site of an ancient medusa infestation — perhaps in Southern Rhodesia near the ruins of Zimbabwe — has begun to attract infatuated male pilgrims. The medusa killed there by some Cimmerian reaver has awakened and healed itself, seeking new blood before selecting a new priestess.
- A priestess of some modern cult has discovered some of the truth of the medusa, and seeks to uncover one to achieve occult power and initiatory insight. She needs a book the Investigators possess, and begins a campaign of alternating blandishments and hired goons to get it. At some point, the Investigators (ideally including a female character in whom the medusa might be more interested) pursue her to her goal.