

HIDEOUS CREATURES

GREAT RACE OF YITH



BY KENNETH HITE

TRAIL OF CTHULHU



Pelgrane Press



GREAT RACE OF YITH

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KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

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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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Great Race of Yith

“THE GREAT RACE’S MEMBERS WERE IMMENSE RUGOSE CONES TEN FEET HIGH, AND WITH HEAD AND OTHER ORGANS ATTACHED TO FOOT-THICK, DISTENSIBLE LIMBS SPREADING FROM THE APEXES. THEY SPOKE BY THE CLICKING OR SCRAPING OF HUGE PAWS OR CLAWS ATTACHED TO THE END OF TWO OF THEIR FOUR LIMBS, AND WALKED BY THE EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION OF A VISCOUS LAYER ATTACHED TO THEIR VAST TEN-FOOT BASES.”

-- “THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME”

Their 10-foot tall cone-shaped bodies, topped with four stalks (eyes, trumpet-like ears, two pincers) are too specifically described in Lovecraft’s novella to get away with too much variation. You can emphasize some of the less well-known features of the Yithian cones, however:

- They incline “as much to the vegetable as to the animal state,” implying some similarity to fungi. Could their vast, virtual telepathic machinery depend on a colony condition? Tropical sunlight? Why else place the Library right atop a flying polyp warren, with the whole world to choose from?
- Their food is “semi-fluid” but “unlike the food of existing animals.” So probably not blood, per se, although a vampire Great Race is likely worth the change. A trough of mineralized (or phosphate-rich) slurry, coming up!
- “Incomprehensible senses” are always good for something, especially if a Yithian-possessed GMC in the 1930s can build goggles that replicate them. Darkvision, lifespan detection, future sense (p. 11), magic detection, and many more seem like naturals.
- No sex; play Yithians as not just gender-free but gender-atheist.
- Yithians communicate by clicking their claws, although like Wells’ Martians, this could be an atavistic remnant of their cone-selves; the true Yithians may be telepathic.
- Yithian cones reproduce with “seeds or spores” – could those survive

fossilized in amber, or carried by time-gate travel? What does a cone-creature not possessed by a Yithian want, and what can it offer?

A Yithian can send its mind forward or backward through time, pick out a suitable subject, and trade minds with it. Thus, whenever a member of the Great Race takes over the body of a being, that being is put into the body of the Great Race individual, there to stay until the being now inhabiting its old body sees fit to return and trade places once more. When the time comes to restore the victim to his own body, the Great Race blanks his memory of all that has happened to him while he is trapped in their age. This blanking is not perfect: the victim may dream of or have nightmares concerning being held by the Great Race. The Yithians use this technique to travel en masse through time and space to conquer other planets.

The Great Race, a purely mental species, took over the minds of the cones when they fled the destruction of their own world, Yith. After driving the flying polyps underground, and a period of internal wars, they built a fascist empire centered on a Great Library complex in Australia. When the polyps erupted again, the Great Race left the cones to their fate and jumped ahead to our far future, where they possess the coleopteran bodies of Earth’s by-then dominant race. Their final stop in this solar system is the bulbous vegetable entities of Mercury, a billion years hence.

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Rugose Cone Bodies

Abilities: Athletics 7, Firearms 7, Health 23, Scuffling 13

Magic: 7+ for degenerate Yithians who seek out magic; likely time spells such as Contact Hounds of Tindalos, Contact Tawil at-Umr, Create Hypertime Gate, Dho-Hna Formula, etc.

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +0 (but 360° vision)

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: +5 (pincer), +1 (per charge of lightning gun); pincer attack only at point-blank range; lightning gun holds 32 charges, any number of which may be fired per round in a single attack.

Armor: -5 vs. any (thick carapace)

Stability Loss: +0

Hardy Coleopteran Bodies

The Yithians of the future become the hive minds of swarms of flying beetles. These statistics describe a swarm of 1d6 x 500 beetles; a swarm remains sentient until reaching Health 0, at which point it scatters.

