

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

SHADOWS OVER FILMLAND

BY KENNETH HITE
AND ROBIN D LAWS

JEROME DJ



Pelgrane Press

SHADOWS OVER FILMLAND

ADVENTURES FOR TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE
AND ROBIN D LAWS

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadow Over FilmLand



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Shadows Over Filmland

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DOUBLE FEATURE

"FURTIVENESS AND SECRETIVENESS SEEMED UNIVERSAL IN THIS HUSHED CITY OF ALIENAGE AND DEATH, AND I COULD NOT ESCAPE THE SENSATION OF BEING WATCHED..."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE SHADOW OVER INNSMOUTH"

On the surface, the two great streams of horror that flowed out of the 1930s would seem to have little in common. H.P. Lovecraft's "cosmic materialism" grew in intricate patterns of words, building sublime dread from the hints and edges revealed by modern science and technology. The "monster rally" horror films of Carl Laemmle Jr's Universal Studios (and even moreso Val Lewton's horror films for RKO), by contrast, kept the dialogue to a minimum and let light, shadow, and sound breathe life into the very same supernatural horror clichés that Lovecraft had dismissed as defunct relics of the previous century.

Lovecraft certainly dismissed the Universal horrors. In a 1933 letter, he wrote: "Last year an alleged *Frankenstein* on the screen would have made me drowse had not a posthumous sympathy for poor Mrs. Shelley made me see red instead. Ugh! And the screen *Dracula* in 1931 – I saw the beginning of that in Miami, Fla. – but couldn't bear to watch it drag to its full term of dreariness." Hollywood repaid the compliment, waiting until 1963 to adapt any Lovecraft tale to the screen (*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*), and even then

hiding it under an Edgar Allan Poe title (*The Haunted Palace*).

But underground, appropriately enough, the two rivers blend. Both Lovecraft and Laemmle drew their archetypes from the Gothic "terror-tale" wellsprings of Shelley, Stoker, and Stevenson. And both responded to, and reflected, the terrors characteristic of their times. Hence, Lovecraft's re-tuning of the old horror standards, and the films' "Silver Nitrate Gothic" blend of timeless legend and modern tension, can combine to throw a black-and-silver spotlight on the Mythos – or paint a Mythos shadow behind the made-up monsters -- for *Trail of Cthulhu* gaming.

Lovecraft Meets the Wolf Man

"I MAY BE ABLE TO BRING YOU PROOF THAT THE SUPERSTITION OF YESTERDAY CAN BECOME THE SCIENTIFIC REALITY OF TODAY."

-- DR. VAN HELSING, *DRACULA*
(TOD BROWNING, DIR.)

For all Lovecraft's dismissal of the "childish folk-elements" of the previous

century's horror fiction, he was unwilling to completely abandon them in his own work. His earlier fiction happily trades in such standard tropes, and even his later hyper-scientific horrors recapitulate and reshape the Gothic horror archetypes rather than rejecting them entirely. This brief examination of Lovecraft's treatment of these standards may inspire *Trail of Cthulhu* Keepers to likewise project the classic figures through a Cthulhoid lens.

The Vampire

Lovecraft's tales actually include two traditional vampires. The monstrosity in the basement of "The Shunned House" is a pseudo-scientific translation of the disembodied blood-drinking spirits of New England folklore; it absorbs the entire personality and life-force of its victims, and engages in a sort of mesmeric possession similar to Lugosi's (and Stoker's) *Dracula*. The "vampiristic attacks" in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* are carried out by a "lean, lithe, leaping monster with burning eyes which fastened its teeth in the throat or upper arm and feasted ravenously." To seal the deal, this vampire is even the resurrected corpse of a black magician, namely Joseph Curwen. Slightly widening our examination we find two more near-vampires. A different black magician, the witch Keziah Mason in "Dreams in the Witch-House," nurses her familiar Brown Jenkin on her own blood, "which it sucked like a vampire." (Brown Jenkin also echoes the traditional vampire's connections to dreams and rats.) Wilbur Whateley's twin, the invisible Son of Yog-Sothoth, fed on cattle "sucked most dry o' blood." Other elements of the vampire recombine in the titular "Colour Out of Space," which drains the life-energies of its victims and drives

them into Renfield-like madness, or even in Cthulhu himself, a dead aristocrat dreaming in his crypt and struck down by a wooden ship through the heart.

The Werewolf

Lovecraft also directly adduces a werewolf legend in "The Shunned House," as part of the ancestry of the house's vampire spirit, which furthermore takes on "wolfish shapes" in the smoke and possesses "wolfish and mocking" eyes. (The exceedingly minor Lovecraft collaboration "The Ghost-Eater" is a straight werewolf tale.) One can also read any of Lovecraft's tales of possession, from "The Shadow Out of Time" to *Charles Dexter Ward* (again) as werewolf stories, stories of a human being transformed into something brutish against his will. On a still more symbolic level, the act of being "bitten" by the Mythos curses unlucky or unwary scholars with inhuman knowledge -- in some cases, such as Olmstead in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," leading to physical transformation also. Finally, "The Hound" features a human sorcerer changed into an immortal canine monster, complete with a grave-robbing scene the equal of anything from James Whale or Curt Siodmak.

The Reanimated Corpse

Which leads us to the various reanimated corpses of the 1930s' cinematic horrors, from *White Zombie* to *Frankenstein*. Lovecraft's most famous Frankenstein is of course Herbert West, the Reanimator, whose story of hubris and nemesis closely resembles those of his cinematic successors. On the literary front, Lovecraft's titular "Outsider" is an agonized Gothic hero-corpse in the mold of Mary Shelley's articulate Monster. Other revenants appear in Lovecraft, whether hinted (as in "The Statement of Randolph Carter"), sidelined (as with the things in the pits in *Charles Dexter Ward*), or inhuman (the thawed Elder Things in *At the Mountains of Madness*).

The Mummy

Closely related to the reanimated corpse is the immortal monster-magus embodied by Boris Karloff's "Ardath Bey" in *The Mummy*. This is one of Lovecraft's favorite tropes. In "He," "The Terrible Old Man," "The Picture in the House," "The High House in the Mist," "Dreams in the Witch-House," and "The Thing on the Doorstep" Lovecraft covers virtually all the immortality bases; the last even includes a romantic entanglement with the immortal wizard. "The Festival" combines an immortal inhuman magus-figure with *The Mummy*'s trope of reincarnations (or descendants) falling victim to ancient machinations. (The same vibe of primordial evil descending on modern everymen is a core Lovecraftian sensation, perhaps most explicit in "The Shadow Out of Time.") The undying sorcerers of "Cool Air" and "The Horror at Red Hook," meanwhile, also have that whiff of Orientalism that makes *The Mummy* (and especially its sequels) such a guilty pleasure. "The Nameless City" and "Under the Pyramids" add actual mummies to the mix along with their Arabian and Egyptian settings. "Out of the Aeons" may have the best Lovecraftian mummy per se, but surely the ghouls of "Pickman's Model" and *Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* are Lovecraft's most characteristic blends of the immortal, the magical, and the exotic.

The Mad Scientist

On the other side of the reanimated corpse is the reanimator, or in larger terms, the mad scientist, the "Henry Frankenstein." In addition to Herbert West, Lovecraft presents us with Crawford Tillinghast in "From Beyond," Dr. Clarendon in "The Last Test," Dr. Munoz in "Cool Air," the murderous entomologist Slauenwhite in "Winged Death," and perhaps even the electrical showman Nyarlathotep in "Nyarlathotep." Although the inventor of the "cosmic radio" in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" is almost a sympathetic figure, he could easily be played as a mad experimenter on the insane and unfortunate. Symbolically, virtually all

of Lovecraft's protagonists (especially the overwhelmingly academic later ones) are "mad scientists" exploring the frontiers of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, and suffering for their hubris.

The Old Dark House

One staple of 1930s horror films is the "old dark house," which was already a cliché when James Whale campily exalted it in *The Old Dark House* (1932). In its pure form, this location entraps the protagonists, usually innocent travelers forced to take shelter, in the ongoing Gothic story line of the house and its inhabitants. (The house isn't always old, or even dark; in *The Black Cat*, it's a gleaming Modernist trophy.) Lovecraft's purest Old Dark House is probably the de Russey mansion in "Medusa's Coil," complete with its overheated narrative of curses and murder. To an extent, Lovecraft's stories are exercises in widening the Old Dark House. In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" the whole town of Innsmouth is the "Old Dark House," in *At the Mountains of Madness* Antarctica enmeshes human protagonists in the ongoing "family drama" represented by the primordial rivalry of the Elder Things and shoggoths, and such tales as "Call of Cthulhu" and "Shadow Out of Time" hint that the entire world across geological epochs is an Old Dark House, complete with Things penned up in the attic waiting to get loose.

The Cursed Lineage

"Legacy" sequels like *Son of Dracula* and *Son of Frankenstein* foreground the old Gothic horror concept of the cursed lineage, as do films like *Cat People*. This is another favorite Lovecraft trope, from "Arthur Jermyn" to "The Dunwich Horror" to "The Festival" to *Charles Dexter Ward*. Sometimes the cursed lineage is entirely external to the hero, as in "The Shunned House" or "The Lurking Fear," but more often it is intimately bound up in the protagonist's self-hood, as in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" or "The Rats in the Walls."

The Haunted Island

From the Haiti of *White Zombie* and the Saint-Sebastian of *I Walked With A Zombie* to King Kong's Skull Island, the mysterious island (often jungled) where the monster dwells is another powerful symbol in cinematic 1930s horror. Likewise, Lovecraft used it powerfully, if surprisingly sparingly, in his own fiction. His emblematic "Monster Island" is of course R'lyeh, the sunken island that rises in "The Call of Cthulhu." R'lyeh is prefigured by the island of "Dagon," and by the sunken Atlantis in "The Temple." The similarly haunted island of Mu appears only in the "flashback sequence" of "Out of the Aeons," and it's probably pressing the point to claim that Australia represents a haunted island in "Shadow Out of Time." Still more tangentially, this may be the context in which to note that Lovecraft's take on searching for mysterious apes in the jungle, "Arthur Jermyn," like *King Kong*, touches on interspecies romance, although Lovecraft foregrounds the issue and plays it for horror rather than pathos.



The Silver Nitrate Mythos

"MY FRIEND SAID THEY WERE HORRIBLE AND IMPRESSIVE BEYOND MY MOST FEVERED IMAGININGS; THAT WHAT WAS THROWN UPON A SCREEN IN THE DARKENED ROOM PROPHESIED THINGS NONE BUT NYARLATHOTEP DARE PROPHESEY..."

**-- H.P. LOVECRAFT,
"NYARLATHOTEP"**

The themes of horror, like its images, often flow from the same well. Some elements, such as xenophobia, the degenerate family, or the clash of modernity with the undead past, are traits of the literary Gothic, and emerge in Lovecraft as well as in the Universal and RKO horrors. Likewise, the movies and the Mythos both share

contemporary fears of the loss of the self (to werewolfism or Deep One blood), and share in the Frankenstein-inspired (or Faustian) fear of science and knowledge. In the age of Freud and Hitler, of industrial change and global war, such fears naturally bubble up, in celluloid and in pulp.

But other central themes of the 1930s monster movies do not immediately conform to Lovecraftian patterns. For example, as with conventional films of the era, virtually all of them involve romance, if only as a tacked-on subplot. Other concerns are more specific to Universal or RKO horror films. Accentuating those Silver Nitrate Gothic elements, which are often sublimated or downright submerged in Lovecraft's tales, brings a whole new palette to a *Trail of Cthulhu* game -- Turner Classic Movies instead of *Weird Tales*.

Predatory and Perverted Sexuality

From the subtle simmer of *I Walked With A Zombie* to the manic melodrama of *Mummy's Hand*, the Silver Nitrate Gothic is all about sex. The monsters embody predatory, even fatal, sexuality in virtually every case from the Wolf Man, cursed to kill the woman he loves, to Kong, slain by beauty. Above and beyond the simple horror of monster-human mating, the sex on offer is perverse and sterile: Dracula's oral fixation, Irina's repression in *Cat People*, the Monster's promise to Frankenstein to "be with you on your wedding night," and its sequel with two madmen giving birth to a new Eve. It gets even more lurid just below the surface, from Kong's bondage fetish to lesbian overtones in *Dracula's Daughter* to necrophilia and incest in *The Black Cat*. Lovecraft's horror-towns full of miscegenation and inbreeding hint around the same territory, although his revision tale "Medusa's Coil" and to a lesser extent "The Thing on the Doorstep" are the only places where sexuality takes anything like the foreground. But the material

is there to be mined, if the Keeper and players feel up to it. Simply putting a sexual through-line in every scenario (whether central or secondary) will juice the Mythos in unfamiliar directions rich with roleplaying possibilities. You don't even have to violate your players' personal Hays Code -- just hint and whisper and suggest, like the scripts of the 1930s had to.

Psychology

Perhaps appropriately for the great age of Freudian film-making, the other great obsession of the Silver Nitrate Gothic is psychology. *The Wolf Man* begins with a psychological definition of lycanthropy, and much of Larry Talbot's torment comes from believing himself insane. The trance phenomena in *I Walked With A Zombie* can be explained as hypnosis, hysteria, or any other mental illness. The Boris Karloff film *Bedlam* is set in an 18th-century madhouse, and the 1932 version of *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* is likewise told in starkly Freudian terms, as the war of id and superego. In *Ghost of Frankenstein*, Ludwig Frankenstein combines his ancestor's surgical interests with a specialization in "diseases of the mind," making explicit the psychological inferences in the first film. (For instance, the Monster's "abnormal brain" is the creation of the 1931 scriptwriter, not Mary Shelley.) The dubious Dr. Judd in Val Lewton's *7th Victim* and *Cat People* is a psychologist, combining the Van Helsing-style "scholar-hero" with the "mad scientist." For all Lovecraft's obsession with insanity, very few of his characters really possess psychological motivations (as opposed to nervous or "artistic" temperaments) of the sort that 1930s film audiences would recognize. The younger Peaslee, in "Shadow Out of Time," is HPL's only important psychologist narrator; the Silver Nitrate Gothic has psychologists, pro and amateur, oozing out of every script. Keepers should work with the players' Drives to emphasize such concerns, and draw NPCs' mind-scapes in even starker terms. Designing the landscape, or the

weather, to reflect psychological strain (or symbolism) is practically de rigueur for the Gothic, whether Silver Nitrate or no.

Corpses and Mutilation

Film scholar David J. Skal proposes that the memories of the First World War, and the increasing fears of a Second, lay behind the Universal films' propulsive interest in corpses, especially mutilated corpses. From *White Zombie* to *Frankenstein*, the dead are everywhere on screen. *Freaks* and *Island of Lost Souls* both feature mutilation and the grotesque not merely as sudden shocks (as in the "unmasking" scene in *Phantom of the Opera*) but as ongoing themes, as do arguably *Bride of Frankenstein* and the other sequels in that franchise. While early tales such as "Herbert West — Reanimator" and "The Lurking Fear" both feature corpses and plenty of 'em, Lovecraft's body count dwindles as his fiction gets more cosmic. (The arguable exception, *At the Mountains of Madness*, features multiple vivisections, albeit all at a remove.) Here, the explicitly forensic nature of GUMSHOE can help convey that Silver Nitrate Gothic feel — describing the corpse in detail should provide both clues and grue.

Economic Fear

Skal also argues that the arrival of the horror film genre and the Great Depression were not unconnected. Audiences, he says, sublimated and transferred their economic fears into supernatural terrors, expiated at least momentarily on the silver screen. Ann Darrow in *King Kong*, and Mary Gibson in *7th Victim*, both explicitly skirt economic disaster before toppling into their respective horrors. Bela Lugosi can represent both predatory Capitalism and dehumanizing Communism (depending on the viewer) in both *Dracula* and *White Zombie*. In *The Wolf Man*, Larry Talbot adds class insecurity to his other identity problems — is he a middle-class American or a British aristocrat? Class conflict is even more pronounced in

other British-set films of the era, from *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* to *The Body Snatcher* to *The Lodger*. Lovecraft's greatest evocation of economic fear comes in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," featuring the devil's bargain for prosperity with the Deep Ones, and its dismal outcome. That said, the stricken Gardners in "The Colour Out of Space," and even the impoverished urban victims in "Dreams in the Witch-House" and "Haunter of the Dark" demonstrate that even the most reactionary of authors was not immune from the economic currents of the Depression. Motivating Investigators by naked greed (or by desperation as their obsession with the Mythos erodes their Credit Rating) may or may not be possible in any given campaign, but economic tension and despair can always drive NPCs to foolish or evil acts.

Blasphemy

The Silver Nitrate Gothics seemingly rejoice in blasphemy. Henry Frankenstein has replaced both God and Adam, there are Satanic cults in *The Black Cat* and *The 7th Victim*, Count Dracula becomes Renfield's invert-Messiah, and everywhere the natural, Godly order is mocked. Conventional religion is almost never shown in a sympathetic or helpful guise, but revealed only as the stark negative to the horrors on screen. Again, for all that Lovecraft uses the term "blasphemous" to describe his monstrosities, religion is not mocked so much as almost entirely absent in Lovecraft. (With the exception of the cuckoo's egg cult of the Starry Wisdom, nestled in the abandoned shell of a Providence church.) Where a Pulp idiom game might present crucifixes and holy water as suitable weapons against the undead, a Purist game can bring a church, or even all human religion, into the foreground as yet another symbolically mutilated corpse.

Randomness

Finally, the Universal horrors are surprisingly random. Becoming the reincarnated target of a mummy's passion, or stumbling into an old dark

house, or having a vampire as a next-door neighbor, is almost always a matter of pure chance. "Even a man who is pure of heart," after all, can become a werewolf. For all Lovecraft's conceptualizing of an arbitrary cosmos, virtually all of his protagonists invite their own doom, Frankenstein-style. Only the narrator of "The Picture in the House" (who takes a classic *Old Dark House*-style "shortcut" in a storm), the Gardner family struck down by an almost literal bolt from the blue in "Colour Out of Space," and the elder Peaslee in "Shadow Out of Time," randomly selected by the Great Race of Yith, truly embody the random victim. The Keeper can emphasize such things by aiming the trail of clues toward the arbitrary cause rather than toward the victim's behavior, or simply by rolling dice to select the next victim in the narrative thread.

The End ... ?

Even at their most arbitrary, the universal horrors of the Silver Nitrate Gothics still yield to a higher order. The monsters are defeated, usually by embodiments of order, whether traditional (the mob of reactionary peasants), religious (crosses, hellish fire, or silver bullets), or dramatic (conventional human love triumphs over Dracula, the Mummy, and Kong). This happens more rarely in Lovecraft -- "The Dunwich Horror," "The Shunned House," *Charles Dexter Ward* -- though it does happen. Most *Trail of Cthulhu* adventures will probably end likewise. But in the Universal horrors, just like in *Trail of Cthulhu* campaigns, there's always a sequel. There are always monsters surviving from the past, always new madmen playing God, always desperate fools waiting to be deceived. The world of the Silver Nitrate Gothic is more Lovecraftian than we think.



BACKLOT GOTHIC

East Of Switzerland,

West Of Hell

When the investigators travel to the Backlot Gothic setting, they're leaving the "hacked from the history books" world that is the default for *Trail Of Cthulhu* and entering a nether region that is less a location than a literary conceit. It is an eerie atmosphere evoked through wildly expressionistic visuals, florid dialogue, and a sometimes dreamlike logic.

The phrase "Backlot Gothic" is not a term in use by characters in the world. In the movies that inspire it, sense of place is deliberately obscured. Instead, the investigators might be told that they are traveling to a "certain remote province in the dark heart of Europe." Sometimes a specific region will be identified—most notably Transylvania. More often, characters may refer to being situated in a province or state but will never state where exactly they are. Cultural markers, from costumes to proper names, mix German, Swiss and Austrian elements with hints of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania. Amongst these influences one also finds a heady streak of imaginary, Gothic-revival England.

The characters of Backlot Gothic are aware of the rest of the world, making reference to places like England and America, but are detached from the historical horrors slowly tightening their grip on it. Though a place of morbidity and doom, Backlot Gothic is also an escapist fantasy. It may be very near to Austria, but you'll find no swastikas, no Gestapo officers, and no Hitlerian oratory blazing from the radio.

Dread Albion

On certain nights, when the moon is full and the color drains from the land, some sections of the British Isles take on a terrible remoteness, displaying an unmistakable kinship to the Backlot Gothic setting. For a similar excursion into celluloid horror on the Yorkshire moors or Scottish Highlands, strip out the central European costumes, names and job titles, but keep the gloomy atmosphere, Gothic scene descriptions, and sense of arrested modernity. Downplay the technological restrictions that prevail in the Teutonic/Slavic version of the setting. Automobiles ought to be acceptable here, for example. You don't have to resort to literary conceit to rule out tommy-guns, which are already highly restricted throughout the country.

For that matter, you'll find no radio, as Backlot Gothic is curiously unstuck in time. Just as it blends cultural indicators from English, Teutonic and Balkan cultures, its chronological sign posts are a hodge-podge ranging from the renaissance to the modern. Here you'll find trains but no automobiles; instead the primary land conveyance is the horse-drawn carriage. The haunted backwaters of Backlot Gothic entirely lack airstrips, landing fields, planes, or zeppelins. There are no radios or telephones; investigators will have to do their legwork by physically traveling from the police station to the count's castle and then down to city hall. Characters may wield luger pistols but never a tommy gun. The flashlight is unknown here; occasionally you'll see a mob of villagers armed with lanterns, but the most popular source of nighttime illumination remains the torch—that's the flaming kind, not the electric. Yet at the same time, the setting's secret laboratories spark and fizz with futuristic equipment bordering on the fantastical. A mad scientist may equip his lair with impossible devices, such as a surveillance system which records moving images of intruders and broadcasts them to a viewing

screen—in *simultaneous time*! However, these remain alarming rarities—reason alone for the townsfolk to storm the castle, angry torches held aloft.

