

NEDOR
COMICS

STARTLING TALES OF SUPER WEIRDNESS PRESENTS

\$9.95

Adventures into **DARKNESS**

H.P. LOVECRAFT'S SUPERHEROIC HORROR!



TRUTH
&
JUSTICE

- BY KENNETH HITE -

STARTLING TALES OF SUPER WEIRDNESS PRESENTS

Adventures into DARKNESS

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The *Truth & Justice* statistics are by Kenneth Hite.

Many thanks to Phil Reed for saying "you should do a supers book next," and to Hal Mangold for making the artwork—and the whole book, in fact—look considerably better.

As always, feel free to follow the eldritch fun, read my half-baked opinions about film, tell me what you thought of this book, plead for sequels, and suggest more projects for me at my LiveJournal: <http://princeofcairo.livejournal.com>.

The original Better/Standard/Thrilling/Nedor Comics stories, and the heroes as presented in them, are in the public domain. This work refers to and builds on those heroes only, and is not intended to infringe on any copyright or trademark governing any later version of those heroes. Their creators were largely anonymous, or have become so with the passage of time, but among them were Al Carny (Kara, Jungle Princess), Sam Cooper (The Cavalier), Will Eisner (Mystico), G.T. Fleming-Roberts (The Ghost), Richard Hughes (American Eagle, Black Terror, Doc Strange, Fighting Yank, Pyroman), Kin Platt (Captain Future), and Raymond Thayer (The Mask).

All of the titles and prices in the "Issue Listing and Price Guide" are completely fictional. Do not base any transaction on them.

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More than most of my work, this book is dedicated:
To H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937) and Harold A. Hite (1937-2006)

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INTRODUCTION

"What is art but a matter of impressions, of pictures, emotions, and symmetrical sensations? It must have poignancy and beauty, but nothing else counts. It may or may not have coherence."

—H.P. Lovecraft, "In the Editor's Study," *THE CONSERVATIVE* (July 1923)

Welcome to the first ever *Startling Tale of Super-Weirdness!* Future titles in this series will explore other strange frontiers of superheroic adventure. But this issue, *Adventures Into Darkness*, presents for the first time anywhere a roleplaying game adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's superheroic stories, torn from the pages of the Golden Age of Comics!

The first section, "**H.P. Lovecraft and the Nedor Comics Lines**" is, strangely enough, the first essay ever dedicated solely to Lovecraft's comics work. Although space forbids anything like completeness, hopefully it will serve as a useful summary of this interesting interlude in HPL's brilliant career.

The next sections—"Heroes" and "Villains"—give descriptions and brief publishing histories of 17 Nedor heroes and 11 Nedor villains, with special focus on their treatment in Lovecraft's Nedor titles *Dream Master Comics* and *Adventures Into Darkness*. Data on their sidekicks, familiars, and typical Lovecraftian minions from ghouls to Yithian agents round out these sections. (Immediately after this, I've provided an Issue Listing and Price Guide for the Lovecraft Nedor titles as

complete as I could make it. Prices, of course, derive from standard references and searches on eBay. They shouldn't be taken as anything more than a rough snapshot.)

"**Write Comics the Nedor-Lovecraft Way!**" gives roleplaying and campaign advice on blending the Golden Age comics feel with the flavors of H.P. Lovecraft. It specifically differentiates between superhero games accenting the horrific frisson of Lovecraft's core Yog-Sothoth Cycle stories of "cosmic indifferentism" and those aiming for the more free-flowing fantasy coloration of Lovecraft's "Dunsanian" works.

The last sections, "**Afterword for the Perplexed**" and "**Actual Bibliography**," should be fairly self-explanatory.

A final note—Lovecraft's publisher, Ned Pines, produced comic books under a dizzying array of imprints, including Standard, Thrilling, Better, and Nedor. For simplicity's sake, I refer to Pines' lines as "Nedor Comics" throughout.

And so, as the Cloaked Clairvoyant himself would say, "Dream On!"

H. P. LOVECRAFT AND THE NEDOR COMICS LINES

H.P. Lovecraft's work with Nedor Comics tends to be unfairly minimized by his devotees and scholars alike. Both primarily concentrate on his fiction (with one exception, restricted to the years before 1937) or his work at RKO in Hollywood, by which time he had completely abandoned what he called (in a letter to Ben Hecht) his "crudely coloured convalescence." As a result, many of the specific details of Lovecraft's comics writing career (which, after all, spanned almost a decade) remain murky or distorted by fannish legend and his own (not inconsiderable) embarrassment.



H. P. LOVECRAFT

"INSTRUCTIONS IN CASE OF DECEASE"

Although Lovecraft didn't actually script a single identifiable comics page until (at the earliest) December of 1939, the chain of events that led to his "donning the cape and bells" began with his serious illness in the winter of 1937. As most of HPL's biographers note, by March of 1937 his life was generally despaired of, not least by himself. S.T. Joshi has discovered medical records from Jane Brown Memorial Hospital in Providence demonstrating that such concern was far

from the "overblown hypochondria" that de Camp's biography calls it. In fact, after an emergency edema drain on March 14, Lovecraft fell into a coma for three days, and was barely conscious for the next two weeks. His remarkable recovery began only on the 28th, well after his aunt Annie Gamwell had already opened his "Instructions in Case of Decease." In accordance with that document, she had summoned his young friend Robert H. Barlow (who Lovecraft had named his literary executor) to Providence to begin the sorting of HPL's papers. Barlow (not even 20 years old at the time) stayed on through most of the spring as a kind of factotum. He helped the convalescing Lovecraft with reading and letter-writing (and

served as errand boy for aunt Annie) but also found the time to dig through Lovecraft's immense rat's nest of papers—which included many as-then-unpublished stories—with fannish glee.

The delight was tempered by the necessity of earning some money for Lovecraft's household. HPL had economized to the breaking point already, and although Barlow's parents were quite generous in sending him spending money (much of which went for food for the household), the young fan took his responsibili-

"Repugnance—and a certain lack of natural cleverness and adaptability, definitely debars me from the popular 'action' field, so all I can do is to try honestly to write really better stories or give up the whole mess as a bad job—though possibly pulling off consciously mediocre yarns now and then for sheer amusement."

—H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Clark Ashton Smith, Nov. 20, 1931
(SELECTED LETTERS III, p. 436)

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ties as “near-executor” (in HPL’s standard epistolary phrase through the balance of 1937) seriously. Fortunately, Lovecraft’s correspondence circle soon turned up the name of a science fiction fan and literary agent who had already sold two Lovecraft stories to *Astounding*—Julius Schwartz. Schwartz and Barlow hit it off immediately, and Schwartz proved his worth by selling Lovecraft’s neglected 1927 manuscript *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* twice, first to *Weird Tales* as a serial and then to William Morrow & Co. for hardcover publication. It received good reviews (Philip Van Doren Stern referred to it as “an able work of regional fiction, told after the manner of Poe” and Mencken called it “pleasingly athwart the modern aesophagus”) and better sales. Encouraged, Morrow published *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (from Barlow’s typescript—by now, transcribing HPL’s handwriting and hunting down missing stories or chapters in the Lovecraft circle of correspondents was the young man’s full-time job) in the summer of 1939.

THE DREAM MASTER ARRIVES

The lush, Dunsanian *Dream-Quest* didn’t do as well, but Schwartz had already figured out an angle—he sold the serial rights to the novel to Ned Pines, a pulp publisher whose newly founded *Thrilling Wonder Stories* was trying to compete with both *Astounding* and *Weird Tales*. Lovecraft’s name sold a lot of issues of *Thrilling Wonder* (starting with the October 1939 number), but by then Pines had moved on to a new target—Superman. The Man of Steel’s debut had blown into a huge fad of epic proportions, and comic books were driving pulps off the front racks all across America. Pines decided to adapt his existing pulp heroes such as the Black Bat and Captain Future to comics, and Schwartz got Randolph Carter onto the schedule as well. A last-minute printing snafu brought on by HPL’s terrible handwriting changed the name from *Dream Quester Comics*, and Pines refused to confuse the audience by changing it back. So it was *Dream Master Comics* that bowed in February of 1940, along with *Thrilling Comics*, which featured (as it happened) an all-new character, Doc Strange, ripped off from an existing pulp hero. The first issue of *Dream Master Comics* credited H.P. Lovecraft as the writer, on the cover—an unusual move for comics, but normal by then for the pulps.

How much, exactly, of the comics work published under his byline Lovecraft actually wrote is one of the great

controversies in comics (and horror) fandom and scholarship. Lovecraft was never very happy with “writing for puerile and drooling mental infants” (from a letter to Derleth in 1943) and constantly denigrated the product as “hash and hackery” in his later letters and his autobiography *Further Notes on a Non-Entity*. But he was literally in no condition to argue. HPL knew he lacked the strength to compose new fiction (although his letters blamed his comics writing for “poisoning Hippocrene with red-and-blue ink”) and he also knew that he couldn’t risk a relapse into malnutrition, since another spell of kidney disease could well kill him. Schwartz made sure the checks kept coming in, and that scripts kept going out.

The first twelve issues of *Dream Master Comics* essentially adapted the novel to comics form, with remarkably few changes given the constraints of printing and lettering. Barlow may well have written the first issue himself (or extensively re-written an ill-natured adaptation attempt by HPL), but eventually farmed the job out to E. Hoffman Price, who had collaborated with Lovecraft on a Randolph Carter short story, “Through the Gates of the Silver Key.”

THE ADVENTURES BEGIN

By the end of *Dream Master*’s first novel-inspired story line in early 1941, Pines had launched two other pulpy superhero titles, *Startling Comics* and *Exciting Comics*, with more than modest success. Schwartz sold Pines on another anthology title, one that would combine the Lovecraft sensibility with the superheroes who were rapidly becoming comics’ overwhelming subject matter. (Even Randolph Carter had become more and more superheroic as the year went on, adding a cape and officially using the alias “Dream Master” in issue #4 of his comic.) Pines and Schwartz decided to deliberately model the new book on DC Comics’ very successful *All-Star Comics*, with the various Nedor superheroes interacting in addition to various solo features.

Adventures Into Darkness #1 debuted with a cover date of August 1941, even including a “Society of Sorcerers” meeting between Nodens and three Nedor superheroes intended to replicate *All-Star*’s successful “Justice Society of America” stories. With this new comic book Schwartz needed many more scripts than the irritably convalescent Lovecraft could (or would) provide, especially once it went monthly with issue #7. (*Dream Master* dropped to bimonthly with the May/

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June 1942 issue, and began featuring the other Nedor superheroes as well, probably Schwartz' idea to help keep sales up.) Barlow took up the typewriter again, and also recruited as many of Lovecraft's old pen pals as he could to help out. Robert Bloch, Fritz Leiber, and Henry Kuttner were happy to try their hands at comics, E. Hoffman Price continued to soldier away, and Frank Belknap Long wrote a number of stories based on his own work. Lovecraft's younger fans took to superheroes rapidly: James Blish and Willis Conover (both 20 years old in 1941) wrote the most Nedor hero-tales for *Adventures Into Darkness* and *Dream Master*, followed closely by Bloch, who could churn out amazing wordage in a pinch. Not everyone was eager to join: Clark Ashton Smith declined politely, citing his own "limitations as an artist," and August Derleth wrote a particularly snide and condescending letter to Barlow (and a more collegial one to Lovecraft) in March of 1940 decriing the whole project as "prostitution." After Lovecraft died, Derleth did everything he could to denigrate the comics work, repeatedly denying any involvement by the old master in such tawdry affairs and blaming the whole thing on Barlow and Schwartz. Film scholars and students of the American horror novel, perhaps nervous at how recently their own fields have become respectable academic subjects, have generally conspired with Derleth to deprecate, ignore, or at least minimize Lovecraft's comics writing.

"ZOMBIE TIME"

Certainly, of the approximately 400-odd individual stories in the seven-year run of *Dream Master Comics* and the eight-year run of *Adventures Into Darkness*, many—

likely the majority—were scripted "by divers hands" other than Lovecraft's. An unknown number may even have been the product of the established Nedor stable; of the "mainstream" Nedor writers, only Richard Hughes deliberately kept himself aloof from "the Providence gang" (as Pines and Schwartz called them) and "the Zombies" (as they called themselves in their letters). Others—Lovecraft fans, friends of Blish or Bloch, or simply comics freelancers interested in a check instead of credit—wrote pages and pages of material, in their best HPL pastiche. What Schwartz (and Barlow) had done was do for comics writing what Will Eisner had done for comics art—create a studio capable of turning out reliable (if not always inspired) work in the style of a single master. Hence, August Derleth and Darrell Schweitzer eagerly (and L. Sprague de Camp and Jules Feiffer, reluctantly) dismiss the entire "Lovecraft" product of the Nedor era as derivative, pseudo-canonical ghost-writing, rejecting any real role for Lovecraft aside from "cashing the checks" (de Camp) or "nodding over the pages as he dreamed of his new novel" (Feiffer). Derleth was especially cutting in his descriptions of "legions of ghouls who feast from the sickbed of a great author, draping his cerements about them and daring to pass off their dreams as his."

But later scholarship—led by S.T. Joshi, whose distate for the Nedor material remains as palpable as Derleth's—has essentially proven that Lovecraft took an increasingly active, even playful, part in story discussions (both by letter and in person as his health recovered and he resumed his traveling habits) and actual scripting when a particularly juicy idea struck him. In a letter to Clark Ashton Smith (August 12,

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1944, reprinted in *Selected Letters VIII*) Lovecraft wrote:

Barlow and Gaius [an HPL nickname for Schwartz] have some new notion for poor Randolph Carter or one of his costumed cohorts, and have dragooned Grandpa into looking up the necessary grotesques in Cotton Mather to be patriotically dispatch'd. In paging through the old Puritan's Book, I found myself writing notes for four or five more such adventures that might scare the news-boy into fits if he can tear his eyes from Captain Marvel.... 'Tis queerly liberating to write trash that one knows is destined for the trash, that makes the old Farnie-stead [Weird Tales] seem like Parnassus by comparison! Everything can be sacrificed for sensation and effect, and one can always console oneself on the atrocious contortions of the comic-book language with the reflection that the mongrel letterer simply couldn't shape his paw around true writing if you bothered with it!! ... [W]riting this nonsense seems—though never Art—an occasionally enjoyable mechanical process. It's rather like Hawthorne or Melville working as mere scribal functionaries while dreaming up Seven Gables or Moby-Dick—perhaps I should consider drafting the adventures of the Fighting Yank or the Night Terror to be the equivalent of Hawthorne composing passport applications!

This sounds less like the violated aesthete of Derleth's imagination, or even Andrew Sarris' detached "mercenary hack," and more like the good-natured, mellow patriarch of HPL's own self-perception, willing to parody Robert Bloch in "The Haunter of the Dark" or compose farcical family trees of Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu for the amusement of his correspondents. Given the vehement insistence by (among other contemporaries) Barlow and Long on HPL's role in the scripting process (and Julius Schwartz' many joking references over the years to having to rewrite Lovecraft "so that Ned Pines or any other ten-year-old could read his stuff"), it seems undeniable that HPL wrote at least some of the work published by Nedor Comics under his name. Also indicative, none of the "Zombies" ever complained, in letters, memoirs, or later convention appearances, that Lovecraft stole credit that was not his. (To the contrary, Fritz Leiber wrote in 1973 that he was "happy that someone else's name went on some of my super-stories, though it's a shame it had to be Lovecraft's." This, of course, was before he came back to write *Hawkman* for Julius Schwartz at DC.) Nor has any hint of dissatisfaction with Lovecraft's share of the Nedor checks come to

light, despite later insinuations by Derleth (mostly at Barlow's expense). Although the modern scholarly consensus doesn't follow Lin Carter's enthusiastic estimate ("easily half to two-thirds of the comics work shows at least occasionally the true Lovecraft touch"), Joshi's figure of "almost fifty certain, perhaps eighty likely" scripts can be considered the low end of the probable proportion.

COLOURS FADE

During the flood tide of the Golden Age superhero, then, things went about as well for Lovecraft and his Zombies as could be expected. They were hampered by Nedor's less-than-stellar art, which often reduced the spooks and monsters to literally "indescribable" blobs. (The art significantly improved after 1946 with the hiring of Ralph Mayo as art director.) Far more irritating to Lovecraft were the too-frequent ham-fisted editing attempts as the bewildered Nedor staff attempted to jam his (or his acolytes') multisyllabic prose into a speech balloon or caption box. It's likely that some of the cuts and changes HPL blamed on the Nedor editors and letterers came from Schwartz or Barlow, retyping a typically prolix Lovecraft script to make deadline.

As Lovecraft's health improved, he became less and less interested in preparing even "malformed calves for the inexpert butcher," beginning serious work instead on his final novel, *The House of the Worm*. He still answered letters from the Zombies, suggesting plot points or incidents as they occurred to him, but seldom bothered to put together even story outlines. The last two or three years of the Nedor-Lovecraft collaboration come far closer to the Derleth-promulgated image of a disdainful artist allowing less-talented friends to shine with reflected creative glory.

Ironically, this new distance was partly a product of Schwartz' ongoing and increasing success in selling Lovecraft's earlier fiction. In 1941, Schwartz had placed "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (originally published in a shoddy small-press edition) and twelve other short stories with Knopf, as *The Shadow Over Innsmouth and Other Weird Stories*. It did well enough to support *The Shadow Out of Time and Further Weird Stories* the next year, and both books drew increasing critical attention. Two different collections (of the same stories) appeared in Editions for the Armed Services; both were very popular with servicemen

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already familiar with Lovecraft's work from the comics. Avon released a domestic paperback (*The Lurking Fear and Other Tales*) in 1947, the same year that Nedor finally pulled the plug on *Dream Master*. Since late 1946, Lovecraft had been making enough money from such editions, from increasing numbers of anthologized reprints, and most of all from his movie work, to be able to do without his Nedor stipend, which he began to turn over to Barlow to distribute to the writers in addition to their piece-rate.

ADVENTURES' END

Perhaps not coincidentally, 1947 was also the year that Julius Schwartz left Nedor for National Periodicals (the future DC Comics), having been head-hunted since 1944. With Schwartz gone and Lovecraft barely interested, the stories edged into steadily wilder adventures driven mostly by the imaginations of Blish and Conover. Nedor was also pushing Barlow (since 1944 officially drawing a salary as a Nedor editor) to include more science fiction content, as superheroes were losing steam in the marketplace. This sparked a rash of interplanetary and time-travel stories in 1948. But Blish began to sell more of his own fiction, and Conover became increasingly interested in writing music criticism. By the summer of 1949, Nedor canceled the last of its superhero comics—including *Adventures Into Darkness*, which ended its run with #77 in July 1949—leaving only “funny animals,” crime, and romance.

Schwartz, of course, had sold *Charles Dexter Ward* to RKO by then, and HPL had gone on to his second career in Hollywood working with Val Lewton, Orson Welles, and Jacques Tourneur, to eventually die in Los Angeles of intestinal cancer on May 5, 1959. (Other sources cover Lovecraft's film work more than fully; see the Bibliography.) That same year, Julius Schwartz got a second bite at the apple once Ned Pines left the comics business for good and DC Comics purchased the rights to the Nedor superheroes. Schwartz put Captain Future into *Mystery in Space* (which became *Captain Future Adventures* in 1962) and added Gardner Fox's revamped Fighting Yank to the JLA in *Justice League of America* #4. In the 1990s, the *Arkham Files* TV series sparked a further Lovecraft revival in comics. *Dream Master*, furiously scripted by Rick Veitch, came roaring back to anchor DC's Vertigo line. Alan Moore's epochal work on *Nodens* caused many fans to seek out the

original Nedor stories, either in the 1970s “100 Page Giant” reprints or from back issue dealers and eBay. DC plans to release the first volume of the *Adventures Into Darkness Archives* in hardback next year. Murky art, hacked-up editing, and Lovecraftian reluctance aside, it's undeniable that HPL and his Zombies changed comics forever—and it's impossible to imagine super-heroic horror without them.