Abilities: Athletics 4 (10 flying), Health 4

Magic: Same as rugose cone Yithians

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: -2 (bite) per round spent in the swarm (automatic)

Armor: none, but weapons must be able to damage several hundred beetles to diminish Health; thus functionally immune to all but insecticide, flame

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weapons, or other area-effect attacks

Stability Loss: +0

Yithian Technologies

Yithian time-travel depends on hyper-scientific machinery, much of which exists in a purely mathematical state, since it can be constructed with virtually any level of technology, no matter how primitive. This may also be true of the rest of their devices.

The Yithians command not only their own highly developed (atomic and further) technology, but potentially the inventions of all times and species. Yithians could potentially grow shoggoths, seal brains in cylinders, build sentient hyperspace craft, solidify dreams, etc. They can also provide weirdly retro human-tech gear for their present-day Yithian agents (*ToC*, p. 165). Err on the side of weird and electric rather than prosaic and digital: Tasers and selenium video, not AK-47s and smart phones. That said, Yithian agent gear should mechanically work as well or better than that used by 21st-century specialists!

For Investigators not trained by Yithians, puzzling out a piece of tech takes either a Physics spend (sometimes for each use) or a Mechanical or Electrical Repair test, at Difficulty 6. Each use might lower the Difficulty by 1 until it vanishes entirely. That said, a Taser might be relatively simple to work out; a gravity-nullifier might never work without a dicey test and a Physics spend!

Building a device from an existing model is the same test (and spend) at +2 Difficulty, and requires a month's work and \$10,000 in materials. Devices based on Yithian conceptual control surfaces (like the time projector) can never be thus reverse engineered; if a Yithian agent can build one, he has had the methodology literally engraved into his mind.

Electrical Repulsion Lifter: This 40-lb. arrangement of conductive rods and carefully placed crystals and wires turns any metallic frame (auto, airplane, ship) into a lifting body by electrically reversing and repelling the Earth's

magnetic field. Requires a Physics spend to install, but not to use: that's Piloting (Electric Repulsion Lifter) or any aircraft type at +2 to Difficulties.

Force Field: This 60-lb. projector-generator creates a lenticular force field 10 feet across. It stops or slows all matter and energy, and provides -6 armor against projectiles, beams, etc. It requires a 1-point Physics spend and an Electrical Repair test to set up. For each extra point of Physics or Cthulhu Mythos spent in its construction, add another 10 feet of field and a further -2 armor.

Language Machine: This device instructs non-Yithian minds in the Yithian language and script by means of sonic-cerebral adjustment. Small and compact, it requires only exposure to a Yithian mind to activate. After 1 day, the hearer adds Yithian to her Languages slots without changing her Languages rating.

Lightning Gun: This camera-shaped device projects a gout of electricity (+1 damage) at Long range (100 yards) with a specific charge that annihilates flying polyps (triple damage). Each extra charge does a further +1 damage or extends the range by 50 yards; the gun contains 32 charges that can be fired in any amount or combination. Over 4 charges fired simultaneously by a non-Yithian blows up the gun (+4 damage, rolled twice) on an unmodified Firearms roll of 1; 8+ charges blows it up (+8 damage, rolled twice) on a roll of 1 or 2. Firing the gun requires either a 1-point Physics spend or an Electrical Repair test before the first time; after that a normal Firearms test suffices. Recharging the gun requires a Difficulty 8 Electrical Repair test to avoid blowing up the gun, melting it, or otherwise rendering it useless.

Memory Eraser: This small copper box erases the memories of the kidnapped minds before they are sent back. (It doesn't work perfectly on Investigators or Peaslees.) The operator connects it to the cranium with thin wires and probes,

then creates a conceptual vacuum in the copper that siphons off memories. Yithian operators (or their trained agents) can also use it to implant memories, transfer memories to other minds, and make memory copies without draining them. Non-Yithians must spend 1 Cthulhu Mythos and make a Difficulty 7 Psychoanalysis test to operate it as an eraser; they cannot access its other functions.

Stasis Box: This clear cold-plasma field slows time inside it, to 1 second passed per thousand (or for later models, million) elapsed years. Boxes range from the size of a large book to the size of a large tyrannosaur. Programming the box is impossible for non-Yithians, but simply activating or deactivating it sometimes requires only the push of a contact – or a 3-point Physics spend, depending on the drama.