Because Backlot Gothic is a literary conceit, a collection of associations and images meant to evoke a feeling of delicious and flamboyant dread, the characters remain unconscious of its geographical, stylistic, and temporal oddities. The players may make self-aware jokes about its various departures from realism, but their *characters* never question them. Like the NPCs, they never stop to definitively locate the place on a map, nor do they speak out loud the name of the country they're visiting. Scenes of travel between the historical world and Backlot Gothic are elided, to avoid embarrassing questions of when one reality ends and the other begins. The Investigator who habitually wields a tommy-gun now has no machine gun on his person and takes no onstage measures to acquire one. (If the player insists on trying to find one, you simply tell him that his attempts have failed and quickly move back to the storyline at hand.)

Stock Footage

The expressionistic horror movies of the 1930s make bold use of visuals to evoke their world of delicious dread. In the verbal medium of roleplaying, Keepers lack the full range of filmic devices at the disposal of film directors. To convey visual information, you must either show the players images, or engage in prose description. In the latter case, you might cue up brief snippets from your DVD collection, or find appropriate clips from Internet video sharing sites.

Many groups find large sections of text read verbatim to be distancing, and tune out after a few lines. That said, this setting, with its roots in classic literature, is particularly well suited to brief, well-placed moments of prose description. To that end, we've divided up what in another game book might be sections of descriptive text meant for the GM alone into blocks of text we're calling "stock footage." Like the filmic equivalent, these are pieces of description ready to drop into a narrative context of your choosing. These can be used at appropriate moments in any of the scenarios provided in this book, or in cases of your own devising. For example, the description of train travel given on this page is suited to the investigator's first journey into Backlot Gothic, whatever that happens to be in your campaign.

Accordingly, we've written much of the description in this chapter in the second person, so that it not only tells you, the Keeper, what sort of visual images to associate with it, but is packaged to allow you to convey these to the players. Paragraphs of stock footage are preceded by the following icon :



They are preceded by a brief descriptive tag, in boldface, so you can find them by quickly scanning this chapter when needed. Stock footage passages are broken up into short passages; unless your group is unusually hungry for canned text, avoid reading more than one of them at once. The more sparingly you use them, the more powerful they'll seem. Edit or paraphrasing the stock footage passages as needed to fit the situation at hand.

Stock footage can also create the illusion that the group is on the right track in a closely prepared adventure. This can be useful for groups who crave a sense of strong direction. For groups who fear railroading, show your hand, telling them that the narrated passages float free from any pre-scripted storyline.

You may find it useful to prepare for scenarios of your own creation by writing sections of stock footage tailored to them. The group may or may not venture into the old mill; if they don't, you can always clip and save your old mill description for a later case.

When writing your own descriptions, subliminally drain this world of color. Omit mention of shades; instead, talk of light and dark, of shadows and gradations.

Movie fans learn to recognize certain bits of overused stock footage. Unless you're intentionally trying to underline the unreality of your game setting, you'll want to avoid this effect, by ticking off the descriptions after using them for the first time. Otherwise you might earn an unintended laugh by reusing a memorable bit of prose.

Stock footage is another example of a GUMSHOE player-facing technique: it takes something normally reserved for the GM (in this case, background description) and turns it around to face the players.

Absent Technologies

It's easy enough to determine that certain categories of item—including cars, planes, telephones, and flashlights—are unavailable here. When certain items in a category seem right and others don't, the task becomes trickier. For example, the following firearms are not available:

Nambu Type 14 pistol, Walther P38 9mm, FN Browning High-Power 9 mm, Smith & Wesson Model 27 .357 Magnum revolver, Thompson M1921 submachine gun, "Schmeisser" MP28 submachine gun.

Guns are always rare. Even the local inspector may be unarmed. Members of the gentry likely possess rifles and shotguns for hunting. The most sophisticated missile weapon fielded by mobs of enraged townsfolk is the thrown rock. Most brandish farming implements: hoes, shovels, rakes, and, of course, pitchforks.

On the other hand, dynamite unquestionably exists here, and is accessible even by the peasantry. They may threaten to blow up haunted castles, or wreak explosive havoc during a scenario's final descent into monstrous anarchy.

When in doubt, resort to the overall rule: if it doesn't feel like it would be in a classic 30's horror movie, it can't be found in Backlot Gothic, and its absence is not an issue to the people who live there.



Forests Blackest

No film genre of the thirties uses the technique of pathetic fallacy, in which the world of nature mirrors the interior emotional states of the characters, to greater effect than the horror movie. In a Backlot Gothic piece, nature is as dark and twisted as the hearts of its seductive vampires and hubristic men of science. Occasional moments of sunlight, or wherein nature is depicted as healing or bucolic, exist merely to increase the height from which its anti-heroes fall.

 **Entry by train:** As you first enter a certain remote province in the mountainous depths of Europe, you look from the windows of the train to survey a blackened, blasted landscape. Fog billows through stands of twisted, stunted trees, their wet trunks bent as against a constant gale. The landscape is an undulation of darkened hills, scoured of vegetation.

 **Entry by carriage:** You bounce and shake as the coal-black carriage that carries you rattles down a winding road. The drover snaps the reins; his horses scream in protest. Yawning to your left is a rocky chasm; if hooves slip, the carriage will tip into depths inestimable. To your right is an embankment infested with snaking briars. Their thorny branches stretch out toward you, as if hoping to catch you.

Forests surround all the locations of Backlot Europe, but the overall effect is not one of healthy growth. The occasional moment of respite excepted, the setting appears to exist in a state of perpetual late autumn.

 **Forest:** The trees have been stripped bare of leaves and needles. Their naked branches are clawed and twisted arms, reaching for you. They surround you, covering the horizon, caging you in.

Visual Motif : Verticality

When creating description of your own, or drawing maps or diagrams of places, keep in mind a defining visual motif of 30s horror: verticality. This can best be seen in the films of James Whale, although his influence on the rest of the genre bleeds into the work of lesser filmmakers who toiled after him. Setting elements move upwards through the frame, whether these be waterfalls, cruciforms, towers, gargantuan tree trunks, or, most famously, the platform on which the Frankenstein monster is hoisted during its creation sequence.

Whenever you imagine a “set” which will require description and/or might serve as the location for a major sequence, try to find ways to give it multiple levels. A set of stairs might wrap around a tower exterior. A patch of forest is not a flat expanse, but a heavily forested ravine. Overlooking the baron’s dining room is a massive balcony.

If in doubt, find a way to insert the words “up” or “down” into your description. You can never use the word “reaching” too much, either.

Ever-present verticals function as a visual metaphor for heaven and hell. Most of the great horror films of the period can be seen as downfall stories. The verticals are almost always shot from the ground—we, through the characters, look upwards to heaven but are trapped on the lower level, in hell. Sometimes we plummet down the vertical, having briefly and improperly muscled our way into heaven, only to be cast back down into the depths, where we belong. Subverting the religiosity of this schema is a sly blasphemy that led to multiple run-ins with industry censors.

To transport the motif into a Lovecraftian frame, imagine the lower level as our constricted human understanding, which paradoxically misleads and protects us from the true horror of an malignly indifferent universe. We yearn to rise up to the cosmos, to look into its face, yet, if we are so unfortunate as to successfully glimpse it, are cast back down into madness and despair.

 **Forest ravine (good for chase scene):** The bare forest floor dives downwards, becoming a steep ravine. Jutting all around you, as if stuck into the ground by some ancient giant, are pine trees, their tall, unadorned trunks each as thick as a telephone pole.

On very rare occasions, the characters might stumble across a sylvan glade. This, naturally, represents an oasis of spiritual calm before inevitable doom intrudes:

 **Forest, sylvan:** A bowl-shaped depression cradles a stretch of densely forested land. Small conifer trees grow thickly along its rim, providing perches

to flitting song birds. At the bottom of the bowl lies a pool of crystal water. A mangy fox, drinking from the pool, sees you and scampers timidly up into the trees.

Features of the landscape are grotesque, exaggerated, tormented, and always oversized.

 **Cliff face (looking down):** You find yourself on the edge of a mighty cliff. One step further and you would have gone over the side. Rocks, disturbed by your presence, hurl themselves over the edge. They land, after a disconcertingly long pause, at the base of the precipice. Its exposed rock is incised, as if by enormous claws.

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🏰 **Cliffface with ocean:** *As above, plus:* Frothing waves crash at its base, as the pitch-colored ocean unceasingly bashes at the earth's stony fortifications.

🏰 **Cliffface (looking up):** Looming above you are the crags and ledges of a sheer cliff face, its upper reaches obscured by a thick, almost pulsating mist. Moisture slicks its moss-coated lower surfaces. Mournful birds nest on treacherous shelves of rock, squawking baleful warnings against any attempt you might make on their eggs.

🏰 **Waterfall:** A thundering cascade of water rips down through a hole torn in the cliff face above. Where it hits the river below, it throws up a ghostly plume, in which countless unwholesome shapes briefly appear, and then are destroyed.

The forest holds the occasional building, abandoned or inhabited by hermits or other wild-men, caught halfway between a feral state and the unreliable authority of civilization:

🏰 **Hermit's hut:** A ramshackle collection of weathered gray boards stands in a weary rectangle, each plank leaning like a soldier on the verge of collapse. Flickering firelight from inside the structure limns the ragged spaces between each board. The structure leans against a dead and towering oak, which forms a crude steeple to its eroding temple.

🏰 **Hunting lodge:** A stout construction of oak sprawls across an expanse of lichen-encrusted rock. A platform, its legs of uneven lengths, adjusts for the skew of the rock, providing a solid base for the lodge. Atop it rests an extended porch, decorated with reaching timber columns, taking the eye up to a shingled roof. Bronze figures of rampant boars stand like forbidding guardians on either side of the lodge door.

🏰 **Old mill:** An old stone mill struggles to remain upright against a blackened sky. The mortar between its stones has decayed, allowing those along its westward face to tumble away

like so many rotten teeth. The wooden frames of its turning blades feebly turn, with only a few strips of their canvas sails trailing beneath them.

🏰 **Roman ruins:** The remnants of an antique wall rise no more than a few feet from the marshy, enveloping ground. Black mildew shrouds its once-white limestones. A toppled column lies across the highest section of wall. Statues of Roman worthies have sunk into the earth, their marble faces pleading up at you, as if praying for deliverance.

🏰 **Abandoned castle:** Atop a spire of rock, at the end of a jagged road, lies the remains of an abandoned castle. Its stone towers overlook a breached outer wall, its stones discolored by scorch marks. Crows scuttle guiltily beneath the teeth of its crenelated battlements.

🏰 **Abandoned laboratory:** A domed structure rests atop a rocky outcrop on the edge of a chasm. Its brick surface attests to its recent

construction. The top of the dome has collapsed in on itself, as if pummeled by a divine and vengeful fist. An antennae pokes warily up from the dome's side. A copper tube lying broken at the base of the structure might once have been a telescope.

 **Graveyard I:** The graveyard rests improbably at the crest of a ravine. Statues of grim, formidable saints jut at odd angles from the ground, silhouetted against a splotchy sky. The soft, yawning earth yields beneath your feet as you scale the ravine, as if the grave dirt hungers for you to join its fellowship of the dead.

 **Graveyard II:** Tombstones fight a losing battle against an encroaching marsh. They respond to the seeping damp by leaning like a platoon of drunken soldiers. You walk on a thick carpet of springy mosses, dodging searching roots sent out by far distant trees.

 **Graveyard III:** A solitary cross marks the spot of what seems to be an ancient mass grave. To your left, mounds of half-frozen earth show the handiwork of local grave robbers. Splinters of shattered coffin litter the ground. Fragments of bone turn to powder beneath your feet.

Forest Supporting Players

The forest is too dark and treacherous a place for honest townsfolk to venture into. Members of the gentry may use it as hunting grounds, traveling in heavily-armed groups. Only outsiders and outcasts dare to live there.

Hermits

Athletics 2, Fleeing 4, Health 2,
Scuffling 2.

Infirm, gray-bearded and dressed in a ragged monk's robe, Milos (MEE-Losh) seems to have stumbled from the pages of a medieval manuscript.

He warms himself by the cookfire of his wretched hovel, surviving on a diet of berries and mushroom soup. An ecstatic visionary, Milos believes that the end times are coming, and that a vengeful God has opened his eyes to the horrors to come. Initially distrustful of strangers, he opens up to anyone able to cloak his words in the mantle of the Eastern Orthodox faith (that is, by using Theology like an Interpersonal ability.)

The quasi-feral Draga looks like a cross between a man and a stoat. He was abandoned as a young man in the dark woods as a young child. Rather than return to a brutal family, he learned to eke out a life for himself among the barren hills and twisted pines. He may track the party in hopes of stealing clothing, equipment or food when their backs are turned.

Athletics 12, Fleeing 12, Health 10,
Scuffling 8.
Alertness: +1
Stealth: +3

Gypsies

Athletics 8, Fleeing 8, Health 8,
Scuffling 6, Weapons 8.
Alertness: +1
Stealth: +1
Weapon: -1 (knife)

The province's nomadic gypsy people usually try to strike their camp of covered wagons on the outskirts of towns, where it is relatively safe. However, as wary townsfolk tend to send the constables quickly when the gypsies arrive, they are often forced to set up an uncertain perimeter in the haunted woods. The portrayal of the Roma seen in our source films is generally positive, if romanticized and exotic. Gypsy villains are usually balanced by sympathetic characters. In a Lovecraftian context, it is safe to assume that at least one degenerate tribe dedicates itself to the worship of the Old Ones.

Using Supporting Players

Rather than simply describe in general terms the sorts of NPCs featured in a Backlot Gothic scenario, this chapter provides brief descriptions for over three dozen ready-to-use supporting players. These minor walk-on characters can be folded into any Backlot Gothic adventure, published or original to you. Usually entire categories of character are given the same game statistics, although of course you should change these to meet your specific requirements. Adapt any details of their personalities or histories to suit, too. For an extended Backlot Gothic campaign, you may find it useful to prepare descriptions for replacement characters in the various categories as you use up the ones presented here.

The fiery dancing girl Esme stirs the heart of any warm-blooded man with her flashing eyes and seductive smile. Whether she is good at heart, and in need of rescue, or a temptress leading gallant males to destruction, depends on your narrative needs. In the former case, she responds best to Reassurance; in the latter, to Flattery or Bargain.

Tribal leader Romeo is a barrel-chested, pot-bellied man who keeps a close watch over his sometimes errant flock. Bitter experience has taught him to distrust outsiders, especially those displaying an air of authority. His people report to him, so he knows what they know, and will act as spokesman when investigators come asking questions. To get through to him, propose a Bargain of benefit to his community.

A sinister gypsy, Petrov, is one of the Sinister Operatives listed on p. 20.

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The wizened matriarch Irenka surveys inquisitive investigators with dead and milky eyes. Though she professes to be completely blind, sometimes she reacts as if able to perceive the world through other means. Irenka performs palm and tarot readings, but whether she possesses true second sight or is simply a canny judge of human reactions is never quite clear. She becomes forthcoming on a Reassurance use. Under suitably dire

circumstances, she may reveal her hard-won knowledge of the Mythos. This she acquired during her adventurous youth, when she was bold and careless, just like the investigators are now.

Health 4.

Gravediggers

Athletics 4, Fleeing 4, Health 3,
Scuffling 3, Weapons 6

Alertness: +1

Weapons: -1 (shovel)

Sad-eyed Otto keeps a constant watch over his bedraggled graveyard. He treats each occupant as an old friend, maintaining a ceaseless one-sided discussion with the lot of them. Assess Honesty is required to sort of his delusional stories of interactions with the dead from whatever useful information he may possess.

With his bald, pallid head and deep-set eyes, Waldemar bears an unwholesome resemblance to the bodies he interrs. Investigators may also be disturbed by his frequent, moronic chuckling. Those who wish to Bargain with him should know that he likes shiny things and pictures of beautiful women.

Huntsmen

Athletics 4, Firearms 8, Fleeing 8,
Health 5, Scuffling 3.

Alertness: +1

Stealth: +1

Weapons: -1 (knife), +0 (shotgun)

Mustachioed, knock-kneed Karl manages the game on the estate of a local lord. Having spent one night too many in the fog-shrouded woods, he has become a touch unstrung. Sure that whatever horror is the current source of village rumors is lurking behind every wind-blown branch, he's quick to haul out his shotgun and blast away. Investigators must use Reassurance to convince him they're not in league with the devils of the forest—if he doesn't accidentally blow holes in them first.

It's a wonder that the porcine Udo can sneak up on any game whatsoever, given his massive bulk, incessant itching, and penchant for shattering belches. The local gentry swears by his hunting skills—when tracking boar, they say, find the man who *thinks* like a boar. If you ply him with enough food and drink (Bargain), he may find some

salient memories in that empty head of his.



Castles and Catacombs

The classic horror films of the period often pit a corrupt, arrogant or cursed aristocrat against the community at large. His castle, chateau or manor provides a sanctuary where he can engage in forbidden experiments or rest after his sallies out into the countryside to prey on the populace. These structures are always heavy and imposing, projecting their authority over the lowly. In keeping with the verticality motif, they often occupy high perches. They may be impossibly balanced atop rocky spires, their approaches limited by chasms, cliffs, impassable forests, and other natural obstacles, as if the malignity of the landscape conspires with them. Their protection proves illusory, however, when their occupants finally reach too far, and an unruly mob appears to, in another essential paradox, demand a return to order.

Castles reinforce the verticality motif, inside as well as out. Laboratories and reception halls alike occupy titanic proportions.

 **Great Hall:** This is a room designed to impress the power and majesty of its host on any who enter it. Its ceiling, domed and supported by reaching columns, has to reach at least forty feet at its highest point. Wooden fixtures form the predominant decoration, carved in a grotesque, Gothic and rustic style. An exposed, slowly narrowing chimney extends from a blazing fireplace along the east wall.

 **Great Hall II:** The cavernous great hall is dominated by a pair

of boar-headed wooden gargoyles, which jut from twin staircases. Each staircase twists and turns through a series of weird angles. Shadows of indeterminate origin slash across the walls, dividing it into a series of disorienting diagonals.

 **Great Hall III:** Double oaken doors, incised with intricate Gothic foliage patterns stand like grim-faced guards at the top of a sweeping marble staircase. Granite tiles cover the floor, and are in turn swathed in a series of dusty, worn oriental rugs. The stuffed heads of elk, boar, and a moth-eaten brown bear stare mutely ahead from a covered balcony above your heads.

 **Great Hall IV:** The massive central chamber is composed of a series of interlocking archways. The support columns are squared timber beams, their surfaces still bearing the tool marks left by their original cutters. Elongated shields bearing the family crest adorn the stuccoed wall facing the doors; each surmounts a pair of crossed sabers, gold tassel dripping from their hilts.

 **Great Hall V:** Oak paneling, decorated in strangely compressed Gothic trefoils, extends halfway up the high walls on every side of the great hall. Long windows cut through the out-facing walls. A trellis-shaped wrought iron frame divides them into dozens of diamond panes. Thick curtains of an unidentified gray and dismal fabric stand ready to be drawn across them at any time.

Living quarters demarcate the class status of each occupant, ranging from the cramped and drafty to the imperial and drafty.

 **Master bedroom:** Tall, thin windows expose the room to the mountain gloom of the surrounding countryside. Grim ancestral portraits keep a judging eye on your movements,

as if assessing your worthiness to place your head on the family pillows. The overstuffed medieval beds—one for master, one for madam—are couches, not mattresses, each bearing an inclined head-rest. Despite the fireplace, which serves as the room's focal point, an inescapable chill suffuses the room.

 **Boudoir (Lady Of the House):** Filmy white curtains scantily cover a picture window extending along the length of the exterior wall. Pine branches throw quivering shadows through them and into the room. Modern lacquered wooden furnishings huddle together, attempting to coax the room into a feeling of contemporary comfort. Perfume bottles and family photos adorn the dresser, along with a jewelry box. Attached to it is an oval mirror.

 **Guest room:** A high, narrow room is further intruded upon by the rounded interior wall of a castle tower. Modest wooden-framed beds hug the few available expanses of straight wall. Mounted on the walls are a variety of brass and pewter display plates. Viewed up close, they are seen to commemorate forgotten medieval battles. Dozens of tiny figures struggle in pitched battle across their metal surfaces.

 **Child's room:** A four-poster bed and looming ceilings overwhelm the room's intended occupant. In a corner stands a plain pine box, home to a small collection of toys. A tapestry piece, unceremoniously hacked from a larger picture, disguises the bare stone walls. It depicts a gallant knight on a charger, his sword protectively outstretched. But something in its crudely sewn expression suggests that the chevalier knows himself to be outmatched against whatever comes to claim his ward.

 **Servant's quarters:** A cramped, narrow room offers barely enough

room for a nondescript bed and battered washing-up stand. The smell of starch indicates that the closets lining the wall opposite the bed store the household's linens. A lonely crucifix hangs over the head of the bed.

Secret doors and passageways riddle any ancestral manor worthy of the name. If their discovery keeps the group or others out of danger, these can be found by investigators making **Mechanical Repair** tests against a Difficulty of 4 or more. If a passageway contains essential clues, it is accessible to anyone with **Locksmith**. The same passageway may be accessible in either manner, depending on circumstances. Players might have to use **Mechanical Repair** early on, when there is no information to be had by finding a passageway, but can then find it with **Locksmith** later, when clues become available in the course of plot advancement.

Passageways not only provide monsters and evildoers with the means to attack or abduct manor inhabitants, but disguise the entrances to the laboratories and catacombs holding the castles' darkest secrets.

 **Subterranean tunnel (natural) I:** The tunnel is a jagged fissure in the hard igneous rock, barely large enough for one person to squeeze through. Its walls are cold, hard, and dry. The sharpened stone tears at your exposed flesh.

 **Subterranean tunnel (natural) II:** Water erosion has cut this womb-like tunnel from soft sedimentary rock. Its smooth surfaces drip and glisten with lime-rich water. Its natural passageway becomes constricted at points, but overall is large enough to move through without great effort.

 **Subterranean tunnel (construction):** Constructed from the same dark stone as the castle above, the

tunnel wends on a steep incline deeper into the earth. Chill radiates from the walls.

 **Catacomb:** Lining the walls of the narrow passageway, hewn directly from the surrounding stone, is a circuitous tunnel. On either side of you rise low stone shelves, on which rest a series of metal coffins. The coffins are marked with the crest of the castle's founding clan, and date back hundreds of years.

