

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH™

ISSUE 22 • JANUARY 2013



A DIGEST OF ARCANE LORE FOR CTHULHU MYTHOS ROLEPLAYING GAMES

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH™

ISSUE 22, JANUARY 2013

CONTENTS

COLUMNS

THE DREAD PAGE OF AZATHOTH	2
THE EYE OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS	6
DIRECTIVES FROM A-CELL	61

TALES OF TERROR

THE FOUND PHONE	28
ST. MICHAEL'S GATE	29
BARGAIN HUNTING	39
SMEDLEY HOUSE	53

MYSTERIOUS MANUSCRIPTS

THE SAFFRON BOOK	4
ATLAS OF ARKHAM 1911	40

ARCANE ARTIFACTS

MALYUTIN'S NIGHTMARE MATRYOSHKAS	8
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FEATURES

CHINA DOLLS: CHILDREN OF MADAM YI	9
STARTING YOUR CALL OF CTHULHU CAMPAIGN	30

SCENARIOS

DIE HIGH	10
REMEMBER, REMEMBER	42

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

THE THING IN THE BOX	64
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OUR SPONSORS—WORSHIP THEM!

ATLAS GAMES	16
MISKATONIC RIVER PRESS	19
NECRONOMICON PROVIDENCE 2013	27
INNSMOUTH FREE PRESS	32
CHAOSIUM	38
CTHULHU MYTHOS ENCYCLOPEDIA	48
PAGAN PUBLISHING	63

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THE DREAD PAGE OF AZATHOTH



*The usual editor's column will return next issue. Lynn Willis, one of the guiding lights of **Call of Cthulhu**, has passed away. I asked Ken Hite, one of the Oath's own guiding lights and a writer who knows **Call of Cthulhu** like no one else, to express our appreciation for Mr. Willis' peerless contributions to the game. — Shane Ivey*

IN MEMORIAM: LYNN WILLIS

BY KENNETH HITE

With the exception of the game's creator and designer, Sandy Petersen, nobody has had more influence on **Call of Cthulhu** than its longtime line developer Lynn Willis, who passed away January 18, 2013. He was Chaosium's third employee, joining the company in 1978 after the publication of his board game **Lords of the Middle Sea**. He co-authored **Basic RolePlaying** with Greg Stafford in 1980, and co-designed the (vastly innovative, and equally vastly under-rated) **Ghostbusters** RPG with Greg in 1986. His broad vision of Michael Moorcock's universe and his intuitive understanding of BRP refigured Ken St.-Andre's wildly (albeit beautifully) uneven **Stormbringer** RPG into the elegant **Elric!**, and his role in polishing Richard Launius' **Arkham Horror** board game into a truly cooperative horror exercise should not be understated. As a Chaosium editor, he helped shape everything from **Cults of Terror** to **Ringworld** to **Nephilim**, as well as launching and guiding the Chaosium fiction line that saved the company at least once while cementing

the "Cthulhu Mythos anthology" as a viable publishing subgenre.

But his decades of work on **Call of Cthulhu** remain his greatest masterpiece and his truest memorial.

His name is in the credits of the first edition; by the fifth edition, more of the text in the corebook was his than Sandy's. That fifth edition, still the first choice of many **Call of Cthulhu** devotees, represents Lynn's fullest statement about the game and its interplay between human heroism and cosmic nihilism. Lynn, the brilliant editor, wrote and crafted that text to reveal, illuminate, guard, and strengthen Sandy's design. Around that design Lynn shaped rules, supporting material, and a nearly perfect work of utility and art. His precepts were laid down by example; his corebook prose as much as the works he commissioned drew you into running the finest of all roleplaying games in perhaps its finest form. He was the best kind of guardian for **Call of Cthulhu**: one who not only kept its core safe, but constantly explored and conquered new territories for the game.

As a designer and sometime line developer I stand in awe of his vision. Run down the row of adventures on your shelves, of box sets in your game room: **Shadows of Yog-Sothoth, The Asylum, Cthulhu Companion, Fragments of Fear, Cthulhu by Gaslight, H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands, Spawn of Azathoth, Terror Australis, Great Old Ones, Cthulhu Now!, Arkham Unveiled, At Your Door, Fatal Experiments, Blood Brothers, Horror on**

the Orient Express, Cairo Guidebook, Dark Designs, Fearful Passages, London Guidebook, Miskatonic University, Taint of Madness, Booke of Monstres, No Man's Land, Dreaming Stone, Before the Fall, Last Rites, Beyond the Mountains of Madness, and Unseen Masters. All of these were made, and usually made vastly better, by Lynn Willis. Behind an “Editor” credit lay a brilliant eye for the game as it could be played, for the text as it could read, for the game line as it could be. Every so often, “L.N. Isynwill” would get a writing credit as well, where Lynn had gone above and beyond to elevate some adventure to the standard he demanded of the line.

Perhaps the best summation of what Lynn did for ***Call of Cthulhu*** as a line comes from the “Clear Credit” section of ***The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep***, the finest single roleplaying campaign ever produced:

Lynn Willis rewrote the succeeding drafts, originating the historical background, introducing race as a theme, inserting or adjusting certain characters, writing the introductory chapter, and most of the advice, asides, incidental jokes, etc., and as an afterthought added the appendix concerning what might be done with shipboard time.

In short, nearly every ***Call of Cthulhu*** product you've ever loved from the first edition to 2005 exists because Lynn Willis made sure its text was coherent, made sure its gameplay was sound, and made sure it got to print. And there's a strong possibility that the thing you like

best about it was added or correctly limned by Lynn, not by the credited author.

He didn't do the convention circuit, so I only met him a couple of times, at the Chaosium offices. He very much liked a few ideas I pitched him, but sadly my pitches coincided with one of Chaosium's dry economic spells, so we never got to produce the massive ***Undying Mars*** campaign setting we both dreamed of. He was a gentleman, funny and interesting, and I regret the emails we never exchanged and the talks we never had more than I regret the game book we never produced.

As befits these august pages, I leave the last word to John Scott Tynes, our esteemed founder and one of the few designers whose contributions to ***Call of Cthulhu*** are visible against Lynn's. And yet, Lynn shaped John as he shaped all of us who loved the game:

Lynn established a writing style for ***Call of Cthulhu*** that I've never been able to shake, and I'm okay with that. He had the vocabulary and love of language of an English professor but the clarity and precision of a journalist. It was a powerful combination and it manifested across the whole line, as he often took a pretty free editorial hand to shape the manuscripts he edited. I trace my writing style today back to his and am grateful for the standard of editorial excellence he set.

Lynn Willis, Rest in Peace. ☞



MYSTEROUS MANUSCRIPT: THE SAFFRON BOOK

BY BOBBY DERIE

On the banks of the river Ai in the land of Mnar, a race of shepherds settled and founded their cities: Thraa and Ilarneek of the white towers, mighty Kadatheron and doomed Sarnath. Yet it was long for these settlements to grow, and longer still for the people of Mnar to give up the herding of sheep, so that there lasted for ages and generations of man on the distant pastures, in the wilds and wastes, the old shrines and the holy hermits. These were strange men and women touched by the gods and the Outer Darkness, and one there was who wrote a strange history in curious golden ink on the soft yellow paper of Mnar, bound in pale, fallow hide.

Of the thief who slew that hermit, who robbed and desecrated that shrine, and the desperate flight to the cavern of flame, and his terrible bargain with the priests Nasht and Kaman-Thah, and the price paid to smuggle that book through the Gates of Deeper Slumber and up the seven hundred steps to the waking world, and how it found its way into the bookcart of Wainwright Carter in Boston in the summer of 1774, no mortal thing knows the whole tale.

The *Saffron Book* has passed through many hands since then, acting as strange currency among the mystics and occultists of the burgeoning colonies. There are letters in the Widener Library at Harvard affirming that the New Aegyptian Lodge of Providence held it briefly in 1779 but traded it to a magus known only as “Kamog” for services rendered. It next appeared in 1825, when a gentleman in spectacles allowed a member of the Athanaeum Club in London to copy certain passages on a journey from Boston to New York. It eventually was purchased by the Manuxet Junior College Library, a satellite of Miskatonic University, where it is considered a regional curiosity, a sort of poor man’s Voynich Manuscript or a cryptographic hoax.

The manuscript gained its greatest fame in a small series of articles in the *Arkham Advertiser* from June to September 1924, by the paper’s resident astrologer J.T. Hartley. He claimed the book held the secret to the keys of lost memory, the primordial race-knowledge that is the inheritance of mankind but that remains locked from the waking mind. Mr. Hartley was discovered dead in front of the book on the morning of 23 September 192_, along with an assortment of exotic opiates and stimulants, apparently the victim of an overdose.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The *Saffron Book* is an overlarge bound manuscript, eighteen inches tall and ten wide, about 80 leaves long, of indeterminate age. Between the fallow leather covers the linen paper is soft off-white, stained at the ages to the yellow of old nicotine, with tiny sparks of what appears to be gold or pyrite dust. The ink is a dark gold and partially reflective, which can make reading difficult—though that is rarely an issue, since the text is written in the strange hieroglyphs of Earth’s Dreamlands.

CONTENTS

In the waking world, it is not normally possible to read the *Saffron Book*. Those who peruse its pages and run their eyes down its blockish characters find their eyelids growing heavy, and in time they pass into a deep, peaceful sleep to dream of reading the golden glyphs and receiving great revelations—only to awaken and remember nothing of what they had learned. Yet during the course of the day they are subject to strange insights, moments of déjà vu, and waking dreams that assist and inspire them.

MECHANICS

In the Dreamlands, the *Saffron Book* grants +6 percentiles of Cthulhu Mythos skill and +6 percentiles of Dream Lore. It requires twelve weeks to study and comprehend, with a SAN cost of 1D2 to skim and 1D8 to study. In the waking world, this knowledge is inaccessible—mostly. Each time a character in the waking world “reads” the *Saffron Book* and then falls asleep, the character may choose to add 1D4 temporary points to the Cthulhu Mythos skill for a single test—and lose an equal number of Sanity Points. These Cthulhu Mythos points are lost after the reader next falls asleep. Lost Sanity points may be regained normally. ☹

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

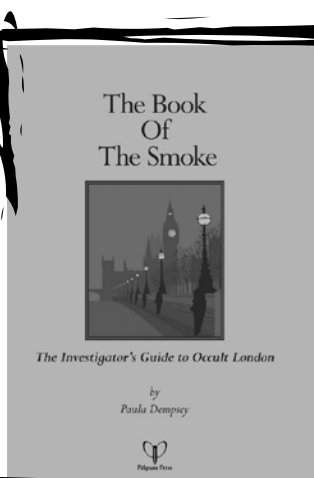
BY VARIOUS CULTISTS

REVIEWED ITEMS ARE RATED ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN PHOBIAS:

1-3: NOT WORTH PURCHASING.

4-6: AN AVERAGE ITEM WITH NOTABLE FLAWS;
AT 6 IT'S WORTH BUYING.

7-10: DEGREES OF EXCELLENCE.



THE BOOK OF THE SMOKE

BY PAULA DEMPSEY
PUBLISHED BY PELGRANE PRESS
REVIEWED BY CHASE W. BECK

Augustus Darcy in 1933. Darcy is an active and well-informed link to the London occult underworld. He serves as a learned tour guide into a forbidding and dangerous side of society.

The book describes occult and supernatural locations in and around London. Each entry could serve as the central plot for a campaign or scenario, to add detail to a game session or to create a story hook or twist for an adventure. The book also describes occult movers and shakers who would be in London in the 1930s. Every one of them could serve as a potential antagonist, colleague or reluctant collaborator for a team of investigators.

Kenneth Hite's *Trail of Cthulhu* set out to enable fans of Lovecraftian fiction to play an investigative RPG that focused more on story than skill rolls. With a dash of pulpy flair, it became a favorite of many and a worthy contender to *Call of Cthulhu*. With the *Trail* campaign framework *Bookhounds of London*, Hite brought that investigative feel to the stuffy, mouldering bookshops and fog-filled streets of 1930s London. That new setting expanded and improved *Trail of Cthulhu* in a way that felt both enlightened and like a natural progression of the game.

The Book of the Smoke is a supplement to *Bookhounds of London* that fleshes out the skeleton of 1930s London that Hite described. However, instead of just publishing a book of random entries about London with various plot hooks and storylines, *The Book of the Smoke* is written as an in-character guide authored by

For instance, *The Book of the Smoke* includes descriptions of standard locations like Whitechapel (the notorious slaying ground of Jack the Ripper), as well as less well-known locations full of supernatural history, like Hobbes Court, Knightbridge (with its long history of poltergeist activity and occasional manifestation of the apparition of a horned Beelzebub). Character descriptions include the oft-mentioned occultist Aleister Crowley as well as the less well-known, but no less impressive, Dion Fortune (a contender in the occult organizations' battle for supremacy).

Even more interesting is that the book sets up a sort of alternate reality game. It supposes that *The Book of the Smoke*, unpublished by Darcy at the time of his death, contains clues into his untimely demise. By cross-referencing information hidden in the pages of *Bookhounds of London* with material sent with the special editions of

Bookhounds and clues located online, the mystery of Darcy's death can be solved.

The Book of the Smoke gets nine phobias for expertly detailing 1930s London in a fascinating way.



TATTERS OF THE KING

By TIM WISEMAN

Published by CHAOSIUM, INC.

Reviewed by MATTHEW POOK

As the 1920s wane, the star Aldebaran appears in the winter skies and the sensitive and the weak-willed fall under a malign influence. It is seen in poetry, painting, theater, and even radical science, sometimes as a thrill, at other times as a taint that drives men, particularly those amongst the artistic set, to what becomes known as a “sympathetic madness.” We have come under the gaze of Hastur and his cult seeks to bring the doomed city of Carcosa or his avatar, the King in Yellow, to Earth. This is the stage for **Tatters of the King**, a 1920s that takes investigators from Britain to Italy, India and Nepal before climbing to a final confrontation above Tibet on the Plateau of Leng.

The first difference between this and other classic campaigns lies in its choice of Great Old One, Hastur, ill-defined as an entity within **Call of Cthulhu**. Here the author draws from John Tynes’ concept (described in **The Unspeakable Oath** issue 1 and in **Delta Green: Countdown**) of Hastur as a force of entropy that beguiles as much as it disturbs and disrupts.

The second difference is that the campaign is set mostly in the United Kingdom and so has a sensibility rarely seen in **Call of Cthulhu** campaigns. This does not mean that characters of other nationalities cannot be played, but it is refreshingly un-American. An appendix provides setting support for the United Kingdom of the period.

Tatters of the King requires one investigator to be an alienist by occupation and another to be an artist. It is a highly structured campaign designed for four to six characters.

Tatters of the King begins with a prologue in which the investigators attend an amateur production of an avant-garde play that ends in hysteria, disarray, and affray. Heavy on exposition, it exposes them to the Yellow Sign,

thus opening them up to a series of dreams that haunt them over the course of the campaign.

“Book I: The Madman” opens the campaign proper and begins with the alienist attending a patient in an asylum, who reveals knowledge of both the play that the investigators saw and of a cult related to it. Through their dreams, the cult’s interest in them, and the actions of a mysterious benefactor, the investigators learn of the cult’s plans to bring Carcosa to a place familiar to old **Call of Cthulhu** hands, the village of Cannich from **Shadows of Yog-Sothoth**.

Foiling this plan gives a respite of six months, with room for a Keeper to run other scenarios or for the investigators to rest. “Book II: British Gods” picks the campaign up again with exposure to a Severn Valley-based Hastur cultist. He tells the investigators that the Hastur cultists have not given up, leading to “Book III: The Upper House,” in which they must visit Mussolini’s Italy.

The strength of the campaign is its atmosphere, an ethereal quality that seeps from the pages. It is infused by quiet tension and madness that underlies every scene, but particularly the sequences in Carcosa and the downright alien place above the Earth. These scenes could be difficult to stage, but the advice for the Keeper is excellent. Its subtlety extends to its structure, still the onionskin format recommended in **Call of Cthulhu**, but more slivers than chunks. Yet in parts it is too linear and in places too subtle, with clues not always helpful or easy to interpret.

Nevertheless, **Tatters of the King** is progressive and delicate, transcending the pulpy format and styling of past **Call of Cthulhu** campaigns. It shows in its choice of Great Old One and in the low-key and well-mannered nature of the cult and its members, who neither chew the scenery nor set hordes of thugs on the investigators. **Tatters of the King** is as mature and as subtle a campaign as **Call of Cthulhu** has received in years, and it would truly spoil its delicacy to play it in the game’s sometimes pulpish mode. Nine tantalizing phobias.

< CONTINUED ON PAGE 55 >

ARCANAE ARTIFACTS

MALYUTIN'S NIGHTMARE MATRYOSHKAS



BY DANIEL R. ROBICHAUD

Matryoshkas or Russian nesting dolls are carved from wood and shaped like bowling pins. Each separates at the waist to reveal a smaller doll inside. This particular set contains five dolls, painted to resemble toad-faced women in 19th-century Russian peasant dress.

The largest doll stands 11" tall by 5" in diameter at its widest and weighs half a pound. The smallest doll measures 3" tall by 1" in diameter at its widest and weighs one quarter of a pound. Though crafted in 1890, their colors are bright as though newly applied.

When viewed indirectly, imperfections in the wood give these matryoshka dolls inhuman aspects: water-bloated faces, digits bending backwards, broad bellies distended by tiny hands pushing from inside.

An Investigator's **Physics** or **Chemistry** roll with appropriate tools and research reveals that the paints used to decorate these dolls has ferromagnetic qualities due to meteorite fragments mixed in the pigments. Individual dolls repel iron shavings and similar items at very short distances. When the dolls are nested the repulsion field increases, affecting items within several feet.

A **History** roll reveals this is the first matryoshka doll set designed by famous matryoshka creator Sergey Malyutin. These dolls were inspired by conversations he held with a swarthy, half-mad sculptor at the infamous Abramtsevo Colony. Their design led to the world-famous versions Malyutin created with Vasily Zvyozdochkin. They were intended for inclusion in the initial doll presentation at the 1900 World Exhibition, but the matryoshka dolls vanished before arriving in Paris.

An **Occult** roll reveals a secret history: Because the designs disquieted those who beheld them, this set was dubbed the Nightmare Matryoshkas. Ownership is rumored to cause claustrophobic madness.

A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll reveals these dolls to incorporate specific angles and odd proportions that suggest extraterrestrial influence. In fact, their design elements correspond in several Mythos texts to ancient lore found in such far-flung locales as fabled Celaeno. Such things are known to aid sorcerers in channeling magical power.

KEEPER'S LORE

The Nightmare Matryoshkas occasionally appear in collections and shops throughout the world, often without the owner's awareness. They are typically found together. An occultist who finds one doll often will go to great lengths to complete the set.

If the Nightmare Matryoshkas are incorporated into a ritual for summoning or binding a servitor race, each doll adds one additional magic point. During such rituals, the dolls' features change subtly. Their cheerful grins are replaced with sorrow, agony, terror or madness, and the figures themselves seem to writhe in the sorcerer's hands. A spell aided by one or more matryoshkas costs the caster an additional 1 SAN point.

With a complete set, once per week the dolls' owner suffers a blackout. The owner wakes to find the surroundings rearranged. Possessions are packed inside boxes within boxes. Furniture is stacked in unusual ways. This experience costs 0/1 SAN.

Once per month, the owner of a complete set is plagued by gruesome nightmares about nesting and eruption. For example, the investigator's body swells with the many "healthy" parasites it contains—each of which houses still smaller creatures, which contain still more, down to the single-cellular level. As all these parasites replicate and grow at maddening speeds, the investigator's body distends and finally bursts. Monstrous contents spill out, whispering riddles, enigmas and secrets. The experience costs 1/1D4 SAN points, but it is also instructive: the dreamer gains +2 percentiles in Cthulhu Mythos.

The dolls always vanish from a collection 2D6 months after acquisition, never to again appear in the same person's possession unless found elsewhere and reclaimed. ☸

CHINA DOLLS

CHILDREN OF MADAM YI

LESSER SERVITOR RACE

BY JO KREIL

Yidhra spawns a multitude of strange and terrible creatures by using the genetic materials of the various life forms she has feasted upon. None are as strange as the China Dolls created by her avatar, Madam Yi. The China Dolls resemble porcelain masks with ever-wiggling tentacles that sprout from the back. They are often found grafted to the withered walking bodies of those who fell into the claws of Madam Yi. Victims who have the masks grafted onto them dart about with inhuman speed as their bodies are forced to stretch and move in ways they couldn't before. A fully grafted China Doll would not hesitate to break bones in the host's arms or hands in an effort to reach a victim hidden in a narrow space. Their movement is jerky yet strangely graceful, and totally unnatural.

These creatures typically grow from Madam Yi's flesh and drop off to be cared for by Yidhra's worshippers. They can be kept docile by opium, which leaves them in an agreeable state, making it easier for the cultists to care for them without losing fingers. Most cults to Madam Yi operate in the 'Golden Triangle,' areas of Asia where the opium trade is king, but have been known in Japan as well. During the Gaslight period the cult had a base in London's Docklands, where it operated out of a local brothel and attempted to gain a monopoly on the city's booming opium trade.

The cult typically uses attached China Dolls to take care of Investigators who get too curious as to the cult's activities. An Investigator might notice something following them, keeping to shadows or wearing a long, hooded coat to hide its masked face. Only when the victim realizes that the mask is melded onto the face does the true nature of the attacker become apparent.

When Madam Yi's followers capture an enemy of the cult, they take one of these mask-like creatures and hold it against the victim's face. Sensing life, the creature buries its tendrils into the new host's flesh. The tendrils eventually root themselves into the host's brain, leaving the host in a permanent zombie-like state. This poor soul tears apart its prey, feeding it to the mask-thing permanently grafted onto its face. Each China Doll has a continuous mental link to Madam Yi, who is fully aware of their activities and gloats over the spread of her alien children. ☹

CHINA DOLLS, CHILDREN OF MADAM YI

CHAR.	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	3D6	10-11 (0 IF NOT ATTACHED TO A HOST)
CON	3D6+2	12-13 (2 IF NOT ATTACHED TO A HOST)
SIZ	3D6	10-11 (2 IF NOT ATTACHED TO A HOST)
INT	1D6	3-4
POW	1D6	3-4
DEX	3D6+3	13-14 (0 IF NOT ATTACHED TO A HOST)

MOVE: 12

HP: 11-12

AV. DAMAGE BONUS: NONE

WEAPONS: FISTS 40%, DAMAGE 1D3+DB

BITE 30%, DAMAGE 1D2 (USEABLE ONLY IF NOT ATTACHED TO A HOST)

ANY MELEE WEAPON AT DEX X 3%

ARMOR: NONE

SPELLS: NONE

SKILLS: DODGE 40%, HIDE 60%, SNEAK 60%

SANITY LOSS: 0/1D4 TO SEE A LIVING, UNATTACHED MASK; 1/1D6 TO SEE A CHINA DOLL GLIDING TOWARDS YOU; 2/1D8 IF THE CHINA DOLL'S HOST WAS KNOWN TO THE INVESTIGATOR.



MANSPERGER

DIE HIGH

A SCENARIO FOR CALL OF CTHULHU, CTHULHU DARK OR TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY GREG STOLZE

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH

INTRODUCTION

Chicago, Illinois has at least sixty buildings over 560 feet tall—some of them residential. For all that, it's not common for people to go out in the open at those heights. A deep-seated and entirely sensible fear prevents it. (Many falls from 30 feet are fatal, and the odds just get worse with more altitude.)

When something unearthly begins stalking the heights of Chicago, it's not spoiled for prey. But there **are** people who go out in the open at those heights— construction workers, rooftop gardeners, amateur astronomers or just people with balconies—and it's quite rare for them to fall to their deaths. Only recently have they started to die without falling.

THE PROUD TOWERS OF CHICAGO

SOME OF THE TALLEST BUILDINGS IN THE WINDY CITY INCLUDE...

THE WILLIS TOWER: FORMERLY 'THE SEARS TOWER' AND ALSO FORMERLY THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE WORLD, IT'S STILL A POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATION. IT NOW FEATURES RETRACTABLE GLASS-ED-IN BALCONIES ON ITS SKYDECK, ALLOWING VISITORS TO LOOK STRAIGHT DOWN AT THE STREETS 1,353 FEET BELOW.

THE AON CENTER: 1,136 FEET TALL AND FLAT-TOPPED, THE AON CENTER IS A SLEEK, WHITE, NO-FRILLS RECTANGLE. UNTIL RECENTLY, IT WAS THE TALLEST BUILDING WITH NO SPIRE OR ANTENNA ON THE TOP, BUT IN 2009 A RADIO AERIAL WAS ADDED.

THE JOHN HANCOCK BUILDING: A GREAT BLACK OBELISK WITH CRISS-CROSSING GIRDERS AND TWO HUGE WHITE SPIRES ON THE TOP LIKE FANGS. THE 'JOHN HANCOCK OBSERVATORY' HAS A 360° VIEW COVERING UP TO 80 MILES AND FOUR STATES.

311 SOUTH WACKER: A HUGE POSTMODERN PHALLUS, IT'S 961 FEET TALL AND CAPPED WITH A 105-FOOT TRANSLUCENT CYLINDER, ILLUMINATED AT NIGHT BY NEARLY TWO THOUSAND FLUORESCENT TUBES.

AQUA: A MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL SKYSCRAPER, AQUA IS 859 FEET HIGH AND RIBBED WITH UNDULATING BALCONIES THAT GIVE THE WHOLE THING A MILDLY H.R. GIGER LOOK, MITIGATED BY ITS WHITE AND BLUE COLOR SCHEME. IT'S GOT A HOTEL IN IT, TOO, SO ONE CAN ENJOY ITS BALCONIES WITHOUT COMMITMENT.

MARINA CITY: ITS TWO CORNCOB-SHAPED TOWERS RISE 587 FEET ABOVE THE CHICAGO RIVER, WITH A PARKING GARAGE INSIDE AND A BOAT DOCK UNDERNEATH. THERE ARE A TOTAL OF 900 APARTMENTS IN IT, AND EVERY LAST ONE HAS A BALCONY.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

Fortunately for its prey, the unearthly thing that haunts the Chicago heights is unwilling to descend much below 560 feet and can't survive for long if it gets within 210 feet of the ground.

The thing has no name in English. In some legends, the Ute peoples of Colorado referred to it as "Suguwemi," though there are only two people alive today who speak the mountain Numic dialect with enough fluency to dredge that word from their memories.

'Suguwemi' is as good a name as any, since it's a nonverbal entity with no name for itself. Intellectually, it's about at the level of a cunning bird—a raven, say. But it weighs between one pound and two hundred (depending on its degree of materialization) and exists in a polydimensional state unimagined by natural humanity.

The Suguwemi, plural, left humanity's phase-state long ago, about a hundred years before Europeans came to North America. (What forced them out? No one knows, and at this point it's probably impossible to find out. Possibly some sort of natural dimensional rupture gave them access to a better environment.) This one has returned only after accidentally stumbling through a dimensional disturbance created by Dr. Hecuba Ostrokol's exotic high-energy experiment at Fermilab, a particle accelerator located some 40 miles outside Chicago's downtown. The arrival altitude wounded the Suguwemi, and it barely managed to escape upward before becoming dormant.

(Unknown to anyone in the world, four other Suguwemi have been pulled back into our realm at assorted high-energy research centers like CERN and the LHC. None of them were able to pull free and survive, however. When Suguwemi die, they ground to an energy-neutral state and phase through the ground towards Earth's core, where the magnetic field tears them into component atoms: bugs on the windshield of Big Science.)

