

DEMONGROUND

Reflections of a Darker Future

MARCH 2001
VOL 11

MYSTIC
PLACES

In this Issue:

Unknown Title

Cover Art by Jestyre

Bureau 13:

Judgement Night

Preview by Nick Pollotta

Call of Cthulhu:

The Severn Bank Giant

Adventure by Linden Dunham

Conspiracy X:

Bigfoot vs. The UFOs

Plot Hook by Rob Beck

Dark Conspiracy:

Mystic Places

Protodimensions by Norm Fenlason

Unknown Armies:

How Many Roads to San Felice?

Protodimension by Dylan Craig





DEMONGROUND ISSUE 11

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER ART	1
<i>Unknown Title</i> by Jestyre	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
EDITORIAL	3
<i>Location, Location, Location</i> by Marcus D. Bone	3
PREVIEW	4
<i>Judgment Night - A Bureau 13 Preview</i> by Nick Pollotta	4
NPCs	8
<i>Generic Corrupted NPCs</i> by Eyal Feingersch	8
EQUIPMENT	10
<i>Rockwell-Vertol R-7000 Mezzoliner</i> by Norm Fenlason	10
<i>Weapons Development: The Versatile MP5</i> by James Wardrip	15
DARK RACES	17
<i>The Pink Mask</i> by Norm Fenlason	17
PLOT HOOKS	19
<i>Interludes: Bigfoot vs. the UFO's</i> by Rob Beck	19
<i>Temple of the Martyrs</i> by Gonzalo Campoverde	22
<i>Cemetery</i> by Ryan Rank	23
<i>Into The Garden</i> by James Pearson	25
<i>The Pit</i> by Michael Beck	27
<i>Innsmouth</i> by Ryan Rank	28
ART GALLERY	31
<i>They Go Up!</i> by Neal Dickinson	31
HOUSE RULES	32
<i>The Mega-Corps Want You</i> by Pault T. Riegel-Green	32
ADVENTURES	35
<i>The Severn Bank Giant</i> by Linden Dunham	35
DARK DIMENSIONS	45
<i>How Many Roads to San Felice</i> by Dylan Craig	45
<i>Pan</i> by Norm Fenlason	47
<i>Tir-na-nog</i> by Norm Fenlason	50
<i>Xibalba</i> by Norm Fenlason	55
<i>Aeaea, Island of the Lost</i> by Norm Fenlason	63
TABLOIDS	66
<i>Houseproud</i> by Lee Williams	66
MILIEU	67
<i>Dark Future History</i> by Mike Marchi	67
THE LOOSE ENDS	71
THE BACK COVER	72



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest fear is fear of the unknown”

- H.P. Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror in Fiction”, 1927

If our old friend Howard Phillip Lovecraft knew one thing about horror, it was the way in which fictional works such as those in this magazine can inspire fear.

In this issue of DEMONGROUND we examine the unknown Lovecraft spoke about. The lands that, although hidden away from reality are the stomping grounds of our imaginations, the locations of our heroes and the settings for our greatest triumphs.

It is the MYSTIC PLACES that define what we know as horror roleplaying in the modern age. Where else can a thunderstorm appear at the whim of the Game Master? Where else can adventures take place in perpetual darkness? In such places, the most innocent of objects can take on lives of their own, causing even the most intrepid adventurer to slow their steps and second-guess each chosen avenue of travel.

In the past, authors such as Lovecraft and Poe were the masters of location, setting their stories in a world that, while much like the landscape of their

age, was different enough to inspire fear in those who read their work. Today, a new generation of authors have taken up this mantle. Stephen King, for example sets many of his tales of macabre horror in a uniquely twisted little corner of Maine.

In Modern Horror Roleplaying it is the responsibly of the Game Master to create such a place, feeding the fear of the unknown, nurturing player paranoia and replacing the rational with the irrational. Even in ‘real life’ we have all experienced that dread of the unknown and the terror of a strange place, whether we are lost in the night or just separated from friends and loved ones.

In our own world there are a number of places that still inspire fear and wonder - Stonehenge, Easter Island, The Great Pyramids and the Cities of the Incas to name but a few. All of these embody the prime material necessary for tales of the unknown.

Taking these concepts another step and exploring the ‘what if’ and ‘what could be’ are what makes horror role-

playing a joy. Letting your mind wander with concepts that might just be true – if only you believe enough.

In tribute to these ideas, a number of articles in this issue are based on the sorts of legends that have survived from our past, tales that have grown from the fears and unknown history of our ancestors. And with the trappings of these tales, we are caught up in worlds of horror, and dragged along with our players, writhing and kicking into the stygian depths.

We hope you enjoy this portal to the other side of reality. Please, take a step into worlds that are *alive* with possibilities. And don’t mind that frantic little voice tugging at the edge of your perceptions. The cries will grow fainter, the deeper you descend...

Marcus D. Bone
Editor



“The Darkness is all around us. It permeates everything. Try this one:

‘You find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.’

“We’ve been warning our children for generations. Have they been listening?”

- Zena Marley (early 21st century mercenary-philosopher)
quoting Pooh (a 20th century bear of very-little-brain)



Judgment Night Nick Pollotta

PROLOGUE

I finally found the murderer, and he was a lulu.

It had taken me months of freelance work to track down the guy who killed my partner, and if the truth be known I broke more than a few laws doing it.

But I didn't give a damn. As far as I could tell, the sick bastard had slaughtered over forty people across a dozen states. Each done the same way he killed Bill Smithers, my partner in Chicago, slit their throats and drained the blood like he was a freaking vampire or something.

The castle was up on the old New York Palisades, deserted for years. I hid my car in the bushes, so nobody could spot the out of state plates. The lock on the front door was good, an expensive French model. Took me almost ten minutes to get through. Inside, the place was surprisingly clean, some of the rooms even carpeted.

Not the usual thing for an undead. But playing on the Count Dracula routine, I checked in the basement.

The place was huge, large enough to land a plane, with a high vaulted ceiling and granite-block walls. More resembled an underground warehouse than a cellar. In a corner was a big-screen TV and a brace of DVD players.

Overflowing bookcases lined the walls and in the middle of the place, on a marble pedestal, was a large stainless steel coffin,

with US Army Clayware mines wired to the outside. Yikes. Ever so carefully, I snipped away the wires on the anti-personnel charges.

All those years watching the Discovery channel finally paid off.

The lid was locked from the inside, so I filled the keyhole with stiff wire from my keywire gun. A lazy locksmith's best friend. A simple twist and the coffin opened on silent hinges. So much for stereotypes. Magnum in hand, I was surprised to find it empty. As I bitterly cursed, a chuckle sounded from behind, I turned and there the bastard stood.

He resembled a computer hacker with that deathly pale skin and weird eyes.

But he was sporting a natty Armani suit that was worth more than I had made ever, woven Italian shoes with tiny tassels, and a gold Rolex watch. What, no caviar-scented cell phone?

A cop would have arrested him and sent the kook to a lunatic asylum. But I wasn't planning on reading this guy his rights. As far as I was concerned, he didn't have any. Not an animal like him.

The murderer came at me with arms extended, as if greeting a long lost relative. His mouth full of those phony vampire teeth you can buy at any novelty store. Pitiful. I didn't have to draw my .357 Magnum; it was already in my hand. Without a qualm, I gunned the freak down, the thundering retorts of the Smith and Wesson echoing around the cellar. But he kept coming, as if my copper-jacketed hollow points had no effect. Must have been wearing a bulletproof vest.

We went hand-to-hand and he had me in a second. Loonies are always strong.

Adrenaline, or something. Maybe he was on PCP. The Count dragged me kicking across the basement and chained me to the stone wall. The chains felt oiled and were spotted with red flakes. I had a bad feeling Nut Boy had used these often.

Chuckling, he went away and soon came back with two women. A blonde and a redhead. Real hot numbers wearing skimpy denim shorts, sleeveless T-shirts and also sporting those phony teeth.

That was when I went cold. I sure hoped whatever they had wasn't a contagious disease. Death was infinitely preferable to insanity.

They gathered around and made the expected remarks on how tasty and juicy I looked. I invented a few curses, which they took in stride. Then the Count waved the women on and they came at me with hands raised, their fingernails glistened like steel. Probably razorblades glued underneath.

This was no time for finesse, so as they got close, I kicked the blonde in the left breast. She didn't bat an eye. That was impossible. There was no way a bra, much less a Kevlar vest, could be hidden under her T-shirt.

Kicking a woman in the breast is like kicking a guy in the balls. Blondie should have dropped big time.

Smiling, Red grabbed my hair and twisted my head about as if I was a child.



Then she opened her mouth wide, exposing every inch on those long white fangs. They actually looked like her own teeth. That's when I realized the freaks were really going to drink my blood. I had faced death lots of times in Nam as kid. In the back alleys of Chicago, too. But there was a big difference between a bullet in the chest, or a knife in the stomach, and having a trio of drugged out wackos suck me dry like a free cherry soda.

That was no way for a nice PI to die.

My brain was whirling with escape plans, none of them worth a damn, when the door over the corner slammed open and in strode a SWAT team.

Or at least that's what they resembled. There were three of them, two men and a woman. All were dressed in camouflage outfits, with backpacks, satchels and dozens of weapons hanging off them.

One guy was tall and skinny, like he hadn't had a good meal since his last birthday. The woman was kinda short, slim and muscular-looking in a nice way. The other guy was downright fat. But he had a genuine shit-eating grin on his face as he worked the bolt on the huge M60 machine gun in his hands. I could tell this was a man who enjoyed his work.

My three freaks spun about at the sound, and hissed louder than steam radiators. Geez, they were really putting in overtime on the old vampire act.

As two of the SWAT guys separated, Skinny pulled out of his shoulder bag a melon-sized crystal ball and smashed it on the floor.

Instantly every door and window was covered with stonework sealing us in. In spite of the situation, I dropped my jaw.

Impossible. Yet I had just seen it happen.

Maybe the ball was actually some sort of electrical device, an EMP bomb maybe, whose command signal pulse triggered the control mechanism for hidden sliding panels. It sounded lame, but what the hell could have happened?

Magic? At this point, I began to wonder if they were really a rescue squad, or merely more loonies in on the fun.

The vampires advanced slaving and growling. Red came at Fat Boy, and he let her have a full burst at point blank range. The heavy-duty combat rounds blew holes in her the size of Montana.

She burst into flames and dropped to the ground, still screaming and trying to get at the lard bucket.

One tough bitch. Incendiary bullets? I wondered.

That was when I realized that the sphere must have contained BZ, military hallucinogenic gas, because everything started to get real funky.

The other two vampire types flapped their arms and turned into freaking bats! No smoke, no special effects. And not dinky little zoo bats, but great big mothers who soared into the air and began circling around the room as if this was Wild Kingdom and I was Marlin Perkins.

Suddenly, Chubby moved in front of me, his machine gun spraying hot lead protection. At least that was no hallucination. I felt the stinging blast of the blow-back gas, and a red-hot shell

case bounced off my hand burning the flesh.

The short lady jumped up on the coffin and, reaching behind her, pulled out a long curved sword so highly polished that the blade seemed to ripple with rainbows. Flipping it over, she knelt and buried the sword to the hilt into the rectangular box. Big deal, I thought. But Batguy didn't care for the idea a bit.

Rearing backwards, he opened his jaw and vomited a lance of fire at the swordswoman.

She ducked, but it wasn't necessary. A river of ice launched from the cupped hands of Skinny and the two streams hit in midair with a deafening thunderclap worse than an overload at a rock concert.

As I shook the ringing from my ears, I suddenly noticed that Batgirl was gone. I couldn't see her anyplace, but a weird patch of fog was drifting towards Mandrake over by where the door used to be. Impulsively I shouted a warning.

However, the coffin was in the line of fire for Rambo and Ninja Girl was dancing with Igor the human hang glider, so Mr. Wizard was alone on this one.

Muttering something, in Latin I guess, he threw a fistful of sparkle dust at the cloud with no effect. What a surprise there. The cloud advanced.

Quickly he pulled out a cross and a water pistol, and started chasing the cloud around, shooting streams of water at it. This is where I lost my tenuous hold on reality and started laughing.

Chubby gave me a quizzical glance over his shoulder as he yanked a fresh belt of ammunition out of his shoulder bag and shoved it into the breach of his weapon.

"You okay?" he asked in a husky voice.

"Shit, no," I replied. "Must have hit my head on an overhang somewhere and I'm having one hell of a dream."

He seemed to accept that and dashed off. I kept laughing.

The two men managed to corner the cloud and let her have it.

There was fire and water and lightning and screaming and explosions and gunshots. In the middle of all this, the cloud turned into a wolf, a giant rat, a bear, a beautiful nude blonde, a nightmarish thing with tentacles and finally a lump of oozing flesh.

Then they set the mess on fire by sprinkling it with communion wafers.

It may have been nothing but a drug-induced illusion, but I rattled my chains at the victory and shouted wa-hoo, even though I don't like fantasy. If I had caught this show on cable, I would have turned to another channel. I prefer a good mystery, with plenty of conflicting clues and a hot seduction or two, that kind of stuff. But magic? I believe in hard facts, science, human dignity, cold beer and the Chicago Bears. Not mumbo-jumbo voodoo gumbo. That's crazy. Or at least it seemed crazy until tonight.

Meanwhile, Shorty had gotten into a bad way. She was flat against the wall with the Count moving in for the kill. A flurry of sword thrusts to his head missed, but instead of attacking, the nut just stood there and stared at her.

His eyes started to glow a bright red. Hesitantly she began to



lower her sword when an arrow took the ugly thing right in the ass.

Where the arrow came from I have no idea.

He grabbed his butt and howled in pain. Coming awake, she charged forward, her sword slashing off a wing. Snarling, the bat raked her chest with his claws, the front of her uniform ripping away to expose molded body armor.

Nice. These guys were definitely government. From the sidelines, Chubby angled the M60 so he wouldn't shoot the woman. The big machine gun stuttered away, Lardo riding the weapon like a professional, spent shells forming a glittering golden arc in the air.

A net materialized above the one-armed bat and dropped onto him. But the Count ripped it apart without even trying. Across the room, Skinny cursed and started digging about in his shoulder pouch. I realized he was the source of the magic stunts.

In yammering fury, the machine gun finally blew away chunks of the Count's skull. The rainbow sword flashed and a clawed leg fell to the floor. That should have killed anybody, but the Count shimmered like bad TV reception and was a man again. Whole and undamaged. Instantly the three closed in as if this was what they had been waiting for. Now I was cheering them on wholeheartedly. Hallucination or not, the sonofabitch had killed my partner and I wanted him dead.

Laughing confidently, the Count unexpectedly doubled in size.

His clothes too. A neat trick that. But the woman leapt into the air and thrust her rainbow sword straight through the guy's chest, as Skinny threw what resembled a wooden dagger into his throat and Chubby shoved a grenade down his pants. Then everybody but me took cover as the big guy fell face forward onto the stone floor and thunderously exploded.

In the enclosed space, the blast was so loud I couldn't hear it at first.

Then sound painfully returned and the shock wave smacked me flat. Acrid smoke tore at my lungs. The ground quaked. The building shook. A rush of heat cooked me to the bone. The ceiling cracked, chunks of stone falling everywhere. I abruptly understood that this was no illusion and braced myself for death.

A short eternity later the rumbling world finally settled back into place.

There was no sign of the Count except for a few smoking bones, and a melted cell phone. For the first time in three months I allowed myself to relax and said goodbye to my partner. We got him, buddy. We got him.

Rising from the rubble, Shorty, Chubby and Skinny dusted themselves off and came over carefully picking their way through the charred wreckage.

"I'm glad you survived, Mr. Alvarez," the skinny fellow said, offering me a canteen. "We have been following you since O'Hare Airport, Chicago."

I gagged on the water. "Huh?" I asked brilliantly.

"As you seemed to be tracking the vampires much better than we ever had, I saw no reason to interfere with your progress until

some intervention was needed. Actually a most impressive job, considering your lack of formal training."

My thanks consisted mostly of four-letter words.

Unperturbed, he opened a leather wallet, showing me a badge and ID card.

"FBI," he announced. "Special Agent Richard Anderson, on permanent assignment to Bureau 13. This is George Renault and Mindy Jennings."

They were feds. "Bureau 13?" I asked.

Wearily George rested the stock of his machine gun on the floor.

"We're a covert division of the Justice Department."

Covert my ass. But not entirely stupid, I was getting the general idea.

"And you handle criminals like these guys." I jerked a thumb at the smoking corpses.

"Yep," Mindy said, wiping her sword off with a bit of cloth before sheathing the rainbow blade. "But believe it or not, our biggest problem is personnel.

Just can't find enough trained people who won't faint when facing vampire bank robbers, werewolf motorcycle gangs or toxic waste mutant assassins."

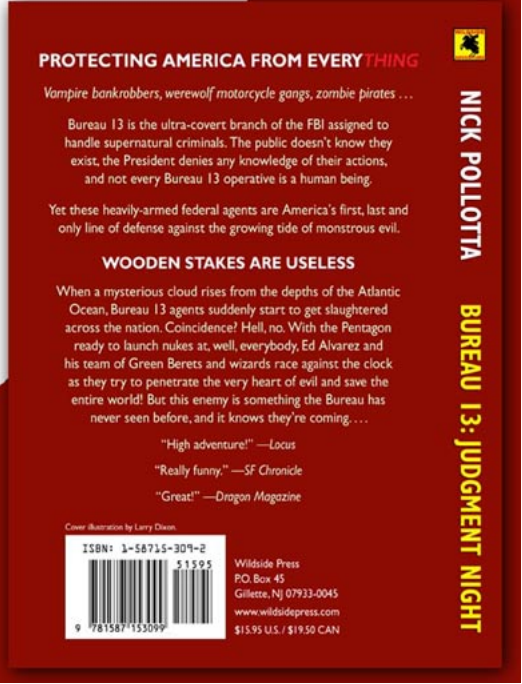
They waited. The next move was mine. What the hell. A short life, but a merry one.

"Okay, deal me in," I sighed.

Smiling, Richard flipped open another commission booklet. The ID card inside this had my driver's license picture and read:

"Special Agent Eduardo Alvarez, FBI". It was dated two months ago. Smooth. I was going to like these guys. However, there was still one very important question that had to be answered immediately.

"Can I get down now?" I asked, rattling my chains.





Nick Pollotta: NOVEL IDEAS

October 2000: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“PANDORA’S REDOUBT” Gold Eagle Books
December 2000: Fantasy/Humor	“BUREAU 13: JUDGMENT NIGHT” Wildside Press
January 2001: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“ZERO CITY” Gold Eagle Books
March 2001: Fantasy/Humor	“BUREAU 13: DOOMSDAY EXAM” Wildside Press
April 2001: Fantasy/Humor	“BUREAU 13: FULL MOONSTER” Wildside Press
April 2001: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“SAVAGE ARMADA” Gold Eagle Books
May 2001: SF/Humor (with Phil Foglio)	“ILLEGAL ALIENS” Wildside Press
July 2001: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“JUDAS STRIKE” Gold Eagle Books
August 2001: Fantasy/Humor	“BUREAU 13: DAMNED NATION” Wildside Press
August 2001: Fantasy/Humor	“BUREAU 13 OMNIBUS” Drofa Press, Moscow (Russian translation)
October 2001: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“SHADOW FORTRESS” Gold Eagle Books
February 2002: Military/Thriller	“SKY KILLER” Gold Eagle Books
May 2002: Military/Thriller	“RED DAGGER” Gold Eagle Books
January 2003: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“SCORPION GOD” Gold Eagle Books
March 2003: SF/Military (as James Axler)	“BLOOD FIRE” Gold Eagle Books

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PRESS RELEASE DECEMBER 8, 2000

“BUREAU 13” is back!

The classic Fantasy/Humor series, based upon the award-winning RPG from TriTac Games, is back in print! Written by the best-selling science fiction author Nick Pollotta.

Over half a million books sold in the US and Europe!

When a gruff Chicago PI is forced to join a covert branch of the FBI that uses military firepower, and wizards, to combat supernatural criminals, he discovers that every monster is not evil, but all of the crazy people are Bureau 13 agents.

“Really funny!” SF CHRONICLE
“Great!” DRAGON MAGAZINE
“High adventure!” LOCUS MAGAZINE
“The X-Files meet The Marx Brothers!”
RAYMOND’S REVIEWS

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Mar 2001: “Doomsday Exam”

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www.bureau-13.com

The DEMONGROUND Staff is proud to announce the addition of the “Bureau 13” RPG by Tri Tac Games to our list of regularly supported game systems.





GENERIC CORRUPTED NPCS



Copyright © 2000 by Eyal Feingersch

by Eyal Feingersch

The Dark Ones, though not directly invading earth, are constantly meddling and conspiring behind the scenes. Slowly they manipulate mankind and delicately acquire power. As the book says: "These are only the symptoms of the disease", the worst is yet to come. The prototypes of NPC's that will be described below are the tools of the Dark Ones for gaining power over human society. All are powerful members and leaders that have gone corrupt, and turned against humanity.

These NPC prototypes are the nobility of the dark world. Therefore they are the ones that must be conquered by the dark, before it can try to conquer the rest of the world. They are provided as adventure seeds, as villains and victims, whose fate will determine the fate of the masses who look up to them, depend on them, and are controlled by them.

One of the tasks of minion hunters is to win back those powerful leaders of society. If they fail, The Dark One's grip on earth strengthens and another brad is nailed to humanity's casket. But if

they win, they might earn a new, powerful ally that is aware of the doings in high windows, and is capable of showing gratitude with his superior assets.

There are no rules for generating random NPC's. Yet, each table can be used with a 10-sided die. Some attempts for random rolls might generate irrational results. In such cases, just re-roll. Some elements in the same table can be combined to make an even meatier NPC, while other tables can be ignored. Feel free to use them in any way you like.



Step 1. NPC type:

1. Politician (government)
2. Politician (political movement)
3. Corporate executive
4. Military officer
5. Police officer
6. Secret Service officer
7. Religious leader
8. Academic administrator
9. High position Public Employee
10. Empathic underground leader

Step 2. NPC Age, Attributes & Skills:

These NPC's are likely to be graduates of universities and academies, and to be very experienced in what they do. Therefore they should have high skill rates, high EDU, INT and CHA Attributes. While achieving their position of power, they have all aged and their STR, DEX and CON attributes have decreased. Therefore, consider them as Veteran or Elite NPC's, with low physical Attributes.

Step 3. Villain type:

1. NPC is an Igor that serves a Dark Lord or powerful Dark Minions.
 2. NPC is a Dark Minion disguising as a human. His whole past and ID's are forged.**
 3. NPC is a Clone/Android/Changeling/any other Minion that is created as a replica of a human.**
 4. NPC is under Mind Control.*
 5. NPC's body is under control of aliens (Darktek devices like Control Bugs).*
 6. NPC's body is taken over as a host by another entity.*
 7. NPC's crew/loyals are Igors/Minions/Clones and he is not aware of that.***
 8. NPC is blackmailed by Dark Minions. He might not be evil, but he has no choice.
 9. NPC is being misled to unknowingly aid the Dark Ones.
 10. NPC is simply an Evil Bastard.
- * the NPC might regain control for short periods.
 ** the original 'cloned' human might still be alive.
 *** but he might be suspicious.

Step 4. What the NPC doesn't know/future events:

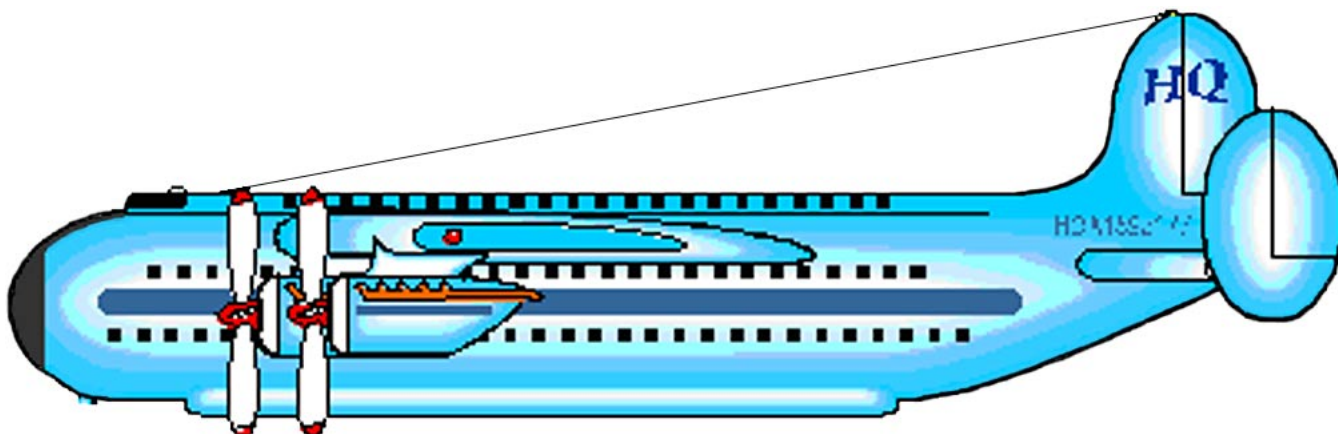
1. NPC is not aware of infiltrates, from his minion 'allies', among his loyals.
2. A Rival group of minions had infiltrated the NPC's staff.
3. A member of the NPC's staff is conspiring to take his place, with the help of the minions.
4. A Dark Lord, or group of minions, tries to destroy the NPC's masters.
5. A Dark Lord, or group of minions, plan to 'convert' the NPC to their side.
5. The powers that the NPC and his masters meddle with are getting out of their control.
6. The NPC's masters are planning on an unusual or formidable task for him.
7. The NPC's masters will try to test his loyalty and capabilities.
8. Someone has found a way for the NPC to break free from his masters (do they know that?)
9. The NPC will soon realize that he has more power than what his masters want him to think.
10. A group of Minion Hunters is working against the NPC and his masters.

Step 5. The NPC plans:

1. NPC has had enough with the dark pact, and he decides to break free or destroy his masters.
2. NPC suspects that his masters plan to harm him, and he decides to break free or destroy them.
3. NPC suspects that his masters are misleading him, and he decides to break free or destroy them.
4. NPC wants to betray his masters, and change sides for another Dark Master.
5. NPC decides to destroy his masters, and serve their own Dark Lord directly.
6. NPC plans to violate his pact with the dark, trying to sustain power without their aid.
7. NPC is going mad. The dark pact had been too much for him.
8. NPC decides to disappear, leaving no trace or clue, trying to leave the past behind.
9. NPC plans on committing suicide (along with a 'grand finale' act?)
10. NPC plans to take over the minions, maybe even becoming a Dark Lord.

Author's Notes: The general Idea for this article came from Generic Horror Adventure Generator by Dale Robert Thurber, Demonground 9. Thanks to the folks at the DC chatroom for raising some of the ideas in this article.





Rockwell-Vertol R-7000 Mezzoliner

by Norm Fenlason

Rockwell-Vertol R-7000 Mezzoliner (Fixed-wing, turbo-prop, passenger liner): The Mezzoliner is a grand class passenger airliner reminiscent of luxury-class ocean going vessels of the previous century. It features a fully segregated First Class passenger cabin, an economy class passenger cabin, and a cargo class cabin that can be used to haul unformatted passenger seating or raw cargo. The addition of a lounge to the First Class cabin provides high-paying ticketed customers the necessary amenities. Shown in the light blue/dark blue colors of HighQual Airlines and featuring 4 massive Hansen Mega-Lifter R70 turbo-prop engines, the Mezzoliner has an intercontinental range. One attendant and the bar tender serve First Class passengers. The other attendants provide limited service to the Economy Class passengers, while the Loadmaster maintains control in the lower deck.

Cruise Speed: 450

Combat Move: 60

Fuel Capacity: 50,400

Fuel Consumption: 3,500

Price: \$750,000,000

Armament: None

Ammo: N/A

Fuel Type: AvGas

Load: 175 tons + passengers

Vehicle Weight: 625 tons

Crew: 2 + 4 + passengers

Min Runway, Takeoff: 1800 m

Min Runway, Landing: 2,600 m

Damage:

Crew: Pilot, Copilot,

Loadmaster, Attendants, Bar Tender

Passengers: 777 max; 76x first class, 301x economy, 400x cargo class

% 1st Class

% Econ Class

% Cargo Class

Radio: Air traffic control radios

WorldNet Access Nodes for 1st Class passengers

Radar: Weather only

Engines: Hansen R70 turbo-props

Fuel: %

Wings: damaged; destroyed



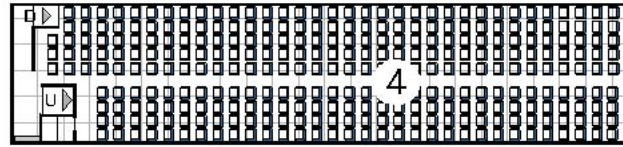
Rockwell-Vertol R-7000 Mezzoliner

1. Flight deck. Pilot and copilot in very comfortable seats. One of these crew members usually mixes it up in the 1st Class cabin after take-off.



First Class

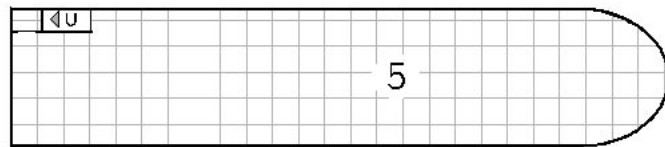
2. 1st Class lounge. While in flight, 1st Class passengers take advantage of the open bar and buffet.