The ultimate secret of a castle varies according to its legend. If it's the home of a monstrous creature of the night, it houses the being's lair, such as a crypt. Strivers after forbidden secrets fill this core chamber with laboratory equipment.

 **Crypt:** A set of winding, worn stone stairs leads down to a dripping cavern, columned by joined stalactites and stalagmites. Rats and other scuttling beasts, some unidentifiable, skitter into shadowed corners at your approach. In the center of the chamber, on a raised stone platform, sits a majestic iron (or stone or wood) coffin.

 **Laboratory I:** The laboratory is a converted garrison, opening up into the tower above it. The floor is recessed, containing an array of sparking, hissing electronic devices. Steel rungs mounted on the side of the tower allow one to climb laboriously up to its top, where a trap door permits access to the vantage point atop its steeple.

 **Laboratory II:** A framework of metal posts supports a series of reinforced glass panels surrounding the laboratory area. An observation deck houses a row of plush seats allowing spectators to watch the procedures inside the glassed enclosure. The ceiling of the working area is domed. Banks of instrument panels surround its curved far wall.

 **Laboratory III:** A hexagonal

chamber, shod in riveted iron, its high ceiling vented with buzzing fans.

A castle's ultimate chamber often houses an infernal hazard such as a chasm, quicksand, sulfur pit, or explosive self-destructive device. On a literal level, these allow for the climactic destruction of the antagonists. Metaphorically, they represent the hell to which they are finally consigned.

You'll also need descriptions of the devices inside the laboratory:

 **Lab Equipment I:** A neon wheel spins in a glassed-in housing.

 **Lab Equipment II:** A device resembling a modified spotlight, its housing bristling with an outer ring of smaller, high-intensity bulbs, beams a coruscating ray at the subject of the experiment.

 **Lab Equipment III:** A tangle of miniature, tamed electrical energy ascends a pair of antenna, arranged into a V shape. When they reach the top of the V, they dissipate, reappearing at the bottom again.

 **Lab Equipment IV:** An overtaxed transformer spits out sparks and smoke.

 **Lab Equipment V:** Copper balls, each a foot in diameter, hang across the laboratory like patio lanterns. Arcing, popping electrical charges periodically pass between them, filling the air with the stench of brimstone.

 **Lab Equipment VI:** Looping electrical coils form a shuddering halo around a chrome globe. Translucent buttons dot its surface, periodically illuminating in a pattern both complex and unfathomable.

 **Lab Equipment VII:** A pair of ceramic horns, resembling the antennae of a gigantic insect, rise from

a black box, its front face covered in meters and dials. When activated, twin discs of spinning force whirl at invisible midpoints between the horn's termini.

 **Lab Equipment VIII:** A portly furnace-like construction of sheet metal supports a glass ball, around which Saturnian copper rings whirl and shudder.

 **Lab Equipment IX:** A metal drum is held aloft in a wire frame atop a battered, wheeled cart. When a lever is pulled, the drum shoots intensely hot beams of white voltage into a diffuser screen, which in turn feeds the entire apparatus with power.

 **Lab Equipment X:** A hood of reflective material surrounds a raw electrical coil, focusing its energy into a semi-circular mounting containing a dozen spark plugs.

Castle Supporting Players

Along with the main characters of your castle-based tale of the Backlot Gothic, any baronial household contains an assortment of servants, assistants, and dogsbodies. Here are some quick profiles to modify as needed. Similar characters are usually given the same statistics.

The more overtly evil the lord of the manor is, the less likely he is to employ honest locals as servants. His needs will be catered to by malign lab assistants, sinister operatives, and fellow creatures of the night.

Non-scientists, needless to say, have no need of lab assistants.

Butlers

Athletics 4, Fleeing 8, Health 4,
Scuffling 4

Anton is an obedient, unimaginative local chap who's served the family for years, valuing loyalty above all other virtues. However, he is a good Christian

man and will aid the investigators, even against his master, should the moral horrors of the household become insupportable. Rendered cautious by his family responsibilities, Anton does nothing that would risk leaving his seven children fatherless. He is a slight, prematurely gray man in his late thirties who walks with a distinct stoop.

The redoubtable **Basil** has known the master since serving him in England, where he was born and raised to service. He maintains his crisp, unflappable demeanor even in the face of overwhelming terror. Short-statured, with a smiling, open face, Basil may prove too brave for his own good, winding up on the list of mysterious deaths the Investigators must investigate.

Young **Hans** is a recent addition to the household, and proof that good help is hard to find when you live on top of a stormy crag and have a reputation for dabbling in things man was not meant to know. Gaunt and birdlike, Hans is most recognizable for the puff of untamed hair jutting from the crown of his head. Though not bright enough to see the manor's hidden dangers, Hans unashamedly flees in the face of obvious menace.

Ancient **Reinhold** performs his duties ably despite his doddering gait and age-dulled senses. His otherwise bald pate holds only a dusting of snowy hair, but he more than makes up for this deficit with a walrus mustache of impressive proportions. Key phrase: "What was that again, sir?"

Maids

Athletics 2, Fleeing 4, Health 4.

Kindly **Constanta** is getting on in years, but has served the family for three generations now, and aims to spend her final years in service. If there are signs of spiritual corruption in the household,

she sweetly fails to see them. Though a good soul, her habit of always seeing the best in her master makes her little help to the investigators, should he prove to be a source of evil. Constanta shows great affection for any children in the household, and would sacrifice herself for them without a second thought, if the need arose.

Pretty **Ilenka** has a crush on the master, but would never show it—or at least thinks she well conceals her naïve, wonderstruck admiration. When the investigators arrive, she may transfer her affection to one of the investigators, provided he shares one or two of her employer's obvious good points, for example handsomeness or stormy genius.

Imposing **Hanna** is a formidable battle-ax of a woman, who performs her duties with gruff implacability. She likes her employer, especially the lady of the house, but, is even more devoted to the inherent virtue of a task efficiently completed. Although not openly rude to guests, she clearly views them as inconveniences at best, and interlopers at worst.

Lab Assistants, Benign

Athletics 4, Fleeing 4, Health 4,
Scuffling 4

The stalwart young **Dr. Alst** came to serve the master after hearing him deliver a fascinating speech at the university. Others may have scorned his unorthodox theories, but Dr. Alst heard the future ringing in his ears. He believes in the master's work but will balk if called upon to commit ethical transgressions. The nattily-attired Dr. Alst exhibits the smooth, cheery good looks of a male ingénieur.

An untrained amateur, the portly, plain-spoken **Oskar** was recruited from among the local villagers to perform tasks in the master's laboratory. He

admires his employer enormously and does not believe him capable of any wrongdoing, no matter what the nature of his inquiries.

Lab Assistants, Malign

The thick-necked, sluggish **Dr. Egilbert** labored in scorned obscurity at a provincial institution of learning before discovering that he shared similar ideas with the master of the castle. He attributes these insights to time spent poring through a corrupt and fragmentary Czech translation of the *Necronomicon*. Secretly Egilbert believes himself to be the master's intellectual superior, and fervently anticipates the day when his benefactor is somehow destroyed, allowing Egilbert to step in and bask in the credit for his discoveries.

Athletics 8, Fleeing 8, Health 6,
Scuffling 6

Hirsute and misshapen, the fiendish **Gregor** lopes through the castle, keeping a suspicious glare trained at all times on the investigators. He either fears or openly taunts them, depending on how dominant they make themselves seem on their first meeting with him. Suspected of several murders by local residents, Gregor can't wait to gain the power the master's experiments promise him, so he can wreak his vengeance against them. He never removes his burlap tunic; if examined, the blind eyes, nostrils and baby teeth of his recessed twin can be seen, hovering above his hairy right nipple. The twin then snaps and bites at the examiner, occasioning a possible 4-point Stability loss.

Athletics 8, Fleeing 8, Health 12,
Scuffling 12
Alertness: +2
Stealth: +2
Special Advantage: Undying

Sinister Operatives

Athletics 6, Fleeing 6, Health 6,
Scuffling 8, Weapons 6.

Alertness: +1

Stealth: +1

Weapon: -1 (knife)

His eyes goggling wildly in his head, his teeth exposed in a permanent feral grimace, the grotesque **Franz** perhaps never had a chance of winning acceptance among the superstitious townsfolk. From birth he has been castigated as the spawn of the devil. A cunning criminal who leads a hermit-like existence in the dark woods, Franz does little to disabuse people of this notion. He will do anything for money,

which he stores in a miserly hoard in an iron chest beneath the floorboards of his hut. He's vulnerable to **Flattery**.

A corpulent gypsy who picks his teeth with a hunting knife, **Petrov** veritably glistens with greed when offered an opportunity for dishonest gain. Although revolting and ill-mannered, he takes pains to present himself as a man of the world. His criminal wanderings throughout Europe have taught him to discourse in many languages, a talent he is anxious to show off to foreigners. Other gypsies, knowing him all too well, shun and loathe him. Investigators who want something from him would be well advised to **Bargain**.

The lumbering **Rudi** is slow of mind, but hates it when people treat him like he's stupid. He can be counted on for simple jobs, like abducting people or digging up graves. (He lacks the Stealth and Alertness modifiers of other sinister operatives.) More sophisticated tasks generally frustrate him, leading to eruptions of violence. He loses his train of thought when subjected to **Interrogation**.



Towns and Villages

The state of tension between castle and town is a constant of the Backlot Gothic world. Villagers fear the activities of the master of the castle, but defer to him out of a sense of traditional power. As the terrors spread, unease grows, sparking town meetings and dark mutterings in the local tavern. Finally a precipitating event occurs—a child found dead, strange lights once more illuminating a laboratory thought destroyed—and the inevitable mob gathers, to wreak indiscriminate havoc on what they perceive as the forces of evil.

New Rule : Undying

Certain featured antagonists can be defined as Undying. When their Health falls to -12 or below, they merely mimic the symptoms of death for a period of several hours. This allows them to be pronounced dead and hauled away, so that they can recover and escape at a convenient moment. At this moment of recovery, the character's Health pool refreshes.

Although this ability can be regarded as supernatural or eerie, it merely reflects an extraordinary natural toughness.

The Undying character does not recover if his body is substantially destroyed, either at the moment of death or afterwards, for example by dissection, cremation, or dissolution in acid.

Even in a pulp game, an Undying character never dies after being reduced to negative Health. He instead suffers the same ill consequences of negative Health as player characters.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Backlot Gothic

A village in Backlot Gothic is no mere sprinkling of rural cottages. It seems heavily urbanized, its medieval structures packed tightly together. Signs may be in English or German.

 **Street scene:** The town's structures huddle together as if for protection from an ominous sky. Some exteriors are covered in white stucco, framed by dark wooden beams. Others are even older stone structures. Uneven paving stones cover the roadways, offering ready weapons should a riot break out.

 **Residence:** At the confluence of two old roads, a single home stands alone. Its unsteady frame falls in on itself, giving it a distorted look, like a cottage painted by a drunken Brueghel. Disputing magpies nest in the straw of its thatched roof.

 **Railway Station:** Looming over the town is the railway station, its tracks following the crest of a barren moraine. Shingles from the station's roof adjust themselves in the wind; it slants down toward you at an alarming rate. The wooden platform hangs over the street below like a hypertrophied gallows. Gothic letters painted on a broad sign announce the name of the town.

 **Police Station (exterior):** A sturdy set of concrete steps leads up to a stone archway, on which is carved the name of the town and the words "Police Station." A squat and blocky cube in the Romanesque style, it projects a sense of dwarfed authority.

 **Police Station (interior):** The station's high-ceilinged lobby is all straight lines and business-like angles. Wrought iron lamps dangle from the ceiling. The Inspector's desk occupies the center of the room, sitting on a well-worn carpet. To the side sits the deputy's smaller and more cluttered desk, a roll-top affair on small metal casters.

 **Jail Cell:** The station's single jail cell is as anonymous and forlorn as any you've seen. It's the standard construction: a single door of metal bars, concrete walls, a wooden bench.

 **Dungeon:** The subterranean level of an otherwise demolished castle tower has been pressed into service as a grim dungeon. Twenty feet from the floor level, a barred window provides a meager glimpse of the street above. Through it you see the shoes and ankles of passersby. An arched door of oaken planks, reinforced by a metal frame, provides the only access to the dungeon. Six stone steps, their edges worn by centuries of shuffling feet, lead from door to floor. Thick iron chains and manacles hang from the walls. Although there are no torture implements on display, you can easily imagine them in use here.

 **Town Hall (exterior):** The town hall is an overstuffed collection of eaves and gables, arranged around a flamboyant central porch, supported by thin pine columns. Jutting from the roof is a clock tower, its face frozen at perpetual midnight. Its picture book style aims for quaintness, but its sagging lines succumb to a despairing decrepitude.

 **Town Hall (interior):** Voluminous drapes suffocate the few windows of the hall's main meeting room. Pew-like seats for the concerned citizens are arranged in a gallery on floor level, their view of the proceedings often obscured by timber columns placed throughout. On a higher level, in a construction resembling a jury box, sit the town councilors. Sashes of office cut ostentatiously across their plain dark suits. Seated behind a high podium is the burgomaster, wearing a grander sash and a gilded medallion on a silk ribbon.

 **Tavern:** Round tables fill the

wooden floors of this large, roadhouse-style establishment. The bar is a heavy affair of dark, lacquered wood. Patrons drink from German-style steins. Wine is consumed from small clay cups. Large doorways allow multiple drinkers to weave in and out of the tavern at once. The place reeks of stale beer and wine gone to vinegar.

 **Hotel (exterior):** The village's sole hotel is a modest wood-frame structure squeezed between two larger and older stone buildings. Gingerbread house decoration drips from its eaves and windows. Its sign hangs from an iron frame, creaking with each gust of wind.

 **Hotel (lobby):** The light from a blazing pot-bellied furnace throws wild shadows onto the dusty lobby's bare walls. A chrome bell sits atop a high wooden reception desk. Behind the desk hang an assortment of skeleton keys, each on an unnumbered peg. Six species of stuffed owls glower at you from the wall alongside the wooden staircase leading up to the rooms.

 **Hotel (suite):** The room is spacious but decorated only by the shadows cast through its windowpane. A wardrobe and low-slung chest of drawers wait to guard your belongings. A deep furrow bisects the dying mattress on the king-size bed. Tell-tale sprinkles of sawdust by the baseboard herald the presence of hungry mice.

 **Hotel (modest lodgings):** The narrowness of the room offers little floorspace that isn't taken up by the single bed or unbalanced washstand. Splotches on the plaster walls show where it has been recently patched, but new cracks have opened up around them. It smells like a rat died in the walls and is slowly rotting away.

 **Shop (exterior):** Wooden panels cover the shop's exterior. The window divides into a succession of small

panes. Painted white letters announce the type of business conducted here. The shop's door is recessed from the face of the building, and seems to hang at an angle.

 **Undertaker's (back room):** A dim, tiny room holds a coffin, a slab, and an array of antiquated equipment for the salubrious arrangement of the recently deceased. The chamber smells like bleach and decaying flesh. Conspicuously lacking is embalming equipment and the accompanying odor of formaldehyde that would mark the workshop of a modern mortician. Tiny portraits in oval frames depict the undertaker's ancestors, all of whom seem to be wearing the exact same black suit, handed down through the generations.

 **Undertaker's (chapel):** A mournful, crucified Christ dominates the room, looking up in agony in a blocky, Gothic-style sculpture. Three rows of oak chairs face the coffin. Although its lid is closed, the deceased's face can be seen through a small square window.

The local funeral home probably doubles as a morgue. If it feels more appropriate to place it in the police station, use the following stock footage:

 **Morgue (interior):** A metal gurney sits in the middle of a disused, dusty room. One wall is taken up by morgue shelves, for the storage of bodies. Unlike the sterile facilities you may be used to, the drawers of these are faced in wood. Old-fashioned drawers, like those for the storage of museum specimens, sequester the various instruments of dissection.

Authority Figures

The chain of authority in a Backlot Gothic village is a short one. The burgomaster, or mayor, oversees a small council of four to six local worthies.

They govern primarily through consensus. Working through the police inspector, any one of them can order wrongdoers locked up in the jail or dungeon. When rare criminal trials occur, the burgomaster acts as judge, and prominent figures, such as the councilors, serve on the jury. It occurs to no one that it might be a conflict of interest to allow officials with powers of arrest to then sit as jurors.

The head of the tiny local police force is an inspector. Although he presumably reports to a larger hierarchy outside the village, its isolation renders him effectively autonomous. It also robs him of outside support, leaving him with meager resources to turn back angry mobs or combat monsters. At best his distant superiors might recruit experts from elsewhere, for example bringing in detectives from Scotland Yard or the FBI to crack a string of grisly slayings. In a game, these outside consultants may be the player characters.

Each village has but one mayor and police inspector, but multiple characters are provided. The investigators may move between towns, or supporting players may fall prey to evil forces, leading to the appearance of replacements in subsequent episodes.

As is always the case in any horror investigative game, local authorities must be largely ineffectual. In the movies inspiring this book, the local police inspector is sometimes able to at least ameliorate the horrors, saving some sympathetic characters from harm. In a roleplaying scenario, that's the investigators' job. Police officials may be helpful during the denouement, but until then are more likely to play the role of unbelieving obstacles to the group's efforts.

On the other hand, particularly for a longterm Backlot Gothic campaign, police inspectors and other doughty

Accents

Reinforce the setting's essential placelessness by emulating the inconsistency of accent found in the source material. Characters from outside the setting, like Americans and Britons, speak in the expected accents. Residents, on the other hand, may display German, Slavic, Hungarian accents. Or they might just as easily intone in English or American accents. Sometimes they'll talk like Cockneys trying to sound German. Townsfolk bear the class markers of whatever national accent they adopt: peasants, ne'er-do-wells and servants might speak Cockney or other London dialects. Senior servants converse, as do their masters and others of rank, in plummy, well-enunciated tones (if English-accented) or in hissing, barking pseudo-German.

locals might make suitable replacement characters as investigators from abroad are slowly chewed up by the hazards of their vocation.

Burgomasters

Athletics 2, Fleeing 6, Health 2.

Herr Buchreiser is a sputtering blimp of a man whose attempts to cling to sanity in a haunted world consist mostly of a punctilious attention to procedure. His peerless mastery of local regulations is always used to delay actions, never to initiate them. While speaking officially, he constantly adjusts the pillbox hat of office precariously angled atop his balding head. He provides information he is reluctant to part with only when an investigator deploys the inexorable logic of **Bureaucracy**.

Herr Düringer is an avuncular, slightly dotty older gentleman who delights in

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discussions of literature, music, and paintings, and enjoys nothing more than sharing a fine brandy with erudite visitors from afar. Unfortunately, he is completely out of his depth when dealing with the horrible curse that periodically threatens to engulf his village. When confronted with it, he tries to change the subject, requiring **Reassurance** before he can be steered back to the subject.

The avaricious **Herr Draeger** whiles away his private hours gazing at the precious antiques he's managed to pilfer, under cover of his official duties, from the homes of the horror's past victims. His common sense eaten away by greed, he secretly hopes for more killings, so he can increase the size of his secret cache. He responds best to **Bargain**.

Police Inspectors

Athletics 6, Firearms 8, Health 8,
Scuffling 4.

Weapon: +1 (Luger)

The police inspectors of this province wear dark, quasi-military uniforms, complete with peaked leather hat and high, shiny boots. Monocles and riding crops are also standard issue.

Inspector Brandt stands at perpetual stiff attention and speaks in the clipped, almost supercilious tones of a mid-level British officer. Absolutely dedicated to his duty, he squints a disapprovingly monocled eye at any investigator who seems to take the dreadful business at hand with anything less than perfect seriousness. He is the sort of self-sacrificing upholder of the law whose sudden demise often presages a final spiral into chaos and madness. **Cop Talk** earns his respect.

Inspector Bohm attempts to portray himself as the sort of man his colleague Inspector Brandt truly is. Instead, he, a rail-thin fellow who



can't pass a mirror without examining the state of his pencil-thin mustache, is devoted primarily to his own authority. Masking his insecurity beneath a veneer of swaggering confidence, he remains an obstacle to the investigators until all hell breaks loose—at which point barked words of **Intimidation** secure his timorous compliance.

An incorrigible snob, **Inspector**

Scheidt hates this provincial assignment, which offers only danger and mental deterioration. He hopes to get back as soon as possible to the unspecified capital where career and social advancement lie. Where supernatural menaces are concerned, he remains a dismissive skeptic, just as his friends back home would expect of him. Characters with **Credit Ratings** of 5 or more can activate his instinctive

University Towns

In cases where the horror in the castle is scientific in nature, the village may house a small university or medical college.



Lecture hall: Steep auditorium-style steps, each bearing a row of chairs and wooden desks, lead down to the hall's focal point, a wedge-shaped dais bearing a lectern and low table. Behind these stand three banks of slate blackboards. These can be slid up to reveal yet more blackboards underneath. They bear a network of crabbed equations, which crowd around a series of obscure diagrams.



Research lab: Shelves of anatomical specimens, bottled and preserved in alcohol, fill high pine shelves which reach to the top of the lab's high ceiling. A sliding ladder allows access to the bottles, the highest of which must be pulled down with a metal grabber device. Lab tables fill the floor of the white-tiled room. Chrome carts bear a full array of surgical instruments.

Supporting players might include:

Dr. Rudolfus Hein, a tightly-wound defender of scientific orthodoxy. He wears tweed suits, smokes a Meerschaum pipe, and surveys the world through circular, horn-rimmed glasses. Hein remains officious and unforthcoming with investigators until one of them demonstrates his scientific bona fides with the use of **Biology**, **Chemistry**, or **Physics**.

The corrupt guardsman **Ferdinand** will let anyone look anywhere, or even spirit away objects he thinks no one will miss, in exchange for a few kroner (**Bargain** ability.) He looks like a sleepy vulture in an ill-fitting uniform.

sycophancy toward the wealthy and well-connected. Scheidt is a plump man memorable for his eye-patch and shaved head.

Constables

Athletics 4, Fleeing 4, Health 3,

Scuffling 4, Weapons 2.