Now that the Suguwemi has recovered from its injury, it's attempting to breed. Absent others of its race, it's falling back on a secondary reproductive strategy that involves assaulting and reformatting human beings. (Why humans and not pigeons? Because humans have at least nascent poly-dimensional awareness. That's why humans learn sorcery and pigeons can't.) It doesn't know, even at the primitive level that it 'knows' anything, that a partial dimensional rotation is going to leave its progeny horribly mutated. If they come to fruition, its 'demi-Suguwemi' won't be able to fly or reproduce. But they can survive on Earth's surface or even a couple dozen feet below it. And the fatal failures of their own attempts to reproduce on humankind won't stop them from trying.

For the time being, however, a Suguwemi egg lies safe in the corpse of its first victim, Ninette Shagasemi.

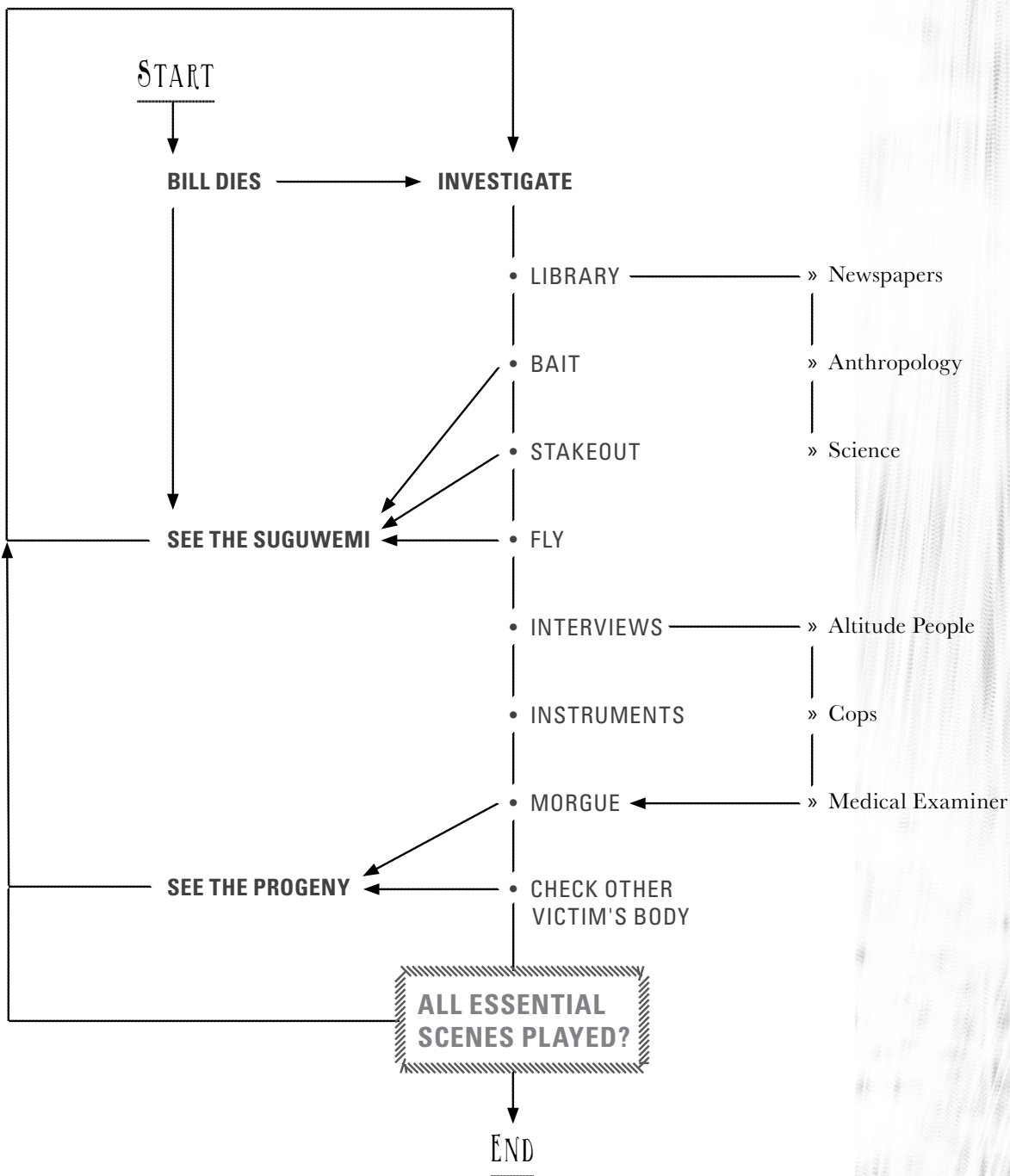
THE STRUCTURE

This scenario is meant to be short, played in one setting, either standing alone or inserted as a change of pace (meaning “a less completely destructive adversary”) in an ongoing campaign. It has a number of mandatory

scenes as well as some optional ones. The Investigators can proceed through this maze however they want, but ultimately, the number of resolutions is limited.

Individual essential scenes are addressed one by one, starting on page 18, but here’s an overview of how “Die High” tends to flow.

DIE-AGRAM



THE SUGUWEMI

IN SHAPE, THE SUGUWEMI LOOKS LIKE A RACK OF ANTLERS, OR PERHAPS A PAIR OF HANDS, FINGERS SPREAD, WRISTS TOGETHER—ESSENTIALLY A FAN OF PROTRUDING DIGITS WITH A SPAN BETWEEN TEN AND TWELVE FEET ACROSS. IT LOOKS CLOUDY OR SMOKY, LIKE A MOVING DUST-CLOUD HELD TOGETHER IN DEFIANCE OF GRAVITY OR WIND. ITS ACTIONS ARE PURPOSEFUL—IT SWOOPS WITH THE DETERMINATION OF ANY SKY-BORNE PREDATOR. IN COLOR, IT RANGES FROM CHARCOAL GRAY TO THE TONE OF CIGARETTE ASH, BRIGHTER TOWARDS ITS EDGES AND DEEPER AT ITS CORE. IT'S FUZZY AND INDISTINCT AT THE EDGES, EXCEPT FOR THE TIPS OF ITS ... FINGERS? ARMS? WINGS? THOSE ARE QUITE POINTED, AND SEEM EXCEPTIONALLY SOLID. THEY'RE THE BLACK OF A STARLESS NIGHT. TWO RED, DIM LIGHTS STARE OUT FROM ITS CENTER. THEY'RE PROBABLY EYES.

WHILE IT IS UTTERLY SILENT, THE SUGUWEMI'S ELECTRICAL FIELD CAN BE MIND-ALTERING, LIKE TRANSCRANIAL MAGNETIC STIMULATION. ITS PARTICULAR FREQUENCY TENDS TO RESONATE IN THE SENSORY CORTEX. WHEN IT'S NEAR, PEOPLE FEEL A SORT OF LOCALIZED HOT ITCH. BEFORE THEY'VE CAUGHT ITS ATTENTION, THIS ITCH CRAWLS RANDOMLY OVER THEIR BODIES. WHEN IT HAS FOCUSED ON THEM, IT FEELS LIKE THE ITCH IS CENTERED RIGHT BETWEEN THEIR EYES.

WHEN IT ATTACKS, ITS BACK TIPS SINK INTO THE VICTIM'S BODY, SEEMING TO ENCOUNTER NO RESISTANCE AND DRAWING NO BLOOD. THE HUMAN BEING ATTACKED SCREAMS AND SCREAMS, HOWEVER. THE CREATURE PULSES OVER THE VICTIM FOR A WHILE, UNTIL HE OR SHE STOPS THRASHING AND DIES, AND THEN WITHDRAWS TO FLY AWAY, SATIATED.

(NOTE THAT WHILE THE SUGUWEMI CAN GRADUALLY PHASE THROUGH SOLID MATTER, IT CANNOT SEE THROUGH IT.)

STATS FOR CALL OF CTULHU

Suguwemi, Lesser Independent Race

STR 5 CON 6 SIZ 10 POW 15
DEX 18 Move 10/1 through solid matter HP 6

Damage Bonus: none

Weapon: Coexist 45%, damage special

Armor: None, for things that can harm it (see "Endgame," page 26)

Skills: Sneak 50%

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4 to see it, 1D4/1D10 if it starts to Coexist (see below)

Damage: When the Suguwemi hits, it doesn't do damage, but begins to co-mingle its essence with the victim's body and identity. The round it hits, there's no particular effect, and the Suguwemi can still extract itself. On the second round, the victim faces 1D4/1D10 SAN loss as the thing treats its identity the way a nest-building robin treats an attractive bit of grass, but the Suguwemi can still escape if the victim descends below 560 feet or comes into the presence of some stimulus that irritates it. During the third and fourth rounds it cannot remove itself, even if the victim is falling towards the Suguwemi's doom. The victim dies at the end of the fourth round, and the Suguwemi can extract itself on the fifth.

STATS FOR TRAIL OF CTULHU

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 7, Scuffling 9

Hit Threshold: 2, for things that can harm it (see "Endgame," page 26)

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: +3 (totally silent)

Weapon: With a hit, the Suguwemi does no damage but begins the process of co-mingling its essence with its victim. On the round it hits, it can still pull itself out. On the second round, the victim takes a Stability Loss 6 hit as the thing treats its identity the way a nest-building robin treats an attractive bit of grass. At this point, the Suguwemi can still pull out and flee if the victim descends below 560 feet or comes into the presence of some stimulus that irritates it. During the third and fourth rounds, it is completely bound to the victim and cannot extricate itself even if he's plunging towards the ground. The human dies during the fourth round of co-mingling. The Suguwemi can extricate itself and fly away (unless destroyed) on round five.

Armor: None for things that can harm it

Stability Loss: +1, but see the "Weapon" notes

STATS FOR CTULHU DARK

No Insanity roll just to see it, but there's certainly one when it starts colonizing your soul. Dodging it requires Difficulty 3+, and the first Investigator to fail suffers Coexistence. If the sufferer immediately gets to a low altitude, he might (on a result of 2-5) kill the monster and possibly (on a 6 result) be quick enough to do so before the colonization is complete.

THE PROGENY

ANYONE WITH THE MISFORTUNE TO SEE BOTH WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO DRAW A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SUGUWEMI AND ITS PROGENY. PROGENY ARE SMALLER (ABOUT AS BIG AS A MEDIUM-SIZED DOG) AND ARE CLEARLY TANGIBLE, WITH NONE OF THE GASSY, FUZZY-EDGED INDISTINCTNESS OF THE PARENT.

THEY ARE A DARK, ROSY FLESH-TONE, THE COLOR OF THE INSIDE OF A NOSE OR A MOUTH. AN ASYMMETRICAL SPRAWL OF LIMBS, NOT ALL WITH THE SAME NUMBER OF JOINTS, EMERGES FROM WHAT MUST BE A TORSO, WHICH SEETHES AS IF BREATHING OR CIRCULATING FLUID BENEATH A SPARSE COAT OF COARSE HAIR AND A NETWORK OF PROMINENT VEINS. THERE ARE NO IDENTIFIABLE SENSORY ORGANS, BUT THERE ARE A FEW RANDOMLY PLACED FLESHY CRENELATIONS ABOUT THE TOP OF IT THAT COULD BE EARS, OR NOSES, OR SOME OTHER APERTURE ENTIRELY. FROM ITS FRONT PROJECTS A FOOT-LONG SPIKE WITH AN OPENING ON ITS UNDERSIDE, SOMETHING LIKE A STINGER OR A PROBOSCIS. ITS MOVEMENTS ARE QUICK AND SKITTERING, AND EACH LEG ENDS WITH POINT THAT IS THE BLACK OF A MOONLESS SKY. THE TERMINAL TIPS OF ITS FEET ARE THE ONLY PARTS THAT RESEMBLE A PART OF THE SUGUWEMI.

THE OTHER WAY IT RECALLS ITS ANCESTOR IS THAT IT ALSO PRODUCES A LOW-INTENSITY VERSION OF THE WARM PHANTOM SKIN-ITCH. IN THIS CASE, IT'S ALWAYS CRAWLING OVER THE SURFACE OF ONE'S FLESH, AND IT ONLY OCCURS WHEN THE CREATURE IS WITHIN A FEW YARDS—EVEN IF IT CAN'T YET BE SEEN.

IT ATTACKS BY RAMMING PEOPLE WITH THAT HORN, WHICH IS MEANT TO BE AN OVIPOSITOR. GOOD NEWS FOR ITS VICTIMS, IT'S STERILE. ITS INCREDIBLY SHARP LITTLE HOOVES CAN LEAVE SCRATCHES AND SCRAPES, AS WELL AS DIVOTS IN FLOORS OR WALLS, BUT DON'T REALLY GET DEEP ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING BEYOND COSMETIC DAMAGE.

(NOTE THAT WHILE IT CAN GRADUALLY PHASE THROUGH SOLID MATTER, IT CANNOT SEE THROUGH IT.)

STATS IN CALL OF CTHULHU

STR 14 CON 14 SIZ 2 POW 15 DEX 17 Move 10/1 through solid matter HP 8

Damage Bonus: none

Weapon: Impotent ovipositor 55%, damage 1d8 (armor piercing: halve the protection of the victim's armor)

Armor: none

Skills: Dodge 40%, Sneak 50%

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3 to see it

STATS IN TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 4, Scuffling 10, Fleeing 10

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +0 **Stealth Modifier:** +1

Weapon: +1; the spike on its body is sharp the way only an interface between dimensions can be, even though it won't make you gravid with young

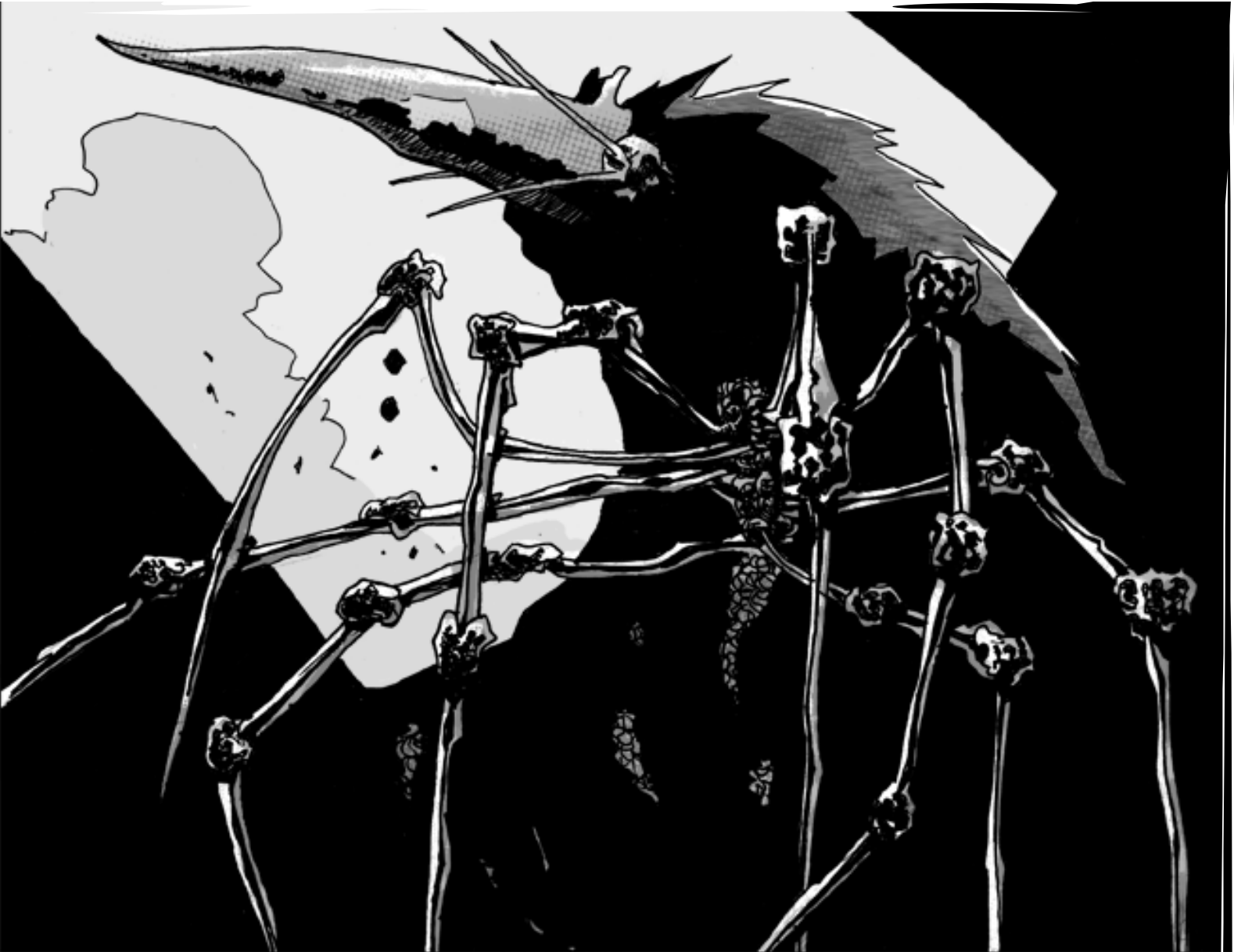
Armor: +0

Stability Loss: +0, or +1 if the Investigators see it come out of a corpse

STATS IN CTHULHU DARK

This is more of an 'animal' than a monster. Smashing it dead with a shovel is well within human capacity, so it folds after two successes at 4-5, or one at level 6.

At the same time, anyone who rolls 3 or lower when trying to get out of its way gets pierced and wounded. Kindly GMs leave this injury cosmetic. Strict GMs might increase the numbers needed to succeed ("No, outrunning the security guards requires a 3: Outrunning them with a big hole in your leg requires a 5") or decrease the payout from high numbers ("With that 5 result, you can suppress the searing abdominal pains long enough to wrestle the parachute off of Wendy's corpse, but you can't get off the side of the building").



MANSPERGER

HOOKS

There are two ways Investigators can get involved with the Suguwemi: Either they experience it directly or a witness comes forward. Both possibilities have their allure.

Investigators as primary witnesses have a reason to get involved because **they saw it** and no one believes them. It probably murdered a friend or co-worker and the burning itch on their head might make them think it's after them next. That's a strong motivation, and if you're using **Die High** as a one-shot, it's the path I recommend. Generate some characters who have a reason to be up high (a list of possibilities follows in the next section), stick them together, and let the monster try to pick them off.

On the other hand, an ongoing campaign is unlikely to just happen to contain an ornithologist, an ironworker and a sustainability consultant all in Chicago in the same week. More likely, the Investigators have some sort of established

position as (at best) “solvers of uncanny problems” or (more likely) “freaks for weird stuff.” Either rep is sufficient for a desperate radio aerial technician who just wants to get back to work without worrying that something's going to sweep him up in to the sky and ... do stuff.

The advantage of the ongoing Investigator structure is that characters are, by definition, inclined to go towards eerie things instead of away. In this case, you start by introducing testimony by the first witness (instead of having the Investigators be the first witnesses) and proceed from there as described under “Investigative Paths.”

The adventure's kickoff is when somebody—either the Investigators or an NPC—is present for the third Suguwemi attack, on Bill Barnes. The first two attacks (Shael and Shagasemi) occur before the adventure begins, so no one initially knows about them. They come up later, during the investigation.

GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE

AS OF THIS WRITING, CHICAGO'S CONCEALED CARRY BAN HAS BEEN STRUCK DOWN IN THE COURTS, BUT IF YOU WANT TO SET IT BEFORE 2012, IT'S AGAINST THE LAW TO GO STRAPPED UNLESS YOU'RE A RETIRED COP WHO TAKES AN ANNUAL TEST. OPEN CARRY IS ALSO FORBIDDEN UNLESS YOU'RE HUNTING, AT HOME, OR IN A FIXED PLACE OF BUSINESS WITH THE OWNER'S PERMISSION.

THIS MAY HAVE THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE OF DENYING INVESTIGATORS WEAPONS THAT WOULDN'T DO THEM ANY GOOD. HOWEVER, GIVEN THAT 10,000 HANDGUNS ARE CONFISCATED BY THE POLICE IN CHICAGO EVERY YEAR, THEY CAN PROBABLY OBTAIN AND CARRY ONE IF THEY'RE WILLING TO RISK ARREST IN ADDITION TO A DEADLY FALL.

REASONS TO GET HIGH

Who spends time out in the open above 560 feet in a city? Not many people, but some people (and their motives) include...

Photographers: It's a beautiful skyline, and the views from the heights only enhance it. If you want to build a portfolio, you could hit on a worse unifying theme than "vertiginous shots of spectacular architecture." A photographer Investigator might have limited time to either fill out a gallery show or lose her spot, motivating her to shoot despite danger. She might even get a picture of the thing that killed her sidekick. (Probably better if she shot that one on film, though. The Suguwemi messes with electronics, and that way it takes a while to develop, so people can accuse her of sensationalizing her friend's tragic death.)

Helicopter Pilots, Crew and Passengers: Why would you get back up in the air when you know there's a monster up there? Because it's your job and rent ain't payin' itself. Not only does this open up the possibility of a chase and/or breathtaking aerial duel, but with a pilot, cameraman and newscaster, you've got a whole character party. One on the tail of a much bigger story than the evening traffic report.

Meteorologists: It's not just their job to watch the sky, it's their job to understand it. In addition to radar and cameras, they're aiming a lot of specialized information-gathering instruments upwards. The Suguwemi causes electromagnetic effects (see "Investigative Paths" on page 20), so perhaps it causes a distinctively anomalous reading on the meteorologist's high-tech new evaporation meter.

Window Washers: Yeah, it's still done by hand. Window washers clamp on, rappel down on top of a couple buckets of ammonia water and scrub, scrub, scrub. Pay's about \$16 an hour and it does not require a college degree. Slipping is always a risk when you're setting up descent gear around pails of soapy water, but for most



window cleaners the worst is weather. Working on a glass building during a sunny day can leave you feeling baked and blinded, but it's better than icy cold, and chill is better than wind. Of course, sometimes you get both—high winds making you drift and sway while your hands go numb around your squeegee. The only thing worse would be if the wind was somehow out to get you. . . .

Construction Workers: Everything that's dangerous about window washing applies to construction, with the added disadvantage that the building isn't even done. Ironworker money's better than window-washer money, and you might even get safety nets, but you also have to carry and manipulate heavy steel on incomplete structures and then deal with all the hazards of welding—eye scald, stray sparks catching things on fire, electrocution—while not falling.

Radio Aerial Technicians: The top of a tall building is the perfect place for a radio aerial, but when something goes wrong, someone has to go up and fix it. It could be a loose electrical connection, damage from high winds or the result of a lightning-strike. Given the Suguwemi's electrical distortions, a tech is more likely to get sent up while it's still there. Or hey, maybe it made a nest! Note well that the proliferation of phone cells and wi-fi has made a lot of work in this field as well.

BASE Jumpers: If you're not familiar with the sport of BASE jumping, it stands for "Building, Aerial, Span, Earth" and it means parachuting without the plane. While the lower altitudes might seem safer, BASE jumpers have less time to react, less airspeed to make them stable and less margin of error on landing. And you know what? When you hit concrete, you're just as dead at 30 mph as 120.

BASE jumping is fraught with legal hassles, so characters in this category are even less likely to go to the police and get believed. But if you want a character who demonstrably runs straight at mortal peril, and who might have the skills to survive being knocked off a thousand-foot building, this is pretty much your only option.

Penthouse Residents: You're not going to pay thousands of dollars a month for a way-high apartment and then ignore the views, are you? Maybe you are, or maybe you'll enjoy them through the windows (if some courageous washer has kept them sufficiently transparent). But perhaps you like going out onto the balcony to watch people scuttle like ants below. Or perhaps your young son liked firing his squirt gun over the edge before the cloud with claws descended and, after a heartbreakingly brief struggle, left him asymptotically dead. Whatever your opinion of balconies, you're in a position to see something and you've got the money to pursue an independent investigation. (Personally, I'm struck with a desire to play a lonely rich widow who lets a desperate window washer into her apartment after witnessing the Suguwemi attacking him.)

Voyeurs/Astronomers: Anecdotally, more telescopes are sold per capita in cities, where the light pollution usually blocks out the stars, than are sold in the clear-sky countryside. Regardless of which heavenly bodies you're seeking to view, however, you might wind up having to go to the roof to get the line of sight you want, especially if glare interferes with your telescope (or if your window isn't very clean). This is much like the Photographer if you change 'artistic' interest to 'prurient' and 'camera' to 'telescope.' Though there's no reason for a pervert to shy away from a telephoto lens—it was good enough for Jimmy Stewart!

Roof Duct Repairmen: This job is substantially less frightening than many of the paycheck-motivated entries in this section. Buildings put AC ducts and chimneys on the roof and walking around up there to check a problem isn't nearly as challenging as going over the side. Just makes it scarier when something whistles down on the wind and tries to co-locate itself with your partner's body.

24-Hour Party People: The roof party is a perennial city favorite (in the summer) because it's both literally and figuratively cooler than being cooped up in someone's tiny apartment. You get great views, the breeze, the stars, lithe-bodied young people shaking their moneymakers and giggling "I am sooo drunk!" Then the thing swoops down, terrifies everyone but only kills one and the game becomes one of sorting out the valuable observations from the few party guests who weren't smashed, tripping balls or terrified into traumatic amnesia. Do you like *Rashomon*? Party-people Investigators lets you do it with the Cthulhu Mythos.

Ornithologists: The stereotypical ornithologist (or "bird expert") is a shy, bookish intellectual—perhaps a soft-voiced middle-aged woman with spectacles? But in fact, there are some badass ornithologists out there. Raptor species are

being driven into cities, where pollution makes their eggs fragile. To preserve the species, someone has to go out and get the eggs so they can be raised in a safe incubator instead of the dizzyingly high and secluded crannies favored by many endangered hawks. Oh, and in addition to crawling out to architectural details that were designed for looks, not accessibility, these ornithologists have to raid nests while the mother hawk stabs at their vitreous fluids. Common hawks can dive at up to 120 mph, but even their more typical cruising speed of 40 mph is no picnic when a two-pound mass of talons and beak is impacting your face.

Lightbulb Custodians: Signs up high have light bulbs burn out, and someone has to go up to change them, simple as that. Those digitally-controlled illuminated signs with hundreds or thousands of bulbs or LEDs? Same deal. Another job where you go up high and do fiddly technical tasks while the playful wind tries to turn you into a pavement smear. Moreover, another job where the Suguwemi's electrical gremlinry is likely to get you called out.

Roofers: As with the duct cleaner and the window washer, it's a job anybody might have and it only makes sense up on top.

Gardeners/'Green Consultants': It's a tough row to hoe, gardening in the city, and the overlap between "people who like to dig their own weeds" and "people who can afford penthouses" is, I would guess, fairly slim. But it only takes one to make a memorable, crotchety, high-altitude millionaire carrot gardener. On the other hand, 'green environments' are lucrative right now, so experts in cloaking buildings in smog-trapping plants and protecting groundwater with rain gardens are springing up like mushrooms after a shower. Rooftop space is traditionally underused.

Rooftop Swimmers: There aren't many swimming pools above 500 feet, but if the Suguwemi gets desperate it might dip down to a lower height, like the pool atop 1111 North Dearborn. Or the exercise yard on top of the triangular Metropolitan Correctional Center.