Time Projector: This resembles “a queer mixture of rods, wheels, and mirrors, though only about two feet tall, one foot wide, and one foot thick. The central mirror is circular and convex.” When activated (Difficulty 5 Mechanical Repair test or 1-point Physics spend) it translates the viewer back into a Yithian cone-body in the Mesozoic, replacing her mind with the one in that body. (Resetting its coordinates is impossible for non-Yithians.) With a 2-point Physics spend and a Difficulty 7 Mechanical Repair test, a non-Yithian can alter the foci of the mirrors and turn the projector into a holographic-telepathic cross-time communicator.

VARIATIONS

“AS MENTAL BARRIERS WORE DOWN, I BEHELD GREAT MASSES OF THIN VAPOUR IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE BUILDING AND IN THE STREETS BELOW. THESE STEADILY GREW MORE SOLID AND DISTINCT, TILL AT LAST I COULD TRACE THEIR MONSTROUS OUTLINES WITH UNCOMFORTABLE EASE.”

-- “THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME”

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As with the “Gods and Titans” section in the corebook, this compendium is intentionally self-contradictory. Its facts and theories come from Lovecraft, from later writers, and from the universe of possibilities opened up between them.

- The Great Race arrived on Earth 400 million years ago (MYA) and took over the cone-creatures’ bodies. 65 MYA, the flying polyps emerged from their prisons; the Great Race fled to the coleopteran host swarms 50 million years from now.
- The cone creatures are a gigantic offshoot of the genus *Wiwaxia*, evolved during the Cambrian Era from early crinoid-creature experimentation. Their vegetable matter is grafts of Elder Thing plasm; they joined the shoggoth rebellion and won their independence. In revenge, the Elder Things created the polyps and sent them to exterminate the cones.
- The flying polyps dominated Earth, Mars, the lost Fifth Planet, and Saturn from 600 MYA until the Yithians defeated them, wrenching the Moon loose from the Pacific and reducing the Fifth Planet to asteroidal gravel in the process. The polyps nearly destroyed the Race anyway, emerging several times over the next 100 million years until constant vigilance led the Race to install its fascist system.
- The defeat of the flying polyps by the Great Race began their degradation into the lloigor.
- The Great Race began its time on Earth with a series of civil wars, eventually resolving itself into a loose co-dominium of four fascist states. Their civil wars continued in between wars against the Xothians (300 MYA), the serpent folk (250 MYA), Elder Things (200 MYA), the Yekubians (150 MYA), and the mi-go (100 MYA).
- The Great Race and the “flying polyps” are the same entities, or rather the polyps are the Great

Race’s psychopaths, criminals, rebels, human-symp, and libertines imprisoned in windowless tower-caverns. Semi-matter accreted to the imprisoned Race until it became immune to lightning-dissociation and emerged 50 MYA to destroy Pnakotus.

- Cthulhu and the Xothians are the flying, semi-material, “polypous” race the Yithians fear. The Great Race sank R’lyeh and imprisoned the Star-Spawn beneath Australia and Arabia.
- The Eltdown Shards describe the trans-galactic world of Yith, its three moons, its sun Ognlach, and its capital city of Czymra.
- The *Chthonic Revelations* of Thanang Phram describe the Dlyrion Tharkos, or Dark Ghosts, fled from a dying world to haunt this one, immortal spirits possessing and being ejected from species after species, wizard after wizard. They are ageless, not time-travelers; their memories of previous possessions imprint on newer ones and drive the hosts mad.
- The Great Race fled Earth during the sinking of R’lyeh for a dark star in the Hyades, where they keep watch on the Lake of Hali and Hastur for the Elder Gods. Celaeno is one of their earlier Libraries; they still deposit books there.
- The Great Race seeks to build host bodies in all times to construct an aeons-long empire of all life under its rule.
- Yithians live in timeless Dreamlands, not the past; they possess people through dreams, not time projection. Pnakotus is either a solidified dream city appearing briefly in Australia or a city built by a Lemurian cult that worshiped the Yithians.
- The Lemurians are the Yithians, a formerly astral race fallen into materiality. They fear the fallen relics of their predecessor root race, the Polarians.