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HEROES

"Only the cosmic framework itself—or such individuals as symbolise principles (or defiances of principles) of the cosmic framework—can gain a deep grip on my imagination and set it to work creating. In other words, the only 'heroes' I can write about are phenomena."

—H.P. Lovecraft, letter to E. Hoffman Price, Aug. 15, 1934 (SELECTED LETTERS V, p. 19)

For each hero, the first paragraph gives a quick summary of their origin and powers, and briefly discusses their mainstream Nedor Comics career. The second paragraph focuses on their appearance in the Lovecraft lines: *Dream Master* and *Adventures Into Darkness*. (For the Dream Master and Nodens, two heroes essentially restricted to the Lovecraft lines, the first paragraph simply discusses their powers and origins.) It covers some of their particularly popular or iconic adventures, nemeses, etc. in those books, but is obviously far from complete.



THE AMERICAN EAGLE

A strange "black light ray" struck government scientist Tom Standish and his youthful assistant Bud Pierce, granting them both the ability to fly and fight like true American eagles. As the American Eagle and Eaglet, they battled the Axis, starting in *Exciting Comics* #22 (October 1942). The American Eagle debuted alone the month before, in *America's Best Comics* #2. The American Eagle's flight can easily keep pace with a car, and he is strong enough to lift and throw a heavy construction crane.

Lovecraft borrowed the American Eagle for a guest appearance in *Adventures Into Darkness* #35, in which he fought "shantak-birds" summoned by Lucifuge. In a longer story (issues #40-44) the American Eagle explored "the Sargasso of the Skies," battling not just shantak-birds but giant vampiric moths, the fungoid Outer Ones, rogue night-gaunts, and all manner of other winged monstrosities. At the climax, the Eagle discovered his old nemesis the Little Führer at the center of the phenomenon. This villain, originally from *America's Best Comics* #12 (January 1945), was a midget super-genius who controlled a super-strong

THE AMERICAN EAGLE

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Athlete, Expert [+4] Keen Eyes, Good [+2] Patriot, Good [+2] Scientist, and Poor [-2] Resistance to Head Blows.

POWERS

Good [+2] Flight, Good [+2] Super-Sidekick (Eaglet), and Good [+2] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Aerobic Dodge (Flight Shifty Business; 1 HP; Average [0] speed and Expert [+4] maneuvering)

Flying Fist (Flight and Super-Strength Signature; Good [+2]; 2 HP; adds to Flight and Super-Strength when combined to punch opponents while zooming past them, for a total of +6 to the dice).

— HEROES —

ACE BUCKLEY

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Engineer, Good [+2] Explorer, Expert [+4] Historian, Expert [+4] Lucky, Good [+2] Natural Linguist, Expert [+4] Pistol Shot, Good [+2] Sidekick (Toni), Good [+2] Scrapper, and Poor [-2] Temporally Unfixed.

POWERS

Master [+6] Super-Gadget (Time Machine).

STUNTS

None.

minion named Hans. Most fans recall this story not for the writing, but for artist Sheldon Moldoff's rendering of the Little Führer's zeppelin headquarters.

ACE BUCKLEY

Ace Buckley invented a time machine in October of 1940 (debuting in *Startling Comics* #3), and with his lovely assistant Toni got into the usual scrapes. Among his historical adventures are the Battle of Marathon, the Crusades, the Spanish Armada, the Jamestown colony, the Revolutionary War, and the struggles of Simon Bolivar. He has only the powers of a standard pulp adventurer, and his trusty gun.

Beginning in *Adventures Into Darkness* #24 (November 1943), Lovecraft used Ace to set up various adventures in archaic settings, especially Atlantis (where he met Haldor, a Conan ripoff from *Thrilling Comics* #26) and colonial-era America. In a number of stories set in the 1690s, Ace crossed paths with Edmund Carter, the sorcerous ancestor of both Randolph Carter and the Fighting Yank. Ace Buckley also helped the magician-scientist Roger Bacon defeat Professor Fenton in a memorable tale in *Adventures Into Darkness* #61 that some fans believe was actually scripted by Alfred Bester.

CAPTAIN FUTURE

Mild-mannered scientist Dr. Andrew Bryant discovered a unique interference pattern created by "gamma and infrared waves" that enabled him to "throw off his normal meekness." Like later heroes exposed to gamma radiation, Bryant gained immense strength, in his case accompanied by flight, and the ability to shoot "energy bolts" from his hands. The gamma radiation suffusing his skin projects a micro-thin

CAPTAIN FUTURE

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Charismatic Leader, Good [+2] Memory, Good [+2] Pilot, Expert [+4] Scientist, Good [+2] Sidekick (Grace Adams), and Poor [-2] Decent.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Gamma Bolt, Expert [+4] Invulnerability (Limitation: Head Blows), Master [+6] Flight, Expert [+4] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Hover Immovably (Flight Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP), *Radiant Light* (Gamma Bolt Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; can dazzle foes or dispel shadows)

Stunning Bolt (Gamma Bolt Shifty Business; 1 HP; Good [+2] range and Master [+6] non-lethal damage)

Wide-Angle Bolt (Gamma Bolt Shifty Business; 1 HP; Good [+2] range and Master [+6] damage against multiple mooks).

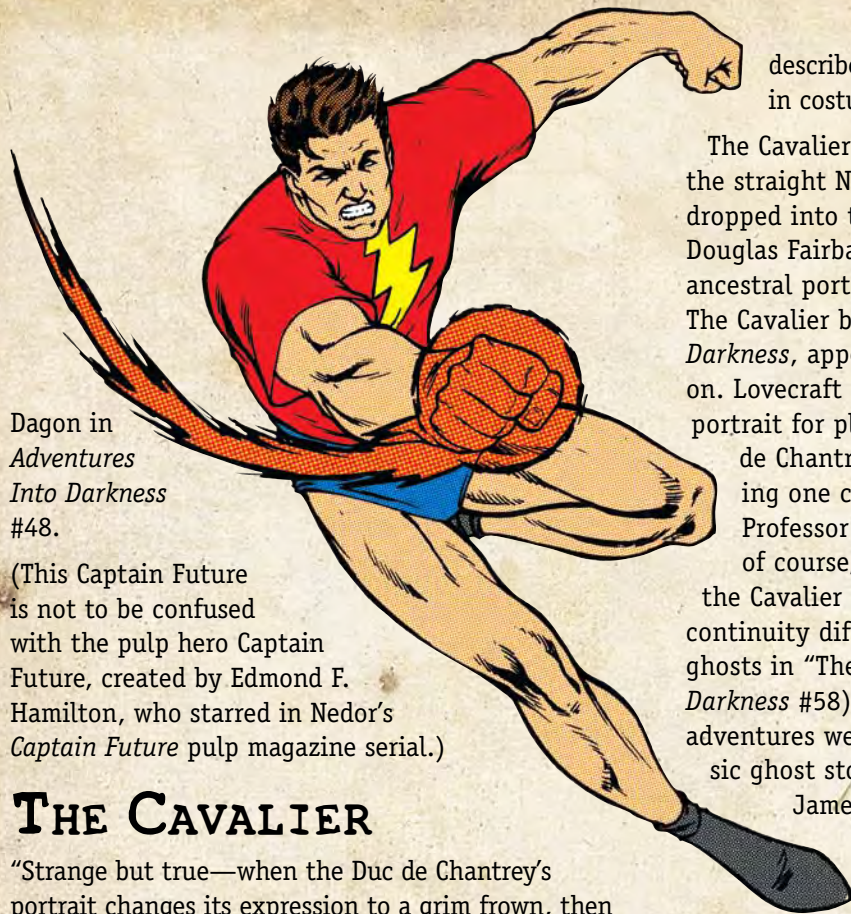
NOTES

All of Captain Future's Powers suffer the Limitation: Must Occasionally Be Recharged.

force field that resembles invulnerability. He must occasionally recharge his powers with his machine. Like many Nedor heroes, Captain Future is not totally invulnerable—a blow to the head can still render him unconscious, perhaps because coshes move slowly enough that they don't trigger the field. As Captain Future, Bryant fights the Axis menace and all other threats to the world. His girlfriend Grace Adams, who works for her Aunt Agatha's detective agency, keeps him alerted to crimes and mysteries.

Captain Future debuted in *Startling Comics* #1 (June 1940), and starred there for forty issues. Lovecraft sent the Dream Master into Captain Future's dreams in *Dream Master* #25. This tale proved very popular, though not popular enough to keep *Dream Master* a monthly in the face of wartime paper rationing. But Lovecraft did write a sequel in which the two heroes teamed up to travel "by etheric translation" to the planet Yaddith, where they helped friendly and advanced aliens named the Yug-Soth battle giant worms. Captain Future was too powerful for the general run of villains and monsters in *Adventures Into Darkness*, and his appearances were concomitantly rare. His most notable guest role is his fight against

— HEROES —



Dagon in *Adventures Into Darkness* #48.

(This Captain Future is not to be confused with the pulp hero Captain Future, created by Edmond F. Hamilton, who starred in Nedor's *Captain Future* pulp magazine serial.)

THE CAVALIER

"Strange but true—when the Duc de Chantrey's portrait changes its expression to a grim frown, then gallant, two-fisted Rance Raleigh forsakes his workaday role to become ... the Cavalier!" So says the splash page from *Thrilling Comics* #53 (April 1946), which goes on to

describe how the "curio shop owner" dresses up in costume and fights crime with a sword.

The Cavalier only appeared two other times in the straight Nedor lines, and would probably have dropped into total obscurity if the combination of a Douglas Fairbanks-style swashbuckler and a magical ancestral portrait hadn't caught Lovecraft's fancy. The Cavalier became a mainstay of *Adventures Into Darkness*, appearing in almost every issue from #45 on. Lovecraft repeatedly used the Duc de Chantrey's portrait for plot exposition, setting eight stories in de Chantrey's historical 17th century, including one crossover each with Ace Buckley and Professor Fenton. The Duc de Chantrey was, of course, a magician, and his sword (which the Cavalier had either inherited or discovered—continuity differed) proved to be capable of killing ghosts in "The Terror of Azderac" (*Adventures Into Darkness* #58). In later years, many of the Cavalier's adventures were thinly disguised rewrites of classic ghost stories by William Hope Hodgson or M.R.

James, probably "ghosted" by Willis Conover or other youthful members of the Lovecraft correspondence circle.

"DOC" STRANGE

This is not Doctor Steven Strange, the Marvel Universe's master of magic. Nor is it Dr. Hugo Strange, the DC Batman villain. This Hugo Strange, who goes by the familiar "Doc," is a brilliant scientist and crime-fighter, like his model, Doc Savage. And indeed, in his *Thrilling Comics* #1 (February 1940) debut, he had only human, albeit pulp-heroic, abilities. But in August 1940 (*Thrilling Comics* #7), he invented the serum Alosun, "a secret distillate of liquid sun atoms," which gives him super-strength (he can throw tractors at airplanes, or kick over trucks) and super-endurance. Since he routinely jumps from the ground to airplanes traveling hundreds of feet above him, he most likely has some measure of super-speed (he can swim at 80 knots), super-aim, and concomitant agility. Doc has a girlfriend, Virginia, but (again like Doc Savage) no secret identity. His sidekick, the orphan Mike Ellis, showed up in January 1942 (*Thrilling Comics* #24). Mike was too young to take Alosun, but helped out with his fists. Continued exposure to Alosun increased Doc's powers; by 1946 he could actually fly for short periods (or

THE CAVALIER

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Antiquarian, Expert [+4] Brawler, Good [+2] Escape Artist, Master [+6] Gymnast, Good [+2] Wealth, and Poor [-2] Chivalrous.

POWERS

Master [+6] Super-Fencing (Limitation; only with De Chantrey Sword, otherwise it is merely Master [+6] Fencing).

STUNTS

Acrobatic Dodge (Gymnast Signature; 1 HP; Expert [+4]; adds to defensive rolls when used)

Disarming Strike (Super-Fencing Signature; 1 HP; Expert [+4]; applies Failure Ranks to weapon or relevant Qualities if foe is armed)

Swingline Travel (Gymnast Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP).

— HEROES —

"DOC" STRANGE

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Criminologist, Master [+6] Gadgeteer, Master [+6] Scientist, Expert [+4] Sidekick (Mike Ellis), Expert [+4] Throwing, and Poor [-2] Resistance to Head Blows.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Super-Endurance, Good [+2] Super-Intelligence, Good [+2] Super-Speed, and Expert [+4] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Super-Aim (Super-Intelligence Spin-off; Good [+2]; 2 HP; adds to aimed shots or leaps)

Super-Leaping (Super-Strength Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; includes super-agility).

NOTES

Super-Endurance lets "Doc" resist physical damage as Armor, and deal with dangerous environments as Adaptation, but does not include those Powers' other effects. All of "Doc's" Powers suffer the Limitation: Depends on Regular Injections of Alosun.

perhaps leap for very long ones) and was seemingly unconcerned about bullets or grenades, though still not truly invulnerable.

Lovecraft tended to use Doc Strange as a source of scientific exposition, when he used him at all. Doc became by turns an expert geologist, physicist, archaeologist, or astronomer depending on the needs of the plot, but usually only took an active part in adventures when the villain was exceptionally dangerous. He did fight the "Killer Plants of the Mad Botanist" (an old American Crusader villain) in *Adventures Into Darkness* #52, and show up in #59 to help combat his own old foe from *Thrilling Comics*, the villainous mastermind Satani. However, in *Adventures Into Darkness* #63, Doc injects a variant of Alosun "distilled from the demon star Algol" and turns into quite a dangerous villain himself.

THE DREAM MASTER

The Dream Master was Lovecraft's first superhero, although he only began calling himself that in *Dream Master Comics* #4 (May 1940). For the first three issues, he was plain Randolph Carter, although he is described



as "a master dreamer" in issue #1 (February 1940).

Randolph Carter is an expert in all occult arts, but his greatest power comes when he enters the Dreamlands. Here—although he can be menaced by such foes as gugs and galley slavers—he is recognized as a mighty king and scholar. In his first appearances, closely adapted from Lovecraft's novel *The Dream-Quest of Unknown*

THE DREAM MASTER

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Antiquarian, Master [+6] Dreamer, Expert [+4] Occultist, Good [+2] Veteran, and Poor [-2] Subject to Ennui.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Cat Control (Limitation: cannot actually command cats, but they will respond well to his requests), Master [+6] Dream Travel, and Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power).

STUNTS

Dream Awareness (Dream Travel Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP; tracking and detection of threats or powerful magics within dreams or Dreamland)

Sign of Koth (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; Power Neutralization against magic-based Powers)

Voorish Sign (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; paralyzes target, beat a TN of 9 to shake off).

NOTES

Dream Travel is the power to enter the dreams of others, and to move around within them.

— HEROES —

Kadath, Carter had only the magic of the Sign of Koth and his reputation to defend him. But soon he gained a nebulous “power within dreams” that allowed him to enter the dreams of others (sometimes criminals, but usually dreams of madmen that threatened to release one or another demon) and use magic there. In the waking world, Carter tends to rely on his knowledge of the occult, and on the ever-useful Sign of Koth. Both awake and dreaming, Carter can speak with cats. Later, the Dream Master added the Voorish Sign to his repertoire, but like the Sign of Koth its effects varied depending on the story requirements.

In *Adventures Into Darkness* #4 (February 1942), Lovecraft revealed that Randolph Carter was related to Bruce Carter III, better known as the Fighting Yank. Both were descended from Edmund Carter, who “was nearly hanged as a witch at Salem.” For the duration of WWII in his own title, the Dream Master would occasionally help the Fighting Yank preserve “the American Dream” from its enemies in stories almost certainly scripted by Willis Conover or Frank Belknap Long.

THE FIGHTING YANK

Wealthy playboy Bruce Carter III became the Fighting Yank after a visit from the ghost of his Revolutionary War hero ancestor, Bruce Carter I. The spirit showed Bruce III where to find a magic cloak that his grandfather had worn during the Revolution. (It was hidden in his hometown of Granger, Massachusetts.) When he put it on, Bruce III gained magical strength (he can lift tanks), flight, and invulnerability to gunfire. (Like most Nedor heroes, however, the Fighting Yank is still susceptible to a knock on the head.) As the Fighting Yank, he battled crime and Nazis with the help of his ghostly ancestor, who rescued Bruce III when things looked dire. The Fighting Yank also uses a pistol when he needs to. Only his girlfriend Joan Farwell knows his secret identity.

From his debut in *Startling Comics* #10 (September 1941), the Fighting Yank proved instantly popular, getting his own title a year later, and publisher Ned Pines encouraged Lovecraft to use the Fighting Yank in *Adventures Into Darkness* as a sales

THE FIGHTING YANK

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Commando, Expert [+4] Escape Artist, Expert [+4] Fisticuffs, Master [+6] Patriotic Symbol, Master [+6] Wealth, and Poor [-2] Loyal.

POWERS

Good [+2] Flight, Expert [+4] Invulnerability (Limitation: Head Blows), and Expert [+4] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Inspire (Patriotic Symbol Signature; Good [+2]; 0 HP; provides Upshift for all Americans who see the Yank fight)

Right Cross (Super-Strength Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; combines with Fisticuffs for net +10 to dice).

NOTES

All the Yank's Powers suffer the Limitation: Only While Wearing Magic Cloak.