Economy Class

3. 1st Class cabin. Where the Gnomes ride in style. There is a full personal holo outfit for each seat allowing the passenger to find that happy place during those long flights. There are two lavatories in this section.

4. Economy Class cabin. Sardine like seating for the non-elite. Life in this cabin is well regimented to assist the attendants to get through their duties. There are two lavatories in this section.



Cargo Class

2 meters

5. Cargo Class cabin. This cabin holds a combination of strapped-down cargo and passengers. Cargo Class passengers have no checked and limited carry on luggage. They also have no seats as they sit on their bags or the cargo. There is only one lavatory and the usual long lines. The Loadmaster can be found in this section resolving the occasional dispute and keeping the passengers from sneaking upstairs.

Crew

The Mezzoliner crew consists of the flight crew, 6 cabin attendants, a bar tender, and a cargo cabin loadmaster. The pilot and copilot are only needed for take-offs and landings and monitoring in-flight conditions, so one of them will be in the 1st class cabin smoozing with the Gnomes. The attendants are mostly busy with serving and keeping the passengers from rebelling. The bar tender serves 2 purposes: mixologist and bouncer. Besides mixing a mean Bangkok Battering Ram, he keeps the lower classes in their place. The Loadmaster serves to keep the free-formatted cargo cabin in good order. He is responsible for keeping the passengers from messing with the cargo or each other.

Captain

Brent Moulton is a commercial pilot who has always wanted to fly. His expectations of the true life of a commercial pilot have been a little short. He is tired of his ten years of flying for HighQual Airlines. He wants to marry into money and smoozes in the 1st class cabin seeking that special, wealthy mate. Brent is a Dobie and understands little outside of his personal experience, which is very limited.

Brent Moulton (Novice NPC)

Strength: 3	Education: 5	Move: 2/4/16/32		
Constitution: 5	Charisma: 4	Skill/Dam: 2/1		
Agility: 8	Empathy: 1	Hits: 10/20		
Intelligence: 3	Initiative: 1	# Appear: 1		
Skills:				
4	Act/Bluff			
2	Business			
2	Computer Operation			
2	Electronics			
2	Observation			
4	Navigation			
7	Pilot			



Co-Pilot

When Richard Vai started pilot training, he had great hopes. Unfortunately, they were dashed when circumstances forced him into flying drugs across the border, and then getting caught by Federal Bureau of Narcotics special agents. Richard Vai spent 7 years in prison stewing on his predicament and plotting his return. Once released, Richard Vai spent what reserves he had on a new identity, and is now flying under the name of Richard Gint. He uses his commercial pilot position to identify unsuspecting Gnomes as targets for his criminal associates for which he receives a generous fee. His favorite target is the lone, wealthy traveler visiting a new city. He quickly calls his buddies who rob or kidnap the victim.

Richard Vai has created a fictitious past involving flying for the Navy and goes by his Naval pilot handle *Pokey* (also fictitious). He will speak of the Navy and the military in very general terms, but when pressed, he will quickly change the subject. Richard Vai packs a pistol at all times in a low-profile shoulder holster.

Richard Vai, aka Richard Gint, aka Pokey (Experienced NPC)

Strength:	4	Education:	3	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	3	Charisma:	9	Skill/Dam:	4/2
Agility:	5	Empathy:	1	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	3	# Appear:	1

Skills	Act/Bluff	4	Pilot	4
	Disguise	2	Small Arms(Pistol)	2
	Forgery	2	Streetwise	2
	Persuasion	4	Vehicle Use(Wheeled)	2

—Recoil—

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng	
Vz-52		SA	1	Nil	1	8	4	—	12

Loadmaster

When on duty, Rodney “Roddy” Hamilton busts an occasional head and likes it that way. A particularly cruel man, Roddy takes his job of keeping the cargo thugs in line very seriously. It doesn’t take much to cause an in-flight emergency, and the cargo thugs are just the right types to try something. The cargo doesn’t need protection, that’s what the security containers are for. Roddy is around to keep cargo secret that is supposed to be kept secret.

Roddy sports the basic in airline disorder disruption. Called the Club, the weapon looks like a lead pipe 1.25m long and 4cm in diameter. One end has a sponge rubber grip accommodating two hands. The other end is open and contains the barrel of an integral single-shot 12-gauge shotgun. A sliding sleeve ejects the spent shell and allows a new one to be inserted. The whole thing is made of very strong, dense, materials that allow it to be used very effectively as a club (1D6+ ½ STR).

Rodney “Roddy” Hamilton (Veteran NPC)

Strength:	6	Education:	1	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	7	Charisma:	4	Skill/Dam:	5/3
Agility:	4	Empathy:	0	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	4	# Appear:	1

Skills:	Melee Combat(Unarmed)	5	Small Arms(Pistol)	5
	Melee Combat(Armed)	5	Small Arms(Rifle)	6
	Observation	3		

—Recoil—

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng	
The Club (slug)		SS	4	3-4-Nil	5	li	7	—	6
Short (buckshot)		SS	9	Nil					
Medium (buckshot)		5x10	1	Nil					



Bar Tender

The Gnomes do not like to be reminded of the little people. The airline likes to accommodate their high-paying passengers. Besides acting as the mixologist catering to Gnome demands, Buzz Beaudry is also the bouncer that keeps the rabble below decks. Buzz will not allow them into the 1st class cabin even if it is an emergency. He will pound them into unconsciousness first, which he is good at. Buzz holds advanced degree black belts in multiple schools of martial arts.

Buzz Beaudry (Elite NPC)

Strength:	9	Education:	3	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	5	Charisma:	3	Skill/Dam:	6/8
Agility:	6	Empathy:	0	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	4	Initiative:	5	# Appear:	1
Skills	9	Melee combat (Unarmed)			
	3	Streetwise			
	4	Observation			

Attendants

After years of strikes for more pay and greater opportunities, the corporate airlines started recruiting attendants for their lack of internal motivation – although good looks helped. The smarter attendants were either transferred out of the positions or fired. This led to attendants less like the emergency personnel of old and more like mindless bright-eyed Gidgets.

Attendants are always female and have names that end in an “e” sound, like Bambi, Barbie, Candi, Stacy, etc. HighQual Airlines likes it this way.

Attendants (Novice NPCs)

Strength:	3	Education:	2	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	3	Charisma:	6	Skill/Dam:	2/1
Agility:	4	Empathy:	0	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	2	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	6

Passenger NPCs

Undercover Airline Security

All the corporate airlines donate a couple of seats to undercover airline security. HighQual Airlines is cheap and only hires one per flight. They stick him into the Economy Class section. John Patrick (Jack) O’Toole is a 30-year man in airline security and seeks after his own skin in an emergency. He will remain anonymous until he can strike with his stun gun without exposing himself to retribution.

John Patrick (Jack) O’Toole (Veteran NPC)

Strength:	5	Education:	6	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	4	Charisma:	7	Skill/Dam:	5/3
Agility:	2	Empathy:	3	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	4	# Appear:	1
Skills	4	Interrogation			
	6	Melee combat (Unarmed)			
	5	Small Arms (Pistol)			
	3	Streetwise			

—Recoil—

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
Stun gun	SS	*	Nil	1	li	1	—	1

*Damage is special and is described in the rule book



Undetermined Federal Agents

The exact agency these people work for is not easily determined. Even their badges are generic – simple government IDs. They are Mr./Ms. Smith and Mr./Ms. Jones and that is what their IDs say. They are following Dr. Corvello and will step in if her investigation starts to uncover something important. They each have cell phones and bugging devices in addition to government-issue pistols.

Mr. or Ms. Smith (Experienced NPC)

Strength:	5	Education:	5	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	4	Charisma:	3	Skill/Dam:	4/3
Agility:	4	Empathy:	0	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	6	Initiative:	3	# Appear:	2
Skills	2	Computer Operation			
	2	Demolitions			
	3	Interrogation			
	4	Melee Combat (Unarmed)			
	4	Observation			
	4	Small Arms (Pistol)			
	4	Stalking			
	2	Streetwise			
	2	Vehicle Use (Wheeled)			

—Recoil—

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
M9 SA	1	Nil	1	15	3	—	12	

CDC Agent

Tucked into the sardine-like Economy Class cabin, traveling to some location or another to investigate some outbreak of strange virus or bacteria or other phenomenon, the hapless Center for Disease Control agent can be very friendly to nearby passengers. In fact, a certain non-publicized governmental agency has requested this agent for the case because of her talkative nature. Toni Corvello will be armed with a field biology kit, a portable Level 4 decom suit, a laptop, a cell phone, 3d holographic still and video cameras.

Toni Corvello (Experienced NPC)

Strength:	3	Education:	6	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	5	Charisma:	5	Skill/Dam:	4/2
Agility:	4	Empathy:	2	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	6	Initiative:	3	# Appear:	1
Skills	8	Biology			
	7	Chemistry			
	4	Computer Operation			
	4	Observation			

Heroic Passenger

There is always one passenger willing to give up his or her life for others. Here is that person. They are internally motivated to help, but often lack any skills, but enthusiasm, to help in the situation.

Heroic Passenger, Bill or Nancy or whatever (Novice NPC)

Strength:	6	Education:	4	Move:	2/4/16/32
Constitution:	3	Charisma:	3	Skill/Dam:	2/1
Agility:	3	Empathy:	1	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	7	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	1





WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT:

THE VERSATILE MP5

by James Wardrip

MP5 N

Developed especially for one of world's most elite special operations units, the U.S. Navy 'SEAL's'. The MP5 "Navy" model comes standard with an ambidextrous trigger group and threaded barrel. Operationally tested and proven, this configuration represents the essence of the modern submachine gun.

Ammo: 9mm x 19 Parabellum
 Weight: 2.93kg
 Magazine Capacity: 15 or 30rd box
 Price: \$1,100



Weapon : MP5N						---- Recoil ----		
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Range
9mm P	3/5	2	Nil	2/3	15/30	1	3	40

MP5K

The MP5K is the ultimate in CQB weaponry. Weighing in at 4.4 pounds and measuring just over a foot long, the MP5K is easily concealed and carried. All MP5Ks can be fitted with an optional folding buttstock. The MP5K can also be fired from inside a specially designed briefcase.

Ammo: 9mm x 19 Parabellum
 Weight: 2kg
 Magazine Capacity: 15 or 30rd box
 Price: \$900



Weapon : MP5K						---- Recoil ----		
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Range
9mm P	3/5	2	Nil	2	15/30	3	6*	20

*Note: Recoil value for burst is reduced to 5 when buttstock is used.

MP5K-PDW

The MP5K-PDW is a compact submachine gun designed especially for vehicle operators, air crew members, security details, and others who require a small, but powerful weapon. While comparable in performance to full size MP5s, the size and weight of the MP5K-PDW make this weapon the ideal choice where a rifle or full-sized submachine gun is unmanageable and a handgun is a poor compromise. With its sturdy folding buttstock and threaded barrel the MP5K-PDW is an exceptionally flexible weapon.

Ammo: 9mm x 19 Parabellum
 Weight: 2.78kg
 Magazine Capacity: 15 or 30rd box
 Price: \$1,000



Weapon : MP5K-PDW						---- Recoil ----		
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Range
9mm P	3/5	2	Nil	2/3	15/30	2	5*	30

Note: Recoil value for burst is reduced to 4 when buttstock is used.



MP5SD

For specialized applications requiring fully realized sound and flash suppression, the MP5SD is the choice of true professionals. The removable sound suppressor is integrated into the weapon's design and conforms to the normal length and profile of a conventional, unsuppressed submachine gun. The MP5SD uses an integral aluminum or optional wet technology stainless steel sound suppressor. It does not require use of subsonic ammunition for effective sound reduction like lesser sound suppressed submachine guns.

Ammo: 9mm x 19 Parabellum
 Weight: 3.46kg
 Magazine Capacity: 15 or 30rd box
 Price: \$950



Weapon : MP5SD						---- Recoil ----			
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Range	
9mm P	3/5	2	Nil	2/3	15/30	1	3	30	

UMP

The UMP is a state-of-the-art submachine gun that offers users the advantages of light weight, uncompromising reliability, and precision accuracy with low felt recoil and is offered in both .45 ACP and .40 S&W variants.

UMP40

Ammo: .40 S&W
 Weight: 2.1kg
 Magazine Capacity: 30rd box
 Price: \$1,100



Weapon : UMP-40						---- Recoil ----			
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Range	
.40 S&W	5	2	1-Nil	2/3	30	1	2	35	

UMP45

Ammo: .45 ACP
 Weight: 2.24kg
 Magazine Capacity: 25rd box
 Price: \$1,200



Weapon : UMP-45						---- Recoil ----			
Ammo	ROF	Damage	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Burst	Range	
.45 ACP	5	3	1-Nil	2/3	25	1	2	35	



"How arrogant we can be. We waded into conflict with our tools of death, fully expecting to emerge from the fray in one piece. Until the day you empty a clip into something that shrugs off the damage like spray from a water-pistol.

"Know your enemy."

- Zena Marley
 (Early 21st century mercenary/philosopher)



by Norm Fenlason

There is only one written record of an encounter with the Pink Mask. A diary was found on a derelict ship. No physical trace of the crew was found beyond occasional bloodstains, and the diary, which was found in a wrecked cabin.

The diary tells of a shark that was caught on the cook's fishing line. The shark had a putrid yellow gelatinous hood over its head and looked like it had been dead for days. Yet had fought hard against the line when reeled in. When one of the seamen touched the material with a boat hook, the shark flailed tossing a piece of the yellow jelly onto his arm. He was taken to the ship's medic who, as it oozed towards the seaman's head attempted to remove the jelly without actually touching it. A portion of gelatinous mess detached from the sailor and clung to the doctor. The screaming of the sailor was abruptly halted when the Mask encased his head. Only muffled sounds were heard after that..

The diary tells of a single survivor who blockaded himself in his room and watched the other crew fight the enshrouded bodies of the sailor and doctor. He wrote of how the substance turned from putrid yellow to deep dark pink just before the doctor and sailor started awkwardly moving about. With the substance firmly attached to their heads, the doctor and sailor would corner new victims and shake their heads sending the substance splattering onto the uninfected seamen. They screamed and attempted to scrape the blobs off. The Captain, who had opened the arms locker, shot one of the things with a shotgun, to no effect. Nothing the crew of 26 did could stop the spread of the substance. All presumably perished and were taken overboard by the *things*.

The survivor's last words tell of how the creatures pounded on his door until it finally gave.

Originally found in oceans, the Pink Mask is a collection of single-celled creatures that move with a collective



THE PINK MASK



intelligence. The Pink Mask feeds on decaying flesh, but it will kill a live host if necessary. Once the Pink Mask attaches to it's the head of its prey, it quickly forms tiny tendrils and sends them into the flesh and organs of its victim. As these parts decay, the Pink Mask draws nutrients through these tendrils.

Having formed a collective intelligence, the Pink Mask has developed the ability to inject electrical impulses along the nervous system of its host. These pulses stimulate the muscles of the host to movement. The Pink Mask then uses the host to move around.

When the Pink Mask first comes into contact with a new victim it moves to the victim's head, surprisingly fast and covers it in a pink blob-like gelatinous shroud – hence the name. Once attached on the head, a portion of the blob augurs into the skull and eats the brain. The Pink Mask then assumes control of the victim's central nervous system. While rough motor control is possible, detailed activities are impossible and only an animal intelligence remains. The Pink Mask uses the sensors of the host, which are covered by the Mask, so its perception is poor. The Pink Mask then moves the host around seeking another body to



attack. When separated from a host, the Mask uses heat, and sent to guide it to another victim.

The Pink Mask infects a victim through direct touch. The Mask can also attack by flinging parts of itself at victims. While obtaining nourishment from its host, the Pink Mask increases its bulk by creating new cells. At any time, a portion of the Mask can split off and attack its new host. While feeding on a host, the Pink Mask doubles its volume every hour.

A body with a Pink Mask has 72 hours to find a new host. When the Mask first starts eating a victim's brain, the Mask turns bright reddish-pink and increases in volume. As the Mask ages

on the body, the color fades and the Mask turns a sickly translucent yellowish-green.

When parts of the Pink Mask attach to a new victim they immediately start to move towards the head, converging if more than one blob is attached. From contagion to head containment takes 5 combat rounds. From head containment to skull-boring attack takes 10 phases, during which the victim slowly suffocates and cannot see or hear. It takes 10 phases for the boring to finish, during which time the victim suffers intense agony and pain (like a red-hot poker through the head). After another 20 minutes of screaming agony, the victims' brain has been turned to ooze leaving the body brain dead. The Pink Mask then exerts control over the body by rapidly sending tendrils throughout the victim's body. The Mask then sends the host stumbling around looking for more victims as it increases its volume from its feast.

Flame attack does double damage. Actual damage decreases the volume of the creature. Corrosive base substances (like lye) cause damage the same as burning. Physical weapons otherwise cause no damage.



Pink Mask (hosted)

Strength: 6	Education: 1	Move: 2/7/13/25
Constitution: 9	Charisma: 1	Skill/Dam: 7/1D6-1
Agility: 4	Empathy: 0	Hits: 16/32
Intelligence: 2	Initiative: 2	# Appear: 2D6
<i>Special: Flinging attack Base (6+7=13)</i>		

Pink Mask (free)

Strength: 1	Education: 1	Move: 0, 12 in water
Constitution: 1	Charisma: 1	Skill/Dam: 7/1d6-1
Agility: 1, 6 in water	Empathy: 0	Hits: 8d6
Intelligence: 2	Initiative: 2	# Appear: * (volume)
<i>Special: * see text</i>		



INTERLUDES:

BIGFOOT VS. THE UFO'S



A small diversion for the world of Conspiracy X

by Rob Beck

HERMES QUERY: Media Reports, Bigfoot, Grey, UFO

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// Devola Journal-Gazette, January 4, 2001, Young Couple Has Close Encounter of the Hairy Kind on Country Road

Article Text

A young Devola couple received quite a start while driving home yesterday evening. The driver, Mark Kasselbaum, claims to have seen a bright blue light appearing in his rear view mirror as he made his way along Country Road 300 North. Mr. Kasselbaum and his passenger, Nancy Kennedy, reported that as the source of the light approached, they could make out something moving inside the source and disrupting it. As it came even with the vehicle, they saw a bright blue transparent sphere, containing (what they claimed) was a Bigfoot.

The creature was described as very tall, over 7 feet, covered with white fur, partially seated, and partially lying in the sphere. The creature appeared to be trapped in the sphere, clawing and scratching in an attempt to get out. Mr. Kasselbaum reported that the look on the creature's face seemed a mix of rage and fear. "It looked as if it were pleading with us to help it," he said. "I just had the strangest feeling. It really spooked us." The two claim the ball then sped on past them and flew off the road into the woods. The light disappeared almost as quickly as it arrived.

Local authorities acting on the couple's report searched the area but have refused to comment on their findings. A statement released by the county sheriff's office stated "The report stretches credibility to say the least and a public safety inspection was conducted to see if the couple had been drinking that evening or if local kids were playing a prank. That is the limit of this office's involvement with this case and the matter is considered closed."

MORE >>



will prove invaluable in this task. If the group has no psychics, an NPC Psychic with at least some telepathic or remote viewing capability would be ideal, if not necessary.

For the more mundane party members, there is still the legwork of searching the woods where the Bigfoot was last seen. Provided with the location by the sheriff or eyewitnesses, they should be able to at least localize where the Grey ship might be and try to physically hunt it down.

If the Greys detect the humans though, they will defend themselves. This is too important an area to be abandoned so quickly. They are devoted to fleshing out their hypothesis, but within reasonable danger limits. If they feel the mission is in jeopardy, they may try to withdraw. This may lead to calling in an Aurora Interceptor to bring down the craft, which would lead to a whole separate mission involving crash retrieval.

An entirely different aspect of this mission may involve trying to contact the Pilosi directly. Normally this would be a nonissue, as the Pilosi would avoid all contact with humans. Given that the Greys, a force they are at least peripherally aware of, have taken one of their own, they may be in more of a mood to negotiate. The Pilosi themselves will undoubtedly try to monitor the humans' activity in the forest and if they feel they can trust them, may attempt contact, by a feeling or thought, that they want to help. They will then do what they can with their abilities to distract or cloud the Greys' detection abilities, providing the Agents a chance to assault and take the craft.

The Pilosi that has been abducted is drugged heavily, but if it sees an opportunity to escape, it will. It would likely not get far, but if it can get outside the craft, the other Pilosi will spirit it away from the scene. They will then likely abandon this settlement and head west, or deeper into the mountains. This area is no longer safe for them.

Of course, the Greys will undoubtedly not let one of their ships fall intact into enemy hands and will likely try to

destroy it if it comes to that. If there is anyway that they can escape, they will likely try to do so.

Alternatives

Royal Cryptozoological Society

This plot could easily be modified for a Royal Cryptozoological Society campaign. Members of the Society could be drawn by the news account, not making any alien connection at all. Maybe there isn't one to make in this case. It could be a matter of a bizarre phenomenon affecting a Sasquatch or something unnatural afoot. This campaign could have the Bigfoots as either normal Sasquatch, typical Gigantopithecus specimens, or as Pilosi. The GM could tailor this instance to his or her individual campaign.

Although a standard cryptozoological scenario would be potentially limiting, the opportunity to find out about the creatures could provide some new and fascinating bits of information for players trying to piece together the odd natural world.

Black Book

Black Book operatives may be added to the standard scenario to spice up the action and give the group a more immediate and tangible adversary. Operatives will likely care little about any Bigfoot sightings, but will be keenly interested in what their "allies", the Greys, are doing and what Aegis might be doing in the area. In the case of Aegis, their concern would be in limiting or thwarting Agents attempts to uncover any information pertinent to the Greys, while at the same time trying to get some answers on what the Greys are really after in the area.

The Black Book group should roughly equal in power and assets the Aegis group, or perhaps be slightly weaker. This might erupt into a full-fledged battle as Aegis agents with Pilosi allies fighting Black Book operatives to get at a hastily departing Grey saucer.

One major alteration would be to eliminate the Pilosi altogether and replace them with run of the mill Sas-

quatch creatures. The Grey's purposes might be simple specimen collection, finding them unusual and to see what they might get out of their genetic information. This would make for a less tangled mix of conspiracies for the already overtaxed GM or a cute angle to throw players with a flare for going after the most bizarre conspiracies.

Atlanteans

What interest would Atlanteans have in a Bigfoot? Good question. When have the Atlanteans ever been fathomable? They have their own reasons to dislike the Pilosi, however, and certainly have reason not to see the Greys succeed here. They may offer extremely subtle and clandestine help to Aegis agents to thwart any possible gains against them the Greys could possibly acquire from abducting Pilosi and studying the Seepage of this area. They make a good random element to completely confuse and bewilder the Agents and can be used with this in mind, or to offer some new insight for the Agents into the nature of one conspiracy or another.

Third Party Groups

Never discount the value of fringe groups to completely befuddle an already overcomplicated situation. Amateur Bigfoot hunters, UFO enthusiasts, and secret organizations with some agenda regarding either might invade the area looking for some answer to one of their own riddles.

These can serve as a distraction, a side plot, a nuisance, or a potential ally given the right circumstances. Possibilities are only limited by the GM's desire to cause his players to go prematurely gray. No pun intended.

Editor's Note: "Seepage" in Conspiracy X refers to the uncontrolled psychic emissions of mankind.





by Gonzalo Campoverde

Originally constructed at the turn of the first millennium Anno Domini into the second, the Temple of Martyrs stands in a secret location. This location is in the center of a vast pentagram, which is only visible by the use of maps or satellite imagery. Each of the five vortices of the pentagram is itself a location that corresponds to one of the five basic elements of ancient Chinese magick (earth, fire, water, wood and metal). For example, the water vortex is in a lake, the metal vortex is in an abandoned silver mine, and so on.

The reason for this is the origin and beliefs of the Temple's original creator. He was a warrior vampire who led his forces against both the Mongol Hordes and the Chinese empire at the same time. His army called themselves 'The Family', and in later years their descendants travelled across the Middle East and eventually established themselves in northern Turkey. This is where they built the Temple of Martyrs.

Although destroyed at the beginning of the 18th century by a secret Inquisition crusade (most likely a mission by the Order of Saint Gregory), it was reconstructed by the descendants of those who had first built it; The Family. Their original leader, now called Gabriel, redesigned the entire shape of the Temple, using an inverted cross-shaped shaft

to connect the labyrinths of dungeons and torture rooms to the Temple above. Myriad secret doors connect this vast collection of rooms, as well as 'fast-air' tubes that use air pressure differences to move people around quickly.

The entire first level of the Temple is an extensive Gothic art museum. The second level has multiple sacrificial altars, dedicated to black ceremonies. There are also many rooms that are used as libraries, some of which contain nothing but rare and often unique books. Many of these volumes do not even appear in the Catholic Index at the Vatican, as their existence is not known outside the Temple.

Another major detail of the temple's construction is the Latin inscriptions that are carved above many of the doorways. In some libraries there is the phrase "Verba Omnes Liberant" ("Words Free Us All") and in several dungeons it says "Nulla Pax Sine Thanatos" ("There is no peace without Death").

It is believed by the members of The Family that the location of the Temple of Martyrs gives special abilities to any wizard who casts spells inside it. In a secret room, at the exact center of the building, there is a special altar that is designed to enable the casting of spells of titanic magnitudes. This includes those spells that enable such

things as time travel, or the opening of 'doorways'. This altar is in the shape of a pentagram, and at each vortex it holds one of the five mystical candles known only as 'The Sources'. Each candle represents, and is made of, one of the five elements. It is said that when the Sources are finally burned out, the Dark Tide will finally arise and the Apocalypse will begin. However, the Sources have to be lit before they can burn out, and the knowledge to light them has been lost.

Even now, Gabriel is locked in one of the many libraries of the Temple, searching for the ritual that will light the Sources...

Plot Hooks:

A holy order wishes to recover certain books from within the Temple, but The Family is too much for them so they need the Hoffman Institute's resources...and agents. Possibly they have traced the origins of something like the Book of Eibon to the area where the temple is located.

There have been reports of ancient Chinese ritual activity connected with vampires in modern-day Turkey. This would catch the attention of the Institute.





CEMETERY



by Ryan Rank

“Welcome to Cemetery...where one can hide from the hell we call life.”

- Peter Mazurak-Founder of Cemetery

A Brief History of Cemetery

One day a man named Peter Mazurak was driving his nearly falling apart car home from work, a job he utterly hated, when he passed an entrance to an old, abandoned mine.

He looked into the entrance, and asked himself a simple, seemingly innocent question. “What if?”

That simple question led to a curiosity, then to a morbid curiosity, to an obsession, and then to an all-consuming obsession. But he never thought that it would end up being taken as far as he was able to take it.

About one month after he asked himself the question, he went into the mine to check it out. What he found startled him. The mine was very deep, very large, in very good shape (for a 50 year old mine) , and very abandoned. That intensified his urge to run away from his job, his life, even more.

He eventually got up the courage to tell some friends of his about his idea. That got their curiosities. He brought them out to the abandoned mine. Right away, they were very skeptical about how well this idea of his would work. But as they kept going in the mine, his arguments got more and more convincing. They all knew that there was a lot of work involved in getting the mines in shape for what they were about to try, but they thought that it was well worth the effort.

What is this idea that I keep alluding to? Peter Mazurak decided to that he wanted to run away from his life with his family to this underground haven. There were no bills to pay and no criminals to hide from. Sure, life would be difficult, but at least you don’t have to cower every time you hear a knock on the door.

In the beginning of this project, there were about 10 people working in the mine making it habitable. In the end that number swelled to about 30. It took about a year to finish the work that the mine needed, but it was done.

After it was done, the 30 of them brought their families (those of theme that had families) into the mine. Right away, it was completely disorganized, and it was clear that a leader needed to be chosen. The most obvious choice to the people was Peter, because this entire thing was his idea. It was a job that he was more than willing to take.

Over the years, some people, after hearing about the mine colony, make a trek out to it. Pretty much everyone who comes is welcomed with open arms.

Today the number of people living in the mine has actually increased to about 800 people...a small town. One of the townspeople inadvertently came up with the nickname “Cemetery” during a meeting about what to do about the dead. Others agreed that to everyone in the outside world they all were, in a sense, “dead”.

Because the number of inhabitants has brought the old mine to its limits, Peter and the original crew are working on plans to start preparing another mine for inhabitants. As of yet, no work has started, but the plans are written up when the need arises.

Staying Alive in the Mine

There are 4 major problems with living in a mine: Food, water, light, and cave-ins. How did they deal with these problems?



Food

A large garden grows neat the mine entrance. The garden is hidden by a large hill, making it invisible to anyone who doesn't know it's there. The garden is the mine colonies major source for food.

Water

Water for the inhabitants is collected from large tarps laid out in the garden to trap rainwater. This is not a very reliable source of water and is a constant worry for Peter and his advisors. As it stands there is just enough water for everyone, but as the population grows they will have to find a better source to supply the mine.

Light

Light was more a matter of dumb luck than anything. The mine was originally owned by a megacorporation (which is still in business), and there is a generator near the mine, which never seems to run out of fuel. There are many different theories on why this is, but the most logical is that the generator is hooked directly up to some sort of gas line to power it. It baffles the inhabitants as to how it is still working after all these years. The lights themselves are fluorescent for efficiency. The generator is large, but by no means do they want to push it to its limits.