Weapon: +1 (Luger)

The elderly, stork-like **Heino** would sooner be snoozing in the police station than performing police work, especially if it threatens to bring him in contact with dark forces. **Reassurance** makes him a less reluctant witness; a spend of the same ability is needed to get him to do anything useful.

A sullen and resentful oaf built like a brick outhouse, **Lambert** sees himself as a put-upon working man forever

being condescended to by the town's well-fed burghers. **Credit Rating 2** establishes a sense of proletarian solidarity which leads him to cooperate with the investigator in question (but not colleagues of other class origins.) **Intimidation** will do in a pinch, but it motivates him to later sabotage the group in other ways, if he can manage it.

Radu, an illiterate bumpkin pressed into service after the deaths of several previous constables, spends his time whittling figurines of bears and wolves. Raised by his half-crazed grandmother, he is a repository of local legends and superstitions, which he supplies when prompted by **Oral History**.

Burghers

The town's most influential citizens

are shopkeepers, merchants and other business proprietors, with perhaps the odd professional thrown in for good measure. Suitable occupations for these worthies include apothecary, baker, butcher, doctor, dry goods merchant, grocer, haberdasher, lawyer, and undertaker. Their main narrative functions in the source material are to express fear, find reasons for inaction in the face of horror, and to be killed off. You may find additional roles for them to play in the proceedings.

For both burghers and townsfolk (below) we provide names and personalities, which you can assign to particular occupations as the need arises.

Mousy **Herr Höcker** is certain that he's the next on the kill list of whatever menace, monster or amorphous horror stalks the woods around the village. Reassurance temporarily snaps him into a state of helpfulness, though any information he provides is filtered through his congenital fearfulness.

Physically imposing and pugnacious, **Herr Mainzer** takes any opportunity to display dominance over others. Like most bullies, he becomes thoroughly cowed when faced with an expert at **Intimidation**.

An amateur painter specializing in poor imitations of Caspar David Friedrich, **Herr Stepanek** is more interested in the investigators' assessment of his artistic achievement than in whatever official business they've come to discuss. A little **Flattery** gets him down to business.

The outwardly pompous and dignified **Herr Lincke** cheats his customers, a fact a character with **Streetwise** twigs to as soon as he engages in a transaction with him. This insight can be used to squeeze him for information. He wears his great girth and triple chin as if they are symbols of authority.

Townsfolk

The rank-and-file wavers of torches and toters of pitchforks occupy less exalted positions in town, including blacksmith, hotel proprietor, station master, tanner, tavern keeper, tinker, wagon maker, and woodchopper.

Wheezing, middle-aged **Gustav** is getting too old for strenuous work. Visibly sweating and straining whenever he does anything physical, he immediately strikes anyone with **Medicine** as being on the verge of a massive coronary. He becomes almost puppyishly cooperative in exchange for life-saving medical advice.

His nerves fraying under the pressures of life in a haunted village, **Matthias** attempts to seem as if nothing is wrong, making him even jumpier than he otherwise would be. His protestations of bravery in the face of any danger register as false to anyone with **Assess Honesty**. Investigators can secure his cooperation by pretending to accept his bluster at face value.

The quietly bitter **Ernst** has seen horrors engulf the village before, and openly agitates for a violent and preemptive solution. If the rest of the village doesn't rise up with him, he just may use some of that dynamite he has on hand to solve the problem himself. **Cop Talk** convinces him that the investigators are experienced hands who should be left to take care of this on their own.

All his life, **Siegfried** has been afflicted by boils, which open and suppurate in times of supernatural menace. He tries to maintain a sunny attitude in the face of constant pain and the obvious revulsion of his neighbors. Siegfried renders whatever assistance is asked of him by the investigators without qualm—but may wind up dead as a result.

Story Hooks

Use the following story hooks as springboards for your own Backlot Gothic scenarios.

The Beating Oak

The undying scion of a degenerate aristocratic lineage embarks on a murder spree, allowing himself to be caught each time. Even when cremated or dismembered, he soon returns from the grave to kill again. To slay him, the investigators must dig into his family's past, discovering that his doting grandmother was a witch who found a way to make him immortal, by transplanting his beating heart into a gnarled oak tree. Only by locating the tree can they reverse the spell of immortality.

Blood Harem

Villagers rejoice when a legendary bloodsucking aristocrat is finally put to the stake—perhaps by the investigators themselves. Yet this only escalates the frequency of attacks in which victims are found drained of blood, with their throats torn out. And this time, it's the handsome men of the village who bear the brunt of the attacks. The death of the count has loosed his harem of seductive vampires to ravage the countryside. Now the investigators must find their lair, and finish them off—before the curse breeds a new generation of vampires.

Book Of Secrets

Ulrich, a former lab assistant who abetted a notorious scientist in a series of obscene and dangerous experiments escapes from prison, then breaks into the secret library facility where his deceased master's cryptic notebooks were kept for safekeeping. Afraid of the horrors the deformed and spiteful Ulrich might unleash with the knowledge inscribed in the journals, the local police inspector calls on the investigators to track him down.

The Derensberg Curse

Alfred Derensberg, an old friend of an investigator contacts them to make a shocking request. He is the current recipient of the Derensberg Curse, which transforms him into a ravening, homicidal monster during the nights of the full moon. Worse than that, he is apparently impossible to permanently kill. Derensberg begs the investigators to dig into his family's infamous past, to find the one method that will send him to the grave forever—but they'd better act fast, because another full moon is on its way.

The Maze In the Woods

After a run-in with gypsies, the investigators get lost on their trek through the dark forest. Eventually they realize they have passed into a dream-like otherworld, where the clan matriarch—an invalid in waking life—becomes a shrieking wraith on an inky steed, who stalks them one by one. To find their way back, they must learn the new, rationality-defying laws that rule the land of sleep.

The Moon Dial

The group investigates the theft of a strange silver Roman device from their local museum. Discovering that the unknown thief seems to be headed back to the point of its excavation in an obscure Eastern European province, they follow, seeking to recover it. The thief is Dr. Laszlo Rohak, who intends to use it as a telescopic lens which will create a "light bridge" permitting travel between the earth and the moon. Unknown to him, his experiments have already caused members of his household to be possessed by spectral entities trapped on the lunar surface. These ancient, amoral beings will kill to stop the investigators from foiling Rohak's scheme.

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Shadows Over Filmland



The Room In the Catacombs

An investigator inherits an abandoned castle deep in the mountain fastnesses of the Backlot Gothic world. Local villagers greet his arrival with barely concealed hostility, certain that he has come to revive the forbidden experiments performed by his distant relative. Strange manifestations plague the group's stay in the castle. The true

danger begins when they stumble onto an intact laboratory in the catacombs beneath, and the inheritor is seized by an overwhelming compulsion to continue his benefactor's work... to ends unknown.

Screams From the Morgue

A missive from a young scientific colleague moonlighting as a morgue

attendant brings the investigators to an isolated university town. There they find their friend occupying the police station's lonely cell, accused of the murder of his supervisor. His astounding claim is that one of the corpses woke up in mid-dissection, and slashed the coroner to ribbons!

The Softest Tissue

An ex-paramour of an investigator returns from a vacation in an obscure province of Eastern Europe a changed woman. Once a frivolous lover of life, now she's moody, irritable, and prone to mad disquisitions on arcane topics that would never before have interested her. When she is killed during the commission of a brutal murder, the investigators discover an anomaly in her brain matter—*some of the cells belong to someone else entirely!* This revelation sends them to her last destination, in search of the madman who performed this forbidden surgery.



DEATH ACROSS THE NILE

"THE WHISPERS OF ARABS ARE VERY WILD, AND CANNOT BE RELIED UPON. THEY EVEN HINT THAT OLD KHEPHREN -- HE OF THE SPHINX, THE SECOND PYRAMID AND THE YAWNING GATEWAY TEMPLE -- LIVES FAR UNDERGROUND WEDDED TO THE GHOUL-QUEEN NITOCRIS AND RULING OVER THE MUMMIES THAT ARE NEITHER OF MAN NOR OF BEAST."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "UNDER THE PYRAMIDS"

The Investigators have arrived in Backlot Egypt to assist with an archaeological expedition to the mysterious Third Pyramid, rumored to be the final resting place of the legendary Queen Nitocris. Unfortunately, some nightmarish power is reaching for one of them: across the Nile, and across the millennia.

Introduction

The Spine

This adventure is relatively straightforward. It begins with the Investigators' **Arrival at the Dig**, where they will hear lurid and horrible **Tales of Nitocris**. Having been introduced to the various NPCs, the first crisis for the Investigators will be the **First Attack**, which kills Fletcher Norton. A **Second Attack** will kill Will Mannering, and the **Third Attack** will actually be aimed at the target Investigator. By then, it will be possible to **Track the Mummy** back to the hidden Temple of Nitocris and its **Terrifying Bas-Relief**. It's up to the Investigators to **Stop the Mummy** and save their companion from a fate worse than (but including) death at the hands of Egypt's undying Queen.

reincarnated lover Menthuophis. She discovers him embodied in one of the Investigators, and resolves to use his *ba* -- his soul -- as a beacon through time. Her agent is the ghoul-priest of Anubis, Anankareh. He sends his own *ba* forward in time, into one of the many mummified ghouls in Nitocris' tomb, reanimating the mummy. Its mission: to tear open a wound in the target Investigator's heart, the seat of the *ba*. Anankareh will use as many ghoul-mummies as it takes, unless he is destroyed. Nitocris wants to climb through that opened way to the future and rule it with her sorcery.

The Horrible Truth

Queen Nitocris uses her unearthly lore to scan future centuries for her

Picking Nitocris' Target

This scenario requires one Investigator to be the "target" -- the reincarnation of Menthuophis, Nitocris' murdered husband. Unlike the lycanthrope in "Under a Werewolf Moon," this Investigator shouldn't be informed in advance; shock is just fine.

The Keeper can use any criterion she wishes, but some or all of the following may apply:

- An Investigator who has already shown an affinity for or interest in ancient Egypt.
- An Investigator with the Occupation of Archaeologist or Antiquarian.
- An Investigator with "true love" as a Pillar of Sanity.
- An Investigator with Antiquarianism, Bad Luck (or Cursed), or Arrogance (reincarnated Pharaohs are like that) as a Drive.
- An Investigator who tends to use Flattery to get his way, or one with a tendency to engage in love affairs.
- An Investigator with a murky ancestry.
- An Investigator who hasn't been the center of any story lines recently.
- An Investigator whose player can be relied upon to show up on game night.

It's important to note that people can reincarnate across genders; the target Investigator can be female if the Keeper decides she'd best suit the adventure. (That said, the scenario assumes a male target, and will run considerably smoother under those conditions.) Likewise, the target Investigator doesn't have to be of Egyptian or African descent; even the fairly race-conscious occultism of the 1930s made exceptions for reincarnated royalty.

The Scenes

Prelude

The Keeper needs a vaguely plausible reason to get the Investigators to Egypt. Feel free to ask the players to come up with something. Any academic Investigator (whether an archaeologist, other professor, or scientist) can be a colleague of Dr. Galloway, while a dilettante could easily count Will Mannering as a family friend or favorite cousin. Authors or journalists might seek out the Galloway Expedition as good copy. In some campaigns, antiquarians or criminals might decide to cozy up to the Galloway Expedition to see if any opportunities for loot or smuggling open up. Other types of Investigators will be harder to insert; the Keeper may have to set up a different adventure somewhere “east of Suez” so that the Investigators can “stop off in Cairo on their way back” to the States or Britain.

Rather than pushing the Investigators, the Keeper can also try the “pull.” The target Investigator (see sidebar) finds himself reading stories about Egypt in the paper, checking out books of Egyptian history or art, lingering over Egyptian antiquities in curio shops, repeatedly walking through Egyptian displays in museums, hanging around the docks where ships are leaving for Alexandria, and having increasingly vivid dreams of living in ancient Egypt. (The Keeper may even salt previous adventures with individual scenes establishing the target’s increasing obsession.) A particularly unscrupulous Keeper may season those dreams with images of an incredibly seductive and beautiful woman: Nitocris beckoning to her love from across the centuries. Enough of this kind of treatment, and the Investigator in question may pester his fellows into going to Egypt without any other obvious story hook.

Once there, any Investigator with a plausible connection to the Galloway

Expedition can “suddenly recall” their old colleague or fraternity brother mentioning something about a dig at the Third Pyramid...

Getting To Egypt

Unless the Investigators are already in Egypt, they almost certainly take a steamship to Alexandria from some other port: New York, Southampton, Marseilles, or Bombay, perhaps. Unless the Keeper plans to set up some later adventure, or run a boat scenario, the trip can be brushed past in a line of narration: “You take the *Star of Egypt* from [convenient port] to Alexandria, at the mouth of the Nile. From there, a crowded railway carriage rattles you south to Cairo.”

At the Dig

The Galloway Expedition is quartered out on the Giza Plateau, living in tents on the south side of the Third Pyramid. There are plenty of tents and camp beds to go around for the Investigators, assuming they can claim friendly acquaintance (a 1-point **Archaeology** spend) with any member of the Expedition. If all else fails, a 2-point **Credit Rating** spend by any Investigator with Credit Rating 5+ creates vague school or family ties to Will Mannering, who is too well-bred to ask a lot of fool questions of a fellow American. (Or a fellow Briton; if the Investigators are primarily British subjects, Will Mannering can come from England rather than New England.)

Some or all Investigators might rather stay in civilized accommodations at the Mena House Hotel, which is an excellent hotel (cliente Credit Rating 4+) in the town of Giza, about half an hour’s drive from the dig site.

The expedition head is the Egyptologist Dr. Ronald Galloway, of Miskatonic University. (If the Keeper is running an “Armitage Inquiry” campaign, Professor Galloway has experience uncovered

mystifying Mythos lore on earlier digs; this scenario can be the Investigators’ opportunity to draw him into the Inquiry conspiracy.) Galloway is in his late fifties, with thinning, grayish hair and a dry, schoolmasterish wit. However, he is also an experienced veteran of the desert, and runs his dig with firm competence. A consummate, careful academic, he responds best to **Archaeology** as an Interpersonal ability -- shop talk, in other words. He reads Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, of course, and can serve as a walking NPC ability pool for Archaeology, Languages, and so forth if need be.

His right-hand man with the native Egyptian workers is Muharab, the straw boss. Muharab is a Muslim, with the colorful Backlot Egyptian habit of expostulating “By Allah!” and calling everyone “effendi.” Despite this, he will react with superstitious terror once the attacks begin, talking about the “old gods of the land.” He speaks both Arabic and English, and responds well to **Flattery** complimenting him on his command of the dig site or on his sharp, shiny white Western-style suit. He wears a native keffiyeh, or head-cloth, on his bald head.

Fletcher Norton is Dr. Galloway’s officious, irritating senior assistant. He is roughly the same age, build, and coloring as the target Investigator. Obviously, the Keeper should describe him independently rather than drawing everyone’s attention to the resemblance. (That said, with some groups, especially those who don’t have strong Investigator-images in their heads, a little bit of “He’s a reedy guy, almost as scrawny as Willoughby” will set the hook better despite being somewhat clumsy.) Depending on the target Investigator’s age, Norton is either a fellow professor from another university (an older target), an adjunct professor at Miskatonic (a target aged 25-45), or a graduate student at Miskatonic (a younger target). Regardless of his age

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Death Across The Nile



or position, he is full of resentment and frustration, made worse by his definitely unrequited crush on Zita. (If the target is female, Felicia Norton has an even more awkward crush on Dr. Freund.) To anyone except Galloway (to whom he sucks up embarrassingly) or Zita (over whom he moons incompetently) he responds only to **Intimidation**, and not particularly well to that.

Will Mannering, by contrast, is easy-going and pleasant to all and sundry. The amiable sprig of a good New England family (or English family, as noted above), he is a sort of “permanent student” attached for the moment to Dr. Galloway. He has the good-but-dented looks, crooked smile, and Brylcreemed hair of the second lead in a B-picture. He will happily volunteer to share his tent with the target Investigator, and won’t take no for an answer. (If the target is female, he will gallantly offer his tent to her, and will sleep next door.) Pretty much any sensible Interpersonal ability except Intimidation works with Will, but none should be necessary. He’s just that nice a guy.

The dig has four or five other background white guys who stand around and look vaguely academic, but if they start interacting with the Investigators things have gotten well and truly off track. The other interesting characters are based at Mena House: Dr. Freund, the mesmerist, and his alluring daughter Zita. Dr. Freund is a creepy, lugubrious German with ink-black hair in a widow’s peak who practices “past life mesmeric regression” for the rich tourists who come to see the Pyramids. He has dark, hollow eyes that never seem to blink, a sallow complexion, and sunken cheeks stretched tight over high cheekbones. Keepers may wish to hint at connections to the Ahnenerbe (or more conventionally, to the Nazi military intelligence unit, Abwehr), but for the purposes of this scenario at least, he provides nothing but a secondary route to solving the mystery. He responds to **Streetwise** from fellow con men, and to **Credit Rating** from potential clients, but like most charlatans he’s too stooled to the rogue for **Assess Honesty** to read casually. He may be lurking around the dig trying

to get background information for his sessions, or he may be introduced if any Investigators are staying at Mena House, or if they follow Zita back there.

Zita, his dark-haired, flashing-eyed minx of a daughter, acts as her father’s drummer and shill. Her loyalty to him is solid, but she is at the troublesome rebellious age -- and she has fallen coiffed head over Milan heels for the target Investigator at first sight. (Perhaps she just likes bad boys, or perhaps being sorcerously sought after by Nitocris has made the target attractive to other girls as well. It happens.) She has no compunction against humiliating Norton to amuse her new inamorata. It is up to the Keeper to determine where, exactly, her compunctions begin. If the target Investigator is nervous at Zita’s intentions (as well he might be), **Assess Honesty** should assure him of their sincerity, if not of their purity. For the target Investigator, **Flattery** or **Intimidation** will both get results, and a well-roleplayed 1-point spend will get her to betray her father; for anyone else except Norton, Flattery is

fine for conversation, at least. When the Investigators first meet her, Zita may be at the dig at Norton's invitation looking bored and malicious, or Norton may drag them off to Mena House to call on her with him, or Mannering may have offered to stand everyone a drink at the Mena House bar and accidentally stumbled over Norton incompetently pitching woo at Zita.

All About Nitocris

It may take one or two scenes to get all the NPCs introduced in satisfactory fashion. At some point during those scenes, it's likely that the topic of Nitocris will come up; the Galloway Expedition is, after all, looking for her tomb.

The Keeper can choose how to unveil the various Nitocris lore set forth here. If no Investigator has the relevant abilities, then they can pick up this information from the informants listed in parentheses. Rather than a single "info-dump," it might be possible to work the exposition into other scenes establishing relationships with NPCs. For example, Norton might patronizingly lecture Mannering (or an Investigator) on the archaeological aspects of Nitocris, or Professor Galloway might listen with interested approval to an Investigator using an Archaeology spend to impress him with Keeper-provided knowledge. Certainly, an Investigator with the requisite abilities can already know the corresponding information; information available with a spend from the relevant ability (or from interacting with an NPC without a spend) is indicated. Exposition-starved Investigators can visit Cairo University, where **Library Use** and a day's research will uncover everything in the History and Archaeology sections. If nothing else, either Dr. Freund or Muharab should tell the target Investigator about Nitocris' ghost haunting the Third Pyramid.

History: According to the chronicles, Nitocris was the queen of Egypt after her brother-husband Menthuthopis was killed. She invited all the Egyptian nobles complicit in his death to a great feast in an underground chamber, and then let in the Nile by a secret conduit, drowning them all. *With a 1-point spend:* After her death (or disappearance), the Old Kingdom of Egypt came to an end in chaos and warfare. *With a 2-point spend:* The Greek historian Herodotus goes on to say that "to escape their vengeance" Nitocris then "threw herself into a room full of burning coals" and was never heard of again. (Will Mannering or Dr. Freund)

Archaeology: According to the Turin King List, Nitocris (or "Nit-aqert" in Egyptian) was the last Pharaoh of the Sixth Dynasty, around 2180 B.C. The ancient historian Manetho claims she is buried in the Third Pyramid, and some Egyptologists believe she expanded the Third Pyramid complex for her tomb. *With a 1-point spend:* There is every chance of finding her mummy, since coincidentally mummification begins during the Sixth Dynasty, possibly when Nitocris was alive. *With a 2-point spend:* Mysteriously, there are no other records, or any monuments, of her reign anywhere in Egypt. The Egyptians only made "un-persons" out of pharaohs guilty of the most heinous of blasphemies against the gods. (Professor Galloway or Fletcher Norton)

Occult: Nitocris was a sorceress of uncommon beauty and cruelty. Her brother-husband was killed by the priests of Osiris, for uncovering their sacred rites of immortality at her bidding. Her ghost still haunts the Third Pyramid. ("You will know it when you feel her eyes upon you, late at night, under the moon," promises Dr. Freund or Muharab to the target Investigator.) *With a 1-point spend:* According to Arab lore, Nitocris used the arts of mummification to make herself immortal; she rules the underground

kingdom of the ghouls as their Queen. *With a 2-point spend:* She had a magic mirror that could see "other planes of being" (Dr. Freund or Muharab)

This last material is just for the players' enjoyment, and should only be mentioned at the tail end of the game if anyone cares: Since the 1930s, scholars have generally decided that the "Nit-aqert" in the Turin King List is actually a misplaced, mistranslated piece of papyrus referring to a later, male pharaoh, Netjerkare Siptah I. (Where Manetho got the name remains unknown.) Since Nitocris may not have actually existed, her tomb has not been uncovered; the tomb in this scenario is based on that of another mysterious female pharaoh, Khentkawes, the widow (or daughter, or both) of Menkaure, the actual builder of the Third Pyramid. Mummies predating the Sixth Dynasty have also come to light since the 1930s. All that said, however, the years at the end of the Sixth Dynasty, and the collapse of the Old Kingdom in general, still remain essentially blank to Egyptologists.