— HEROES —

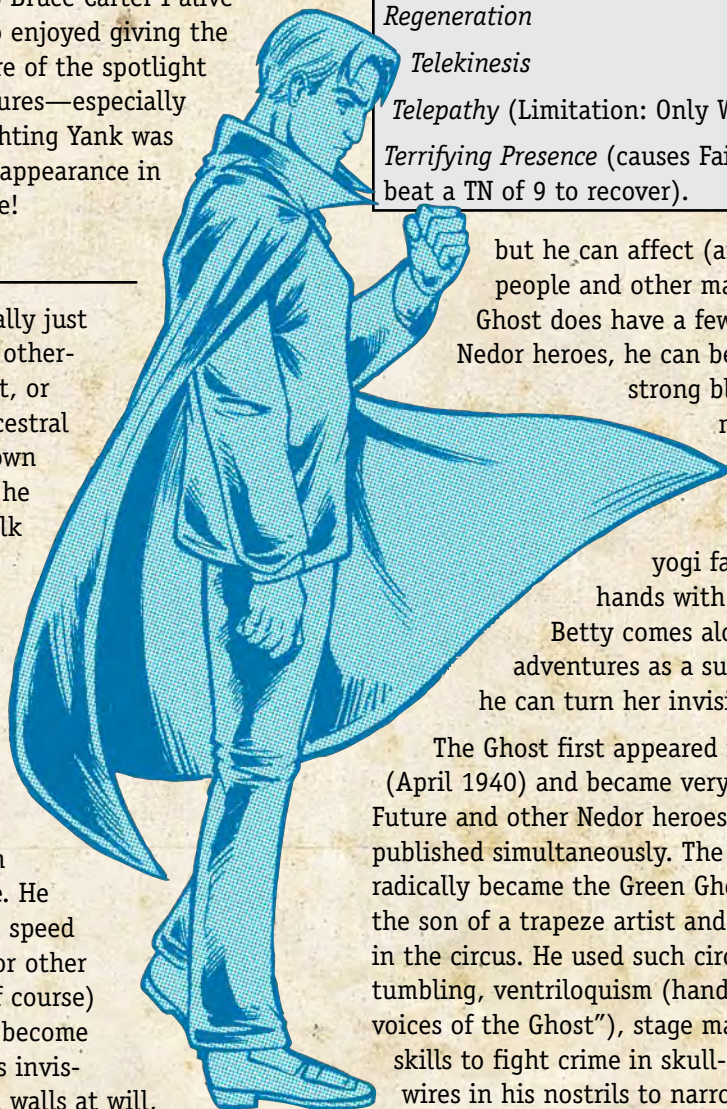
booster. Lovecraft's inspired blending of Bruce Carter III's family tree with Randolph Carter's (established in *Adventures Into Darkness* #4) provided ample material for such crossover stories, many of which ran in the Fighting Yank's backup feature in *Dream Master*, beginning with issue #22. The Fighting Yank's own stories could get plenty weird—he battled Dr. Fantom, who turned people to wolves in *Startling Comics* #18 (December 1942), and Mojo, the leader of an invading army of insect-sized Japanese in *Fighting Yank* #9 (August 1944)—but resisted too much actual magic. Not so in *Adventures Into Darkness*, where he battled all manner of horrors taken from Lovecraft's bottomless stock of New England lore, usually summoned up by Baron von Junzt. In the Lovecraft version, it was Randolph and Bruce Carter's sorcerer ancestor Edmund who originally enchanted the cloak they wore, and who cast the spell to keep Bruce Carter I alive after death. Lovecraft also enjoyed giving the ghostly Bruce Carter I more of the spotlight in various spectral adventures—especially after WWII ended, the Fighting Yank was often reduced to a cameo appearance in his own guest-starring role!

BRUCE CARTER I

Bruce Carter I's ghost usually just shows up to help untie or otherwise rescue his descendant, or merely to give ghostly ancestral advice. He does have his own powers—like the Spectre, he can grow to giant size, walk through walls, and grab cars or swat planes out of the air.

THE GHOST

Raised in India by his immortal yogi foster father, George Chance learned the arts of Eastern magic from a youthful age. He can levitate and fly at the speed of light, animate statues or other inanimate objects, and (of course) take on his astral form to become a ghost. While astral, he is invisible and can walk through walls at will,



BRUCE CARTER I

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Patriot, Expert [+4] Soldier, and Poor [-2] Devotion to Descendants.

POWERS

Master [+6] Ghost (Meta-Power).

STUNTS

(all Ghost Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP)

Flight, Growth

Immortality

Invisibility (Limitation: Can Be Sensed By Animals),

Invulnerability (Limitation: Non-Magical Attacks Only)

Phasing

Regeneration

Telekinesis

Telepathy (Limitation: Only With Fighting Yank)

Terrifying Presence (causes Failure Ranks from fear, beat a TN of 9 to recover).

but he can affect (and can be affected by) people and other material objects. The Ghost does have a few weaknesses. Like most Nedor heroes, he can be knocked out by a strong blow to the head, and he must have his hands free to work his magic. (That said, if the Ghost is in India, his yogi father can come untie his hands with a call.) His girlfriend Betty comes along on many of his adventures as a suitable hostage, although he can turn her invisible as well.

The Ghost first appeared in *Thrilling Comics* #3 (April 1940) and became very popular. Like Captain Future and other Nedor heroes, he had a pulp version published simultaneously. The pulp Ghost (who sporadically became the Green Ghost starting in 1941) was the son of a trapeze artist and animal trainer, raised in the circus. He used such circus skills as contortion, tumbling, ventriloquism (handy for "the hundreds of voices of the Ghost"), stage magic, and his parents' skills to fight crime in skull-faced makeup (including wires in his nostrils to narrow them and horrifying

THE GHOST

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Circus Performer, Expert [+4] Intimidating, Expert [+4] South Asian Lore and Languages, Expert [+4] Stealth, Master [+6] Yogi Training, and Poor [-2] Show-off.

POWERS

Master [+6] Astral Form (Meta-Power), and Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power).

STUNTS

Acrobat (Circus Performer Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; adds to defense rolls against attacks that can be dodged)

Air-Walking (Astral Form Signature; Good [+2]; 0 HP; form of Flight, includes walking on water, feather-fall, walking without tracks, etc.)

Animal Control (Sorcery Spin-off; Good [+2]; 1 HP)

Animate Objects (Sorcery Spin-off; Good [+2]; 1 HP; animate up to 1.5 tons of matter, more with more HP)

Escape Artist (Circus Performer Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

FTL Travel (Astral Form Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; Limitation: Light-speed only)

Invisibility (Astral Form Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; also inaudible; Limitation: Can Be Sensed By Animals)

Knife Throwing (Circus Performer Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Phasing (Astral Form Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Skull-Like Pallor (Circus Performer Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; stacks with Intimidating against criminals),

Telepathy (Astral Form Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; Limitation: Only with people he knows).

NOTES

All of the Ghost's Powers have the Limitation: Must Have Hands Free.

false teeth "the color of old ivory"). Lovecraft brought the Ghost over to *Adventures Into Darkness* early (in #7, June 1942), for a rematch with his time-travelling nemesis Professor Fenton, and made him and his "Indian magic" a recurring staple of the title for essentially its entire run.

Some of the Ghost's early tales were likely written by Lovecraft's Theosophical enthusiast friend E. Hoffman Price, who drew little distinction between the pulp and comics Ghosts. As a result, the Ghost in *Adventures Into Darkness* could "throw on a skull-like pallor" to frighten criminals, tame animals with a word, and throw the magical daggers that appeared in virtually every story with great accuracy. Lovecraft (more probably, either Henry Kuttner or Frank Belknap Long) adapted Long's India-flavored story "The Horror From the Hills" for *Adventures Into Darkness* #67, pitting the Ghost and Doc Strange against "Chaugnar Faugn, the elephant-headed demon composed of solidified Time itself."

KARA, JUNGLE PRINCESS

"There are some distances neither planes nor radio waves can span—the chasms in time that have produced many of the secret wonders of the world! Arohiti is one of these—the ancient citadel set like a gem in the tropical wilderness—and guarded by immortal warriors! Cast among the Arohitan by a plane crash, Kara rules an amazing realm—with Major Kit leading the royal guard against the deadly threats of the outcast—Targala!" Kara, Jungle Princess, is actually Jane Howell, deposited in Arohita by a plane crash. Her powers, like those of most "jungle girls," consist of sheer indomitability, swinging on vines, and fighting skill; she also partakes of Arohitan "immortality," which is essentially invulnerability (to leopards at least). Her pistol-packing male sidekick Kit is somewhat less useless than the normal jungle girl boyfriend. Her rule is opposed by the evil priest Targala and his Lumu people, and by Venomo, leader of the snake-like Subterrions of the underground city Subterris.

After Will Eisner invented Sheena, the first "jungle girl" in comics, other publishers jumped on the bandwagon. Nedor had several—not just Kara, but Judy of the Jungle, Tygra, and Princess Pantha—but Kara was the first, debuting in *Exciting Comics* #39 (June 1945). And she was the one Lovecraft put (not without vociferous protest, according to later recollection) into *Adventures Into Darkness*. As it happened, he first put her into *Dream Master* #55, implying that Arohiti might also (or only) exist in the Dreamlands. Arohiti's lost-city, quasi-Egyptian or Babylonian feel (Kara wears a gauzy harem outfit, rather than the standard fur bikini) blended well with Sarnath, Ulthar, Celephais, and the other

— HEROES —

KARA, JUNGLE PRINCESS

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Beautiful, Master [+6] Gymnast, Expert [+4] Hunter, Master [+6] Jungle Survival, Good [+2] Princess, Expert [+4] Sidekick (Major Kit), Master [+6] Sure-Footed, and Poor [-2] Responsible for Arohiti.

POWERS

Good [+2] Immortality and Expert [+4] Regeneration.

STUNTS

Acrobatic Dodge (Gymnast Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; adds to defensive rolls when used)

Friend to Animals (Jungle Survival Signature; Good [+2]; 0 HP)

Keen Hearing (Jungle Survival Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Vine Swinging (Gymnast Signature; Good [+2]; 0 HP; 12 yards per Turn movement).

Dreamlands countries.

When *Dream Master's* run ended, Kara moved into *Adventures Into Darkness*

beginning with #57 for meetups (in the waking world) with the Ghost, Mystico, and the Fighting Yank. Rumors persist of a lost Kara adventure that re-told Lovecraft's story "Arthur Jermyn" from the ape perspective, but if anyone in Lovecraft's shop had written such a daring tale, Nedor would certainly have ash-canned it.

THE LIBERATOR

"Bookworm professor" Nelson Drew of Claflin University discovers the ancient Egyptian formula known as Lamesis. Drinking it unleashes a wave of force and grants him super-strength (he can break trees, bend gun barrels, and punch through

THE LIBERATOR

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Chemist, Expert [+4] Egyptologist, Good [+2] Eidetic Memory, Master [+6] Fearless, and Poor [-2] Dual Identity.

POWERS

Good [+2] Super-Armor (Limitation: Except Head Blows), Good [+2] Super-Charisma, Good [+2] Super-Speed, and Good [+2] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Disarming Blow (Super-Speed Shifty Business; 1 HP; running speed drops to Average [+0] while reaction time jumps to Expert [+4]; all Failure Ranks apply to weapon or relevant Qualities if foe is armed)

Power Punch (Super-Strength Haymaker; 1 HP; Upshift damage to walls, cannon, and other non-sentient targets)

Super-Leaping (Super-Strength Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; up to 500 feet).

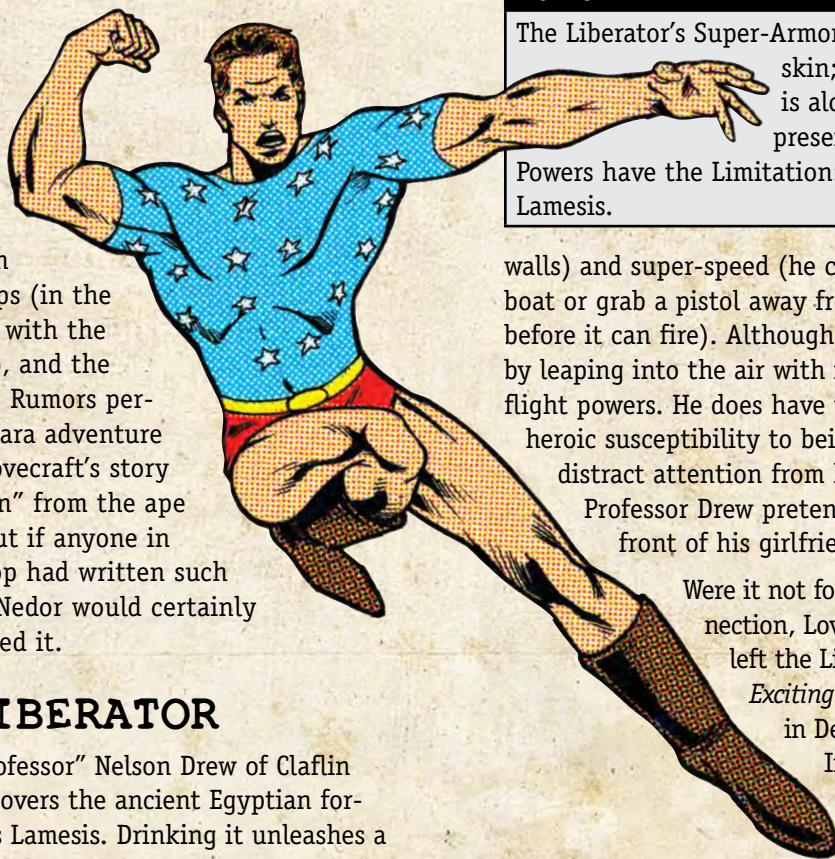
NOTES

The Liberator's Super-Armor is actually super-tough skin; his Super-Charisma is alchemically enhanced presence. All of the Liberator's Powers have the Limitation: Only After Drinking Lamesis.

walls) and super-speed (he can outrun a fast speed-boat or grab a pistol away from a Japanese saboteur before it can fire). Although he can launch a plane by leaping into the air with it, he doesn't have true flight powers. He does have the unfortunate Nedor heroic susceptibility to being hit on the head. To distract attention from his career as the Liberator, Professor Drew pretends to cowardice, even in front of his girlfriend Annabel Evans.

Were it not for the ancient Egyptian connection, Lovecraft would probably have left the Liberator in the pages of *Exciting Comics* where he debuted in December 1941 (issue #15).

Instead, Professor Drew occasionally served as an academic along for the ride who discovers occult Nazi plots or buried



— HEROES —

monsters, or both, in remote corners of the world. The Egyptophile (and Nazi-hating) Robert Bloch was probably the uncredited writer of most Liberator appearances in *Adventures Into Darkness*. However, Lovecraft may very well have storyboarded *Adventures Into Darkness* #31 (May 1944), in which Lamesis is discovered to be the blood of a monstrous and inhuman "living mummy" trapped beneath "the Red Pyramid of Abyssinia." With the help of the Ghost, the Liberator manages to destroy the creature even though it has "gallons of Lamesis oozing through its pulsing veins."

THE MASK

The Mask began as a reworking of the Thrilling Publications pulp hero the Black Bat, a crusading district attorney named Anthony Quinn who was blinded by criminals. In the pulps, the Black Bat honed his other senses to the keenest level before regaining his sight in an eye transplant. But his new eyes were able to see "even in the inkiest blackness" and he continued to pose as a blind lawyer in his civilian identity during his covert fight against crime. The Mask, who debuted in *Exciting Comics* #1 (April 1940), was the similarly blinded fighting D.A., Anthony Colby. He regained his sight early, but had no special powers, fighting crime as a vigilante in a purple cowl and packing a pistol. His run in *Exciting* lasted only 20 issues.

It was probably Julius Schwartz who inspired Lovecraft to add the Mask to the lineup in *Adventures Into*

Darkness #37 (November 1944), two years after the character had vanished from the mainstream Nedor lines. Lovecraft's (or Schwartz's) version of Colby had gained "ultra-violet vision," and could not only see in total darkness but through "all but the densest metals" and occasionally "into the astral plane" or "alien dimensions." This ability to see ghosts and invisible demons came in handy on the Mask's adventures, especially in his battles against Horla, the Invisible Monster.

MYSTICO, THE WONDER MAN

The mad scientist Dr. Slade decided to test his vita-ray on a stolen Egyptian mummy named Mystico. However, the vita-ray proved too powerful. It exploded, killing Dr. Slade and destroying his laboratory—but it restored the mummy to full human flesh and life. Mystico, who as it turned out had been a wizard in ancient Egypt, took the name Wonder Man and used his magic to fight crime. (Apparently, to an ancient Egyptian mummy wizard, 1940s street clothes are a wild enough costume; Mystico looks almost disorientingly normal, except for a slight widow's peak.) Originally, Mystico used magic in a classically arbitrary Golden Age style: in one story alone he gets a premonition of danger, turns a car into a soap-box derby racer, changes guns into lilies and molten steel into high explosive, summons a pterodactyl to ride on, and enlarges a house cat into a giant predator. Although he had his share of Axis spies to defeat, Mystico's archenemy was the alluring Lilith, "the Regent of Darkness, Princess of Pluto, Supreme Ruler of the universal Realm." She was assisted by her chief scientist and adviser Dr. Voodoo (who resembled a white Fu Manchu with pointed ears and two Satanic wisps of hair on his head).

Mystico ran for 17 issues of *Startling Comics*, beginning with #1 in June 1940. A revived Egyptian wizard mummy hero was a natural for Lovecraft's new book, and Mystico also appeared in *Adventures Into Darkness* #1. In that first issue, Mystico, the Ghost, Nodens, and the Scarab formed the "Society of Sorcerers," intended as a magical Nedor version of the increasingly popular Justice Society of America. Later issues mostly ignored the Society, or treated it as a framing device, and most of Mystico's later adventures in the book were solo tales, likely often scripted by Robert Bloch. In those adventures, Lilith came back in *Adventures Into*

THE MASK

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Brawler, Expert [+4] District Attorney, Master [+6] Keen Senses, and Poor [-2] Obsessed With Justice.

POWERS

Master [+6] Ultra-Violet Vision (Limitation: Blocked By Lead).

STUNTS

Combat Sense (Keen Senses Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; adds to physical attacks and defenses)

Danger Sense (Keen Senses Signature; Good [+2]; 0 HP; adds on rolls to avoid surprise, traps, etc.)

Lockpicking (Keen Senses Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Stealthy (Keen Senses Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 HP).

— HEROES —

Darkness #9, this time tricking Mystico into fighting her war against the Outer Ones “from the dark side of Pluto.” In his penultimate appearance, in *Adventures Into Darkness* #64, he teamed up with Kara, Jungle Princess to fight her old *Exciting Comics* nemesis Esh-Kar, the Ape God of Evil.

THE NIGHT TERROR

The Black Terror, who debuted in *Exciting Comics* #9 (May 1941), was one of Nedor’s most popular heroes. In civilian life the druggist Bob Benton, he gained super-strength and bulletproof skin by inhaling “formic ether vapors” and fought crime and the Axis with his sidekick Tim. Together, “the Terror Twins” romped through sixty issues of *Exciting* and all 31 issues of *America’s Best Comics*, and the Black Terror was one of only three Nedor heroes (along with the Fighting Yank and Dream Master) to have his own title. Before becoming a best-selling crime novelist, Patricia

Highsmith scripted some Black Terror stories.

Nobody is quite sure why the Black Terror never appeared in *Adventures Into Darkness*. Julius Schwartz hinted that Ned Pines got cold feet at the last minute, while Frank Belknap Long always claimed that Nedor writer (and the Black Terror’s creator) Richard Hughes was jealous of HPL and threatened to quit if his best title was “dragged into all that monster stuff.” As it was, in *Adventures Into Darkness* #10, Lovecraft (or possibly Schwartz) simply invented a heretofore unknown twin brother to Bob Benton, the gravedigger Rob Benton. He inhaled his own “formic ether vapors” from a mysterious embalmed corpse in a colonial-era mausoleum and got the same powers as the Black Terror. Rob Benton added a black hood to his brother’s black-and-gold costume and became the Night Terror. His signature stunt was using a wrestling hold (and his immensely strong arms) to crush the life out of some hapless Nazi. Given the number of walking corpses, living skeletons, and other undead that the Night Terror fought, that move wasn’t always foolproof. The Night

MYSTICO

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Ancient Egyptian Wizard, Good [+2] Intimidation, and Poor [-2] Fish Out of Water.

POWERS

Master [+6] Mummy (Meta-Power), and Master [+6] Sorcery (Meta-Power; Limitation: Only When Able To Speak or Gesture).

STUNTS

Animate Objects (Sorcery Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; animate up to 75 tons of matter)

Immortality (Mummy Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Mental Invulnerability (Mummy Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP; acts as Invulnerability against mental and psionic attacks)

Precognition (Sorcery Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Regeneration (Mummy Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP)

Summon Servitor (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; summons animals, elementals, etc. subject to Control as Power)

Transformation (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP).

NOTES

Mystico’s Sorcery Stunts will vary widely by adventure.