MYTHIC ECHOES

“WHEN THESE VICTIMS HAD LOST THEIR MEMORY, THEY HAD ASSOCIATED THEMSELVES WITH THE CREATURES OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD MYTHS—THE FABULOUS INVADERS SUPPOSED TO DISPLACE MEN’S MINDS—AND HAD THUS EMBARKED UPON QUESTS FOR KNOWLEDGE WHICH THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD TAKE BACK TO A FANCIED, NON-HUMAN PAST.”

– “THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME

Beings that can possess anyone from any culture on any continent are bound to leave a mark in history, understood as demonic intrusion or as daemonic inspiration. “Channeled spirits” might actually be time-questing Yithians, as might any reincarnated mahatma, or any prophet or oracle. Of course, the Yithians might more closely match their various legendary depictions than Lovecraft’s fiction.

The Keeper who sets her campaign in the 1950s or later has much more to choose from. Any number of alien attackers resemble the Yithians; the Flatwoods Monster (spotted in Braxton County, Kentucky, after a 1952 UFO crash) sports a cone-shaped torso, round head, and clawed tentacle-arms. (So, weirdly, does Zontar, the mind-controlling Venusian alien in Roger Corman’s 1956 classic *It Conquered the World*.) In his 1958 book *Secret Places of the Lion*, UFO contactee George Hunt Williamson proposed constantly reincarnating alien “Great Ones” as the engine of human destiny. The psychic Ruth Montgomery further domesticated these “Wanderer” entities as the “Walk-Ins” of New Age myth, beginning with her 1978 book *Strangers Among Us*. She explicitly identified them as aliens in its 1985 sequel *Aliens Among Us*. Replacing the lurking, swarthy foreigners of Lovecraft’s fiction with happy, vapid housewives as the Yithian support network has at the very least the virtue of incongruity going for it. A Keeper who wants to introduce “Walk-Ins” or something like them to the active 1930s Spiritualist scene is only slightly

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anachronistic: the films *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941) and *Gabriel Over the White House* (1933) both feature celestial beings taking over (and wildly altering) human lives at the moment of their death. The latter film, especially, could be a Yithian documentary: the “angel” possessing the President institutes something very like the Great Race’s “fascistic socialism.”

Aion (Roman Empire)

Beginning around the 2nd century A.D. in Rome, a branch of Mithraism dedicated itself to the worship of Aion, the personification of Unbounded Time. Depicted variously as an idealized youth or as a lion-headed demon with four snake-like arms, Aion appeared, or awoke, in a cave at the beginning of the world. He wields the thunderbolt and the keys; depicted as Osiris, he sometimes wears the white, cone-shaped crown of Upper Egypt.

Bori (Hausaland)

The term *bori* refers both to a possessing demon and to a cult or secret society dedicated to inviting such possessions. Bori possession alters the eyes and gait of the host or *mai-bori*; in their native form, bori are headless but somehow serpentine demons. Mai-bori can determine which bori possesses them by ritual motion or dance; once a sort of body-mind communication exists, they can foretell the future. Iron repels bori possession.

Dybbuk (Jewish)

Originally a possessing demon, by the 16th century the dybbuk became an uneasy ghost or spirit. The dybbuk possesses someone who has sinned or omitted some precaution or protection, entering through the mouth or nose and dwelling in the hands or feet. While possessed, the host craves candy and behaves cruelly or arrogantly. The dybbuk eventually leaves the body weakened and drained; a rabbi can sometimes exorcise the spirit with kabbalistic rituals. When not possessing a host, dybbukim dwell in caves, desert places, ruins, and

Known Yithian Intrusions

This places the known Yithian irruptions in time and space; M = million.

- ca. 150M B.C.:** Valusian serpent-folk sorcerer
- 100M B.C.:** S’gg’ha, an Antarctic crinoid-creature
- 6M B.C.:** Insect-philosopher from Jupiter’s moon Callisto
- 3M-1M B.C.:** Three voormis Tsathoggua cultists of Hyperborea
- 850,000 B.C.:** King of Lomar
- ca. 100,000 B.C.:** A priest of the Middle Kingdom of Atlantis (Age of Kull)