The lighting itself is actually very poor, but reliable. It is like walking around in moonlight. Sprained and twisted ankles are commonplace in Cemetery.

Cave-Ins

So far, cave-ins have not been a problem. Any time there is one even suspected, a former contractor goes over to the potential problem area to have a good look at it. If any work needs to be done about it, the work gets done within 2 hours. Cave-ins are a constant scare among the Cemetery residents.

Other problems include main elevator break downs, and residents that finally snap due to the solitude.

Cemetery Environment

For the most part, the people are pleasant to outsiders. Unfortunately, most of them have been living underground for so long that they have nearly forgotten how to treat a guest. But that's rarely a problem, seeing that cemetery does not get many visitors.

It's very HOT in the mine. Everyone walks around wearing as little as they possibly can. It is considered a blessing when one can go outside to work in the garden, just to get out of the heat. It is even hot on the coldest winter day.

The punishment for crimes in Cemetery is very extreme and harsh. No one is ever permitted to leave the mine permanently, because there is fear that the megacorporation that rightfully owns the mine may one day come back and reclaim it. Or that someone will tell the world about the settlement, and too many people will want to join them. The penalty for most crimes is death and unmarked burial outside.

Cemetery and the Outside World

For the most part, Cemetery is unknown to the outside world, but there are some who know something is going on.

The Megacorporation knows something's going on. They abandoned that mine because of "odd behavior among the workers." They could not find anyone willing to work in the mine. It has been forgotten about...until recently. The generator has been using fuel all of a sudden. Fortunately for the settlers, the Megacorporation has decided that taking the generator totally offline would cost more than they were losing in fuel costs. But they are still curious as to what is going on...

Also, the Children of the Damned (see "Children of the Damned" by yours truly in DG10) know about the settlement. Their presence is not yet widely known in Cemetery, but it is spreading. The Children are hoping that eventually they will be able to use the town as a sort of "refugee camp" for their people who have been under tremendous "stress" lately. But currently, the Children are very quiet about their presence.

For the most part, the rest of the world has NO idea that anything is going on in the mine. Drivers do not see the garden, and the people left the entrance to the mine untouched, so the entrance does not hint that anyone is living in the mine. The government is oblivious to them living there, as well. Even if the government did know, they could do virtually nothing about it, as they do not have the manpower to oust the people.

Cemetery and the Dark

There is a Dark presence in the town of Cemetery. On level 12, there was a demon buried back in the 800's, long since forgotten. After over 1200 years of capture, it is very angry and wants out of its prison. It has the ability to control people's actions to a small degree (a slap to the face will free the person of the control).

The creature is only about 20 feet away from one of the corridors on level 12. In that corridor, many people have been known to suddenly start digging, but they only manage to get a few stones turned before someone stops them. If the Children of the Damned find out about this....

In Closing

Cemetery was meant as an escape from the hell we call life, a step back to a simpler time. But in that time, life was more difficult than it is today. The people stay because they don't have to watch the constant wars on television, read the obituaries of their best friends or missing persons reports on family members. They don't have to report to a job that does not care about them. However, the repercussions of running away from life are usually more, and possibly worse problems than you had before. When the inhabitants of Cemetery eventually have to atone for running away from life, will they live to tell the tales?





Into The Garden

by James Pearson

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Genesis 3:24

In the News

Doctor Raymond Allonzo, Archeology and Ancient Texts professor at the New Centennial University announced today that the Garden of Eden has officially been located! The center of religious and academic debates for centuries, the Garden of Eden is the alleged birthplace of all mankind. Detailed in the “Book of Genesis” in the *Bible*, Eden is said to be the paradise where God first created life.

In a press release today Professor Allonzo described the method by which he derived the true location of the Garden of Eden and announced that he is preparing a team to explore the area. Although he refused to go into detail at this time, the Professor states that he hopes to provide concrete, scientific proof to back up his claims. Academic professionals and religious leaders alike are skeptical.

Background

The Professor’s claims have drawn great criticism from the academic and religious communities. Since Eden is believed to be a myth by both communities, or at least impossible to locate, it will take some tremendous empirical evidence to prove otherwise.

The Professor’s findings are based on his lifelong search for the Garden of Eden. His co-workers and associates have ostracized him for years because of his fanaticism. However, the Professor truly has located the Garden!

Researching hundreds of religious texts the Professor was able to triangulate the exact location of the ancient birthplace of humankind. His research includes not only the Bible’s story of creation from the book of Genesis, but also other “less reputable” religious texts such as *The Book of Jubilees*. The book is an ancient text originally written in Hebrew that expands upon the book of *Genesis*. Many have disputed its actual religious value, as it seems to insert portions of common myth and folklore into the retelling of the creation story. However, Professor Allonzo points to several verses in Chapter 8 that discuss the geography of Eden in great detail.

Based on the Professor’s studies, the exact location is in Egypt, a little northeast of Cairo. At what is commonly referred to as “the center of the world”, 32 degrees latitude by 32 degrees longitude. Surrounded by desert, Eden is an oasis encompassed by sand. Up until now no one has even ventured

into this area because of its inaccessibility. The desert has provided a barrier to anyone who sought it out in the past. Another theory suggests that the Garden is able to mask itself from those who do not completely believe. One final theory is that the Sword of Fire and the Cherubim, mentioned in the book of Genesis are real and have protected the Garden for millennia. Killing any who ventured too close.

In any case, the cost to explore the deserts of Egypt for the mythological location has been prohibitive.

Hooks

There are several ways to involve your characters in the search for Eden. Many techniques will depend upon how you handle religion (if at all) in your campaign. Of course, in *Dark Conspiracy*, *The Garden of Eden* doesn’t have to have any real spiritual significance at all. It may be a demonground or the source of a great portal to a powerful proto-dimension. Or, you may find that the myths discussed in popular religions are based upon aliens, or creatures from other proto-dimensions.

The Professor

Professor Allonzo himself contacts the characters. He has found himself in a situation that requires the characters’ unique skills and talents. He now realizes that Eden is not a simple location, but actually a powerful demonground that poses many threats. The creatures that block its entrance have killed off his team. Others have disappeared mysteriously. His main purpose is to have the group assist him in retrieving some solid scientific evidence to support his claims.

Demons

A tall, dark man who says he represents a group interested in visiting this newfound Eden contacts the players. He says that his group (a religious organization) has a sincere interest in the artifacts found there. However, they must go through some unusual channels because of the involvement of other groups and the academic community, which may not understand their religious rights to view the location first hand.

This group turns out to be several creatures from a proto-dimension. In their natural form they are grotesque, horned creatures, the basis for our stories about demons and devils.



They remain masked by an illusion they project to all but the most powerful empaths. They have been banished to our dimension for thousands of years and want to return to their homeland. They believe that the original Garden of Eden is the location where they first arrived here and that by returning there they may once again open a portal to their home dimension.

However, the creatures are by nature predominately evil. They will stop at nothing to reach their goals. This may include killing any humans they find at the site and the player characters as well.

If this group succeeds in opening a portal to their home dimension, there is nothing to say that more of their brethren may not come through.

Angels

Like the hook above, the angels are actually creatures from a proto-dimension. They too have been here for millennia and are the basis of our belief in angels. In their natural form they are bright glowing beings that cast a sense of peace and well being. While in the presence of humans they project a human image.

However, these creatures are not necessarily all good. While they typically are more interested in studying human nature, and not generally dangerous, they will kill or harm another being if they feel it's the only way to achieve their goals.

The characters may be hired by a band of these angels to take them to Eden. In reality, the player characters are still just pawns. What these angels know is that there are powerful creatures protecting the entrance to Eden and are hoping that the players can defeat them (without themselves coming into harms way). Once done, the angels will be able to access the proto-dimensions they desire.

Cherubim

The Cherubim are real creatures with awesome powers. Anyone possessing such a creature, assuming he could control it, would have access to this creature's powers. A fallen Cherubim is believed to be a Djinn (Genie). Because of Hollywood's influence, Genies are believed to be the granters of wishes. An interested party might hire the group to capture and subsequently corrupt one of the Cherubim hoping to acquire the promised reward of three wishes. Unfortunately, this tale is but a myth perpetuated through the ages. The Cherubim are creatures dedicated to protecting a person or place, no matter what that means. The Djinn, a fallen cherubim, are even worse since they care even less about the outcome of their situation. Anyone attempting to coerce a Djinn into providing supernatural powers may find himself a meal instead.

The Tree of Life

The Tree of Life is the tree from which Eve picked the fruit (there is no biblical evidence that it was an apple). This

tree is believed to hold the secrets to the universe. It allows anyone who partakes of its fruit to see the "truth", whatever the GM deems that to be. It is also believed to give life, possibly immortality. This fact alone could lead to the characters being hired to retrieve its fruit.

A Dark Lord or even a powerful human sorcerer would be interested in the Tree since it promises great power. Possibly the truth that is spoken of is great empathic power or access to powerful proto-dimensions.

The Sword of Fire

This is the sword that God set to protect the garden, opposite the cherubim. Exactly what this artifact is will be left up to the GM. Some suggestions include a laser or other alien device set to protect the area from intruders. It could also be an actual sword, animated by a Dark Lord or simply wielded by a minion intent upon stopping trespassers from entering the Garden.

If the artifact is indeed an actual sword, it could grant great powers of protection to anyone who wields it. A patron seeking such power (a political or military leader for example) might hire the characters to retrieve it.

The Catholic Church

The Church could play an important part in a scenario including the Garden. Maybe the Church has always known of the Garden's true location, but kept it from us for fear of its power falling into the wrong hands.

On the other hand, the Church might hire the characters to undermine or disprove the Professor's theory. After all, it's the Church's job to reveal such spiritual things to the populace.

Lastly, the Church may be interested in any of the artifacts previously mentioned. The Vatican, for example, may desire to be the true owner of such powerful religious artifacts, to use to its own ends. Or, the church may be interested in obtaining the artifacts in order to thwart the plans of other groups. After all, if they should fall into the wrong hands...

The Mormons

Yes, even they have a hand in this grand conspiracy. You see, many of them believe that the Garden of Eden actually resides in Missouri. Imagine their embarrassment at not being right!

***Authors Note:** *The true location of the Garden of Eden is still in debate. The location presented in this article is just one of many possibilities. Missouri has already been mentioned, but many scholars point to other locations such as Iran. However, the location in Iran is often attributed to being beneath the Caspian Sea. Egypt therefore, becomes a much more accessible location for a scenario. However, who's to say that the Caspian Sea isn't the real location of Eden and that Eden was truly Atlantis?*





THE PIT

by Michael Beck

*"I can't describe it, man. I'm an adept, you know, so I can *sense* things. I do pornomancy, you know? There's sex in everything, if you know how to look. But there's no sex in that Pit. It's like a hole in the universe, man, a black hole for magic. I'm not going back there, ever."*

There's a club in whatever city your campaign is set in called "The Pit", famous for having, well, a pit. It's been around as long as anyone can remember, the drinks are OK if a bit pricy and the music's usually good.

But the real prize the fact that dead in the middle of the club there's a huge hole in the floor, ten feet wide and you can't see how deep. The owners have painted the inside black so you can't see how deep it is, and there's big glass wall around it so you can't throw stuff in. Still, there's nothing cooler than going there and looking down; a whole lot of poets and goths like to just look at it for hours. That's how the club must make its money, because it's empty most nights.

At least, that's what those who aren't in the occult underground think. Any adept or follower of an archetype who sees the pit will sense an emptiness about it, like there's a hole in the universe.

In fact, there is. When the universe was being created last time around, there was a tiny mistake in it and a spot occurred where nothing got put. The flows that run through everything, the flows that are everything, don't touch the Pit. They enter it and simply vanish.

The club is in fact owned by the supernatural organization of your choice - in my campaign it was the secret government group, Agency - who pay the bills, the club and the glass wall is there to keep people from falling into the pit. The organization originally tried to fill the Pit in, but that idea failed so they put up the club to explain the pit's presence.

Anything that goes into the pit is gone - permanently, forever, no glorified special effects, no remakes or do-overs. For that reason people possessed by ghosts hunt out the pit and throw themselves in, as it's the only way that they finally get to die.





"You've no business here. Leave."

-Any native of Innsmouth

Innsmouth. The name alone is enough to strike fear into surrounding communities. Anyone within a fifty-mile radius knows not to go to Innsmouth for anything. Everyone within one hundred miles knows not to ask about Innsmouth. But even with the town being that much of a taboo subject, people still whisper. But what could make such a large area fear a town and its inhabitants so much? Why doesn't anyone visit the town? Why does no one from the town try to escape? Or even leave for a little while?

What the surrounding communities have to say

Much of what is said in the surrounding communities of Innsmouth is simply rumor. There are some facts about it mixed in with those rumors, however. The first problem is to get the people in the communities to talk about it. No one wants to speak of that vile town. The only people who seem to be willing to talk about Innsmouth live in either a nursing home (which is rare enough, these days) or in an asylum.

Some of the stories told about the town are very far fetched. People whisper about how all of the inhabitants of the town walk around at night in a zombie state, wandering aimlessly. Some people think that the entire town is enslaved to old man Bradford. One of the more outlandish rumors is that everyone in the entire town is a monster, and afraid to leave their homes. Still others think that the entire town has died off because of the plague that hit earlier in the century.

The fact is, no one knows what is really going on in the town of Innsmouth. But there is one thing that everyone in the surrounding area will agree with: there is something going on there.

Talking to the Townsfolk

Most of the people in the town of Innsmouth are very callous...they do not like outsiders at all. A visitor will not find a single souvenir shop, postcard, or anything that a tourist may be interested in. And while the PCs are walking, or driving, around Innsmouth, they will notice that there really is no one in the streets. The party will spot one person on the streets if they are lucky. His name is Nick Van Ess. Nick is the town drunk and is more than willing to talk to the PCs...if they help buy him a drink, or two, or three...

Three shops look like they are open, a grocery store, a general store, and a very small public library. The PCs will not find any customers in these places. Each establishment has one employee though. All of them are very cold and unhelpful to outsiders. A character that has some kind of background in business will wonder how these establishments are able to keep open.

Simple research

Despite the efforts of the area surrounding Innsmouth to hide its existence (some even go as far as not to put it on maps) they cannot hide everything. Going to a library and looking up Innsmouth will reveal some things. Usually, it will reveal simple things like news clippings. Surprisingly, looking in back issues of tabloids will reveal absolutely nothing...the tabloids refused to touch Innsmouth.

Innsmouth is actually quite an old town. It was founded approximately 200 years ago. Back then, and for about 100 years, it was a very successful shipping and fishing town. It had a good natural harbor. It was the only good one for about 100 miles in either direction along the coastline.

But, it was the shipping that ultimately caused its isolation. 100 years ago, there was a plague in the town. Over three



quarters of the Innsmouth inhabitants died from it. Luckily, the town government recognized the disease's lethality right away, and did not let anyone leave the town, or let anyone enter. Essentially, it was a self-inflicted quarantine.

However, the people in the town did not like this quarantine. Some of the townspeople revolted, setting fire to many of the government buildings. The revolt was very short lived. The disease killed most of the people and the police rounded up the rest of the citizens before any could leave. The entire skirmish lasted approximately 3 months.

In the latter part of those three months, the food supply in the town started to run short. The people started to gather their own food through various means. Since there was a forest surrounding the town on 3 sides (the fourth being the ocean), people were able to hunt for meat. There was enough room in the small town for people to grow their own vegetables and have enough where they could also sell them in the marketplace that the local government had set aside.

For their major source of food, they turned to the ocean. Fishing. Because of the citywide epidemic, shipping companies refused to go into the town, and the local government turned away the companies that did not know about the plague. Since there were no longer large vessels in the harbor, many fish started to move there. So the fishing has been good for quite a long time.

The local government lifted the quarantine after approximately 3 years. But due to the townsfolk having to rely on themselves for so long, they stayed in the town. They would rarely leave for anything. The shipping companies had also grown accustomed to shipping to the surrounding communities, so they decided against going back to Innsmouth. The history of Innsmouth remained quiet up until about 20 years ago.

It was at that point a man named James Bradford started to produce some very eccentric jewelry. Sometimes it would be a ring, other times it would be a necklace; he did not specialize. The jewelry was totally unique, and the stones he used were some of those that had never been seen before. He would sell them to museums, royalty from other nations, and very rich people. This was not the type of thing that the average family would be able to afford.

Despite the scientific community's best efforts, they have not been able to identify what the stones were. And it almost seemed as if it was never the same stone twice. Sometimes they were soft, other times hard, and never exactly the same color or luster. The stones have baffled scientists for a long time, and they are still baffled today.

That concludes the history section for the town of Innsmouth.

What's Really Going On

**** **Game Master's Eyes ONLY!** ****

When a character gets into the city (which is actually not that difficult), they will at once notice many houses that have

been abandoned. Many of the commercial buildings have been abandoned as well. Because of this abandonment, the buildings are falling into a dramatic disrepair. Half of the downtown district is already condemned. The other half is not too far behind. Many of the houses are in poor shape, as well. The best way to tell if a house is inhabited in the town of Innsmouth is to check if it has curtains hanging in it or not.

The Town Businesses

As was said before, there are only three shops open in Innsmouth. The grocery store on the surface seems to be pretty normal. But upon closer inspection there are a few things rather odd about it. Upon inspection there seems to be a whole lot of fish, more than is normally carried by a grocer. And where the vegetables are kept, there is a strange vegetable that looks like freshly cut seaweed. Most of the other fruits and vegetables look spoiled. If the spoilage is pointed out to the grocer, the strange looking young man will kick them out of the store, not allowing them to purchase anything. He is of absolutely no conversation.

The General store is a little more useful to the PCs. There are no lethal weapons or ammunition in the store, but there are cooking knives, a few antiques, some clothing, etc. It is completely up to the GM as to what the store has in it. The best rule of thumb that I can give you is this: if it is modern, forget it. The shopkeeper is a 35-year-old woman, and has a very strong Innsmouth look to her. She has a very foreboding demeanor to her. She seems to be so cruel that the PCs may not even try to speak to her. Her cruel look is there for a reason. If someone tries to talk to her, she will either completely ignore him, or snap at him. If a person tries to flirt with her, it will be met with a stony stare and they will get absolutely nowhere. If the characters look like thieves, she will not allow them into the store at all.

The library is woefully small. It is virtually useless for research. There is one set of encyclopedias, and a small, out of date nonfiction collection. There are no newspaper clippings, magazines, or anything referring the characters where to look for materials (i.e. Card Catalogue). There is actually nothing in the library about the town of Innsmouth. The boy tending the library (approximately 14 years old) is not cold to the PCs though. He will try to help them as best he can. It may take a bit to get him going, but he will talk to the PCs.

His name is Eric Dombrow. He moved into Innsmouth to live with relatives. His parents died in a car accident 3 years ago. He is home schooled (and seems to be pretty well educated, too). He works at the library to simply get out of the house. He is an active young man and cannot sit in the house for as long as his aunt and uncle want him to (which is all the time). He will mention how it seems everyone in the town is a strong swimmer. If asked about the Innsmouth look, he will confirm it, but will not be able to give much more information about it. He will be able to say that it starts to manifest itself at about the age of 16 and only gets worse from there.



Somewhere between the ages of 35 and 40, the people will go into seclusion, because they do not want to be seen in public.

Nick Van Ess

Nick Van Ess is about 85-90 years old, and surprisingly does not have any of the Innsmouth look. Nick is actually a very pleasant man. He just knows too much for his own good. The reason that he drinks is to escape the horror known as his life. He does not know why the town is the way it is, but he does know the “what.”

He will voluntarily tell his story if the characters supply him with enough alcohol to get him a tipsy. If the party actually wants to know what is going on in the town his story is worth it.

He will start his story with how he moved here when he was five, which was shortly after the quarantine. There would be nights he would have trouble falling asleep. And it wasn't because he was afraid the disease was still around, and not because he didn't want to go to sleep. It was because there was strange chanting coming from the sea. He will say that the chanting seemed to come from the surface of the ocean, and as he looked out his bedroom window, he could see a glow coming from underneath the ocean surface. An eerie orange glow.

In that glow he could see almost human creatures silhouetted above the waves. Every one of them looking like crosses between humans and sea creatures. He thinks it was because of these chants that people started to develop the Innsmouth look. It was too far away for him to see what was going on at the Oceanside, but with things that looked like that, it could not have been good.

The townspeople start to disappear when they turn about 40, and they're not hiding from the prying, public eye. They are going to live in the ocean. People, who have the Innsmouth look, look like a cross between a fish and a human. Nick says they don't even blink. Ever.

It's almost as if everyone in Innsmouth is related somehow, the way that they all end up with the same features. Nick does not know, but he guesses that the town has, or at one point had, a major incest problem.

The Real History of Innsmouth

Innsmouth was a very prosperous little town about for quite a while. But that ended when old man Bradford made a “deal with the devil,” so to say. Already an old man, at that point, he knew his years were numbered. But, he knew many rituals to lengthen his life. And at the ripe old age of 75, he figured that he had nothing to lose if he tried them.

And try them he did. Even though he didn't know the full effect the rituals would have on him, or the others around him. He ended up contacting a being from deep under the sea known simply as Rasmalarthim. This being was in search of willing servants to aid him in his evil (and unknown) plans.

Rasmalarthim made a deal with Mr. Bradford. The evil creature said he would require many willing servants to grant his wish of immortality. And if the old man was able to get enough servants, he would be granted great wealth along with his immortality in the form of otherworldly gems and jewels.

The old man then contacted the mayor of the town. Speaking of immortality and living forever, Bradford was quick to get the mayor on his side. Sensing people would resist, the mayor quietly quarantined Innsmouth. He fashioned a story that a plague had come in on a ship and was very contagious. The police were to turn away any visitors to the town and close the harbor. The police were also told to shoot anyone that tried to leave town because everyone was contagious. Some of the people fought back. They knew they weren't sick. Others however, believed the plague cover story and actually helped out the law. Those people were considered servants to Rasmalarthim. The battle that ensued was very bloody, leaving many people dead, and the once tall, proud buildings were now but piles of ash. The police with the help of Rasmalarthim and his servants eventually contained the revolt.

After the revolt Rasmalarthim moved into the harbor, he brought many fish with him, for fish are attracted to him. This is why the fishing is so good in Innsmouth, but not in the surrounding communities.

All of Rasmalarthim's servants were then transformed into a kind of sea creature (the type varied from person to person) and taken to serve him under the sea for all eternity. The changes were genetic, and passed from generation to generation. Anyone from that era of Innsmouth was going to turn into a creature, as would all future generations.

But Rasmalarthim knew that old man Bradford, due to his age, would be of virtually no use of him, so he was granted immortality without transformation. The drawback was that he would continue to age but never die.

For a long time old man Bradford just collected the gems and jewels that were given to him by Rasmalarthim. After running short on money, he decided to sell some of them, but not to reveal the truth about where they came from. Knowing that he would be thrown into prison, if anyone found out.

Under the sea, Rasmalarthim grows more and more powerful. Topside, Bradford now realizes the consequences of his actions. He will do anything to undo them, but fears what Rasmalarthim may do to him if interfered with. The entire fate of humanity lies with a scared old man. Welcome to modern day Innsmouth.

The Innsmouth Look

The Innsmouth look is very disturbing. Most common is that of a fish. The person's eyes start to bulge out and get a slight clear, slimy coating over them. Their foreheads start to get very tall and they start to loose hair. After a while, an outsider will notice a slight coloring to their skin, and an almost scaly look. If a PC is unfortunate enough to see an Innsmouth native with no shirt on, he will see two folds of skin where the



shoulder meets the neck. These are gills.

Other people from Innsmouth have other looks. Some have a slight frog look to them, growing longer, stronger legs, green skin, etc. There are many different variations to the Innsmouth look, but every single one will be aquatic in nature.

Other Notes

At this point, I will leave everything up to you Game Masters out there. If requested, however, I am willing to write up Rasmalarthim, his undersea home, actions, etc. I have left the statistics out of this because I want to keep Innsmouth “any game friendly.” A good rule of thumb, if you’re creating the townsfolk/sea creatures. There’s really nothing special about them except for the obvious transformations. They act just like normal people. They do though speak a different, very throaty, language to each other. There are no mental powers to them of any kind.

Rasmalarthim, on the other hand, is very powerful and

very evil. PCs should not be able to win a straight out firefight with him. There needs to be trickery involved, and if the PCs are lucky, Rasmalarthim may be banished into another Proto-Dimension. He will dimension walk if he feels that he is over-matched. He will not, however, be tricked out of the water. That is his strong suit he will not leave his element.

Credits

This article is based almost entirely upon the work “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” by H.P. Lovecraft. That short story is highly recommended reading, as is anything by Mr. Lovecraft.

“Never sign your name in blood without first reading the fine print.”

-James Bradford, Innsmouth Inhabitant



ART GALLERY

This issue’s spotlight into the realm of visual imagery falls on Neal Dickinson.

Neal was kind enough to grant permission for us to use some of the artwork he had created for the ill-fated 2.5 edition of *Dark Conspiracy*.

This is one of the more interesting pieces from that collection - a piece which fits well within the theme of this particular issue of DEMONGROUND. We’re grateful to have the opportunity to show you folks some of the fine work he did.

Although it arrived without a title, we like to call this piece, “They Go Up!”, since it seems to be addressing the mystical question, “Where do these stairs go?”





THE MEGA-CORPS WANT YOU !

by Paul T. Riegel-Green

After playing *Dark Conspiracy* for some time I have found myself with a massive collection of alternative career choices for my players. In addition, I found myself doing starting money slightly different from the way the *Dark Conspiracy* book shows. Each of the new career choices are set up just like those in the *Dark Conspiracy* book, with the addition of several new categories.

The first new category is Social Class Allowed, this continues the format set forth in the PC Booster Kit for allowing only certain social classes to perform those jobs within the realm of their own social class. Next is Entry Skills Required and Entry Background Required this breaks up and further defines the old category Entry.

The next new category is Security clearance. This represents that careers access to secured areas, such as Dreamland and 'Bot city. This category is expressed as a percentage. For each term after the career giving the security clearance the percentage is cut in half. In a rival mega-corps dreamland this percentage would be reduced by 10 to 75 percent. In a rival mega-corps facilities this percentage would fall 25 to 100 percent depending on how friendly the atmosphere was between the two mega-corps were.

Secondary activities is the next new

category, this expresses the number of secondary activities that the player may gain in a given term. Lastly, there is a new category called Money, which tells how to calculate the monies accumulated during this term.

Mega-Corps Front Office Careers

You are the front line of the Mega-Corps, as you keep everything flowing on an even keel. The positions are often far from glamorous but they do allow the players to get into the mega-corps and get skills that are needed to work within the corporations.

See the Office Worker, Receptionist, Secretary, and Computer Technician career descriptions on this and the following page.

Mega-Corps Executive Offices

You are the lower portion of the upper crust in the mega-corps community. For the most part the mega-corps still operate on the old boy network, which leaves the players out because of their other calling, the fighting of the dark minions. These careers tend to be somewhat better at compensation than those in the front office but still the lack a certain heroic glamour.

See the Personal Secretary, Executive and Vice-President career descriptions on the page after next.

OFFICE WORKER

You are the typical office type person, typing, filing, copying, and doing all the things that keep the life blood of the mega-corps, its paperwork, flowing. It is not a very exciting job but it is a job and a paycheck, which is more than many can say. It even offers some perks, allowing access to the lower level stores in dreamland.

Social Class Allowed: Prole or Mike

Entry Skills Required: AGL 3+

Entry Background Required: None

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Business	2
Computer Operation	2
Persuasion	1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 4 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Act/Bluff
Business
Computer Empathy (If EMP 4+)
Computer Operation
Forgery
Language
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 1 per term from the Business sector. Roll 1d10 for a 9+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 10 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 2 secondary activities.

Special: None

Money: The character receives \$500 for each point of Computer Operation skill possessed.



RECEPTIONIST

You are the front line between the people on the outside and the people inside the mega-corps. You have to make constant snap decisions on who to let through to see someone in the organization and who to keep out.

Social Class Allowed: Prole or Mike

Entry Skills Required: If Prole then a CHA 7+

Entry Background Required: None

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Act/Bluff	1
Business	1
Computer Operation	1
Persuasion	2

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 4 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Act/Bluff
Business
Computer Operation
Forgery
Language
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 2 per term from the Business sectors. Roll 1d10 for a 7+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 10 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 2 secondary activities.

Special: None

Money: The character receives \$500 for each point of Persuasion skill possessed.

SECRETARY

You are the next step up from the office worker, a bit better pay and a few more perks but you bear much of the responsibility for keeping the office workers on their jobs. Its hard work but it is much more interesting that of the office worker.

Social Class Allowed: Prole or Mike

Entry Skills Required: Computer Operation and Business skills totalling 4+.

Entry Background Required: Prole must have worked a previous term as an Office Worker.

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Business	2
Computer Operation	1
Persuasion	1
Psychology	1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 5 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Act/Bluff
Business
Bargain
Computer Empathy (If EMP 4+)
Computer Operation
Forgery
Language
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 2 per term from the Business or Specialist sectors. Roll 1d10 for an 8+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 25 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 1 secondary activity.

Special: None

Money: The character receives \$1000 for each point of Business skill possessed.

COMPUTER TECHNICIAN

You are called in when they need the system fixed because some programmer/user crashed it. This keeps you very busy. Therefore, you are much more than just a computer operator as you are constantly found tinkering with computers on your spare time.