THE NIGHT TERROR

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Acrobat, Master [+6] Fisticuffs, Good [+2] Mortician, Expert [+4] Scary, Expert [+4] Shadowing, Master [+6] Urban Movement, Master [+6] Wrestling, and Poor [-2] Resistance to Head Blows.

POWERS

Good [+2] Ghoul Control, Average [+0] Invulnerability, Good [+2] Regeneration, and Average [+0] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Acrobatic Dodge (Acrobat Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; adds to defensive rolls when used)

Crushing Hold (Wrestling Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; combines with Super-Strength for super-scale damage)

Swingline Travel (Urban Movement Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Terrific Punch (Fisticuffs Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP).

NOTES

The Night Terror’s Urban Movement Quality is the parkour-like ability, exhibited by other comic-book grim avengers of the night, to shinny up buildings, chimney down alleys, dodge across roofs, etc.

— HEROES —

GHOULS

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Claws, Good [+2] Ghoul, Expert [+4] Strong Arms, Good [+2] Thick Rubbery Hide, and Poor [-2] Horrible.

POWERS

Good [+2] Immortality.

STUNTS

None.

NOTES

In some campaigns, ghouls may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Average [+0]. The Ghoul Quality includes darkvision.

Terror also fought some of the Black Terror's more colorful villains, including Dr. Eptil and the Spider, Caleb Ketchum (the inventor of a spray that can grow insects to enormous size), the Voice (a hooded master chemist specializing in gases), and the hypnotic Lady Serpent (who perhaps inevitably became a cultist of Yig). In Lovecraft's stories, the Night Terror dispensed with his twin brother's occasional habit of packing machine guns.

GHOULS

Dr. Ghoul, another Black Terror villain, showed up in *Dream Master* #51 as the leader of a pack of evil ghouls, humans given a horrible debased immortality by eating fresh corpses. When Dr. Ghoul returned in *Adventures Into Darkness* #28, the Night Terror had the ability to command ghouls.



NODENS

The god Nodens made his comics debut in *Dream Master Comics* #9 (October 1940) as a deus ex machina. He appears with his nightgaunts and saves the Dream Master from the Veiled Priest. In future issues of *Dream Master*, in a clear attempt to compete with DC's wizard hero Dr. Fate, Nodens is not a god but a human scholar (an Oxford professor named Ronald Williams) who discovered the Trident of Nodens in an ancient barrow. Holding the trident and reading the runes on its shaft transforms his right hand into the "sorcerous silver hand of the god," and essentially makes Professor Williams an avatar of that ancient British deity. Nodens can fly, hurl his trident at his foes or Nazi airplanes, and cast the general sort of plot-device magic in the comics. He can use a pool of water to see clairvoyantly or to reveal the past, and his silver hand is completely invulnerable and can pass through walls or smash them down. His head, of course, is as vulnerable as that of any Nedor hero, and if his hand is bound with "cold iron" then he cannot do magic with it.

According to *Dream Master* #17, Nodens supposedly trained Randolph Carter in magic after World War One. Nodens appeared in the first issue of *Adventures Into Darkness* as a member of the Society of Sorcerers, but spent most of his time either fighting demons or getting clonked on the head by Nazi saboteurs attempting to steal Excalibur or destroy Stonehenge. In a rare mostly-straight crime story in *Adventures Into Darkness* #61, Nodens battles Doc Strange's old archenemy the Eye (a gangster Moriarty wearing an

— HEROES —

NODENS

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Eye for Detail, Good [+2] Imposing, Expert [+4] Professor, and Poor [-2] Resistance to Head Blows.

POWERS

Good [+2] Godlike Wisdom, Master [+6] Invulnerable (Limitation: Right Hand Only), Expert [+4] Phasing (Limitations: Right Hand Only), Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power), Master [+6] Super-Sidekick (Nightgaunts), and Expert [+4] Trident.

STUNTS

Deflect (Invulnerable Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 HP)

Flight (Sorcery Spin-off; Good [+2]; 1 HP)

Gigantic Form (Sorcery Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 2 HP)

Godlike Aura (Godlike Wisdom Signature; Good [+2]; 2 HP; combines with Imposing for +6 to presence-attack dice)

Scrying (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP; Limitation: requires pool of water or mirror).

NOTES

Nodens' Trident Power can be a Bolt (when hurled, requires one action to return to Nodens' hand) or the equivalent of a Super-Strength blow. Nodens' Godlike Wisdom is mystical Super-Intelligence, and counts as resistance against Unearthly or Super-Unearthly beings (see p. 36-37). All of Nodens' Powers have the Limitation: Only When Wielding the Trident of Nodens. Sorcery and Phasing also have the Limitation: Except When Right Hand Bound in Cold Iron. In some campaigns, Nodens may also have the Super-Unearthly Power at Average [+0]; he may or may not be able to turn it off.

eye-patch) who has stolen books and idols to establish a cult of Mormo the Moon Goddess.

NIGHTGAUNTS

Nightgaunts are the servitors of Nodens in the Dreamlands, and occasionally followed him into the waking world and *Adventures Into Darkness*. These hunting beasts are entirely black, bat-winged faceless creatures with long fingers and barbed prehensile tails. They do not speak, but restrain Nodens' enemies or carry them off into the sky never to return.

NIGHTGAUNTS

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Nightgaunt, Expert [+4] Flight, Expert [+4] Prehensile Tail, Expert [+4] Tickle, Poor [-2] Deaf, and Poor [-2] Mute.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation, Good [+2] Regeneration, and Good [+2] Super-Senses (blindsight, darkvision, direction sense, tracking).

STUNTS

Restrain (Prehensile Tail Signature; Good [+2]; 1 HP from Nodens; adds +6 to immobilize foes caught in tail).

NOTES

In some campaigns, nightgaunts may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Good [+2].

THE ORACLE

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Determined, Good [+2] Physique, Good [+2] Pistol, Good [+2] Shadowing, Expert [+4] Two-Fisted, and Poor [-2] Do-Gooder.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Precognition (Limitation: Only While Unconscious or Asleep).

STUNTS

None.

THE ORACLE

Bob Paxton gained the power of precognition—though only while asleep or unconscious—after being exposed to poison gas. As the Oracle, he thwarted crimes and Axis plots, beginning with *Startling Comics* #20 (March 1943). Other than foreseeing the future, Paxton has no other powers, although he can take care of himself with his fists and packs a gun like most Nedor crime-busters.

Although the Oracle's visions would often kick off the action in *Adventures Into Darkness*, his only real "starring" story was in *Adventures Into Darkness* #31, in which he and the Ghost battled Professor Fenton, pursuing him into the distant past. In that story, it turned out that the Oracle's powers came not from the gas but

— HEROES —

from an attempted possession by a dying member of the Great Race of Yith. Believing itself to be possessing a dying man (since Paxton was choking on the gas at the time), it fled "into no-time," leaving Paxton's unconscious mind sensitized to "temporal waves." Of course, during the story, the Oracle kills the Yithian in the past, creating a closed time loop.

PYROMAN

According to *Startling Comics* #18 (December 1942), a German agent named Dizaster used "a sonic transmitter" for serial arson, framing a gang of toughs for the crimes. Their friend, the graduate student Dick Martin, was sentenced to the electric chair as the putative head of the sabotage ring. Fortunately for Dick, previous high-voltage experiments had made him immune to electricity and his electrocution instead gave him amazing control over electromagnetism. Taking the (misleading) name Pyroman, Dick fights crime and fascism with the help of his mentor Professor Clark. His girlfriend, Joyce



PYROMAN

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Electrical Engineer, Good [+2] Physique, Good [+2] Presence, Expert [+4] Sidekick (Professor Clark), and Poor [-2] Resistance to Head Blows.

POWERS

Master [+6] Electromagnetism Control, Expert [+4] Lightning Bolt, and Expert [+4] Magnetic Beam.

STUNTS

Disintegrate (Lightning Bolt Shifty Business; 2 HP; range drops to Good [+2], damage increases to +15 against non-living normal targets)

Flight (Electromagnetism Control Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Power Tap (Electromagnetism Control Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; adds +4 to any of his Powers while able to drain other electrical power sources)

Repel (Electromagnetism Control Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; acts as Super-Armor to metallic projectiles).

NOTES

All of Pyroman's Powers have the Limitation: Except When Fully Grounded.

Clark (the Professor's daughter) knows nothing of his secret identity. Pyroman can draw himself to large metal objects, or magnetically attract smaller ones. (A similar use of that power lets him repel bullets.) He can shoot electric bolts through any conductive medium, and if his own bolts aren't strong enough, he can draw more power from other electrical sources like high-tension lines. Pyroman can create an electrical field to protect himself from energy blasts or help him smash his way through walls. In some stories, he has the ability to travel through the air on Earth's magnetic field. Pyroman often fought technological foes like Dizaster, the Tyrant King (who invented not only the Electrosorber but the "voltogun"), the Steel Nazi, or German invaders using the Subterron, a huge digging machine similar to an underground U-boat.

Pyroman's technology-centered stories apparently didn't interest the Lovecraft circle, although he did help Doc Strange and Captain Future defeat one of the Outer Ones' mining machines in Alaska in *Adventures Into Darkness* #72. His villains proved more adaptable; the Unseen, a hulking figure whose long hair covered his face, searched for "the phagoment," a substance that could destroy all matter, in *Adventures*

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THE SCARAB

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Bazaar Hand, Expert [+4] Brawler, Good [+2] Desert Survival, Expert [+4] Egyptologist, Good [+2] Legerdemain, and Poor [-2] Resistance to Head Blows.

POWERS

Average [+0] Flight, Good [+2] Invulnerability, Expert [+4] Super-Sidekick (Akh-Tu-Men), and Good [+2] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Wade Right In (Brawler Signature; Good [+2]; 2 HP; combines with Super-Strength and Invulnerability for total of 10 ranks to split up in solo fights against multiple normal-scale thugs).

NOTES

All of the Scarab's Powers have the Limitation: Must Rub Ring to Activate.

Into Darkness #60 and #67. Pyroman's villain Schnubel, a cadaverous Nazi scientist with a machine that could "transpose Martian conditions to Earth" (among other things) proved more popular in *Adventures Into Darkness* than Pyroman did, appearing six times to the hero's four. This despite seemingly dying in every adventure, a tradition begun in Schnubel's debut, *America's Best Comics* #3 (November 1942). Schnubel was actually described as a "half-rat, half-corpse" in his final appearance in *Adventures Into Darkness* #76, which would explain how he kept coming back to life despite having no apparent super-powers.

THE SCARAB

Egyptologist Peter Ward has only to rub his scarab ring to become the Scarab! Akh-Tu-Men,

AKH-TU-MEN

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Cat, Expert [+4] Egyptian Priest, and Poor [-2] Small.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power).

STUNTS

Catfall (Cat Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP)

Feline Elusiveness (Cat Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 HP; adds +10 to dodge and stealth rolls)

Telepathy (Sorcery Spin-off; Average [+0]; 0 HP). Akh-Tu-Men will also have a number of other magical spin-off stunts for Sorcery.

the high priest of the Egyptian sun god Amen-Ra, granted Ward super-strength, invulnerability to bullets, and flight. Better still, reincarnated as a black cat, Akh-Tu-Men accompanies the Scarab on his adventures to help out with magic or ancient lore where needed. In addition to standard foes like Axis agents and gangland toughs, the Scarab fought tomb-robbers like Aton, leader of the Masked Marauders (stock Arab bandits) and similarly quirky villains.

The Scarab bowed in *Startling Comics* #34 (July 1945), but had a short run in the main Nedor lines. However, the combination of Egyptology and reincarnated cats made him a natural for *Adventures Into Darkness*, beginning with #49 and running through most of the book's remaining issues. Like the Liberator, most of the Scarab's tales were probably Robert Bloch scripts. Lovecraft most likely had a larger hand in the Scarab's appearance in *Dream Master* #48, in which Peter Ward and Akh-Tu-Men predictably went to Ulthar and the Moon.



VILLAINS

"We have no business calling in such things from outside, and only very wicked people and very wicked cults ever try to."

H. P. Lovecraft, "The Dunwich Horror"

Although Lovecraft and his Zombies provided an endless supply of villains and monsters over the comics' multi-year runs, this section highlights the fan favorites and most characteristic nemeses. This selection concentrates on villains familiar to fans of Lovecraft's fiction and film work.



ASENATH, THE BODY SNATCHER

The body-snatching astral projector Asenath Waite in Lovecraft's story "The Thing on the Doorstep" may have been either her own father or one of the Innsmouth fish-folk. When she appeared in *Adventures Into Darkness* #14 to bedevil the Sphinx (an unpow-ered crime-busting detective who debuted in *Exciting Comics* #2 (May 1940)) she was a sorceress who could jump into other people's bodies. Cleverly, the stories never made clear exactly how long the process took, although they implied that Asenath at least had to eat or drink with her target. Probably the best Asenath story is *Adventures Into Darkness* #34, in which she engages in a taut cat-and-mouse game with Spectro

ASENATH

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Arcane Lore, Expert [+4] Fascinating, Expert [+4] Fearless, Good [+2] Lithe, and Poor [-2] Cruel.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Astral Projection, Expert [+4] Air Control, and Master [+6] Mind-Switching (Limitation: Must Eat or Drink With Target).

STUNTS

Clairvoyance (Astral Projection Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Suffocate (Air Control Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Telepathy (Mind-Switching Spin-off; Good [+2]; 0 VP; Limitation: Only with people she has possessed)

Thickening Air (Air Control Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; ensnares victims, slows down bullets, etc.).

— VILLAINS —

the Mind-Reader, an obscure Nedor hero who debuted in *Wonder Comics* #1 (March 1944).

BARON VON JUNZT, THE BLACK SCHOLAR

The Baron von Junzt was the “top Nazi specialist in the black arts,” “the man who trained Hitler in mesmerism,” and “the most evil magician in the world.” Unfailingly dressed in dapper evening clothes, complete with monocle, the Baron always has some evil tome or eldritch artifact to use for the Third Reich’s benefit. In some

stories, he is seeking such a thing when he draws the heroes’ attention, and in a number of *Adventures Into Darkness* tales he is racing archaeologist heroes like the Liberator or the Scarab to find the Yekubian Cube or the Glass of Leng before they do. His own powers are apparently restricted to mesmerism, but he wears a “Ring of Set” that protects him from bullets or fire. He usually has other abilities derived from whichever artifact or book he carries in any given story. In *Adventures Into Darkness* #16-17, the Baron teams up with Vurmann, a Doc Strange villain and specialist in androids to build “the perfect body” in order to contain “the resplendent energies of Yog-Sothoth,” but he usually sticks to magical artifacts rather than super-technology. Even in that story, von Junzt uses the “suppressed journals of Dr. Frankenstein” and leaves the machines to Vurmann.

BARON VON JUNZT

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Aristocrat, Expert [+4] Charismatic, Expert [+4] Minions (Nazi Cultists), Master [+6] Occultist, Master [+6] Perceptive, and Poor [-2] Arrogant Nazi.

POWERS

Good [+2] Etheric Vision, Expert [+4] Invulnerability, Expert [+4] Mind Control, and Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power; Limitation: Requires a book or dark artifact).

STUNTS

Mesmerism (Mind Control Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; stacks with Charismatic for +12 to sway weak or trusting minds); Others vary depending on the tome or item he uses in the current adventure.

NOTES

The Baron’s Invulnerability comes from the Ring of Set, a magical Super-Gadget that can only be used by those who can read its hieroglyphs, and can only be removed from his finger while helpless. The Baron’s Aristocrat Quality gives him connections and pull with powerful figures even in Allied countries.

NAZI CULTISTS

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Cultist, Good [+2] Soldier, and Poor [-2] Obedient.

POWERS

None.

STUNTS

None.



— VILLAINS —

NAZI CULTISTS

These stats are for standard Nazi cultists “from the Gestapo’s Black School” of the sort assigned to Baron von Junzt. They are essentially competent machine-gun toting goons with a splash of occult lore.

BLITZ

In 1943, a team of Nazi commandos practicing demolitions work in the Alps blew open a hidden glacier cave. Within its depths they discovered the body of a primordial blond Aryan giant from the prehistoric Stone Age. The giant had been frozen in the ice for millennia, and the lengthy exposure to the ice altered his biochemistry. He was not merely immune to sub-zero temperatures, he could radiate intense cold at will. Either as a result of his freezing, or of his ancient caveman muscles, the giant was super-strong. Taken under the wing of Gluncken, the Nazi commando, the giant (now code-named Blitz) became one of the Reich’s most feared super-saboteurs.

Although he sounds like the product of a Robert E. Howard (or Heinrich Himmler) fever dream, Blitz was actually invented by the creator of the Fighting Yank,

Richard Hughes, in *Fighting Yank* #5 (September 1943). The Yank knocked Blitz into a sinkhole, seemingly to boil to death, but a giant primordial Aryan with cold-powers was far too juicy for Lovecraft to ignore. Blitz appeared repeatedly in *Adventures Into Darkness*, often as “muscle” to some other Nazi menace. In a time-travel story (in *Adventures Into Darkness* #53), the Ghost and the Cavalier fought Blitz in his native “Ancient Thule,” where for some unknown reason he already had his cold-powers despite the story being set before his long freezing. In his last appearance, in *Adventures Into Darkness* #68, Blitz and the Ooze teamed up in Antarctica to fight the Outer Ones (and eventually Captain Future and Mystico) over Hitler’s brain-case.

DAGON

Dagon is a demon-god worshipped by the Devilfish and his Frog-Men, first mentioned as such in *Adventures Into Darkness* #4. He battled Mystico and

BLITZ

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Hunter, Expert [+4] Massive Build, Master [+6] Physical Specimen, Good [+2] Thule Lord, and Poor [-2] Primitive.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation, Expert [+4] Cold Control, Good [+2] Polar Vision, Good [+2] Regeneration, and Good [+2] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Cold Fog (Cold Control Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; creates obscuring fog)

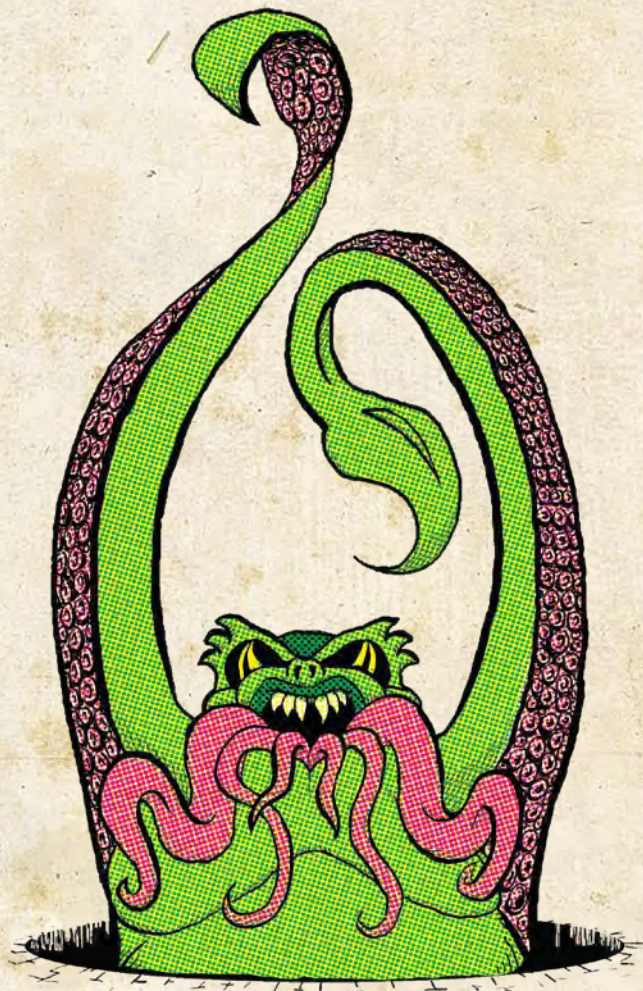
Cold Wave (Cold Control Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; acts as Cold Blast)

Ice Cage (Cold Control Spin-Off; Expert [+4]; 2 VP)

Sapping Chill (Cold Control Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; saps foes’ strength or Super-Strength as Power Neutralization).