Investigators can come from any of the above-listed categories, though the adventures runs most smoothly if they are all in the same group and start out knowing and trusting one another. The other use for the list is, these are all people Investigators might talk to, or find out about the Suguwemi from. If you want to give it extra victims, they could come from any of those categories. (BASE jumpers, voyeurs and partygoers are all witnesses who might distrust the cops, as might an under the table illegal immigrant washing windows or fixing ducts.)

Motivating people to pursue the Suguwemi isn't always easy. If they saw it kill a friend, they might be set on revenge ... or they might decide they don't want any part of the nightmare that killed Billy.

One thing that helps is the burning forehead sensation. Once the Suguwemi has seen them, that twinge between the eyes never goes away. If it's nearby, the feeling might intensify (or it might not). When it swoops towards them, they might feel like a part of their brain is trying to jump out and meet it. Don't come out and tell them that it has marked them as its prey, but if they jump to that conclusion, by no means dispel it. Suggest that it gets more intense as they go upwards, so that once they're above 220 feet, it's distinctly prickly. Once they're back down on the ground, it's merely irritating. But any time they want to go up in a tall building, suggest the idea that it's zeroing in on them. If they try to flee, ask them if they're keeping track of their height above sea level—or ask “are you sure you want to go out into all that open space out past the suburbs? Maybe it's only been missing you because you're hidden among so many people and buildings. . . .”

As long as you can frame it that the thing is coming to get them (even if that's only 'possibly' coming to get them) and that the cops aren't doing anything, they should be motivated.

Other drives can be more quotidian. What's the altitude of their apartments? Do they want to move back home with their mom or their ex-husband? Maybe their work puts them up there. Finding a new job is hard enough without saying “I can only work on the first floor or the sky-monster will eat me.”

SCENE ONE IF INVESTIGATORS SEE THE MONSTER

If the Investigators are going to be primary witnesses, Bill is a close friend or even a relative. Whatever motivates them to be up in the air, he does the same thing. Play up a first scene where they're doing their thing, and make it immersive. If they're BASE jumpers, get the details of the equipment and emphasize the crazy risks they're taking, the chilly air up high, the crackle of the police-band scanner and the clatter of the lock as they bust through it. If they're in the traffic copter, emphasize the noise, the vibration and the reek of fumes.

When the Suguwemi attacks, let them roll some dice.

In **Call of Cthulhu**, some obvious possibilities are Dodge (when it swoops close), Hide (when it's out of sight but you're worried it's returning), Climb and Jump (to get to a safer position) or Sneak to get away from it. In **Trail of Cthulhu**, Athletics, Fleeing and Stealth serve the same purpose, while in **Cthulhu Dark** it's just an ordinary 1-2D pool. (If they really want to risk their Sanity in the first scene, 3D.) Mention the hot sensation of itch on their shoulder blade, moving down their ribs and then across their stomach, its angles almost seeming to mimic the creature's moves... until it turns towards them, and they see the red eyes, and the itchy pain snaps up to their forehead like a sniper's laser sight.

All attacking rolls are pointless, but **Call's** Spot Hidden can get a view of the thing. Anyone who really tries to look at it gets the Spot Hidden roll and gets a description (much like the one Andrea Barnes gives, below) even on a fail. Characters who succeed may also notice (1) that it's totally silent, (2) that it's very slightly transparent—they can see bright lights through its body or (3) it doesn't displace much air. (That last one is for the character who has it swoop right by his face, turning at the last moment.)

In **Trail**, hand out those clues to different players as long as they aren't actively Fleeing or hiding to the point that they wouldn't see it at all.

In **Dark**, they get the rough outline description no matter what they roll, but anyone who gets a 3+ gets a clue, or multiple clues.

Call and **Trail's** Electronics or Electrical Repair might indicate that phones and laptops and any other gear carried is slowing up and getting flickery for no good reason, while in **Dark** a 5+ is needed to notice this effect in all the hurly-burly.

Depending on who the characters are and what abilities or specialties they have, they may make other rolls. That's great! A good result with a specialized skill should, at the very least, result in the character looking cool, and possibly could yield another hint as well. For instance, if a BASE jumper decides to go over the edge rather than stick around and fight it, you could describe how it follows him down, pivoting deftly around his shroud-lines, getting closer and closer ... then inexplicably stopping and going back up at around 300 feet. A photographer can get a picture on film (not digital), or an ornithologist can notice that not only are its 'wings' nothing like biological wings, they shouldn't even function.

At the core, though, don't let too much ride on the dice. Allow players who roll badly when running or fleeing to fall and get a little injured, but plunging to their doom really should be off the table. If they roll well, describe their escapes as close calls, with the Suguwemi getting within inches of their faces before they cram themselves behind the steel frame of the rooftop TV antenna. They can't die in this scene, and they can't save Bill Barnes. If you want it to touch them, giving a brief chill that immediately fades into the itchy headache, that's a good detail too.

After a few passes, Bill stumbles and the thing's on him. It enfolds him, seeming to flow through him like bubbles through a liquid, before he crumples and it flits away. He's dead, and no Medicine or First Aid is bringing him back. The Investigators now have to try to explain what happened to the police, who are completely dismissive. Why wouldn't they be? There's no physical evidence.

SCENE ONE IF INVESTIGATORS DON'T SEE THE MONSTER

For more ongoing games, the Investigators get approached by Andrea Barnes, Bill's distraught sister. She was on the heights and she saw the attack, but no one believes her. The Investigators are her only hope of understanding what happened and maybe preventing further pointless deaths.

(To tie this together, figure out how Andrea found out about the Investigators. Best and easiest is to have her know someone from a previous adventure, an ally or asset—ideally, someone whose life the Investigators saved.)

Here's Andrea's story.

"I work for a high-end catering business ... hors d'ouvres, mostly. When Luis, my boss, was looking for some extra setup and wait-staff help, I got him to hire my brother Bill, who'd lost his job in Gary. He was staying with me while he looked for something here. Anyhow, it was an afternoon wedding reception on this penthouse balcony. A gorgeous deck overlooking the lakefront. I was there early, getting the steam trays ready while Bill carried out tables. The decorators weren't there yet. It was broad daylight, maybe 3:00 in the afternoon, and something ... attacked me.

"I mean, it just came down out of the clear blue sky and tried to grab me! It looked ... weird. It was gray. I didn't see it really clearly, everything was sudden—but it was shaped kind of like ... antlers? Or like if you put your hands together and spread them out? Like you were holding a basketball for a free-throw, only without the ball.

But not really. It looked cloudy, and there were these red or orange sparks in the middle of it. It kind of blurred, but it was really fast.

"It just came down at me and I fell over. I was trying to get under a table and then Bill was there with one of my vegetable knives, yelling at it, and I think he tried to stab it. It just kind of folded around him. Like wrapping paper, only the ends of its ... horns, or fingers ... they were pointy and went into him. But not like it was stabbing him. It was like ... I don't know. He just dropped and it flew away and he was dead."

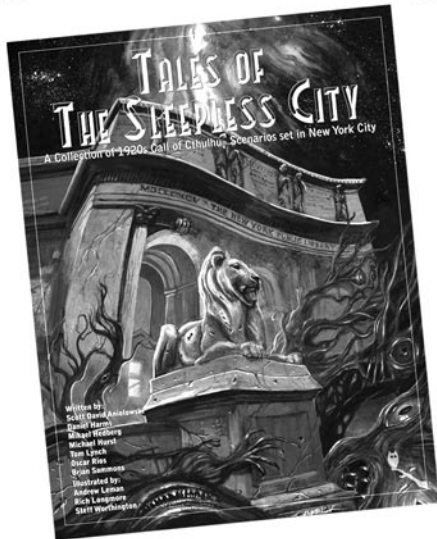
Then she cries. Note that Andrea has a red rash between her eyebrows, where she's been scratching. She hasn't made the connection just yet between that and the Suguwemi, but she picks at it while talking to the Investigators.

Trail Investigators may try Reassurance to pry a few more details out of her. With a 1-point spend, she recalls that she never heard it make a sound and that her head started hurting afterwards. With a 2-point spend, it's not only the silence, but she reluctantly admits that it "didn't look really real—like I could see stuff through it, just a little, like a shadow or a reflection." Other Abilities like Assess Honesty or Psychoanalysis require no spends to indicate that, at least on the surface, she shows no signs of dishonesty or insanity. Both Occult and Cthulhu Mythos draw blanks about flying antlers attacking in the sunshine.

For **Call**, it's Persuade for the bonus clues, Psychology to indicate that she seems honest and grieving but not delusional.

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CTHULHU TAKES THE BIG APPLE!



Scenarios by Scott David Aniolowski,
Dan Harms, Oscar Rios,
Brian Sammons, and more!
With Handouts by the HPLHS!



Edited by Joseph S. Pulver, Sr, this anthology contains deluded visions of Dim Carcosa with new fiction from Barron, Lupoff, Strantzias, Gavin, Goodfellow, Pulver, and more.

The King in Yellow is calling;
spend A Season in Carcosa.

The Strange Dark One is
W. H. Pugmire's tribute to
none other than Nyarlathotep.
Worship at the altar with the
Queen of Eldritch Horror!



In **Dark**, it takes a 5 to get the silence clue and a 6 to get the transparency, but only a 3 on something relevant to find her generally trustworthy and stable.

INVESTIGATIVE PATHS

After the first scene with Bill and/or Andrea, the Investigators need to learn more about what they're facing. There are a lot of ways they can go about this, and I can only list the most obvious.

Mixed in with the (relatively) safe investigation scenes, there also needs to be escalating danger, keeping pace with their dawning realization about what they're facing. Scene One introduced the peril, either directly or indirectly. The natural escalation is to get a closer look at the Suguwemi; to find out it's worse than expected by encountering its Progeny; to realize that turning a blind eye is not an easy option; and ultimately to confront it and either take it out, die trying, or die succeeding.

Those dangerous confrontations are dealt with below, in the "Essential Scenes" section. Before that, we have options for clue-gathering scenes, along with suggestions for transitioning them into essential scenes.

QUICK! TO THE LIBRARY! (OR WIKIPEDIA)

The standard **Call of Cthulhu** response is to find a thick dusty tome and read it until you go crazy, find an answer, go crazy finding an answer, or find an answer that's crazy. Here's what's available on the Suguwemi, both from bound volumes and the Internet.

OLDE TYME SOURCES

There's not a lot there. Suguwemi only dwelt in the Rockies; people there were sparse during the years of their occupation; not everyone who encountered one survived; not every survivor told the story; and not every story about the Suguwemi was recorded. For most researchers, that well is bone dry. Someone who makes an extraordinary effort can find the word, and a story of a flying elk with 'sunset eyes' that haunted only the highest mountains and hills.

Call: A generous Keeper might let this slip on a special success for Occult. Otherwise, a success on Anthropology, Archaeology or Library Use should do it.

Trail: A 1-spend on Anthropology or Archaeology. Or free if anyone happens to know Language: Nomic or Language: Ute.

Dark: Give out the clue on a 6 only.

This is much more fruitful. People looking for high-altitude deaths in Chicago can find six over the last decade, if you exclude suicides. One was a spousal defenestrations (husband confessed), two were drunken tumbles, one was a failed BASE jump ... but the other two only took place within the last two months. Those were Ninette Shagasemi and Mickey Shea.

All that's available just for sweat equity. For superior students (as described below), there's information about Ninette and Shea. Ninette Shagasemi was a triathlete stock-trader who was found dead next to her apartment building's pool (240 feet up) with no signs of foul play. Mickey Shea was an ironworker who fell to his death—but there was a lengthy police investigation because, although he he was seen just minutes before wearing his safety gear, he apparently took it off and ran towards the crane (which was taking people to and from the high-up work site) when he fell. He was an experienced construction worker; his behavior was out of character and completely inexplicable.

Call: Library Use or Computer Use success to get the two victims.

Trail: Library Use or Research to get the two victims.

Dark: Roll 3 for the victims.

THE SCIENCE SECTION

There are a thousand things that might be relevant to high-altitude death with no symptoms: blood-clots, oxygen starvation, an Andean politician's assassination in 1978 that apparently used a poison that only becomes active in thin air. There are zero things that seem relevant to weird elk-horn-shaped sky monsters. The only bone to throw superlative researchers is an obscure article by Dr. Hecuba Ostrokol. She's a physicist working at Fermilab with some funky ideas about polydimensional superstring interfaces and how they might be hinted at in electromagnetic interference patterns. Something about her work reminds the genius Investigator of what he saw, or of Andrea's story... but he can't explain why.

Call: Special success on Library Use for the weird intuition, or a Physics success if they specifically request to try that skill. Otherwise nada.

Trail: 2-spend on Physics for the Ostrokol instinct.

Dark: Roll 6 for the gut feeling about Ostrokol's work.

Y'WANNA SEE A DEAD BODY?

There are three corpses the Investigators might want to examine: Bill's, Ninette's and Mickey's. All are in varying states. Ninette was autopsied and buried. Mickey was cremated. Bill is still in the morgue.

This part of the investigation is your best opportunity to smoothly introduce the Progeny, as discussed on page 15. Ideally, the Investigators pursue some sedate leads before going face to face with an It, and you can defer them by having an incompetent clerk direct them to the wrong hospital or having them arrive when the morgue is busy checking in the tragic results of a drug-gang shootout.

If they get to Bill's body early, the obvious clue that requires no roll is that he's dead and has no drugs, no poisons, no toxins, no injuries and no hidden traumas. The M.E., Dr. Rufus Hallifax, has seen some weird stuff in his day and bluntly says that there are some causes of death that are just beyond the current understanding of science. (His favorite anecdote is about a murder victim from 1991 whose widow swore he was killed by Yakuza gangsters using "Dim Mak.")

More observant observers may realize that Bill has somehow lost thirty pounds of weight, even though his mass remains unchanged if tested using centrifugation instead of a mechanical scale. (Any Investigator with the Physics skill who realizes this has his or her sanity in jeopardy.) Moreover, the lights in the room flicker when Bill's corpse comes near and electronic devices run slow and dim within ten feet of him.

Call: Noting the weight loss requires a successful Idea roll while seeing the body moved. (It's just a weird instinct, like the way you can tell in a B-movie that the rock is foam, not stone.) Finding the mass/weight discrepancy requires a successful Physics roll and triggers a Sanity check with a 0/1 loss and a growing suspicion that the laws of nature are weaker than we think. Picking up on the electromagnetic weirdness requires an Idea special success or a success with Electronics or Electrical repair.

Trail: The weight loss is free for Forensics or a 1-spend for Medicine. The mass/weight weirdness is free for Physics but forces a Stability check. Noting the flickering lights and dull electronic response is automatic for Electrical Repair.

Dark: Noting the weight loss requires at least a 4, and the mass conflict requires a 6 and forces an Insanity roll. The electronic distortion requires a 5+ to spot.

MEETING PEOPLE AND TALKING TO THEM

When you're dealing with something that doesn't make sounds, that barely interferes with matter and that throws gremlins into most of the equipment that might record it, your best bet may be human witnesses.

OTHER ALTITUDE AFICIONADOS

All those categories of people in "Reasons to Get High"? The Investigators could go after any one of those groups and start asking roundabout questions that drill in towards, "Seen any weird stuff up there?"

Do not let your players see that list. It is 100% their job to brainstorm categories of people who'd be up in the air. Resist the temptation to give them hints. If they're direct experiencers, they probably remember parts of the list, in addition to already having a social group in the heights. If they're part of an ongoing campaign, they've got ironworkers (from Shea) and the notion of people up top for parties (from the Barnes siblings and Shagasemi). If they're really stuck, mention seeing a window-washer at work as they're going up to interview someone else.

From any category, they can get initial shifty denials but, with a little tenacity, someone admits to seeing 'something spooky.' If they describe the creature first, it's a good time to have the listener get really shook up and admit that he's seen it but thought he was going crazy. The most fruitful people to ask, of course, are the ones with red marks on their foreheads from where they've been scratching that horrible, unending itch.

Ironworkers, when asked about Shea, say he was a good worker and conscientious about his safety gear. Only on a spend (for **Trail**) or a success (**Call** and **Dark**) do they get someone who admits that he saw Shea get down, and that he seemed to be running from something.

With the other categories, it's a similar thing. Workers who are up all day are more likely to have real insights, if approached right. A photographer may have a blurry picture, or a voyeur/astronomer might have made a rough sketch. Electrical repair workers with the red mark are far more likely to have noticed that electronics wig out when the Thing is around, and with an extraordinary success or some guidance might be able to pick out a distinctive electromagnetic signature.

The big get is someone who survived an attack by descending below 210 feet. Save that for big spends (**Trail**), special successes (**Call**), sixes (**Dark**) or as a reward for a lot of player effort. If someone really emotes up a storm during the inquiry, or if the player group has a really brilliant strategy for finding witnesses or getting them to talk, that's the time to reward them with an escape story.



Call: This is mostly going to be Persuade. Credit Rating might look promising, but in fact that just gets you people who'll tell you whatever they think you want to hear for a date with Mr. Franklin.

Trail: Your go-to here is Oral History or Flattery, with a 2-Spend to find the survivor. Streetwise is a 1-Spend to get the standard stuff Flattery gets free, and for Electrical Repair it's a 1-Spend to talk shop and find out about the interference.

Dark: Roll 3 for the standard stuff, 4 for the electrical clue, 6 for the survivor.

THE POLICE

The police haven't put anything together. They've got stuff going on, from traffic infractions to infanticide, so they focus

most of their attention down on the ground. After all, that's where the people are, and people are the ones doing crimes.

They do not want to hear crazy stories about flying monsters with glowing red stuff. Between drug raids and off-med schizos, they hear a weirder story than that every day. Investigators who've helped in the past, or who have some kind of tie to a precinct (formal or no) get a better reception, but without a confession or physical evidence, there's not much the police can do. Their best advice (for those who deal with them successfully) is to talk to the medical examiner, Dr. Rufus Hallifax.

Call: It's Persuade again, but a success only gets a kindly suggestion that they talk to Dr. Hallifax.

Trail: Cop Talk gets the referral to the M.E. without a spend, but is otherwise dry.

Dark: Sent to the morgue on a 5 (but it's cool, it's only to talk).

THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

The M.E., Dr. Rufus Hallifax, is far more open than the police. He's extremely skeptical about claims of ghostly monsters, but the ominous parallels between Shagasemi and Barnes do bother him, and he's open-minded enough to get a queasy feeling if his attention is drawn to the irregularities.

Nevertheless, people die weirdly in Chicago all the time. He's going to lean towards dismissing it as coincidence. Unless, of course, the Keeper decides to spring the essential scene "Seeing the Progeny" (page 15) when Hallifax is there. That makes him a believer, if he survives.

If it seems too early for the Progeny to appear, keep the Investigators away from the morgue by fobbing them off with excuses. Dr. Hallifax can finally call and apologize, and offer to show them their friend's body, after they've had a few dry investigative scenes and are ready for some more red meat.

PEOPLE WITH THE HEAD-MARK

You never realize how many people have acne until you start looking for people with marks on between their eyes. If the Investigators are talking to everyone they see with a scratched-raw patch, give them a few false starts before they meet a woman on the train named Hecuba Ostrokol. As described on page 20, she's a researcher out at Fermilab. She has not actually seen the creature, but it perceived her during its near-death arrival on this dimension. Don't make her help a total gimme—she's too smart to go off alone on the say-so of any ol' stranger with a weird story. But a plausible link between the head-itch and electronic distortion might get her attention.

INSTRUMENTATION AND TECHNOLOGY

There are several avenues to the clue that the Suguwemi messes up gadgetry. With that factoid in hand, it's a short step to "Let's set up gadgetry and see what we can learn if the Suguwemi messes it up!"

This is an ideal place to insert the essential scene "Seeing the Suguwemi" (page 25), either when the Investigators are placing their gauges and monitors in place, or when they go to recover them after getting some promising data.

If it seems early to unveil the Suguwemi, they might be able to capture its unique electrical signature even without seeing it. This is not a gimme unless they actually fought it. (In other words, if you run the "Seeing the Suguwemi" scene, they get the electromagnetic data automatically. If they play it cautious and don't expose themselves, it costs them.)

Once they have the data from their instruments, they can attempt to build a bigger detector and track it through the city. But don't let them get that machine built until you're ready to run an Endgame, as described on page 26.

Call: Characters who take the guarded approach get their data from any Electronics success, or from an Electrical Repair special success. Those who risk hosting a Progeny get it free.

Trail: 1-spend for Electrical Repair with no risk, free with risk.

Dark: Requires a 5+ if they don't see the thing, but the clue is free when they do.

GET THE COFFEE. IT'S A STAKEOUT

If putting up electronic monitors to watch for the thing is flirting with disaster, this is kissing disaster right on the lips. If the Investigators decide to go way up high on buildings and look for the creature, that's a pretty firm signal that they're ready for the "Seeing the Suguwemi" scene. If that fits with your pacing, let them do it and describe how their burning foreheads get worse as they near it.

Alternately, you can tease them a bit if they go for this too early. Perhaps they're sitting up on a rooftop with their electromagnetometers and scoped rifles when they see the thing ... a mile off in the distance, heading for those guys changing the bulbs on that huge Miller Highlife sign. Their chances of getting over to mount a rescue? Zilch. The odds that anyone can get up there in time to do anything? Zilch. The chances that they might get hold of the bulb changers? Zilch, the Suguwemi's blocking their cell phones. All they're going to get is a front row seat for a terminal Suguwemi attack. Blurry pictures, maybe, though the angle's poor. At least they have one more body to examine and one more survivor to interview.

BAIT

This is different from the stakeout in that the Investigators put a goat or a large dog or something on the roof to tempt the Suguwemi, then hide in safety instead of being out in the open themselves. (If they're out there with the bait, run it as a stakeout.)

The creature investigates, but doesn't attack the bait. The bait may or may not freak out, break its leash and run over the edge of the building, creating possible tragedy and certain mess. But unless they're filming with old, non-electronic cameras, the Investigators learn nothing besides "It only attacks humans." If they get film, they have a lovely conversation starter with special effects aficionados. "Whoa, the budget on that must've been pretty low, huh?"

You may not have Bill's sister in the game if the Investigators were his buddies and were with him when he died. But characters in an ongoing campaign may benefit from a scene to invest them further in the peril. If they haven't figured out the head-pain thing, have her mention it to them and say it's been getting worse. Have her call one (or more) if they're stuck, hysterically insisting that she saw it out her window and that the pain is getting worse. If they tell her to get out of there, she can describe how the pain lessened when she was heading down in the elevator. If they don't, they can keep her on the line and hear her (she has them on speakerphone, of course) hysterically scream out a description as it phases gradually through her window and kills her. Or, it can pick off a guy who was on a higher floor and who went out on his balcony to try and take a picture with his phone. (Examining the phone afterwards, and how it came to be bricked, is another option for getting technical information.)

TAKE TO THE SKIES!

The essential question here is, "Will the Suguwemi attack a helicopter or a light aircraft?" and the answer is, "You betcha!"

It's a birdbrain, remember? It can sense the human consciousness it requires to breed itself out of loneliness and the concept of a moving enclosure is way too abstract for it. So it attempts to make it with the vehicle.

In story terms, this serves the same function as the stakeout, above, only now with the tension of relying on one pilot to keep everyone alive while the electrical systems on his aircraft go woogy and weird. Of course, anyone who wants to even the odds by shooting at the thing can learn that bullets pass right through it—and that if they open a window, it will attempt to get inside and co-exist forcefully with them instead of with the aircraft.

If things go seriously south with this, let the Suguwemi get inside while the chopper's crashing—after it rebounds off the Aon Center and cracks open, perhaps. It gets inside and starts its icky process of infecting a character, the weapons are doing nothing, and the pilot gets one last chance to pull out. If he or she succeeds, you can go with to the "Martyr for Humanity" Endgame option. If the pilot fails, same thing, only collective instead of individual: They may have all sucked fiery death, but at least they took the Suguwemi with them. (Make sure to describe its futile dying attempts to extract itself before proximity to the ground crushes it. It's the least you can do to salve a total party kill.)

Call: It's all Pilot. When the thing first slams into the aircraft, call for a straight Pilot roll. If it succeeds, the craft isn't crashing, but if it fails, they are. Either way, the next

roll is taken at a -10% penalty because the electronics are starting to cook. If they weren't already crashing, a success means they've pulled away and can either escape, make an emergency landing, or (if they're sick of living) attempt to re-engage, which takes them back to the beginning. If they were already crashing, the roll at -10% determines whether they pull off an emergency landing in the street, crippling the vehicle and doing 1d6 damage to everyone inside (or 1D10 for people who couldn't be bothered with helmets and safety gear). That's a success. If they fail the second roll, give 'em a third roll at -10%. If that roll succeeds, they've killed the Suguwemi and whichever passenger makes the highest successful Luck roll survives with only minor scarring, but everyone else dies. If that last roll fails, the pilot dies instantly, but anyone getting soul-spliced by the Suguwemi survives long enough to know it died, then succumbs as well. No survivors.

Trail: As for **Call**, except that the first roll is at Difficulty 5, and any additional rolls are Difficulty 7. Instead of 1d6 damage for a crippled landing, it's an ordinary damage roll, at +2 for the unprotected.

Dark: Abstract it out to one roll by the pilot to keep it together. Get a 5+ and the chopper comes down hard in the street. It's spectacular but there are no meaningful injuries. (Maybe a round of Insanity rolls.) Whether the Suguwemi is dragged to its doom is up to the GM depending on how far the scenario has progressed. On a 4 or below, someone's going to die, and on a 1 it's everyone in the chopper, along with an unfortunate bystander or two. But again, no TPK without dragging the monster to its doom.

WHAT TO DO WITH STUCK INVESTIGATORS

If your players had a hard day at work and just can't think of any good investigative avenues, kill somebody. Go back to the list of people with high-altitude interests on page 16, pick a group they haven't thought of, and have the news report that a person in that category died under suspicious circumstances. A new victim adds pressure, and also opens up new avenues of investigation, since they can talk to other witnesses. Those witnesses can introduce clues (a stimulus it didn't like, the electronic harbingers of its presence, the head-itch, its unwillingness to go below a certain height) or reinforce those clues if they've been presented and forgotten.

ESSENTIAL SCENES

Investigation scenes are 'essential' to the extent that some of them have to happen, but it's not necessary (or desirable) to go through all of them, and any single investigative avenue can be ignored without it compromising the game. The four essential scenes are things that have to happen to complete the story.

I say four because while I count “Scene One,” that one’s already dealt with. It establishes the puzzle and the peril. Each investigation route escalates the mystery. The other essential scenes escalate (and ultimately resolve) the danger. “Seeing the Suguwemi” confirms that the thing is as it was described and is an unworldly threat. “Seeing the Progeny” expands the danger—it’s worse than the Investigators feared. “Endgame” finishes things off, one way or the other.

SEEING THE SUGUWEMI

Whether the scenario kicked off with the Investigators seeing the Suguwemi or just hearing about it, at some point they need a second view. This gives them a chance to try a couple of tactics on it and gather information directly, if they must.

There are a couple of investigative routes that lead directly to seeing the beast, particularly the stakeout and “Take to the Skies!” Just about any clue that direct observation can give up—the Suguwemi’s electrical effects, its non-physical nature, its invulnerability to conventional weapons—are a good payoff for the risk of this confrontation. It’s also a chance to play up the forehead-itch, having it intensify as the entity nears, and maybe having any who haven’t yet seen the thing feel the crawling sensation, then the focused itch when it spots them.