Social Class Allowed: Mike

Entry Skills Required: Computer Operation 3+, Electronics 2+

Entry Background Required: Technical School or better

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Business	1
Computer Operation	1
Electronics	1
Mechanic	1
Persuasion	1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 6 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Act/Bluff
Business
Bargain
Computer Empathy (If EMP 2+)
Computer Operation
Electronics
Instruction
Mechanic
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 2 per term from the Business or Specialist sectors. Roll 1d10 for an 8+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 40 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 1 secondary activity.

Special: None

Money: The character receives \$2000 for each point of Computer Operation skill possessed.



PERSONAL SECRETARY

You are the right hand person of some executive in the mega-corps. You get all the flak about things not getting done and even have to do "Special Projects" to keep your executive happy. These special projects could be anything from picking up the executive dry cleaning to doing the executives Christmas shopping for them. Yet, the perks are there for you and also the power of having the close personal ear of a high-ranking executive make the job bearable.

Social Class Allowed: Mike or Gnome

Entry Skills Required: Business 4+

Entry Background Required: If the character is a Mike must have previous term as Secretary.

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Bargain	1
Business	2
Computer Operation	1
Persuasion	1
Psychology	1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 6 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Act/Bluff
Business
Bargain
Computer Empathy (If EMP 4+)
Computer Operation
Forgery
Language
Leadership
Instruction
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 3 per term from the Business or Specialist sectors. Roll 1d10 for a 7+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 50 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 1 secondary activity.

Special: None

Money: The character receives \$2000 for each point of Business skill possessed.

EXECUTIVE

You are the up and coming executive looking to make a name for himself in the corporate world. As such you have to work longer and harder than the average executive who has already made his mark. The work is hard and long but the rewards are adequate for now and in the long run could be fantastic.

Social Class Allowed: Mike or Gnome

Entry Skills Required: Business and Bargain total of 6+

Entry Background Required: Mikes must have an undergraduate degree and have worked a previous term as Personal Secretary or Manager.

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Bargain	2
Business	2
Observation	1
Persuasion	1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 5 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Bargain
Business
Computer Operation
Foreboding (If EMP 4+)
Instruction
Interrogation
Language
Leadership
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 2 per term from the Business or Specialty sectors. Roll 1d10 for a 7+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 70 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 1 secondary activities.

Special: Treated as a minor VIP for a period immediately following his last term as an Executive equal to the amount of time spent as an executive.

Money: The character receives \$3500 for each point of Business skill possessed.

VICE-PRESIDENT

You are the Vice-President of a minor department within the mega-corps. Unless you were born into it, which few were, you have worked long and hard to get where you are today, just outside the inner circle of power at the mega-corps. As such, you have great power but you still must depend on the inner circle for your instructions. So, you spend most of your time trying to make yourself look as good as possible to your bosses, doing a lot of party planning, and constantly indulging in office politics.

Social Class Allowed: Gnome

Entry Skills Required: Business 6+

Entry Background Required: Must have a previous term as an Executive.

First Term Skills: The character receives the following skills in the first term:

Bargain	2
Business	1
Observation	1
Persuasion	2
Leadership	1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 6 levels from any one or a combination of the following;

Bargain
Business
Computer Operation
Foreboding (If EMP 4+)
Instruction
Interrogation
Language
Leadership
Observation
Persuasion
Psychology

Contacts: 3 per term from the Business or Military sectors. Roll 1d10 for a 5+ for the contact to be foreign.

Security Clearance: The character receives level 95 clearance.

Secondary Activities: The character may engage in 2 secondary activities.

Special: Treated as a VIP for a period immediately following his last term as a Vice-President equal to twice the amount of time spent as a Vice-President.

Money: The character receives \$5000 for each pt. of Bargain skill possessed.



INTRODUCTION

The Severn Bank Giant is a Call of Cthulhu adventure for 3-6 experienced investigators. A simple missing persons case becomes a race against time to stop a group of cultists from awakening a dormant Star Spawn of Cthulhu. The adventure assumes that the investigators are based in the Severn Valley, the area of Gloucestershire chosen by Ramsey Campbell as a setting for his Lovecraftian horror fiction. Keepers should feel free to substitute any other region of the British Isles to fit already established campaign settings.

MISSING

One of the investigators is contacted by Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. Their son Peter, a theology student at Brichester University, has gone missing and they want the Investigator to look for him. The investigator's exact connection to the Johnsons should be determined by the Keeper but is most likely to be professional in nature e.g.:

A **Lawyer** will have acted for the Johnsons when they were buying their house in Exham a year ago, or may have drawn up their wills. The Lawyer recalls that the Johnsons were "difficult" clients.

A **Doctor** will know the Johnsons as patients from when they were living in Brichester. Mrs. Johnson made fairly frequent visits to the surgery and could be termed a hypochondriac.

A **Police Officer** will have encountered the Johnsons when they initially reported Peter missing. Although the police aren't officially investigating the disappearance something about the case strikes the officer as strange and he/she agrees to look into it on their own time.

A **Private Detective** will have had the Johnsons referred to him/her by a sympathetic police officer at Brichester



station.

A **Professor** or any other character with an academic bent may know Peter as a student at Brichester University. If the investigator is qualified in the appropriate subjects they could even be one of Peter's tutors.

A **Priest** (or other member of the clergy) will know the Johnsons as regular churchgoers. They frequently involve themselves in church activities e.g. fetes, coffee mornings etc. The investigator may have discussed studying theology with Peter and have written him a reference when he applied to go to the University.

The Johnsons tell the investigator that Peter was supposed to have returned home to Exham for the Easter holidays last weekend but failed to show up. When the Johnsons contacted the University their son's professor informed them that Peter hadn't attended any lectures in the last week of the term. Peter's housemates also claim not to have seen him for at least a week.

The Johnsons have spoken to the police but they don't seem particularly interested. After some initial enquiries they decided that Peter had gone away for a few weeks without telling his parents and will turn up "sooner or later when his money runs out."

The Johnsons remain worried and ask the investigator and colleagues to find out what has happened to Peter and return him safely to his family. They suggest that the investigators start their enquiries with the police followed by Peter's lecturers and housemates.

KEEPER'S BACKGROUND

Peter has been recruited by a religious cult called The Children of the Sea. It is headed by an American, Reuben Waite, and has its headquarters in nearby Severn Bank. Its members can be found in Brichester most days handing out pamphlets to passers by. Outwardly The Children of the Sea appears to be a typical religious cult: Its membership is small, but fanatical in their devotion to their faith and their strangely charismatic leader, Reuben Waite.

The Children of the Sea is of course far more than just another millennial cult. Reuben Waite is a middle-ranking member of the Order of Dagon who specializes in magical research. After years of study he believes he has perfected a spell that can reanimate those Star Spawn of Cthulhu who were trapped in R'lyeh and other cities when the stars changed. The Order has sent him to Britain to free a Star Spawn buried under Severn Bank to test the spell's effectiveness. If Waite is successful, the Order intends use his spell to reanimate other Spawn entombed at various sites around the world.

The awakening spell requires the expenditure of a vast amount of mental energy to be successful. Waite is unable to awaken the Spawn alone and has been recruiting local people to assist him.

INITIAL ENQUIRIES

The Police: Detective Sergeant Stone of the Brichester police readily agrees to talk to the Investigators. He is convinced that Peter has gone away for a few weeks, "to get away from those overbearing parents of his, and with a girl in tow I shouldn't wonder. If you go round his house it's pretty obvious that he's only taken clothes and washing stuff. Everything else is still there which suggests to me he'll be back some time soon. He's probably gone inter-railing or something."

(Keeper's Note: This stage can be omitted if one of the investigators has a police background. The investigator can be assumed to have already have spoken to Stone after seeing the Johnsons).

The University: Professor Lewis, Peter's tutor, also appears unconcerned at his disappearance. "I've had students take 'early' holidays before," he says. "It isn't particularly unusual. I'm not particularly bothered as long as he's back in time for the summer exams."

Professor Lewis can also tell the investigators that Peter was a reliable if average student with a particular interest in evangelical groups. He sees the evangelical movement as being similar to the early Christians who preached the

Gospel, and thus purer in belief than the modern church which he feels resembles a corporation more than a religion.

(Keeper's Note: This stage can also be omitted if one of the investigators knows Peter through a shared connection with Brichester University).

Peter's House: Peter shares a scruffy rented terraced house with two other students in Lower Brichester. His housemates, Mark Carlisle and Richard Browning, have remained in Brichester for the holidays. They are initially suspicious of the investigators, believing them to be police who want to search the house for drugs (Any investigator who makes a Pharmacy roll will notice a strong smell of marijuana coming from the front room). Once this misunderstanding has been cleared up Carlisle and Browning agree to talk to the investigators. Browning tells them "Peter was ok for a god-botherer. He didn't try and ram that religious stuff down your throat the way some of them do."

Neither student can recall precisely when Peter left although they did notice his absence a couple of days into the last week of the term. Carlisle remembers coming home drunk one night in the previous week to find Peter in the sitting room with a couple of other people. "They were having some big discussion about how heaven was in the sea and not in the sky like everyone thinks. It was complete crap. I told them as much then went to bed." Carlisle is hazy about the incident but thinks he remembers one of Peter's companions: "An American guy with psycho eyes. I've seen him in town, preaching in the street."

Peter's room is locked but any Investigator with the proper tools who makes a Mechanical Repair roll will be able to open it within 5 minutes. Carlisle and Browning will object to this and a successful Fast Talk or Oratory roll is required to persuade them to drop their objections. Alternatively, the Investigators can get the spare key from the Landlord who lives on the next street. He has already loaned the key once to Sergeant Stone and doesn't see why he should have to extend the same courtesy



to the investigators. Fast Talk/Oratory rolls or payment of a ten pounds “viewing fee” are required to obtain the key.

If the investigators break into Peter’s room regardless of Browning and Carlisle’s objections the two students will try to stop them. The investigators will probably win any ensuing fight but they can expect a visit from the Brichester police shortly afterwards.

Peter’s room contains a bed, desk, wardrobe and bookcase. The bed is unmade and the wardrobe is empty except for some dirty washing in a plastic bin liner. The desk is covered with papers. Investigators who take the time to read them find that Peter was in the middle of writing an essay on what he terms “grass roots religions” i.e. those dispensing with traditional trappings such as churches, formal rituals, ordained priests and ministers etc.

The top drawer of the desk contains a single piece of A4 paper. It is a letter

dated three weeks ago (see Figure 1):

The bookcase contains books on theology with an emphasis on fringe religions. Investigators who succeed in A Spot Hidden roll find a leaflet sticking out from the back of the bookcase where it seems to have fallen.

The leaflet is photocopied on white paper and has the words “Salvation From the Sea” emblazoned on the front above a crude line drawing of a shining city surrounded by ocean. The reverse of the leaflet contains several closely typed paragraphs setting out the beliefs of a group called *The Children of the Sea*. These seem to be to be a highly dubious mixture of biblical creation myth, natural history and apocalyptic prophecy: The Children believe that God created all life on Earth. However, they also accept that life originally started in the sea. God himself lives in the sea in a submerged heavenly city. One day, heaven will rise to the surface

and God will step forth to judge humanity with only the Children of the Sea being saved. In the meantime the Children pray daily for heaven’s rising believing that the strength of their prayers will help bring about the final judgment they desire.

Investigators with Cthulhu Mythos skill who succeed in an Idea roll after reading the leaflet will realize that the Children of the Sea’s beliefs are a thinly disguised version of those held by the Cthulhu cult.

Finally, the leaflet contains a contact address for those interested in receiving further information: Riverside Manor, Severn Bank, Gloucestershire.

CLUES

Prudent investigators will want to do some background research before heading off to Severn Bank. The following information can be obtained fairly easily from various sources. The numbering in brackets indicates the likely source according to the following key:

(1) Investigators must have a contact in an appropriate official body e.g. Local Authority, Tax Office or Police. Alternatively an investigator can attempt a good old-fashioned bribe.

(2) Can be obtained from any suitable library (e.g. Brichester Central or Brichester University) with two hours study and a Library roll.

(3) History roll

(4) Cthulhu Mythos roll

(5) Cthulhoid book e.g. *Necronomicon*, *R’lyeh Text*, *Cthulhu in the Necronomicon*.

The Children of the Sea: There appear to be no records relating to the Children of the Sea. The group is not registered as a company or a charity in the way that some cults are. It does not file tax returns with the Inland Revenue or pay Council Tax to any local authorities. (1)

Severn Bank: A small hamlet situated by the River Severn five and a half miles southwest of Berkeley. The village gets its name from the ridge that lies between it and the river. (2)

Local legend has it that “The Bank”

Riverside Manor
Severn Bank
Gloucestershire

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your recent letter. I am gratified that my recent preaching in Brichester impressed you so much. I would be very pleased to be interviewed for your dissertation on grass roots religion. It sounds fascinating. I will be in Brichester again on Friday and will be free to visit you at seven-thirty. I will telephone you Thursday evening to confirm our appointment.

I look forward to making your acquaintance.

Yours sincerely

(signed)

Reuben Waite

Figure 1



marks the grave of a giant slain by one of King Arthur's knights. (2) or (3)

The Bank was excavated by Sir Gilbert Morley in the 1700's during his search for the Berkeley Toad (Byatis). He dug into the southern side of the Bank but then ordered the works to be dismantled and sealed up. (2) or (3)

Health statistics show that the incidence of mental health problems in Severn Bank is noticeably higher than the national average. Particularly prevalent are sleep disorders and associated problems. (2) A high incidence of such complaints is consistent with "fallout" from the telepathic communications of Great Old Ones and related entities. (4) (5)

The area suffered an earthquake on 25th March 1925 with the epicenter being located around the Bank. Although the tremors were mild local people reported that they continued unabated for at least three hours. (2) or (3)

The timing of the earthquake coincided with the temporary surfacing of R'lyeh in the Pacific. (4)

Riverside Manor: Despite its name Riverside Manor has never been home to any members of the landed gentry. It was built as a family residence in 1919 by Alfred Gregory, a Midlands industrial magnate who made a fortune from munitions production during the Great War. The Manor is situated at the north-eastern tip of The Bank. (2) or (3)

Gregory and his family left the Manor two months after the earthquake saying that the tremors had made the house unsafe to live in and that at night it was possible to hear the ground beneath the house moving: "Almost as if the Earth itself was breathing in and out."

After the Gregorys left the area, periodic attempts were made to sell the house but it remained unsold. Copies of the Brichester Herald dating as far back as 1926 contain advertisements offering Riverside Manor for sale or auction. The more modern adverts describe the property euphemistically as "ripe for redevelopment." The last firm of agents to advertise the property was David Knight and Co of Brichester in 1990. (2)

BRICHESTER

David Knight and Co: A firm of estate agents with an office in Brichester High Street. David Knight is the sole proprietor and also the owner of Riverside Manor. He bought the house from the Gregorys in 1990 using money he had earned during the late 1980's property boom. He intended to refurbish the Manor and then sell it at a profit. Unfortunately for Knight the bottom fell out of the real estate market shortly afterwards leaving him with barely enough trade to support himself, let alone renovate a large country house. The Manor has become something of a millstone around Knight's neck as he lacks the funds to restore the property but he is also unwilling to sell it in its present condition and take a loss. Having always prided himself on his financial acumen Knight finds the whole episode embarrassing and will be initially reluctant to talk to the investigators. A Fast Talk or Oratory roll is needed to make him open up.

Knight was approached by Waite seven months ago. The American offered to rent Riverside Manor for £800 a month. Knight accepted, pleased that his much-depreciated asset would at last be making him some money. Waite pays cash, monthly, in person. Knight dislikes Waite, saying there's something sinister about him, but is quite happy to take his money.

Encounter with the Children of the Sea: The Investigators are likely to run into the Children as they go to and from the library, police station, university etc. Waite sends cult members to Brichester every weekday. The cultists usually mill around the main street giving out leaflets to passersby and trying to engage likely recruits in conversation. Anyone showing interest in the Children's message will have their personal details taken. They will then be visited by Waite, who will assess their suitability, before deciding whether to recruit them in to his cult. One day a week Waite himself travels to Brichester and preaches in the main street. His sermons are all on the theme of the Earth

being engulfed in an apocalyptic flood with only those who are at one with the sea being saved. Anyone stopping to listen is regarded as a potential recruit and in between sermons Waite will talk to spectators in attempt to discern whether they are cult material.

Investigators approaching the Children will be given a leaflet and the standard recruitment pitch. Investigators could take this as an opportunity to confront Waite (who will be present on a roll of 15%) or one of his minions about Peter's disappearance. Alternatively the investigators could try to infiltrate the cult. If the Investigators choose the first option the cultists will refuse to answer any questions about Peter. They will then attempt to get away so that they can report back to Waite. The investigators will have tipped their hand with precious little to show for it. Trying to "join" the cult will expose the investigators to the vetting process described above. The Children will be suspicious of a large number of people suddenly expressing a desire to join them. A single investigator would be more credible but anyone who meets Waite will have to convince him of their suitability to join the cult. Having an insider in the cult, while potentially useful, is extremely dangerous. There is the risk that the investigator may be discovered as an imposter in which case Waite will kill them. The investigator may also be driven insane by exposure to Waite's occult powers and the nightly cult rituals.

SEVERN BANK

The outcome of the investigators' expedition to Severn Bank should be adjudicated by the Keeper using the map and details below:

1. The Green Man Pub: The Green Man stands at the center of the village. The sign outside depicts a giant green figure standing on a low ridge with an expanse of water in the background. The figure's back is turned so that it is impossible to see its face but its proportions are too flabby and rounded for it to be truly humanoid. A smaller sign



underneath offers bed and breakfast for £15.00 a night.

The Green Man's landlord is Harry Allen. He will cheerfully talk to the investigators about the Children of the Sea but is unable to offer any useful information about them. He just likes to moan about what a bunch of "bloody weirdoes" they are.

Two of the Green Man's regulars may be of more assistance to the investigators:

Stanley Owen is a notable local artist (investigators should make a Know roll to have heard of him) and Severn Bank's oldest resident. Now aged eighty-two he was nine when the earthquake struck The Bank in 1925. He vividly recalls The Bank "rippling up and down for ages like it was going to burst open but couldn't quite manage it." Owen painted the Green Man's sign from a childhood dream he had a few days before the earthquake. He doesn't believe the old legend of a giant being buried under The Bank but does think that there is something "not quite dead beneath the ridge, and sometimes when it dreams we do too." Owen can be found in the Green Man at lunchtime and at between eight and nine o'clock in the evening.

Graham Price is the owner of the local quarry. His business is close to going bust because of his chronic mis-

management. Price is an alcoholic who prefers to spend his afternoons boozing it up in The Green Man. He is the archetypal pub bore and will swiftly latch on to the investigators so that he can bend their ears about the state of the country, England's performance in the last world cup or any other subject that takes his fancy. Needless to say Price is none too keen on the "religious loonies" up at Riverside Manor and plans "to do something about them soon." If the investigators gain his confidence (i.e. by getting him drunk while appearing to go along with his idea of taking action against cultists) Price will let them in on a secret: Two nights ago some dynamite was stolen from Price's quarry by some of "the loonies." Price hasn't informed the police of the theft because he thinks he may have forgotten to lock the door of the storage shed. The last thing he wants is his own culpability being exposed by a police investigation. He would like the dynamite back though before it is used for some illegal purpose which could land him in even more trouble. Price "knows" the Children are behind the theft because one of them dropped a religious medallion in some bushes near the shed.

The medallion is three centimeters in diameter, made of gold and bears a design of a large frog-like creature

spearing a shark. Investigators making a Cthulhu Mythos roll will recognize the creature as Father Dagon and will realize that the medallion serves as a badge of office for a Dagon cult official.

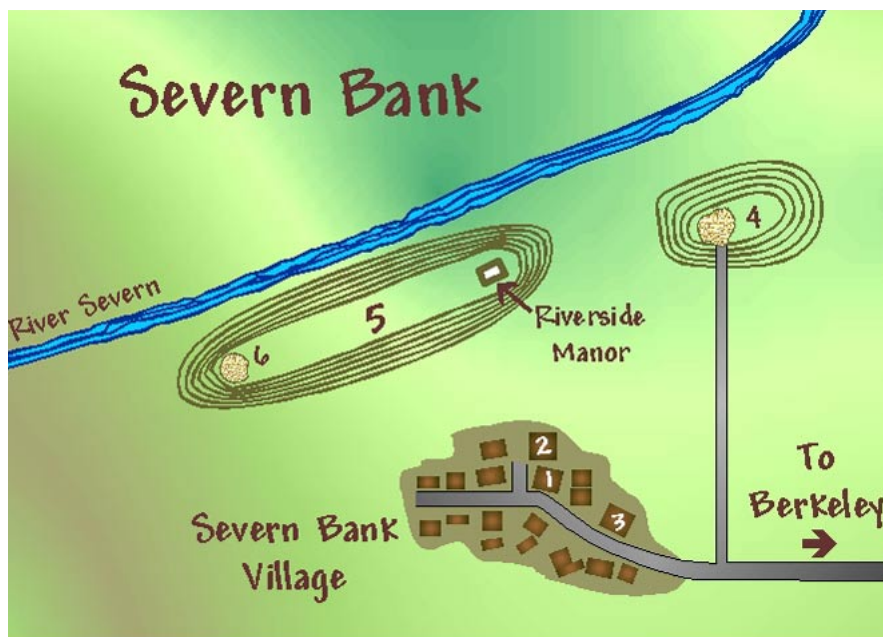
Price will happily attach himself to the Investigators' party if it looks like they are going to take action against Waite and his followers. His alcoholism makes him an unreliable ally though.

2. Village Shop: Investigators can obtain basic supplies here such as food, newspapers and some household goods (specific items are at the Keeper's discretion). If the Investigators question Mrs. Higgins, the owner, about Waite and his followers she will repeat the commonly held view that they are strange. They don't mix with the local people and only come into town to buy provisions and use the photocopier. Mrs. Higgins thinks that they all have this far away look on their faces like they've been brainwashed. The only one who doesn't is Waite and he just looks evil with his mad staring eyes.

Mrs. Higgins recalls that several of the Children came into the shop the other day and bought her entire stock of bandages and plasters plus several bottles of antiseptic disinfectant. Perhaps someone's had an accident up at the Manor?

3. Price's House: A detached house on the edge of the village. If the investigators befriend Price they could use it as a base although it's not the most comfortable place to stay. Price has left the house go since his wife left: There are dirty dishes piled in the sink, beer cans overflowing from the trash bins and dirty clothes left in heaps in the bedrooms. Price keeps a double-barrelled 12-gauge shotgun with several boxes of cartridges in a metal cabinet in one of the spare bedrooms.

4. The Quarry: Price's quarry is located on a hillside to the northeast of Severn Bank. It can easily be seen from Riverside Manor. At present all of Price's workers are laid off because he does not have enough money to pay them. All heavy machinery has been repossessed by finance companies. Price





often retreats here in the evenings to drink and fire off his shotgun at bottles, cans and any wildlife unlucky enough to stray into his sights.

There are two buildings in the quarry, an office and a storage shed. The office contains little of interest. The shed is full of equipment, which could be of use in opening the door to the Spawn's vault if Price can be persuaded to lend it to the Investigators. Anyone who makes a Spot Hidden roll while in the vicinity of the shed finds several large brownish stains on the ground. A Know roll is required to recognize the stains as dried blood. The trail of dried leads behind the shed and through the bushes to a hole in the fence that surrounds the quarry. This is the only evidence remaining from the Children's theft of Price's dynamite.

5. The Bank: A 150-foot high ridge covered in broken limestone and scrub. Investigators traversing this terrain must do so at half speed or roll their DEX x 5% to avoid falling and suffering 1pt damage. In some areas of the bank a different type of rock is mixed in with the limestone. It is dark green in color with a smooth soapy texture. An investigator who makes a Geology roll will be unable to identify the rock but will realize its presence in the region is completely anomalous. Investigators who succeed in a Cthulhu mythos roll will recognize the rock as being similar to the stone used to build R'lyeh and other prehistoric cities.

6. Morley's Well: A 15 foot deep pit in the southern end of The Bank. This is the site of Sir Gilbert Morley's dig in the seventeenth century. Although not particularly steep the Well's sides are as treacherous as the rest of The Bank and PCs should make a climb roll when descending. Failure results in a 10ft fall to the bottom for 1D6 points of damage. At the bottom of the Well large amounts of limestone rubble have been cleared away to expose a door made of green soapstone. An Elder sign has been carved into the surface of the door.

If the investigators want to repeat Morley's excavations they will need suit-

able tools (e.g. pick axes) to pry the door open which should be treated as having an effective STR of 60. In the event that the door is opened anyone in close proximity must make a Dodge roll to avoid the stinking cloud of green gas that escapes from the doorway. Failure means that the person is enveloped in the gas and must make a CON resistance roll vs. STR 15 poison or lose 1D3 hit points through violent vomiting. The gas soon dissipates, but its stench - a mixture of rotting fish, seaweed and salt - lingers on. Beyond the doorway is a green stone staircase, which leads down into the earth. Investigators who descend the stairs find that the foul stench gets stronger and stronger until they find themselves in a cavernous chamber containing a massive open sarcophagus. Inside the sarcophagus lies a dormant Star Spawn of Cthulhu. Those investigators not driven insane by the sight of the sleeping monster can destroy it if they have the means to do so (they've recovered Price's dynamite for example). In the unlikely event that the Star Spawn is destroyed the Investigators are free to explore its tomb. What

they find is at the Keeper's discretion but could include alien artifacts or pre-human historical records. The Keeper could even rule that the Star Spawn's vault is merely an antechamber to a much larger complex.

RIVERSIDE MANOR

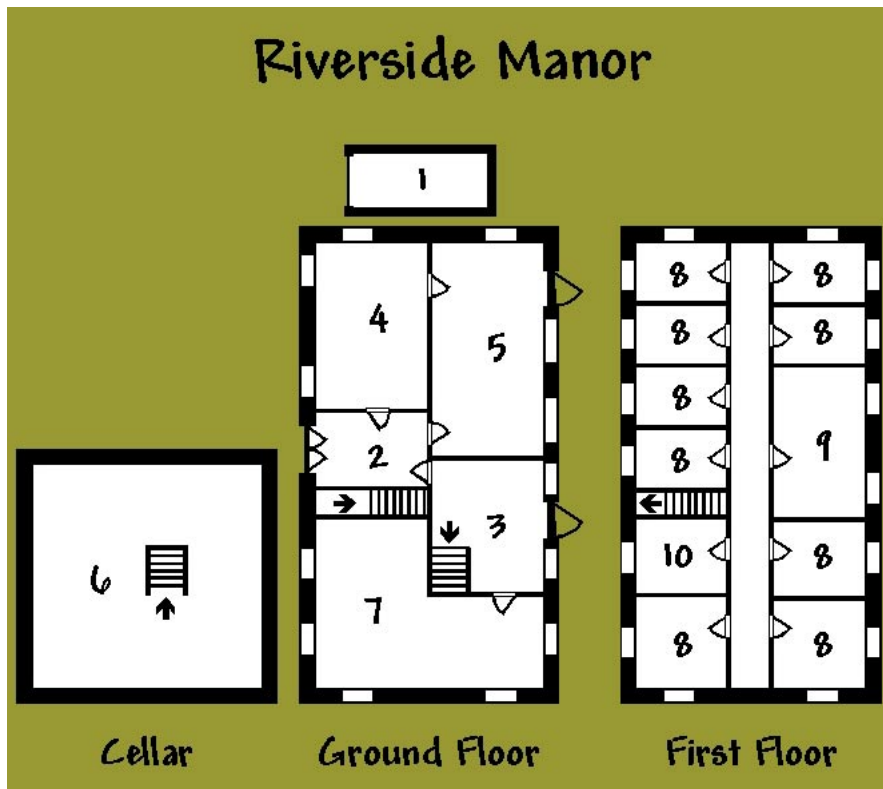
Riverside Manor is a moldering brick pile situated at the northeast tip of The Bank. Its grounds are surrounded by a brick wall that has collapsed in several places allowing the Investigators easy access to the grounds. The house is in poor condition: Slates are missing from the roof and a number of windows are broken. The interior is damp and dirty.

1. Garage: A battered Ford Escort is kept here. The cult uses the car for their trips to Brichester.

2. Hallway: A large wooden door (STR 30) gives entry to the house. It is kept bolted from the inside. The hallway is done out in dark wood paneling. This has worked loose in places.

3. Kitchen: There will usually be two cultists here preparing meals for the others. Conditions are unhygienic.

4. Dining Room: A worm-eaten





dining table is the main feature of this room. The tabletop is littered with the leftover remains of previous meals.

5. Lounge: Cult members not otherwise engaged can usually be found here with Waite taking part in cult dogma teaching sessions. Waite's nightly attempts to resurrect the Spawn also take place here.

6. Cellar: Entrance to the cellar is via a locked wooden door (STR 25). Inside are the tools used by the Children to excavate Morley's Well (spades, pick-axes, ladders and buckets) plus a wooden crate containing the stolen dynamite (ten sticks).

7. Study: Musty old books line the shelves of this room. A large desk at the back of the study is covered with sheets of paper on which are scribbled writing and calculations. A person who succeeds in a Cthulhu mythos roll while examining these papers will realize that they are an attempt to formulate the correct wording of a spell designed to revive a dormant Star Spawn. The spell invokes the name of several Outer Gods, most notably Yog-Sothoth. Another piece of paper has an elevation of The Bank sketched on it. Morley's Well is clearly marked on the sketch together with a stairway leading underground.