NOTES

Blitz’ Polar Vision power gives him direction sense and infravision.



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DAGON

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Ancient Demi-God, Master [+6] Frog-Man, Master [+6] Terrifying, and Poor [-2] Unsubtle.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation (Limitation: Undersea Conditions and Aging Only), Master [+6] Growth, Average [+0] Minions (Frog-Men), Expert [+4] Regeneration, Master [+6] Sorcery (Meta-Power), Expert [+4] Super-Armor, Good [+2] Super-Strength, Average [+0] Super-Swimming.

STUNTS

Coils of Dagon (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 VP; creates mystical coils of force, TN 17 to break)

Control Sea-Life (Sorcery Spin-Off; Expert [+4]; 1 VP)

Control Water (Sorcery Spin-Off; Expert [+4]; 1 VP),

Control Weather (Sorcery Spin-Off; Expert [+4]; 1 VP)

Fist of Dagon (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 VP; acts as Water Blast; Limitation: Must Use Existing Body of Water)

Impervious Hide (Growth Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; stacks with Super-Armor for net +14; Limitation: Only While In Giant Form)

Titanic Strength (Growth Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; stacks with Super-Strength for net +12; Limitation: Only While In Giant Form)

NOTES

In some campaigns, Dagon may have the Super-Unearthly Power (see p. 36) at Good [+2]. The Frog-Man Quality includes low-light vision and underwater pressure-senses.

Nodens "on the astral plane," where he had the sort of magical powers one would expect of a demonic god. In a huge, sprawling story in *Adventures Into Darkness* #46-48 he took physical form and attacked America, battling virtually every Nedor hero in turn until he was finally defeated by Captain Future. For his invasion, Dagon took the form of a huge (30 feet tall) humanoid frog-creature with a long, tentacled beard and scaly tentacle arms.

THE DEVILFISH

The Devilfish has more in common with a Dick Tracy villain than with the standard gangland boss in Nedor Comics. Horribly disfigured and resembling an uncanny frog-fish hybrid of vaguely humanoid shape, the Devilfish is the ruler of an undersea city off the Massachusetts coast. He usually wears either a capacious rain slicker and wide-brimmed hat or a sailor's cap, peacoat, and scarf when on land. He and his Frog-Men commit crimes in coastal areas and assist Nazi and Japanese saboteurs and U-boats. Although he is a strong swimmer and can breathe underwater, only his prodigious strength and "thick, rubbery hide" (which stops fists, clubs, and knives) could be considered super-powers. However, in *Adventures Into Darkness* #28, he has the power to command fish and aquatic beings to do his will. In #39, he commanded a shog-



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goth (a sort of oozing blob of protoplasm created by a long-dead Antarctic race), and he played a key role in the ritual to summon Dagon in issues #46-48.

Lovecraft of course based the Devilfish and his Frog-Men on the Marsh patriarchs and Deep Ones from his novella "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." They appeared repeatedly throughout *Adventures Into Darkness*, beginning

THE DEVILFISH

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Criminal Mastermind, Master [+6] Frog-Man, Expert [+4] Minions (Frog-Men), Good [+2] Occultist, Good [+2] Speargun, Expert [+4] Talons, Expert [+4] Thick Scaly Hide, and Poor [-2] Misshapen.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation (Limitation: Undersea Conditions and Aging Only), Good [+2] Control Sea-Life, Good [+2] Regeneration, Average [+0] Super-Strength.

STUNTS

Swimming (Frog-Man Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 VP; 12 yards per Turn).

NOTES

In some campaigns, the Devilfish may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Good [+2]. The Frog-Man Quality includes low-light vision and underwater pressure-senses.

FROG-MEN

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Frog-Man, Good [+2] Talons, Good [+2] Thick Scaly Hide, Good [+2] Trident (or Speargun), and Poor [-2] Misshapen.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation (Limitation: Undersea Conditions and Aging Only).

STUNTS

Swimming (Frog-Man Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; 10 yards per Turn).

NOTES

In some campaigns, frog-men may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Good [+2]. The Frog-Man Quality includes low-light vision and underwater pressure-senses.

with #2, in which they battled the Ghost. The Devilfish would often seemingly be killed in a fire or explosion, but returned more evil than ever in a few issues.

FROG-MEN

The Frog-Men are simply weaker versions of the Devilfish, fish-frog hybrid humanoids who go around in all-concealing trench-coats while on the surface. They usually use either tridents and spear-guns or some sort of advanced ray gun.

PROFESSOR FENTON

Professor Fenton was a pre-existing villain of the Ghost, appearing in *Thrilling Comics* #18 (July 1941) as the inventor of a time machine. In *Adventures Into Darkness* #7, Lovecraft gave him a new origin story. It turned out that Professor Giles Fenton was actually possessed by a member of the Great Race of Yith, a species of cone-shaped aliens from the "immemorially distant past" who had mastered psychic time

PROFESSOR FENTON

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Amoral Scientist, Good [+2] Arcane Lore, Master [+6] Meta-Historian, Expert [+4] Minions, Good [+2] Yithian, and Poor [-2] Social Affect.

POWERS

Good [+2] Psychic Stun Blast, Expert [+4] Psychic Super-Armor (Limitation: Defends Only Against Mental Attacks or Unconsciousness), Master [+6] Super-Gadget (Time Machine/Viewer), Good [+2] Super-Gadgeteer, Master [+6] Super-Intelligence, Good [+2] Telepathy, Good [+2] Vulnerability (to psychic exorcism of his Yithian possessor).

STUNTS

Breath Control (Super-Intelligence Spin-Off; Good [+2]; 0 VP)

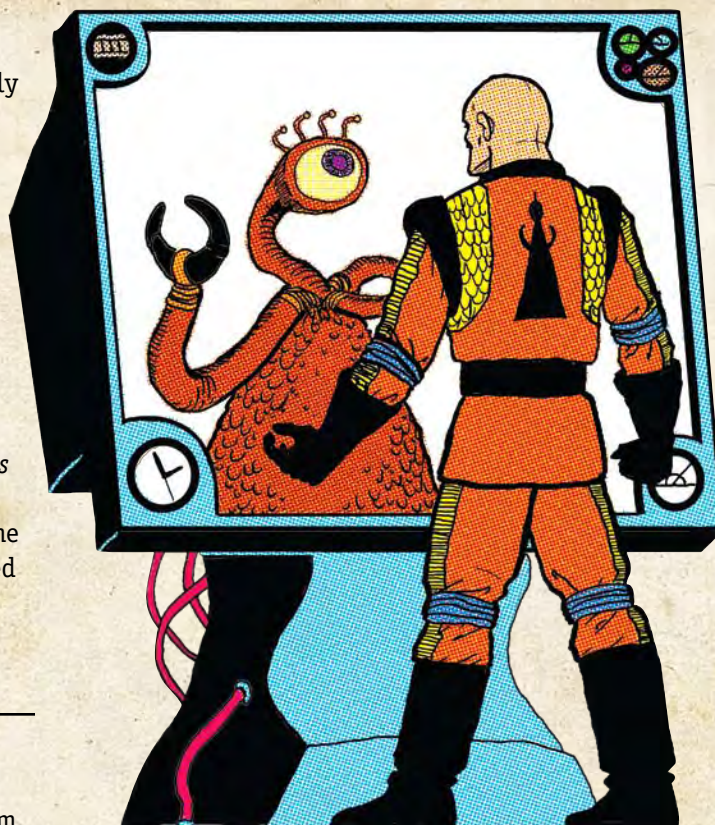
Hysterical Strength (Super-Intelligence Spin-Off; Good [+2]; 0 VP; Limitation: Only once per Scene).

NOTES

Professor Fenton's Meta-Historian Quality covers the entire span of the Earth's inhabitation, from 2 billion B.C. to at least 50 million A.D. In the remote past, he has access to a Master [+6] Mind-Switching Super-Gadget.

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travel. This not only explained Fenton's advanced technological skills but gave Lovecraft (or more likely Henry Kuttner) the opportunity to give Fenton other psychic powers, mostly "mind blasts" which can stun people in Fenton's sightline and "mind probes" which let him read the minds of helpless or unsuspecting victims. Fenton also shows "complete mental control over his body," enabling feats of "hysterical strength" and allowing him to hold his breath for hours. Professor Fenton's mental strength is such that he may be the single hardest person in the Nedor universe to knock unconscious with a blow to the head. In *Adventures Into Darkness* #66, which retold Lovecraft's tale "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," Professor Fenton (retconned to be the same as the character Fenton from that story) was revealed to have other connections with aliens from the star Algol.



YITHIAN AGENT

The Yithians maintain a network of un-possessed human agents in their future (our present) to help them blend into their new surroundings, supply them with machinery and money, and otherwise ease their journey through time. The Yithians reward such agents with advanced technologies; these are spy-type mooks with at least one or two such amazing gadgets.

"HENRY AKELEY"

Lovecraft adapted his story "The Whisperer in Darkness" as a Fighting Yank tale for *Adventures Into Darkness* #20. In this version, it remains unclear whether the folklorist Henry Akeley was ever a real human, or was always one of the Outer Ones (the winged Plutonian crustaceans in the story) trying to lure the Yank into a trap. The Outer One who the Yank drove off returned repeatedly, most often in human disguise and some-

YITHIAN AGENT

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Conspirator, Good [+2] Occultist, Good [+2] Technician, and Poor [-2] Brainwashed by Yith.

POWERS

Average [+0] Super-Gadget (varies).

STUNTS

None.

"HENRY AKELEY"

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Armor (Bio-Web Gadget), Master [+6] Outer One, Expert [+4] Occultist, Expert [+4] Stealthy, and Poor [-2] Compulsive Manipulator.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation (Limitation: Except Against Drowning), Average [+0] Invulnerability, Expert [+4] Shapeshifting (Super-Gadget human disguise; Limitation: For Specific Humans Only), Expert [+4] Super-Gadgets (Various, depending on the adventure), Expert [+4] Telepathy, and Good [+2] Wide-Spectrum Vision.

STUNTS

Summon Alien or Demonic Being (Telepathy Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; summons an alien or demonic Super-Sidekick with 14 points of Qualities and 8 points of Powers).

NOTES

Although Outer Ones can fly, "Akeley" cannot do so while in human form. The Outer One Quality includes blindsight and darkvision.

OUTER ONES

OUTER ONES

QUALITIES

Good [+2] Armor (Bio-Web Gadget), Good [+2] Outer One, Good [+2] Scientist, Expert [+4] Stealthy, and Poor [-2] Alien Monstrosity.

POWERS

Good [+2] Adaptation (Limitation: Except Against Drowning), Average [+0] Invulnerability, Good [+2] Super-Gadgets, and Average [+0] Telepathy.

STUNTS

None.

NOTES

In some campaigns, Outer Ones may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Expert [+4]. The Outer Ones' arsenal of Super-Gadgets include an electro-projector (Good [+2] Electrical Blast) and a mist gun (Good [+2] Cold Beam). The Outer One Quality includes blindsight and darkvision.



Also called "Plutonians," "flying fungi," and—in one Mystico tale—"Mi-Gou," the Outer Ones are alien monstrosities from the planet Pluto, which they call Yuggoth. They enjoy removing human brains for study, and in addition to their other goals, want to mine various strange metals from the Earth. They resemble a kind of cross between scorpions and crabs with bloated, brain-like heads. Their wings resemble those of enormous moths, most probably because the artist didn't read Lovecraft's typically verbose and ornate descriptions.

times using Akeley's name. The Akeley Outer One has the abilities of all Outer Ones (see sidebar), and a good deal of magical skill, as well as access to weird, advanced alien technology. "Akeley," at least, also has the power to sense any sort of metal or radiation as part of his "wide-spectrum vision."

The crab-aliens from Pluto were also given retroactive responsibility for the Fighting Yank villain the Brain, who on his initial appearance in *Fighting Yank* #9 (August 1944) was just a brain in a jar who commanded a U-boat. In *Adventures Into Darkness* #38, the Brain was revealed as the Third Reich's ambassador to Pluto, and although the Fighting Yank destroyed his "cerebro-plane," the Brain (of course) returned.

KEZIAH THE WITCH

Keziah Mason, the witch from Lovecraft's story "The Dreams in the Witch-House," appeared as "Keziah

the Witch" in *Dream Master* #22 and later in a number of *Adventures Into Darkness* tales. In addition to her powerful witchcraft, she has the ability to draw "hyperspace runes" on walls and walk through them. This also lets her escape into other dimensions, enter locked chambers, and so forth. Her runes can also imprison people or ghosts inside "hyper-pentacles," as the Ghost discovered in *Adventures Into Darkness* #36. Her other great advantage is her familiar, the humanoid rat Brown Jenkin.

BROWN JENKIN

Brown Jenkin resembles a brown rat with tiny human hands and a human (though rat-toothed) face. Like traditional familiars, he runs errands and translates for Keziah (he speaks and reads all languages), and acts as a subtle tempter of others. In the comics, he casts illusions and bites heroes' girlfriends, the better to bait his mistress' traps.

— VILLAINS —

KEZIAH THE WITCH

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Evil Eye, Good [+2] Knife, Expert [+4] Skulking, Expert [+4] Witch, and Poor [-2] Fears the Cross.

POWERS

Average [+0] Darkvision, Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power; Limitation: must be able to chant or draw runes) and Expert [+4] Super-Sidekick (Brown Jenkin).

STUNTS

Cosmic Sound (Sorcery Spin-Off; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; acts as Sonic Beam)

Dimensional Travel (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; can also function as Phasing)

Hyper-Pentacle (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; TN 13 to escape)

Raise Demon (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; summons a demon with 14 points of Qualities and 8 points of Powers; Limitation: Only In Demon-Tainted Location)

Seal Away (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; TN 13 to beat Power Neutralization; Limitation: Magical Powers Only)

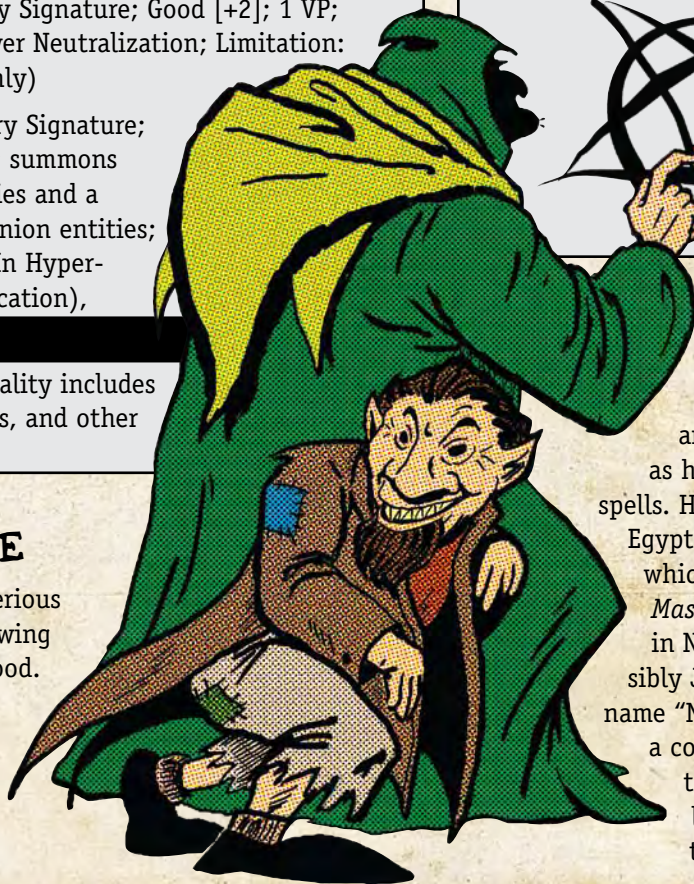
Spirit Gate (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; summons 11 "named" entities and a horde of lesser Minion entities; Limitation: Only In Hyper-spatially Weak Location),

NOTES

Keziah's Witch Quality includes herbalism, poisons, and other arcane lore.

LUCIFUGE

Lucifuge is a mysterious figure clad in a flowing scarlet robe and hood. Inside the hood is only blackness—his face is never revealed. His hands are also



BROWN JENKIN

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Rat-Familiar, Good [+2] Small, Expert [+4] Verminous Bite, and Poor [-2] Malevolent.

POWERS

Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power).

STUNTS

Dimensional Travel (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; can also function as Phasing)

Enochian (Sorcery Spin-Off; Average [+0]; 0 VP; as a master of the secret language of the planes, Brown Jenkin can read and speak all humanoid languages)

Phantasms (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Vile Whispers (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; acts as evil and seductive Mind Control; Limitation: Takes at least one full Scene)

Witch Link (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; mental link with Keziah).

NOTES

In some campaigns, Rat-Familiars may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Good [+2]. The Rat-Familiar Quality includes the ability to speak with rats, low-light vision, and keen scent and hearing.

black when they emerge from his sleeves. He claims to be a "dark god," and "more than a devil," but he uses arcane technology almost as often as he does weird magic rituals or spells. He speaks all languages. In ancient Egypt, he was known as Nyarlathotep, which is how he appeared in *Dream Master* #12. Most likely, someone in Nedor's editorial office (or possibly Julius Schwartz) thought the name "Nyarlathotep" a bit too much for a comic book villain, not to mention the trouble it made for the letterer. For whatever reason, then, he is Lucifuge on his first

— VILLAINS —

LUCIFUGE

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Arcane Manipulator, Master [+6] Dark Technologist, Expert [+4] Stage Presence, and Poor [-2] Boastful.

POWERS

Master [+6] Immortality, Expert [+4] Sorcery (Meta-Power), Expert [+4] Super-Communication, and Expert [+4] Super-Gadeteer.

STUNTS

Control Wild Beasts (Super-Communication Spin-off; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Create Darkness (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Dimensional Travel (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; can also function as Phasing)

Discern Weakness (Arcane Manipulator Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 VP)

Fascinate (Arcane Manipulator Signature; Expert [+4]; 1 VP; overcome TN 17 to tear one's gaze away)

Hellfire Blast (Sorcery Spin-off; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Phantasms (Sorcery Signature; Good [+2]; 1 VP; can stack with Discern Weakness if Lucifuge can tailor the Phantasm to his target's fear or desire)

Stupefy (Super-Communication Spin-off; Good [+2]; 2 VP; stacks with Arcane Manipulator for +8 to leave targets blank and assisting; Limitation: Target must hear Lucifuge speak for one Turn)

Summon Demon (Sorcery Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; summons a demon with 14 points of Qualities and 8 points of Powers). Lucifuge will likely attempt either another major sorcerous Stunt or Gadget in any given adventure.

NOTES

Lucifuge's Super-Communication Power is the ability to speak with all beasts, demons, machines, and men.

THE DARK HAUNTER

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Dark Hunter, Good [+2] Enormous, Good [+2] Needle-Sharp Teeth, Good [+2] Silent, Expert [+4] Terrifying, and Poor [-2] Servitor.

POWERS

Good [+2] Flight, Good [+2] Invulnerability, Good [+2] Smoke Form, Good [+2] Super-Strength, and Expert [+4] Vulnerability (to light).