The First Attack

It is up to the Keeper whether to trigger a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 3) for the target Investigator during his first night at the dig. A success gives the impression of being "watched closely, from a great distance." This can follow immediately after hearing that Nitocris' ghost haunts the Pyramid, or come in a later scene, depending on timing and rhythm.

The other thing that needs to happen is: Fletcher Norton asks to borrow the target Investigator's coat, claiming that his got soiled during the day's excavations. **Bargain** ("No answer, no coat") or **Intimidation** gets Norton to reveal that "Zita likes it" and he wants to wear it on a date with her. If the Investigator refuses, Norton will steal it and wear it anyway.

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This, it transpires, is poor decision-making on Norton's part. The Investigators hear a woman's scream from the east (the direction of the Nile) and arrive at a stretch of limestone wall and causeway sticking up out of the desert a few hundred yards from the dig site. Here, they see Zita having hysterics over a dead body wearing the target Investigator's jacket. When she sees the target alive and well, she flings herself into his arms sobbing her relief. "Oh, thank God! I thought it was you! I thought you'd been killed!" Rolling the body over (Norton really did look like the target, especially from behind) reveals Norton, dead. The grotesque scene inspires a 3-point Stability test.

Forensics is barely needed to determine cause of death: Norton's rib cage has been smashed in, his sternum simply split. Norton's heart is open to the air, with a great slit across it; a 1-point spend of either **Forensics** or **Outdoorsman** will indicate that the slit was torn by a claw, not a knife. From the blood splatter, **Forensics** or **Evidence Collection** will determine that the attack must have come from behind. Forensics will also note a premortem head wound (also from behind, looking like a clawhammer attack that smashed the skull in) and a number of postmortem mutilations of the body.

The blood also has footprints in it, seemingly hopelessly intermingled. There are Zita's prints and less-definable ones, both easily distinguished with **Evidence Collection**. A 2-point spend with **Outdoorsman** will note that the less-defined prints are shaped like canine paws, but elongated and muffled. On the causeway wall, hieroglyphics have been painted in Norton's blood. A close examination (**Evidence Collection** or **Art: Painting** or **Art: Calligraphy**) indicates that the "brush" was a rag with a heavy point (like a steel pen nib, only thicker) inside it. Looking at the

hieroglyphics also triggers faintness and a strong sensation of falling forward, along with a 3-point Stability test, for the target Investigator.

With **Languages: Ancient Egyptian** (or by copying the hieroglyphics down and showing them to Professor Galloway), their meaning can be revealed: "For the love of Nitocris, I do this." A 1-point spend reveals that the word "love" includes the character *ba* meaning "soul" or "heart."

Zita's story, when she is calm enough to tell it (**Reassurance**), is simple: Norton asked her to meet him at the causeway earlier tonight. She kept him waiting, as was her custom, and when she got here, she found what she thought was the target Investigator dead.

If the Investigators think to ask any of the native workmen if they saw or heard anything (**Reassurance** that they won't get into trouble, **Bargain** to offer a few piasters for information, or even **Cop Talk** to make them think they *will* get in trouble if they don't spill), they will describe hearing a sort of "howl" from the direction of the river earlier. Investigators with **Languages: Arabic** will hear that the "howl" also had "the sadness of a soul in torment" to it. Nobody heard anything from the causeway; Norton picked it so that nobody could overhear his attempts at romance, after all.

None of these clues are technically core clues, as the story continues with the second attack regardless.

Visiting Dr. Freund

Before or after the attack, the Investigators may decide to visit one of Dr. Freund's "mesmeric consultations," either covertly (**Stealth**) or by wangling an invitation from Zita (**Flattery**). This whole section is not strictly necessary to solve the mystery or further the plot, but Keepers under less time pressure

may wish to introduce it, or accede to player requests.

Freund works in his hotel suite at the Mena House, festooned with hangings and carpets and genie-lamps and Egyptian bric-a-brac of all kinds. **Antiquarian** suggests that some of the stuff is genuine, but likely looted from low-rent tombs or picked up for practically nothing at the bazaar in Cairo. A **Library Use** applied to the books in Freund's rooms show a heavy collection of occult reference works, palm-reading and Tarot guides, and general histories of ancient Egypt, mostly in German.

He runs as many clients as he can through sessions in a given evening's sitting. He sits behind a damask-draped table, wearing his severe German suit, and gazes into the client's eyes through the smoke of a small glowing charcoal brazier. **Streetwise** indicates that Freund's routine is basic cold-reading stuff; fake romance for the rich and gullible.

The only exception occurs at the Keeper's discretion, if she thinks the story could use another kick: A society matron, Mrs. Pillowby, after a twittering description of the odd dreams and compulsions that "dragged, yes, Dr. Freund, you wouldn't countenance it, oh but of course you would, you understand such things, *dragged* me here" actually goes into a trance. This isn't that unusual (**Hypnosis** or **Medicine**) given the setting, but while in trance, she talks unbidden about her past life as the body slave of the Pharaoh Meren-Ra. (**Archaeology** or **History** will note this as the "throne name" of Menthuthophis, a very unlikely piece of trivia for Mrs. Pillowby to know.) As the session reaches its climax, Mrs. Pillowby seems more and more terrified: "He is dead, by the blows the priests struck against his wife! Nit-Aqert! Osiris' knives were meant for her but now she is Great King of the

Two Lands! His *ba* was but her shield and roadway to power! She is watching me! Watching me *now!*" And at that peroration, Mrs. Pillowby jumps bolt upright, shrieks, and faints dead away. A quick **Assess Honesty** indicates that Freund is as surprised as anyone at this result from his charlatany. She will be found dead (an overdose of chloral hydrate) on the night of the next attack, whenever that is.

Another option that may occur to the Investigators is for one of them to undergo past-life regression. They may get client appointments (**Credit Rating**), or go through Zita. For anyone but the target Investigator, there is no result except a moderately amusing cold-reading session. (An Investigator already suffering from delusions or other mental illness may still come to believe in his farcical "past life," of course.) For the target Investigator, willingly being mesmerized by Dr. Freund results in a vertiginous sensation of falling. The target "awakens" in ancient Egypt, addressing a crowd of people in priestly robes. The Third Pyramid, brand new and covered with blinding black marble, shines in the background. The crowd looks angry and shouts occasional imprecations in the name of Osiris. Horrible, monstrous, jackal-headed beings in armor hold flails, whips, and knives, keeping the crowd in line.

The target knows that he is the Pharaoh Nemty-em-Saph, who rules as Meren-Ra. (**History** or **Archaeology** recalls that Nemty-em-Saph is the Egyptian version of the name Menthuophis.) He threatens the crowd with slavery and withdraws to an inner room, where a hauntingly beautiful woman awaits him, wearing a filmy robe and a black mirror hanging from a golden chain around her neck. (If the Keeper has used the "pull" method, the target recognizes her from his dreams. She is, of course, Nitocris. If the target asks what he sees in the mirror, the response is: "Yourself.") She leads him along a passage to a hidden

chamber, the walls of which are covered with painted bas-reliefs. Inside is another jackal-headed being, but rather than being dressed like a guard, he is dressed like a priest. He holds a black dagger that seems to drink the light from the room.

About those bas-reliefs: Nitocris is painted on the left-hand wall, torturing a man to death; as Nemty-em-Saph can easily read, the man's *ka* (his life force) is depicted as a weird, cone-shaped monstrosity. The bas-relief then shows Nitocris holding a strange spiral design in her hand; this design is replicated in the burning braziers all around the walls. They shed far more light, far more harshly, than they should. The back wall is blank, but the wall on the right-hand side depicts three gods with the heads of jackals, apes, and monsters (**Archaeology**, **Occult** or **Theology** identifies Anubis, the god of the underworld, Thoth, the god of magic, and Set, the god of darkness; again, Nemty-em-Saph knows these things automatically) as well as an unknown being depicted as a night-black, masked Sphinx. The gods are depicted as smaller and lower than the Sphinx, which indicates (to **Theology**, **Archaeology**, or **Art History**) their subordination to It.

The mesmeric dream continues: Nitocris takes the black dagger from the jackal-priest (who the target knows is Anankaresh, the High Priest of Anubis) and cuts herself and the target over the left breast. "Your heart's blood is my heart's blood," she intones. "Our hearts are as one; your *ba* and mine are joined forever." She smears blood from both wounds onto her fingers, into each wound, and on both their mouths, winding sinuously closer to the target. Her mouth closes on his as he gasps in helpless, sanguinary ecstasy . . . The clouds of brazier smoke well up, and the target awakens again back in Dr. Freund's sitting room and the 1930s. The whole experience results in a splitting headache, a fading pain in the

heart, and a 5-point Stability test for the target Investigator.

The other Investigators, of course, see none of this. The target at first begins gabbling in Ancient Egyptian, (**Languages: Ancient Egyptian** indicates that the speech is a proclamation of defiance of the priests of Osiris) and then slowly returns to English as the target's present-day body, brain, and vocal cords regain some control. From this point, the target can describe what he's seeing and experiencing; if no Investigator draws him out with leading questions ("What is painted on the walls?"), Dr. Freund can do so.

Cthulhu Mythos recognizes the guards (and Anankaresh) as ghouls, the cone-shaped *ka* as depicting a member of the Great Race of Yith, and the Black Sphinx as a form of Nyarlathotep. Realizing the level of Mythos involvement in Nitocris' reign -- and by extension, the target Investigator's own past life -- results in an automatic loss of 3 Stability and 1 Sanity pool points.

More rewardingly, **Archaeology** can pinpoint the place from which the target addressed the crowd -- the site of Nitocris' temple-palace!

After the murders begin, the Investigators may also suggest a séance to contact Fletcher Norton or Will Mannering. Dr. Freund will refuse, pleading that his gifts are insufficient to such a task. (As indeed they are, allowing **Assess Honesty** to confirm this.) If the Keeper has already gone through the Pillowby or target Investigator sessions, Freund will still refuse, but with an undertone of genuine and uncharacteristic fear, strong enough for **Assess Honesty** to detect. If they somehow force him to proceed, he will indeed be unable to contact either victim -- their souls have been destroyed by Anankaresh's attack. At the Keeper's discretion, however, he may open himself up to possession by the roving *ba* of Anankaresh. The possessed Freund

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immediately attacks the Investigators with teeth and nails, fighting and howling in Ancient Egyptian until he is killed all the way to -12 Health. He suffers no penalties for any injuries. The possession, attack, and seeing Freund continue to frenzy despite any number of should-be fatal wounds, causes a 5-point Stability test in any Investigator victims or witnesses.

Dr. Freund

Hypnosis 7, Health 4, Scuffling 6
Weapons: -2 (teeth and fingernails);
while possessed by Anankaresh,
Dr. Freund can engage in two nail
scrapes and one bite each round.



The Second Attack

Either the next night, or the next night in which nothing else happens, Zita invites the target Investigator to meet her at the Mena House. She may use her feminine wiles (if the player has demonstrated his Investigator's susceptibility to such), or a promise of information about her father, or a sudden recollection of something else about Norton's killing. Her pretext is irrelevant, as her motive is to get the target Investigator alone at night in a romantic setting. If other Investigators come along, the evening is spoiled, but the scene is likely improved. If the target Investigator categorically refuses to meet her, skip ahead to the Third Attack, but really, it's dramatically much better if he succumbs to Zita's importuning. Zita should be able to appeal, not merely to prurience, but to Drives such as Antiquarianism ("I don't think you've seen my father's real antiquities, have you?"), Curiosity, Duty ("I feel so scared here by myself"), or Ennui, at the very least. When he does meet her, she will confess (among other things) to a premonition of danger around him, a confession that **Assess**

Honesty indicates is genuine.

The scene actually begins when Will Mannering is attacked in the tent that he and the target Investigator share. Any Investigators remaining at the dig site can get a **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 6) to notice a stiff, shadowy figure moving through the tents. Shooting the mysterious figure, if the Investigators have been carrying their firearms with them everywhere in defiance of Egyptian law, produces no visible result except panicking the whole dig and slowing pursuit of the thing.

Investigators who succeeded in the **Sense Trouble** test and chased after (**Shadowing** or **Athletics**, but the result is the same either way) the figure arrive to see the thing -- a horrific, bandage-wrapped, canine-headed monstrosity -- creep up behind Mannering. The mummy seems to be sniffing like a hound, but silently. If they do not immediately attack it, it will smash Mannering's head in from behind and then move to tear out the dying man's heart. If they do immediately attack it, combat ensues. The mummy will attack the target Investigator (if he is unaccountably present; again, see the Third Attack) or Will Mannering, seeking in either case to punch in the rib cage and expose the heart. If it gets Mannering's heart during this combat, it will run off with it to set up the Third Attack.

Will Mannering

Athletics 6, Health 1 (dramatic
vulnerability for plot purposes),
Scuffling 3

The thing is a mummified ghoul from the buried temple of Nitocris, reanimated by the *ba* of the ghoul-priest Anankaresh, a *ba* flung forward in time by the rites of Nitocris. It is wrapped in moldering linen strips, through which a leathery amalgam of skin and hair shines dully. Its head more resembles a jackal than a hound, and its jaw and muzzle

are wrapped and resined individually to allow it to howl and bite in the afterlife.

If the Investigators fail the first one, the Keeper can call for a second **Sense Trouble** test at Difficulty 4, to try and notice the blood-spattered mummy as it leaves the scene. This combat can take place anywhere in the dig site (such as deep in an investigation trench), through a maze of tents, or in the desert east of the dig under the watchful Pyramid.

If the Investigators failed the first Sense Trouble test, or only intercepted the mummy as it left the dig site, or no Investigators were at the dig site, they return from Mena House (or wherever) to find Will Mannering dead in the target Investigator's tent. **Forensics** reveals that his head was smashed in from behind, but before he could die, his chest was torn open and his heart removed. The tent has been ransacked, seemingly at random; a strange heart-shaped design is painted in bloody hieroglyphics on the tent's ceiling. **Evidence Collection** finds another footprint similar to that from the attack on Norton; a 1-point spend indicates that the ground by one of the four tent poles has been disturbed.

When the target Investigator enters the tent, he feels a clawed hand seize his heart, and must make a 5-point Stability test. If he fails, he loses 1 point of Health, in addition to the Stability loss. The pain is least at the center of the tent, directly under the bloody hieroglyph. To leave the tent again, the target Investigator must make another 5-point Stability test, against a Difficulty 6. He is caught in Anankaresh's *ba* trap.

Archaeology or **Languages: Ancient Egyptian** can read the hieroglyphics; they are the birth-name, Horus-name, and throne-name of Menthuphis, written inside a large *ba* glyph in the shape of a heart. With a 1-point **Occult** spend, the purpose

Ghoul Mummy

Slightly slower than when alive, a mummified ghoul can make two claw attacks against the same target *or* one bite attack in a given round. It does not regenerate Scuffling or Health.

This scenario is intended to play out over several separate mummy attacks; the Keeper may wish to tweak these statistics up or down to avoid a walkover by either side. It's best, however, to err on the side of letting the Investigators more easily destroy the mummy the first time, with each subsequent victory becoming more and more difficult as they expend Health and pool points.

Any Investigator who has been close enough to a mummy to fight it (or has been downwind of it undetected) has smelled the powerful odor of pitch, natron, and incense it gives off. **Chemistry** postulates that anything that smells like that is probably highly flammable; even without smelling a mummy, a 2-point **Archaeology** spend concurs.

Abilities: Athletics 9, Health 7, Scuffling 11

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1 (+3 in the Temple of Nitocris)

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (claw), -1 (bite); if two bite attacks in a row succeed against the same victim, the second attack does double (worrying) damage. The ghoul mummy needs not roll to hit that victim thereafter, but will continue to do normal damage to him each round until killed.

Armor: -2 vs. any (leathery skin); impaling weapons including bullets are useless; fire does +1 normal damage.

of the glyph can be deduced: a magical seal, or trap, keeping Menthuophis' *ba* imprisoned inside another heart. A 2-point Occult spend will reveal the above, and also warn that attempting to burn, leach, or otherwise destroy the hieroglyphics will result in immediate burns, leachings, or similar destruction of the trapped target Investigator's heart.

Digging up that disturbed ground, meanwhile, uncovers the target Investigator's shaving mug, buried in the ground with a chunk of Will Mannering's heart stuffed inside it. Buried at the other three corners of the tent are a cigar box, a water jug, and a shoe, each also containing a chunk of Mannering's heart. When any two adjacent corners have been dug up and the heart chunks burnt (1-point **Occult** spend, or **Archaeology** or **Theology** to know that the heart is the seat of the *ba*), the trap dissipates. If all four chunks are burnt, Mannering's voice is clearly heard screaming as his soul dissipates. (5-point Stability test for the Investigator who burnt the last chunk; 4-point tests for all earwitnesses to the shriek.)

Interrogating the workmen produces much the same results as after the first attack, along with a fleeting description of the attacking ghoul-mummy and the information that it came from (and departed to, if its attack on Mannering was successful) the east, toward the Nile. Everybody is always hearing muffled thumps and such amid the general noise -- it's a tent city, in an archaeological dig, full of men with pickaxes.

Handy Weapons

An archaeological dig is full of things that can easily become wonderful mummy-killing weapons. For example:

Knife, straight razor, claw hammer, two-by-four, hand axe: -1 damage

Shovel, entrenching tool, crowbar, maul, pickaxe, piece of rebar: +0 damage

Torches (-1 damage; +0 against mummies) are easily whipped up anywhere in the Backlot world. A thrown kerosene lantern (close range only) only does -1 damage (+0 against mummies), but the spilled kerosene will keep burning for three more rounds for a further -1 (+0 against mummies) damage each time.

Finally, the Keeper is welcome to add swords, battle-axes, maces, war-flails, or any other martial equipment (all +0, since they're made of bronze, not steel) to the impedimenta in the Temple of Nitocris, if she feels like it, or if she believes that the combats have been too deadly thus far.



The Third Attack

Whether or not the target Investigator has been snared by the *ba* trap, Anankaresh will return, even if his host mummy was destroyed. Anankaresh, after all, is back in the Sixth Dynasty; he merely sends his *ba* forward in time again to reanimate another mummy from the temple of Nitocris.

The night after Mannering's death, another ghoul-mummy creeps into the dig site from the east. If the Investigators are watching for its approach from inside the tent, they may make a **Sense Trouble** test at Difficulty 5 to get one round's notice of the mummy's approach: "A shadow suddenly looms up behind the canvas wall!"

If they are watching the tent itself from outside, have the relevant Investigator(s) make a **Stealth** test at Difficulty 5. If they succeed, they see the mummy silently creep up to the outside wall of the tent from the shadows, and have one round to attack the thing outside. If they fail, it eludes their watchful eyes and tries silently killing the nearest watcher from behind instead. He gets a **Sense Trouble** at Difficulty 5 to smell the natron, pitch, and incense behind him before being attacked; if he fails, the ghoul mummy has surprise and one round to attack in which the Investigator can do nothing except bleed.

If they are outside the dig site at night watching the eastern approaches to the camp, the watchers hear the mournful howl of the awakening ghoul-mummy echo from the east. About an hour later, they get a **Sense Trouble** at Difficulty 4 to spot the mummy slinking through the dark desert; they may attack it, use **Shadowing** (Difficulty 5) to follow it into camp, fire shots to warn their comrades, or do anything else they wish with their positional advantage.

The mummy's entry into the tent, if the *ba* trap has not yet been disarmed, results in a puff of fire from the four chunks of



Mannering's heart; Mannering's voice is clearly heard screaming as his soul is torn to shreds forever.

Combat doubtless ensues, during which the ghoul mummy will bend every effort to wound the target Investigator in the chest over the heart. If the target Investigator is not present, the ghoul will attempt to kill or maim as many Investigators as possible, and then move

on to attack the target.

If the target Investigator is reduced to -1 Health or below, the mummy has wounded the target Investigator in the chest, and begins to bark a chant in Ancient Egyptian. (Even without the **Languages: Ancient Egyptian** ability, witnesses recognize the word "Nit-aqret"; with it, the chant is decipherable: "Nit-aqret and Nemty-

em-Saph, your hearts are joined. The *ba* of Nit-aqret and the *ba* of Nemty-em-Saph, meet in the Door of Yith. *Ba* and *ba*, love and love, Nit-aqret and Nemty-em-Saph, heart and heart, joined and eternal.”) It cannot attack during the chant, which lasts long enough for the other Investigators to destroy it. If the other Investigators aren’t around, the mummy doesn’t bother to chant, but batters the target Investigator unconscious and kidnaps him.



Finding the Temple of Nitocris

If the mummy has kidnapped the target Investigator, **Outdoorsman** (or **Shadowing**, if the Investigators are on the ball) can track it across the desert back to the hidden Temple of Nitocris. Carrying an unconscious man, the reanimated ghoul leaves deeper tracks that the wind doesn’t erase.

If not, there are other ways to get the Temple (a **core clue**) found:

- The target Investigator’s past life memories (if he’s been regressed by Dr. Freund) pinpoint the location of the Temple terrace for an Investigator with **Archaeology**. (“Hold on ... He said the Third Pyramid was *right behind* the gate!”)
- The target Investigator can have a dream of his past life, this one conveniently revealing the location of the Temple. If the Keeper hasn’t run the “Visiting Dr. Freund” (most likely because the players haven’t thought of it), this dream can be the same as the past-life vision from that section. In this instance, the dream is brought on by the attack, and by the partial ritual

the mummy performed. (“That night, your wound aches, burns, and itches. You toss and turn in sweat-soaked nightmare. You seem to fall away from your bed, and see yourself on a balcony, addressing a crowd in Egyptian robes...”) Since it’s “only a dream,” it only induces the 5-point Stability test without any Mythos shock.