8. Sleeping Quarters: These rooms are where the cultist sleep and recuperate after particularly strenuous sessions of worship. The rooms are all untidy with personal belongings strewn everywhere.

9. Master Bedroom: Waite has selected this room as his own. A decrepit four-poster bed dominates the room. A locker beside the bed holds the following items:

- .38 caliber revolver with five rounds loaded
- Keys to the house and the Escort
- Brichester Building Society account book in the name of Reuben Waite. The account contains just over £9000 pounds
- A ring binder containing Waite's personal journal

10. Peter's Room: This room is sim-

ilar to those occupied by the other cultists. Peter will be in bed recovering from the wounds he received during the raid on Price's quarry. He has gone from being an observer to being a willing participant in the cult's activities. He will not go with the investigators voluntarily and will have to be subdued before he can be removed from the house.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SEA

Reuben Waite has been in Severn Bank for six months. Prior to this he had been a middle ranking Dagon cult member respected by other members of the order for his facility with magic. While studying one of the cult's more obscure texts, Waite found a reference to a Star Spawn buried under Severn Bank in England. He seized on this as a golden opportunity to test a spell of his own devising which if cast successfully would awaken the creature from its death sleep. After a conference with his superiors it was decided that Waite should go to Britain. The order's leadership was skeptical about his chances but agreed he should be allowed to make the attempt. After all if Waite was successful his spell could be used to resurrect other Star Spawn and possibly even Great Cthulhu himself.

On arriving in Severn Bank Waite was lucky enough to find the empty Gregory house, which he rented using money provided by his order. Once his base of operations was established he began recruiting gullible local people to provide the extra bodies required for a successful casting of the Awaken Spawn spell. So far Waite has acquired an entourage of eight people (five male, three female) who have been induced to follow him by a mixture of occult power, psychological manipulation, and charismatic preaching. The cult has a rotation dividing duties between recruiting expeditions to Brichester, meal preparation and working towards freeing the Spawn. Efforts towards this last task have run into a series of obstacles. After the Children had cleared the rubble from Morley's Well they found that the door to the Spawn's chamber was sealed with

an elder sign. Unable to remove the sign Waite decided to steal some dynamite from Price's quarry and simply blow the door open. Taking Peter and two other cultists Waite burgled the quarry's storage shed and took the dynamite he needed. However, the noise of the burglary woke Price who was sleeping off a whisky and shooting bender in the office next door. In the ensuing scramble to escape Waite lost his badge of office and Peter was injured when the enraged Price fired his shotgun at the fleeing cultists.

Now that Waite has the means to open the door to the Spawn's chamber he is concentrating his efforts on casting the Awaken spell. His efforts have been hampered by his failure to perfect the invocation to Yog-Sothoth on whose intervention the success of the spell depends and by not having enough worshippers to generate the required Magic Points. His solution is to press on regardless and each evening he will have a 10% chance of successfully casting the spell. This will double to 20% if Waite decides to offer up a human sacrifice to Yog-Sothoth. This will occur to him on any day in which he makes an Idea roll at INT x 2% (one roll per day). If the spell is successful there will appear to be a sudden flash of ball lightning over the Bank as Yog-Sothoth briefly materializes and releases the Spawn from its death sleep. This will be followed by a series of reverberating booms from underneath The Bank. This will be the Children's cue to take the stolen dynamite up to Morley's Well and blast the door and its Elder Sign apart. Once released, the Spawn will crawl out of its vault and into the Severn where it will submerge before swimming out to sea through the estuary.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Ideally the investigators should stop Waite from releasing the Spawn and return Peter to his parents. If the Spawn escapes then the Investigators have essentially failed. Rescuing Peter and/or apprehending Waite may mitigate the resulting SAN loss.



SAN losses/rewards:

Killing the Star Spawn	+1D20
Preventing the release of the Star Spawn	+1D10
Rescuing Peter Johnson from the Children of the Sea	+1D6
Apprehending Reuben Waite	+1D6
Allowing the Spawn to escape	-1D20
Waite escapes	-1D6
Peter Johnson killed	-1D10
Peter Johnson remains member of the cult	-1D6

Author's Note: This is my first proper attempt at writing a Call of Cthulhu scenario. I'm not really satisfied with it. The buried monster seems absurdly powerful and the spell used to free him is too contrived. The main idea for it came from seeing Bible preachers on the streets of Worcester and Gloucester. I have to admit to a certain amount of admiration for these people as they brave the indifference or ridicule of the public as well as the lousy British weather. I got to wondering if the preachers ever actually convert anyone and if so, what happens to the converts? Are they expected to join a church of some kind? Street preaching seems to be the complete antithesis of organized religion. I ended up giving these thoughts a mythos twist and this scenario is the result. I don't think I've done the basic idea justice, but I might return to it one day if I come up with a good story line.

Editor's Note: Linden's disclaimer aside, we like the adventure, and look forward to seeing more in the future.

NEW SPELLS AND BOOKS

Awaken Star Spawn of Cthulhu: Only Reuben Waite knows this spell. It shares some verbal and gesture characteristics with the Contact Star Spawn of Cthulhu and Call Yog-Sothoth spells. If cast successfully near the site of a dormant Star Spawn it causes the All in One to manifest itself and reverse the temporal conditions which keep the Spawn dormant. Casting the spell requires the same procedure as any Call Deity spell but the chance for success is only equal to the amount of Magic Points expended x 0.5%. If a human sacrifice is offered to Yog-Sothoth then the chance for success is as normal.

Journal of Reuben Waite: A personal diary combined with a record of Waite's research into the Cthulhu Mythos including his attempts to perfect his Awaken Star Spawn Spell. The journal is particularly informative about oceanic matters connected with the Mythos.

Language	+ to Knowledge	Spell Multiplier	SAN Loss
English	+5%	x1	1D6

Spells: Awaken Star Spawn (Incomplete version. Waite's additional notes in his study are required to learn the whole spell)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The Call of Cthulhu, The Shadow over Innsmouth and At the Mountains of Madness by H P Lovecraft
2. Cold Print by Ramsey Campbell
3. Guide to the Severn Valley by Shannen Appel (Valkyrie Magazine 15 and 16)
4. Underground by Marcus Rowland. CoC scenario that appeared in Games Workshop's Good Games Guide. Provided the mechanics for Waite's psychic abilities.
5. X-COM: Terror From the Deep: Sci-fi strategy game by Microprose, heavily influenced by H P Lovecraft and John Wyndham. The game's climatic scene features a massive squid faced alien in a sarcophagus.



NPC's

Name: Reuben Waite

Sex: Male

STR: 12 DEX: 9 INT: 15 Idea: 75 Dam Bonus: +1D4
CON:11 APP: 15 POW: 15 Luck: 75 Hit Points: 12
SIZ: 13 SAN: 0 EDU: 14 Know: 70 Age: 35

Skills:

Archaeology	25	Fast Talk	55
Astronomy	30	Handgun	35
Bargain	40	History	63
Cthulhu Mythos	32	Occult	21
Debate	45	Oratory	68
Drive Auto	40	Psychology	48

Spells: Contact Deep One, Shrivel, Contact Star Spawn of Cthulhu, Awaken Star Spawn of Cthulhu

Waite has the ability to influence people's minds. For the cost of 2 Magic Points he can match his POW against another person's and if the prospective victim fails a resistance roll he/she loses 1D8 SAN. If the victim becomes insane as a result of this attack they will develop an unquestioning devotion to Waite, seeing him as a messianic figure who has come to save them from the misery of their daily lives. Waite uses this power on a daily basis to reinforce individual cult member's loyalty. He is also well versed in the psychological tricks used by some non-Cthulhoid cults e.g. sensory deprivation, brain washing and "love bombing."

Notes: Reuben Waite is descended from the Innsmouth Waites and is part Deep One. He has the protuberant eyes common to Deep One-Human hybrids but none of the other features such as a narrow skull, scaly skin or premature baldness. Waite is an ascetic looking man of tall slim build with an iron-grey crew cut. He is usually dressed in a denim jacket and jeans.

Waite hopes to use the respect and kudos he gains from freeing the Spawn as a means to advance within his Order. In the normal world he would be a pushy young executive eager to climb the corporate ladder without being too bothered who he steps on to do it. He regards the Children as expendable. He will quite happily sacrifice one of them to Yog-Sothoth if he considers it necessary. The likeliest sacrificial victim in this case will be Peter whose injuries make him a liability i.e. he requires care and is unable to participate in cult activities. Waite will stop at virtually nothing to accomplish his goal. The only thing that will give him pause is the prospect of his own injury or death. Waite may be insane but there's nothing wrong with his sense of self-preservation.

Name: Peter Johnson

Sex: Male

STR: 10 DEX: 10 INT: 13 Idea: 65 Dam Bonus: None
CON:12 APP: 10 POW: 11 Luck: 55 Hit Points: 13
SIZ: 14 SAN: 40 EDU: 12 Know: 60 Age: 20

Skills:

Cthulhu Mythos	03	Library Use	37
Drive Auto	29	Occult	60
History	25	Read/Write Latin	20

Notes: Overweight, bespectacled with a bookish air about him Peter comes across as a bit of a nerd. The only son of doting parents Peter saw university as an escape from the stifling environment of family life. After arriving in Brichester, Peter soon rebelled against his traditional middle class C of E upbringing. Rather than descend into unabashed hedonism as might be expected in someone away from home for the first time Peter began to flirt with evangelical groups seeing them as purer in spirit than the traditional church. He first encountered Waite during one of the American's preaching sessions in Brichester High Street. Although he found Waite's beliefs bizarre Peter was taken with the force and conviction of his preaching. After obtaining one of the cult's leaflets Peter contacted Waite thinking he would make an excellent subject for his dissertation. Waite responded by visiting Peter's lodgings and using his powers of persuasion recruited Peter into the Children of the Sea.

Peter has been a cult member for long enough to be a true believer. Once rescued, he will need specialist treatment, including the services of a deprogrammer, if he is to recover.



Name: Graham Price

Sex: Male

STR: 14 DEX: 12 INT: 12 Idea: 60 Dam Bonus: +1D4
 CON:15 APP: 11 POW: 13 Luck: 65 Hit Points: 15
 SIZ: 15 SAN: 60 EDU: 12 Know: 60 Age: 42

Skills:

Accounting	20	Mechanical Repair	37
Bargain	35	Operate Hvy Machinery	45
Credit Rating	30	(Tracked Vehicle)	
Drive Auto	49	Shotgun	42
Fist/Punch	55	Spot Hidden	32
Geology	18	Throw	30

Notes: Price is a big brawny man with a red face. He can usually be found in the front bar of the Green Man. Always a heavy drinker he has become a full-blown alcoholic since his wife left him for another man six months ago. His wife's departure has left Price very bitter and he is eager to take his anger out on someone or something. The theft of his dynamite has given him legitimate excuse to hate the Children of the Sea and he will readily join up with the investigators if they seem about take action against the cultists. He will support any aggressive course of action and will even suggest a few of his own. However, his bravado will quickly evaporate if at any time the cultists are getting the upper hand or the situation escalates out of control in some other way (e.g. if the police burst onto the scene). If things start going wrong he will be the first to turn tail and run. Price suffers from nightmares as a result of the Spawn's telepathic communications but attributes them to the upset of his wife leaving combined with too much spirits before he goes to bed.

Children of the Sea Cultists

Sex: Male/Female

STR: 11 DEX: 11 INT: 11 Idea: 55 Dam Bonus: None
 CON:11 APP: 9 POW: 9 Luck: 45 Hit Points: 12
 SIZ: 13 SAN: 35 EDU: 10 Know: 50 Age: 20-40

Skills:

Cthulhu Mythos	05	Fast Talk	15
Debate	20	Oratory	10
Drive Auto	30	Psychology	10

Notes: Waite's cultists are a fairly desperate bunch. Recruited primarily from Brichester's transient population they consist of alcoholics, drug addicts and the socially inadequate. Waite has cured them of their various addictions and has given their lives a purpose. The Children are all fanatically devoted to Waite and will gladly give their lives for his if necessary.

Star Spawn of Cthulhu

STR: 70 INT: 17 Hit Points: 75
CON: 60 POW:21 Move: 20/20 Swimming
 SIZ: 90 DEX: 12

Weapon	Attack %	Damage
Tentacles	80%	9D3
Claw	80%	9D6

San Loss: 1D20/1D6

Armour: 10 pts blubber plus 3 pts/round wound regeneration

Spells: Contact Cthulhu, Contact Star Spawn of Cthulhu, Contact Deep Ones, Contact Old Ones, Dread Curse of Azathoth

Notes: The Star Spawn has been trapped in its vault ever since R'lyeh and its satellite cities sank beneath the sea. The Spawn's chamber was separated from its parent structure during pre-historic shifts in the Earth's crust. The Spawn has only woken once since it's imprisonment. The rising of R'lyeh in 1925 caused it to revive briefly along with other members of its race. Only the Elder Sign left by Sir Gilbert Morley prevented its escape. The creature's struggles to break out of its tomb were responsible for the famous Severn Bank earthquake. When R'lyeh resubmerged the Spawn fell back into its death sleep.





HOW MANY ROADS TO SAN FELICE?

A magical realm for the Unknown Armies RPG

by Dylan Craig

Like the Cardboard Palace (Post-modern Magic, pg. 146), San Felice is a pocket universe that can be accessed using the correct artifact - in this case, one of several battered copies of a dime novel entitled *How Many Roads to San Felice?* The main differences between the Palace and San Felice are that San Felice has full-time inhabitants (demons, admittedly, but inhabitants none the less), and fairly porous edges, which allow entrance to and from the astral plane. This means that San Felice has its share of unusual citizens - from astral parasites in the hayloft to Abominable Servants hitched up on the high street.

San Felice has the appearance of a generic Western town of the American Frontier era; dusty streets, a railroad, tumbleweeds, the whole shebang. Two features unique to this realm maintain this illusion:

Firstly, it is impossible to bring any anachronistic technology or skills into the realm. These items or knowledges are overwritten with (replaced by, or, in the case of skills, reassigned to) a period-appropriate equivalent. This effect might turn an AK-74 into a Winchester, or a *Hack the Pentagon* skill into *Play Honky-Tonk Piano*. A character's obsession skill cannot be overwritten; neither can artifacts containing a magical charge or enchantment. This effect lasts as long as the character remains in the realm. The changes can be left up to the character to decide, or handled by the GM, which can lead to the amusing situation of a character having to figure out what he or she is skilled at while in the realm.

Secondly, the "citizens" of San Felice (minor spirits, detailed below), are com-

pletely unable to carry out anachronistic conversations or deal with concepts that don't fit into the paradigm. This block can take the form of simple confusion ("What in heck are you talking about, pardner?"), astounding feats of self-delusion ("Nope, son, I don't see these here tentacles you're a-talking 'bout. Looks like a regular hoss to me!"), or simply a blank stare and mental hiccup, followed by "Sorry, drifted off there. What was it you wanted again?" Only travelers from outside the realm, or major spirits (see below) are able to register, and converse normally about, such topics.

Part 1 - Getting there

There are lots of roads to San Felice; as many as several dozen copies of the tattered novel exist, each one shabbier than the last. To enter the realm, a character simply has to devote his or her full attention to reading the novel. After a few pages (1-10 minutes) - during which the reader experiences a growing sensation of "getting into" the story - they simply cease to exist in the "real" world and appear somewhere in San Felice. This style of disappearance means that no one would, for instance, notice a character disappearing from a lunch counter, even if they were sitting adjacent to them when it happened. Friends or relatives might remember that so-and-so was here a second ago, and realize that they aren't any more, but be completely unable to explain where or when exactly they went.

Copies of the book come in several formats and sizes, but the most common "incarnation" is a dog-eared small-for-

mat paperback with an ink illustration of a crossroads on the cover. No author is listed. The publishers are identified as Peyote Press, Chicago - of whom, needless to say, no record exists. The "story", such as it is, appears different every time the book is read; if the pages are read out of sequence or singly transcribed, they will appear to lack any continuity, each seeming to exist as a page from a separate narrative. This is because each page is, in fact, a portal to a separate series of events currently happening in the pocket universe of San Felice, the very set of events the reader would be deposited into if they continued reading long enough. It is thus possible to skim-read the book, looking for a particular type of event (such as a gunfight), or a particular character, and begin reading from that point, which will bring the reader into the scene in question when they shift into the book.

The book itself is not an artifact; instead, the living narrative itself is the source of the book's power, and a fairly major one at that. Hence, anyone who faithfully transcribes or dictates the novel, a page at a time, taking care not to read long enough to enter the story, will be able to create a functioning copy (this process is worth a rank-2 Unnatural stress check). The only restriction on this is that the medium on which the narrative is stored is a physical, tangible one; hence, dictating onto wax cylinders would work, but magnetic storage media (audio tapes, computer discs) would not. An audible copy has the benefit that several people may listen at once, and thus be transported to San Felice simultaneously.

The only problem with transcription is that, apparently, only a finite number of instances of the narrative can exist at once, and when a copy is made, one of the other copies disappears. This tendency has led students of the occult to speculate that because the number of portals, or "roads", to San Felice seems to be finite, that the story's title is in fact a riddle of some sort, waiting to be solved. What affect such a solution would have remains to be seen.



Part 2 - San Felice

San Felice is a town of around two hundred souls, and covers an approximate area of forty square miles. The town is built in the Mexican style, with mostly single-story adobe buildings with small courtyards in front.

The town has three large buildings: the taphouse, the jail, and the church. The church is situated in the center of the town, with the jail and taphouse on the fringes on either side. The town has few “roads”, as such; although the houses and shops are separated with cobbled alleyways barely wide enough for a single rider on horseback, the main streets themselves are little more than beaten earth and peter out a few yards outside the town. San Felice is set in a bowl of hills; those walking out of town can walk for hours and still never reach the crest of these hills, or the lands beyond. The town’s single railroad never delivers an actual train to the town, although one is always expected “tomorrow at noon”. The town also has a large warren of interconnected basements and cellars, some of which contain stairs leading down to the underground caverns from which the town’s aquifer draws its water.

Around two-thirds of the town’s inhabitants are stock western archetypes - cowboys, bankers, schoolmarm, etc. By and large, these are minor spirits and suffer from a “blinkered” vision of reality as described above. This is not to say that they lack three-dimensionality, however; apart from a certain tendency to act in a vaguely clichéd manner (“Sheriff, come quick! The Winslow gang’s a-robbin’ the bank!”), they appear as human as any “real” person. In reality, these creatures are simply ghosts, and while they have a semblance of real life while in the town, they can never really leave or be killed.

The remaining third of the townsfolk are “exotic” in some way or another; either they are major spirits with enough magickal essence to be able to transcend the town’s consensual reality, or they are visitors from the “real” world. Needless to say, visitors can be killed in San

Felice just as they would in reality; this does not apply to the major spirits who, like their minor counterparts, fade away when killed and reappear elsewhere in the town within a few days. All visitors, of course, will have in their possession the book that brought them to the realm; while in the town, the book serves as a convenient way of tracking down other inhabitants or “teleporting” from one location to another; one simply sits down and begins reading. Note that worn paperbacks will replace copies of the book that exist on anachronistic media when entering the realm.

The only way out of San Felice is to read a non-fiction book set in a contemporary real-world location. Any location is viable, even if it was not the location that the reader entered from. A visitor might thus enter the realm from a subway train in New York, and reappear in Rio de Janeiro - as long as he or she can find a non-fiction book set in Rio de Janeiro to read while in San Felice. This, of course, is a tricky proposition, seeing as all books of this type are overwritten as anachronisms when brought into the realm; suitable novels thus have to be written in San Felice, from memory, and disappear from the town with their reader. A pricey market for such books has thus sprung up among the town’s “transient” population.

A character’s reappearance in the real world takes much the same form as their initial disappearance, in that it arouses no awareness among bystanders. However, while the character’s skills revert to their pre-disappearance titles (unless they were improved using experience points during the character’s stay, in which they retain their Western flavor), the same does not go for any equipment they brought with them. A Peacemaker stays a Peacemaker, even if it was a Glock when the character entered the realm. Characters will also find that time has passed on a one-to-one basis while they were in San Felice; if they spent two weeks in the town, they have been missing for two weeks in the real world.

Part 3 - Using San Felice in your game

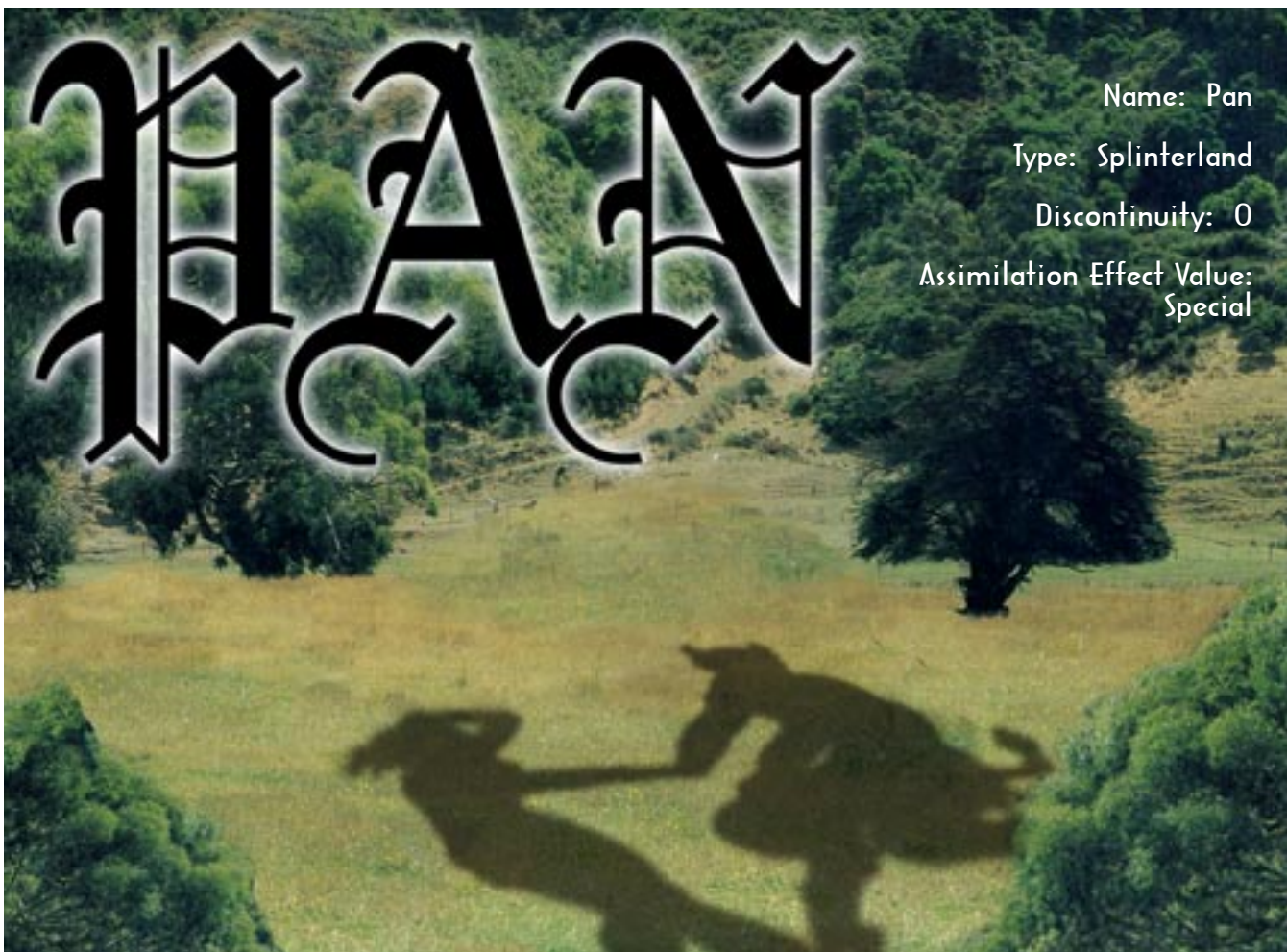
If you are playing *Unknown Armies*, San Felice might make an interesting and atmosphere-refreshing interlude for dukes who need to lay low for a while, somewhere where their enemies are unlikely to find them. This works well when used in conjunction with the town’s perpetually expected noon train; imagine the PC’s faces when, after several days (or weeks) of peaceful rest, their midmorning siesta is disturbed by a piercing steam whistle!

Alternately, the party may have ended up in San Felice by accident, after picking up copies of a battered paperback Western from a cardboard box left on public transport. In this case, they need to find out how to get back to “reality”, and avoid the attentions of the box’s owner, who wants her books back.

Finally, the party might have to track down a duke who has “gone native” in San Felice, perhaps to warn him or her about approaching danger or to find out some piece of information. Once again, the steam whistle and the noon train might herald the arrival of danger.

If you are playing another game set in a Victorian or Wild West context, San Felice can still be used by assuming that the town manages to exist by “borrowing” fragments of historical reality and popular fiction, and cobbling them together to form a coherent, “real”, realm. In this case, the characters might be sucked up during one of these cosmic cut-and-pastes, and be forced to deal with a bunch of locals who act like characters from dime novels, not to mention monsters, time-travelers, and all kinds of “dang-blasted weirdness”. The focus of the game would be discovering how to get back to their reality - but imagine the chaos if they ended up in the “occult underground” world of *Unknown Armies* by mistake!





Name: Pan

Type: Splinterland

Discontinuity: 0

Assimilation Effect Value:
Special

by Norm Fenlason

Legend

The Land of Arcadia was a magical place – a bountiful place where rustic inhabitants while away their time in an endless summer. Arcadia was a land of Nymphs, Satyrs, Fauns, and Cyclops; ruled by the Great God Pan. A land where rationality was abandoned, and mysterious forces operated. Saint Cesarius of Arles writes of the inhabitants of Arcadia and their rituals:

“... disguise themselves as stags: others don the skins of sheep or goats, yet others disguise themselves with animal-like masks, exultant and rejoicing because, having assumed a bestial appearance, they no longer seem to be men.”

- Quoted by Nigel Jackson
in *Masks of Misrule*

Reality

Eons ago a mysterious Dark Lord generated the land Pan. Splitting it off from its primary dimension, the land of Arcadia. This Dark Lord came to be known as the Great God Pan. Hapless victims, who find the splintered Land of Arcadia, are transformed into new citizens of Pan to serve his evil purpose. The unwary victim then joins in a never-ending cycle of wanton debauchery.

History

In the early years of Greece and after the Trojan War, the great Ulysses’ wife Penelope, who may have been a Nymph, bore a child by Hermes, the Greek Messenger God. Hermes was disguised in the form of a billy goat when he mated with Penelope. Pan, the result of this strange coupling, was born covered in hair with the horns and feet of a goat.

It is said that upon Ulysses return to Penelope he spied this malformed child and stormed off never to return.

Another legend has it that the child is the offspring of all Penelope’s suitors. This may have been the true reason Ulysses killed all her suitors. In reality, the suitors were, a group of darkling minions led by one masquerading as the god Hermes. The minion’s goal was to secure a human form for their Dark Lord, and in this they were successful, the result being Pan.

Pan grew in the region of Arcadia as the son of nobility, but as an outcast due to his deformities. Pan quickly created a movement to promote himself to god status with the locals. Using his dark powers, he was able to form a viable religion that exists to this day. With the wane of Arcadian power, Pan took part of Arcadia and split it off from its pri-



mary dimension. This splinterland came to be called Pan after its creator, and Pan himself became a powerful Dark Lord.

Description

Timepieces in Pan do not work, even though the sun appears to move in a normal manner across the sky. Light breezes keep the temperature a constant 23°C (73°F). High fluffy clouds spot the brilliantly blue sky and faint strains of what sounds like lyre and pipe music can be heard playing a faint, familiar melody. Light scents of honeysuckle fade in and out of sensory perception triggering pleasant memories of better days and everyone feels extremely relaxed and happy.

When visitors first enter Pan, they'll notice the pastoral nature of the hilly countryside stretching into the distance. It is dotted with rocky outcrops and small stands of trees. Sheep are grazing in the knee-high grass that covers the hillsides.

In the distance, on a hilltop sits a marble building composed of columned walls and an open center courtyard. In the center appears to be an altar-like slab of marble piled high with local fruits, breads, cheeses, and bottles of wine. Wandering around the structure are naked humanoid figures eating food, playing musical instruments, and occasionally dancing. The humanoids appear to be male and female, but on closer inspection the male creatures lower bodies look to be covered in fur. On other hilltops, further in the distance, are similar structures. These structures also have humanoids cavorting around them.

All the females are lithe, winsome, and uncommonly beautiful. Their charisma is apparent even from a distance. But there appears to be three types of males. Some have the hind legs of a goat; others have the hind legs of a deer. There are also some that have more hair on their upper body, even covering their face, with a tail and hind legs of a horse. The goat men are *Satyrs*, the deer men are *Fauns*, and the horse men are *Sele-nii*, a form of *Satyr*.

Getting to Pan

The proto-dimension of Pan has a discontinuity of 1, meaning it is directly accessible from the primary dimension. However, few visitors ever return from Pan and tales of personal experience of this proto-dimension will be rare.