STUNTS

None.

NOTES

In some campaigns, the Dark Hunter may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Master [+6], or even the Super-Unearthly Power (see p. 37) at Average [+0]. The Dark Hunter Quality includes blind sight, darkvision, and tracking.



appearance in *Adventures Into Darkness* #6, when he fought his "ancient foe Nodens."

Lucifuge became a kind of universal arch-villain for the series, battling not just Nodens and Dream Master but Mystico, the Liberator, the Scarab, the Night Terror, and in a particularly strange tale in *Adventures Into Darkness* #66 (loosely based on Lovecraft's prose poem "Nyarlathotep"), Pyroman. Lovecraft's stable wrote Lucifuge into a number of other Nedor back-stories—for example, *Adventures Into*

Darkness #62 revealed that he was the real source of the Ghost villain Mendezzi the Magician's powers. (In original *Thrilling Comics* continuity, the second-rate stage conjurer Mendezzi sold his soul to Satan.)

THE DARK HAUNTER

Lucifuge commanded or controlled a startling variety of demons over his years in the comics, but one of his favorites

— VILLAINS —

THE OOZE

QUALITIES

Master [+6] Mimic, Good [+2] Poker Face, Expert [+4] Stealthy, and Poor [-2] Obsessed (with increasing its powers).

POWERS

Expert [+4] Adaptation, Expert [+4] Liquid Form, Good [+2] Power Theft (Limitation: Must kill and absorb target), Good [+2] Quality Theft (Limitation: Must kill and absorb target), Master [+6] Regeneration, and Master [+6] Shapeshifting. The Ooze will almost certainly be manifesting stolen combat Powers beyond this when encountered.

STUNTS

Elongation (Liquid Form Spin-off; Average [+0]; 0 VP; can extend limbs or tendrils up to 10 yards)

Flow Up Walls (Liquid Form Spin-off; Average [+0]; 0 VP)

Super-Senses (Shapeshifting Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 VP).

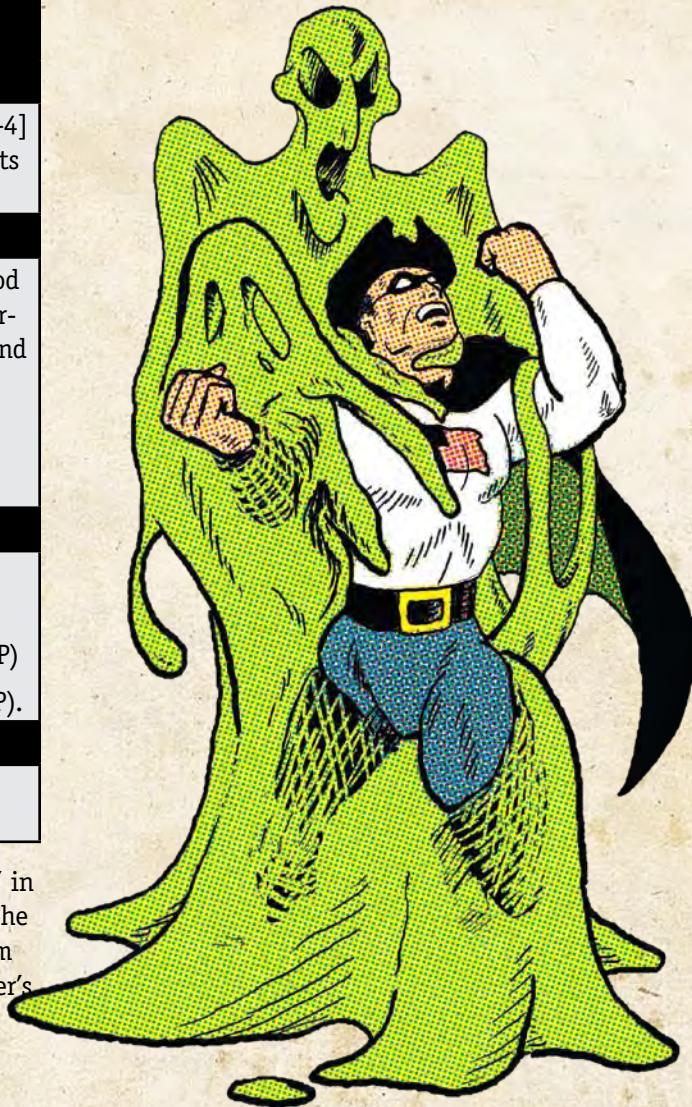
NOTES

In its "native" shoggoth-form, the Ooze may have the Unearthly Quality (see p. 36) at Master [+6].

was the Dark Haunter, derived from the "titan blur" in Lovecraft's short story "The Haunter of the Dark." The Dark Haunter was a sort of huge winged flying worm made up of black smoky tendrils; this horrific hunter's mouth is full of needle-sharp teeth. Intense light drives the Dark Haunter away.

THE OOZE

In *Adventures Into Darkness* #27, the Night Terror traced a series of murders to "Dr. Lake," the mysterious survivor of an Antarctic expedition. In their climactic struggle, Dr. Lake turns out to be "a shoggoth aping human germ-plasm." The last panel shows a thin film of goo on the ground after a titanic explosion has seemingly destroyed Dr. Lake, thinking "You haven't heard the last of me ... of the Ooze!" And indeed the Ooze returned in several later issues, battling the American Eagle, the Liberator, Doc Strange, and the Scarab, among others. The Ooze usually wanted to kill people with some great talent (a circus strong-man, an acrobat, an opera singer, etc.) in order to "absorb their germ-plasm" and take on their powers. (The Ooze can also absorb powers from animals.) Of course, this urge led the Ooze to try to



kill and absorb the various Nedor heroes. The Ooze has the innate powers of shapeshifting—not only can it take on any human (or organic) form, but it can flow through cracks, make its body super-dense to resist bullets (or liquid to let bullets pass harmlessly through it), and stretch out its arms to grab enemies. Also, the Ooze usually has whatever powers it has managed to absorb in a given story—common ones include extraordinary agility, elite combat skills, "catlike vision," and flight.

THE YELLOW LAMA

"Trained in the remote monasteries of the distant plateau of Leng, the Yellow Lama has mastered the secret powers of the Orient!" Wearing Chinese-looking robes and a yellow silk mask at all times, the Yellow Lama opposed

— VILLAINS —

THE YELLOW LAMA

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Artist, Expert [+4] Captivating, Master [+6] Lama, Expert [+4] Minions (Tcho-Tchos or Japanese soldiers), Expert [+4] Ventriloquism, and Poor [-2] Hatred of Caucasians.

POWERS

Master [+6] Adept of Leng (Meta-Power), and Expert [+4] Mind Control. The Yellow Lama also occasionally may possess magical artifacts (functionally, Super-Gadgets) in any given adventure.

STUNTS

Annihilating Gaze (Mind Control Signature; Expert [+4]; 2 VP; Limitation: Can be reversed by true love's kiss, and requires the target to gaze into the Lama's face)

Bilocation (Adept of Leng Signature; Good [+2]; 0 VP)

Biofeedback (Adept of Leng Signature; Good [+2]; 0 VP; can function as Regeneration)

Breath Control (Adept of Leng Signature; Good [+2]; 0 VP)

Inner Heat (Adept of Leng Signature; Good [+2]; 0 VP; resistance to cold and melting non-living objects)

Levitation (Adept of Leng Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 VP)

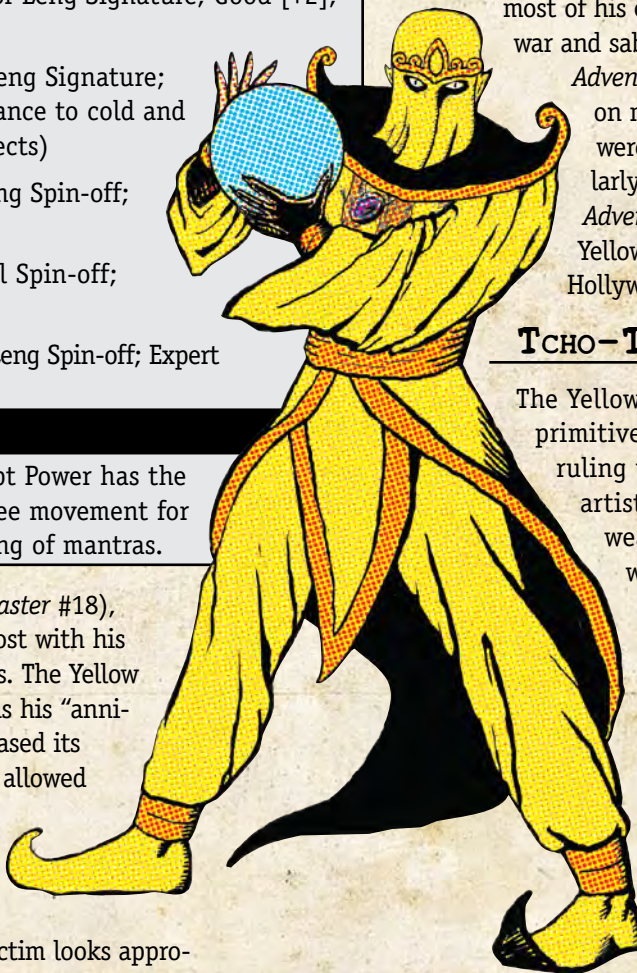
Telepathy (Mind Control Spin-off; Good [+2]; 1 VP)

Teleportation (Adept of Leng Spin-off; Expert [+4]; 1 VP)

NOTES

The Yellow Lama's Adept Power has the Limitation: Requires free movement for mudras and the chanting of mantras.

first Nodens (in *Dream Master* #18), then Mystico and the Ghost with his magic and psychic powers. The Yellow Lama's greatest power was his "annihilating gaze," which "erased its victim's personality" and allowed the Yellow Lama to control them remotely. (He pulls back his mask—always drawn from behind—and the victim looks appro-



TCHO-TCHOS

QUALITIES

Expert [+4] Poison Dart, Good [+2] Stalker, Good [+2] Tribesman, Poor [+2] Cannibal, and Poor [-2] Primitive.

POWERS

None.

STUNTS

None.

riately terrified, then blank and zombie-like.) Magic (or occasionally the kiss of a true love) can reverse this effect. The Yellow Lama also has various magic powers like levitation, ventriloquism, astral projection, teleportation, and seeming immunity to cold or gas. He can also bilocate, appearing in two places at once. Finally, like most Golden Age magicians, he can use various one-off spells and artifacts for any powers the plot particularly requires. Predictably, this "Oriental mastermind" spent most of his early career helping the Japanese war and sabotage efforts, although in later

Adventures Into Darkness issues he took on more cosmic projects. His motives were always unsavory; in a particularly unsettling Fighting Yank tale in *Adventures Into Darkness* #65, the Yellow Lama started a wave of suicides in Hollywood "to drown America in despair."

TCHO-TCHOS

The Yellow Lama is also "the lord of the primitive Tcho-Tcho people of Inner Asia, ruling them with fear and magic!" Nedor artists depicted Tcho-Tchos as skin-wearing cannibal pygmy savages with strongly stereotyped "non-white" features. The Tcho-Tchos carry blowguns, slings, bows, and other such weapons, always firing missiles "tipped with an exotic poison!" When Tcho-Tchos visit New York or other cities, nobody (except occasionally their frightened target) ever seems to notice their bizarre appearance, although that may just be artistic convention.

— ISSUE LISTING & PRICE GUIDE —

ISSUE LISTING AND PRICE GUIDE

DREAM MASTER COMICS: Feb, 1940-No. 57, May, 1947, Better Publications (Nedor)	Good	Fine	N-Mint
1-Intro & 1st app. Dream Master (in costume splash panel only)	425.00	1260.00	6000.00
2-3	225.00	625.00	3000.00
4-Dream Master in costume	275.00	725.00	3250.00
5-8	135.00	400.00	1900.00
9-Nodens 1st app.	200.00	500.00	2350.00
10-14: 12-Dream-Quest story line concludes. 13-Origin Dream Master; Early Tales story line begins	130.00	350.00	1400.00
15-Nodens app.	175.00	450.00	2000.00
16-Silver Key story line begins	110.00	350.00	1350.00
17-19: Nodens app. 18-Yellow Lama 1st app.	70.00	210.00	1000.00
20-24: 22-Fighting Yank begins	60.00	175.00	950.00
25-Captain Future app.	65.00	190.00	1000.00
26-36: 26-Grim Reaper app. 27(5/42)-First bimonthly issue; 28-Fighting Yank team-up w. Dream Master; 34-Hirohito c.	55.00	150.00	700.00
37-38-Captain Future app.	70.00	210.00	1000.00
39-54: 48-Scarab app. 51-Dr. Ghoul app.; Tuska-a	50.00	125.00	600.00
55-57: 55-Kara the Jungle Princess begins	60.00	200.00	750.00

ADVENTURES INTO DARKNESS: Aug, 1941-No. 77, Jul, 1949, Better Publ./Nedor/Standard	Good	Fine	N-Mint
1-Nodens, Ghost, Mystico, Scarab app.	590.00	1800.00	6500.00
2-Nodens, Ghost, Dream Master, Doc Strange app.	510.00	1500.00	6000.00
3-Origin Nodens	480.00	1400.00	5750.00
4-6: 4-Dream Master, Fighting Yank app. 5- Mystico app. 6-Nodens app.	240.00	750.00	2350.00
7-(6/42)-First monthly issue; The Ghost app.	175.00	600.00	1400.00
8-9-Mystico app.	132.00	390.00	1350.00
10-Origin & 1st app. Night Terror	480.00	1500.00	5000.00
11-15: 13-Hitler-c. 14-The Sphinx app.	135.00	400.00	1350.00
16-17-Frankenstein story; Fighting Yank app.	80.00	240.00	1000.00
18-29: 20-Fighting Yank app. 24-Ace Buckley app. 27-Night Terror app. 29-Liberator app.	70.00	230.00	970.00
30-Bondage-c	80.00	250.00	1000.00
31-39: 31-Ghost begins, Oracle app. 33-Hitler-c. 34-Spectro app. 35-American Eagle app. 37-The Mask app. 38-Fighting Yank app. 39-Night Terror app.	70.00	220.00	950.00
40-44-Sargasso of the Skies; Moldoff-a	85.00	270.00	1100.00
45-Cavalier begins; not in #57, 63, 68, 72	48.00	155.00	950.00
46-48(8/46)-The Call of Dagon: 48-Captain Future app.	150.00	500.00	1650.00
49-Scarab begins; not in #56, 68, 77	66.00	210.00	850.00
50-56: 52-Doc Strange app. 55-Night Terror app. 56-Doc-Strange, Mystico app.	45.00	140.00	1050.00
57-Bondage-c., Kara the Jungle Princess app.	50.00	180.00	1200.00
58-Terror of Azderac; Frazetta-a	45.00	135.00	1000.00
59-62: 59-Doc Strange app. 60-Pyroman app. 61-Ace Buckley, Professor Fenton app.	33.00	100.00	800.00
63-Demon Star story; Doc Strange app.	48.00	150.00	850.00
64-Mystico, Kara the Jungle Princess app. Frazetta-c	54.00	180.00	1600.00
65-67: 65-Fighting Yank app. 66-Pyroman, Professor Fenton app. 67-Doc Strange app.	36.00	150.00	950.00
68-Hitler-c.; Captain Future, Mystico app.	66.00	200.00	2350.00
69-Nodens app.; Ghost ends	60.00	180.00	1650.00
70-71 Ingels-a	48.00	165.00	1000.00
72-Pyroman, Doc Strange, Captain Future app.	36.00	110.00	950.00
73-77: 76-Pyroman app.	33.00	100.00	850.00

WRITE COMICS THE NEDOR—LOVECRAFT WAY!

"[W]e can revel in the ...Arcadia of an author who will play with the old ideas, atmospheres, types, situations, and lighting effects in a deft pictorial way; a way tinged with affectionate remembrance as for fallen gods..."

—H.P. Lovecraft, "Lord Dunsany and His Work" (1922)

The world of *Adventures Into Darkness* is one of two things: fundamentally horrific or fundamentally fantastic. Both, it should be emphasized, spring equally from the pen of H.P. Lovecraft. Both are cosmic—each stretches far beyond the fields we know in time, space, and dimension. But the first is a soul-crushing, terrifying vastness, and the second is rather an endless jungle of variation dwarfing even the capacity of human imagination.

THE HORRIFIC WORLD

This is the world of "Call of Cthulhu" and "At the Mountains of Madness" and "The Colour Out of Space"—as bleak, indifferent, and fatal as stomach cancer. Knowledge is death, and madness, and futility; the true world is old and uncaring and cruel. Human interests, and human goals, are vanishingly unimportant; superheroism is irrelevant at best, and misunderstood evidence of human insignificance at worst. The horrific world exemplifies cosmic horror in purest "indifferentist" style, viewed through four colors perhaps, but still a realm of stark hopelessness at its core.

This makes conventional superhero storytelling difficult, if not impossible. The core theme of Lovecraft's "cosmic indifferentism" is human powerlessness and irrelevance, while the core theme of the superhero myth is the complete power and relevance of one man (or super-man) at the right place, at the right time, usually with a right hook. Following from that, superheroics privilege the physical solution—even Batman's mind is usually no more than a targeting system for his fists—while most of Lovecraft's cosmic terrors are immune to conventional weapons, in the long term at least. However, there are a few common elements available for the GM desperate to run a purist blend of H.P. Lovecraft and Gardner Fox. Firstly, of course, Lovecraft's fiction and the Golden Age of Comics share a common

setting, at least in our 21st-century eyes: the Pulp Era of the 1920s through the 1940s. All the setting assumptions for the one hold true for the other—or are broken (superheroes exist, scholars know about books that drive people insane) solely to juice the narrative. This lets certain props and elements—Packard coupes, fedoras, tommy guns, newsboys, the Empire State Building, propeller planes—unify the two with every scene wipe.

FISTS, FEARS, AND FUTILITY

Both sets of stories revel in the physical—fistfights in the one, dripping slime in the other. Both likewise accentuate the grotesque: supervillains and gang bosses are almost as "twisted and malformed" as ghouls or shambling monsters. (Similarly, both the Golden Age comics and Lovecraft's stories fear and distrust other races, especially Asians in the former case. This is probably not material suitable for modern-day roleplayers, though.) Both genres are fundamentally stories of loners. The dark guardian of the city and the orphan with a secret he can tell nobody are as isolated in their way as the scholar who cannot publish the truth about Antarctica or the artist who communes with ghouls. Likewise, both genres highlight questions of identity: Who am I, really? Who is anyone? Identity is fragile. Who else might be possessed by a Yithian, or secretly worshipping Cthulhu? Is Starman a scientist disguised as a vigilante, or a vigilante disguised as a scientist? Where does Charles Dexter Ward leave off and Joseph Curwen begin, or Carter Hall and Prince Khufu? The "secret identities" of Kent Nelson, Jim Corrigan, and even Billy Batson (Dr. Fate, the Spectre, and Captain Marvel) are more godlike than human—a sentiment Wilbur Whateley could sympathize with, as could Kal-El. The narrator of "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" feels the tug of his alien heritage no more than the Martian Manhunter does.