- An academic Investigator needing spotlight time can simply deduce its location with a 2-point **Archaeology** spend: the Temple of Nitocris has to be on low ground by the ancient course of the Nile, or her trick with the drowned banquet room wouldn’t work. It has to be within a few degrees of east of the Third Pyramid, or Manetho wouldn’t have placed her there.
- Better yet, two Investigators working together with a 1-point spend apiece, one in **Archaeology** and one with **Geology**; Geology can find the ancient course of the Nile, recognize signs of ancient canal digging, and identify a rock formation in the right area that Nitocris would have to use as a foundation, or else the whole Temple would subside.
- If the players haven’t yet tried it, **Outdoorsman** tracks the mummy across the desert anyway. Muharab can be approached to recommend a Bedouin tracker if the Investigators don’t have the skill. (“One of the best! He’s half camel and half bloodhound, Allah be praised!”)
- The target Investigator can feel a tugging, or pulling at his heart, leading across the desert and eventually pointing to the Temple. This is Anankaresh trying a summoning spell. The Keeper may even want to break out that

old 1930s horror standard, the “sleepwalker into danger.” Make sure the target Investigator wakes up his bunkmates when he leaves; give them a nice low **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 2) to notice him leaving. **Psychoanalysis** reminds the Investigators that waking up a sleepwalker is horribly dangerous, so they can **Shadow** him (Difficulty 2) across the desert.

- In the worst case scenario, Professor Galloway can uncover a map in one of the Third Pyramid mastabas that shows the location of the Temple of Nitocris. He’s bound and determined to go, and he won’t listen to any nursery stories about mummies. (Even if he’s seen one.) As far as he’s concerned, Norton and Mannering were killed by religious fanatics trying to frighten him away from the temple; he won’t stand for it. (In an “Armitage Inquiry” campaign, Galloway suspects that the temple is a Mythos outpost, and feels his own Drive to investigate it. His skepticism is just a cover story.)

Getting the target Investigator into the Temple is a matter of Drive; almost any Drive will work, but especially Adventure, Antiquarianism, Arrogance (“I was ruler there once!”), Curiosity, Duty (to Professor Galloway and the other innocents on the dig), Revenge (“That jackal-headed monster is going to pay, alongside that she-devil!”), Scholarship, and Thirst for Knowledge. The same holds more generally true of the other Investigators, should any of them seem balky.



In the Temple

Finding the entrance to the Temple is a matter of simple **Archaeology (core clue)** and either a convenient dust storm raised by Anankaresh's magic (if the Investigators are going there alone) or a day's labor by the Egyptian workers (if Galloway has relocated the dig there). However the sands are cleared, they reveal a large plaza with an ornamental gateway, two immense stone doors, on its south side. Over the gateway, the hieroglyphics have been chiseled off. When the target Investigator looks at them, however, they are visible; they read "Nitocris, Great Wife of Menthuophis, King of Upper and Lower Egypt." The massive doorway opens when the target Investigator has read those words.

Inside the gateway, the Temple is mostly made up of a maze of narrow corridors and cramped chambers. Any Investigator who has ever been inside a ghoulish warren shudders in unwelcome reminiscence, and must make a 2-point Stability test. The resemblance is strengthened by the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of mummified ghouls in the Temple; every hallway has one or two in a niche, every chamber has a few leaned against the walls. (**Evidence Collection** will notice that at least one niche is missing a mummy, and that the dust on the floor nearby has been disturbed.) **Chemistry, Biology, and Medicine** all agree that setting every mummy in the Temple on fire will rapidly exhaust the oxygen here and poison everybody inside. The Temple as a whole is shaped like a backwards "L" (or a forwards "J") with the gateway in the "heel." The foot of the L points south, and the leg of the L points west. Should the Investigators attempt to leave, the doors will (of course) swing shut; if they are part of a larger party including Galloway and other cannon fodder, Galloway will refuse to leave, triggering Duty and Scholarship Drives (at least) among the Investigators.

The shorter south wing contains a large and ornate temple to Anubis. (**Occult, Theology, or Archaeology; Theology and Cthulhu Mythos** conveys that it is also a temple to Mordiggian, the Great Ghoul, though this revelation costs no Stability.) It also has a richly decorated corridor leading down three flights of rock-cut stairs to a sealed chamber. (**Geology and Architecture** both confirm that it leads below the level of the Nile.) Its seal reads "By the Will of Nitocris, Great Wife of Menthuophis, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Osiris Is Drowned By the Nile. Disturb Him At Your Peril." The basalt door is counterweighted, and cannot be opened by anything short of dynamite. (Should the Investigators somehow not yet have heard the story of Nitocris' drowned feast on p. 30, **History** will recall it.)

The longer west wing contains large and ornate temples to Thoth and Set. (**Occult, Theology, or Archaeology; Theology and Cthulhu Mythos** conveys that they are also temples to Yog-Sothoth and Tsathoggua, though this revelation costs no Stability.) If the target Investigator has had either a past life regression or an expository dream, he knows the hidden chamber of the braziers is in the west wing, where to find it, and how to open it. If not, after a suitable amount of wandering around (or being chased by mummies), **Architecture** or **Archaeology** can find the hidden chamber (**core clue**). Opening the chamber with a **Mechanical Repair** test is only Difficulty 3, but it takes one round for every point of the test result under 7. (For example, if Martin spends 2 points and rolls a 4, that's a total of 6, which succeeds by 3. Opening the door thus takes 4 rounds, or 7-3.)

Why count door openings in rounds? Because once the Investigators are all well and truly inside the Temple, Anankaresh begins sending his *ba* into mummy after mummy. Only one ghoul

mummy will animate at any given time, but an attack can come from almost anywhere. The Keeper may want to lower each mummy's Health to 1 or 2 to allow for a wave of mummy attacks, or just stick with one uber-mummy and keep the spares in reserve. It's up to the Keeper how long this goes on; Anankaresh is toying with his victim, the target Investigator. The mummy attackers no longer howl mournfully as they awake; instead, they curse the target Investigator in Ancient Egyptian: "Unworthy scum!" "Debauched weakling!" "Contemptible human worm!" "You are not worthy of her love, yet she follows you across the years!" Even if no remaining Investigator has the relevant **Languages** ability, the target Investigator can somehow understand the taunts as his two personalities begin to merge again.

There are no wooden doors remaining in the whole Temple complex (**Biology** notes they have likely rotted from the Nile air from beneath the Temple, then desiccated and fallen apart in the last 4,000 years) and the only stone doors are the ones at the entrance and the door to the hidden chamber of the braziers.

Eventually, the Investigators will want to hie themselves to the hidden chamber, if only because it's the only place they can block off the mummy. A mummy can spend 4 Athletics points in any round to batter at the door; when the door has absorbed 20 points, it will be forced open. Likewise, any two Investigators with a priceless stone statue used as a battering ram can Cooperate on an **Athletics** test should Mechanical Repair somehow fail them. The die result does count against the 20 points. (For example, Martin and Willoughby, Athletics 8 and 2 respectively, are trying to batter the door in. As leader, Martin commits 6 points, Willoughby commits his maximum of 2, for a total of 7 (subtracting 1 from the followers' points as per p. 58 of *Trail of Cthulhu*). Martin rolls a 4, reaching 11.

Only 9 to go!) After being battered in, the door cannot be effectively shut.

Inside, the hidden chamber of the braziers is much as the vision on p. 36 describes it, with two exceptions. First, there is an enormous stone sarcophagus in the middle of the room; its cover shows a man in a jackal mask. It can be shoved across the floor to blockade the doorway with a total Athletics commitment of 40, and up to four Investigators can Cooperate to shove it. Use the same procedure as door-battering, above. If it blocks the doorway, it will take a mummy outside an hour or two to cut through with a ceremonial axe. The name on the sarcophagus is of course “Anankaresh, Beloved Slave of Anubis, Slave of Nitocris.”

The second major change is that the middle wall now shows a painted relief. At the top, Nitocris and Menthuophis challenge the priests of Osiris and then exchange their hearts’ blood. Then, the relief depicts a priest stabbing Menthuophis, Nitocris’ drowning of the feasters in revenge, and then Nitocris consulting with Anankaresh. Nitocris is then shown looking into the light of a brazier and seeing the target Investigator, depicted in 1930s garb but labeled with the cartouche of Menthuophis. Anankaresh is shown with his *ba* rising out of his heart and traveling into a mummy; the rest of the relief shows the major events of the adventure down to the present. The final image shows Nitocris walking into the chamber of braziers and flinging herself through the light into the target Investigator’s body, followed by a gigantic Nitocris looming over many worshipful slaves also in 1930s garb. Carefully reading the entire set of wall paintings requires Languages: Ancient Egyptian (or a past life as a pharaoh) but adds +1 to an Investigator’s Cthulhu Mythos. At the Keeper’s discretion, it may also teach the Dho-Hna Formula. The braziers are corroded, but intact;

casting the spell as taught here will require a polished such brazier full of very specialized charcoal; neither polish nor charcoal are available. Careful **Photography** will capture the bas-reliefs in three shots.

Seeing this fate, along with his undeniable image carved into the wall of a 4,000-year-old Egyptian tomb, is definitely a Mythos shock for the target Investigator; if he hasn’t yet lost any Sanity from the past-life regression, he loses 4 Stability and 2 Sanity pool points. (6 and 3 if he has “true love” as a Pillar of Sanity.) If he has already lost the Sanity from Freund’s mesmeric vision, he only loses 1 Stability and 1 Sanity pool point.

If the target Investigator was kidnapped after the third attack, the Investigators will still be attacked by serial mummies as they search the Temple looking for their fellow. With **Evidence Collection** or **Outdoorsman** they can follow footprints in the dust, or the sound of chanting, to the hidden chamber.



I Am Dying, Egypt, Dying

Once everything is in readiness for the climax, Anankaresh stops toying around. He begins (or renews) his attack on the target Investigator. This time, once he has opened the wound and reduced his target to -1 Health, his chant takes only 5 rounds to perform. Further, it may be performed by multiple mummies. (*For example, if one mummy gets 2 rounds into the chant before being hacked to pieces, the next mummy will only need to chant for 3 rounds.*) If he finishes the chant, the body of the target Investigator begins to split open at the heart (2 points of damage per round), and a pale, womanly hand reaches out of the bloody cavity. (The target Investigator is howling in agony,

and should it matter at all, must make a 7-point Stability test every round.) It is Nitocris, emerging into the present day from the ancient past, out of the “room of burning coals” where she escaped her enemies’ vengeance. Nitocris is invulnerable to anything the Investigators can possibly do, but it will take her a few rounds to emerge from the target Investigator’s heart.

Possible solutions include:

The Adventurous Solution: Destroy the heart of Anankaresh himself, destroying his *ba* and unmooring him from the world of the living and the dead. Strictly speaking, this must be done before he finishes his chant, although a kindly Keeper can make the mystic backwash from Anankaresh’s death slam the gateway shut before Nitocris can climb completely through.

Anankaresh’s heart, of course, is mummified inside the sarcophagus along with the rest of him. Opening the sarcophagus requires two rounds with crowbars or 10 Athletics points from up to four Investigators cooperating. Once they open his sarcophagus, Anankaresh will drop whichever mummy he was animating and animate his own mummy. His mummy has the same statistics as a normal ghoulish mummy (p. 34), but the ability scores are higher:

Anankaresh

Athletics 11, Health 11, Scuffling 14

In his own body, Anankaresh can open the secret door in one round with no expenditure of Athletics points. By spending 2 Athletics points, he can slide his own sarcophagus away from the door, fling a statue at someone (**Athletics** test; +2 damage; close range only), etc.

Anankaresh’s heart must be destroyed with fire or acid; simply chopping it up is insufficient.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Death Across The Nile

The Tragic Solution: If the target Investigator dies (by his own hand or by a friend's) before the chant is completed, his *ba* flees into the afterlife to await its next reincarnation. Nitocris' plan is thwarted ... for the present.

The Romantic Solution: It may occur (correctly) to the Investigators that Anankaresh is acting like a jealous lover. (The unsubtle Keeper might make one of Anankaresh's rants identical to one of Norton's.) If they can goad Anankaresh into wilder and wilder flights of jealousy at Nitocris' callous rejection of his service, he may leave the 20th century and return to the past to kill Nitocris so that she will be entwined with him forever, instead of with Menthuophis. This will take

knowledge of Ancient Egyptian (or some other language understood by Anankaresh), good roleplaying, and at least one 2-point Interpersonal spend, most likely **Flattery**.

Failure: If the Investigators fail, the consequences are both more and less dire than they might have imagined. When Nitocris fully emerges from the target Investigator's heart, he shrieks (like Mannering's spirit) and dies. Charcoal brazier fumes pour up from the wound, blotting out all sight of Nitocris and Anankaresh. The last things the Investigators see before they faint are Nitocris' eyes, burning with the eerie light of centuries. Her voice echoes, but they cannot decipher her words. When they awaken, she is gone

-- and the Keeper has a new potential direction for the campaign. The Investigators may awaken with Mythos knowledge, post-hypnotic blocks, or mysterious tattoos in hieroglyphics over their hearts...

The Last Frame

In a Pulp game, stopping Nitocris and saving the target Investigator's life is worth a refresh of 2 Sanity points. (Only stopping Nitocris allows only 1 point.) However the Investigators end the story, the painting on the Temple wall changes to depict it.



WHITE BOKOR

"I THOUGHT FOR A WHILE I WAS ALL RIGHT, AND THEN I FELT THE TUGGING AT MY BRAIN. I KNEW WHAT IT WAS -- I OUGHT TO HAVE REMEMBERED. A SOUL LIKE HERS -- OR EPHRAIM'S -- IS HALF DETACHED, AND KEEPS RIGHT ON AFTER DEATH AS LONG AS THE BODY LASTS."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE THING ON THE DOORSTEP"

Victor Halperin's 1932 film *White Zombie* stars Bela Lugosi in his second-greatest performance. Better still, it is in the public domain, which means that this adventure is no mere tribute, but a direct sequel. The story as presented here begins the evening after the final scene of the movie; some Keepers might want to construct an introductory act paralleling the events of the film. (They should be careful not to let the Investigators get far enough ahead that they can derail Legendre's plot, or short-circuit his seeming death, though.) Players can watch the movie either before or after playing this scenario without fear of spoiling anything. This adventure combines the survival horror of the modern zombie film with the weird dreaminess of Halperin's low-budget accidental success.

Introduction

The Spine

Upon their **Arrival at Legendre's Castle**, the Investigators have a scene or two to look the place over until **The First Zombies Arrive**. From that point on, it's a **Race Against**

Death to discover Legendre's secret, find Legendre's body, and **Destroy The Bokor** before the Investigators are swamped by zombies — and perhaps become zombies themselves.

The Horrible Truth

A member of the body-switching Cult of the Skull, Mamert "Murder" Legendre came to Backlot Island years ago and tortured a local bokor, or Voodoo magician, into revealing the secret of making zombies. Legendre zombified hundreds of islanders to work his sugar mill and to guard his territory against bandits and trespassers.

Legendre overreached himself, however, when he aided a local planter, Beaumont, to zombify an American girl named Madeline and then double-crossed Beaumont by zombifying him in turn. In a confused showdown at Legendre's cliffside castle, the girl's husband and a German missionary rescued Madeline, while Beaumont managed to overcome the onset of his catalepsy long enough to topple himself and Legendre over the cliff to their deaths, followed by the necromancer's zombie bodyguards. Madeline threw

off her catalepsy, and left the Island to live happily ever after.

But Legendre's soul also lived. He has summoned all his zombie workers and guards to gather at the castle. He intends to switch his consciousness into a strong zombie body and go hunt down an influential victim for a permanent switch at Halloween. Until Halloween, however, he must keep his previous body intact — and kill any interlopers in his castle.

The Scenes

The Prelude

The adventure begins with the Investigators arriving at Legendre's castle high on the Mountain of the Dead, on the coast of Backlot Island. How they got there is up to the Keeper.

- The easiest and simplest way to manage things is a shipwreck. While the Investigators are sailing or steaming through the Caribbean, a hurricane smashes their boat. They cling to spars, or manage to launch a lifeboat, only to wash up on the forbidding shore of the Mountain of the Dead. If the Investigators have enemies, natural or supernatural, feel free to replace the hurricane with a mysterious explosion, eerie ultra-violet vortex, or monstrous tentacled paw. (Keepers interested in more detailed shipwreck introductions and rules can cannibalize the relevant sections of "Devourers in the Mist" from *Stunning Eldritch Tales*.)

- The Keeper can also plant clues in another scenario luring the

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

White Bokor

Previously, in White Zombie

Planter Charles Beaumont met Madeleine Short on the ship from America and fell in love with her. Unfortunately for him, she was already affianced to Neil Parker, a clerk at the Bank of Port-au-Prince. Beaumont invited her to marry Neil at his mansion, in the hope of winning her away from her true love with his wealth and sophistication. When she rebuffed him, Beaumont made a deal with the bokor “Murder” Legendre: Legendre would turn Madeleine into a zombie and give her to Beaumont. Legendre’s magic worked: Madeleine seemingly died on her wedding night, and Neil drank himself into a stupor.

Going to Madeleine’s tomb the next day, Neil found her body gone and turned for advice to the missionary Dr. Bruner. Bruner and Neil went to a native houngan (a Voodoo priest) and asked him who would steal Madeleine’s body; the houngan fingered Legendre. Neil and Bruner headed into the jungle to Legendre’s castle, where Legendre double-crossed Beaumont by poisoning his wine and zombifying him as well. Legendre, as it turns out, not only despised the snobbish Beaumont, he coveted Madeleine himself.

While Bruner sneaked up to the castle to scout, Neil fell into a feverish dream in which he heard Madeleine calling to him from the tower. He immediately climbed up the path to the castle, stumbling Legendre’s clutches. Just as Legendre was about to murder Neil, Bruner emerged from hiding to thwart the attack. With Legendre distracted, Beaumont managed to overcome zombification just long enough to hurl the bokor and himself off the cliff, followed by Legendre’s five zombie bodyguards. With Legendre dead, Madeleine threw off her zombification, and one presumes that she and Neil live happily ever after.

Keepers may include as much or as little of this backstory as they see fit; in this scenario, it is essentially flavor for fans of the film. If the adventure begins with an actual investigation (rather than a storm, bandit attack, shipwreck, etc. throwing the Investigators into the castle in the first scene), the investigation can parallel this story. The core clues are:

- There has been a rash of grave-robbings all over this part of the island for years.
- “Murder” Legendre is a creepy sugar-mill owner with a large, apparently efficient work force.
- He is untouchable by the authorities for some reason, but the local planters consider him a jumped-up social-climbing creep.
- He has a reputation for mesmerism and magical powers.
- The natives, and people like Dr. Bruner who talk to them too much, believe that Legendre is a bokor, and can make zombies.
- They also believe that he recently robbed the grave of an American, Madeleine Short, who died on her wedding night.
- Madeleine’s fiancé Neil and Dr. Bruner went after her, thataway, two days ago.

Rather than lengthy bouts of **Oral History** amongst the natives, **Credit Rating** amongst the planter gossip network, and **Reassurance** or **Bargain** amongst easily-bribed or insufficiently-silenced servants and workers, this information can also turn up, if need be, at the campsite (see below). **Evidence Collection** will find Neil’s diary, with a final entry something like:

Day 5, Night

Bruner has gone ahead to scout the castle. I still can’t believe that Madeleine is dead – much less that she has become the living dead, as that witch doctor said. But Bruner knows the island, and he trusts the witch doctor. I do believe that if anyone is capable of such monstrosity, it’s that devil Legendre. How he frightened poor Madeleine last week on the road! She told me how his eyes seemed to burn into her brain, as though she was looking into and through them all at once. Poor Madeleine! If only I knew then what I know now, I would have turned the carriage around at once and we would have gone back to America to be married. Madeleine! If I could only sleep, I could dream you were still alive, still with me.

Investigators to Legendre. If the campaign already features the Cult of the Skull (p. 163 of *Trail of Cthulhu*), it’s as simple as including a letter from Legendre to another Cult necromancer in the haul of

clues from a previous adventure. Combine this option with the shipwreck: the Cult has sabotaged the Investigators’ boat in an attempt to drive them into the waiting arms of Legendre’s zombies.

- Investigating weird necromancer castles in America’s Caribbean backyard is exactly the kind of thing Project Covenant does for a living; the Armitage Inquiry might send the Investigators to look into a lead

generated by the Upton scandal of 1933 (as reported in Lovecraft's story "The Thing on the Doorstep"). Again, either of these options works with the shipwreck.

- This adventure can be dropped into an ongoing campaign right after another scenario set on Backlot Island. The Investigators can just overhear a rumor about the Mountain of the Dead where zombies dwell, or get disoriented on the jungle roads, or flee a bandit (or zombie, or black-winged monster) attack to supposed safety in the castle. Haiti (the setting of *White Zombie*), Jamaica, and Trinidad make excellent versions of Backlot Island for Keepers who require a modicum of geography. This scenario also works just fine set in the bayou country of Louisiana.



The Castle of Murder Legendre

Legendre's imposing stone castle looms on the cliff top above an angle of the sea full of jagged rocks. Two pathways lead up to the castle: one disused road twisting up from a shingled beach to the castle's tower, and one main road climbing steadily from the settled plantations in the lowlands. Aside from those two paths, zombie-infested jungle entirely surrounds the castle for miles around.

If the Investigators have come from a plantation (Beaumont's or another), or from the main port, they will take the main road up to the castle's front gate.

If the Investigators were shipwrecked on the beach, or have come down the trail from a native village in the interior, they will instead take the twisty pathway

up to the tower. Searching around the beach or following the trail will uncover an abandoned campsite from which the castle tower window is visible. (This is Neil's campsite from the movie, which he leaves in delirium after seeing a vision of Madeline.) Investigators with **Outdoorsman** can tell the camp is two days old, and that two men camped there. (**Evidence Collection** can tell one of them was a pipe smoker, not that it particularly matters.) Investigators with **Preparedness** can make a test to find a useful piece of equipment or gear (machete, lantern, canteen, etc.) at the campsite.

Approaching the castle, regardless of the pathway, **History** or **Architecture** can tell that it was probably built as a fortified chateau by a French sugar planter in the 17th century. With a 1-point spend, **Architecture** or **Archaeology** will note that many such chateaus had secret tunnels from their basements to the ocean or into the countryside to facilitate smuggling and to provide escape routes in case of a slave revolt. (The secret tunnel into the castle is inaccessible without diving gear unavailable on Backlot Island; it now emerges 15 feet below the water level. It is, however, fully zombie-accessible, as they can hold their breaths for much longer than the living.) Since then, it has fallen into disrepair. Although there are signs of habitation -- smoke from a chimney, lights burning in some windows -- **Architecture** can tell that only rudimentary work has been done to the castle in the last decade. Indeed, where the walls have been rebuilt, the workmanship is shoddy and devoid of care.