Assimilation

During assimilation, visitors will slowly change into a woodland creature. Faun, Satyr, or Nymph based primarily on sex. With this transformation also comes loss of memory and submergence of identity. Once the assimilation is complete, visitors will have no recollection of who and what they once were. Assimilation starts 60 minutes after entering Pan and continues for the next 10 hours. In the first eight hours there is no change in external appearance, but internal motivations and mindset start to change. Motivation and mindset are a function of the target creature the visitor will turn into. In the last two hours, as the memories fade completely, bones will start to deform, hair sprouts and the visitors shape shifts to their new form (detailed below). After the transformation is complete, the visitor will only look slightly like their former self.

Assimilation into a Satyr starts with the visitor having bully-like emotions, displaying violent and aggressive characteristics and an overbearing personality. Fauns will become increasingly passive and tender, preferring avoidance to direct action. Nymphs will become coy, demure and increasingly flighty. A sense of play and lack of seriousness will enter the outlook of all visitors in the beginning. Once the second hour of assimilation begins, 10% of the visitor's memories and personality will be lost per hour. Should a visitor fail their Willpower check and join the Great Dance, assimilation will accelerate by a factor of 10 with complete transformation finished within the hour. Should visitors notice the assimilation effects, they can attempt to resist (see below). Once the assimilation is complete, the newly formed creatures will strip their clothes

off, drop any equipment they are carrying, and join the frolicking inhabitants.

Dark minions that fall prey to Pan's assimilation will universally transform into a Cyclops. After the Cyclops' personalities are dismissed, the True Masters of Pan plant controlling suggestions and backgrounds; and bend the Dark Minions to serve their will.

Technology will operate in the first 60 minutes, but will fail shortly after. The guiding physics of the dimension is that of mythical Greece.

The Sikkinis – the Great Dance

*"Come where the round of the dance is trod,
Horn and hoof of the Goat-foot God.
Come, O Come to the heartbeats drum..."*

-Doreen Valiente

When the sun starts to set, all Satyrs, Fauns and such start to collect firewood from the surrounding woods. They place the wood on the altar in the center of the building. Once it is placed, it bursts into flames creating an enormous bonfire. Some Satyrs produce fresh bottles of wine and stronger spirits. Others begin to play pipes and primitive drums. They start playing the cadence for the Great Dance. The basso profundo of the drums serves as counterpoint to the dizzying weave of the pipes. The Fauns and Nymphs start to dance with each other in a circle around the fire. In the beginning, the dance is graceful and pleasant, but starts to build in tempo. An occasional Satyr stops piping and joins in the dance as a low sounding drone of deep-throated voices start to build. The tempo increases again as the Dance turns into less of an art and into more of a sexual statement. The Nymphs dance enticingly around, teasing both the Fauns and Satyrs. They seem to dodge the Satyrs advances, preferring the fauns. Occasionally a Satyr will catch a Nymph and drag the luckless maiden into the bushes. Other Nymphs go willingly away with the fauns and bestial sounds soon start to emanate from the surrounding woods. The Dance takes the entire night. Most of the inhabitants will have moved off into the woods by the time the sun starts to peek above the horizon. The bonfire



will begin to go out as the first rays of light strike the marble columns.

Visitors watching the Great Dance will feel the urge to join in. To avoid joining, should they choose to not dance, each visitor must make a difficult test of Willpower. Failure indicates that the visitor has succumbed to the magic of the Dance, sheds any equipment or clothing they are wearing, and joins in the wantonness of the moment. Satyrs will drag off female visitors should they catch one, while the fauns will attempt milder persuasions. Nymphs will tease and expect to be caught by male visitors ensnared by the Great Dance's power.

Satyrs

*"I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me and sounds
Of indistinguishable motions, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod."*

-Wordsworth

The Satyrs of mythology were bestial creatures, half man and half beast. Satyrs have the legs, hips, tail and hooves of a goat; and the torso, arms, face, hands and genitals of a man. They wear no clothing but a thin belt made of rope. To this they affix a wineskin and their pipes. In appearance Satyrs have the face of a man, but with coarser features, more hair and ram's horns protruding from their head. In personality, they are gruff, overbearing and aggressive. However, they are more the bully and if they cannot cower an opponent, they will flee and strike later from ambush.

The Satyrs love dancing, and control the Great Dance, the Sikinnis, which is accompanied by the sound of their syrinx pipes. They love wine and drink; and are in a state of continuous drunkenness and sexual expectation. Satyrs love most to copulate with Nymphs (or other females) and will take every opportunity to corner one. They will force their desires on unwilling victims and seem to delight in doing so.

The older male visitors trapped in Pan are more likely to transform into a Silenii, a older Satyr. Unlike the Satyrs, the Silenii are half man and half horse.

Instead of goat legs and tail, the Silenii have the legs, tail, and hooves of a horse. They also have more body hair on the human half – more animal-like than human. The Silenii are not nearly as Nymph crazy as the Satyr, they are more interested in drinking wine and getting drunk. Papposilenus, the oldest Silinii, is one of the leaders of the Satyrs

Satyrs and Silenii will avoid talking to any non-assimilated visitors and move off into the woods when confronted. However, a group of Satyrs will stalk and sexually attack a female visitor should she appear vulnerable.



By him we breathe, we live

During assimilation, male non-darkling visitors will transform into a Satyr (versus a Faun) on a 3+ on 1D6. Older male visitors that roll to become a Satyr, have a 2 chance in 6 (1 or 2 on 1d6) of becoming Silenii instead.

The Maenad Nymphs

Nymphs were classically portrayed as the daughters of Zeus, the Ruler of the Gods, but in Greek the word Nymph means a girl old enough to marry or who has just married. In Pan they are the

form that all females take. All Nymphs are unbelievably graceful, incredibly beautiful, and enticingly attractive. The Nymphs like to hang out with the Fauns, who they consider fair enough to give of themselves willingly. They fear Satyrs and dislike their bestiality, but still take every opportunity to tease them. The Nymphs will never go willingly with a Satyr to couple.

During the day, Nymphs will gather with the fauns and sing in harmony with their flutes, or will engage in lively, albeit meaningless, conversation. Their every move is full of style and grace. Their voices tinkle like glass charms in the breeze. They step lightly and dance at a moments notice. They enthusiastically join the Great Dance, even though the chances are great that a Satyr will catch them.

Nymphs wear no clothing, but make wreaths of flowers they wear in their long luxuriant hair. Their charisma is very hard to resist, male or female, should they turn on the charm. They will talk to non-assimilated visitors, but they will literally have nothing to say, unless it is about the previous night's activities.

Fauns

In classical times Fauns were the rural spirits of the wood and agriculture, and represented its fertility and wildness. Like the Satyrs they appear to be half-human but with the legs, tail, and hooves of a deer. Unlike the Satyrs, fauns have handsome youthful faces and smooth-skinned arms.

Fauns have the ears of a deer and some even have nub-horns. The fauns are generally shy, but have a good sense of humor, a joyous laugh and are easily seduced by the Nymphs. They play a flute called a shawm that produces a haunting, complimentary thread in the Great Dance's musical fabric. The Nymphs do not fear the Fauns, as they do the Satyrs and enjoy their company. Fauns will talk with non-assimilated visitors, but will be easily distracted and will wander off to join others in their normal activities.



In assimilation, male non-darklings will transform into a Faun on a roll of 1 or 2 on 1D6.

Cyclops

In classical Greece, the Cyclops were offspring of the marriage of earth and sky, Gaia and Uranus. They were responsible for forging thunder and lightning. Whenever a Dark Minion is assimilated into the physics of Pan, they become a Cyclops. The True Masters of Pan immediately assert control over the newborn Cyclops and bend them to their new tasks.

In the wee hours of dawn, after the inhabitants wander away from the Great Dance, the Cyclops emerge from their lairs to perform tasks the True Masters set for them. The Cyclops harvest the local foods and place them on the altars. They remove meal remains; clean the temple areas, including the remains of the bonfires; and place fresh bottles of wine and spirits. The True Masters require their slaves to also take care of the buildings, quickly repairing any damage from rough play, or the effects of the ages. The Cyclops are also responsible for tending to the livestock, which they take turns doing in the daytime. However, the Cyclops are sensitive to the light and even though they are out during the day tending sheep, they will stay in the shadows.

The other inhabitants of Pan stay away from the Cyclops at all times. The Cyclops will eat them when given the chance. At night, the Cyclops will take an occasional Satyr, which they prefer, to be roasted on their spits. However, the Cyclops will take anyone wandering around in the dark away from the Great Dance.

The True Masters of Pan

On every hilltop there stands a rectangular marble building on a raised series of steps. Marble tables are spread among the trees and grass on the surrounding hillside. The buildings have gleaming white marble columns topped by intricate capitals supporting huge marble crossbeams, called architraves.

Creatures of Pan

Satyrs

Strength:	8	Education:	1	Move:	3/10/20/35
Constitution:	6	Charisma:	4	Skill/Dam:	3/3
Agility:	5	Empathy:	1	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	3	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	1D6

Fauns

Strength:	5	Education:	2	Move:	3/10/20/35
Constitution:	4	Charisma:	8	Skill/Dam:	3/1
Agility:	8	Empathy:	2	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	4	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	2D6

Maenad Nymphs

Strength:	3	Education:	3	Move:	4/12/30/50
Constitution:	3	Charisma:	10	Skill/Dam:	3/1
Agility:	8	Empathy:	3	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	2D6

Cyclops

Strength:	29	Education:	1	Move:	4/10/25/45
Constitution:	22	Charisma:	1	Skill/Dam:	6/5D6
Agility:	3	Empathy:	5	Hits:	100/200
Intelligence:	3	Initiative:	3	# Appear:	1D6
Unarmed Melee Combat	27				
Armed Melee Combat	29				

Cyclops are humanoid, 18 feet tall, very muscular, and virtually hairless. They have only one eye and carry large clubs. Due to their size, Cyclops have a long unarmed range. Club is -1 to hit and does 1D6+14 damage.

True Masters

Strength:	-	Education:	3	Move:	0
Constitution:	-	Charisma:	5	Skill/Dam:	-/-
Agility:	-	Empathy:	18	Hits:	1500/2000
Intelligence:	9	Initiative:	-	# Appear:	*See text
Human/Darkling Empathy	20				
Project Emotion	20				
Project Thought	18				

The True Masters of Pan are sentient buildings. They are very empathic but cannot move or physically fight.

Friezes and bas-reliefs cover the triglyphs and metopes on top of the beams. These sculptures show the various inhabitants in different states of sexual activity. Others show Fauns and Satyrs playing while Nymphs dance. A large ring of creatures dancing around a

bonfire is a recurring theme.

In the center of the building, open to the sky above, stands a large raised marble stone about one meter high. The stone appears to be an altar, but the top

continued on page 54...



by Norm Fenslon

TIR-NA-NOG

Name: Tir-na-nog

Type: Splinterland

Discontinuity: 0; special, see below

Assimilation Effect Value: Special

They [the Tuatha De Danaan] built a massive underground fortress at the Boyne, which is known today as New Grange. After the battle, they used their Druids to blight the fields of the Milesians, until at last, the invaders made peace with the Danaans through Manannan. The first king of the Irish Milesians, Crimthán MacNair, is buried at New Grange, as his wife was Danaan. But the majority of the Danaans joined with the Sidhe and dwelt in the hills, and Manannan put invisible walls around their glades, and made them immortal, though they already were long lived. He brewed them his ale, and fed them his swine, and it was so.

- Greywolf the Wanderer

Legend

In tales of Eire, legends abound of the Land of Faerie where impish elves and fairies kidnap travelers and take them back to their lands. If these victims reappear, they do so years later and unchanged by time. Tales tell of people chasing partys in the woods where one can hear the partygoers but never seem to catch up to them. Some victims catch the party and join in the festivities, carousing the evening away. These victims report that they spent only one night, while the world they knew has progressed many years or decades. Old wives' tales tell of toadstool rings that should be avoided. To step into them sends the errant child into the Land of Faerie to be raised there by elves, never to see their family again.

The legend behind the tales has it that Tir-na-nog is the land of the Faeries. The Fairies (Tuatha De Danaan and the Sidhe) were forced into magical

lands when the Milesians (the current Irish) drove them out of Ireland. Tir-na-nog means the Land of Promise. The people of Tir-na-nog are called Tuatha De Danaan or the children of the goddess, Danu.

Reality

Tir-na-nog is a generic name for a group pocket proto-dimensions (splinterlands) that share the same host creatures (the Faeries) and proto-dimensional physics. Populated with beings that thrive on the joy that captive humans generate in their idyllic world, the Faeries are not above kidnapping the occasional human. The primary proto-dimensional assimilation effect is the loss of memory. The Faeries create a festival atmosphere with free-flowing wine, never-ending song, and the warm-hearted attention of the opposite sex to keep victims there as long as possible. Captives and visitors alike soon loose all memory of who or what they are, prefer-

ring to spend all their days eating, drinking, carousing or partaking in the other offered pastoral activities.

History

There was once a single proto-dimension that served as the Fairies home. Being a wonderful and fair place, the Land of Faerie(Tir-na-nog), held the same peaceful reverence as Elysium, Eden, and Shangri La. This fair land came under the notice of a Dark Lord who immediately attempted to subvert this paradise. But the Faeries were powerful empaths in their own right and more so with the assistance of the Sidhe. A mighty war took place between the Faerie races and the minions of the Dark Lord. As a result of these empathic battles the Land of Faerie shattered into unnumbered pockets (The Lands of Faerie) and the Sidhe scattered. This mighty battle and the disappearance of the Faeries from the prime plane formed the basis of the High Elf legends



that Tolkien formalized into a modern mythology.

Getting to Faerie

The nature of these proto-dimensional pockets allows easy entrance and exit to each proto-dimension. p-dim. However, humans, once entering the Lands of Faerie, feel disinclined to leave making Tir-na-nog a dangerous place for humans. There are three main methods of getting to Faerie depending on the nature of the particular Faerie Land.

In the first type, the Faeries actively attempt to kidnap human victims. A Faerie will move into the prime plane to lure a victim into an overlapping demon-ground. The Faerie will use Project Emotion and Project Thought to paint pictures in their victim's mind. Chasing after these images leads the victim into the gateway to Faerie. This is the source of the disappearing party legend as the Faerie created illusions of a party just out of reach of his victim. The victim catches up to the illusion when it is in Faerie itself. In Tolkien terms, this type of Faerie land is the home of the Wood Elves.

The second type forms the basis of the toadstool ring myth. Actual, naturally occurring portals exist between a Land of Faerie and the prime plane. These have different appearances on earth: ring of mushrooms, a hole in the ground, a patch of green grass in the middle of a forest, a circle of stones, etc. Portals of this type are not constant, but are created spontaneously and uncontrollably. These portals will immediately transport the straying traveler to one of the lands of Tir-na-nog.

The third type is the hardest to get to for humans. This is a whole Land of Faerie complete with a Faerie Queen, court and retinue. These have fixed entry points such as a gap in a hollow tree or passage through a crevasse or a cave. This type of Faerie Land is the source of Tolkien's *Lothlorien*. These entry ports are geographically fixed portals established eons past after the war with the Dark Lord.

The lands of Tir-na-nog, the Lands

of Faerie, are pocket proto-dimensions – meaning that their extents are limited. All paths away from the center of the dimension ultimately curve back to the center. Up is unlimited should one desire to fly up, and down is also infinite should one wish to tunnel away.

Description

When entering a Land of Faerie through a non-permanent portal, the change in scenery is hardly noticeable. Set in woodland environments, the flora and fauna of the prime plane change imperceptibly to that of Faerie as the victim moves into the proto-dimension proper. When entering through a fixed portal, the scenery change can be quite dramatic. For example, the red rock formations in the harsh, dried-up Australian Outback can harbor a portal leading to the Land of Faerie's lush fertile woodland environment.

Faerie is a mythical woodland. It consists of a fairly dense forest with lush undergrowth. The sunlight that filters down from the entangled canopy is tinted with a bit too much yellow giving the shadows less contrast and highlighting the green of the surrounding plants. Although dense, the forest is not oppressive and emanates a sense of warmth and peacefulness. Woodland creatures of the European continent flourish in the undergrowth and show no fear of human visitors. Fruits, nuts, berries and other edible plants grow natively all around. These are always in season and taste as good as they look. In the morning hours, there is a slight mist that makes it difficult to see more than 5-10 meters into the forest. This burns off as the sun moves overhead and is gone by noon. The temperature never rises above 23° C (73° F) cooling only slightly to 20° C in the early hours.

At night, the stars are arranged in unrecognizable constellations. A moon will rise an hour after sunset and is always full, filling the forest with a ghostly glow that allows moving about. There is no Man in this Moon, and instead of the silvery disk seen from earth, the moon will appear slightly

golden and featureless. Shortly after midnight, the mist starts to rise, which in the dark, limits visibility to a couple of meters, and deadens sounds.

Faerie villages can be found nestled in massive branches of the huge trees in the forest center, or in finely crafted stonework buildings on the forest floor. Near the villages, the smell of the hearth fills the air. Sometimes the smell of a roast or baked bread drifts across a visitor's path. The feeling is one of contentment and happiness.

The inhabitants of the Lands of Faerie appear as Societe Anachronista. Their dress is medieval, but the cut is unfamiliar. There is a distinct lack of technology. Master craftsmen handle most tasks. The quality of the cloth and handmade goods is remarkable. The visitor feels he has entered a fantasyland from the middle ages. One can almost hear the knight's approach and the ladies sighing.

Assimilation

Assimilation in the Lands of Faerie consists of several main effects. The primary assimilation effect is the loss of memory. The mechanics of the memory loss is based on a percentage. Living in a Land of Faerie causes a 5% memory loss per hour. For each hour add 1 point of memory loss. When the character attempts an action requiring drawing something from memory, roll a d20. If the value is above the current tally, the character succeeds in remembering it. For example a victim has been in Faerie for 6 hours conversing on the morality of trees. She then attempts to tune a portable long distance radio to contact an extraction team. For the 6 hours, the total is 30%, so the tally is 6. In order to remember the frequency to tune in, she must roll higher than a 6 on a d20. After 20 hours, the memory loss is total and even the identity is gone.

However, the submerged personality continues to work underneath the screen of the lost memory, and can ultimately free the victim from his idyllic enthrallment. Each day after the first that memory has completely faded, the



victim gets a 2% cumulative chance of the memory dam breaking and all the victim's memories returning in an overwhelming flood. Once a day the referee rolls against this cumulative percentage. Success indicates that the memory loss has failed, and the victim remembers everything.

Another assimilation effect of major importance is the time scale difference. For each day spent in a Land of Faerie, 360 days pass in the prime dimension. For each hour spent in Faerie, 15 days pass in the prime dimension.

A secondary assimilation effect is the increased healing that the victim undergoes. All wounds, physical and mental illness heal at a very accelerated rate. Within 3 days, all these are com-

pletely healed. Should the victim return to his dimension, he retains the well being attained while in Faerie.

Another secondary effect is that technological devices more complicated than an acoustic musical instrument fail to operate. The principle rulers of the original Land of Faerie caused this change in physics to counter an attempted takeover by denizens of Mechaica. The result for victims is that all technological devices stop working, including firearms. The local Faeries, use long knives similar to shortswords and bows.

Faeries

Theory has it that Faeries are the positive analogy to the Dark Elves. While the Dark Elves thrive on the pain, suf-

fering, fear and depression of humans, the Faeries live on the joy and well being that humans can generate. Physically, they are similar to the Dark Elves being slight of build with impish features. Unlike the Dark Elves, the Faeries are generally of less ominous appearance.

Faeries are extremely empathic like their darker cousins and well versed in darkling empathic abilities. They can Dimension Walk, Project Thought, and Emotion like the Dark Elves. The Faeries cannot Project Fear as this diminishes the level of empathic nourishment their victims emanate. Unlike the Dark Elves, the Faeries can and do use empathic sorcery. These skills have been denied the Dark Elves due the danger the Elves would present their masters. However, Faerie ability in the sorcerous skills is not common.

Morality in the Land of Faerie

While the Faeries live off of positive human conditions, they have no particular love of humans. After their war with the Dark Lord, the Faeries are distrustful of human visitors. They prefer to kidnap humans and bring them to their dimension. The Faeries have no problem killing humans they think are in league with their dark adversaries. Due to their paranoia and ongoing conflict with their nemesis Dark Lord, the Faeries will take measures considered atrocious by human standards. Some Faeries take delight in the eventual suffering human victims have when they return to their homes decades later, in time to see their loved ones die of old age. Paradise can have its costs.

In the Hall of the Faerie Queen

In those Faerie proto-dimensions with large Faerie populations (over 1,000) there will always be a Queen. The royal line is completely matriarchal with the ruling Queen demanding and receiving unwavering loyalty. Her word is law.

From 20 to 100 faerie warriors serve as the personal guard of the Faerie

Faerie Queen

Strength: 5	Education: 5	Move: 3/10/20/35
Constitution: 4	Charisma: 10	Skill/Dam: 8/3
Agility: 8	Empathy: 16	Hits: 10/20
Intelligence: 5	Initiative: 4	# Appear: 1
Human Empathy 20		
Project Emotion 20		
Project Thought 18		
Dimension Walk 14		
Change Environment(Special) 14		

Queens Guard

Strength: 8	Education: 3	Move: 3/10/20/35
Constitution: 7	Charisma: 9	Skill/Dam: 8/4
Agility: 7	Empathy: 10	Hits: 10/20
Intelligence: 5	Initiative: 5	# Appear: 20-100
Archery 14		
Melee Combat(Armed)16		

These warriors are fiercely loyal and serve only their queen. While they have a high empathic ability, they do not generally use it.

Normal Joe Faerie

Strength: 6	Education: 4	Move: 3/10/20/35
Constitution: 4	Charisma: 9	Skill/Dam: 7/3
Agility: 8	Empathy: 10	Hits: 10/20
Intelligence: 5	Initiative: 3	# Appear: 1
Human Empathy 16		
Project Emotion 16		
Project Thought 18		
Dimension Walk 18		



Queen. These are handpicked fighters skilled in the long-knife and bow and will lay their lives down for their queen. The Queen will hold court in a centralized building with a large retinue of advisors and courtesans. The courtiers hold minor intrigues to curry favor with the queen. These intrigues are always good-natured and serve to keep the ruling elite on their toes.

The Faerie Queen has ultimate responsibility to defend her Land of Faerie from darkling attack. She is a powerful empath having a 40% increase over the average attribute value. However, she is very concerned about darkling incursions and is the focus of Faerie paranoia. There is no way she will trust any outsider.

Revelry, Or, the Ever Moving Party

In dense ancient forests, and in some parks these days, Faeries use the ages old ruse of a party just at the edge of perception. A Faerie will use Project Thought and Project Emotion to cause a potential kidnap victim to chase after this party. The goal of the Faerie is to

isolate the victim and move him across the waiting portal. Should the kidnap be interrupted, the faerie will Dimension Walk away leaving his victim with a longing for the party that was not there. Should the victim move through the portal, he will be teleported to a party like the one he was chasing. The kidnapper and his compatriots will engage the victim in superior revelry until the victim's memories are completely gone. They will then invite him to their homes. All during the victim's revelry and later *captivity*, the Faeries feed on the good times experienced by their new visitors.

Trapped in Paradise

Once wiped free of memories, human visitors are brought back to the village to join other human *captives*. The abundance of the surrounding forest is freely offered to the Faerie's human visitors. The Faeries themselves do not eat food, but they will partake of the rather strong alcoholic beverages they brew. With plentiful food and drink, each evening is a party. The Faeries are distinctive musicians and have good voices. The paradise includes drinking, singing, and

dancing around the large bonfires built in the central clearing. The days are spent in long discussions or games of chance or skill. There is no real creativity that takes place, just pleasant activity. This pleasantness serves to feed the Faeries.

Leaving Faerie

The faeries know that their visitors' memories will return someday. When this happens, one of the Faeries will lead the captive to the forest and Dimension Walk him out to his original entrance point. Of course a lot of time may have passed since the victim went into Faerie.

Empaths that recover their memories can also Dimension Walk their own way out of Faerie. In either case, special protections placed on the proto-dimension long ago prevent the empath from returning unassisted.

If a recovered visitor misbehaves, the Faeries will have no compunction in killing him..



... continued from page 50

is covered with bottles of wine, cheeses, breads, fruits and other delicacies. The altar has no marks or stains and is made of the same gleaming white marble as the building. Interspersed among the tables are statues of Satyrs, Fauns and Nymphs on pedestals. Fauns and Nymphs wander among these buildings eating, drinking, dancing and playing flutes or lyres. Lurking among the trees one can spot an occasional Satyr plotting their next mischief.

The True Masters of Pan are these buildings. The buildings contain sentient consciousnesses that prey on the lust, sloth, consumption and reckless abandon that transpire among Pans' inhabitants. Because of this need, the True

Masters take very good care of their charges.

Should a threat to the existence of the buildings or an attempt to remove or subvert the inhabitants be made, the True Masters telepathically call upon the Cyclops to come deal with the invaders.

Resisting Assimilation

Prior to the complete elimination of memories, a visitor may actively resist the assimilation effects. A visitor resists by making a difficult test of Willpower once every 3 hours. Should the visitor succeed, assimilation effects will be stopped for three hours. The visitor does not revert back though, the transformation just stops. Should the visitor fail, the

transformation continues where it left off. The transformation and memory loss continue through the night and during sleep. The act of resisting takes most of the visitor's attention, and should attention be diverted, the character must make a memory test to remember to resist.

Leaving Pan

Empathic adepts can leave Pan by opening a portal. But once assimilation has started, persons wishing to open a portal must pass a memory test to remember how to open it.





XIBALBA

by Norm Fenlason

Name: Xibalba
Type: Splinterland
Discontinuity: 0 (sticky)
Assimilation Effect Value: 0 (special)

Xibalba is a Mayan mythic place of the underworld “a place of heroic testing of mortality.” It is a splinterland protodimension with a Central American flavor and a few strange twists. It is suitable for a variety of plot hooks or plot placements.

The Entrance

The entrance to Xibalba is usually set in a jungle environment, but Xibalba has been spotted in arctic regions as well. Its entrance is visible from the main dimension and appears as a large

hole in the ground that opens into a cavern. The opening hole will be from 100 to 400 meters wide and approximately 2-3 km deep. There is a permanent mist that eddies about 100 meters down the edge of the lip. As the mist swirls, fleeting glimpses of a rain forest canopy and even the ground beneath can be seen. The hole bows out into a cavern 3-4 km in diameter at the base. Good observers may be able to make out what look like natives moving around along the edges.

Entering Xibalba

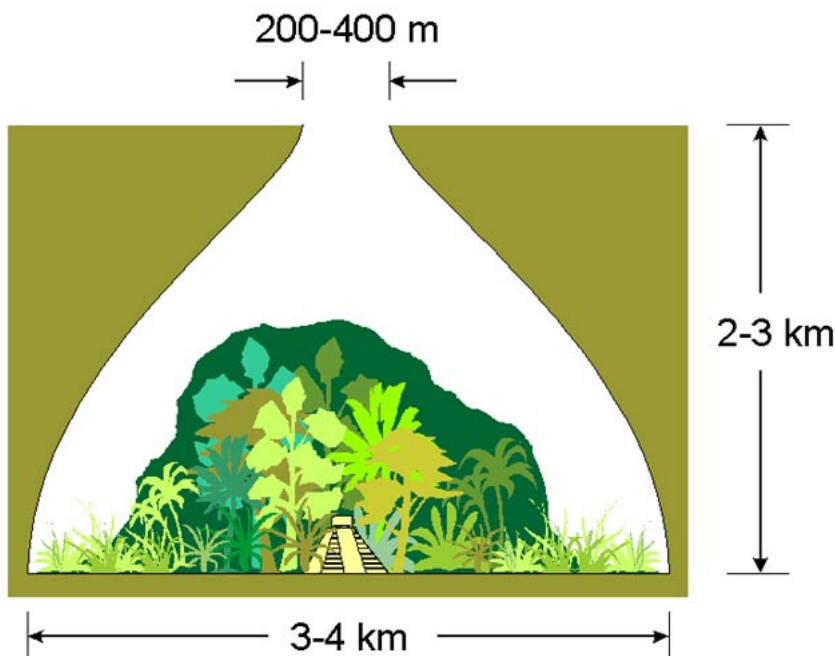
Experienced Dimension Walkers can transport straight into Xibalba, but the most common way to enter is through the hole in the ground. Any being, empath and non-empath alike, can enter Xibalba through the hole without noticing any

discontinuity effects. Most simply rappel down the sides, use block-and-tackle, or hang glider to get down. There is not enough room for helicopters to descend down among the trees.

The Rain Forest

Dominating Xibalba’s landscape is the rain forest. It grows to almost 1000 m high, and is strangely limited to the central portion of the cavern. The ecology of the rain forest manifests in zones. At the top, the permanent mist starts 100 meters from the cavern lip and extends down half the rain forest canopy. The mist condenses on the jungle vegetation and produces a constant dripping, similar to a light rain. This is truly a *rain* forest. Passing down from the cavern’s lip, through the mist, observers may notice a large variety of tropical birds. However, the birds thin out as the mist does. Where the mist ends small mammals and reptiles dominate. Lower in the rain forest, even these thin out, and no creatures appear to take their place. On the forest floor there is a richly organic loam covering a very wet clay. Large and small leafed ferns along with dangling vines predominate the floor. Light streams carry the rain’s runoff water away in a perpetual motion of bubbling cacophony. The amount of water coupled with thick undergrowth and vines, make travel through the jungle extremely difficult. There is also the possibility of quicksand.