— WRITING COMICS THE NEDOR—LOVECRAFT WAY! —

Finally, although Lovecraft highlights it rather than muting it, he shares a certain message of futility with long-running superhero comics. No matter how many Nazi spies you capture, there's another Axis plot to foil next issue. No matter how many murders you solve, gangsters will kill more people next month. Especially in the Silver Age, it becomes personal, as supervillains always survive and return, just as the Deep Ones survive the destruction of Innsmouth, and Cthulhu survives being disincorporated when rammed by the *Alert*. GMs who are willing to highlight these aspects of their two sources can potentially bridge the gap in theme between them, perhaps leaving the true nature of the world indistinct. In some campaigns, this tension could become the ongoing theme: Is it good sense, or surrender, to act like the world is like it seems to be, whether from a rooftop in Gotham City or a hilltop in Arkham?

STRANGE VISITORS FALLEN FROM ANOTHER WORLD

From tension as creative ambiguity, of course, the next step is resolution as creative subversion. Adding the bleak vision of Lovecraft can make a Golden Age comics world feel more like the Iron Age (or "Dark Age") of comics, becoming a window for the ironic re-examination or even denaturing of the superhero ethos. The heroes become mere epiphenomena, victims, or pawns of aeon-spanning forces. At best, superheroism is accidental, unjust, and arbitrary—perhaps the American Eagle's "black light ray" was just a glint reflecting from the Shining Trapezohedron, or Kara's jungle immortality a side-effect of an eons-old Elder Thing toxic waste dump. More disturbingly, superheroic powers might merely offer another avenue for contamination by the true Lovecraftian reality as superheroes become supervictims. The Fighting Yank becomes increasingly possessed, Curwen-style, by his undead ancestor (or the Cavalier by his sword), and the Mask slowly goes mad as he sees further and further into the "ultra-violet." Ace Buckley travels back to before the dinosaurs and discovers the true nature of the Earth's history. Pyroman survived death and returned—surely something else changed for him besides his voltmeter reading.

From victim to voluntary madman: Nedor heroes could easily come to resemble the overreaching Crawford Tillinghast from "From Beyond," becoming unhinged not by the vision of a resonator but by the ingestion of unknown chemicals and alien gases. (Doc Strange,

the Liberator, the Black Terror, and the Oracle are all essentially vulnerable to this kind of reinterpretation.) This approach also leaves the door open for you to transform—or retcon—superhuman heroes into inhuman villains. Any of the other Nedor mystics—the Ghost, Mystico, the Scarab, and of course Dream Master or Nodens—might see too much and go mad, or be revealed as the heirs to dark gods and worse cults, or both. In *Terra Obscura*, Alan Moore thusly recast Mystico as the god Set, but the Wonder-Man might also have been one of the mummified servitors of Ghatanothoa, or the Black Pharaoh Nephren-Ka himself. Captain Future can easily become a self-conscious superman who sees himself as the harbinger of a greater race, more kin to the crinoid Elder Things or the fungoid Outer Ones than to mere mortal humanity.

THE THING IN THE COWL

This sort of world, although fascinating to explore as a reader or GM, can be an uncomfortable place to play, especially immersively. One way to gain some



MIND-BLASTING HORRORS FOR TRUTH & JUSTICE

Humans react poorly to creatures, gods, and even energies from outside the normally experienced four-dimensional universe. In fact, the human sensorium and mindset is so parochial and limited (which is to say, evolutionarily specialized to our local conditions) that seeing some sorts of extraterrestrials can trigger such overreaction. The attempt to perceive the normally indescribable (which may, in truth, be humanly *un-perceivable* on both physical and neurological levels) sets up a feedback loop in the human brain and nervous system that closely resembles insanity, and can trigger it.

In game terms, this is represented by either the Unearthly Quality or the even more intense version of the same effect, the Super-Unearthly Power.

In some campaigns, idols, artifacts, primordial ruins, or even books may possess the Unearthly Quality or even the Super-Unearthly Power, like a trap or gadget.

GMs will usually want to distinguish between “impossible” sights like “normal” superpowers and “horribly impossible” sights like dread Yog-Sothoth materializing above Drakesville. Of course, in some games, any superpowers at all may be unearthly and inhuman, and all supers (hero and villain alike) must take the Unearthly Quality or even the Super-Unearthly Power!

UNEARTHLY (NEW QUALITY)

Something about this creature or being radiates wrongness on a fundamental level. At the beginning of the Scene, an Unearthly creature immediately “attacks” all those who can perceive it with its Unearthly Quality; characters with specific Qualities like Fearless, Unfazeable, or Insane can use them to resist as with a normal conflict situation. Other characters must merely toss their 2d6 and hope for the best. Once this first exchange is completed, and the horrified witnesses have checked off their Failure Ranks, the Unearthly Quality does not come into play again unless the GM rules that it stacks with a specific fear attack, magical spell, etc.

GMs may or may not count ranks in Unearthly against a creature or being’s total for purposes of calculating the values for Sidekick, Minion, etc.

UNEARTHLINESS GUIDELINES :

Average [+0]	Unpleasant but actually from the Earth (serpent-men such as the Subterrans), or extraterrestrial but not hostile or unpleasant (one of the friendly Nug-Soth of Yaddith).
Good [+2]	Loathsome and/or supernatural but not utterly inhuman (ghouls, frog-men), or utterly inhuman but potentially non-threatening (nightgaunts), or loathsome, supernatural, and threatening, but relatively small (rat-familiars).
Expert [+4]	Clearly alien and inhuman, as well as threatening (Outer Ones).
Master [+6]	Utterly inhuman; the Liveliest Awfulness (shoggoths), or major demonic entities (the Dark Haunter as monster).

distance is literally to gain some distance. The player characters in this case aren’t the Golden Age Nedor heroes but their modern descendants or successors. Perhaps they travel back in time and slowly discover the horrible truth about the Golden Age past, while simultaneously discovering, perhaps, its less attractive conventional aspects. After all, for some superheroes, the realization that their beloved mentor routinely shot and killed people might be even more horrifying that

the discovery that his “Atlantean” heritage actually came from a different sunken continent. Alternately, the horrific Golden Age past can erupt into the modern age, as in Alan Moore’s *Terra Obscura* or Warren Ellis’ *Planetary*. Which modern icons are contaminated with the Mythos? Which legendary avenging figures continue its poisonous work? Do they do so knowingly? What other lies have been left buried, from the pre-Golden pulps or the sunny Silver Age? A game pitting superhe-

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SUPER-UNEARTHLY (NEW POWER)

Gods and immense monstrosities such as Dagon possess this, the "super-version" of Uearthly, much like Super-Strength instead of Strong. It ignores Quality-level defenses; only Powers like Mental Shield or Godlike provide a defense against it. Like other Super-attacks, if the sight of a Super-Uearthly being penetrates, it does *super-scale* sanity damage: a number of extra ranks of damage equal to the Target Number of the Super-Uearthly Power is added to the normal-scale damage.

SUPER-UNEARTHLINESS GUIDELINES :

Average [+0]	Basically humaniform, or not immediately malevolent (Nodens), or merely enormous (the Dark Haunter as avatar).
Good [+2]	Titanic but not sheerly incomprehensible (Dagon).
Expert [+4]	"A mountain walked or stumbled." (Cthulhu).
Master [+6]	"Roiling nuclear chaos." (Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth).

Obviously, the GM can vary these values at her whim or to suit her conceptions of the gods and titans of the Lovecraftian universe. In some campaigns, all ultraterrestrial beings will have the Super-Uearthly Power, as there is no mere human (Quality-level) defense against such horrific sights.

SANITY DAMAGE

In most Golden Age games, seeing Uearthly, or even Super-Uearthly creatures does Failure Ranks instead of Damage Ranks, but in harder-edged campaigns, Damage Ranks can be justified as actual mental trauma instead of shock and terror.

In either case, being zeroed out from Uearthliness means the character is completely panicked. This might result in total shock, blind panic, berserk frenzy, mindless catatonia, etc., depending on the specific stimuli and the psychological makeup of the witness.

In some campaigns, intended to closely model the works of H.P. Lovecraft and his school, recovery from shocks to the fundamental nature of human thought is not as simple as merely allowing the passage of time. In those campaigns, sanity (and hence, ranks in human concerns such as Qualities) drop dangerously or even permanently, leached away by exposure to Things Outside.

For every instance of being so zeroed out, the character may either lose one rank in a Quality reflecting human concerns (such as jobs, NPCs, etc.), or add another Weakness at Poor [-2] such as Fear of the Dark or Twitchy. To prevent a character from accumulating a horde of Weaknesses, the GM might try this optional rule: Treat mental or character Weaknesses as Motivations in addition to their normal effects. Thus, a character with Fear of the Dark will have to spend 1 HP to enter a dark room; each additional zeroing-out adds 1 HP to that cost. (Characters *do not*, however, receive Hero Points for giving in to such Weaknesses, unless the GM decides that a dark room counts as a Limitation.) Once a character is out of Quality ranks, or if overcoming a Weakness costs more than 5 HP, the character has gone insane. Recovery is impossible under normal circumstances, requiring a story development or superpowers (at least). The witness has seen and learned too much of the real nature of the universe.

Regaining lost Qualities, or removing Weaknesses, requires not merely the spending of MAX but a specific process. The player should describe their process ahead of time, and it should remain constant for that character. It may be treatment by a psychiatrist, prayer to the witness' God or gods, time spent in one's secret identity with normal folks, or the mental disciplines of the hero's original Tibetan monastery. (In some games, it may require killing the creature that caused the shock, or saving its would-be victims.) In any case, it takes a matter of weeks or even months.

Again, the GM can vary the severity of this loss, the ease of recovery, and the effect (or lack thereof) of Hero Points to create any specific feel for her game.

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heroes against the terrible legacy that they cannot reveal to the outside world (or even, perhaps, to their fellow heroes) could interestingly square the circle between H.P. Lovecraft and Jack Kirby.

The other method of distancing the player characters from the bleak, horrific truth behind Lovecraftian superheroics is literally alienation—the PCs aren't superheroes in the first place. In this kind of game, superpowers are likely all caused by some sort of Lovecraftian effect: Nyarlathotep as the source of telepathy, Yog-Sothoth as the key to teleportation or super-speed, Hastur or Ithaqua for flight or astral projection. Superpowers—like the magic in "The Dreams in the Witch House"—might merely be misunderstood manipulation of the dimensional matrix, derived from tapping into hyperspace in ritual patterns such as the recital of an oath or saying a single Name of Power.

Shoggoth ichor might grant shape-

shifting, super-stretching, or any other sort of bodily alteration from invulnerability to shrinking. Perhaps the "metagene" or "mutant gene" is yet another legacy of Old One tinkering, or of Yithian psychic alterations to certain bloodlines. Needless to say, any super-artifacts from green rings to scarab amulets to mysterious helmets could be derived from alien technology—or, like the Shining Trapezohedron, left over from the primordial rulers of the Earth. In rules terms, such powers might also come with limitations on their use or activation, such as "attracts ghosts," or "must pray to Azathoth," or "opens user to possession while sleeping" ... or "must consume human spinal fluid." What, exactly, goes into Alosun, or Lamesis, or Miraclo? This sort of game doesn't so much square the circle as go completely around the other side. The true heroes aren't the freaks and mutants unleashed by Mythos entities (or by an American government desperate to defeat the Axis) but the normal scholars, authors, and adventurers who armor up with "experimental Crookes tubes" and flame-throwers and stand with humanity's best against some alien world's finest.

THE FANTASTIC WORLD

This leads us naturally into the second sort of Nedor-Lovecraft world, the fantastic world. This is the world of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and "Through the Gates of the Silver Key"—and even "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" and "The Shunned House." Lovecraft has no shortage of heroes who fight evil and win, from Dr. Armitage of Miskatonic University to the anonymous sailors and G-men who destroyed the shadow over Innsmouth (at least for the time being). The world can be scary, even terrifying, but it is somehow *containable* within the realms of dreams or the restricted shelves at the University library. It can even be *controllable* with the right incantation or with flamethrowers and super-science. Knowledge is weird, and surprising, and occasionally grim; the true world is strange and wonderful and dangerous. This is not a world of cosmic indifference, or cold materialism, or helpless shrinking before the ineffable vastness of existence. No, it is a Golden Age superhero world, a world obsessed with decency and fairness at home—and with mercilessly smashing America's enemies abroad—where evil can, and should, be vanquished. Lovecraft's cosmic dreams work on the existing Golden Age



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assumptions like spices in a stew. They don't change the "meat and potatoes" experience of fighting Nazis, gangsters, and demons, but they bring out new flavor possibilities and accentuate certain elements.

FOUR COLORS OF DARKNESS

The first element is an almost surprising level of darkness—Superman idly threatens to kill a man in his first-ever adventure, and Batman packs a gun through most of 1939. Doctor Fate routinely kills sorcerers and others that "the law cannot touch," when they don't just commit suicide. On the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific, between jaunty wisecracks superheroes kill the enemy like any other soldier would. These aren't the post-Comics Code stories of the shiny Silver Age, in other words. And if the heroes are a little darker, the villains are worse—common murderers, thieves and racketeers, corrupt officials, and insensitive millionaires. There aren't a lot of quip-trading gentleman jewel thieves or brightly garbed rogues yet. The "Golden Age of Comics," remember, begins in the *tenth year* of the Great Depression, and crime and death (and the threat of poverty represented by all those bank robbers) aren't abstractions to either the comics creators or the comics audience. And that's just the home front—after 1941, comics villains get *really* evil, from Adolf Hitler on down. Although the Nazis have become almost camp figures in our own day (and to be sure, they mounted their share of seemingly ludicrous capers both in real life and in the comics of the 1940s), they represent something far nastier, and far more worthy of hate and revulsion, than any supervillain. Indeed, although racism meant the Japanese were usually drawn even uglier, the stock Golden Age Nazi was a brutish, almost microcephalic, troll-like thug or a weaselly, rat-like sadist.

All of these dark threads, of course, find natural echoes in horror, even in fantastic horror like that of Robert E. Howard and H.P. Lovecraft. But although it's dark, it's not soul-freezingly so. First of all, the existence of such darkness makes the brightness of the heroes seem more obvious. The comics of the 1940s took some surprisingly nuanced looks at questions of intervention, public duty, ethics, and so forth, but with self-confidence worthy of FDR they played things as they saw them and stuck by their play. Heroes were the good guys, and not always just because they were smacking the bad guys around—but that was good enough for wartime. That Rooseveltian self-confidence stayed with them,

too: aside from the occasional "if only" moment, the heroes do very little agonizing about their choices or their experiences after the fact. Life, and superheroism, goes on. Shocks to sanity can be overcome, in the fantastic world, about as easily as ordinary fear, panic, or other emotional conditions. At least superheroes (and their sidekicks and girlfriends) can overcome them, anyhow—different rules apply to them.

AN ARBITRARY UNIVERSE

The rules, or perhaps the lack of them, are another common feature of both Lovecraftian fantasy and Golden Age superhero comics. Lovecraft deliberately highlights the malleability and inconsistency of Randolph Carter's various realms and adventures as a means of conveying wonder and mystery. Both Carter and his environment shift seemingly at random—in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" he even takes on the body of an alien, and the disjointed *Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* shows a world where cats are feared warriors and ghouls are chatty tour guides, at least sometimes. In "Dreams in the Witch House" a crucifix stops a Nyarlathotep cultist; in "Nyarlathotep" he's an electrical showman as well as a god. Likewise, the heroes in the early comics could go anywhere and do anything the plot demanded, except when they couldn't. Golden Age magical heroes such as the Ghost and Mystico (or Dr. Fate and Ibis the Invincible) had essentially arbitrary spells and powers, and their goals and tactics seemed almost as arbitrary. One minute the Spectre is hopping from planet to planet wrestling demons, the next he's turning a mugger into ash on a random street corner. The super-strong, bulletproof hero who drops like a toddler when clonked on the head with a two-by-four is a distressingly common phenomenon, in Nedor comics especially. The Black Terror's powers shifted from a mere Batman-like "peak of human accomplishment" to full-blown super-strength and bulletproof skin from issue to issue.

The Golden Age writers refused to be a prisoner of last month's issue, much less of "continuity." Partly this is because some of the writers just didn't care that much about product they saw as throwaway kid stuff. The better part of it is the sheer effervescence involved in inventing a new kind of storytelling. Jack Kirby had to wait twenty years to break all the rules of superhero comics in the 1960s—when he started out in the 1940s, there weren't any rules to break yet! GMs interested in

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this feel should avoid getting hung up (or letting the players get hung up) on minutiae and “but last week my robot couldn’t fly,” although the constraints of serial roleplaying (and insistent geek obsessive-compulsion) may keep things straight regardless. Still, maybe just once, change things for no reason, and refuse to explain it. If your players recover from the shock, who knows? Maybe they’ll enjoy it—even enjoy being infuriated by the dropped options or vaulted plot holes—as much as the comics-reading kids of the Golden Age did.

STRANGE TALES

The third common territory shared by Lovecraft’s fantasy work and Golden Age comics is pure strangeness. *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* resembles nothing so much as a demented Dr. Seuss book, with zoogs and gugs and bholes and voonith ramping about the place. Even the more straight-faced material in this subgenre, such as “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward” or “The Dunwich Horror” has its odd aspect or two—the strong hint that Willett has accidentally re-animated Merlin (or something even weirder), the whippoor-wills who catch sorcerers’ souls, and so on. When he wasn’t rigorously building his more despairing science-fictional tales, Lovecraft let his imagination—and his sense of whimsy—take over. Like the Golden Age comics writers, he plundered names and “origin stories” from anywhere and everywhere, with extreme prejudice for romantic and evocative locations like Egypt and Tibet. (Gardner Fox plundered Lovecraft on occasion himself, such as the “fish-men of Nyarl-Amen” who battled Doctor Fate.) His fantasies excitedly rush from the Great Cypress Swamp to the Congo to New York City to ill-defined other dimensions just as the Ghost might visit Ceylon one issue, while the Fighting Yank shows up in North Africa to battle Nazis. The world is a big, gorgeous canvas for the Golden Age, and Lovecraft simply extends it into dreams and up to the Plateau of Leng. But like the Golden Age heroes, Lovecraft’s heroes often found themselves battling against the extraordinarily strange and evil right in their hometown. Be it Providence or Metropolis, there’s always a moon-demon or a sinister Chinese cult waiting around the next corner.

As an iconic example of all that was utterly bizarre about the Golden Age, consider one of its most popular characters—and one of the few Golden Age “supervillains” to not just return, but be the star of his own series—*Silver Streak’s* the Claw. Admittedly, the Claw

was created by Jack Cole, the protean genius who also invented Plastic Man. But even a guy made out of living rubber pales before the Claw! This mad yellow monster-god had pointed ears, enormous fangs and bony talons, and a skull-like cavity where his nose should be. He lived in a hollow mountain near Tibet, or maybe on a Pacific Island, where Chinese coolies, tribesmen, scientists, and soldiers alike worshipped him as “the god of hate.” He shot electricity from his fingers, could grow to be a hundred feet tall, and was occasionally super-strong and bulletproof when he wasn’t inventing tunneling machines or sneaking off to the planet Zylmarx to plot his revenge. He teamed up with Hitler to fight the original Daredevil in April of 1941 (in the wonderfully titled Charles Biro masterpiece *Daredevil Battles Hitler #1*). Now consider this—if they hadn’t survived into mainstream modern times, wouldn’t Captain Marvel, Green Lantern, or the Sub-Mariner (what’s with the little wings?) seem kind of weird to you, too? Speaking of iconic Golden Age weird heroes, it’s worth keeping in mind that the Spectre was Jerry Siegel’s *other* creation. Behind every Superman, in other words, lurks a whole raft of half-forgotten weirdness.