Because the encounter is aerial, you have lots of opportunities to emphasize environmental danger as well as the threat of the monster. In **Call**, throw in the occasional Climb, Dodge or Jump roll to keep the players reacting and not plotting strategy. Failures should only result in 1D2 damage, or temporary helplessness like the loss of an action as the Suguwemi searches for them or draws closer. They might have to go from roof to roof (Jump) with a failure leaving them clinging by their fingertips until they can scramble up and keep running. They could need to descend a radio aerial rapidly (Climb) without slipping and plummeting for a heart-stopping second before slamming into a cross-brace and taking damage. Or they could simply slip on a wet patch of roof (Climb failure) and sprawl there, helpless, while the thing gets closer. In **Trail**, you can substitute Athletics and Fleeing, with Difficulty Numbers ranging from 4-7. In **Dark**, just roll and apply narrative scaling.

This scene should not allow the Suguwemi to be destroyed or defeated. An Investigator could die after a string of bad decisions and/or rolls, but keep it unlikely. The Suguwemi’s reproductive drive hasn’t built up too much since it just sated itself on Bill, perhaps. Or perhaps someone’s cell phone goes off and the creature flees, leaving them wondering what it is about a Galaxy S phone on the T-Mobile network set to ‘vibrate’ that scares the thing.

Final thought: Nothing gives Investigators pause like seeing the critter casually kill off a beloved NPC. I recommend Amanda Barnes or possibly Dr. Ostrokol.

WHO NEEDS BRAINS WHEN YOU’RE INVINCIBLE?

THE SUGUWEMI CANNOT BE HARMED BY CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS, PERIOD. MOREOVER, NO KNOWN SPELLS CAN HARM OR RESTRAIN IT. OTHER THAN THE TACTICS DISCUSSED UNDER ‘ENDGAME,’ IT IS FUNCTIONALLY INVINCIBLE. GOOD THING IT ONLY HAS THE BRAINPOWER OF A CROW, HUH?

THE GOOD NEWS IS, THE SUGUWEMI HURTS WHEN IT SPENDS TIME AT AN ALTITUDE BELOW 210 FEET. IT CAN PASS THROUGH PHYSICAL BARRIERS LIKE A GHOST (THOUGH THEY SLOW IT DOWN CONSIDERABLY), BUT IF IT’S TRAPPED AND DRAGGED DOWN, IT DIES. RATHER THAN PROVIDE A LOT OF STATS FOR THIS PROCESS, LET THE INVESTIGATORS GRADUALLY KILL IT IF THEY’VE FIGURED OUT ITS VULNERABILITY AND CAN GET IT IN POSITION. NO ROLLS REQUIRED. THIS ONE’S ALL DOWN TO THEIR CUNNING.

SEEING THE PROGENY

The Progeny are debased mutant byblows of the Suguwemi’s sickening ‘trysts’ with humanity. Far more material than their transdimensional parent, they can survive at any altitude but they’re vulnerable to physical harm.

They form in the corpses at varying rates, hatch when they’re ready, and attempt to get out and about so they can ram their infertile ovipositors into the nearest patch of yielding human flesh.

The Progeny scene arises most naturally from an attempt to investigate a Suguwemi victim’s body some time after the attack. This means the encounter occurs at the morgue (for Bill Barnes) or at a cemetery (for Ninette Shagasemi).

Where the Suguwemi is silent and airborne in broad daylight, the Progeny has to scuttle and stumble about on the ground in an enclosed space. But though it’s small (you could fold it up and put it in a grocery bag, if you didn’t mind bits of its thorn-tipped legs sticking out the top), it’s quick, disproportionately strong, and too stupid to be afraid of fire or loud noises. About all it can manage is to lunge out at people and try to stab them in fleshy locations, then briefly flee if attacked, before forgetting it’s in danger and trying to attack again. In other words, it’s likely to strike and hide and repeat until dead (or until the Investigators run away).

If they flee, it hides. It can move through solid matter at a very slow rate, so if they let it out of sight it probably gets away, eventually. Stories of attacks on isolated persons near where they abandoned it could serve as a follow-up adventure if they kill the Suguwemi without wiping out all its kids.

Investigators who check Bill’s body could see the Progeny materialize out of his abdomen in mid-autopsy, repurposing his tissues to form it as it lunges straight into Dr. Hallifax’

torso. Or they could hear something thumping around in his drawer in the freezer. (Perhaps they open it and there's nothing there but the corpse and the shredded body bag: Tired of confinement, it phased into the next drawer over and is getting ready to phase out the front and attack them from surprise.)

Alternately, they might go to Ninette Shagasemi's grave, which is in a lovely old cemetery full of large, upright tombstones. There are well-planted groves of old trees scattered throughout. If the Investigators dig up her grave (which they'd probably have to do by night unless they get Dr. Hallifax on their side in a big way), they can hear it thumping and bumping inside the casket as they get down to it, and then it can get out (either digging free or phasing), attack, and skitter off into the woods or hide behind the myriad grave markers. Even in daylight, that's probably a pretty creepy cat-and-mouse game, where everyone involved is both hunter and quarry.

Once killed, it quickly degenerates, flaring off weird orange sparks and oozing something that smells like burning oregano. Parts remain, and under scientific scrutiny they seem to be a weird organic molecule, but undifferentiated in structure—more like a fossil than anything else.

Again: Murdering off an NPC is a great idea with these. I humbly submit Dr. Hallifax for mauling.

ENDGAME

They've seen the Suguwemi, either once or twice. They've dealt with at least one Progeny, preferably more. More importantly, they've gathered some or all of the following clues.

- It's not material the way we know it.
- It causes electrical distortion.
- Weapons don't hurt it.
- Some electrical signals **do** disturb it.
- It won't willingly go below 210 feet, and may even relinquish a victim to stay at its preferred altitude.
- It showed up after a high-energy experiment at Fermilab.

With those facts, the Investigators can construct a plan to take it down. Players being players, they may well come up with something vastly different from the options listed below. In that case, be a Keeper: Wing it if it sounds plausible, crush them if it's ridiculous, and scare them either way. But most plans probably fall into one of the following categories.

ENSORCEL IT

The Investigators may have a spell or magic gadget (Baneful Dust of Hermes Trismegistus, Dust of Suleiman, Elder Sign, etc.). It doesn't work on the Suguwemi.

This might seem harsh, and I can't stop you from ignoring it, but think about the message you send if a well-known spell, be it ever so spendy or difficult, becomes the solution to this problem. It means the Investigators found a general remedy. General remedies are kryptonite for horror.

Now, what's the story if the spell that held back a Flying Polyp does exactly zilch to the Suguwemi? "You don't know what you're doing and things will lay eggs in your body." Which sounds more like the central Lovecraft thesis—that or the general remedy?

SCIENCE WILL SAVE US!

This is the answer. The Investigators don't have to understand what the creature is, its motivations or anything much about it other than "it creates a particular electromagnetic signature" and "it didn't like one particular stimulus." That's enough to construct a rickety plan based on desperation and shaky technobabble, such as ...

- "I think we can pour iron bullets, polarize them, and rig batteries to the rifle barrel to give it a magnetic charge. The slug should retain an electrical charge for at least... twenty feet. Maybe fifteen."
- "I've recreated and amplified the signal that scared it off. If we can mount this on a plane and fly over it, maybe we can drive it down into the ground!"
- "It took all night, but I've constructed a net from copper wires, dead cell phones, 9-volt batteries and about twenty rolls of electrician's tape. I'm 90% certain it can't phase through this. Now we just have to lure it close, net it, and drag it to its doom!"

The particulars of the device are left up to individual groups, and the rolls or tests required vary by system. However, the cheat code is Dr. Ostrokol: If the Investigators convince her that they're dealing with something real (by virtue of their scientific chops, their interpersonal skills or by showing her one of the Progeny) and suggest building a weapon or trap, she can successfully make one of the above gadgets or help an Investigator do the same. In that case, the struggle is to persuade her. (Re-creating the experiment that let it through is a non-starter: The conditions can only be created in the bowels of Fermilab, and the Suguwemi would die down at that altitude.)

Once the implement is constructed, it's time to find the Suguwemi (should be easy at this point—scanning for its magnetic signature, identifying its nesting site by charting the attack locations, using the head-itch or simply going up in the air) and deploy the weapon. If they haven't been in a helicopter yet, that's a great final fight scene. Otherwise, do it on a rooftop. One hitch could be that this is that rare monster that hunts by day, so they're going to risk pulling their Ghostbusters routine in broad daylight.

Call: Someone with Electronics can develop the device without a roll. Mere Electrical Repair needs a successful roll. Or one can Persuade Ostrokol (or Fast Talk her). Then it's Firearms to shoot the thing, or Throw to get the net over it, or Pilot to drive it down. You can spice up the fight by having it unexpectedly get over the plane, or start killing Ostrokol (or an Investigator), but if they've worked this hard, don't cheat them just because their dice go cold. The universe is uncaring, but you don't have to be.

Trail: Building the gadgetry is a 2-spend for Electrical Repair or Physics (unless they're all tapped out, in which case you can either settle for everything they have in it, or force them to find an alternative). Persuading Ostrokol is a 1-spend for Physics, Flattery or Reassurance, but is free for Intimidation. (She has issues.) Then it's just a matter of Athletics, Firearms, Scuffling, Piloting, or any other skill that can be shoehorned into the hunt.

Dark: They make the thing on any 4+ result. When they try to use it, they need to get a 5 to ensnare/shoot/compel the Suguwemi. Anyone who only gets a 1-2 during that attempt gets hit with Coexistence, which brings us to Plan B.

MARTYR FOR HUMANITY

If the Investigators know that the Suguwemi takes some time to complete its business with a given human, and that it violently resists going below 210 feet, all they really need to do is set it up with a human victim on a rooftop and then, when it's in the middle of Coexisting, throw him off. Sorted!

If an Investigator volunteers for this, it works. A bit of dodging and scuffling may be required to get the Suguwemi to attack the right guy, and if the non-martyrs stay too far back, it may just kill the guy before he can stagger over the edge of the roof, but by and large this isn't one to leave to the dice. An Investigator who's willing to die to take the monster with him can do that.

Particularly cruel Keepers may require a **failed** SAN roll to jump off a building, even if you are having your personality violated by a thing from beyond. That may be useful if the table needs that last piece of suspense. But warn the players ahead of time that only the unstable are likely to really do it.

(Note that BASE jumpers can, in theory, fling themselves off buildings and survive. That's pretty much the definition. Of course, it's hard to do when an alien is trying to lay eggs in your personality, so a roll of Parachuting or some equivalent skill can determine whether the human survives. Live or die, though, the jumper kills the creature.)

The colder alternative is to have the other fellow die for the cause. Anti-heroes may rustle up someone they dislike, pimp him out for the beast, and then fling him to his doom. This may require combat rolls as well, not to mention the SAN cost of such sociopathy. (I recommend 1/1D10 if the Investigators abducted an unwilling victim, or 1/1D8 if the other fellow volunteered and got cold feet.)

However they do it, if someone dies, that's a police matter. Throwing your buddy off a roof to kill a monster that leaves no physical remains looks a lot like a standard defenestration. Is it worth it?

DENOUEMENT AND EXTENSIONS

If the Investigators are competent and foresightful enough to have a telescope focused on the plummeting Suguwemi (or someone watching from below), they see it impact, sizzle, disintegrate, and sink into the ground. Success! Victory! Sanity rewards for all (1D6 in **Call**), if you roll that way.

It's also possible that they never see it hit and never find out whether they succeeded. A dearth of suspicious aerial deaths is a good sign, unless it just moved to New York City or even St. Louis. The Sanity reward is halved.

As for additional adventures: Did they get every Progeny? Are they sure? Did anyone recreate Dr. Ostrokol's experiments using the Cornell Electron Storage Ring, or the Synchrotron Radiation Facility in Frascati, Italy, or the Beijing Electron Positron Collider?

And if the 3.9 mile ring of the Tevatron could bring through the Suguwemi, what might emerge from similar experiments at the Large Hadron Collider, 17 miles across? ☺

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TALE OF TERROR: THE FOUND PHONE

BY GREG STOLZE

People drop cell phones all the time. This one—found on an airport chair or a taxi stand bench or a public bus—is a nice one, a smartphone that shows and records movies. In fact, a movie is queued up, easy to play by mistake while looking for some clue to the owner’s identity.

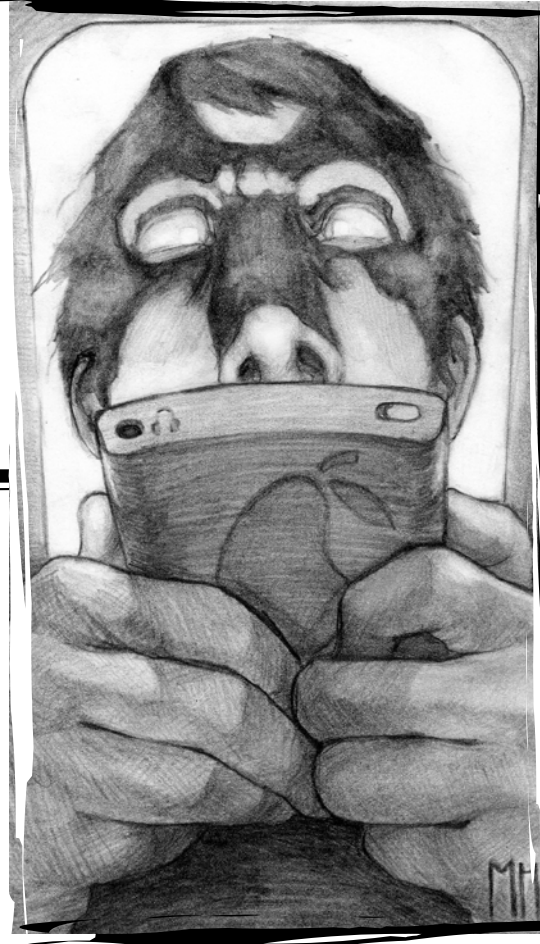
The movie looks like it was filmed on the phone’s camera. A man, making a partial attempt to hide his face, puts the recorder on a shelf facing a curiously-wrought chair, then looks over his shoulder and bolts out a door.

A woman in a robe and a man in a pilot’s uniform enter. The pilot sits on the chair and the woman begins to pinch and tug at his skin, conversing the whole time. (They’re speaking Hindi. “Did it go well?” “The exchange was fine... ouch!” “Don’t snivel.”) His face distorts under her hands, and his body as well, until his features are completely different.

Trading more pleasantries, they leave, returning with a young child led by the hand. The kid is swarthy, has a harelip, and is of indeterminate gender. The pilot laughs: “Can you believe they just let me walk off with an unaccompanied minor?” He then pins the child into the chair, where it screams as the woman cuts off its clothes with scissors and performs the same taffy-like distortions of the flesh, turning it into a very pretty little girl as it struggles and shrieks. The two adults haul it out of the chair and push it into a corner, where one keeps it cornered while the other flings something on it that looks like bread dough. Despite the child’s struggles, it’s unable to clear its face and eventually stops struggling as the dough covers its features.

Then the pilot and the woman roast the bread over a nearby fire, pulling off pieces and eating them. Chunks of bloody flesh adhere to the interior of the baked crust. “We would have gotten a good price for that one,” the woman mutters, mouth full, “if we hadn’t been so goddamn hungry!”

Of course, it could be done with special effects. Sanity loss for viewing the video is 0/1D6. The greater the loss, the more certain the viewer is that the footage is real.



OPTION 1: BOLLYWOOD

It’s a rough cut of a scene from the forthcoming Bollywood horror film, “मौत भूख दादी” or “Mauta bhīkha dādī.” Should it ever get translated into English, the title is *Death-Hungry Grandma*. The phone belongs to Narottam Saxena, who did the special effects.

OPTION 2: MISSING

It’s real. The man setting up the camera is Asgar Dutta, an investigative reporter from the magazine *Tehelka*. He hasn’t been heard from for over two weeks. It’s his phone, but how it got from his last known location—the small village of Bothidih in Chattisgarh—to where the Investigator found it is anybody’s guess.

OPTION 3: BLANK

Any time the Investigator shows the film to an NPC, the NPC doesn’t see anything unusual. No one else can make the movie play. The first time he or she shows it to a fellow Investigator, let them play it straight, but when that other Investigator is called on for verification, take that player aside and explain he’s never seen this movie and that there’s nothing playing on the screen. The whole film is a figment of the phone finder’s deranged imagination. ☹

TALE OF TERROR

ST. MICHAEL'S GATE



BY ADAM GAUNTLETT

This is a Dark Ages Tale set in a large city such as London.

The best source of water, whether for drinking, washing or any other purpose, is the river that runs through town. As this is also the most popular place to dump waste—anything from excrement to dead bodies—the water is at best brackish and can become extremely foul. Access to the river is controlled by the person or persons who own the riverside land. There may be public rights-of-way but these rights are sometimes contested.

St. Michael's Gate is a stone-built postern that contains a public latrine and access to the riverside. Within the memory of the oldest townsman it has always been used by the poor of the parish. The religious order (knights, monks or similar; Keeper's choice) which owns St. Michael's Gate has cut off all access to the river and stopped maintaining the public latrine, without offering any explanation. The poor believe they are being denied their rights, and are appealing to the town's lord for aid, but even he can get no sense out of the order.

OPTION 1: SIGNS

The new leader of the order is a secret magician and has been trying to foretell the future with his grimoires. According to his oracle, a great and terrible event will take place at St. Michael's Gate within the next twelve months, but he cannot be sure what this will be or exactly when. All signs point to a monstrous birth or an attack by some river-dwelling creature; whatever it will be, many lives will be put at risk. He has cut off all access to protect the innocent, though he cannot tell anyone why without revealing his diabolic source of information.

OPTION 2: DWELLER

The order has become aware that a coven of damned witches are using the river access as a means of contacting their water-dwelling demon. They discovered the coven one midnight conducting a ritual sacrifice, and though the discoverers broke up this ceremony several of the worshippers escaped. The order has stopped all river access because they don't know how extensive this cult is and they lack the resources to find out. They have sent a secret plea for help to their organization's leaders, and in the meantime are holding out against all petitioners. After all, there's no telling who might be involved; even the lord of the city might be a cult member. Meanwhile the water demon—a Dweller in the Depths—is becoming more active, as the sacrifice was interrupted and the order's attempts to keep it magically bound are having no effect.

OPTION 3: BOUND

The order recently discovered a magician's occult grimoires, and in a fit of piety threw the lot into the river. This was swiftly proven a mistake as the books polluted the river, acting as a form of Gray Binding (*Call of Cthulhu* Sixth Edition, p. 237) on all corpses dumped nearby. The order is aware of at least six dead men that plague the spot, and there may be more. Prayers are useless against them, and each kill they make swells their number. They hide in the river, attacking by ambush, and so long as the books pollute the river they will keep on being created. So far the order has kept this a secret and sent for an experienced exorcist, but they refuse to tell anyone else what has happened. ☹



STARTING YOUR CALL OF CTHULHU CAMPAIGN

BY DANIEL HARMS

Are you ready to get beyond the one-shot?

This is not an article on how to run a fun, entertaining, or scary game session. It won't tell you how to create a world or how to manage a tabletop game successfully. Plenty of advice along those lines can be found elsewhere for **Call of Cthulhu** and many other roleplaying games. (Particularly recommended: Kenneth Hite's **Nightmares of Mine**—if you can find it—and Robin Law's **Robin's Laws of Gaming**.)

Instead, this article will help you build your campaign and scenarios to create and maintain an ongoing, long-term **Call of Cthulhu** game.

GETTING STARTED

First, talk with your group about their preferences. They might be quite happy to hang out and go along with whatever you decide, but they might have definite ideas about the sort of games and characters they like to play. Take this into account as you go forward.

SCENARIOS

Call of Cthulhu is blessed with dozens of excellent books of settings, campaigns, and scenarios—perhaps too many for the beginner. To start narrowing it down, consider what time period you and your group would appreciate the most. The majority of supplements are for the 1920s and 1930s, followed in number by those in modern settings, but there are also books for **Gaslight** (Victorian), **Invictus** (Roman period), and **Dark Ages** (medieval) campaigns. Read some reviews, or consult an online forum (yogsothoth.com is a personal favorite) to decide what to buy. Don't forget the scenarios in the main rulebook as well.

Once you've picked the era and have some scenarios on hand, read each one. As you read it, think about what you like and what you don't like. Note how it is structured, how skills are used, and how information is presented. At the end, ask yourself, "Would I like to run this scenario? Would the group enjoy it?" If the answer is "no" or "unlikely," ask yourself, "Is there any part of this I liked? Was there a scene, a character, a monster, a dusty tome—anything I'd like to use?" Keep notes on what you like. You

STARTING YOUR COLLECTION

THE FOLLOWING ARE MY PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW KEEPERS. I'VE MOSTLY OMITTED CAMPAIGNS (LOTS OF FUN, BUT ALSO LOTS OF WORK FOR A NEW KEEPER) AND MONOGRAPHS (SAVE IN A FEW CASES). SOME OF THEM ARE ONLY SOLD ELECTRONICALLY OR IN USED CONDITION. DON'T ASSUME THAT THESE WILL ALL WORK FOR YOU—OR THAT A BOOK IS NOT RECOMMENDED JUST BECAUSE IT'S NOT ON THIS LIST.

GENERAL

THE KEEPER'S COMPANION, VOLUME 1, FOLLOWED BY **VOLUME 2**—LOTS OF TOYS FOR KEEPERS

MALLEUS MONSTRORUM—ALL MANNER OF BEASTS TO POPULATE YOUR SCENARIOS

1920s INVESTIGATOR'S COMPANION—OCCUPATIONS AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE ERA

LOVECRAFT'S STORIES

BOOKS ON THE HISTORY OF YOUR CHOSEN ERA

CLASSIC (1920S)

PICK UP **H. P. LOVECRAFT'S ARKHAM** TO GIVE THE CHARACTERS A HOME AND FOR SOME GOOD ADVENTURES. ALL OF THE **CALL OF CTHULHU** RULEBOOK SCENARIOS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THIS ERA. THE **LOVECRAFT COUNTRY** LINE HAS SOME EXCELLENT BOOKS OF SCENARIOS: **TALES OF THE MISKATONIC VALLEY**, **ADVENTURES IN ARKHAM COUNTRY**, AND (FROM **MISKATONIC RIVER PRESS**) **NEW TALES OF THE MISKATONIC VALLEY** AND **MORE ADVENTURES IN ARKHAM COUNTRY**.

GASLIGHT (1890S)

THE REVISED **CTHULHU BY GASLIGHT** BOOK IS ESSENTIAL HERE. TRANSPLANTING THE RULEBOOK SCENARIOS TO THE DEFAULT SETTING OF THE **UK** MIGHT PROVE CHALLENGING. PERHAPS THE BEST BOOK OF SCENARIOS IS **SACRAMENTS OF EVIL**. MANY SUCH ADVENTURES ASSUME THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE CHARACTERS ARE UPPER CLASS.

MODERN

MOST RULEBOOK SCENARIOS, SAVE "**DEAD MAN STOMP**," WORK WELL SET IN THE MODERN DAY. YOUR GAME CAN TAKE TWO ROUTES, GENERALLY SPEAKING. ONE IS A CONVENTIONAL GROUP OF INVESTIGATORS BROUGHT TOGETHER BY A SITUATION YOU CREATE. BOTH **THE STARS ARE RIGHT!** (THE MORE RECENT EDITION) AND **UNSEEN MASTERS** ARE EXCELLENT FOR THIS. THE OTHER APPROACH CALLS FOR A GROUP OF GOVERNMENT AGENTS AND THEIR ASSOCIATES WORKING FOR A SHADY CONSPIRACY. FOR THIS APPROACH, GET **PAGAN PUBLISHING'S DELTA GREEN** SOURCEBOOK AND ITS SEQUELS **COUNTDOWN**, **EYES ONLY**, AND **TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY**.

CTHULHU INVICTUS (ROMAN)

NOT MUCH HAS BEEN PUBLISHED SO FAR, SO THE MAIN **INVICTUS** BOOK AND THE **COMPANION** SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT. BRINGING IN SCENARIOS FROM THE CORE RULEBOOK IS DIFFICULT AT BEST.

CTHULHU DARK AGES (1000 AD)

OUTSIDE THE **DARK AGES** BOOK, THIS LINE HAS SEEN LITTLE SUPPORT. A MONOGRAPH CALLED **THE ABBEY** PRESENTS THE PLAYERS WITH A STARTING BASE OF OPERATIONS. BE AWARE THAT THE MEDIEVAL AGE AROUND **1000 AD** LACKS MANY POPULAR ELEMENTS OF THE **HIGH MIDDLE AGES**.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

320

RETURN OF A DEATH

FULL NAME Warren Bedford Registered No. 2161
Place of Death Corbit Haves
Date of Death May 2, 1920 Age 56 years _____ months _____ days

might be able to use it later in a separate scenario of your own. This is the best way to learn about scenarios for **Call of Cthulhu**.

Now, so far we haven't dealt with the players at all. That's deliberate. You could ask the group to roll up characters and pick a scenario that works specifically with those Investigators. This is a more satisfying style for many groups, but it also might involve quite a bit of preparation when you start out as a Keeper. If you're starting a campaign from scratch, I recommend starting with the scenario and build the group for it.

THE FIRST ADVENTURE AND AFTERMATH

Sooner or later, you will pick a scenario and run it for your group. One popular starter is “The Haunting,” from the **Call of Cthulhu** rulebook (I'll give some spoilers for it below), but pick the one that suits the campaign you want to run.

Importantly, try to make it a short scenario. You want the players to be able to play all the way through it in one sitting. That may mean they spend the first session mostly on creating characters and get just the introduction to the scenario, then play it out in the next session. If you take that route, be sure the hook that ends the first, introductory session is intriguing enough that they'll be excited to come back for more. When you pick your first scenario, look for an opening that delivers a sense of mystery and suspense.

In the first session spend some time rolling up characters, and ask the players to come up with a reason for their Investigators to join up. Are they friends? Family? Colleagues? Members of an occult lodge? Reporters for a trashy magazine? Some combination of the above? They need a reason to come together—and to stay together when things get dangerous. The reason that they're together ought to shape the backgrounds and skills of each character.

The key point for your fledgling campaign is at the end of the first scenario. Tell the group that some time will pass in the game before the next session. I prefer a month, for reasons I'll go into below, but you might select more or less time for the group. Ask each player what their character is doing during that time, and record the results.

One pitfall of this will be if a character wants to continue the investigation, or put himself or herself into a dangerous situation alone. **Call of Cthulhu** works best when the group comes together for an investigation—feel free to say that explicitly, if necessary. If someone insists, you can always run a quick session just for that character. If the foes are able to put up any level of opposition, this problem will likely resolve itself quickly.



WHAT COMES NEXT?

After the session is done and you have some time to relax, look at what happened and what the players wish to do. Let's say you've finished “The Haunting,” and you have written down the following:

- Sid went mad and is undergoing treatment.
- Amanda was injured and is in the hospital.
- Cheri found the madman's diaries and is reading them.
- John wants to look for more local ghost stories.

Now, think back to the scenario and consider what might be loose ends. Did the characters do anything notable? Did their exploits become public? Did any villains escape? Will any characters show up again? Are any curious tomes or artifacts lying around? Make some notes on those. For example:

- The villain is dead.
- His magical device was undiscovered.
- The head of the cult is out there somewhere.
- The group met Detective O'Connor (a character you made up on the spot) while asking around.
- The characters had a story written about them in the Boston Daily Globe.

Now, it's time to think of what comes next. Start with the list of character actions. Does anything there suggest a new scenario?