The days are short in Xibalba because the hole lets down limited sunlight. However, what light filters through appears to be enough, for the place is not really gloomy. That is, until the sun starts





to set. The nights are correspondingly long.

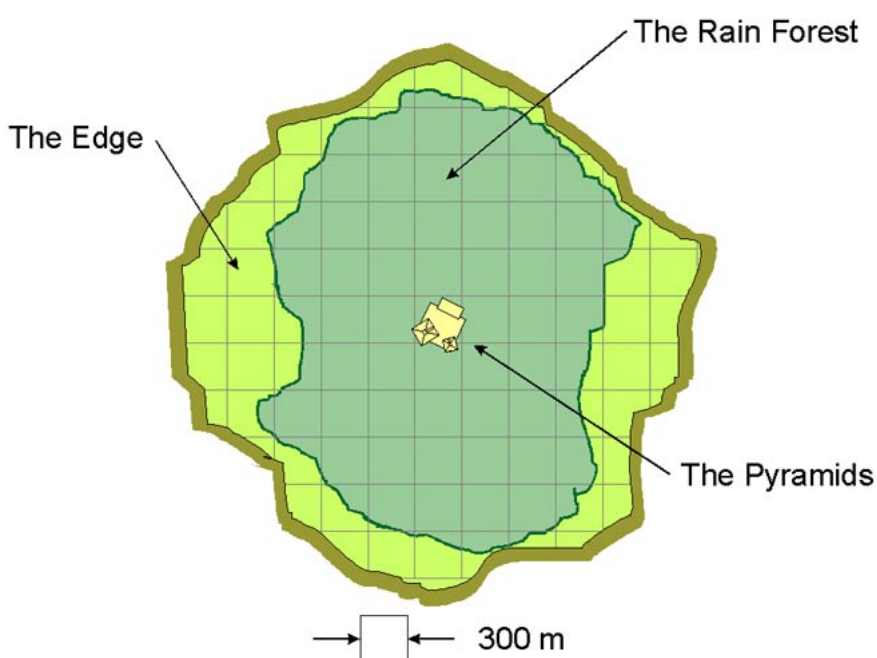
The Edge

Around the edge of the rain forest is a strip of dense grass from 10 to 200 meters wide. The thick forest seems to stop right at this line. Even the constant drizzle of condensation stops here. The grass extends right up to the rocks where the cavern walls start climbing. The grass is about 1.5 meters tall and extremely dense. There is a light breeze that blows from the cavern walls towards the trees that cause the grass to constantly rustle. Visibility through the grasses is extremely difficult and the ground is very wet. In some areas the rain forest grows right up to the cavern walls with no intervening grass. Other portions of the grass seem to have been cultivated. 30-meter square patches of rice-like plants fill these areas. Around these patches are clear trails through the surrounding grass. The trails lead to the cavern walls.

The Xibalbecs

The cavern walls are dotted with cave openings. Paths from the grasses lead to a well-worn stairways built upon existing rocky outgrowths. The stairs lead to the caverns, which are linked to each other with paths along ledges. Hardwood poles have been pounded into the rocks to provide climbing assistance. These well worn hardwood poles are intricately carved with fluid, organic images of stylized people and animals. The rock walls are covered with painted carvings in the same motif. The caves extend into darkness. At the mouth of each cave are fire pits containing burning firewood. The pits average 4 meters across and 1 meter deep and span the opening from wall to wall. On the opposite side of the pit there is a pallet leaning against the wall with one side blackened. The whole setup is like a drawbridge across a fiery moat.

The Xibalbecs are small humanoids with pale brown skin and black hair existing in a neolithic agrarian culture. They are very friendly and have an easy



going temper. Although initially way of strangers Xibalbecs will warm quickly if the party demonstrates peaceful intentions. All their implements are made of a strange carved wood. The bowls and implements look well worn and if asked, the Xibalbecs will claim most of their wooden bowls and jars are over one hundred years old.

The Xibalbec diet consists mainly of beans, which they grow in their cultivated patches. They collect tubers from the rain forest edges for special occasions. They do not eat meat. The Xibalbecs also cultivate the sugar cane that grows among the grasses. They chew on the canes, nearly constantly. Because of this most of the population have few remaining teeth.

Skilled observers will notice that despite plentiful food, the Xibalbecs eat barely enough to survive. All are very thin except for what looks like an occasional pregnant female who is very round. There are a good number of children of various ages. Visitors skilled in anthropology or sociology will notice that the children's' ages are banded. There are a group of what looks like 5 year olds, another of 10 year olds, etc. Each child claims that they have very many siblings, but it is unclear if it is a true relationship, or a familiar refer-

ence.

The Xibalbecs have developed very strong artistic skills. Their stylized motif is imprinted on everything. All the implements are carved. The Xibalbecs use an obsidian edged tool to carve the wood and are very quick at it. Each Xibalbec carries a carved figure from a very dark, almost black, densely grained wood around their neck. When asked what they are, the Xibalbecs will claim they are good luck charms. (See the sidebar.) The carved figures look like they would fetch a sizable sum in the markets at home

The Xibalbecs wear few clothes, since the temperature is nearly constant at 23 degrees centigrade. What clothes and fabric items that they do have are made from grass fiber. The Xibalbecs call it *Lizard Grass*. Both sexes wear the same wrap-around skirt and go bare-chested. Both sexes wear a fair bit of wood and polished stone jewelry. They also have stylized tattoos on their face and hands.

Xibalbec culture clan based. Each clan consists of several monogamous families of strongly bonded couples and their children. The children strongly resemble one or the other of their parents. There is no sign of clan totems as in other native societies.



At night the clan lights the fire pit in the door. The fire is well tended until the coals burn down. The coals are then covered in ashes and the clan retires. While tending the fire, the families will sit in the openings to their cave and tell stories about past events. These are epic-like, grandiose stories and usually are accompanied by paintings on the wall. The Xibalbecs will claim that the stories are several centuries old. If asked, the visitor will be shown a rolled up collection of wooden sticks covered with stylized hieroglyphics. The Xibalbecs claim that their stories are recorded in the carvings. Each clan maintains a collection of the sticks rolled in a finely scaled skin. A special part of each clan's cave is filled with stacks of these rolls. The Xibalbecs claim that the skin is that of the Death Lizard.

Observers will notice that the fire gives off a lot of heat. Those with outdoor skills will notice that it is too much heat for a wood fire. The Xibalbecs value metal of any kind and claim they

can forge it in their wood fires to make tools to supplement their wood-obsidian ones. They will try to trade for any of the party's metal things.

In a ceremony the Xibalbecs will dance, laugh and speak rapid prayers. Then march off to the rain forest edge to cut down a tree for firewood. Along the edge are several small trees. (Small compared to the giants of the main forest.) As men watch the jungle, one of the smaller trees is selected for a team to cut down. The forest grows extremely rapidly. When a tree along the edge is felled for firewood, the next day another one will be growing to replacing it with no sign of the original trees stump.

All Xibalbecs are naturally empathic. Untrained, but latent, and more powerful than humans. This coupled with genetically strong charisma allows the Xibalbecs to learn the visitor's language very quickly – in a couple of days. The charms that they carry are charged with empathic energy. (See the sidebar.) Trained empathics coming in contact with

the charm will immediately know this.

Confronting the Death Lizard

The Xibalbecs do not generally use intoxicants, but they have strong substances that they use in an otherwise non-discussed ritual. The clan chief or family head will retrieve several flowers from the edge of the woods to make a special compound called the *Pillar of Alcan Votan*. (See the sidebar.) The ritual overseer will take a meter-long tube made of vine and pack the tip with this compound. The ritual overseer will then put the tube to the nose of the chief and blow hard from the other end, propelling the compound deep into the chief's sinuses. The chief will then go into a deep trance for about 20 minutes. After that, he will take his obsidian knife and run into the rain forest. If the chief returns, he will be carrying a skin from a large monitor-like lizard. The head of the thing will be in a bag at his waist. These he hands to his women who run off to process them. The skin they tan;

Charmed Wood

The stunted tree in the center of the plaza is the source for the Xibalbec charms. Fresh branches cut from the tree have a light green wood that turns a rich dark brown, almost black color within an hour or two. The color change starts when the wood is separated from tree. The wood is truly empathic in its own right. It has the ability to focus the empathic ability of an empath wearing it. This gives a 1 to 3 point increase in the empathic ability of the person wearing it. Add this bonus to empathic skill when performing a task check.

The tree is actually a sentient being, alive but slow moving. Its perception of its surroundings is strictly long term. The activity around the tree appears to it as a whirlwind of activity. While the tree regrows branches, bark and what few leaves there are at a normal rate, it does not otherwise interact with the surrounding world. It is actually just starting to wonder from where these buildings (built maybe 40 thousand years ago) have just popped up.

Pillar of Alcan

A pharmaceutical concoction of the Xibalbecs, the Pillar of Alcan is a unique empathy-boosting combat drug. Non-empaths that take the drug will feel no effects. Empaths regardless of level of ability can take advantage to the drug's special effects. The drug takes about twenty minutes to take effect, during which no other activity can take place. Once the drug has taken effect, it provides the following enhancements:

Empathically enhanced strength – the user can enhance their strength by 1d3 points for a period of 1 hour.

Empathically enhanced constitution – the user can enhance their constitution by 1d3 points for a period of 2 hours.

Increased initiative – initiative can be enhanced by 2 points, which lasts for 24 hours. This is over the normal limits on initiative.

When strength and constitution are enhanced, all tasks that rely on them are increased as well. For example, the new strength is used to figure firearm recoil effects. Task checks for constitution-based skills are also improved. Limits for wound states are recomputed using the new strength and constitution values. Once the effects of the drug are finished, the old states return. (if damage exceeds the unenhanced levels, death will result.)

The drug lasts for 24 hours. There is no check for using the enhancements. However, humans using the drug must wait 1 hour between successive triggering of the strength, constitution capabilities.



the head they mummify. Some men from the clan then stake the mummified head just inside the rain forest edge. These are meant to keep the Death Lizard away.

The chief or family head will perform this ritual when one of the Death Lizards comes out of the forest and takes a family member. The Xibalbecs claim that the *Pillar of Alcan Votan* assists the chief to defeat the Death Lizard. The chief will tell the story of his hunt to the clan while members hastily carve the story into their recording sticks. The Death Lizard skin is then used to wrap the sticks up. The roll is ceremoniously placed on the clan's stack with the others.

There are other rituals involving this compound, but the Xibalbecs will not speak of them.

Death Lizard

The dominant carnivore of the rain-forest floor is the Death Lizard. This is a monitor lizard ranging in size from that of a small dog to that of a brown bear. It has a dark green mottled skin providing it camouflage among the ferns and vines. The Death Lizard is reptilian except for its head, which is vaguely humanoid in appearance. The jaw is heavily muscled with rows of strong sharp teeth designed for tearing flesh from bones. They prey mainly on the large rat-like creatures infesting the undergrowth. These are similar to the *capybara* of South America. However,

the Death Lizard will occasionally stalk out of the forest into the Lizard Grass to take one of the Xibalbecs. The Death Lizards can move through the undergrowth with ease, making the forest floor very dangerous. Even the Xibalbecs will not go into the forest without reason. However, the Death Lizard does not climb the trees. The canopy is dominated by something else entirely.

The Pyramid of the Stars

Centered in the rain forest are the remnants of a pyramid complex. Laid from stones made of the same material as the cave walls, there is a main pyramid, a minor pyramid, and a squat rectangular building. The main pyramid is called the Pyramid of the Stars. The Xibalbecs claim that Alcan Votan built it when he descended to earth. He created the Xibalbecs and asked them to join him in his new city. The Xibalbecs lived a flourishing life with Alcan Votan until the darkness came. In those days the world did not consist of the caves and the cavern, it was flat and open. With the darkness, the cave walls grew around the city. Alcan Votan fought the darkness, and drove its master away. He is still chasing the darkness and when the fight is over, he will return to banish the minions from the city. Until he returns the city remains under the control of the darkness's minions and deserted by the Xibalbecs.

The main pyramid has nine stories,

each 5 meters tall, which make up the steps of the pyramid. On the top of the ninth sits a building covered by a steep roof thatched with dried lizard grass. This topmost building has walls of stone. A single steep stairway leads to the top and the door into the building. While the pyramid is covered with overgrowth, the steps are surprisingly clear. All along the steep stairs is a banister covered with the stylish motif found in the Xibalbecs' dwellings. The motif here appears more refined and sophisticated than that back at the Xibalbec dwellings. The square base is approximately 30 meters on a side with succeeding steps offset 2.5 meters. There are no apparent openings on the stepped sides.

The minor pyramid is shorter than the main pyramid. It also has nine stories with a building on the tenth. The stories are only 2.5 meters tall with a base of almost 40 meters on a side. The building on the top has been overgrown by the forest. The steep stair has been reproduced, and there are fewer, coarser, carvings along the banister. The whole pyramid is covered in layers of vines and ferns. A tree has challenged one corner and is carefully moving the base stones with its roots – appearing to grow from the side of the bottom story.

The rectangular building is in extreme disrepair. It does not appear stable and the forest has overgrown it. It was once 40 meters wide by 20 meters deep by 10 meters tall. The outside, what can be seen through the vines, has some of the recurring motif carvings. There is a single entrance to the ruined structure in the middle of the longest side. The inside is lost in long shadows.

Connecting each structure is what once was a paved plaza. The paving stones are in a disarrayed jumble of vines, roots, and undergrowth. While passage across the plaza is easier than through the jungle, it is not much easier. In the center of the plaza is a low-growing, gnarled, sparsely leafed tree that is clearly out-of-place, but not for immediately apparent reasons. A Xibalbec will tell you it is the source of the wood for their charms. They do not cut it down,





but merely cut off branches to carve.

Overhead the rain forest canopy tops all. The bottom of the permanent mist is barely visible through the tree branches. The constant drizzling rain keeps everything wet and sticky. There are no sounds from the creatures in the branches, nor any from the rat-things on the jungle floor. The only sounds are the constant dripping of water from the overhead vegetation.

Those capable of foreboding are overpowered by feelings of despair. The whole complex radiates a sense of hopelessness. Death is an escape from this place. Even non-empathic beings can feel it.

The Gate

The building at the top of the main pyramid contains a dais, on top of which stand two columns topped by a crosspiece. The columns and crosspiece are made of the same wood as the Xibalbecs' charms. The wood is heavily carved with the same motif as the rest of the buildings. Those that learned the Xibalbecs' language can read that this is the doorway by which Alcan Votan arrived. Beyond the empathic emanations from the wood itself, the structure appears anchored in normality. An altar stands behind the structure, also on a raised dais. The two platforms are connected by a short walkway. The altar is a flat, dark, stained piece of rock 3 meters wide by 1.5 meters across. There are no symbols on the stone altar. The rock does not look like any rock seen in Xibalba. A groove has been cut around the edges, apparently for drainage. The surface of the dark rock looks deeply stained. The whole thing is emanating even stronger than the background emanations of the complex. Perhaps it is the source of the malefic intent.

Powering the Gate

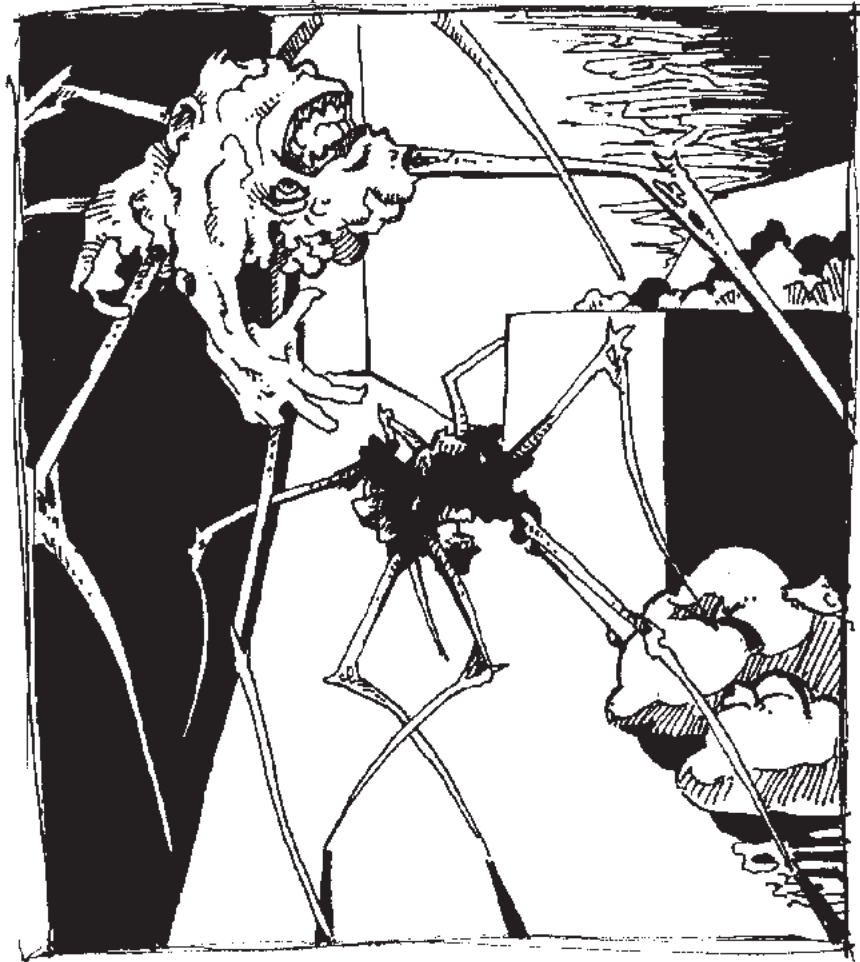
The gate is powered by performing a ritual sacrifice at the altar. Sacrificing a non-sentient creature (like a rat) will cause the area enclosed by the wood structure, to darken slightly. Additional sacrifices of more non-sentient creatures

will not increase the darkness. Sacrificing a sentient being, on the other hand, will make the wood itself start glowing a pale blue and make the open area enclosed by the wood structure to turn a deep black. Once this happens, the gate can be opened to the protodimension requested by the adept. It is an easy task once the doorway is opaque.

The Children of the Darkness

The reason that the Xibalbecs do not go into the forest is not the Death Lizards, although that is incentive enough. The real reason is the Children of the Darkness that have infested the jungle after Alcan Votan's Great Fight. The Children are sentient arachnid-like creatures that live and move in the rain forest canopy. Being nocturnal, the Children stay in their lair during the day. Their real threat is at night, when they attack from the trees like jaguars. Even the Death Lizards can not stand up to them.

The arachnids are supernaturally quiet, able to move through the forest without the slightest whisper from the leaves. They are strictly carnivores preying on progressively larger mammals as they gain in bulk. When hatched from their egg-sack, they swarm out ravenously attacking the source of the nearby vibration that caused them to hatch. Encountered in the canopy, the Children will be from 10 cm at hatching to 2 meters at average adult growth. Particularly aged individuals can get to be 3 meters long and the Xibalbecs claim seeing one that was over 5 meters long. Being arachnid-like, they have eight segmented legs. Triply segmented bodies with clusters of eyes on each side of their tiny heads. They have vicious hooks or claws on the ends of all arms, which they use to attack. Dual rows of sharp teeth circle the mouth that dominates the head. Small appendages on the sides of the mouth have small hooks and





are used to scoop shredded flesh into their mouths. The Children move very slowly in the wild, until they launch to attack. At this time they move nearly too quickly to see. Unlike normal arachnids, the Children have a spike that they can launch from their tail that is drenched in poison. This poison causes instantaneous paralysis. The Children then drag their prey through the branches back to their lairs to eat. The Children consume their victims like true carnivores and do not drain them like other arachnids.

The arachnid lairs are strange affairs. Stuck high in the canopy, they consist of a jumbled collection of leaves and branches held together with a blackish-green web-like substance. Small scavengers crawl around the nest feeding on the remains of prey also stuck into the jumbled morass. The stench of death is overpowering.

The Guardian of the Gate

The largest, most intelligent, most successful of the Children takes up residence in the building that houses the Gate. It is the Guardian of the Gate. Once another arachnid is big and bad enough, it seeks out the Guardian in a form of challenge. Should the challenger defeat the Guardian, it becomes the new Guardian and the old one is eaten. Should the old Guardian win, it uses the hapless, still-living, challenger as a sacrifice to power the gate. The opens a portal to its home dimension and leaves Xibalba forever. Challengers are instinctively drawn to the temple. Occasionally, a challenger will find no Guardian in place and simply steps in to become the new Guardian. The urge to leave Xibalba is great. The powerful, dark emanations from the city and the altar seem to attract the arachnids like ants to sugar, so there are always challengers. Once a Guardian has left, a new challenger will move in within 4 hours.

Powers of the Children

The Children of the Darkness are empathic and use those abilities to attack their prey. Each arachnid can drain the willpower of their prey, project thoughts



and emotions, and establish empathy with any living creature. They use these abilities to stalk their prey, projecting feelings of safety. Once the prey feels safe, the arachnid attacks. The arachnids prefer to paralyze their prey, but will use 4 of its 8 arms and its bite attack, if necessary. All arachnids can spin a web. However, due to the latent neuropathic powers of the Xibalbecs, they no longer spin webs to catch prey. They do not spin webs to catch prey because after millennia hunting Xibalbecs, they have stopped. The latent neuropathic powers of the Xibalbecs have caused the deaths of many Children.

Powers of the Xibalbecs

The Xibalbecs are latent empaths. Specifically, they are neuropaths. They have no training, but when trapped and desperate, they unintentionally will let off sorcerous fireballs, lightning, or nano-black holes using powerful change environment skills. Xibalbecs, trapped in the webs of the Children stress fired these attacks unintentionally. The creatures were usually destroyed and the web burned away. The Xibalbecs ended up with nothing more than bloody noses and headaches, and thought protective spirits had saved them. As a result the Children stopped using webs and started stalking prey instead. The Xibalbecs have many such tales in their *archives*.

Discontinuity

Xibalba is a trap door and sticky protodimension. It is very easy to get into Xibalba but very difficult, although not impossible, to get out. Therefore the discontinuity in terms of dimension walking is 0 to get in and 3 to get out. Even non-empaths can get in. But non-empaths cannot get out unassisted. With a discontinuity of 3, it is very difficult to get out. The exception is, of course, the gate, which when properly powered makes it easy to leave.

The protodimension of Xibalba is roughly conical with a closed in base. From the inside, the top will extend into infinity. A viewer from the outside of the entrance will see a 2-3 km deep closed-bottomed hole. While it is relatively easy to climb down the sides into Xibalba, it is impossible to climb out. As climbers approach the top lip, it will imperceptibly recede away. To an observer from without, looking in, the climbers will march maddeningly to the top but will never quite crest the lip. Should outside observers attempt to pull the climbers out, piles of rope will spool at their feet, but the climbers will not get any closer, even though they will feel motion. This is the same for flying out. The rock sides will go on and on...

Tunneling out through the side will result in breaching the opposite side



of the main cavern. In fact some of the clans have done this to keep from walking around the rain forest to see their friends on the opposite side of the cavern. Tunneling up will return the diggers to the cavern floor on the opposite side of the cavern.

The only way out is dimensionally, through a successful dimension walk or through a gate.

Assimilation

There is no apparent assimilation. There is no damage caused when entering Xibalba. However, there is a potential for damage to human males when leaving. The difference in the physics between the two dimensions is in how the chemically encoded DNA of humans is interpreted. The Xibalbecs are hermaphroditic; they do not need intercourse to reproduce. Their only requirement is a certain level of unused proteins in their system. When this percentage is high enough, they become pregnant – males and females. Xibalbec couples have sexual intercourse, but it is for pleasure and bonding, not reproduction. To have children, the Xibalbecs eat. They overeat. This is why they do not eat much in general. Xibalbecs come to full term in about 10 days. They display the same outward characteristics as pregnant humans. Males develop milk in their breasts, their hips widen, their bellies distend, and they gain weight. When the Xibalbecs get pregnant they get extremely round. The reason they get this round is the number of children they have. They conceive anywhere from 2 to 12 triplets making them distend a lot.

Assimilation for humans (primates) in this protodimension is through the human DNA. The reproductive systems of both males and females are changed over a period of 24 hours to that of the Xibalbecs. This is unknown to normal humans. Humans specially attuned to their bodies, such as mystics, may be able to detect the changes. The downside is that if the visiting humans eat too much, or insist on a protein diet, like meat, they will become pregnant – males included.

Human males will develop milk-producing breasts, suffer widened hips and distended bellies, just like the Xibalbec males. An orifice will develop in the last day of their term (the 10th) to allow delivery. The hour of delivery will be random on the 10th day. Male or female, they will deliver between 2 and 12 babies. The Xibalbecs will be more than happy to assist in the delivery process.

Once visiting impregnated humans return to their dimension, females will still be pregnant. They will be as pregnant in months in their home dimension as they were in days in Xibalba. If they were 10 days pregnant, they will immediately go into labor upon returning. The number of delivered babies will be significantly lower, between 2 and 6. Human males returning to their own dimension will suffer 2 dice damage to their abdomen for each day of pregnancy in Xibalba.



Adventure Hooks

Standard

- Researchers (friends or professional acquaintances) of Mayan ruins have disappeared.

Slightly non-standard

- Extreme sports acquaintances have hang-glided or parachuted into the hole and have not climbed out.

- Arctic researchers have discovered the opening among the snows of Greenland.

- Dark corporations are harvesting the wood from Xibalba, looking for the source of the charms. When some business contacts turn up horribly mutilated...

Weird

- Dark minions are using the protodimension as a farming ground for arachnid assassins. The party traces the arachnid source to Xibalba.

- Minions are using the Xibalbecs as an empathic baby farm. Humans are sent to Xibalba to become impregnated with empathic children. The children will then be used to power Darkling computers and machinery.

- Darkling corporation is using the protodimension to allow sterile, wealthy patrons to have children. Send mommy to a feast – bingo. Until one prospective mother falls prey to an arachnid.

- Drug corporation sends researchers looking for the Pillar of Alcan.



The Creatures of Xibalba

Death Lizard

Strength:	10	Education:	0	Move:	4/15/30/60
Constitution:	15	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	8/4d6
Agility:	7	Empathy:	1	Hits:	30/44
Intelligence:	3	Initiative:	2/5*	# Appear:	1d6-1

*The Death Lizards have the ability to hypercharge for a number of initiative rounds. At the beginning of Tactical Combat, a 1d6 is rolled to determine the number of rounds the creature spends at Initiative 2. Another 1d6 is rolled to determine the duration the creature spends at Initiative 5. At the end of this period, the dice are rolled again. Of course, the referee makes these rolls.

The Children of the Darkness

Strength:	2	Education:	0	Move:	2/6/12/24
Constitution:	2	Charisma:	0	Skill/Dam:	8/5d6*
Agility:	2	Empathy:	12*	Hits:	12/24
Intelligence:	8	Initiative:	3	# Appear:	1-2
Human Empathy	18				
Animal Empathy	11				
Project Emotion	18				
Project Thought	16				
Willpower Drain	17				

* The Children have a stinger in their abdomen that delivers a powerful neurotoxin. This toxin paralyzes its target for 1d6 hours. The Children hit with their stinger using a skill level of 4.

** The Children will use their empathic abilities to create a feeling of well being and security in their target.

The Xibalbecs

Strength:	4	Education:	2	Move:	2/6/12/24
Constitution:	6	Charisma:	7	Skill/Dam:	8/5d6*
Agility:	7	Empathy:	8	Hits:	12/24
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	2	# Appear:	1-2
Throwing	8				
Armed Combat	13				
Woodcraft skills	18				
Alter Environment	16 * (special)				

* The Xibalbecs use the special Alter Environment skill only when they are under extreme duress, i.e. fear for their lives or the lives of their loved ones. The skill manifests as a fireball or lightning strike that causes 3d6 damage and attacks all within a 10-meter radius.





Aeaea, Island of the Lost

by Norm Fenlason

Name: Aeaea

Type: Splinterland

Discontinuity: 0; special, see below

Assimilation Effect Value: Special

Fenlason '00

Legend

Homer's *Odyssey* tells of Ulysses' return from the Trojan War and his landing on the island of Aeaea, inhabited by Circe, a beautiful but powerful sorceress. The island was overrun with pigs, the metamorphosed forms of mariners seduced by her alchemies. Ulysses lost his entire crew to her charms, but forewarned and armed with an herb given to him by Hermes, he was able to withstand her spells and finally force her to release his men from their insufferable shapes.

The island of Aeaea reportedly exists, uncharted but spotted in different areas of the world's oceans. Visitors to its shores never return, though passers-by and those too afraid to leave the safety of their boats, report an island paradise covered with feral pigs, goats, and other livestock. Current mariner legend has it that

Ulysses did not defeat Circe. Instead, the mighty Ulysses barely escaped with his life and the sorceress still rules Aeaea, consuming hapless visitors.

Reality

Aeaea is a splinter proto-dimension. The proto-dimension impinges on the earth dimension as an island amidst a swirling mist. The island stays in place for a few days and then disappears into mist again. Instead of a mighty sorceress, Aeaea contains a powerful darkling creature. Although not a dark lord, the creature is entrapped in this splinter and delights in feeding upon mariners that find her shores.

Arriving at the Island

Approaching the island, observers will notice a wall of fog appear very quickly. Sailing into the fog, the mist will

thin out to reveal an island of about 7.8 square kilometers (3 square miles). The island has broad, deep, sandy beaches with no discernable reef. The beaches climb steeply to a plateau of grasslands surrounding a central peak reaching to 2,000 meters. There appears to be snow on the summit, which is strange, since the island usually appears in tropical zones, where no snow lasts for long. From the water and the beaches, there is no sign of human habitation.