The Lovecraftian slew of other dimensions, magical dream cities, ghoulish tunnels leading from Boston to the Vale of Pnath, sunken continents, and demon-spawning stars and planets grows almost seamlessly out of (or into) the Golden Age world of Japanese submarine fortresses in Lake Michigan and Luftwaffe comet-ships behind Mars and lost white tribes in darkest Jungly Somewhere. Here, at least, the GM can feel completely justified in yielding to her Silver Age instincts—the “lovely and pointless” imaginings of the Silver Age writers, and the travelogue super-battles made famous in *Justice League of America* stories, fit perfectly into this world as well. One good way to slide such things in is to look at them through a Lovecraftian lens. What does Flash’s Gorilla City look like so much as a time-lost Yithian outpost with a strong dash of “Arthur Jermyn”? How much more fun is M.O.D.O.K. if you assume that the Fungi from Yuggoth built him while experimenting with their collection of human brains? Keep it planted firmly in the 1930s or the 1940s—a mad Nazi science angle is always good—and keep your tongue planted firmly in cheek. This kind of joyous freedom to explore and create can also help cut (or highlight, if you want) some of the undeniable Lovecraftian grimness that pervades even light-hearted fantasies like “The Cats of Ulthar.”

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"[T]he only conflict which has any deep emotional significance to me is that of the principle of freedom or irregularity or adventurous opportunity against the eternal and maddening rigidity of cosmic law... especially the laws of time!"

—H.P. Lovecraft, letter to E. Hoffman Price,
Aug. 15, 1934 (SELECTED LETTERS V, p. 19)

The traditional answer to the question "what would you do if you could take one trip in a time machine and change history" is "shoot Hitler." That's a hard answer to rebut, but I will say that if I get to take two trips, my second answer is "get H.P. Lovecraft a typist." Someone who could have saved Lovecraft the torture of two-finger hunt-and-peck could at the very least have given him more time and leisure to write more letters. A slightly more interested typist—an appreciative horror reader, perhaps—might very well have goosed him into producing one or two or ten more stories—maybe even the long-rumored "last Lovecraft novel," *The House of the Worm*. A horror-savvy typist who knew a good agent—or who knew a New York editor—could have gotten HPL into hardcover in his lifetime, and not from some near-vanity press like Arkham House. And that would have brought in some more money, preventing the malnutrition that brought on his Bright's disease and at the very least aggravated Lovecraft's fatal intestinal cancer. Another decade or two of Lovecraft's fiction, increasingly noticed by the New York literary world or by the burgeoning SF community, or both, perhaps changing the entire course of American genre fiction, and with his own brilliant critical writing making it all appear "worthy" of elite criticism. Now, *that's* an alternate history worth risking the wrath of the Morlocks for.

And it *almost* happened. Lovecraft had at least four near-misses with New York publishers, including Alfred A. Knopf and G.P. Putnam's Sons. In the third instance, in 1932, Vanguard Books tried to get a novel from HPL, and he claimed not to have one to sell them—this, with "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and "At the Mountains of Madness" sitting in manuscript in his files! (In 1936, a similar offer from William Morrow & Co. came to nothing.) His 1933

cover letter to Knopf, which consists of nothing but deprecatory comments about his own fiction, certainly cost him a book contract, and may have cost him his life. (His cancer most probably onset the following year.) Lovecraft had young, eager, gifted fans—not least of them Robert H. Barlow and Robert Bloch—who would have jumped at the chance to work for the Old Gentleman if he could have unbent enough to offer. And he really, honestly and for true, met and befriended a young Julius Schwartz, the future father of the Silver Age of comics. Schwartz, at the time working as a literary agent, sold "At the Mountains of Madness" (and maybe "The Shadow Out of Time") to *Astounding Stories* for HPL, and probably saved Lovecraft's life for a while with that check. But it was too little, too late. Lovecraft died on March 15, 1937, just fifteen months before Superman was born.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS AND HOW IT CAME TO BE

This book was always intended to be a guide to mashing up Lovecraft with the Golden Age of comics. The parallels are both so obvious to me and so little remarked upon by most people that I figured it would be a slam dunk to write. But while I was doing a little research (and re-reading a few histories of the Golden Age) I stumbled across a fact I somehow hadn't known before. Namely, that there were honest-to-Biro Golden Age superheroes just lying around out there for the taking. A gaggle of comic book companies dropped their superhero lines or otherwise left the business in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as the superhero fad (and to a lesser extent, the comics market) faded. And by no means all of them bothered to renew their copyrights. Ha-ha, I thought—the perfect NPCs for my Golden Age project! Looking through lists of public domain characters, I recognized some of them—the Fighting Yank,

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the Liberator, Mystico, the Magnet—from Alan Moore's "Terra Obscura" storyline and dug further.

It seems that in 1999 Moore named his comics imprint (at that time part of Image/Wildstorm) "America's Best Comics," and sometime thereafter learned that he wasn't the first to use that title. In 1942, Ned Pines had named one of his own Nedor Comics superhero anthology series *America's Best Comics*, as a knock at DC's *World's Finest Comics*. Moore found out that the Nedor heroes were in the public domain, and promptly revived them in the pages of *Tom Strong*, as the heroes of the counter-Earth, Terra Obscura. (In a nod to DC's Silver Age "Earth-2" stories, the heroes of Terra Obscura were fictional comic book characters on Tom Strong's Earth.) He tweaked the original "Doc" Strange into "Tom Strange," and another glorious Alan Moore story arc flared into existence.

Well, I wasn't going to pass up a chance to rip off—er, pay homage to—Alan Moore and H.P. Lovecraft simultaneously now, was I? This book became explicitly a Nedor-Lovecraft crossover project, and like Moore in reverse, I borrowed a Nedor title for my own book. The real *Adventures Into Darkness* was Nedor's attempt at a horror anthology series, when Pines was getting off the sinking superhero ship and moving into the booming horror comics field. (It ran 14 issues, from 1952 to 1954.) My book now had a name: ***Adventures Into Darkness***. And right about then, I realized what I was actually writing. It was an RPG sourcebook from an alternate history, one where H.P. Lovecraft somehow survived long enough to write comic-book superheroes for Nedor Comics. Hence, this Afterword.

THE LOVECRAFT OF TWO WORLDS

My alternate history diverges with H.P. Lovecraft's last coma, on March 14, 1937. In the real world, he died early the next morning. In my world, he survives—his cancer somehow goes into remission. (This really happens sometimes, though not nearly often enough. And to be perfectly honest, it probably never hap-

pens in cases as advanced as Lovecraft's was by 1937.) Everything after that is my invention or extrapolation, except the actual Nedor heroes and villains and their histories. (Ned Pines, for example, really did adapt some of his early comics heroes from the main characters in his pulp lines.) Among the heroes, I adapted only Dream Master (Randolph Carter) and Nodens from Lovecraft tales, basing the superhero versions of Dream Master roughly on Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's (Silver Age) Sandman and Nodens on Gardner Fox's Doctor Fate with a hint of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's Thor. The Night Terror is somewhere between invention and adapta-

tion. He's very closely based (all except for the ghoul control) on the original Nedor Black Terror, who passed into the public domain along with the rest of the Nedor heroes in 1968-1974. But ... Beau Smith revived the Black Terror (with an entirely different secret identity, back story, and power set) in 1989 for Eclipse Comics, which means that the Smith version quite possibly belongs to Todd McFarlane.

As I wanted to avoid that morass if possible, I had HPL create a "twin brother" for the character. (Alan Moore apparently agrees with my reasoning, since he renamed his Terra Obscura version of the Black Terror "the Terror.") That said, if

you just want to use the stat box for the Night Terror as a stat box for the Black Terror (minus the ghoul control, plus submachine guns), I don't see how even Todd McFarlane can stop you.

Among the statted-up villains, the Blitz and Professor Fenton (sans Yithian) are real Nedor baddies; all the rest are my Lovecraftian mashups. All the various other heroes, sidekicks, and villains mentioned in the Heroes and Villains sections are real Nedor characters. The rule of thumb is, if a character is mentioned in any other context besides (or in addition to) *Dream Master Comics* or *Adventures Into Darkness*, he (or she) is a Nedor original. In my history, those two titles ran about as long as Nedor's other flagship titles, *Thrilling*, *Exciting*, and *Startling*, ending their runs in 1947 and 1949, around when the Nedor superhero series did historically.

But back to Lovecraft. His connection with Julius Schwartz is, as I mentioned above, historical fact. (As



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are all the HPL quotes in this book, except for those in the body of the alternate-historical essay that follows the Introduction.) Robert Barlow was on the verge of getting on a train to Providence on March 15 in real history, but got Annie Gamwell's telegram telling him of Lovecraft's death before he did. In my history, he arrives, and becomes the typist, factotum, and cheering section that HPL deserves. Nothing about Julius Schwartz, in my version of history, is any less plausible than his actual career in comics. (In the real world, Schwartz went to work for National Periodicals in 1944, three years earlier than in my alternate.) Lovecraft really did have James Blish, Fritz Leiber, Henry Kuttner, and Robert Bloch (among others) paying court to him by mail. Once he hit the big time at DC, Schwartz really did throw a lot of comics work to his old SF writer clients—Alfred Bester wrote Hal Jordan's Green Lantern oath, for example. Combining Lovecraft's correspondence circle with Julius Schwartz produces "the Zombies" and HPL's comics scripting studio, which I modeled (with some variations) on Will Eisner's historical Eisner & Iger studio. Aside from the novel sales, the anthology that should have happened from Knopf, and of course the sales to Thrilling and Nedor, my fictional Schwartz doesn't actually do much better than the historical, dead HPL did. August Derleth (in real history) did manage to sell a lot of HPL's unpublished work to *Weird Tales* after 1937, and the Arkham House editions of Lovecraft did get respectful reviews from mainstream critics. (And a vitriolic savaging from Edmund Wilson, to be sure.) Philip Van Doren Stern, a prominent New York editor and critic, got HPL into the Editions for the Armed Services in our history, and Avon really did put Lovecraft into domestic paperback in 1947.

THE TRANSITION OF H. P. LOVECRAFT

The final objection is that Lovecraft probably really would have rather died than write for comic books. He would have thought them to be utter trash, worse even than the movies. I can only plead guilty to any and all such accusations, and even in my alternate, HPL has to be badgered incessantly into lending his name and talents to such things. But I do have a few thin arrows in my quiver.

First, of course, is the fact that Lovecraft was a gentleman almost as much as he was an artist. If Julius

Schwartz had gotten him committed to something, he would have tried his utmost to fulfill that commitment. His complete inability to let down the most pathetic of his revision clients, or to politely extricate himself from the amateur press circles that (mostly) failed to appreciate his work while taking up his increasingly valuable creative time, indicates that he might well have soldiered on in comics if Barlow or Schwartz could insulate him from enough of the misery involved. He would also not have been insensitive to the financial argument—that regardless of his own finer feelings, his elderly aunt needed an income to live on—as distasteful as he would have found the discussion.

Second, HPL really did have a sense of fun about his "Yog-Sothothery," for all that it also epitomized his most serious philosophical beliefs. He loved to joke around with his gods and monsters, especially for his younger fans. It's not difficult at all to imagine Lovecraft convalescing, reading a copy of *Action Comics* left around by Barlow, and firing off a jolly letter to Fritz Leiber or someone, speculating on what would have happened if Superman had been rocketed from "the lurid smaragd star Xoth, fleeing the unspeakable antecedents of Great Cthulhu, instead of from the inoffensive red sun of Krypton."

Third, surviving cancer can change people in unpredictable ways. Things you thought were absolutely permanent take on new shapes. Formerly serious things can seem trivial, and the transient passage of every day—even a humdrum one—seems like headline news. Hanging around with James Blish, Willis Conover, Robert Barlow, Fritz Leiber, and Robert Bloch to write superhero comic books—or anything—would not be a humdrum day. It would seem like very heaven to almost anyone with an imagination. And if they all worship the Old Gentleman, well, it would be hard for him to tell them no, that they were keeping him alive with trash and poison, especially on a warm August night in 1943, with letters piled on his desk from servicemen overseas thanking him for his comics. No, he'd lean back in his chair, settle a cat on his lap away from the dish of ice cream, and say something like: "Some geologists report that the shafts of Mayan temples go all the way down to the great sea of groundwater underlying the whole of our continent. Perhaps one of Dagon's spawn lurks down there, eh, Barlovius, plotting with a prowling U-boat that entered the aquifer by a secret channel, as in Verne's tale? It seems a suitable hazard for 'Doc' Strange to me...."

(ACTUAL) BIBLIOGRAPHY

"How many of these things survive, I'm sure I have no idea; for I make no attempt to keep track of them."

— H. P. Lovecraft, letter to Clark Ashton Smith,
January, 1931 (SELECTED LETTERS III, p. 247)

The Bibliography on page 9 is, of course, almost entirely fictional, although the authors all exist, and most of them have written books similar (or almost precisely equivalent, in some cases) to the ones I assigned them. Feiffer's book and the De Camp biography are cited exactly as they are in our world, for example, and I've changed only the publisher of Long's book to a suitably prestigious house in the alternate world. I should add a special mention of Willis Conover's fictional book, *Lovecraft at Length*. It's based on his real labor of love, *Lovecraft at Last* (Carrollton Clark, 1975). *Lovecraft at Last* is one of the most haunting memoirs of HPL—of any friendship—ever written, and invaluable for its personal look at the kindly, tolerant, jocular H.P. Lovecraft that far too few fans or scholars know. The book is also just plain gorgeous.

Speaking of just plain gorgeous, Alan Moore's *Terra Obscura* stories appeared in *Tom Strong* #11-12. With Peter Hogan, Moore plotted two *Terra Obscura* six-issue miniseries, both now available in a trade paperback compilation. Moore's take on the Nedor heroes isn't mine, but I'd be lying if I said it wasn't an influence. The "SMASH" webpage by 'Herowatcher' at www.geocities.com/herowatcher/index.html and Michael Norwitz' "Terra Obscura Timeline" at blaklion.best.vwh.net/timelineBSN.html both cover Moore's version as the default, but Norwitz especially has some excellent information on the Nedor originals.

More information on the Nedor originals, and the real kernel of my research, came from "The Nedor Heroes ... From A to Z" in *Men of Mystery Spotlight Special: The Nedor Heroes!* (AC Comics, 2001). AC Comics publishes their own versions of some Nedor heroes as well as reprints of various Golden Age stories. The "Pure Excitement Comics" webpages had more good information, as well as scans of a few Nedor stories online. It seems like the site is no longer active, but "Pure Excitement #8," a whole issue devoted to Nedor,

was still up at www.fortunecity.com/victorian/hartford/103/8excitement.html as of this morning. There are more scanned Nedor stories featuring the Black Terror, Doc Strange, the Fighting Yank, Kara Jungle Princess, and the Liberator here at Comic Art Pro: www.comicartpro.com/comics/index.html. And although I haven't tried it myself (I still have dial-up), there are apparently free downloads of scanned Nedor stories at Golden Age Comics: goldenagecomics.co.uk/index.php?cid=74. Don Markstein's Toonopedia at <http://www.toonopedia.com/index.htm> has good, mostly solid entries on the Black Terror, Doc Strange, and the Fighting Yank (the original "America's Best Heroes"). Further Nedor info came from Cash Gorman's amazing "Golden Age Villains Encyclopedia" at www.geocities.com/cash_gorman/index.html, Jess Nevins' excellent and comprehensive "Golden Age Heroes Directory" at ratmmjess.tripod.com/ga/goldintro.html, and Jeff Rovin's really quite impressive *The Encyclopedia of Superheroes* (Facts on File Publications, 1985), which batted cleanup for me when the Internet failed. Hail, print!

For even geekier levels of data, I relied on *The Standard Catalog of Comic Books, 3rd Edition* (Krause Publications, 2004) by John Jackson Miller, Maggie Thompson, Peter Bickford, and Brent Frankenhoff. This massive compendium of comics publication info includes all the Nedor titles, and it's pretty much unsurpassed, by Overstreet or anyone else. On the more general history of the Golden Age of Comics, the first stop is always Dick Lupoff and Don Thompson's *All in Color For a Dime* (Arlington House, 1970) and *The Comic-Book Book* (Arlington House, 1973), both available in reprint editions from Krause. Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (Dial, 1977) is great in both worlds. But the current gold standard in our timeline is Gerard Jones' *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book* (Basic Books, 2005). Along with Michael Chabon's novel *The*

— (ACTUAL) BIBLIOGRAPHY —



Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay (Picador, 2001), it gives a crystalline, human picture of what it was like to be present at the creation of America's third great original art form.

For Lovecraft, the source of ultimate recourse remains S.T. Joshi's magisterial *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life* (Necronomicon Press, 1996). I'm very sorry there can't be a second volume covering HPL's life after 1937. I also utilized my brand-new copy of Lovecraft's *Tales* (Library of America, 2005) because quite frankly the notion of H.P. Lovecraft being published in the Library of America still seems like an alternate history to me. Of course I drew much joy and only slightly less inspiration from Peter Cannon's own "alternate Lovecraft typist" novel *The Lovecraft Chronicles* (Mythos Books, 2004), but Cannon's sense of humor is both dark and sly in this one, so you've been warned. Will Murray's seminal article "Julius Schwartz on Lovecraft" (*Crypt of Cthulhu* #76: Halloween 1990) contains the Official Word on the Schwartz-Lovecraft relationship that saved "At the Mountains of Madness" but sadly didn't change comics.

In the realm of "prior art," I acknowledge Joshua Marquart and Chad Underkoffler's "Lovecraftian Supers: Using the Mythos to Power Your Metahumans" (*Pyramid*, November 22, 2002), which does a fine job of laying out the potential for the Cthulhu Mythos as a "secret history" of a Silver Age superhero world. Both Big Finger Games' *Adepts of the Arcane* (by John Polojac, Johnathan Wright, David Solon Phillips, and Jeremy Forbing) and Blackwyrn Games' *The Fires of War* (by Aaron Sullivan, Ben Davis, Rob Hall, and Dave Mattingly) present horror (and in the former

case, Lovecraftian) crossovers with superheroic (and in the latter case, Golden Age) villainy. Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* and *B.P.R.D.* comics series (both published by Dark Horse Comics) are likewise great examples of blending superheroics and horror, and Phil Masters and Jonathan Woodward's *Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game* (Steve Jackson Games, 2002) is an excellent guide to adapting that blend for games. Plus, it has Nazi war apes. Paul Grist's *Jack Staff* (under his own Dancing Elephant imprint) is another terrific comic book exploration of a Golden Age legacy and its secrets, as is (albeit for the Silver Age) Alan Moore's (him again!) *Albion* (DC/Wildstorm) and, of course, his *Watchmen* (DC Comics, 1987 coll.).

But for Golden Age gaming inspiration, there's no better source than Golden Age comics. I've already mentioned the AC Comics reprints, which are a mixed bag creatively speaking, but a good way to get a handle on the underlying tropes of Golden Age storytelling. Marvel reprints concentrate more on that company's proud Silver Age legacy, although some of the Essentials and Masterworks lines veer into the Golden Age. DC has far more extensively mined its Golden Age, both creatively and financially. Currently, DC has a tremendous swathe of Archive Editions—around half of them Golden Age reprints—available for only the cost of a small developing nation. For that *Adventures Into Darkness* feeling, I recommend *The Golden Age Spectre Archives*, the *Golden Age Doctor Fate Archives*, and (for a more general Golden Age taste) the *All-Star Comics Archives*, which collects the original stories that introduced the Justice Society and the "team-up book."