50,000 B.C.: A general of the “great-headed brown people” who rule South Africa

- 15,000 B.C.:** Crom-Ya, chieftain of Cimmeria
- 1674-1640 B.C.:** Khephnes, Nyarlathotep-cultist of 14th Dynasty Egypt
- 200 B.C.:** Theodotides, Graeco-Bactrian official
- ca. 75 B.C.:** Titus Sempronius Blaesus, quaestor of Rome under Sulla
- ca. 800 A.D.:** Court astronomer of Tiahuanaco in the Andes
- ca. 1150:** Bartolomeo Corsi, monk of Florence
- ca. 1630:** Pierre-Louis Montmagny, an aged French courtier
- ca. 1650:** James Woodville, a Suffolk gentleman
- 1908-1913:** Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, professor of economics at

Miskatonic

- 1930-1933:** Amos Piper, anthropology professor at Miskatonic
- 2513-2518:** Nevil Kingston-Brown, Australian physicist
- 5000 A.D.:** Yiang-Li, a philosopher from the cruel empire of Tsan-Chan
- 16,000 A.D.:** Nug-Soth, a magician of the dark conquerors
- 50M A.D.:** Five coleopterous beetle hive-minds
- 500M A.D.:** Venusian crystal entity
- 800M A.D.:** Two arachnid folk from Earth’s last age
- 1,000M A.D.:** Bulbous vegetable entities of Mercury

whirlwinds, which all seem suggestive. Legendry around the world often associates wind or storms with possessing spirits; this may be a conflation of the Great Race and its wind-wielding elder foes the flying polyps.

Tempo (Brazil)

Tempo, or Iroko, is the orixa of Time in the Candomblé tradition of Afro-Caribbean religion in Brazil. He governs dreams, secrets, the wind, herbalism, and entrances. He is the first houngan, the creator of correct worship. Those possessed by him seem drunk or otherwise unsteady in their body, then become arrogant and haughty. Similar entities existed both in Angola and in Arawak tradition in Haiti, connected to

the sacred iroko or “African teak” tree, which grows in intertwined stands that resemble thick wooden cones topped with waving tentacle-trunks.

INVESTIGATIONS

Keepers should treat this section, and use these elements, even more idiosyncratically.

Clues

Perforce, the clues in this section mostly point to “canonical” Yithians as painted in Lovecraft’s “The Shadow Out of Time.” Feel free to adjust them at will.

Accounting: The Club’s investments have a remarkable track record: they

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avoided the '29 Crash altogether, for example. They do tend to pour funds into wildly experimental technologies: they've bought heavily into RCA, despite the fraught legal and technical challenges facing electronic television.

Anthropology: "The blackfellows have always been full of talk about 'great stones with marks on them,' and seem to have a terrible fear of such things. They connect them in some way with their common racial legends about Buddai, the gigantic old man who lies asleep for ages underground with his head on his arm, and who will some day awake and eat up the world. There are some very old and half-forgotten tales of enormous underground huts of great stones, where passages lead down and down, and where horrible things have happened. The blackfellows claim that once some warriors, fleeing in battle, went down into one and never came back, but that frightful winds began to blow from the place soon after they went down."

Archaeology: "Professor Dyer was appalled at the measureless age of the fragments, and Freeborn found traces of symbols which fitted darkly into certain Papuan and Polynesian legends of infinite antiquity. The condition and scattering of the blocks told mutely of vertiginous cycles of time and geologic upheavals of cosmic savagery." (Anthropology, Geology)

Architecture: Looking at the scale on these drawings we found in old Petersen's office, the rooms would have to be something like 20 feet high, since those tables are supposed to be 10 feet off the ground! The doorways are 12 feet wide, there are no stairs ... this is either fascist, or inhuman, architecture, or perhaps both.

Art History: A number of animals on the Roman 1st-century B.C. Palestrina Mosaic resemble dinosaurs and Pleistocene mammals. The mosaic dates from the time of Sulla, but was badly damaged by

Pope Urban VIII in 1625 – during the reign of Louis XIII. The Barberini family had watercolor copies made of the mosaic before damaging it; copies that have vanished since the 17th century.

Assess Honesty: "Something in my aspect and speech seemed to excite vague fears and aversions in everyone I met, as if I were a being infinitely removed from all that is normal and healthful. This idea of a black, hidden horror connected with incalculable gulfs of some sort of *distance* was oddly widespread and persistent." (Sense Trouble)

Astronomy: "When—very rarely—the night sky was clear to any extent, I beheld constellations which were nearly beyond recognition. Known outlines were sometimes approximated, but seldom duplicated; and from the position of the few groups I could recognise, I felt I must be in the earth's southern hemisphere, near the Tropic of Capricorn."