It might be tempting for Sid or Amanda to come across some mystery in the course of their treatment, but subjecting an injured or mad investigator to further danger

is best done sparingly. Save that for when the Investigators are more well established, when hitting them at that vulnerable point will have even greater impact.

Cheri and John are better possibilities here. Maybe Cheri finds a clue in one of her old tomes—perhaps in the text itself, or written into the margins, or as a bookmark—that suggests another investigation. Maybe John finds a particularly intriguing story of a local haunt that the group could investigate next. The best way to start your next scenario is with a character-initiated action. They can't complain if their chosen course goes badly!

When you provide these clues, you could simply tell the players about it or you could make a physical handout. You don't need anything elaborate—writing a paragraph and playing with the font in your word processor can turn out something respectable. You might also include another piece of information to give the event some urgency or a sense of danger. A murder at that haunted house or a mysterious sign from a cultist's diary scrawled on a lamppost might lead the players in the right direction.

Now, look at the remaining items. Let's skip the deceased villain. Although it's true that “with strange aeons even death may die,” bringing a villain back to life should not happen right away. The magic device might come into play if someone finds it—you might think of a suitable candidate—but that's not much of a new plot on its own.

The cult leader is out there somewhere; he might come back soon, or later, or never. Detective O'Connor might be the sort of character who turns up in later Boston-based adventures.

The story in the Boston **Daily Globe** is most likely to have immediate effects. Will the investigators gain clients, or fame, or notoriety from it? You can weave these together with character actions to create a living, breathing word.

There's one important twist to this approach: the consequences of breaking the law. Serious illegal activity by Investigators should have consequences, especially a heinous crimes such as murder, or one that is conducted in public. On the other hand, it is often best to overlook the consequences for minor burglary, assault, and dynamiting of old mansions in the middle of the night. Otherwise, given how many **Call of Cthulhu** scenarios turn out, competent police work by NPCs could quickly turn your campaign into **The Fugitive**. When it comes to the authorities, give investigators the benefit of the doubt unless they've been grossly sloppy or they've committed atrocities that demand pursuit by the law.

Once you have lined up some of these consequences from their first investigation, you can plan your next scenario. During subsequent sessions, add the outcomes and new elements to your list. You don't have to use all of them;

give preference to the ones with which the players are most engaged and those that lead to later adventures.

PUBLISHED SCENARIOS

Running published scenarios can be a great time-saver and can teach a new Keeper quite a bit. Even campaigns in which you largely invent the material, you can rely on published works for occasional creative breaks and as sources of inspiration.

On the downside, it's unlikely that any published adventure will meet precisely with the needs of your group. You'll always need to adapt and improvise.

The first issue is the hook for the adventure. The default assumption in **Call of Cthulhu** is that the Investigators have a reputation for investigating strange and unusual events. In the example above, the story in the Boston **Daily Globe** could be custom-made to bring the Investigators to the next scenario when someone who read the article approaches them with another problem. In other cases, you might have to adjust the introduction for your group.

Think ahead on such matters so you can provide leads to the next scenario in the current one. The trick is to keep the Investigators from gallivanting off after that particular clue when they should be paying attention to the present scenario. Maybe the person they meet today will have a problem in the near future, or will bring a new lead to them after the events of the current scenario. Maybe that tome or expert they consult is in San Francisco instead of Boston. Maybe that brief mention of a mystical item or occurrence doesn't become important until a newspaper story points the way.

Musty old tomes often provide good leads to the next scenario. While reading one an Investigator might run across an intriguing fact. It's even better if you've written a brief handout. That's a logical way for a character-initiated action to lead to another scenario, and the long reading time for tomes makes it easier for to withhold a clue until the time is right.

Two caveats apply to this approach. First, take into account the date, authorship, and nature of the tome, and make sure the information fits. You can get around this—for example, with a note written into the margins of an older book—but it should be taken into account. Second, the player should be actively encouraged to share that clue with others. Do this in character if possible, perhaps by allowing them to speed up the research time by working together if both make the necessary language or other skill rolls.

Any published scenario will also need some preparation. Read it over in conjunction with your list of consequences

and loose ends. Can you work in an NPC the group has already met? Might the cultist in a scenario be connected with those in a previous story? Can you place another vague mention of some upcoming doom within the new scenario? Where can you add something that enhances the overall story?

A good example of this in “The Haunting” is the tome in the Chapel of Contemplation. There’s no reason that the exact tome or its contents have to be what is described in that scenario. You could make it the Necronomicon itself, or a book of revelations by Michael Thomas, or even a soggy and unreadable mess of papers. (I wouldn’t recommend the latter unless you want to cut off opportunities for future clues!)

After you’ve run the second scenario, update your list of consequences and loose ends once again.

DESIGNING YOUR OWN SCENARIO

At some point you will need to write your own scenario. This is not as hard as you might think, but it does take some thought and preparation.

First, bear in mind that the basic structure of a **Call of Cthulhu** scenario is a mystery leading to a horrifying revelation. You want to create a trail of clues leading to a horrifying individual, creature, or event. It’s good to scatter some small scares before the big one, of course, but keep the basic structure in mind.

Even if you aren’t going to run them, read the scenarios “The Haunting” and “The Madman” in the core rulebook. Those scenarios particularly demonstrate how you can create a frightening, memorable scenario without a great deal of detailed characterization or setting. If you can bring in those extra details, so much the better, but it’s more important to make your first hand-made scenario manageable.

START WITH THE END

First, pick the ultimate revelation of your new scenario. Is it a monster? A place? An artifact? A cult? Is it a discovery about the origin of a character (perhaps an Investigator), a town, an event, or humanity itself? This bears some careful thought. Try to make it a single, simple revelation. Combining two or more revelations crucial to the campaign in one scenario is likely to create too much complexity. Likewise, bringing a Great Old One or an Outer God into the scenario directly makes it hard to continue the campaign, both in terms of the toll on Sanity and lives and in setting the bar higher for the next scenario. An encounter that catastrophic ought to be the culmination of a long campaign.

Next, think of the nature of that revelation. What’s scary about it? What traces, remnants, and signs might it leave where people could encounter them? How might people react to encountering it, and what effects might it have on them? Finally, what points from your list of hints and consequences could be incorporated into it for the most horrifying effect?

The key, at this stage, is to remember that **Call of Cthulhu** is an investigative game that must take place in a world that is, at least on its surface, logical and ordered. Certain subgenres of horror—including parts of the Cthulhu Mythos—emphasize a dreamlike or irrational view of the world, but these are best used in small quantities in play. The final revelation can be chaotic and mind-destroying, but the players deserve an everyday game world that is understandable and in which logical steps can be taken to uncover the truth. That’s what their Investigators are fighting to preserve.

WORK BACKWARD

Once you’ve got your list of clues, arrange them in the order that they’ll need to be discovered. It might help to draw a map or flowchart, a technique from **Robin’s Laws of Good Game Mastering**. Put a one- or two-word description of the final revelation in a corner of a sheet of paper and draw a box around it. Now start adding other boxes that feature particular encounters, whether those are conversations, local libraries or archives, crime scenes, or brief (and survivable) attacks by cultists or monsters. Draw arrows between these boxes corresponding to particular clues that lead from one to another, and what Investigator actions and skill rolls might be used to find them (such as “Spot Hidden—torn diary page”). As you’re drawing all this, note where the preliminary scares might occur.

Balance diversity with simplicity. On one hand, you shouldn’t write a scenario with only one solution, or that can only be solved if players do exactly what you have in mind. It ought to be flexible enough to allow for player creativity and to allow for hints to nudge them along if they get stuck. Nonetheless, find ways to simplify the process. That haunted house might have only six rooms instead of twelve, for instance. Or the scenario might be set in the rural countryside, where the players expect a limited number of NPCs and locations, fewer resources, and slower police response than in town.

Some clues in the scenario should be driven by skill rolls. When you’re designing the scenario, consider what skills your Investigators possess at high levels. This does not mean that you should only include skill rolls at which your group will likely succeed, but challenges where they’re more likely to fail are best inserted after the first two clues that point to the next encounter.



The resistance table is another way to create a challenge, with the players pitting their stats against those of another character or object to reach their ends.

And some clues can be revealed to the group without a roll at all if they take a particular action or look in the right place.

Whether it's a skill roll, a resistance roll, or an unrolled revelation, choose whatever is exciting, challenging, and interesting while it moves the game along.

One common pitfall in designing a scenario is locking its progression into one particular trail of clues. That leads to situations in which a failed skill roll, or miscommunication, or differences in perspectives of the players and the Keeper can throw the whole scenario off. The entire game **Trail of Cthulhu** was, in fact, written to avoid exactly these situations.

You can reduce the risk of those problems by having multiple clues leading to a crucial point from multiple encounters. It doesn't matter that the Investigators all need to end up at the old Townsend mansion, as long as they can find out about it from several sources. The flowchart of clues helps enormously. Make sure it has lots of different paths to the final confrontation.

The same could be said for the scares you've planned. If one clue for the next encounter can be found in the Black Cave and the other at the local library, the cave probably provides more opportunities for creating horror. But come up with possibilities to scare them at the library, too.

Some Keepers like to include false leads to keep the players on their toes and keep things from getting predictable. If you wish to include them, only do so sparingly, and provide ways to bring the group back to the main plot after a little investigation. The natural thought processes of **Call of Cthulhu** players tend to create plenty of dead-end trails without your help.

CREATE LOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

As you create an encounter—whether it's a place, person, or situation—consider its logic and consistency. What might one expect to find in this location? What are the motivations of this character? Is this situation consistent with the setting and the other scenes? Could it actually occur? Why must it occur?

Creating interesting characters is always fun, and they should be a staple of your scenarios. At the same time, if an individual is a source of clues, make sure the investigators can figure out how get the character to reveal them. If the character does not wish to talk, there should be some other way for the Investigators to get the information—perhaps by talking to the character's neighbors or relatives, or finding and reading the character's letters or private journals.

When plotting out thrills and chills, keep in mind that you don't want an earlier encounter to trump the final revelation or to weaken the group so that the final encounter becomes too difficult. This is easier to gauge with regard to Sanity losses than it is with combats. This doesn't mean you should avoid dangers. Providing a physical or combat-based challenge before the climax lets athletes and tough guys shine. Nonetheless, physical dangers should either seem more imposing than they actually are or else some factor should be present that curtails serious consequences. Maybe the police shows up, or the cultists just want to grab their artifact and go, or the enemies retreat after light losses.

Some clues might require handouts, especially clues that aren't immediately obvious. If you want the Investigators to recall a fact they learned a few encounters earlier, create a handout. You can even provide a handout giving the highlights of a conversation or story that the Investigators witnessed or overheard; handouts don't have to just reproduce game-world documents. A handout should be long enough to convey the flavor of the source but short enough that the important information doesn't get lost.

Don't forget to build in leads and clues to future scenarios, based on where you want the campaign to go next.

PRESENTING YOUR SCENARIO

When you have all this figured out, record your scenario in a way that you can understand later and that allows you to navigate quickly through the different parts. You don't need to write out the whole scenario as if you were getting it published. You could, for example, put rough notes for each encounter on a separate page, number them, and cross reference them with the flowchart and maps.

You definitely need to write down some game statistics. You don't need full stats for every person and creature in the scenario, but develop enough information for the character or monster to serve its purpose. If the investigators are likely to engage in combat with a person or monster, write down its STR, CON, SIZ, DEX, damage bonus, HP, attack skills, armor, and attack skills, damage and effects (and its POW, if it or the Investigators have spells). If an NPC is an expert in a particular field, record a few relevant skills. If a monster strikes from ambush, make sure, make sure you know its Hide, Sneak, Spot Hidden, Track, and Listen skills.

If you're not sure how to determine the stats, look at similar characters in scenarios you've read, or the list of occupational skills in the rulebook. You can even take blocks of stats wholesale from one scenario to another. No one will notice but you.

This is hardly the only way to create a scenario. You could take a news story about a paranormal event and think out its Cthulhu Mythos implications. If you love horror movies, you could think in terms of you and the Investigators acting one out. But plan out the possible paths that the Investigators need to follow to get to the ultimate horrifying revelations and the encounters that get them there.

RUNNING A SESSION

Call of Cthulhu has challenges that are unique among roleplaying games.

First, improvisation is harder in **Call of Cthulhu** than in other games. Clues might be based on particular names, dates, and places, and if the characters seek a route you did not anticipate, you must make sure that what you've come up with to adapt is consistent with other elements of the scenario. If the players investigate something you didn't anticipate, ask for a short break to consult your notes and come up with information which is consistent with the rest.

With all of a Keeper's planning for a campaign, it's often difficult to remember that players will not recall clues as

readily as you. If there's a piece of information that you want the group to recall from a previous session, be ready to feed it to them. Idea rolls are a great way to do this.

You can always give characters out-of-game knowledge about an investigation. That ought to be an option of last resort because it tends to pull players out of their characters' heads, but if telling the group, "This person doesn't know anything else," or "I'd prefer you didn't go to San Francisco just now" makes the game more fun, do it. That is rarely the best way to handle such a situation, though, and you should use it less and less as you become more experienced with running the game.

INVESTIGATOR DOWNTIME

In **Call of Cthulhu** some activities—healing, treatment of mental illness, reading tomes, training, and learning spells—may take weeks or months in the game. Yet a typical scenario usually takes place over only a few days. How should a Keeper handle this?

Try putting an in-game month between each session. That allows time for wounds to heal, research to be done, psychoanalysis to be sought, and the everyday maintenance of work or relationships to occur. It might be that more or less time is appropriate, but choose what works well for the group as a whole rather than in terms of individual characters. If one Investigator goes insane, perhaps it's best to bring in another character. If everyone is at the sanitarium, maybe you can move the timeline ahead a bit.

You should also consider a couple of rules changes for a long-term campaign. The first deals with studying Cthulhu Mythos tomes. You might rule that an Investigator reading a tome or learning a spell should make rolls each week to determine whether he or she has made progress. Record of the total number of weeks of success until the necessary time has been met, rather than waiting until the whole block of time has passed and then rolling once. It can be disheartening for an Investigator to spend months reading a book to find all that effort was for naught with a single roll.

Second, the rulebook states that training to improve a skill should occur over the course of six months. Unless the skill is incredibly exotic—such as Cthulhu Mythos, Other Language (Aklo), or Martial Arts in a Western, non-modern setting (other than perhaps judo and boxing, restricted to Investigators with the Grapple and Fist/Punch skills, respectively)—I suggest ignoring the need to go find a trainer and simply assuming that an Investigator not engaged in other activities can gain 1D6 skill points over a month, with a cap of 50%. This can allow a player to slowly retool a character's skills to meet the needs of a campaign, and it gives non-academic characters a way to keep busy when they're not recuperating from wounds or resting in a sanitarium.

MANAGING INVESTIGATORS

Call of Cthulhu might not quite live up to its reputation for killing or driving all Investigators insane, but characters are much more vulnerable than those in other games. This raises the question of how to handle the inevitable gaps in the roster when an Investigator is badly traumatized or is in fact killed.

After the first adventure of the campaign, make sure the players understand that their characters are fragile—you could demonstrate it on an unfortunate friendly NPC if the players are cautious enough to keep their Investigators safe—and encourage them to create their next characters.

Let them make whatever backup characters they want, so long as they can describe why this new character might take up the fight when the first Investigator is out of the picture. This new character might take the Investigator's place if he or she dies, or merely step in for a few game months while the first investigator recovers. Introduce the backup characters in play in the background or in preliminary scenes so they're known to the primary Investigators and to each other.

When the backup character is in play, the player should create another backup for that one, and the cycle continues.

A popular way to ease this process is to create an organization in which the Investigators are all members. This can be tricky, as an organization that can back up the Investigators with too many of resources can blunt the horror of isolation in the face of supernatural threats. If you do want to create an investigative organization—whatever the era of your game—I recommend reading the sourcebook *Delta Green* and its sequels. They offer great models in *Saucerwatch*, *Phenomen-X*, and *Delta Green* itself.

Whatever shape the organization takes—whether it's a large conspiracy or a small, informal group of overly dedicated enthusiasts—as long as an incoming character has a connection with the rest, you can move forward.

Your role as Keeper is to keep an eye on the challenges posed to the characters. A one-shot game can be as lethal and insanity-inducing as you like, but a campaign requires planning. It is tempting to use the most dangerous monsters in every game, but the body count might reduce your ongoing story to a series of one-shots. **Call of Cthulhu** is at its starkest and most suspenseful when you let the dice fall where they may, but you have to plan out situations and scenarios that will not destroy the group with just a few unlucky rolls—at least, not until you've built up the horror and revelations of the campaign to a world-shattering (or at least Investigator-shattering) climax.

MAGIC

When you're starting out, you will likely not be familiar with the vast range of spells and magical effects in the game. Don't bother rolling for random spell use by monsters; just pick one or two spells for that serpent man or sorcerer that look like they would be interesting in a showdown. Feel free to make up the rest as you go; that's what Lovecraft did. Make yourself familiar with spells as they are mentioned in the scenarios you read, and don't use too many too quickly. The supernatural ought to be rare and dreadful.

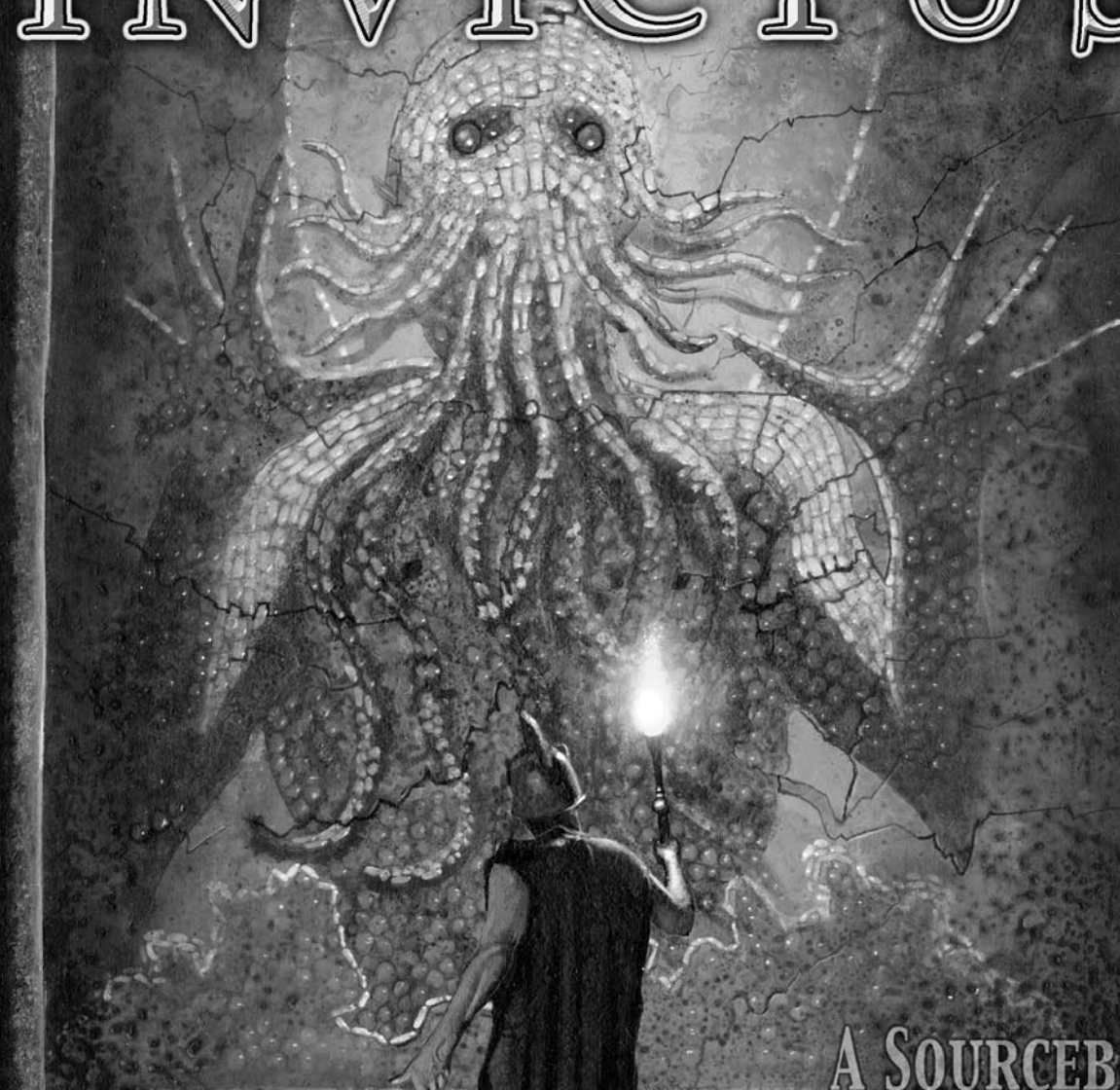
At the same time, you don't need to be too afraid of Investigator use of spells in the game. Spells take a long time to learn and cost Sanity to use. The key here is to be absolutely familiar with the rules for that spell and for learning spells in general, and to adhere to those rules strictly when Investigators pursue them. You might find one or two games thrown off when a particular spell is used, but it is not likely to be a problem in the long run.

WHAT TO KEEP?

If you're a new Keeper of Arcane Lore, you have a long career ahead of you building horror and suspense for your players. For some of us that career has already spanned decades, and we're still learning and still making it up as we go. As time goes on, you will comfortably ignore more and more of the advice of so-called experts—and you'll reread old advice and find it useful in all new ways. Between all that, you'll find your own direction. Learning that strangely disciplined creativity is the most rewarding part of being a Keeper.

Good luck! ☸

CTHULHU INVICTUS



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TALE OF TERROR

BARGAIN HUNTING

By ADAM GAUNTLETT

The Investigators are at a second-hand market; it can be as large as Portobello in London or a small neighbourhood bring-and-buy. The eclectic selection includes everything from junk ‘collectables’ to high-quality merchandise.

A team of organized bargain hunters is working the stalls, obviously working cooperatively. They’re comparing notes and seem to have a communal budget.

The Investigators find a genuine item with potential Occult or Cthulhu Mythos importance. The nature of the piece (book? statue?) is up to the Keeper. The bargain hunters have spotted the item too, and a bidding war begins. The bargain hunters seem willing to pay a high price for this item, but their budget may not be enough to beat the Investigators.

OPTION 1: BELIEVERS

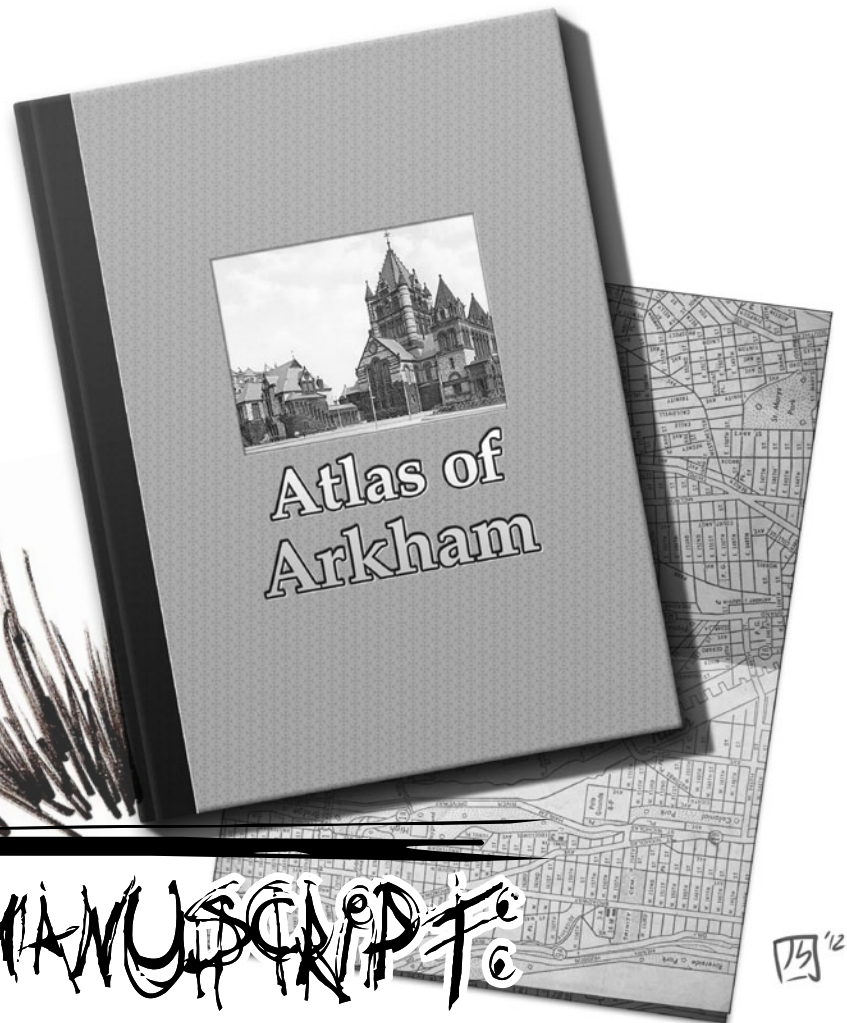
The bargain hunters are members of a fringe church and have been instructed to buy certain ‘evil’ items to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. They don’t have a lot of money and may be easily outbid, but they will report their failure to the church elders. The church then begins a campaign against the Investigators, hoping to persuade them to hand over the artifact peaceably. This may involve reasoning with the Investigators, warning them about ‘the true nature’ of their purchase, gathering on an Investigator’s front lawn in a prayer meeting, and so on. They won’t give up easily, since they’re convinced that only they can be trusted with items of such power.

OPTION 2: PAWNS

The bargain hunters are dupes, members of an occult circle who have been tasked to get hold of this item, along with several others, by their ‘ascended master.’ They don’t have much of a budget and can be easily outbid, but they can’t risk failure and will do anything, including burglary or theft, to get the item. Tracking the dupes back to their ascended master reveals that she, an ages-old wizard posing as a vampire, is trying to recover items stolen from her by an acolyte. The ascended master has a good line in Satanic subterfuge and won’t stop at killing to get what she wants.

OPTION 3: VICTIMS

The bargain hunters are dressed in business casual and seem to have a lot of money to spend. However, their behaviour is off; it’s almost as if they aren’t used to large groups of people. In fact they are Deep One hybrids, sent by their colony to retrieve several items that were stolen from them. Their painstaking efforts have allowed them to track the artifacts this far, but at this point they are as interested in the Investigators as the artifacts, since the colony still doesn’t know who stole their treasures and the Investigators seem to be the only people—apart from the Deep Ones—to appreciate their true value. Perhaps, the bargain hunters think, the Investigators know more than they’re letting on. Do they know the thieves? Are they the thieves? Kidnap and torture may be the only way to find out. ☹



MYSTEROUS MANUSCRIPT

ATLAS OF ARKHAM 1911 (ANNOTATED)

By **BOBBY DERIE**

Old New England towns creep and grow organically from the straight streets laid out by their founders. The outlines of old farms and millponds are slowly obliterated by spreading urbanity; big old houses are torn down to make way for more modern neighborhoods and blocks of flats; cemeteries are overgrown, walled off and forgotten in strange spaces. So it was with Arkham.

In 1908, Jacob Salthorpe began an ambitious historical and geographical study of Arkham, Massachusetts. He spent as much time walking the twisting lanes and speaking with sewer workers and men stringing up the new electric lines as he did researching old maps and records at City Hall, Miskatonic University, and in the quaint, crumbling bookshelves of old Arkham families. The result was the *Atlas of Arkham 1911*, published by the local Manuxet River Press and available from most regional booksellers for two dollars in the 1920s and 1930s. The book was quickly recognized as one of the standard texts on Arkham, and would remain in print in various revised editions for the next century.