While the island can be seen from the earth's dimension, the proto-dimension, proper, is not entered until a visitor steps foot onto the beach. Empaths and non-empaths alike can step across this boundary. The beach is very nice and the sun beats down warmly, regardless of the weather outside the fog. As visitors move up the rocks through lush vegetation and cascading fresh water streams,



apparently feral farm animals will greet them. Chickens, geese, pigs, sheep, and goats all emerge from the undergrowth like pets seeking their owners. Their numbers are large enough to hinder anyone's movement.

If the visitor's leave the their boat anchored in the sandy-bottomed cove, once they step onto the beach, the boat will appear to be swallowed by the mist and disappear from view. This is actually because the visitors have crossed over into the proto-dimension.

The Farm

Moving inland, visitors will come across a fair-sized farm nestled at the foot of the central mountain. A large farmhouse, a huge barn and multiple fenced pens stand surrounded by fields of wild wheat, oats, grapes and other foods. The pens are full of livestock. There is a gray-haired old man throwing grain to the fowl crowding at his feet. Deep cracks line his grim and hard set face. His clothes are very strange. A simple blue-gray long-sleeved tunic is belted at the waist. A pair of faded black pants is gathered at the knee atop white stockings reaching into worn gray boots. Before the man looks up at the party, a woman will appear at the farmhouse door.

The woman appears to be in her late twenties or early thirties and dressed in a simple floor-length skirt. A peasant's blouse and partially laced bodice support a cascade of thick black curly hair reaching below the shoulder. Fair skin, winsome figure, and demure smile, radiate a warmth and hospitality to the group. Even females in the party can feel the inherent charisma of the woman.

P-Dim Gothic

From her position languishing in the doorway, she will call out to the party and ask if they would like some water. She will be very glad that the party has come ashore and insist that she throw a party for her new visitors. She will show them the farmhouse, which seems more of an inn than a residence. She is very fluent in whatever language the party

throws at her.

The woman will introduce herself as Diana and in the course of conversations she speaks of her father, Philip, whom she calls over and introduces. Philip smiles flatly and shakes hands with the party. He will not say much, but leans silently on his pitchfork. Good observers will notice that his hands are not as wrinkled as his face. Philip will notice any interest in his hands and hurriedly stuff them into his pockets. Keen observers will notice that any feral animals that followed them into the farm will not go near the couple. They will stumble over themselves to avoid any contact with Philip or Diana.



Circe

Diana is a Dark Master. Circe from legend, an ancient evil that feeds on the suffering of the poor souls she transforms into animals. She attacks her victims by convincing them to eat the meals she prepares from her captive farm stock. Once the victim eats the food she prepares, they start to lose their memories. Memory loss is the first stage of this proto-dimension's assimilation effect. Circe in her guise as Diana will continue to play the good hostess until memories are completely gone, which takes about 5 hours. At the end of this time, the victim will fall unconscious. While unconscious, the assimilation completes its next stage, and the victim awakes as a farm animal. Circe can stop the assimilation process at will,

delaying the animal transformation. Any victim that she does this to will have memories placed empathically such that the victim will live in servitude to her.

Incredible Suffering

Although a farm animal, the victim retains all consciousness of being a human. This is the source of the suffering upon which Circe feeds. Circe and her servitor, Philip, also beat the animals and occasionally eat one, increasing the blind fear and helplessness their victims suffer. The suffering of the victim is eternal since the aging process all but stops in Aeaëa. The animals cannot even take their own lives. If they throw themselves off the cliffs onto the rocks, they will just heal up, slowly. While Philip tends the farm stock, he uses his pitchfork to prod the transformed victims. He will use the shaft to smack errant victims back into formation. The feral animals that met the party are ones that escaped Philip's pens.

Philip

Circe's servant Philip is an enslaved Dark Elf. She has given him a certain visage consistent with her chosen disguise as her father. Philip has no memory of his previous existence as a Dark Elf and his implanted memories of long faithful service to Circe keep him fiercely loyal to her. Should any of Circe's enchanted victims recover, Philip is quick to dispatch them with his pitchfork, which is always at hand.

Ulysses' Fate

There is one escape from Circe's doom. There is an herb that grows among rocks near the snow cap. The plant has a maroon flower with white stripes and blood-red vein patterns. It has a strange seven-pointed leaf and a singular effect. The flower gives off a distinctive odor that the sensing human will recall from somewhere as very familiar, but fail to place it. If smelled, a victim's memories will return in a flood. Circe's implanted memories will be swept aside and the situation will become crystal clear. If an animal victim eats any part



of the plant, the assimilation effects are immediately and painfully reversed. Legend has it that Ulysses used this herb given him by Hermes to defeat Circe. This information can be learned from the animals should a member of the party succeed in establishing a Human or Animal Empathy link.

Tech Transform

When a victim initially transforms, their clothing and equipment does not transform with them. Philip collects these goods and places them in the barn behind the main farmhouse. There is a lot of stuff from eons of victims in that storeroom. However, the island of Aeaea predates technology and because of the inherent limiting effect of assimilation, nothing more complex than a crossbow will operate.

Confrontation

Circe will not fight. She will attempt

to slowly attack willpower until her victims slip and eat something. She will use all manner of Project Emotion and Project Thought to coerce would-be victims to partake. If confronted by freed victims, Circe will Dimension Walk away. Unknown to the party, she cannot leave Aeaea, but Dimension Walks to caves on the other side of the mountain.

Leaving the Island

Circe Dimension Walks to other parts of the island because she knows that she cannot open a portal to another dimension. She does not know why.

Any portal opened while on the island proper will only open to an earth dimensional manifestation of the island, which immediately causes entrance to Aeaea again. In effect piping the portal back to the island.

After an attempt or two, a successful difficult test of observation allows the empath to understand the situation.

When a portal is opened over the water, the portal works normally.

Memory Loss

The mechanics of memory loss is based on a percentage. Circe's hospitality causes a 20% memory loss per hour. For each hour add 1 point per 5% of loss. When the character attempts an action requiring drawing something from memory, roll a d20. If the value is above the current tally, the character succeeds in remembering it. For example a victim has been in Aeaea for 2 hours after feasting with Diana. She is attempting to tune a portable long distance radio to contact an extraction team. For the 2 hours, the total is 40%, so the tally is 8. In order to remember the frequency to tune in, she must roll higher than an 8 on a d20.



BEASTIES

Circe/Diana

Strength:	8	Education:	3	Move:	4/10/20/40
Constitution:	7	Charisma:	8	Skill/Dam:	8/1d6
Agility:	9	Empathy:	12	Hits:	40/80
Intelligence:	10	Initiative:	3	# Appear:	1
Human Empathy	18				
Project Emotion	20				
Project Thought	18				
Project Fear	15				
Change Environment (Special)	14				
Dimension Walk	14				

Philip

Strength:	7	Education:	4	Move:	3/10/20/35
Constitution:	4	Charisma:	9	Skill/Dam:	7/4
Agility:	7	Empathy:	10	Hits:	10/20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	4	# Appear:	1

Abilities as a dark elf, except that Philip doesn't remember he is a dark elf.



HOUSEPROUD

by Lee Williams

Excerpt from UK Science Quarterly, Spring 2009

AN END TO SOARING HOUSE COSTS – WHY NOT GROW YOUR OWN!

- From genetics correspondent Robert Moya



What if you could have a home built to your own design, with as few or as many rooms as you could want, in whatever sizes and shapes you wish? Now imagine that all you have to pay for is the plot of land upon which your new home is to be built? Sound too good to be true? Not any longer, says leading biogeneticist Rowland Usher.

According to Dr Usher, certain types of genetically engineered single-cell plant organism can be trained to grow in huge clusters, dying as they go and leaving behind merely their hard shells in much the same way as sea coral. Only a thin core inside the hard outer surface of each wall and floor will remain alive.

“Any size or shape of building can be constructed in this way,” says the former Harvard alumnus. “The organisms are even capable of recognising specific needs, and will extend tap-roots into the ground to provide fresh water which will be filtered. As for organic waste products, these will be processed as food for the living organic inner core of the house.”

Dr Usher is currently growing an experimental building at an undisclosed location in South America. The location has been carefully chosen to provide nutrient-rich soil and a ready supply of fresh water, and also the near-tropical temperature will help the building to grow very quickly.

This revolutionary concept has...

(Continued on Section B, Page 327)...

Dr Usher’s new concept in cheap home building has certainly caught the attention of the scientific community. The idea has been warmly welcomed by those who live in the ant-hill districts of major cities too, as it offers them something better than what they currently have. It has also given several of the construction corps a nasty surprise, as it may rob them of their profits.

The key to the growth process is the so-called Gantz bacterium -- a genetically modified single celled plant organism with the ability to grow into specific shapes. Altering the levels of certain chemicals in particular locations can control the shapes. Usher believes that buildings made in this way can eventually house the majority of the world’s poor and homeless. Homes built using this method are weatherproof, regulate their own internal temperature and humidity within acceptable levels, and even have a limited self-repair capability.

Gantz buildings are somewhat odd to the human eye, having no perfectly straight lines or angles anywhere in their entire structure. Colours are largely dependent on what nourishment is available from the soil at the time of growth, although they can be altered by the addition of particular natural salts. The outer surfaces are lightly textured, whilst the inner corridor walls are usually perfectly smooth. This aids in keeping the interiors clean.

Too good to be true? Well...yes. The Gantz bacteria was originally modified by DARPA researchers by gene splicing a harmless pond organism with a cell sample taken from a growth discovered on the exterior of a space shuttle. The mutated hybrid was stolen by agents of an undetermined megacorp who thought it was some kind of medical vaccine. When this proved not to be the case, they simply dumped it in the river. A

field trip from Harvard’s environmental facility discovered it, and passed it on to Professor Gantz who in turn gave it to his star pupil, Rowland Usher.

It has not yet become apparent to Usher or any of his team, but Gantz buildings get hungry for more interesting food than soil based nutrients. As a rough guide, a building the size of an average three-bedroom house will need to consume a human-sized being once every 18 months or so. Although they will take any animal they can get, such as mice and rats, larger creatures are preferable. This does of course mean that a large building like an office block or department store would need a correspondingly higher amount of ‘food’.

Author’s Note: Original inspiration for this article came from ‘The Growth of the House of Usher’, © Brian Stablford 1988.





Past Future History



by Mike Marchi

The game of **Dark Conspiracy** presents a bleak, twisted future Earth – one in which society as we know it has essentially collapsed. The rural populations have fled to the cities. City populations swelled until overcrowding forced many to live in vast housing projects, sharing their beds with vermin, and waiting for the next corporate handout to come along as ‘payment’ for the use of your inalienable right to vote. A world where the social boundaries between the haves and the have-nots reaches epic proportions. Technology for the rich and affluent approaches the level of magic, while the tools of the common man revert back to inexpensive knockoffs of vacuum-tube circuit board designs out of the 50’s. The world took on a retro film-noir cast, populated by the indigent and downtrodden masses. But how did this come to pass?

Indeed, there is very little in the ‘official’ history as presented in the books, that reaches a level of detail sufficient to explain how our world came to be so dramatically altered. Apart from a handful of milestone events (A Gateway opening on Io in 1983, The Voting Rights Act of 1997), the path to destruction was virtually uncharted.

This was certainly sufficient in 1991, when the book was first published. After all, the future was still in the future. There was still time for the horrifying transformation to occur. But as the calendar slipped ever-closer to, and eventually passed into the new millennium, we began to see how unlikely the events would be. There simply was not enough time left to deconstruct the world in the image of Blade-Runner/Dark Cities separated by fast expanses of Mad-Max-style outlaw areas. This lack of time was further enhanced by the fact that popular opinion (and at least one of the DC adventure modules), pegged a timeframe in the second decade of the 21st century.

So the question remained. How did the Dark World come to pass? Some thought, that perhaps the 2012 was a little too soon, and suggested leapfrogging the canon events forward to the later half of the 21st century. After all, that would leave us with at least a couple decades to destroy our world-as-we-know-it. Unfortunately, doing so would also mean that the canon material would have to be updated as well... perhaps calling it the Voting Rights Act of 2057. For my part, I found this solution to be unsatisfying. It didn’t matter how many times you pushed the timeline forward, you would still reach a point when you’d just have to move it again.

It dawned on me one day that the solution to the apparent paradox was pretty simple. Instead of continually trying to match-up the DC back story with modern-day reality, we should break the two apart completely, and let the charted timeline remain intact.

What follows here, is the first half of that expanded timeline, following the alternate reality of the DC world forward to Y2K. The later portion of the timeline will be addressed in a future issue of DEMONGROUND.

FALL TO DARKNESS

Although set in the early 21st century, the world of **Dark Conspiracy** is not a direct projection of the world we see around us. The changes that would have to occur to produce the twisted reality of the DC world could not have happened in the short span of time that remains between now and the time period of the game. The world of **Dark Conspiracy** draws its roots from an alternate timeline from our Earth. In other words, **Dark Conspiracy** does not postulate a world that will be, but rather a world that might have been.

At some point, the timeline of **Dark Conspiracy** diverged from our world, and followed its own unique pathway into the new millenium. The divergence begins in the early 1980’s, and proceeds forward, with increasingly disparate events defining the bleak and twisted world the Dark Ones seek to dominate.

What is presented here, is the path of divergence from its beginnings, until the dawn of the second decade of the new millenium. The timeline assumes that in July of 1947, an alien survey vessel crashed in the desert outside Roswell, New Mexico. The United States Air Force recovered the craft, as well as the bodies of the alien crew. A short time after that, the reclusive aliens made their presence known to select members of the political, military and scientific communities. Over the years, this clandestine relationship has been fostered by a number of individuals, and resulted in an exchange of technology between the two races.

The **Dark Conspiracy** history, and our own, run exactly in parallel until...

January 6, 1983: While humanity was celebrating the birth of a new year, a team of humanoid alien explorers made an astounding discovery on the Jovian moon of Io. Ancient ruined structures were discovered on the moon, dating back countless centuries. Delving deep into one of these struc-



tures, they came upon a stone seal that vibrated with a high-frequency tone. They aimed a powerful fusion disrupter drill at the seal, and attempted to gain access to what lay on the other side. They succeeded.

March 1, 1983, 23:09 : Scientists at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico intercepted a coded burst transmission from the approximate direction of Jupiter. Much of the transmission was indecipherable, either encoded, or spoken in a language unfamiliar to the scientists. The final sentence of the transmission was extremely clear, and spoken in English. "I fear we have opened the wrong door." The transmission ends abruptly.

March 2, 1983, 00:02 : Scientists at Cornell University and several other linked educational facilities noted a momentary loss of communications with Arecibo. No further incidents were reported regarding telemetry from the radio telescope.

March 2, 1983, 15:30: Following a full investigation and debriefing of personnel at the Arecibo Observatory, the Joint Chiefs of Staff for then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan were informed of the findings. The President is briefed before dinner that night.

March 5, 1983: The encoded portion of the Arecibo distress call is decrypted. The transmission is a 86-second video clip of a humanoid ET transmitting from a darkened room. The message details the return of three of the four survey team members to the mothership. Within hours of their arrival, chaos ensued among the crew. The message describes violent and erratic behavior resulting from exposure to any of the returned crewmembers. Like a disease, this aberrant behavior has overtaken one crewmember after another. Those who resist are killed. The message warns that the irrational aliens pose a threat to humanity, and advised the recipient to take precautions.

March 20, 1983: Strategic Defense Initiative plan is delivered to President Reagan for approval.

March 23, 1983: President Reagan holds a press conference to announce the Strategic Defense Initiative - or "Star Wars" as it came to be called by its detractors. The proposed system was described as an orbital defense system designed to protect the United States from all out nuclear attack. The system is immediately condemned by the Soviet Union as a violation of the US/Soviet Arms agreement limiting weapon development during the Cold War.

During the next seven years, this topic was to be revisited many times. Reagan and his supporters stubbornly insisted on developing SDI, despite increasing waves of disapproval at the waste of resources.

1984: Yuri Andropov - Secretary General of the Soviet Union since 1982 dies. He is succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko.

November 1984: Ronald Reagan re-elected as President of the United States.

March 1985: Konstantin Chernenko - Secretary General

of the Soviet Union dies. He is succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev.

November 1985: Unable to convince the United States government to abandon the SDI project, Soviet officials announce their intention to build a space-based defense system of their own. Reagan remains steadfastly behind the SDI project, despite the escalation in the Arms Race.

January 28, 1986: The Space Shuttle Challenger STS-25 explodes, 73 seconds after takeoff, killing 7 crewmembers. STS-25 was noteworthy as the mission carrying a public schoolteacher into orbit. Millions watch on live television as Challenger is destroyed. Conspiracy theorists suggest the shuttle may have been carrying a key component of the SDI orbital defense platform, and was destroyed as a warning. The investigation that follows the tragedy effectively shuts down the Space Shuttle program for two years.

"Gentlemen, we are in a clandestine war with travelers from beyond our solar system. The enemy has struck us a tremendous blow. We cannot let this deter us from our course. We can expect the enemy to strike from other quarters. They will try to manipulate facts to turn public opinion against us. We must not let our nation fall!"

– Ronald Reagan, addressing the joint chiefs.

April 1986: The Chernobyl Unit 4 Nuclear Reactor suffers a catastrophic explosion. The disaster occurs during a controlled test of shutdown procedures.

February 1987: The Tower Commission delivers its report on the Iran-Contra scandal, implicating the president and members of his staff. The decline in public opinion brings many national policies into question, including SDI.

May 1987: A high-ranking CIA agent is found slain under mysterious circumstances. In what many feel is an attempt to divert attention away from the president, evidence is suddenly made available tying the dead agent to the arms-for-hostage deal,

October 6, 1987: The stock market takes a 3.5% market drop, setting a record for points dropped in a single day. In fact, even as the Dow was plummeting, the new Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission was giving his first speech, on the topic of controlling market volatility in the event of a "market meltdown". Over the course of the next seven business days, the market continues to decline.

October 19, 1987: Following a steady decline in general stock value over the previous week, the market opens on a downbeat, and accelerates downward throughout the course of the day. Speculation as to what caused the crash suggests that computerized trading systems might have triggered "Sell" orders when the market dipped below a certain threshold. The sudden onslaught of sales caused prices to dip even further, in turn triggering even more sales, and further declines.

THE POINT OF DIVERGENCE

[Up until this point in this alternate history, the events that have transpired do not contradict actual history. We have



merely been ascribing conspiracy-theory to actual events.]

October 20, 1987 (our reality): The stock market continued to plummet. The Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission steps in and halts trading in the middle of the day to allow a cooling-off period. When trading resumes, the markets rebound, climbing slowly over the course of the next year to reach the pre-crash levels.

October 20, 1987 (DC reality): The stock market continues to plummet throughout the following day. The Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission insists that this is merely a market correction, advises caution, but takes no further action. The global economy, inextricably linked to that of the United States follows it down.

[Note that from this point forward, many events continue to follow actual history. Now that the point of divergence has passed, we will see our increasingly Dark history unfold.]

THE GREATER DEPRESSION BEGINS

October 23, 1987: A gardener finds the mutilated body of the Chairman of the SEC half-buried in the flowerbed behind the Chairman's suburban home. The details of the death are kept from public knowledge, but investigators determine that he had been dead for well over a week.

October 26, 1987: President Reagan declares a state of emergency and passes an executive order suspending all activity in the U.S. Stock Market, pending investigation of conspiracy charges against the Chairman of the SEC.

June 1, 1988 - Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev (now president of Supreme Soviet) sign a disarmament agreement. The hope seems to be that by removing the Arms Race against one another as a threat, already strained financial resources could be diverted elsewhere.

January 20, 1989: George Bush, former Vice President under Ronald Reagan, and former director of the CIA, is sworn in as President of the United States.

1989: Tanks overrun protestors in Tiananmen Square

1989: The Berlin Wall comes down.

April 1990: Space Shuttle Discovery (STS-31) deploys the Hubble Space Telescope in high orbit. Initial attempts to access the telescope proved disappointing. A defect in the reflective mirror of the telescope was blamed for the inability of the device to focus.

August 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait. The United Nations protests, but without the financial backing of the United States and Britain is unable to take more than token action against them. Outraged, Israel begins gathering support in the region to take action.

February 1991: With the United States otherwise occupied with domestic problems, the United Nations issues a list of demands against Saddam Hussein, including threats of trade sanctions.

April 1991: Evidently encouraged by the lack of effective reprisals for moving against Kuwait, Saddam Hussein begins

a campaign to take control of Saudi Arabia. Israel, Turkey and Egypt declare an alliance. Iran and Syria make no attempt to enter the fray.

August 1991: Tanks invaded Moscow in an attempt to overthrow Mikhail Gorbachev. Boris Yeltsin is instrumental in turning them back peacefully. Mikhail Gorbachev resigns as head of communist party

September 15, 1991: Space Shuttle Discovery STS-48. A video taken by Discovery's rear camera shows several bright objects moving somewhat slowly, then darting off in another direction at high speed as what seems to be a "beam" of some sort hits the spot that was just vacated by the largest object. Many claim this was video of a UFO being shot at by some sort of "Star Wars" particle beam. Officials dismiss the conjecture, explaining the "beam" is merely the exhaust of one of Discovery's own maneuvering thrusters, and the lights were merely ice crystals caught suddenly in the turbulent jet wash.

December 8, 1991: Boris Yeltsin spearheads the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an attempt to form an organized trade federation under a single defense system.

December 25, 1991: Mikhail Gorbachev resigns as president of Supreme Soviet. After his resignation the USSR dissolves, and the CIS forms. Problems plague the fledgling commonwealth's attempts at democracy. The Russian organized crime syndicates rise to power, holding sway over the individual states. By the end of 1993, each state had established its own military, and operated independently of the CIS. Under the watchful eye of the crime syndicates, each former soviet state became an island of industry. Living conditions in many of the states deteriorated as the syndicates and corporations placed emphasis on production and trade.

January 1992: Iraq sends troops across Red Sea into Egypt. The campaign of aggression seems to be targeting specific historic landmark sites. Israel's air force comes to Egypt's aid, striking back against key military sites in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

April 1992: Syrian leaders speak out against Israeli involvement in the Iraqi interests in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

August 1992: A biological weapon is detonated in Jerusalem. Syria is blamed for the attack. Turkey responds by invading Syria. This sets off a chain reaction of aggression in the region.

September 1992: A series of nuclear weapons are detonated along the eastern edge of the Red Sea. The prevailing winds send a cloud of radioactivity into Saudi Arabia, but providing a buffer zone against further aggression into Egypt. Iran enters the fray.

December 1992: By the end of the year, the Middle Eastern war is over. Despite an apparent lack of direct involvement, investigations into George Bush's cabinet members reveal a number of clandestine operations may have been set into motion to accelerate tensions in the Middle East. The war destroys the organized power base of the region, and ren-



ders huge sections uninhabitable. Global oil supplies begin to dwindle. Fuel oil and gasoline prices skyrocket.

January 1993: William Jefferson Clinton is sworn in as President of the United States. The Clinton administration focuses on stabilization of the Middle East situation. The corporations in charge of oil production in the region become the only recognizable source of order.

December 1993: STS-61 Space Shuttle Endeavour repaired the Hubble Space Telescope by fitting it with a corrective lens.

July 1995: Space Shuttle Atlantis (STS-71) first docking with the Russian Mir Space Station.

May 1997: Voting Rights Act of 1997 - includes provisions for voters to give their proxy votes to others in government elections, just as they previously could in corporate elections.

June 1997: Russian Cosmonauts fail to effect repairs on the aging Mir Space Station. A series of unforeseen system failures cripples the station, forcing the crew to abandon the station and return to earth. Moments after the space station is abandoned, a malfunction in on-board fuel cells results in an explosion aboard the massive structure. Mir drops out of stable orbit, and begins a decaying path into the Earth's atmosphere. Projections give the station give less than four months to reentry.

July 1997 - Hong Kong is relinquished by the British, ostensibly returning it to Chinese Control. By this time, Hong Kong has become the model for international trade, and is completely controlled by corporate influence. The megacorporations are in full control of the city, forming independent communities within the bustling trading post. Rumors that Beijing would send as many as 4000 troops into the city to herald the end of British rule prove to be baseless.

August 1997: Utilizing their proxy vote powers, the megacorporations begin global expansion campaigns, attempting to gain footholds in other countries. The Australian government, responding to public protest, refuses to pass the Voting Rights Act legislation. The megacorporations institute massive embargoes against Australia, virtually stopping all imported goods from entering the country. This is done through control of the shipping and stevedoring companies, meaning no new goods are arriving in the country or if they are, then they are not being unpacked.

September 1997: Space Shuttle Atlantis (STS-86) attempts a much publicized rendezvous with Mir to boost the crippled station into higher orbit. Details of the mission are not released, but the mission is scrubbed shortly after docking. Three days later, Mir re-enters the atmosphere, breaking up and sending a shower of flaming debris across the Pacific Ocean.

October 1997: Widespread rioting breaks out across Australia in reaction to the trade embargoes. Brought to its knees, the Australian legislature capitulates and passes the Voting Rights Act. Similar tactics are used worldwide to push accep-

tance of this policy.

January 1998: Fueled by corporate influence, the various space agencies join forces to step up production of the International Space Station. The ambitious project is slated for completion in 2005, and is to be christened "Freedom Space Port"

February 1998: Citing feelings of betrayal by the Federal Government's decision to pass the Voting Rights Act, the Western Australian war of independence erupts, dividing Australia into two nation-states.

May 1999: The Zephyr construction module, designed to act as an orbital base of operations during construction of Freedom Space Port is sent into orbit by Chinese heavy-lift rockets.

June 1999: Space Shuttle Discovery (STS-96) First docking with the Zephyr module in orbit. Transfer of personnel begins the era of permanent human presence in low earth orbit.

December 31, 1999: On the eve of the new Millenium, the world waited while countless computers ticked over into the new year. For months, every precaution had been taken to safeguard against catastrophic failure. The world focused on New Zealand first, waiting anxiously as they became the first country to slip into the new Millenium. At a few minutes before midnight, key systems were carefully shut down, and the world held its breath waiting for the country to come back online. It did not. As the clocks in Sydney, Australia advanced toward midnight, the drunken merriment of countless New Year parties became increasingly somber. Computer specialists who had been working to prevent this very disaster scratched their heads and assured the world that they were ready to make the crossing to the new century. The world watched in horror as yet another country was plunged into darkness. Like an approaching wave of destruction, the communications blackout advanced around the globe, passing through time zone after time zone.

A few minutes after Berlin followed into the blackout, the first response from Auckland was received. Telemetry and diagnosis of the problem was quickly sent out, with the hope that other countries could be spared in time.

In the aftermath of what came to be known as the Y2K Disaster, explanations for the lack of preparedness were investigated. One spokesman for a highly respected consulting firm was quoted as saying "*We tested everything prior to Y2K. We poured over millions of lines of code, pulling out anything that may have been affected by the year zero bug. There is absolutely no reason why this should have gone down this way. But when we went back over the code, looking for our changes, we didn't find them. It was almost as if someone was following along behind us, undoing anything we fixed. Somebody wanted this to happen.*"

TO BE CONTINUED...





THE LOOSE ENDS

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Theme Contest

The DEMONGROUND Theme-Writing contest seems to have been a big success this issue. We have a lot of Mystic Places for you to choose from.

Within two weeks, all registered subscribers (anyone who is on the mailing list) will receive a special e-mail with login instructions to a secure ballot page. Each registered user will be allowed one vote for the 'best' Mystic Place-themed article in this issue. The winner will be announced in the next issue of DEMONGROUND.

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Next Issue

Our Next issue will be coming out in June, and will have the Theme of THE SUPERNATURAL. The Deadline for DG12 Submissions will be May 1, 2001.

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DEMONGROUND NOMINATED !!



DEMONGROUND: Reflections of a Darker Future has been nominated for the 2000 Origins Award for Best Amateur Game Periodical.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the Origins Awards. They are sort of like the Academy Awards for the gaming industry. The members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design narrow down the list of eligible products, and the public (that's you!) votes for the winners. Winners are announced at Origins 2001 in July.

The public version of the Final Ballot is printed in most popular game magazines, and will also be available on the Academy Website as a downloadable PDF file (usually in May or June).

www.gama.org/academy

Check out the list of other nominees at:

www.gama.org/academy/nominees_2000.html

The competition in this category is going to be fierce. There are some really impressive magazines out there. One thing is certain. We didn't get this far without the support of our contributors and readers. And we're going to need every one of you if we expect to garner the top honors.

When the ballots are made available, it is up to all of you to vote for the best product in each of the categories. Hopefully, you'll feel that DEMONGROUND is deserving of the *Best Amateur Game Periodical* honor.

DEMONGROUND Issue 12 Theme

THE SUPERNATURAL

If it involves unusual phenomena, it's fair game for Issue 12

Please indicate at the start of each contest entry that it is intended for the Theme Contest. Remember, it may not be possible for all contest entries to appear in the magazine. Finalists will be chosen by DG staff members. Final choice of the winner will be carried out by popular vote from among registered Demonground subscribers ONLY. See the DEMONGROUND Web Page for further details and full presentation of the terms and conditions of the contest, as well as specifications of the Prize.



www.demonground.org