Biology: This "mental patient" was doodling trilobites until his release interview came through. (Evidence Collection, Geology)

Bureaucracy: Nurse Campbell has agreed to let us see the records for all the amnesia cases reported or diagnosed for the whole hospital system, going back to the last century – as long as you put in a good word and get her a better assignment from the medical board, Doctor. (Medicine)

Chemistry: The Laboratoires Rhone-Poulenc have done some pioneering research in phenothiazine derivatives, especially when mixed with opioids, to induce a "waking hibernation," but this compound looks like it's years ahead of even their work. It certainly blanked out Carlson. (Pharmacy)

Cop Talk: Pretty much any cop has heard it, the wife comes in and claims her husband "isn't her husband any more." Usually it's just because he's started

beating on her or cheating on her, but sometimes it's weirder than that. Mrs. Petersen's case is one of the weird ones, says he's been "replaced."

Credit Rating (5-6): I can tell you, because you're a trusted client – I don't know why Petersen has suddenly liquidated his assets. I mean, I know it's to fund these insane voyages of his, but I don't know where he thinks the money will come from in a year or two.

Cryptography: This code simply can't be broken, not unless you had a team of mathematicians working in parallel for a decade. And yet he plainly deciphered it overnight, despite having no background and no training we can uncover in math or codes.

Evidence Collection: "On the polished table-top were scratches shewing where some heavy object had rested. The queer machine was gone, nor was anything afterward heard of it. Undoubtedly the dark, lean foreigner had taken it away. In the library grate were abundant ashes evidently left from the burning of every remaining scrap of paper on which I had written since the advent of the amnesia."

Forensics: The hair is singed, there are fern-pattern burn marks on the chest and coat, and lesions extending deep into the muscle. The coins in his pocket show "arc marks," and heated enough to burn his skin, as did his pen and ring. Cause of death appears to be cardiac arrest induced by lightning stroke.

Geology: "As a mining engineer, I have some knowledge of geology, and can tell you that these blocks are so ancient they frighten me. They are mostly sandstone and granite, though one is almost certainly made of a queer sort of cement or concrete. They bear evidence of water action, as if this part of the world had been submerged and come up again after long ages—all since these blocks were made and used."

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History: “I would inadvertently refer, with casual assurance, to specific events in dim ages outside the range of accepted history—passing off such references as a jest when I saw the surprise they created. And I had a way of speaking of the future which two or three times caused actual fright.”

Languages: “Even my speech seemed awkward and foreign. I used my vocal organs clumsily and gropingly, and my diction had a curiously stilted quality, as if I had laboriously learned the English language from books. The pronunciation was barbarously alien, whilst the idiom seemed to include both scraps of curious archaism and expressions of a wholly incomprehensible cast.”

Law: We are no longer Mr. Petersen’s attorneys. He has requested we transfer his affairs to the firm of Crespi et Cie, of Paris. That firm? Very old, goes back to the mid-17th century, but with a rather ... *outré* clientele.

Library Use: “These rumours, though never proved at the time, were doubtless stimulated by the known tenor of some of my reading—for the consultation of rare books at libraries cannot be effected secretly. There is tangible proof—in the form of marginal notes—that I went minutely through such things as the Comte d’Erlette’s *Cultes des Goules*, Ludvig Prinn’s *De Vermis Mysteriis*, the *Unaussprechlichen Kulen* of von Junzt, the surviving fragments of the puzzling *Book of Eibon*, and the dreaded *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred.”

Medicine: “Physical strength returned at once, although I required an odd amount of re-education in the use of my hands, legs, and bodily apparatus in general.”

Occult: “Other ugly reports concerned my intimacy with leaders of occultist groups, and scholars suspected of connexion with nameless bands of



abhorrent elder-world hierophants. ... Then, too, it is undeniable that a fresh and evil wave of underground cult activity set in about the time of my odd mutation.”