Among the many copies in existence, however, is a single annotated edition. The printer in preparing this part of the print run had cut the paper a little wide, leaving an extra half inch on the margins, and some previous owner or peruser of an eccentric and occult bent has taken advantage of the space to add lengthy notes, corrections, and amendments to the text—even going so far as to make some alterations to the many maps that Salthorpe had drafted or copied by hand from old city plans and originals.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The original issue of *Atlas of Arkham 1911* was a hardback, bound in blue cloth but without dustjacket. It ran to 264 pages, including twenty-six black illustrated and photographic plates and a large, fold-out map of the city in the rear of the book. The annotated edition is marked with red and green ink in a small, crabbed but steady hand, mostly in the margins but also sometimes running on the header and footer, or between lines of text. Changes, notes, and markings on maps are primarily done in red ink. The most elaborate changes are on the fold-out map,

where the entire blank back has been used to trace a primordial landscape labeled “Arkham, as it was in the time of Atlantis and Thebes.” The only indication of the note-maker’s identity is the legend “From Wilhelmina Spence, 16 Lich Street, 1913” on the inside cover, and an accompanying clipping from the Arkham Advertiser pasted inside for “Spence & Kale, Tutors in Geography, Latin, & Mathematics, 16 Lich Street.”

CONTENTS

Salthorpe’s text begins with a concise geographical history of Arkham, beginning with the latest scientific ponderings of the last ice age and proceeding to Indian times and then the Colonial period. This gives way to the atlas proper, discussing the geological features of the town—the Manuxet-Miskatonic river system, the strata of Hangman’s Hill and French Hill—and then the layout of streets and neighborhoods, supplemented by maps and occasional diagrams of street-level strata and the layout of the sewer and burgeoning electrical systems. Particularly noteworthy landmarks, buildings, and features are given their cultural, scientific, and historical contexts, such as Christ Church and Miskatonic University, the original site of the Mayor’s Mansion before the events of 1836, and Freemason’s Hall.

The annotations expand on Salthorpe by addressing the occult, criminal, and hidden history of Arkham. Each house of each suspected witch hanged, pressed, or burned during the witch trials is marked and briefly discussed, from Abigail Prinn to Keziah Mason. The maps of the waterfront and sewer are marked to indicate hidden smugglers’ tunnels, some of them dating back to the Revolution or possibly before—for the book places much emphasis on old Indian legends, marking out where certain stones were located on the hills, and where eroded grave-mounds may yet linger unmolested in Christchurch Cemetery. Even the geological history is not neglected, being amended with notes of a strange, inhuman settlement made along what would be the banks of the Miskatonic in some vastly distant, primordial age.

USING THE ANNOTATED ATLAS OF ARKHAM

The annotated *Atlas of Arkham* is essentially a map of Mythos activity in the city, as accurate or inaccurate as the Keeper needs it to be. It can be used as a reference to uncover something of the hidden history of various sites in and around Arkham and as a jumping-off guide to the seedy occult underbelly of the town. It can be placed almost anywhere a used book may be found—on the shelf of a library, in a private home, in a used book store, or even in the lobby of a doctor’s office. Since it is superficially identical to regular copies of this standard

work—except for the paper being slightly wider, which isn’t obvious unless you take the book off the shelf—the Keeper can place this book for any character to find while conducting research.

SCENARIO SEEDS

- Wilhelmina Spence and Jenna Kale lived in a 'Boston marriage' in Lich Street for six years, tutoring out of Spence’s considerable library. The partnership ended bloodily in 1913. The details are fodder for the town gossips: Kale had married the rake John Whateley Bishop and moved to Boston, then returned and quarreled with Spence over selling the library; an altercation with a knife left both women dead and Bishop claiming their shared property. The more adventurous gossips talk of how both women were found naked in a circle of blood after they died, though the newspapers said nothing of this, and how Bishop returned to 16 Lich Street several times over the following years, claiming that some rare works of geography were missing from the library.
- Edwin Sandal had an evil reputation as a warlock in the 1600s but disappeared without a trace. His farm passed through many hands and now has been replaced by a new apartment building, as annotated in the *Atlas*. What few know is that Sandal was a middling wizard who would spy on his neighbors using the Wandering Soul spell (**Call of Cthulhu** Sixth Edition, p. 247). At last he was discovered while on such a journey, and his body interred in a lead coffin marked with seals that prevented his spirit’s return. Now he seeks high-POW characters who can detect his presence to help recover his mortal form, the location of which he believes is in the *Atlas*. If none of the player characters qualify, or if they refuse them, he may throw in with their enemies—and over the centuries he has uncovered many secrets.
- There are stones older than any Christian grave in Arkham’s cemeteries, and someone is disturbing the earth around them, raising the forgotten monuments and setting them at curious angles. Signs of the rituals suggest that someone is attempting to create a massive *gate*—one which will, if opened, encompass all of downtown Arkham. Only the *Atlas* can point the characters toward the other sites in time to halt the work—but the old cemeteries have dangers of their own.
- A hundred years ago, the *Atlas* says, a séance was held in a small set of rooms on Lich Street; six people died, and a further two went mad. The rooms were sealed, but the deaths continued until a trio of occultists exorcised the spirit or entity with the *Banishment of Yde Etad* (**Call of Cthulhu** Sixth Edition, p. 220). Now a group of young women enamored with spiritualism have return to the site, and the invisible entity may have come again. The *Atlas*’ notes on the ritual are insufficient to reconstruct the ceremony—but they can point the player characters in the right direction. ☸

REMEMBER, REMEMBER

A 1930S TRAIL OF CTHULHU SCENARIO SET ON BONFIRE NIGHT

BY ADAM GAUNTLETT

*“Remember, remember the Fifth of November
The Gunpowder Treason and plot;
I see no reason why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.”*

HOOK

London bookseller Thomas Fell has been murdered and some of his stock stolen. Shortly afterward his store burns to the ground—but was it arson, or was something else responsible?

AWFUL TRUTH

Street gangs have been harassing Indian shop owners, trying to force them out of business. Henry Nutting, a former junior clerk in the colonial service now turned tramp, took this hard. He’s on good terms with many of the Indians, and they provide him food and shelter. Nutting recognized a tome in Fell’s shop window as being of special significance—the poetic epic *Bagh Simh*, a variant on *Devnarayan*, translated by Nutting’s old employer, Sir

Hutton Dawes. Nutting, a firm believer in the occult, thought he could use the magic of the epic, together with some other items, to frighten the street gangs off. Nutting murdered the bookseller when he refused to sell Nutting the *Bagh Simh*, and thanks to that murder and Nutting’s subsequent rituals a number of Fire Vampires were summoned, first to the bookshop and later to other places.

Nutting isn’t performing his ritual correctly. He thinks he’s summoning the martial spirit of the father of the *Bagaravats*, but in is fact bringing Cthugha’s children to London. He thinks he can summon them, have them do his bidding, and then they will leave. They do come, but they don’t go away again, and some of them are arriving whether he wants them to or not. They have a different agenda; according to the ritual Nutting used, he ought to be giving them messages to take back to Cthugha but, as he hasn’t done so, they’re setting fires of their own. Bonfire chaos has disguised their activities so far as random firework-related accidents; but the more Fire Vampires come to earth, the more likely it is London burns.

Nutting’s chosen the disguise of an itinerant Guy Fawkes Night beggar, dragging a stuffed effigy of Fawkes behind him, playing his fiddle and begging for pennies. Even if



he's stopped now, the Fire Vampires still have to be dealt with, or they might start a bonfire that nobody can stop.

SPINE

The police come calling. Do the Investigators know anything about the murder of Thomas Fell? Any investigation at the bookseller's must take place quickly, for the Vampire is due. Fireworks suggest a Guy Fawkes connection; there are hundreds of itinerants roaming the streets with Guys, and bonfires are being built in several places. Witnesses remember seeing a ragged man. More fires spark at businesses 'protected' by a vicious firm, and a rival investigator joins the search. Street contacts report a disguised 'cat man' with a Guy, but the cat man can't be tracked to his lair, and the Investigators come face to face with more Vampires. Inquiry amongst the immigrant population might have better luck, as might talking to the local tramps, or even Sir Hutton Dawes. The Vampires are hunting in packs; stopping Nutting is one thing, but only a correct performance of the Bagh Simh will drive them off now.

BONFIRE NIGHT

This information should be available on a 0-point Spend to Investigators with **History, Theology, Anthropology** or **Occult**.

Guy Fawkes was one of several Catholic conspirators who attempted to blow up the House of Lords in 1605 as part of a wider plot to replace James I with a Catholic monarch. The scheme failed and Fawkes was put to death, but he cheated the hangman, breaking his own neck by jumping from the gallows. James I allowed his people to celebrate his survival with bonfires, so long as they were held without danger or disorder. From that day to this, the Fifth of November has been Bonfire Night. Mounds of wood, old furniture and scraps are burnt with an effigy of Fawkes on top.

For days beforehand children and itinerants, carrying a Fawkes dummy, beg for 'pennies for the Guy'; the children use it to buy fireworks for the celebration. Bonfire Night is a wild affair with high risk of injury or worse, and there have been many fireworks-related accidents. The event has largely lost its religious significance and become an excuse

for an ecstatic celebration. In the days leading up to the Fifth the night air is split with explosions, and on the Fifth itself London has several grand fireworks displays.

DIWALI

Diwali is a Hindu religious festival of lights. It celebrates the return of Lord Rama and his triumph over the demon-king Ravana, and represents the triumph of good over evil, light over dark. It is an important celebration, and is also celebrated by Sikhs and Jains; though the exact meaning differs between cultures, the festival is common to all. For they have in common the belief in an inner impulse—the Light—that leads humanity to do good deeds and therefore become closer to divinity. Literally “diwali” means a row of lamps, and celebrants light oil lamps in their homes, share sweets and snacks with family and friends, and let off fireworks. The festival lasts for five days, each with its own significance. Traditionally it is celebrated on the first new moon between mid-October and mid-November; new moons are especially significant in the Hindu calendar. There’s always a chance that the first day of Diwali falls on the Fifth of November, and that’s where it fell the year of this scenario.

PHADS

The following information should be revealed only when the Investigators know that Nutting is using a phad painting. Phads are made of cloth, anywhere from fifteen to twenty foot in length. Traditionally they are brightly coloured with vegetable paints, often in vivid primary hues, with red, gold and blue being common. The patterns on the phads tell the stories of gods and heroes, most often the tales of Devnarayan and Pabuji. In the scenario the phad concerns the Bagravats, heroic warriors who were killed by the goddess Shakti, also known as Kali, which would put it in the Devnarayan tradition. Historically phads have been used as mobile temples by itinerant priests, who would perform the epics with the phad as a kind of backdrop.

CEASED TRADING

The Investigators need a connection with Thomas Fell. The following suggestions may help:

- Fell is a rival bookseller (compatible with Bookhounds of London).
- Fell claimed to have something of particular interest to the Investigators, and asked them to visit him in his shop.
- Fell is a near neighbour.
- Fell is an occultist of whom the Investigators have become suspicious, and they were paying attention to his activities.
- Fell claimed to have a copy of a useful Mythos tome and was selling it to the highest bidder. The exact tome should be left up to the Keeper, always bearing in mind it might have been a fake.

At Fell’s shop, the Investigators are startled to see a crowd and several policemen outside the door. Onlookers are trying to peek in the shop’s windows. Most in the crowd know that murder’s been done but have no details.

The constables at the door are not forthcoming. **Cop Talk, Credit Rating** (0 points) or similar gets one of them to admit that “The owner’s been done for, sir,” but they’re not willing to give details. Spending a point might persuade a constable to meet an Investigator later on “for a quiet pint and a chat.”

Sergeant McCubbin is in charge of the scene and wants to interview anyone with a connection to the dead man. That may include the Investigators, depending on the introduction, or they may volunteer to be interviewed.

McCubbin is a burly man, a keen rugby player in his late 20s. He has a thatch of blonde-white hair and a broken nose. He seeks promotion and wants as much information as he can get.

McCubbin wants to know who the Investigators are, what their connection to the deceased is, the last time they saw him alive, and whether to their knowledge he had any enemies or had anything of particular value in the shop. He neither confirms nor denies that something was stolen, and does not say how Fell died.

Cop Talk or similar gets him to unbend, and he has some information to share:

- Fell died sometime between six p.m. the previous night, when he was last seen, and no later than 10 p.m., according to the medical examiner at the scene.
- Bruising on the face suggests a struggle, but the main impact (and cause of death) was blunt-force trauma to the back of the head. This could be consistent with an accidental death rather than premeditated murder; Fell might have been punched and fallen over backward onto something solid.
- Preliminary investigation at the scene suggests that a robbery may have taken place. Some money was stolen from the cash box, and some of the stock has been rifled through.

Talking privately to another constable may get some more information:

- The last man to see Fell alive, a neighbour, says he saw Fell in close conversation with a “ragged looking chap,” and Fell didn’t seem pleased to see him. Voices were raised.
- Fell kept good records of his stock, and according to those records several items recently arrived that the police can’t account for, possibly because they were stolen. If the Investigators were lured in by a Mythos tome, then that’s gone, but so is “something called Bagh Simh. Some sort of poem. Not Shakespeare by all accounts!”

BREAKING AND ENTERING

The investigators may try to get into Fell's shop. Little do they realize that Nutting's intervention has summoned, belatedly, a Fire Vampire, which will destroy the premises. If they don't break in, they may hear that the shop burnt down in a later scene.

Searching the shop requires getting past the constables first. After McCubbin's initial investigation and removal of the body, he and most of the policemen leave the scene, leaving one man behind to guard the door. That man is replaced later in the evening by another, who's on duty until the next morning. The policeman is standing outside the front door, so **Locksmith** or similar on the rear door won't be noticed. Bribing the constable may also work, as might **Cop Talk**.

The shop is meticulously kept. Recent arrivals are displayed in the shop window and in cabinets at the front of the shop. Otherwise the collection is arranged by sections, and Fell had a separate (locked) glass-fronted cabinet for his occult tomes. If this is run as part of a series, the Keeper may want to seed the campaign with suitable items, but otherwise assume that none of the items in the occult section are worth more than **1 dedicated pool point of Occult**, non-cumulative, and in money terms none are worth more than £80.

CLUES:

- **Evidence Collection.** There's a clump of blood and hair on the edge of Fell's desk. The edges are quite sharp, easily enough to have caused the injury. A sweet has rolled under the desk; it's wrapped in colourful paper and is incised with a Hindi saying. It's the sort of thing that's cheaply made by the thousands but only found in shops and restaurants run by Indians.
- **Library Use.** Fell's records are very comprehensive. Several items on the recent arrivals list cannot be found in the shop, but a comparison with his day book shows that only the Bagh Simh is unaccounted for. It's

described as "an epic Hindi poem, in translation by Sir Hutton Dawes," and is worth £20.

- » **Occult, Anthropology or History** knows that the Bagh Simh refers to the tale of Bagh Simh, the tiger-headed father of the Bagaravats. It is one of the martial legends of Hindu folklore, but as this is largely an oral tradition spread by musician-storytellers, there are several variants on the tale.
- **Locksmith/Forensics.** Whoever did the deed didn't bother to touch Fell's safe even though it was in plain view in his office. The cash box was emptied, but that probably didn't contain much. The perpetrator didn't bother to search the place, either, which suggests he knew exactly what he was looking for and only made a half-hearted attempt to disguise the theft as a robbery.

Though the Investigators do not realize it, a Fire Vampire is due to arrive soon. Accidentally summoned by Nutting, this creature forms first near Fell's coal-burning stove in his office, where there are still a few embers glowing. From there it starts to set the whole shop alight and may attack the Investigators if they are present. It certainly attacks and kills the constable if the Investigators aren't there.

FIRE VAMPIRE

ATHLETICS 11, HEALTH 3, SCUFFLING 14, MAGIC 6

HIT THRESHOLD: 4

ALERTNESS MODIFIER: +1

WEAPON: +1 (BURNING TOUCH)

ARMOR: IMMUNE TO PHYSICAL WEAPONS, FIRE AND ELECTRICITY; CAN BE EXTINGUISHED. A BUCKET OF SAND OR WATER OR A THICK RUG IS -2 DAMAGE, A GARDEN HOSE -1, A FIRE EXTINGUISHER +0, OR +1 FOR A FIRE HOSE AIMED STEADILY. FELL'S SHOP DOES NOT HAVE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

STABILITY LOSS: +0



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Any Fire Vampire summoned during this scenario stays until dismissed, as per “Endgame,” page 52. This may lead to sightings, newspaper reports, and other fires. London is a very flammable city and has already endured three great fires, in 1135, 1212 and 1666; newspaper editorials during Bonfire celebrations plead for restraint, warning Londoners of the risk they run with unsupervised firework displays.

Once the shop has burnt to the ground the clues in it cannot be discovered, but **Evidence Collection** or similar on the charred remains notices odd burnt, sooty streaks on the walls of neighboring buildings, as though something aflame was poured (or flew) over them.

FRIENDS. ROMANS. COUNTRYMEN

The Investigators may inquire among friends, rivals and acquaintances as to whether Fell had any enemies or did anything odd in the days before his death.

Fell has an estranged wife, no children, four employees (none of whom lived at the shop) and some professional acquaintances. Possibilities include:

- Edith, his wife, who lives with her good friend Emily in Soho; a pale creature who likes dingy artist’s clubs.
- Arthur Cooper, the shop assistant, gangling, awkward and nineteen, who enjoys writing Byronic poetry.
- James Quarry, a seedy book scout who chain-smokes and is an expert on grimoires, particularly early 18th century.

CLUES:

- **Core.** Fell had many rivals, but none who’d go so far as to kill him over a business deal. Edith, his wife, is worse off financially now that he’s dead and will have to go back to working for a living. Though he had debts, none of them were substantial. Neither his life nor the shop and its contents were insured. The only odd duck anyone can remember, recently at least, was “an old fellow who claimed he was some kind of Indian mystic, though

Thomas pegged him as a tramp. He wanted the Bagh Simh but wasn't prepared to pay for it. He seemed to think it was his by rights."

- **Oral History, Reassurance, Flattery.** "I remember the old fellow saying something in a foreign language. I think it may have been Hindi; I had an uncle in the colonial service who talked like that. He was tanned, as well, as if he'd spent a lot of time in sunnier places than this. I don't think he was a Hindu; his accent was pure Home Counties."

BAGH SIMH

The Investigators may try to learn more about this epic.

Possible lines of inquiry: **Library Use** (British Museum or similar), **Credit Rating** (clubs which may have private libraries or knowledgeable members, such as The Athenaeum, The Oriental Club, Traveller's Club), **Art History or History** (museums, art galleries, e.g. the Horniman or the Cuming Museum), **Occult** (The Society for Psychical Research, members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn), **Anthropology** (the Indian community in London).

Inquiry down any of these lines should eventually lead to Sir Hutton Dawes (see "The Orientalist"); perhaps the Investigators were given an introduction to Sir Hutton by a contact introduced in this scene, or perhaps they're made aware that he's in England and then have to make their own introduction.

CLUES:

- **Core.** The Bagh Simh concerns the career of a tiger-headed hero, father of heroes, whose story is celebrated in song during the festival of Diwali.
- **Library Use:** Sir Hutton's translation of Bagh Simh was published in 1923 in a limited edition of 500 volumes, by Rood & Co., Oxford. Rood & Co. are favored by scholars and Orientalists, particularly from Exeter College. It's a very small, obscure press; occultists claim some of its translations are of Mythos texts. Bagh Simh sold mainly to collectors and former India colonial administrators. There is a copy available: **2 dedicated pool points of Anthropology, History or Occult**, and dedicated study confers **+1 Mythos**. It includes a ritual, which in the text is performed by a street musician to summon up the spirit of Bagh Simh. In fact this is a version of Contact Cthugha; anyone carrying it out summons a Fire Vampire to their location, who can then be used as a messenger to the Great Old One. The ritual requires a ceremonial phad, or religious painting (see below).
- **Credit Rating:** Sir Hutton Dawes was Resident of Cochin for twelve years, and Governor in Council of Madras for two years, before retiring to Oxford on grounds of ill health. He's a knowledgeable Orientalist with an interest in mysticism. Until recently he was a member of the Society for Psychical Research, but fell out with some of his

fellows and publicly repudiated the Society. He's also the author of *Not Precisely So*, a collection of ghost tales set in a fictional Indian colonial district.

- **Art History/History:** The musician-priests of India traditionally perform their rituals in front of phad paintings, stylized artwork depicting the scene that their song is trying to portray. These are mobile temples and can be as large as 30 feet long. They are highly prized by their owners, and few are known to be in European collections.
- **Occult:** Sir Hutton Dawes is a bit of a crank, well known for his strong opinions on virtually any occult subject. While an expert in his own field, his views on European witch cults ("heavily influenced by charlatans like von Juntz, you know") have caused his ejection from several occult societies. Scholars with Mythos connections admit that Sir Hutton has some knowledge, but his forthright way of dealing with criticism made him enemies.
- **Anthropology:** Though they don't talk willingly to outsiders, those who have a connection with the Indian community know that recently the home of a prominent import/export merchant was burgled. Little was taken except for a phad painting depicting Bagh Simh and the Bagaravats. The community is in an uproar and rewards anyone who returns the painting (effectively granting 1 Credit Rating point to the one who returns it).

THE ORIENTALIST

The Investigators try to contact Sir Hutton Dawes, the author of the Bagh Simh translation, following on information received in previous scenes.

Sir Hutton lives quietly in a cottage on the outskirts of Oxford, not far from the river. He discourages visitors and keeps a ferocious dog. He also has a shotgun. He employs a cook and a manservant, but neither live in; at night he is alone. The cottage is a bit too small for all the bric-a-brac stuffed in it, memorabilia collected over 30 years in colonial service: everything from ceremonial swords to a tiger skin rug, some of it shoved into whatever corner will fit it. The umbrella stand, for example, contains two umbrellas, four canes, a polo stick and a lance from an Indian light horse regiment. Hidden treasures can be found almost anywhere.

Assess Honesty or similar realizes Sir Hutton is a functional paranoid, possibly with persecution delusions. He won't let more than one person in his house at any time, unless he knows them; any excess have to wait out on the porch, under the watchful eye of his dog Won-tolla. He keeps his shotgun and a pistol to hand at all times.

CLUES:

- **Oral History:** The Bagh Simh that Sir Hutton translated is a variant of the legend, which describes the tiger-headed subject as "he with the Crown of Lights." According to Sir Hutton's sources, this actually refers

DAN HARMS

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to an astronomical phenomenon which some worship as though it were a deity. "They call this thing Cthugha, the beginning of all things, and some also say the end of all things."

- **Evidence Collection:** Among the innumerable memorabilia are several collections of photographs, and two of them show a fakir engaged in ritual. In the first, the magician is performing with a stringed instrument in front of a phad. In the second, the fakir is joined by a dancing blaze of light, which seems about to consume the fakir.
- **If asked about Henry Nutting:** "I remember Nutting. Sound man, or he was before he fell foul of those blasphemers. Back in '12, it was. Before that, he was my man in Adyar, but those Theosophical people persuaded him to help them in their occult researches, and it was the beginning of the end for poor Henry. He had a breakdown in the summer of 1912, and dropped out of sight a little afterward. I'd heard he'd taken up with the mystics and was begging for his bread."

SIR HUTTON DAWES:

ATHLETICS 4, ANTHROPOLOGY 3, ART 1, ASTRONOMY 1, CTHULHU MYTHOS 2, FIREARMS 6, FLEEING 5, HEALTH 6, LANGUAGES 3, LAW 2, LIBRARY USE 2, OCCULT 4, SANITY 3, STABILITY 5, SCUFFLING 4, THEOLOGY 1, WEAPONS 5; DAMAGE +1 (PISTOL, SWORD, SHOTGUN)

WON-TOLLA THE GUARD DOG:

ATHLETICS 10, HEALTH 6, SCUFFLING 10, SHADOWING 8, STEALTH 6; ALERTNESS +1; ARMOR +1; DAMAGE -1 (TEETH).

PENNIES FOR THE GUY

While investigating in London the Investigators notice Guy Fawkes celebrants having fun.

There are thousands of children and beggars all over London, hauling stuffed Guys around and begging for pennies. At night the air is split by explosions as the fireworks bought by those pennies are set off. Fire engines can be heard nightly, racing from disaster to disaster.

POTENTIAL ENCOUNTERS AND CLUES INCLUDE:

- Two beggars, claiming to be working men from the North cut loose by uncaring employers, dragging a misbegotten, bedraggled Guy behind them. Their breath stinks of alcohol.
- Four children and a dog, Boko, with their natty Guy (complete with battered top hat and monocle). They already have some fireworks, which they may use to startle the Investigators. No damage, but **Sense Trouble** may prevent having to make an **Athletics** check to avoid having a few firebombs chucked under their feet or even tied to their ankles (potentially -3 damage).
- An entire street busy about its bonfire, dragging all their unwanted goods to the pyre. Later, on the Fifth, there is to be a street party with the fire and fireworks as main entertainment.
- **Oral History, Flattery, Interrogation, Credit Rating:** "I saw the funniest old man just the other day with a Guy that looked just like a cat! Wrapped up in some kind of colourful cloak, it was, and had a mask on it with ears and whiskers! Poor old man; folk like him shouldn't have to beg for their supper."

ASSISTING WITH THEIR INQUIRIES

The Investigators may try to follow up on the Diwali angle ("Breaking and Entering": the sweet), possibly after finding out ("Bagh Simh") that a phad was recently stolen.

It will take delicate handling; **Interrogation** or **Intimidation** get the wrong response. Immigrant communities, whether Hindu, Sikh, Catholic or Muslim, do not trust outsiders, and are particularly on edge at the moment because some of them are being attacked by a vicious street gang, the King's Road Boys. The Boys are trying to force the Hindu merchants out so they can be replaced by white businesses. The community is divided; none of them want to involve the police, but they can't keep the King's Road Boys out.

Streetwise knows about the Kings Road Boys.



Reassurance, Language (they react well if addressed in their own language) or **Cop Talk** may help to get the immigrants to open up.

CLUES:

- **Core.** They are being threatened by gangsters but will not yield. Some of them are talking about organizing an armed resistance. Nobody wants to go to the police. Some of them claim that the recent arson of several of the gangsters' businesses are a sign from the gods; but as to which god, they are all strangely silent—even worried.
- The theft of the phad was completely unexpected. The owner is a virtuous man with few enemies, and nothing apart from the phad was stolen. The theft happened when the merchant, in honour of Kubera (demon-god of generosity and wealth), was giving alms and food to the poor. There were many beggars present, and it's thought

that the thief used this as a distraction.

- Some children have seen a beggar who goes about dressed in an imitation of Bagh Simh. This man wears tattered evening dress but also the face of a tiger (possibly a masquerade mask), and chants greetings in Hindi even though he is white. The man is probably Henry Nutting, a tramp well known to local businesses. Nutting, a former colonial administrator, speaks Hindi fluently. This Bagh Simh beggar has been seen dragging a stuffed Guy behind him.
- The King's Road Boys have been particularly violent recently, as one of the shops under their protection has burnt down. The Boys blame Hindu rivals for the arson, but nobody in the community is claiming responsibility.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- Rajeesh Chowdry, a thin, harassed man in his early

forties who suffers under a growing brood of children and ne'er-do-well relatives. He runs a bakery.