The Front Gate

A broad stone staircase leads up to the front gate of Legendre's castle from a wide landing faced with eroded stonework and furnished with weather-stained benches and planters. The landing overlooks the bay on one side

with the cliff on the other. **Evidence Collection** or **Outdoorsman** notices tracks and other signs of a recent scuffle on the landing. A number of the tracks and scrapes lead over the low stonework edging; looking over the edge, an Investigator can see a number of crumpled and broken bodies on the rocks below, rapidly being covered by the incoming surf. Between the spray and the shadow of the cliff, further details are impossible to make out. Climbing down the slick cliff side to the bodies is impossible without a rope. a Difficulty 7 Athletics test is required (failure does not necessarily lead to a fatal fall but might merely force the Investigator to climb back up); ideally the Investigators will not pursue the possibility and will instead enter the castle.

If an Investigator decides to climb down anyway (perhaps by lowering a rope snubbed to a stone bench, lowering the Difficulty to 5; failure does a die of damage to the climber bashed against the rocks by the wind), the icy spray drenches him to the skin, putting out any torches or lanterns. If he has an electric light source, he can discern seven bodies wedged into the rocks as the tide rushes in. There is only time to cursorily examine one body; **Medicine** indicates that the fall was the cause of death. Despite this, a 1-point Medicine spend notices a blue tint to the corpse's finger and toenails: symptoms of poisoning in the body as well. (The body is that of one of Legendre's zombie bodyguards. Legendre's body is at the very bottom of the pile, completely inaccessible in the time available.)

Climbing back up with a rope is Difficulty 5. Without one, it is Difficulty 8. Failure again does one die of damage, but the Investigator reaches the landing.

From the landing, as noted, a broad staircase leads up to a gatehouse

White Bokor

Zombie Poison

In *White Zombie*, the process of making a person into a zombie is (ideally) threefold. The bokor must have something connected to the victim – Legendre steals Madeleine’s scarf. The victim must inhale or ingest a minute amount (“only a pin point”) of zombie powder. The bokor must make a poppet or doll of the victim (Legendre favors carving an effigy out of wax) and cast it into the fire with the connection object. The victim suddenly falls into a deathlike cataleptic trance from which the bokor can awaken him as a zombie slave.

By contrast, Legendre gives Beaumont a glass of wine laced with zombie powder, but doesn’t bother with a connection object at all. (Perhaps he assumed he could get one at his leisure.) While he slowly carves the Beaumont effigy, Beaumont finds himself slowly becoming a living zombie, increasingly unable to move or think or resist Legendre’s commands.

If an Investigator ingests or inhales any zombie powder, she must make an immediate test of her Health against a Difficulty of 5. If she fails, she immediately loses one die of Health. If she succeeds, she loses only 1 point of Health. In either case, she feels her muscles stiffen and slow, her senses fog, and her mind alternately races and drifts. After three rounds, she becomes **hurt**, regardless of her current Health pool. She then loses 2 points of Health per hour (or per three scenes, depending on the drama). When she first realizes what has happened, she must make a 4-point Stability test. After that, she will lose 1 point of Stability every time she loses Health.

Once her Health reaches 0, she loses half her Athletics and Fleeing pools. Once her Stability reaches 0, she becomes very suggestible; she will follow the orders of the fellow Investigator with the highest Intimidation (or if she had Follower as a Drive, of her “leader”) or of the bokor who compounded the zombie powder. If those orders conflict, the bokor wins. She can resist orders with a Stability test at Difficulty 5 (Difficulty 6 for the bokor’s orders) until her Stability reaches -11, at which point she loses all personality whatsoever.

Once her Health reaches -11, or once she fails a Consciousness roll, she is fully zombified. A fully zombified Investigator fully refreshes her Health, for purposes of registering physical damage, but remains **hurt** in a mechanical sense. The first order given to a fully zombified Investigator triggers a 7-point Stability test as her body obeys without her will.

First Aid and Medicine cannot cure or halt zombification; only Pharmacy and access to the zombie powder, or the final death of Legendre, can do that.

vestibule in the castle; the doors are standing open.

The Great Hall

From the vestibule, a discreet door leads off into a service corridor, and a large arched doorway leads into the great hall of the castle. This enormous room dwarfs even the grand piano in the far corner. Two-story high curtained windows overlook the pounding sea, and on the opposite wall, gratings and balconies overlook the hall itself from the castle’s interior. A stairway along the wall opposite the entry leads up to a curtained landing; a door beneath that staircase gives further access to the castle.

The hall is decorated in a sort of gaudy

yet faded splendor. Manorial hangings, damask curtains, rich rugs and fine furnishings are boastfully displayed or covered in decades of dust. A sideboard near the stairs holds wine, brandy, and glasses. At the Keeper’s discretion, the glass with which Legendre poisoned Beaumont may be among them. If so, and if the Investigators drink from those glasses, give a randomly chosen Investigator (or one with Bad Luck) a **Sense Trouble** test at Difficulty 5 to detect a sharp, sweet smell to the wine in time to hurl the glass away. Checking the fragments of the glass with **Pharmacy** detects a thin residue, likely a vegetable-derived poison. A 2-point spend (and a very dramatic sequence of riskily sniffing the deadly stuff) indicates that it is similar to puffer fish venom; it slows heartbeat and breathing, and

stiffens major muscle groups, producing (among other symptoms) inability to speak, lurching movements, and insensibility to pain or shock.

The Tower Entrance

The twisting path leading to the tower, meanwhile, passes through an ornate formal garden now almost completely recovered by the jungle. Marble and granite porticoes and pillars emerge from the greenery, linked by twisting paths and tumbled walls. At one point in the garden a courtyard centers on a well: **Geology** will note that the well is a natural sinkhole going all the way down to the ocean. The Investigator with the lowest current Sanity will see a faint green glow at the very bottom of the well if they look; no other Investigator

Falling To Your Death

Falling over the side of the various landings and ledges in the castle is necessarily fatal, or at least permanent. Falling “to your death” does 9 points of damage onto the rocks, or 7 points onto the sea. (Falling into the sea triggers the Drowning rules, of course.) Kindly Keepers can allow Investigators to survive the fall if the points break that way, but such broken, battered souls can at best hope to wash up on the beach the next morning more dead than alive. Or worse, an Investigator might be trapped at the bottom of the cliffs, unable to swim or climb to safety while the zombies clamber out of the surf toward them ... Either way, even a surviving fallen Investigator cannot rejoin the party until after the scenario ends.

Investigators never need to make tests to go up or down even the winding, vertiginous trails and staircases in the castle complex – falling can only be caused by suicidal mania, zombie action, or the exigencies of combat. Having to fight zombies on a stairway with a sheer dropoff to one side might add +1 to the Difficulty (+2 if the steps are covered with sea spray or blood) for Fleeing, Scuffling, Weapons, and other such tests. The Keeper can allow Investigators to spend 1 Athletics point to ignore the penalty for a round (2 points if the Difficulty modifier is +2), as a concession to fancy footwork. Zombies, of course, move slowly enough that they won’t accidentally slip over the edge – they must be shoved or led over it.

will see it. The sides of the well are too smooth to climb; the well is too wide to chimney down (or up).

If, against all sense, the Investigators try to climb down the well, it will require at least 200 feet of rope braced on the walls with a Mechanical Repair test at Difficulty 4, and an Athletics test at Difficulty 4 to descend. At the bottom, there is indeed a chink in the wall opening onto the Crypt of the Green Flame (see below). **Archaeology** notes that there was once an archway here, sealed up using 17th century French stoneworking techniques. It cannot be reopened without a major engineering effort; explosives powerful enough to blow it down would collapse the well entirely.

Eventually, the gardens give way to an open iron-banded oak door in the tower wall. It opens onto a stone-and-brick passageway with another door (this one made of polished cherry wood, and shut) on the right-hand wall. Ahead, the passage begins to curve down, interrupted by

large, occasionally uneven staircases. The left-hand side of the passage opens up to reveal the interior of the tower, and a dizzying drop to the sea below. The stairs finish curving around the inside of the tower and hit another landing rimmed with a low stone coping. Over that coping is the ocean; a water gate below booms and crashes with the tide. Just past the coping, an archway leads into the curtained landing in the great hall.

The Tower

Going through the cherry wood door at the tower entrance leads into the upper levels of the tower; a corridor runs around the wall of the tower between staircases. On each floor of the tower is a suite of rooms in a random state of repair and cleanliness: a bedroom, a sitting room, and one or two small servants’ rooms. Each bedroom has a bay window opening onto the sea wall of the tower.

Only two bedrooms are worthy of notice: One was recently occupied by a woman; it has been hastily ransacked

of its jewelry, but most of the clothing, cosmetics and such remain. (This was Madeleine’s boudoir during her zombification; once Legendre died, her two maids tossed it before trying to escape to their home village.)

The other room is obviously the master bedroom, with clunky antique furniture and ornate wall hangings. A painting on one wall depicts a lean, eager man with piercing eyes. He is dressed in what looks like a colonial American uniform, and stands in front of a fireplace of dressed stone. A skull rests on the stone above his left shoulder, and his hands are joined in a peculiar gesture (see the “Legendre Gesture” box below). An engraved label on the frame reads “ENOCH DEXTER: b. 1654” once the tarnish is rubbed away.

Art History dates the painting to approximately 1700; with a 1-point spend, the Investigator notices that the engraved label postdates the painting by at least 150 years; with a 2-point spend, the odd placement of the skull – as a patron or blazon, not as a memento mori -- becomes evident. **History** dates the uniform to the late 17th century; with a 1-point spend, to the Massachusetts militia; with a 2-point spend, to the Arkham Company of Rangers, who raided the Indians deep into Maine between 1675 and 1700. **Art: Painting** (or a 1-point **Chemistry** spend) notes that the fire in the fireplace was originally painted green, but has faded to yellow since.

In a campaign with an ongoing Cult of the Skull presence, the Keeper can put any further clues (letters, diaries, maps) as leads to future scenarios in this bedroom.

Chambers and Passages

The rest of the castle is a congeries of chambers and passages, narrow stairways, rooms still full of sheet-covered furniture a century old, and the

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occasional sign of recent habitation. For the purposes of this scenario, its exact layout is irrelevant. The Keeper can riff on “stock footage” of the derelict chateau, invent specifics to distract the players, or just cut to the chase with “nothing else in the tower or the main body of the chateau seems interesting; much of it still seems abandoned decades ago.”

This scenario is not about exploring the castle, but about zombie attacks. If the Investigators don’t make it upstairs to the tower in the first scene or two, just move the Dexter portrait (and any campaign clues) to a random room in their path. Once the players begin settling in, don’t let them get out the graph paper: bring on the zombies.



The Zombies Arrive

Technically, the first to arrive is a panicked Creole girl dressed in a maid’s uniform. She comes running into whichever door the Investigators are nearest; if they are away from a doorway, she runs inside, sees a shadow, and screams her head off until they arrive.

Annette

Fleeing 6, Scuffling 2, Stability 4
Hit Threshold: 3
Weapon: -2 (fists)

What The Maid Saw

Calming her down is a matter of **Reassurance**, and perhaps some medicinal brandy. In between terrified gasps, she can tell Investigators the following:

- She is Annette, one of the maids at the castle.
- Legendre lured her and her friend Marie here with the promise of good pay, only to imprison them

with the walking dead.

- They were at Legendre’s mercy — he could control them with his eyes, which seemed to look right through them. He could look through the eyes of his zombie servants, too; they could never tell when he was watching them.
- The night before *la femme Americaine* appeared at the castle, Marie heard horrible noises from the cellars. (“Oh no, Monsieur, I could never show you — it was Marie who heard, and we were forbidden to go downstairs at any time.”) (core clue)
- They were assigned to serve Madeleine as her maids, which was horrible. For a zombie, she had a disconcerting habit of wandering around independently.
- Legendre wanted her. (“He said she would be a new vessel for him. I do not know what he meant; I would never ask.”)
- Annette heard the sounds of fighting, but it was Marie, looking out a window, who saw Legendre hurled to his death over the edge of the landing by the main gate, and his horrible zombie guards with him.
- When Legendre died, she and Marie thought only of escaping this hell.
- “But there is no escape! The living dead — the zombies! — they killed Marie! They are on the road! They are coming here! By the scores! Legendre boasted he had hundreds of dead men working for him on this mountain! Oh, we are dead ourselves!”

At any point in her tale, if the Investigators decide to head out the door, they will see 10 or a dozen zombies moving slowly toward them and toward the castle. If a player specifically mentions looking

down at the sea, her Investigator sees one or two zombies moving slowly along the shingle at the base of the cliff, through the breaking surf, ignoring the lashing of the frigid waves. Legendre has ordered these zombies to pry his body from the rocks and carry it to safety through the submerged tunnel and into the castle. Only if the Investigators are on the landing in front of the front gate, and a player again specifically says she is looking over the edge at the fallen bodies, will any Investigator see the zombies salvage Legendre’s corpse. At that point, the zombies at the gate attack, and the Investigators get too busy for further surveillance.

The First Attack

If the Investigators are outside, they need to be driven inside by an overwhelming wave of zombies: 10 or 12 in the first scrimmage, with more shambling up in the distance. If the Investigators seem inclined to stick around and die under overwhelming odds, perhaps Annette can provide tactical inspiration -- “Run!” -- by example or exhortation.

If the Investigators are inside, then the Keeper can better tailor the first zombie attack: the number of zombies in this first attack is one fewer than the number of Investigators. This combat will give the Keeper a chance to calibrate the attacks going forward for the proper mix of tension, attrition of Investigator ability pools, and survivability.

Subsequent Attacks

Once the first attack is fled or stopped, the Investigators only have a brief breather. More zombies are on their way. Encounters should come in a steady rhythm, ideally one just too fast for the players to get used to. The specifics of each attack depend on the Investigators’ actions:

If the Investigators have barricaded themselves inside a room: The

Zombies

Athletics 5, Health 7, Scuffling 7

Hit Threshold: 3 (slow; this is also the Difficulty for Athletics or Fleeing tests to escape zombies)

Alertness Modifier: -1 (drugged)

Stealth Modifier: +1 (mute)

Weapon: -1 (grab or punch)

Armor: none, but all weapons do half damage; firearms do only 1 point of damage even if point-blank; shotguns do 2 points of damage.

The zombies in *White Zombie* are a surprisingly faithful version of the traditional Haitian zombie, complete with drug-induced zombification. They do not have an infectious bite, nor do they moan “Brainnns!” They are instead eerily silent: they never speak, shuffle slowly, and breathe very shallowly every few minutes. The movie never mentions any special vulnerability to salt; if the Keeper allows a line of salt to block zombies, a shell-load of rock salt to hurt zombies, or a mouthful of salt to send zombies scurrying for the nearest cemetery (to name three variants on the legend) it will make the scenario much faster, much more survivable, and much less scary.

If the Keeper has time, she should roll Health (one die +3) separately for each zombie; this will help differentiate the combats.

Occult

Investigators familiar with the **Occult** will know that a zombie is a body without a soul, granted a mechanical semblance of life by a Voodoo sorcerer, a bokor.

With a 1-point spend, an Investigator will know that zombies are “blank slates,” very susceptible to mesmeric compulsion by a more powerful will. (If the Keeper is using any form of zombie salt vulnerability; a 1-point spend also reveals it.)

With a 2-point spend, an Investigator will know that creating a zombie involves injecting or poisoning the victim with a special drug “capable of inducing a lethargic sleep,” as the Criminal Code of Haiti puts it.

zombies will hammer the door down (using heavy benches or iron torchiers as battering rams, or using agricultural axes and machetes to chop through the door) and flow in. Most of the rooms in the castle, even the bedrooms, have two or three doors. As a result, it should be impossible for the Investigators to guard all the doors equally, but they likely have a way out.

If the Investigators are moving

through the castle: They will cross paths with the zombies. Allow a Sense Trouble test first, at Difficulty 5. On a success, the Investigators have an advantage. The Keeper should pick one or more of the following:

- The Investigators outnumber the zombies.
- The Investigators have a superior tactical position: coming at the

zombies from behind, or in a narrow corridor where the superior numbers of undead are useless. (The Keeper might even allow proactive players to describe the location.)

- The Investigators know the zombies are coming and can prepare ambushes, weapons, torches, or booby traps. Setting a booby trap requires a plausible plan from a player and a successful **Mechanical Repair** test.
- The Investigators have time to find and salvage something useful from the room with a **Preparedness** test.
- The Investigators get a free Fleeing or Athletics test to evade the zombies entirely.

On a failure, the zombies have the advantage, which will usually devolve to either superior numbers, a surprise attack from a doorway or passage entrance, an attack while the Investigators are navigating a sheer staircase with a drop, or a superior tactical position such as attack from two doors at once, or from both ends of a corridor.

Each attack should also change up the zombie threat.

The Legendre Zombie

Once his zombies have rescued his body from the rocks and hidden it, Legendre sends his soul into a zombie body to coordinate the defense of his castle. In the second or third attack, the zombie attackers include the current host body of Legendre’s soul.

- The “Legendre zombie” always starts with a Health of 9, regardless of its appearance.
- An Investigator with professional fighting experience (Criminal, Military, Police, P.I., or a plausible

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character history) or Scuffling 6+ can tell that the Legendre zombie doesn't move like the others; it seems more intelligent. Its Hit Threshold is 4, and its Alertness Modifier is +0.

- The Legendre zombie can give up its action in a round and mesmerically speed up another zombie. That zombie gets to attack twice. To do this, the Legendre zombie must stop, look at the target zombie, and make the "Legendre gesture" (see box) with its hands.
- Worse yet, the Legendre zombie can cast Mind Exchange on the most promising Investigator. (This might be the most aristocratic looking, the most youthful and vigorous looking, or the one who has had the least spotlight time.) For these purposes, Legendre has a Stability of 15. Casting this spell also requires the "Legendre gesture." If cast on a zombie-poisoned Investigator, Legendre's tests for this spell are at -1 Difficulty.

- If the Investigators kill the Legendre zombie, the Investigator on whom Legendre has cast Mind Exchange (whether successfully or not; the psychic link is made either way) has a quick vision of a chamber lit by a lambent green flame. She has the odd sensation of lying down, and of intense cold, as of the grave ... While this unpleasant vision of being inside Legendre's dead body causes a 4-point Stability test, it also provides a core clue for locating said corpse.

- Once killed, Legendre will not return in any given combat, but the next zombie attack or the one after that will include a new Legendre zombie.

Armed Zombies

Later zombies will have weapons as well as their fists:

- 1: kitchen knife, hatchet, broken chair or table leg, hammer, awl
- +0: machete, fireplace poker, sickle, hoe, mattock
- +1: scythe, rusty armorial sword, axe

The proportion of armed zombies to

The Legendre Gesture

To make the Legendre gesture, hold your left hand flat in front of you like a shelf, palm up, with your pinky on the inside and your thumb on the outside. Then lay the fingers of your right hand flat on top of the fingers of your left hand. Your right hand should be palm down, with the thumb side toward your body and the pinky side away from it. Now curl the fingers of your left hand, pulling the fingers of your right hand along with them to make a kind of "S" curve. Stare balefully at someone. Curl your fingers again. Oh yes, their will falters ...

unarmed should increase over the course of the scenario. Armed zombies have a Weapons ability of 3. If the Legendre zombie is armed, it has a Weapons ability of 5.

Only a Pinpoint

For Keepers who want to add some of the Romero-era infection back into the zombie attacks, the third or fourth attack includes a Legendre zombie holding a pin coated with zombie poison. With a successful Scuffling attack, it pricks the skin and induces zombie poisoning (see box).

By the fifth or sixth attack, all the zombies have exchanged their weapons for poisoned pins, awls, or shards of glass.

To make such attacks believable, the Keeper should allow **Evidence Collection** (or **Craft: Cabinetry**) to uncover small phials of zombie powder hidden in the master bedroom, the sideboard in the great hall, the boudoir, the kitchen, etc. The Keeper should thus convey that Legendre has salted his magic dust all over this warren of a building.



The Only Way Out Is Through

Once the Investigators adjust to the rhythm of the zombie attacks, it's time to break that rhythm and get them heading down into the cellars. There are a number of ways to accomplish this.

- In an ideal world, the players will realize that the zombies are trying to herd the Investigators upstairs and into a fatal envelopment, and will think of going downstairs on their own to counter that move.
- The zombies might kidnap a fainting Annette (or an unconscious or fainted Investigator); following their

trail leads downstairs.

- The zombies might attempt to trap the Investigators in a room (such as a kitchen or the butler's pantry) with a stairwell down into the cellars. Being zombies, they failed to coordinate, and the cellar zombies downstairs were late, or inadequately reinforced. This works well if the Investigators get a good Sense Trouble result and spring the ambush early.
- In a hitherto unexplored section of the castle, an Investigator with **Architecture** notices a secret stairway leading to the cellar.
- While being chased through the castle, the Investigators find the castle's muniment room, with its rolls of charters and maintenance records. **Library Use** will uncover a handy map showing a way down into the cellar.

Down Among The Dead Men

Regardless of how it happens, the Investigators should be given another "moving through" Sense Trouble opportunity at Difficulty 4 once they reach the cellars. A success allows a surprise attack on a small knot of zombies (no Legendre among them) and access to a shaft sloping generally downward, through what **Architecture** or **Archaeology** can identify as smoothed, chipped cave walls: pre-French construction.

The Bagi

Peering out of the shaft, the Investigators see a low corridor of Cyclopean stone. A party of oblivious zombies shambles past, swinging wide of a particular doorway. The doorway leads to Legendre's bagi, his ceremonial Voodoo laboratory, closed only by a line of reddish-black dirt. **Occult** (or a few minutes of observation) theorizes that it's a juju

ward: zombies cannot cross it if it remains unbroken. Getting into the doorway can require a quick scrap with a passing knot of zombies (if the Investigators are still full of pool points), **Stealth** (Difficulty 4) to sneak across from the shaft when the zombies pass, or a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** (or **Fleeing**) test to charge across without being struck by a zombie for a free hit.