Oral History: “As many as three men—all Australians—seemed to feel something sinister in the air. Mackenzie explained ... this was a fear picked up from blackfellow folklore—the natives having woven a curious fabric of malignant myth about the high winds which at long intervals sweep across the sands under a clear sky. Such winds, it is whispered, blow out of the great stone huts under the ground where terrible things have happened—and are never felt except near places where the big marked

stones are scattered.” (Anthropology)

Outdoorsman: The tracks lead deep into the cave complex, and they move pretty steadily, like he’s been here before. No hesitations, although you can see here he gives a *very* wide berth around this sinkhole.

Pharmacy: He’s suddenly started using powerful sleeping draughts, apparently on a routine basis. Either he’s got dreams he doesn’t want to remember, or he’s got a mind that doesn’t sleep unless you drug the body it’s in.

Photography: In these pictures from his “blank period,” Petersen’s facial

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muscles are just relaxed and tensed almost at random. This anniversary photo, conversely, shows a completely natural expression. Could he have had a stroke? But if so, why does each “blank period” picture show a different muscular contraction pattern? (Evidence Collection, Medicine)

Physics: All I can guess about the machinery from these receipts and the one piece we found is that it seems to be designed to create and manipulate an amazingly intense magnetic field, but in a very small cubic space. But there’s no way that such a small machine, with no external power input, could even generate that kind of field. The lights and mirrors, as far as I can tell, serve no purpose. (Electrical Repair)

Psychoanalysis: This pattern of amnesia and split personality followed by these very specific body-alienation nightmares strongly resembles the 1908-1913 split-personality case of Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, formerly an economics professor at Miskatonic University, since 1922 an instructor in psychology at the same institution. See *Jnl. Amer. Psych. Soc.* v. 34-35 (1928-29).

Sense Trouble: The man staring at you seems not to know what to do with his hands; he’s just holding them straight out at an angle.

Streetwise: No, I know the gonif you’re talking about. Big Sal thought he was an easy mark, ‘cause of how he kept asking

questions about what street was which and so forth. Then somehow Big Sal and four of his momzers get hit by lightning – *indoors* -- and now nobody touches the gonif. You want to follow him, wear rubber boots.

Theology: The Shaivite yogi and saint Tirumular supposedly lived for seven yuga cycles (30 million years) before possessing the body of a Tamil cowherd in the 5th century and composing the *Tirumandhiram*. Some Theosophists also claim that Jesus Christ was possessed by “the Lord Maitreya” during His ministry, a similar break from rural obscurity.

Scenario Components

The usual Great Race scenario takes one of two forms. The first posits some sort of time-window or time-gate allowing the Investigators and the cone-creatures to interact, with plenty of lightning-guns and dinosaurs. Pick a dangerous location (Ayers Rock? The Endless Caves in Virginia? Dunwich?), decide whether the window opens into the present from the Mesozoic or vice-versa, and you’re ready to rumble. Perhaps the time-gate comes from some other Mythos force: the immanentization of Yog-Sothoth, or a Xothic dream-bomb. Both the Yithians and the Investigators are drawn to the location, in their own times; the Yithian Agents cult provides hassle and distraction in the now while the cone-creatures prepare to cauterize the time-rip with a quick annihilation or a Moebius loop.

Yithian GMCs

The other sort of standard Great Race story deploys a Yithian-possessed GMC as a major villain for a campaign arc, or as an enigmatic source of Mythos leads.

Yithian Host Abilities

The real muscle of the Yithian in human garb is the agents and cultists who do its bidding, and deploy hyper-scientific tools and weapons (p. 5) to that end. But the Yithian itself has a few tricks up its sleeve.

Great Race of Yith

Future Sense: Even in primitive human sensoria, Yithians can sense the flow of time in their vicinity, and see future events. Give the Yithian GMC a Preparedness pool of 10+, which works as normal. But the Yithian can also test and spend its Preparedness to get surprise, disappear in the moment nobody is watching, avoid ambushes, be not standing where the gun pointed, etc. Difficulties are either 4 or the total of the Investigators' spend and roll, if the Yithian is pre-evading direct Investigator action.

Hypnotism: The superior minds of Yithian-humans let them "influence the thoughts and acts of others," modeled with a Hypnosis ability pool (*ToC*, p. 43) usually at 8+. Yithian Hypnosis can work on the unwilling, and includes simple commands ("open the door") and even alters thoughts ("you never liked policemen" or "these machines seem normal").