- Jal Dash, a former soldier turned moneychanger and pawnbroker. Success has made him fat, but he likes to think of himself as a brave warrior still. His young son is the apple of his eye.
- Jankani D'Souza, a devout Catholic who runs a grocer's. He took over the business when his father-in-law 'retired' but the old fellow still dodders about.

LONDON AFTER DARK

The King's Road Boys are a recent phenomenon, formed after a previous gang was wiped out by rivals. The survivors are trying to establish turf across the river, but locals (mostly Indian immigrants) have resisted their protection racket. The Boys then tried to force the immigrants out and replace them with white businesses which would be more amenable to their racketeering. This had some success, but then businesses protected by the Boys started going up in flames.

This was the work of Henry Nutting, but they don't know that. They blame the immigrants, and are upping the stakes by attacking immigrant businesses. Their typical approach is to send half a dozen thugs round, break all the windows and smash the stock, and then run away. If they have to come back a second time, they torch the place.

Their leadership is just smart enough to realize that finding out who's burning down their businesses is important, and they've put one of their own in charge of that investigation: Charlie Macavoy, aka "Mad Mac." Charlie's got a reputation for bravery and some brains, and when he finds out that the Investigators are on the job he wants to know what they know. This may involve kidnapping one of them and torturing him or her for information, or shadowing them to see where they go.

The Keeper should use Mad Mac as a prod. He's as interested as the Investigators are in finding out what happened, but for different reasons. He has many thugs to throw at a problem and doesn't have qualms about using them. Let his thugs be spotted shadowing Investigators, or pull Investigators down dark alleys to beat the stuffing out of them. He probably won't be a problem until the Investigators have either talked with immigrants or encountered a Fire Vampire; either incident is enough to attract his attention.

As the Boys are Nutting's target, wherever they can be found, so too can the Fire Vampires. A conflict between gangsters and Investigators could be broken up by the sudden arrival of a Vampire; or a tortured Investigator trapped in a warehouse might find that his prison is afire.

CLUE:

Occult, Streetwise. Many of the Boys have started carrying good luck charms and are skittish around fire

and fireworks. Some of them believe that their pyrotechnic troubles are occult in origin, possibly summoned up by "them foreigners." If present when a Fire Vampire is due, their increased agitation is worth an extra +1 to any Sense Trouble rolls.

TYPICAL KING'S ROAD BOY

ATHLETICS 5, DRIVING 4, EXPLOSIVES 1, FILCH 4, FLEEING 8, FIREARMS 4, HEALTH 7, INTIMIDATION 2, STREETWISE 2, SCUFFLING 8, STEALTH 7, SHADOWING 7, SENSE TROUBLE 1, STABILITY 6, SANITY 4, WEAPONS 6; WEAPONS: FIST, KICK (-2), CLUB, KNIFE (-1), LIGHT FIREARM (+0), PETROL BOMB (+1 POINT BLANK, +0 CLOSE, NO DAMAGE OTHERWISE).

MAD MAC

ATHLETICS 9, COP TALK 1, DRIVING 8, FLEEING 7, FIREARMS 9, FIRST AID 6, HEALTH 9, INTERROGATION 2, INTIMIDATION 3, REASSURANCE 1, ORAL HISTORY 1, PREPAREDNESS 4, STREETWISE 2, SENSE TROUBLE 4, STEALTH 8, SHADOWING 9, STABILITY 8, SANITY 6, SCUFFLING 9, WEAPONS 9; WEAPONS: FIST, KICK (-2), KNIFE, CLUB (-1), LIGHT FIREARM (+0). PUMP SHOTGUN (+1). A TALL, BROAD-SHOULDERED MAN WHO DRESSES LIKE A SWELL AND PRETENDS TO BE RESPECTABLE.

FIRE VAMPIRE

HEALTH 7, MAGIC 8

OTHERWISE SEE PAGE 45.

LONDON'S BURNING

Eventually the Investigators discover that Nutting has been setting fires.

The evidence is scattered all over the East End, particularly those businesses affiliated with the King's Road Boys: pubs, greengrocers, newsagents, betting shops, pawnbrokers and other small businessmen. They all have two things in common (apart from being burnt out): they're all run by whites, and they're all pretty shady in their own right. The greengrocer cheats on his measures, the newsagent sells pornography on the side, the pawnbroker is also a receiver of stolen goods, the pub is a notorious gang hangout and so on. **Cop Talk, Streetwise** or similar would know about their shady connections, but otherwise all the arson attacks look to the uninformed as though they happened to innocent businesses.

As Fire Vampires start to proliferate, they may start targeting innocent businesses; they don't care about Nutting's crusade, and are only here because he hasn't finished the ritual.

Nutting doesn't much care whether there are people inside or not when he sets his fires. His usual tactic is to carry out the ritual and leave. He knows that the Fire Vampire will eventually arrive and cause chaos, but he doesn't know when. It's the Mythos equivalent of a time-delay fuse on a bomb.

Not only that, but Nutting hasn't considered collateral damage. Yes, his target probably goes up in flames, but

what about the neighbouring buildings? Or suppose the fire touches off a gas main, or a pub's liquor supplies? The impact could easily destroy an entire street, or worse, as the Investigators realize on a 0-point **Evidence Collection** spend or similar.

POTENTIAL CLUES:

- **Streetwise:** At each King's Road-related location, members of the King's Road Boys street gang are gathered. They seem shaken and angry, and react violently if Investigators try to talk to them or to the owners of the businesses they're supposed to be protecting. See also "London After Dark."
- **Evidence Collection:** The same odd burn patterns seen elsewhere are present here. These dappled scorch marks look as if someone poured lit fuel over the walls—or something on fire was hovering close to them.
- **Photography, Occult (night only):** An Investigator who tries to take a picture of a burning building or, using Occult knowledge, looks for signs of mystic disturbance, may catch a glimpse of one of the Fire Vampires as it flies away. This can only happen at night, and the picture if taken shows the Vampire in the upper section of the frame, just in shot. Potential **Stability Loss 4** (a Mythos creature seen at a distance).
- **Intimidation, Interrogation or similar (on King's Road business owners):** The shopkeeper is irate, and blames "them fuckin' foreigners! It's their doing! They went and torched my place on account of they know their days are numbered! We need a 'itler 'ere, sort 'em aht proper!" **Assess Honesty** knows that the anger is genuine; the shopkeeper really believe what he or she is saying. If prodded, the shopkeeper remembers seeing an odd tramp hanging around the place a while ago, but didn't see any significance in it at the time.

Potential antagonist reaction includes direct confrontation with the King's Road Boys ("London After Dark"). If the Investigators weren't important to Mad Mac before this scene, they are now.

DOWN AND OUT IN LONDON

The Investigators may track Nutting by talking to his fellow tramps.

They are all sorts, from working men laid low by the Depression to habitual malingerers. All ranks, colors and creeds are represented, and most of them go unnoticed, begging for their bread. At this time of year many of them use Guy Fawkes as a way of raising a few pennies (see "Pennies for the Guy"). They congregate in many different places; **Streetwise** or similar will be able to find where they gather.

CLUES:

- **Core.** The "cat-man," or man with the cat-faced Guy, is Henry Nutting, known to most of his chums as "Fakey," their version of fakir. They know him as "a bit of a toff, but all right at bottom." He was in India, working with the Colonial Service, before he returned to England.
- **Evidence Collection.** Nutting slept here a night or two ago and left behind a Fire Vampire waiting to emerge. This creature burnt the place down mere hours before the Investigators arrived. Its greasy, burnt trail can be clearly traced over the walls and rooftops. Study of the scene gives Investigators a one-time-only +1 bonus to **Sense Trouble** when detecting Fire Vampires, as they become more accustomed to the Vampires' attack patterns.
- **Occult.** Many tramps have talked with Nutting about his beliefs. According to them, Nutting is "some kind of re-whatsit, a coming again. That's wot he says. Half off his chump, I reckon, but he figgers on turning into a tiger and bitin' folk." Taking that together with the Bagh Simh, the Investigators may realize that Nutting thinks he's taking the energy of the god and using it for his own purposes. The trouble is, that isn't how the ritual in the Bagh Simh is meant to be used. And misuse of any magical ritual is likely to lead to disaster.
- **Reassurance, Oral History.** "Fakey wasn't 'alf wrathy when them King's Road lot started in on the darkies. 'E said they had no right to it, and what was more, if 'e 'ad 'is way, they'd all get what was coming to 'em. 'E said there was a book what would show 'im 'ow to do it, but 'e couldn't



get the cove wot 'ad it to give it 'im. But 'e said the bloke would give over, if 'e gave 'im wot-for. I didn't like the look on Fakey's mush when 'e said that! Gave me the shivers.'

Investigators who follow up this line of inquiry find one of Nutting's haunts, a spike (or doss-house; sleeping quarters) where the Tramp Major (a fellow tramp in charge of the facility) keeps some of Nutting's belongings for him. The Tramp Major, a florid man named George, doesn't like betraying a friend, but can be convinced (bribery, **Intimidation**) to show the goods.

Nutting's paltry belongings include a packet of letters sent to him from India, a collection of odd coins (all from India), and a statuette of what looks at first glance to be a tiger-headed god.

Library Use finds something interesting among the letters, which were written to Nutting by a Theosophical scholar named Emily Parkinson. "Take heart! Your heroism will not go unrewarded. Remember that you won a great victory, and do not allow your karma to be tainted. Cthugha is not a God for Man to worship, as your experiences ought to have taught you, and whatever benefit you might think you gain will be swallowed up by your spiritual loss."

The god (**Occult**) does not appear to be Bagh Simh, though it might be mistaken for the tiger-headed hero. However its face is in fact a mass of bronze flame, as though its body supported a blazing fireball. **Cthulhu Mythos** may recall that an Indian Cthughua cult worships the god in the guise of a tiger-creature, a thing they describe as "he with the Crown of Lights." Sir Hutton knows this if the Investigators don't.

A Vampire follows quickly on the Investigators' heels to destroy the doss-house.

FIRE VAMPIRE

HEALTH 9, MAGIC 9

OTHERWISE SEE PAGE 45.

ENDGAME

By this point the Investigators are tracking Nutting, Mad Mac is tracking them, and several Fire Vampires infest London. Those Vampires not killed by Investigators wander freely, causing more fires. These blazes are blamed on Bonfire foolishness, and several newspaper columnists demand that the government do something about unregulated displays that cause so much damage. The Investigators, by this point, probably realize that the Vampires are to blame and if not stopped will go on to cause more harm, possibly even deaths. Revelation: **Stability 3, Sanity 1.**

Tracking Nutting should be an exercise in **Shadowing**, **Streetwise** and **Stealth**. It may involve dodging Mad Mac's Boys. The first encounter with Nutting should involve a Fire Vampire, which may give Nutting a chance to Flee. These encounters happen in the seediest parts of London.

Example encounter locales:

- A gin-house next door to a stinking tannery, home to the roughest and most desperate. Investigators with an obviously high **Credit Rating** are not welcome.
- A narrow, dark residential street, the houses on either side home to the poor and desperate.
- Dockside, with the dank, stale breath of the Thames insinuating itself in the Investigators' lungs.
- An abandoned, rotting dye-works, with treacherous floorboards and hungry vermin.

Once the Investigators catch up with Nutting and take away his Bagh Simh and phad, he's effectively powerless. However, that won't stop the Fire Vampires, and **Occult** or **Cthulhu Mythos** realizes this is because Nutting carried out the ritual incorrectly. The Vampires are waiting for instruction; until they get it, they won't leave.

To get them to go, the Investigators (or possibly an NPC like Sir Hutton, but only if the Investigators persuade him) need to carry out the ritual correctly. This requires **2 points Art, 1 point Cthulhu Mythos, or 3 points Magic**. The complex ritual needs a singer and a musician as well as the phad. Cooperation may be necessary, as it is likely that no one Investigator has all those abilities to hand.

When it's performed, all the Fire Vampires previously summoned come to the summoner's location and float in the air, awaiting a command (**Stability 5**). Spending **1 Mythos point** allows the Investigators to give the command; if not, the Vampires attack.

HENRY NUTTING

ATHLETICS 4, ART 1, BARGAIN 1, CONCEAL 5, EXPLOSIVES 3, FLEEING 9, FLATTERY 2, HEALTH 7, HISTORY 2, LANGUAGES 3, LIBRARY USE 1, OCCULT 3, STREETWISE 3, STABILITY 2, SANITY 2, SCUFFLING 8, SENSE TROUBLE 5, STEALTH 7, SHADOWING 8, WEAPONS 2.

ARMOR: NONE.

WEAPONS: FIST, KICK (-2), CLUB (-1), FIRECRACKERS (-3, REQUIRE ATHLETICS TO THROW).

SPECIAL: NUTTING IS DRESSED IN RAGGED EVENING WEAR AND HAS A CAT MASK, STOLEN FROM A COSTUME SHOP. HIS GUY, WHICH HAS THE PHAD WRAPPED AROUND IT LIKE A SHROUD, HAS CAT EARS AND ROUGHLY DRAWN WHISKERS. WHEN FLEEING, NUTTING MAY TRY TO CARRY THE GUY, WHICH INCREASES HIS DIFFICULTY BY 1.

3

TALE OF TERROR: THE SMEDLEY HOUSE



By **BEN RIGGS**

One morning an Investigator leaves his home and sees, instead of a vacant lot across the street, a house with peaked windows and a cupola. Figures are seen moving behind drifting curtains. A middle-aged man in a suit out of fashion for at least 25 years leaves the house and greets the Investigator by name. The man's name is Thomas Smedley, and he knows everything a neighbor would know about the Investigator including his occupation and marital status.

Research and a Library Use roll discovers that an identical house burned to the ground on the spot the house now occupies in a suspected act of arson 25 years before. All four members of the Smedley family died in the fire. No one was ever brought to trial for the crime.

OPTION 1: THE TIME WARP

The Smedleys are the victims of a time slip. They have been transported from the day before the arson that would have killed them. Strangely, the time slip endowed them with knowledge of their new neighbors, but they are puzzled by what modern conveniences have emerged since their disappearance (such as iPods, airplanes, or electricity depending on time period). Confused by modernity, they turn to the Investigators for comfort. Unfortunately, the Smedleys' presence in our timeline has begun a chain of paradoxes that will lead to the collapse of our dimension.

Over the next 36 hours, blood begins falls from the sky. Children appear in an Investigator's home claiming to be his or hers. The children eat only raw meat and sleep hanging from the ceiling like bats, though they have no physical adaptation or deformation to allow this. An Investigator's deceased loved one comes to visit in the form of a moldering corpse telling hellish tales of the afterlife. Time-slipped soldiers from the Cruel Empire of Tsan-Chan arrive and pillage the town.

A successful Physics roll reveals that to save reality the original aberrant elements must be removed. The characters must kill the Smedleys to save the world. Murdering the family costs 1D10/1D12 SAN but stops the timeline collapse, rewarding the characters with 1D8 SAN.

OPTION 2: GHOST STORY

Houses, like people, have souls. The soul of the Smedley house slept soundly until the Investigators' recent paranormal researches awoke it. Smedley, his family and the house are all ghosts. Upon learning that his children were the product of an affair, Mr. Smedley killed his wife and children with a hammer and scissors. To cover the crime, he set his house on fire and allowed the conflagration to take his life. Since reappearing in this dimension, the house and the ghosts inside have been re-enacting the vicious murders. Investigators occasionally hear blood-curdling screams emanating from the house and see the flicker of an uncontrolled fire through the windows. Every morning Smedley leaves to "go to the office" and returns at 5 o'clock "just in time for supper." Investigators who enter the house and witness Smedley murdering his family suffer 1D4/1D10 SAN loss. Escaping and exposing the truth about the murders dispels the haunting, but Mr. Smedley uses all the powers at his disposal to ensure the Investigators do not leave the house alive.

OPTION 3: THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

The house is a shape-shifting alien predator. The Smedleys fell prey to the beast some 25 years before, resulting in the conflagration which destroyed the house. It has returned, and taken the form of Smedley and his house to lure new prey. Understanding that humans are very clever monkeys, it uses reverse psychology to attempt to get the Investigators to enter it. Strange chanting emanates from the house at night, punctuated by a scream. Wan figures stare at the Investigators from the windows, though Smedley claims to live alone. A trail of bloody footprints is discovered leading to the back door. Unexplainable fairy lights buzz the house's high cupola; if photographed, their pictures reveal they contain the Investigators' faces. The neighborhood begins to stink like a Third World butcher. The stench leads to Smedley's garbage: a blood-stained tarp and a rotting hunk of unidentifiable meat.

When confronted with any of this strangeness, Smedley's explanation is that his cat died, he sings in the shower, he's an amateur butcher, and he walked through red paint on the way home from work.

Whoever enters the house becomes trapped. White sheets of flesh flop down over all exits. Hacking through it results in a view of the house lumbering through a fantastic landscape populated with extra-cosmic monstrosities and costs 1D4/1D6 SAN. A pale yellow digestive fluid (1D3 damage/round) is released which slowly begins to flood the house from the basement up. The fluid only dissolves flesh, so the bones and clothes of the Smedleys can be found inside the house. Kind Keepers may allow the Investigators to find Smedley's diary under an antiquated suit filled with bones in the attic, in which Smedley reveals that it takes about a day for the house to flood, and describes the location of the predator's nervous system. Irritate it enough, and perhaps the beast will vomit them up. But where? ☹

UNSPEAKABLE!



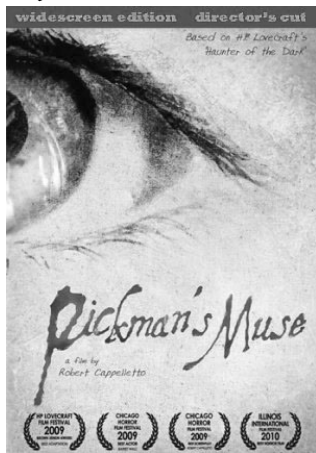
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THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7 >



PICKMAN'S MUSE

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
ROBERT CAPPALLETTO
REVIEWED BY BRIAN M.
SAMMONS

This movie is not what you think. Sure, it's based on the stories of one H.P. Lovecraft, and yes, there's an artist named Pickman, but that's where the similarities between **Pickman's Muse** and the ghoulish HPL tale "Pickman's Model" end. This is the same kind of bait and switch that had Chaosium call a campaign **Shadows of Yog-Sothoth** when it really deals with—well, I'm not going to tell. But a rose by any other name and all that; forget the title, it's the movie that matters. Is this experiment in Lovecraftian cinema any good?

Hell yeah it is! **Pickman's Muse** is one of the most serious, somber, and scary films with ties to Lovecraft that I've ever seen. While many movies based on HPL's works give you the occasional wink and sly smile in between the spookiness, and oftentimes the splatter, this film plays things dead straight. If you're seeking a gory-but-funny Lovecraft film like **Re-Animator** then you should look elsewhere. If you want to watch a young filmmaker who takes both his craft and the very idea of horror seriously, this is the film for you.

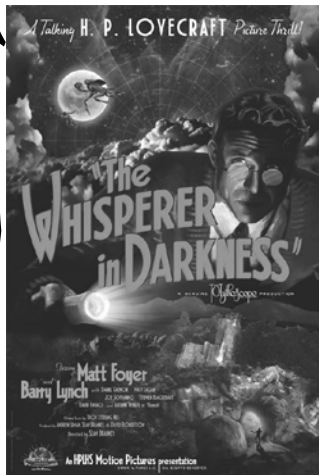
Pickman's Muse is a sequel to Lovecraft's "The Haunter of the Dark." The evil Church of Starry Wisdom still stands in the modern day and its baleful influence, much like Cthulhu's call, has devastating effects on sensitive artists who look for something more than mundane reality. Robert Pickman, a depressed painter, is sick and tired of life itself. One night, after contemplating suicide yet again, Pickman feels the pull of the rotting church that rises

outside his studio's window and the horrible secrets hidden. Suddenly his most recent bout of artistic block is broken and he starts painting like mad. However, not only has his subject matter changed overnight from quaint landscapes to deeply disturbing vistas and subjects, but he is unwittingly mimicking the style of another artist named Goodie Hines, right down to the brushstrokes. What makes this case of unconscious plagiarism truly dreadful is that Goodie went completely cuckoo for Cthulhupuffs and killed a whole mess of people, cutting out their eyes. Could young Robert be on a similar path? Psychologist Ambrose Dexter, who not only has been treating Pickman for depression but is also the shrink in charge of Goodie, starts investigating the warning signs.

Pickman, fully infected by the taint of the abandoned church, starts hearing voices demanding him to 'pay' for the images of otherworldly horror that he has been allowed to see and paint. And you can bet, those from the other side don't take credit. As the young artist's spiral of madness swirls faster and faster, he keeps eying that box cutter on his desk. . . .

Meanwhile, Dr. Dexter looks into the odd church and the secretive society that still owns it, and even visits the ruin. (Unfortunately, once there the psychologist finds the movie's one and only misstep: a crucified octopus. Yeah, that was just silly. It was the only time I laughed in this very dark movie, and I don't think that was the reaction writer-director Cappelletto was going for. Still, that's the only flaw I can find in the brilliant Shining Trapezohedron that is this film, and that should tell you just how good it is.) By now you should have a good idea of where this movie is going, but I won't tell you what happens once it gets there. The climax, like the movie as a whole, is well done and suitably Lovecraftian.

I thoroughly enjoyed **Pickman's Muse**. The acting, all by unknowns, was surprisingly good, with Barret Walz standing out as the sad, then mad Pickman. Robert Cappelletto proves a competent filmmaker and shows a keen understanding of what makes Lovecraft's cosmic horror work. I look forward to what Mr. Cappelletto does next. **Pickman's Muse** gets an easy nine phobias.



THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS

PRODUCED BY THE H.P.
LOVECRAFT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
DIRECTED BY SEAN BRANNEY
REVIEWED BY BRIAN M.
SAMMONS

The Whisperer in Darkness is the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society's second motion picture, and Great Lord Cthulhu is it impressive how far they have come. To be fair, their first film, **The Call of Cthulhu**, was quite good, but it was also short (only 47 minutes), very low-budget, and silent. (Yes, the HPLHS brought silent films back long before **The Artist**, but did they get any Oscar buzz? No, and that's a travesty, but I digress.) **Whisperer** is a full-length feature film and nearly an hour longer than **Cthulhu**, and it has sound. While still low-budget, it looks great and is incredibly ambitious. How ambitious? They bought a biplane just for this movie. Yeah, try to name the last independent flick you saw that went that far, I dare you. Add to that the fact that this movie is exceptionally faithful to the original story and you have a film that all fans of Lovecraft have been dreaming of.

"But wait," you say, "I don't remember a biplane in HPL's story." You're right; the filmmakers changed a few things and made some additions to the original tale. However, before you grab the torches and pitchforks and start chanting "that's not Lovecraft, that's not Lovecraft," relax. All additions or changes are well implemented and add a lot to the story.

Lovecraft's story is totally intact here, starting with a series of heavy rains in Vermont that cause the locals to notice the corpses of strange critters washing away in the swollen rivers. A farmer named Akeley, beset by the alien-looking beasts, writes to a professor at Miskatonic University for help. The professor, Albert Wilmarth, doesn't believe in such hooey, but he is a folklorist and curious to boot, so he heads out to the wilds of Vermont to get to the bottom of the mystery. He meets up with farmer Akeley, who's acting very strangely, and before you can say "creepy alien invaders who

practice unelective surgery," Professor Wilmarth learns how wrong he was to dismiss all those wild tales out of hand.

I know you know what happens next, because you've read the original story, right? But here comes one of the added bits that I really liked. The Professor Wilmarth in this movie is far more adamant than in the short story about the strange tales being hokum. He even engages in a lively debate with none other than the champion of all things weird at the time, Charles Fort. While it's not a completely necessary addition, I sure enjoyed this bit and thought it went a long way in helping flesh out the professor. And it was just plain fun.

Then there is the famous plugging of the "jar" into the machine. I won't say what's in the odd jars, just on the chance that you don't already know, but this movie captures the creepiness and wonder of that moment perfectly. It also adds a few stylistic twists to make things a bit more lively, which was a wise choice as jars by themselves are pretty boring. The strange machine was especially well realized.

If I say "the big reveal," you know what I'm talking about, right? It was the best and most memorable "OMG" moment from the story. You know, when Wilmarth learned—well, I hate to say, just in case. Trust me, you'll know it when you see it. That scene has two surprises here. First, it happens about halfway into the film, which means there's still a whole lot of movie after it. Second, it was damn creepy. I watched this movie with a friend who is not a Lovecraft fan and had no idea what was coming, and when "the big reveal" happened she literally said, "What the hell?" in a hushed whisper. I cannot think of higher praise than that.

Lastly there is the biplane, which provides a far more thrilling ending to the movie than what was written in the original story. In that way this film improves on Lovecraft, which not an easy thing to do. **Whisperer** has the best scene with biplanes since the original **King Kong**. Even with this film's low budget, it is pulled off very well.

I keep mentioning the film's tiny budget because some of its limitations show around the edges. A few viewers may hold that against it, especially when some of the more ambitious CGI effects enter the scene. Those effects don't look horrible—in fact they appear to be on par with a lot of what you see in TV shows—but they are noticeable. If you watch this film just waiting to pick some nits, they will

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

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be an easy target. But if you can just sit back, go with it, and enjoy the excellent story, fine acting, good direction and impressive attention to detail, then you will get a lot out of this movie.

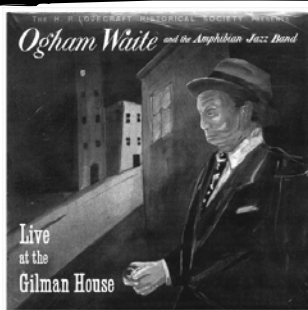
Things that I did not like or that I thought could have been better:

...

I'm glad we've gotten that out of the way.

The Whisperer in Darkness is a hell of a fine film, one of the best adaptations of a Lovecraft story ever made. It's far superior to the vast majority of bigger-budgeted films that have "H. P. Lovecraft's . . ." before their titles. **Whisperer** is faithful to the source material to a fault. What changes it does make are very welcome and actually enhance the story, as opposed to just padding things out like so many other movies based on Lovecraft's short stories do. It is obviously a labor of love and when moviemakers care this much it shows in every frame of the film. If you're a fan of H. P. Lovecraft, this is mandatory viewing. If you've never read anything by HPL (which I would find hard to believe since you're currently reading **The Unspeakable Oath**) and always wanted to see what all the hoopla was about, this is a great place to start. I thoroughly enjoyed this film and highly recommend it to the tune of 8 phobias out of 10.

You can get your own copy of this movie as a two-disc DVD or Blu-ray set directly from the creators at their website: <http://www.cthulhulives.org>.



LIVE AT THE GILMAN HOUSE

BY OGHAM WAITE AND THE AMPHIBIAN JAZZ BAND
PUBLISHED BY THE H.P. LOVECRAFT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
REVIEWED BY BRIAN SAMMONS

The members of the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society, cultist of the first degree, will receive the very highest honor: being eaten first when Cthulhu finally rises from R'lyeh. They have shown their love for Lovecraft proudly for years

and carried the Mythos flag farther than almost anyone else. In addition to being Cthulhu LARP maniacs they have made first-class props for **Call of Cthulhu**, created ringtones for mobile phones, designed T-shirts, crafted collectibles and produced radio plays; they've even produced excellent movies. And that is just the tip of the **Titanic-sinker**. Now you can add music to that impressive list. Does this latest offering from the HPLHS continue to please the Great Old Ones, or is it a blunder that demands a whole bunch of virgin sacrifices to appease the angry eldritch horrors?