Never Sleep: Although the human body needs some rest, the Yithian brain requires no sleep. This provides yet more time to plot evil or study Mythos tomes.

Olfactory Overload: Yithians have no sense of taste or smell in their cone form, and the power of those human senses takes some getting used to. Clever Investigators could use spicy food to conceal poison or distract the Yithian, or even stun it for a round or two with perfume or a bank of flowers.

Total Recall: Yithians can memorize text at sight, and perform rapid, complex mathematical analysis. This might simply manifest as complete knowledge of all history, science, languages, geography, and technology – the equivalent of a smart phone in 1935. A Yithian who applies instant calculation to bullet trajectories could get +2 on aimed Firearms rolls; one who calculates tensile strength and angle of approach perfectly gets a similar bonus to Mechanical Repair tests to set traps; the potential is endless

-- and ideally really annoying to the Investigators.

Yithian-Possessed Investigators

Yithian possession is automatic. Extremely kindly Keepers may allow a Difficulty 8 Stability test to resist possession, but really, if the story is about you being possessed by the Great Race, that's what it's about. A few brief amnesiac spells among people in the Investigator's past ("Didn't you know Grampa George had memory loss when he was younger? Can't think why I never mentioned it before.") or neighborhood depict the Yithians "fishing" for their player-character target, and provide dramatic warning enough.

Awakening in a cone-body is a 5-point Stability test (a 7-point test if the Investigator knows that the Yithian inhabits *her* body in the present), but the Great Race actually put some effort into easing the transition for the time-swapped. All the better to squeeze the history out of them, of course.

Once in the Mesozoic past, and in a 10-foot cone body, the Investigator can use Interrogation to resist giving in, and other Interpersonal abilities to win over fellow kidnapes or earn reading rights at the Great Library. Hiding a message to oneself in the future likely takes a Difficulty 7+ Preparedness test plus a plausible tale, Library Use (or Geology) to find a specific spot, and an Interpersonal spend to get a chance. Presumably the Keeper runs these as brief, staccato scenes interspersed in the present-day action; a full adventure set in Pnakotus seems unlikely.

Returning to oneself occurs 1d6 years later, unless something unusual forces or draws the Yithian to body-switch early – such as the present-day Investigators credibly threatening the life of its human host, perhaps. After about 6 months of readjustment to the present, the dreams begin: a 3-point Stability test every session for 1d6 years. Every failed test costs 1 Stability rating point, as well. You shun mirrors and dark holes in the ground and whistling winds, as with a Phobia.

If you had substantial access to the Great Library, even the fragments you retain give you 1 Cthulhu Mythos rating point. If you somehow partially recover your memories (months of Psychoanalysis, lengthy Library Use in restricted shelves with Peaslee's research as a guide), they provide 4 Magic potential points, and 2 Cthulhu Mythos rating points; these brighter memories also cause a 7-point Stability test and may strike at a Pillar of Sanity. Full recovery of your Yithian-blocked Mesozoic memories requires Yithian technology or magic, with effects both damaging and informative left up to the Keeper's discretion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

H.P. Lovecraft tells us quite frankly more than we need to know about the Great Race in "The Shadow Out of Time," but the cascade of telling detail provides plenty of story possibilities. The astral being in HPL's early effort "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" also possesses humans and aliens throughout time, presenting the alert Keeper with a proto-Yithian or cousin species to involve, as well as a Yithian connection to the Dreamlands.

Robert M. Price's anthology *The Yith Cycle* for Chaosium compiles "Shadow Out of Time" and most of the other core Yithian texts, from Gullette, deBill, and Pons' "The Horror From Yith" (set interestingly on the planet Yith, not the Jurassic past) to whatever August Derleth was doing with "The Dark Brotherhood," in which the Great Race are building clones of Edgar Allan Poe to haunt Providence and mate with our women.

Elsewhere, "And Other Horrors" by Nick Mamatas and Don Webb features Yithian time-tourism at the extinction event of 2012; Brian Stableford's "The Holocaust of Ecstasy" in *Cthulhu's Reign* includes a Yithian caught up in the Cthulhuvian paradise; and Konstantine Paradias' "The Sinking City" in *World War Cthulhu* presents, of all things, a hard-bitten Yithian man-on-a-mission war story.