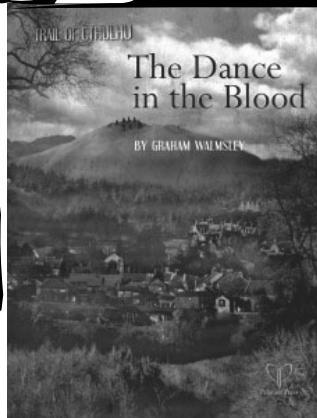
Live at the Gilman House is a collection of eight humorous and jazzy tunes as sung by a Deep One hybrid for an audience of fine fish folk. It's all performed with a wink, a smile, and a nod for the funny. Many melodies are familiar but twisted with a Deep One spin. Some of those moments I got ("Hey, I know that one!"), while others remained tantalizing and torturously on the tip of my tongue. But I won't ruin the fun of figuring them out for yourself.

The music is appropriately jazzy and the band never misses a note. I would have thought webbed fingers would have impeded piano playing, but that's certainly not the case here. The velvet croaking of the crooner, Ogham, is what you would get if you crossed a lounge singer with the Creature from the Black Lagoon. Whether he's slurping his way through "My Slimy Cephalopod", gulping down air (and, I imagine, cigarettes and booze) between "When You've Got the True Marsh Eyes" and "We'll Be Stalking You," or just chatting with the crowd (keep an ear out for a shout out to Robert Olmstead), he delivers plenty of grins to Lovecraft fans.

Live at the Gilman House is designed for easy listening and grooving. It lets Lovecraft fans play "spot the in-joke" and is suitable background music for **Call of Cthulhu** the next time your players are in a jazz-era speakeasy. In that last regard, the HPLHS, always good at giving a little more bang for your buck, have included a cocktail napkin and a matchbook (complete with a scribbled note about Zadok Allen on its inside cover) from the Gilman House Lounge, which is perfect for Keepers looking to plant clues to send their players out Innsmouth way. Ogham Waite and his assembled amphibians provide smooth jazz with a lipless, fishy smile and they richly deserve 8 out of 10 phobias.

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

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THE DANCE IN THE BLOOD

BY GRAHAM WALMSLEY, ART BY
JÉRÔME HUGUENIN
PUBLISHED BY PELGRANE PRESS
REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

The Dance in the Blood brings to a close Graham Walmsley's 'Purist' trilogy of scenarios for **Trail of Cthulhu**, following **The Dying of St. Margaret's** and **The Watchers in the Sky**. The trilogy is more a series designed to be played in any order than a campaign. Each scenario is a one-shot with a dark, inevitably nihilistic ending. Different investigators are required each time. The Mythos elements are utterly uncaring and alien.

Set in 1935, **The Dance in the Blood** opens with the characters visiting the Lake District town of Keswick in the north of England. The five pre-generated investigators have their own reasons for being there, from visiting an antiques fair to being stranded after being thrown off a train. Guidelines are given for the players creating their own characters and for their getting to the opening scene at the Blackstone Hotel, the town's best place to stay. None of the investigators know each other. Yet a singular coincidence presents a mystery and questions for all of them when it appears that they all might have something in common.

Investigating this mystery draws them deeper into the Lake District to the nearby village of Manesty. Grim and unwelcoming, Manesty hides secrets particular to the investigators. The time of its most hideous secret is near.

The scenario uses the "Drive Yourself Crazy" alternative rule seen in **The Watchers in the Sky**, in which the players rather than the GM control when their investigators suffer Stability loss. A "reward" encourages players to participate in the process and makes it a race to see which investigator goes mad first.

Walmsley's previous two Purist adventures focused on particular aspects of the **Trail of Cthulhu** mechanics.

In **The Dying of St. Margaret's** it was how the investigators' Drives pushed and pulled them to their fates. In **The Watchers in the Sky**, it was how their Sources of Stability were undermined. **The Dance in the Blood** also explores the investigators' Drives—in particular, though never explicitly explained, what happens if they have the same, hidden Drive.

Advice for the GM is excellent, particularly on how each NPC should be portrayed, but might appear heavy-handed in suggesting that the GM tell his players "not to go there" or "not do that." This is to keep the investigators, if not on track, then at least from straying too far. For some players it might be irritating, but pushing at the scenario's boundaries will deflate its mood, achieving little.

The Dance in the Blood is charged with the creeping realisation of the truth about our investigators, of an inevitable fate that awaits them all at the scenario's end. Seven inevitable phobias.



CALL OF CTHULHU: THE WASTED LAND

BY TOMAS RAWLINS
PUBLISHED BY RED WASP
DESIGN
REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

Call of Cthulhu has visited the Great War before, most notably with the scenario **No Man's Land**, but never in as interactive a fashion as in **Call of Cthulhu: The Wasted Land**. This app for iOS, Android, and Windows platforms uses **Call of Cthulhu** for its mechanics under license from Chaosium, Inc. It is not a true RPG, but rather an Action Point driven, turn-based tactical skirmish game in the manner of **Laser Squad** and **X-Com**, both classics of the genre.

The setting is the Western Front in 1915. As related in the diaries of a Captain Hill, his British squad must

defend against a German attack that grows stranger and stranger. Not just ordinary German soldiers, but fanatics and zombies too! Fortunately, Professor Brightmeer from military intelligence is on hand to inform Captain Hill and his men that a German occultist has turned to more outré means to bring about victory for the Kaiser. So begins the desperate search for the means to stop this dastardly villain, which takes the squad over the trenches and underground in the course of eleven missions, facing poison gas and otherworldly monsters along the way.

Game play is simple. Each character has a number of Action Points to use per turn. These are spent to move and attack opponents, with options given for taking aim, healing and even psychoanalyzing allies to restore their Sanity. Characters dodge from cover to cover and search for strongpoints where they can heal, research documents, and more. In between missions characters can be upgraded, improving stats and skills and purchasing new equipment. This is where the mechanics of *Call of Cthulhu* are at their most obvious, but they show in the use of skills and in the Sanity mechanic. Sanity is lost when attacking and being attacked by forces of the Mythos, and when too much is lost, a character can be paralysed with fear, sent catatonic, or even sent manic. In later missions, characters can learn to use magic, but of course it is almost as dangerous to the user as it is the target.

While game play is simple, it is quite challenging in places—the final mission overly so—and it might take a restart or two to really get into the game. Play is hampered by slightly clunky controls, and the missions are linear in nature. Replay value may not be high for everyone. A ‘Fog of War’ mechanic would have added welcome depth.

Inspired by the events of Lovecraft’s “Herbert West: Reanimator,” the game’s treatment of the Cthulhu Mythos is more pulp than purist. It mixes a number of Mythos entities together and its game play is all combat. Where *The Wasted Land* shines is in its detail and its atmosphere. Although it’s anachronistic in places (easily portable machine guns in 1915?), all of the characters are well defined and the battlefields feel suitably ‘gone to hell,’ literally a wasted land. The animation is good—it is quite unnerving to see a Dark Young lumbering towards your squad as they attempt to blast it to bits before their Sanity is blown too. *The Wasted Land* is an engaging electronic treatment of Lovecraftian horror worth a Teutophobic six phobias—and a sequel.



BLOOD! THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF MODERN HORROR

PUBLISHED BY POSTMORTEM
STUDIOS, \$27.50

WRITTEN BY JAMES “GRIM”
DESBOROUGH, NORLEY TUCKER,
PAUL CAMPION AND STEVE
OSBORN

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

When *Blood! The Roleplaying Game of Modern Horror* appeared in 1990, it was a quintessentially British game of visceral horror heavily influenced by the genre films of the 1970s and 1980s, and by the works of Clive Barker, Shaun Hutson, and Graham Masterton. It was a self-aware gore fest with heavy mechanics centered on weapons as diverse, deadly, and domestic as the kettle and the toilet lid, with Critical Hit tables that covered severe damage ranging from the simple bite to the power tool. It should be no surprise that *Blood!* emphasized the chance that victims (or player characters) could bleed to death.

Unfortunately, that first edition detailed few monsters and had no rules for handling the psychological impact of seeing frightful monsters and suffering grievous bodily harm. Further, it appeared just as *Vampire: The Masquerade* came to dominate the horror RPG, so it was handicapped from the start.

Overhauled for its second edition, *Blood!* still encompasses slasher flicks, video nasties, and gross-out horror, but the addition of more monsters and a sanity-loss mechanic enables it to cope with the psychological horror of *Ringu*, the cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft, and the survival horror of *Resident Evil*. Its remit of pitching ordinary folk against hideous horrors of both manmade and supernatural origin remains unchanged. Its mechanics retain the same heft, with players needing to keep track of Hit, Blood, Energy, and Mind Points during play. The impression of having to keep track of all these Points is that playing *Blood!* is intended to be something of an ordeal.

The meat to *Blood!*'s otherwise straightforward rules is

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

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its combat system which emphasizes the expenditure and loss of Hit, Blood, and Energy points. Severe Blood loss inflicts crippling penalties to skill and attribute checks. The Critical Hit Tables provide more visceral effects, some most gruesome, such as this entry on the “Power Tool One: Drill” table:

» 68-73: The drill slams through your hand and jams there, the spinning bit scraping on bone and flesh, but failing to tug free, spinning in vain circles as they try to pull it from you once more. *Double Blood loss, Exert Strength check to pull free, hand disabled until the drill is pulled out.*

A small selection of monsters and diseases show off the game’s diverse influences. Each monster is described in detail, particularly its Fear Effect, and is accompanied by several adventure seeds. It lacks a full scenario, though, and the otherwise solid GM advice does not cover campaign play, keeping the default play style to the one-shot.

Blood! is very up-front about the grueling, visceral nature of its horror. The GM advice—placed at the front of the book—sums it up in sanguinary fashion when it says that it is best “to keep it moist!” Less English and less quirky, **Blood!** is now more generic but more accessible and capable, worth a haemophobic five phobias.

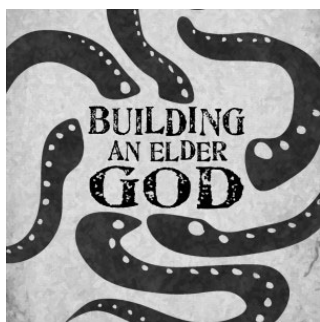
Building an Elder God. Designed for two to five players aged six and up, it is a casual game that can be played in about twenty minutes. The aim is to be the first player to build an Elder God of a certain length out of cards, the length varying according to the number of players. A reasonably sized table is required.

It casts the players as cultists who, having read things that man is not meant to know, all want to have their Elder Gods in their own backyards. If this means sneaking into your rival’s backyards with a shotgun and blasting a hole in the tentacles of his or her Elder God, that is merely a further sign of your true devotion, right?

The game features Monster, Damage, Immune, Elder Sign, and *Necronomicon* cards, with the Monster cards further divided in Body, Mouth, Tentacle, Split, Eyestalk, and Mouth cards. The Monster cards are used to build your Elder God. The Damage cards blast holes in your rivals’ Elder Gods. The Immune cards protect against Damage cards. The *Necronomicon* cards heal your damaged Elder God. The Elder Sign cards are used in a variant to banish parts of a rival’s Elder God and your Elder God. All of the cards are done in full colour, with the Monster cards depicting tentacular body parts in Mythos green and the Damage cards being spattered with deep burgundy ichor.

Each turn, you draw a fresh card and then play one card from your hand of six. You can grow your Elder God by adding a Tentacle, Split, or Eyestalk card. If you play enough Monster cards, you can top off your Elder God with a Mouth card and win the game. Or you can blast a rival’s Elder God with a Damage card or heal your Elder God with a *Necronomicon* card.

Building an Elder God is a quick, simple, undemanding game best played between or before other games. For many gamers it might be too casual and light even for a filler. Game play is easy enough for a younger audience, yet its subject matter might be too mature for them (unless they have been indoctrinated into the worship of the Elder Gods early). It gets three helminthophobias. ☹



BUILDING AN ELDER GOD: A GAME OF LOVECRAFTIAN CONSTRUCTION

PUBLISHED BY SIGNAL FIRE STUDIOS, \$19.95
DESIGNED BY BEN MUND
REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

There are plenty of Lovecraftian card games to choose from, but not all are simple enough for younger players, which is perhaps the strength of Signal Fire Studio’s

DIRECTIVES FROM A-CELL

DIRECTIVE 109: ALPHONSE'S AXIOMS FOR AGENTS

BY ADAM SCOTT GLANCY

During the French and Indian War, 25-year-old Robert Rogers of the American colonial militia organized a unit to engage in wilderness guerilla warfare against the enemies of Britain. In 1757 he wrote "Rogers' Rules for Ranging," a list of 28 guidelines that Rogers wrote in 1757 to help turn frontiersmen into infantry specialized in reconnaissance and hit-and-run tactics. Rogers' Rangers may be one of the earliest experiments in creating an organized doctrine of asymmetrical warfare. To this day, U.S. Army Rangers are required to learn a version of "Rogers' Rules for Ranging" and the U.S. military credits Rogers' Rangers as the spiritual antecedent of its modern special forces.

From Delta Green's disbandment in 1969 and across the decades of its existence as a secret, illegal conspiracy, its agents received no formal training for dealing with the supernatural. Even after Agent Alphonse reorganized Delta Green into a cell-based conspiracy, training was conducted on the job. It was left up to an individual cell's veteran survivors to explain to each newcomer—each FNG, as they're invariably called—which tactics worked and which mistakes opened the position that the FNG currently fills.

However, an unofficial list of practices, tradecraft and tactics has developed and been quietly, unevenly distributed. The legend is that Alphonse himself, in the spirit of Rogers' Rangers, put together this list to guide newly minted agents through their first (and hopefully not last) Night at the Opera. It's more likely that this list was compiled and refined over several decades by many Delta Green agents. Ironically enough, there are several versions floating around in notebooks and hard drives in violation of secrecy protocols.

This list of axioms is not espionage tradecraft. It is Delta Green tradecraft. Delta Green borrows some methods from intelligence and counter-intelligence services, as well as the military, but since those organizations' operational objectives are different from Delta Green's objectives, our tactics are also necessarily different.

Delta Green operations have four basic steps:

- I. Identify the possible existence of a preternatural anomaly.
- II. Confirm or deny the anomaly as preternatural in nature.
- III. Eliminate the source of the preternatural anomaly.
- IV. Ensure public ignorance of both Delta Green and preternatural threats.

Step I is mainly A-cell's balliwick, but Steps II, III and IV must be accomplished by whichever cell is on the ground. Alphonse's Axioms for Agents provide a good starting point.

These rules should guide your cell's actions in any operation. As universally applicable precepts, they are necessarily broad. These axioms do not govern how Delta Green operates as an organization, but rather how a cell should proceed during a field investigation.

ALPHONSE'S AXIOMS FOR AGENTS

1. The first commandment is, Thou shall not get caught. You do not have a "get out of jail free" card. You do not have a license to kill. To the world outside Delta Green, you are a criminal, a terrorist and a traitor. If you are arrested, keep quiet, say nothing, and take what's coming. Getting you out of custody is not A-cell's problem, unless A-cell needs you for something.
2. Always have your go-bag packed and ready for a Night at the Opera. Your go-bag should include sanitized gear, weapons, cash, clothing and false identification that can be used and abandoned during a Night at the Opera.
3. Stick to code names and cover names. The less you learn about each other during an operation the

safer you all are. You can't betray what you don't know. This is doubly true when dealing with Friendlies.

4. Always keep to your cover identity. Your cover should always be someone with a reason for asking the questions you need answered.

5. Prepare a new cover after every Night at the Opera. Covers last only as long as they are necessary. Even the best covers can't stand up to intense scrutiny. Make them, use them, ditch them.

6. Other than sticking to your cover, never lie to a fellow member of Delta Green. About anything. Ever. Unless A-cell says otherwise.

7. Always lie to anyone who isn't a member of Delta Green. About everything. Always. And make sure your lies are specific and consistent.

8. Friendlies can know the truth about an individual operation. They can never know the truth about Delta Green.

9. Always scout your destination, no matter how secure you think it is. Never bring the whole team to do surveillance. Be inconspicuous. See the enemy first.

10. Always perform a counter-surveillance check before you camp down and before you move. Perfect paranoia is perfect awareness.

11. Never do anything alone. Always have someone watch your back. When you are sleeping, pissing, eating, searching a location, interviewing a witness, or when your nose is buried in research, have someone watching your six.

12. Always establish a rally point in case the team has to scatter and regroup. The rally point should be tactically advantageous in the event that not everyone manages to shake pursuers and the opportunity arises to ambush them. The rally point should be pre-stocked with anything you need to escape the opposition: money, travel documents, a spare vehicle if you can manage it.

13. If you're attacked, break contact. Do not stand and fight when the opposition has the initiative. Retreat, regroup at the rally point, go back later and kill them in their sleep.

14. Any operation can be aborted. If it feels wrong, it is wrong.

15. Never take a chance if you don't have to. You are harder to replace than you think. Your death, injury or disappearance will be difficult to explain.

16. Don't wait until you see the whites of their eyes. If firearms have no effect, it's best to find that out while you still have the time and the space to break contact.

17. Give no "fair warnings." Surprise is the only advantage you have. Taking live prisoners usually carries more operational hazards than benefits.

18. If you do take prisoners and you plan on interrogating them, never leave them together to cook up a story between them. Unless, of course, you've bugged their cell.

19. Torture rarely works on our brand of opposition. Be prepared to find another way in. Look for the opposition's laptops, notepads, cell phones, documents, and journals. Passwords and encryption are often broken more easily and more reliably than men.

20. Assume nothing. Don't believe what you are told. Double-check it yourself.

21. Everyone is always potentially under control by the opposition. Including your teammates.

22. Don't harass the opposition. Save your energy, limit your exposure, strike when you are ready. Be utterly thorough. Be utterly ruthless.

23. Don't ever go into any place if you don't know how to get out. This includes buildings, neighborhoods, cities, states and countries. Always work backwards. Establish your line of retreat first.

24. Always take a different route getting out than you took going in.

25. Think carefully before you steer law enforcement officers toward the opposition. Law enforcement officers are unprepared for the supernatural and high casualties are likely. LEOs may not be prepared to prevent escapes or the loss of critical opposition assets. They do, however, make an excellent distraction.

26. When embedded with an agency that is pursuing its legitimate remit, act with extreme caution. Remember that in this situation you are working without cover. The host agency's goals are not our goals. You may have to undermine their mission in order to accomplish our mission.

27. Recognize when it's time to call A-cell for help, especially when embedded in a legitimate investigation. Oversight and legitimate duties can prevent you from directly accomplishing your objectives. Other cells can execute the mission while you act as a conduit for intelligence. Don't marry the mission.

28. Always check the nearest Green Box and stock it with leftover supplies. If there isn't a Green Box nearby, create one.
29. Don't lose a tail until you arrange for someone to follow the guys following you. Find out where they go and what they do.
30. Never start shooting until you identify the opposition and confirm their numbers and capabilities.
31. If you find a target during the day, wait and attack under cover of darkness. It won't just hide your numbers and actions from the enemy, it will hide your actions from innocent bystanders you won't have to eliminate later.
32. Never search an occupied structure. If you are entering an occupied structure, it's called an assault. Dress accordingly.
33. Don't kick down the front door. Make your own entry point. This applies to most situations, both literally and figuratively.

34. Calculate the opposition's strength and identity from a prudent distance. Send in closer reconnaissance after all other options are exhausted. Take your time. Do not rush. If you're made, back off. Someone else can kill them later.
35. When you don't have enough force to assault the opposition's stronghold, burn it. Flush them and ambush their escape route.
36. Use your pre-paid burner cell phone. Turn it off and take out the batteries when it's not in use. Throw it away after the Opera. Other than that, stick to randomly selected public landlines when contacting A-Cell. You shouldn't be calling anyone else during an Opera.
37. Cell phones are tracked by employers and family alike. Make sure your personal cell phone is wherever your cover story says you are supposed to be.
38. You're safer if you never get out of range of encrypted radio with your teammates. You're safest if you never get out of each others' sight.
39. Use old cars. No Lojack, no GPS, no Siri, no satellite radio, no airbags, no automatic locks. Manual everything, if you can get it.

40. Never bring anything to the Opera if you can't drop it and walk away. Never bring anything you didn't buy with cash. Never, ever bring anything your home agency issued to you. Ever.
41. Do not use hypergeometry, medieval metaphysics or any other system of planar manipulation that could be taken for magick. You will become part of the problem. Concentrate on solving the problem before the supernatural becomes your only option. If you do end up using such systems, always tell A-Cell that you did. The consequences are far preferable to having A-Cell find out later that you kept it a secret.
42. Never leave teammates behind where the authorities can find them.
43. Always report back to A-cell. Even if that means leaving your team to die.
44. If you are successful, you won't have to explain your actions to A-Cell. A-Cell will be the final arbiter of your success. ☺

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MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

THE THING IN THE BOX

BY ROSS PAYTON

It's better if I don't describe it. The thing in the box can't hurt anyone now unless you let it. There's not much time before daylight. After I finish writing, I'll go and bury the box. Then I'll turn myself in. I was wrong about Sarah. "What are you doing?" she asked. Nothing I do keeps her voice out of my head. Maybe a prison cell will.

Remember the safe in Copper's house? You paid for your first car by house sitting Copper's place, making sure no one touched the safe. We all made a good amount of cash. Copper only talked about what was in the safe if we got him drunk first. That was always easy to do. All of us heard the ghost stories. We finally got it out of the safe after Copper died. Steve and I put it in the box.

All the stories were real. I hope you remember them because I'm not putting them down on paper. It's too risky.

It's important you know where the box is, though, because we can't just let it be. Remember the place, out in the middle of nowhere, where we found that stray dog, the black and white one, all those years ago? It was friendly and we spent like an hour pulling ticks off of it but your uncle hit it with his truck the next morning. I'm burying the box six feet under the tree there. I'll put the weird rock from my backyard over it. The one from Hawaii. I'd throw the box in the ocean or a lake if I thought it would help but I'm afraid of what it would do to the water.

This is a hell of a thing to ask but there aren't any other options. Everyone else is gone. You have to make sure it stays in the box. If it gets out, that's it. We're done. What happened in the basement would happen everywhere. Do you even remember? You passed out right after you saw the growth on the walls. I don't blame you. We can't let it get out.

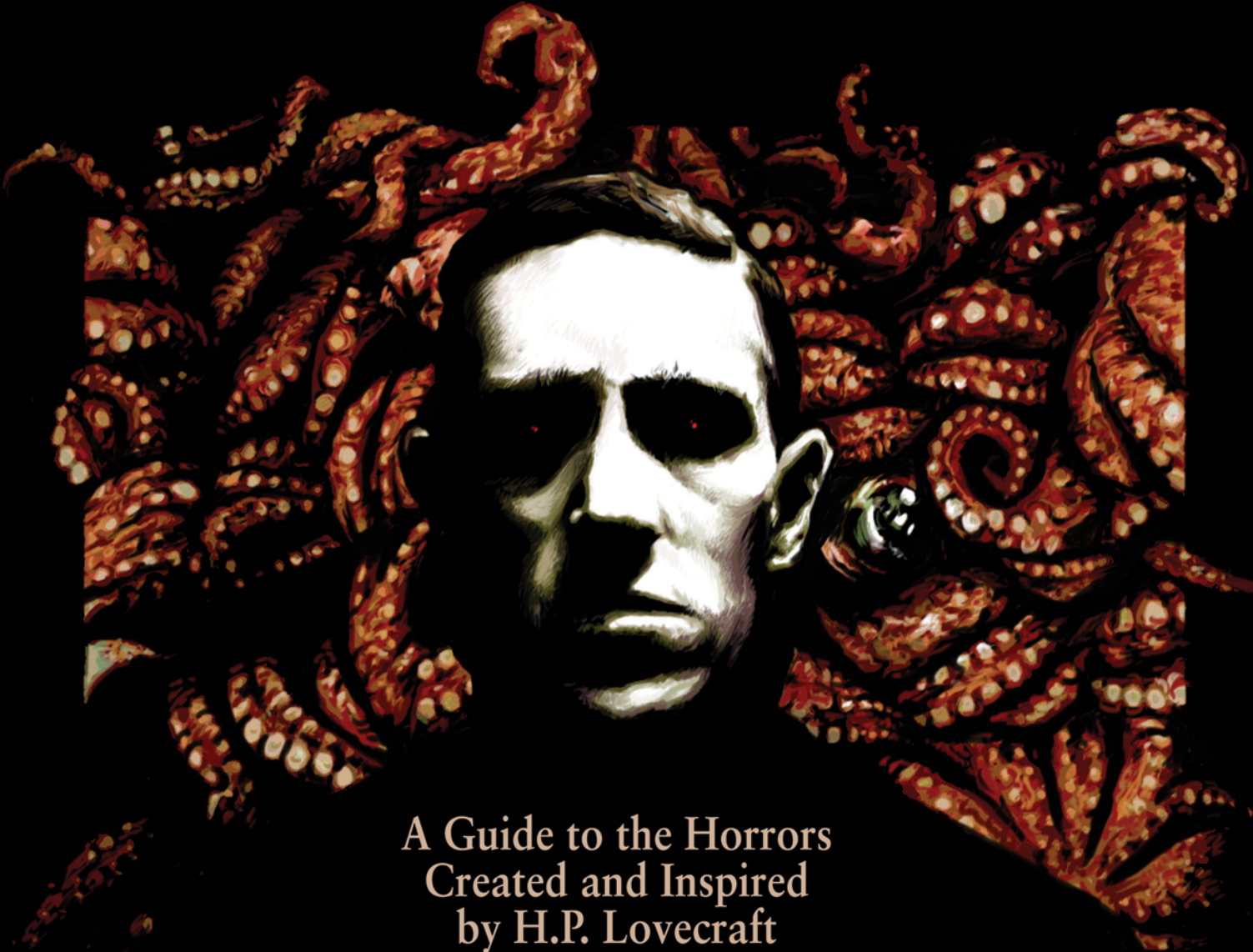
No one knows who had it before Copper. Steve tried to find out by digging through his papers after the estate sale but I don't know what he learned. All his notes burned up with him.

We have to watch for "signs and wonders" like Copper said. A week before every solstice (look it up), spray the area with weed killer and fungicides. Spray it every day until after the solstice. If something still grows, kill it and burn it. If any animals linger around that are big enough to dig it up, kill them and burn their bodies. Stay in the car until you're sure there's no wild dogs or coyotes around.

Get a police scanner and listen to it as much as you can. If you hear about a domestic disturbance or a bar fight, anything like that, try to find out if it mentions someone being a fake or an imposter. Like, if the fight started because a wife believed her husband wasn't really her husband. If that happens, find the person accused of being an imposter as fast as you can. Or just head to the box, because they'll go there, sooner or later. You can't let the imposter get to the box. Shoot them. Trust me when I say it's not murder. Shoot one and you'll know. There won't even be a body to dispose of, so you don't have to worry about that. If you're afraid of shooting a real person, wait until they start digging. They always dig for it.

One last thing. I never told you this before, but Amber didn't run off with the kids. She was down in the basement when Steve set the fire. I only saw the end but she set it off somehow. It took her and the kids. That's why Steve burned the house down. The thing is, you saw her too. She was the growth on the walls.

Don't let it out of the box. ☹



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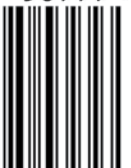
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