Inside the stone bagi chamber is a large flat stone about three feet high and a crudely built set of wooden shelves. Voodoo impedimenta — bottles, fly-whisks, bells, masks, bowls, feathers, etc. -- lie scattered over the stone and shelves both. A thick book crudely bound in flaking black leather sits on the top of one shelf. A painted geometric design covers the wall behind the altar: **Occult** identifies it as a vever, a sacred symbol of a Voodoo god. (A 1-point spend identifies the vever as dedicated to Ghede, the lord of the dead.)

By this time, a crowd of zombies has accumulated on the other side of the juju ward. Although their actions are currently restricted to shuffling ominously, a sense of tension should remain.

- **Pharmacy** can identify the contents of one of the jars on a shelf as zombie powder: enough to analyze at a lab to figure out an antidote or treatment for any zombified Investigators.
- The book is the unsavory *Le Cult des Morts*, written by the depraved Hugues Caverne before his exile to Canada in 1680. These last details are available with **Occult**, or any relevant ability from an antiquarian Investigator. (If the Keeper has already invented or supplied a core book for the Cult of the Skull, use it instead of this one.) It has been bound with an extra quire of parchment in Legendre's handwriting: his personal spell-book, or Book of Shadows. At the

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Le Cult des Morts, by Hugues Caverne (1661, French)

A bizarre tome maintaining that the world is the skull of the True God, whose spirit communicates across centuries and continents. Only four complete copies are known to exist besides the one you just found; the missing chapter describes Tulszcha, the True God of the Skull and the rites he commands, including incest and transmigration of souls. Caverne's book lays out the blueprint, in other words, of the Cult of the Skull. Skimming the book provides 2 dedicated pool points to any Investigative ability related to the Cult of the Skull. (The Investigator may assign these points in play.) It also provides enough information for an Investigator to locate the Pit of the Shoggoths in Maine (and hence, the Chesuncook headquarters of the Cult) with Astronomy, Outdoorsman, and Piloting. Poring over it adds +1 to your Cthulhu Mythos ability; +2 if you have already encountered Tulszcha or the Cult of the Skull.

The incomplete version provides only 1 dedicated pool point, no explicit directions to the Pit of the Shoggoths, and only +1 to Cthulhu Mythos ability if you have already encountered Tulszcha or the Cult of the Skull.

Spells

Le Cult des Morts likely contains the spell Mind Exchange; at the Keeper's discretion, Legendre's addendum could contain either or both of the following incantations.

Create Zombie

Provides the specific ritual mentioned in the Zombie Poison box above, the formula for zombie powder, and the ritual to awaken a cataleptic corpse as a full zombie slave.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4 (3 with a Pharmacy or Occult spend) to compound zombie powder, 0 to steal an object, 3 (2 with an Art: Sculpture spend) to carve the effigy; 5 to raise the zombie.

Cost: 2 Stability or 4 Pharmacy to compound a handful of zombie powder; 5 Stability pool points and 1 Stability *rating* point to awaken a corpse as a zombie. The latter cost becomes 2 Stability pool points and *no* rating points if the corpse is awakened in the light of Tulszcha's green flame.

Time: 12 hours to compound zombie powder (half that with a good laboratory, less still with a Pharmacy spend), 15 minutes to carve an effigy, 1 round to thrust the effigy and stolen item into the fire. To awaken the corpse takes 3 hours of Voodoo ceremonial rituals; 1 hour if performed in the light of Tulszcha's green flame or on a spot aligned to Shub-Niggurath.

Create Juju Dust

Provides the formula and ritual to create juju dust, also known as "bad-corpse dust." The ingredients include graveyard earth, brick dust, the intestine of a zombie, some of the caster's flesh or blood, and the powdered flowers of a rare jungle liana. When trailed out in a continuous line, it creates a barrier that zombies cannot cross and will instinctively avoid. The barrier can be washed away by seawater, or blown away by a wind from the ocean.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with Occult) to compound; none to scatter.

Cost: 2 Stability and 1 Health to compound per 40 feet of powder; none to scatter.

Time: 8 hours to compound; 1 round to scatter per 3 feet of line (6 feet with an Athletics spend).

Keeper's discretion, Legendre's notes may contain the formula for a juju dust ward, zombie powder, etc., either in code or in clear.

- Whipping up a new batch of juju dust takes too long to be helpful during this adventure,

but an extraordinarily charitable Keeper might allow **Evidence Collection, Occult, or Geology** to spot a jar of pre-made juju dust good for just one more doorway's worth.

- **Geology** (or **Archaeology**) notes

that the stone of the altar doesn't match the stone of the walls or floor of the bag; shoving on it (or being forced back against it by a horde of zombies) moves it aside with a squealing groan, revealing a stone staircase going down into a green-lit cavern below the floor. (Core clue)

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Ideally just before this last discovery, a Legendre zombie arrives with a bucket of seawater. He tosses it onto the juju ward, washing it away and opening the bagi to an onrushing (well, on-shambling) horde of zombies. The Investigators must beat a retreat into the crypt.

The Crypt of the Green Flame

This egg-shaped chamber is hewn from the living rock of Backlot Island, carved in fluted patterns of shifting shadows ... or shifting geometries. **Archaeology** is baffled; the rock carving matches no known human culture. A slit high in the chamber gives a smell of the sea and the sound of waves: this chamber is mostly below sea level. (**Architecture** notes that this slit is right below the well shaft in the garden near the tower entrance.) A low tunnel runs inland and disappears in utter darkness.

The chamber is lit, however, by a column of green flame that spouts from a cleft in the rocky floor. The flame casts no shadows and gives off no heat; the rock around it is coated with an oily verdigris-

like residue. Seeing this flame is a Mythos shock that triggers a 6-point Stability test at a Difficulty of 5. Even a success costs 2 Stability points; something about the flame flickers and corrodes the mind that sees it. **Cthulhu Mythos** identifies the Green Flame as a tendril, or aspect, or avatar, of the god Tulszcha, the Emerald Emanation of Azathoth, the Corpse-Light of the World, at the cost of another 2 Stability points.

In front of the Green Flame, the broken and clammy body of Murder Legendre lays on a stone altar. To fully defeat Legendre, the Investigators must:

- Kill the Legendre zombie that has chased them down into the crypt, with a growing crowd of his fellows.
- At the moment the Investigators kill his current zombie, Legendre's broken body shows a horrific flicker of life. Before his soul can jump into another zombie, they must destroy Legendre's corpse. Tossing the body into Tulszcha's flame is the most

appropriate method, but if they wish to go old-school and simply behead it, that probably works too.

Aftermath

If the Investigators destroy Legendre's body before killing his current zombie, his soul can escape into another body for the sequel, leaving his zombies to turn and flee into the jungle to fight another day. The Keeper needn't inform them of this until they have perused *Le Cult des Morts*, however.

If they truly destroy Legendre's soul, or trap it in the headless body, all the zombies in the castle immediately drop dead. Some of them (such as Annette or any zombified Investigators) may even return to life, if not to complete equilibrium. Only the cruelest of Keepers will enforce a Stability test for any zombies the Investigators killed that might otherwise have recovered.

In a Pulp game, destroying Legendre refreshes 2 points of Sanity.



DR. GRAVE DUST

"THERE WAS NO SOUND, BUT JUST THEN THE ELECTRIC LIGHTS WENT OUT AND I SAW OUTLINED AGAINST SOME PHOSPHORESCENCE OF THE NETHER WORLD A HORDE OF SILENT TOILING THINGS WHICH ONLY INSANITY -- OR WORSE -- COULD CREATE. THEIR OUTLINES WERE HUMAN, SEMI-HUMAN, FRACTIONALLY HUMAN, AND NOT HUMAN AT ALL..."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "HERBERT WEST - REANIMATOR"

A series of daring grave robberies leads the investigators to the door of Dr. Fredric Gravenhurst, a disgraced scientist who, aided by the recovered notebooks of a Dr. Herbert West, has begun reviving the dead. Is this only the first stage in a scheme of cosmic hubris? Will the investigators be the instrument of his mythic downfall—or further grist for his corpse factory?

This scenario burns through Stability and combat-related pools at a punishing rate. For a lower Investigator loss rate, adjust opponents and shock levels, and/or allow pauses in the action to refresh combat pools.

Introduction

The Spine

As presented, "Dr. Grave Dust" is a tightly guided scenario, suitable for fast play with a group who like a clear pathway through the evening's plot. You can always fill it out with open-ended sequences and may, as always, find yourself improvising when players charge off in unexpected directions.

In **Open Graves**, the investigators

agree to solve the mystery behind an epidemic of grave robbery. This leads them to **Mad Bogdan's Hut**, home to a degenerate hermit responsible for many of the robberies. He reveals that his employer was Dr. Frederic Gravenhurst. In **The Doctor Consults**, the group is invited into his parlor, where their suspicions of him blossom. Unfortunately, the distrust runs both ways, and Gravenhurst dispatches some **Resurrected Corpses** to destroy them. Assuming they survive, they can examine the revived remains to guess at the ultimate purpose of his scheme, and to find his hiding place for his rotting charges: at **The Old Amphitheater**. There they do battle with the rest of his undead horde as he attempts to complete a ritual of **Ultimate Blasphemy**.

The Horrible Truth

Past dabblers in the art of reanimation, such as the unlamented Dr. West, have, by attempting to erase the boundary between life and death, taken onto themselves the power reserved for gods. Fredric Gravenhurst intends to take the blasphemy *one step further*. He

wishes literally to become a god, and mastery over life and death is only a means to that end.

An unsociable, solitary man, he's never been able to recruit the cult of followers he needs to perform certain dread rituals. So he's decided to make his own cultists, by stitching up corpses and infusing them with a serum derived from his own brain cells. These obedient servitors, human enough to get the job done, will bang the drums and dance the obscene dances needed to summon a Mythos entity—at which point Gravenhurst intends to rob it of its godhood, and achieve apotheosis.

Scenes

Open Graves

Scene: Intro / Core

The opening scene of this scenario occurs in the Backlot Gothic setting. If the investigators are not already there, find a reason why they'd want to come all the way to a remote European province to solve some grave robberies. Answers might include:

- assignment to the task by the organization they work for, such as the Armitage Inquiry or Project Covenant.
- being contacted as experts by the local Police Inspector.
- a family or business connection to the region. (This will come in handy for involving the group in other Backlot Gothic scenarios.)
- a proactive interest in weird news

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stories from around the globe, which often indicate supernatural or Mythos activity.

If this is the group's first exposure to Backlot Gothic, introduce the setting with some suitably creepy images of their train trip in. Use stock footage (p. 12) where appropriate.

On the way in, the investigator with the highest **Sense Trouble** pool briefly glimpses a strange figure skulking among the trees. It is a loping, seemingly naked, pallid person of no obvious gender. Whether the investigators travel by train or carriage, their vehicle is moving too fast for a better look. Carriage drivers will not want to stop in this forlorn section of haunted forest; a 1-point **Reassurance** spend is required to get a driver to turn around and go back to the scene. By this time, the figure is long gone, leaving behind, on the use of **Evidence Collection**, only a few indistinct tracks in the mostly rocky soil. A 1-point spend shows that the person suffers a severe bodily deformity, as shown by the distinctly deeper prints left by his or her left foot. The tracks peter out as they reach a rocky outcrop.

Early resort to the **Cthulhu Mythos** ability indicates that the being might have been a ghoul. Allow the character to read out the passage on ghouls from *Trail Of Cthulhu*, p. 133. The thought of a ghoul problem costs the invoker of this ability 2 Stability.

Aside from the general oppressiveness of the landscape, no other chills await the group before they arrive in the village. They are greeted at the train or carriage station by a delegation of anxious locals, headed by the burgomaster and two prominent citizens, along with the police inspector. They are:



Herr Weber, Burgomaster

Herr Weber is the town's mayor and the owner of a small hat factory. (He is referred to by others only by his last name, or as "Your Honor", but, if asked, will supply his given name as Ralf.) Weber presents himself as a kindly, worried fellow. When you play him, wring your hands and look nervously from side to side. Anxious to see the grave robbers caught, he requires no special prompting to assist the investigators.

Fleeing 2, Health 2.

Inspector Schroth

Inspector Schroth is a brisk, businesslike man fitting the general description of police inspectors given on p. 23. He finds it deeply humiliating to have to call on outside help, a fact he attempts to conceal from the investigators. (**Assess Honesty** makes this apparent after a brief interaction with him.)

Athletics 4, Firearms 2, Health 4,
Scuffling 4.

Weapon : +1 (Luger)

Doctor Gretler

Doctor Leonhard Gretler is the town's

physician. A silver-haired man of middle years, he displays the blocky features concomitant with his good German stock. He tries to project a professorial authority but is easily flustered in the face of outré happenings. He has little information to offer, but can help investigators recover lost Health or Stability.

First Aid 8, Health 4, Psychoanalysis 4

Herr Krehan

Manfred Krehan, the town's undertaker, is most distressed to see his handiwork being desecrated. Contrary to the usual mortician stereotype, Manfred is a vigorous fellow whose ample frame suggests an appreciable appetite. He willingly tells the group what little he knows.

Fleeing 6, Health 4.

If the investigators are here through the intercession of a distant relative or other contact, that character is present as well. Characters of central European ancestry might be related to Gretler or possibly Krehan.

The welcoming delegation escorts the group from the train platform to Krehan's mortuary. Use stock footage from the "Backlot Gothic" chapter to set the scene if the group hasn't visited one of these villages before.

Agitated villagers peek out of their homes as the investigators pass. They pour from their porches to direct traumatized, imploring gazes at them.

Norbert Schmied

One of them, a tall, bony-faced man, brandishes an enormous metal hammer and shouts, "When you find them, string them up!" This is Norbert, the village blacksmith. Other villagers grumble their assent to his violent expostulation. If the characters try to get a read on

Lodgings

Various members of the delegation billet the investigators. The group members with the two highest Credit Ratings stay as guests of the Burgomaster. Those with the next two highest Credit Ratings bunk in Dr. Gretler's guest room. Everyone else stays in the gloomy, unoccupied apprentice's quarters at Krehan's funeral home. (This village lacks an inn of any kind.) Rearrange the lodging assignments for investigators who have personal connections to a villager: if Gretler is, for example, the distant cousin of the group's resident dilettante, that character stays at Gretler's instead of the mayor's.

him, **Intimidation** pegs him as the impulsive ring-leader type—a guy who won't back down and reacts to pressure by escalating the situation.

Athletics 12, Health 6, Scuffling 8, Weapons 8.

Weapon : +0 (blacksmith's hammer)

In the front parlor of the mortuary, the welcoming committee and investigators perch together on undersized wooden chairs, drinking tea, and discussing the crisis. (If asked for stronger libation, Krehan grudgingly instructs his plump wife Irmgard to unlock the brandy cabinet.)

This is what the investigators are told. (Try as much as is natural to provide this information in response to questions, making this more a dialogue scene than a stream of uninterrupted exposition.)

- For more than six months, bodies

Interviewing Norbert

Norbert confirms the account given of his brother's disappearance, although he indignantly disputes the assertion that he irresponsibly dozed off. He claims he was put to sleep by witchery. **Assess Honesty** reveals that he's telling himself a lie in order to assuage his guilt.

have been disappearing in and around the village. Over a dozen bodies have been taken. (If asked why the number is vague: "That depends on whether you count those who were alive when they disappeared." This is a reference to the vanishing of Karsten Schmied; see below.)

- The town's graveyard has been plundered on at least a dozen occasions.
- Graveyards of nearby towns have also been pillaged of their dead, though never so frequently as here.
- No apparent pattern links the identities of the stolen corpses. Any recently buried corpse seems at risk of theft.
- The graveyard is a league away from the village. (**Anthropology** reveals that this is in keeping with the superstitious attitudes toward death that prevail in a remote province like this.)
- They've tried posting guards, but people are understandably reluctant to stay out in the haunted woods for long.
- Some have come running back after seeing pale, lurking figures in the woods.

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Shadows Over Filmland

List Of Stolen Bodies

If players persist in requesting a detailed timeline even when told that no apparent pattern exists, supply them with the following list. You'll need to make your own copy of it, adjusted with hard dates relative to your campaign timeline. The list is essentially a red herring, so don't foist it on the group unless they demand it.

Date Of Theft	Identity of Corpse	Occupation	Age
Six months, seven days ago	Gösta Richard	Farmer	53
Five months, eleven days ago	Frida Fuetterer	Butcher's wife	46
Five months, nine days ago	Camilla Ekman	Farmer's wife	71
Four months, twelve days ago	Werner Ralph	Baker (retired)	31
Four months, one day ago	Hanna Müthel	Farmer's wife	70
Three months, eighteen days ago	Lothar Wyda	Laborer	45
Three months, eleven days ago	Emmy Pommer	Landlord	58
Two months, twenty-three days ago	Werner Dauner	Lawyer	53
Two months, twenty-one days ago	Wolfgang Schnyder	Farmer	42
One month, three days ago	Maria Unkel	Tanner's wife	72
Three and a half weeks ago	Mechthild Jabs	Farmer's wife	54
Three weeks ago	Gertrude Herlth	Servant's wife	77
Two weeks ago	Adolph Röhrig	Servant	52
A few days ago (adjust depending on travel time)	Gitte Schmied	Widow	

This is only a partial list, reflecting only proven losses in this one town.

- Norbert the blacksmith and his brother Karsten stood watch for several nights after their mother died, hoping to catch the body thieves in the act. Norbert dozed off to sleep for a few moments; when he awoke, both Karsten and the remains of his mother were gone.
- They've tried other measures to discourage the grave robbers, but all have failed.
- When they put bodies in a new, secret graveyard, the robbers found it easily.
- They placed the dead in iron caskets and welded them shut, but these were pried open.

- In defiance of local custom, one family built a pyre to burn their dead father. But they were pelted with rocks from the woods, and fled. When they came back, the logs were scattered, and the corpse stolen.

Medicine notes that Dr. Gretler holds his left arm in a way that suggests it is recovering from a bad break. If asked, he confirms that he was hurt in an altercation with Norbert, who accused him of taking the bodies to use as cadavers. **Assess Honesty** shows that Gretler is still deeply offended by this accusation.

If asked about any unusual people who might have moved to the area at about the same time the grave robbing began,

the assembled worthies mention:

- Gypsies. But then gypsies are always coming and going, so it's hard to say whether these ones are new to the area.
- The crazy Englishman who rents out Razvan's hunting lodge.
- The American who inherited the title of local Baron.

The Inspectors has been unable to implicate any of them in these events. Most of the villagers suspect that the gypsies are somehow involved.



Gypsies

Scene Type: Red Herring

Outdoorsman and a few hours spent poking through forbidding woodlands places the investigators at the gypsy camp. Accustomed to scapegoating and persecution, its inhabitants instinctively distrust the investigators. To come upon the camp by surprise requires a Difficulty 5 Stealth test. Without a Stealth attempt, the group is intercepted by a group of armed and able-bodied men before they reach camp. On an unsuccessful test, they're met by the same group, who are convinced that the investigators are up to no good. There is one more gypsy defender than there are investigators.

Athletics 8, Fleeing 8, Health 8,
Scuffling 6, Weapons 8.

Alertness : +1

Stealth : +1

Weapon: -1 (knife)

On a successful test, the investigators can observe the gypsies for as long as they want, then double back and make an honest approach, with their subjects none the wiser. **Assess Honesty** shows that these are ordinary people struggling to warm and feed themselves in a hostile place. **Anthropology** indicates that they are normal nomadic folk of Central Europe, conspicuously lacking the signs of physiognomic degeneracy characteristic of tribespeople who have dedicated themselves to evil forces.

Winning the trust requires Oral History if the group haven't outraged the gypsies, and a total spend of 3 points from **Oral History** and/or **Reassurance** if they have. (It is acceptable to require spends for information here, because the gypsies have no core clues to offer.)

Acting as spokesman for the group is their king, Fyodor. He's unusually young to hold the position, but projects an air of virile confidence. When he disclaims



any involvement in the grave robbings, he crosses himself fearfully. **Assess Honesty** shows he's telling the truth.

In fact, he continues, they lost one of their own dead to the robbers last month. The gypsies are not allowed to bury their dead in the local cemetery, and must take their deceased loved ones to a Romany burial ground half a day's wagon ride away. While readying the body of Fyodor's aunt for this procession, persons unknown sneaked into the camp and spirited it away.

Anthropology indicates that many Romany tribes fear that their dead will

come back as evil spirits if funerary rites are not correctly performed. Asked about this, Fyodor shudders and says that yes, the elders worry that his aunt has come back as a vengeful *muló*, possibly in the body of a wolf.

The Graveyard

Scene Type: Core (Physical Evidence)

The core clue in this scene is divided between several abilities. The second element of the core clue is unavailable until the first part is found.

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The graveyard is a lonely stretch of earth surrounded by a rickety wrought iron fence. Its gate has fallen off its hinges and creaks incessantly in the wind. The yard sits atop a flattened hillock. Its gravestones are mostly toppled; those that are not have been recently righted.

The village road passes by to the south. Rolling forests surround the hill to the east, west and north. Despite their denuded branches, the trees cluster together with an oppressive density.

Geology shows that the earth has been constantly disturbed over the past six months.

Evidence Collection finds fragments of very old bones and slivers of rotten wood.

Evidence Collection or **Outdoorsman** (core clue a) also locates partially obscured tracks leading not down to the road—as many other sets of boot prints do—but from and to the forest. These prints are from no ghost or ghoul, but a human being. A 1-point spend reveals that they were left with a pair of very worn boots. A 2-point spend reveals that fact, and also pegs the individual's weight between a hundred and eighty and two hundred pounds.

Geology (core clue b) finds fragments of red clay in the bootprints, which must be discovered before this clue becomes available. The soil around here lacks clay, red or otherwise.



Staking Out the Graveyard

Enterprising Investigators may choose to stake out the graveyard, waiting for the robbers to show up. With no fresh corpses at their disposal, they'll have to fake it. (One playtest group courageously sealed a PC inside a coffin and waited for it to be dragged away by the mystery perpetrators!)

In this instance, Bogdan (see "Mad Bogdan's Hut", below) shows up, but is likely to sense something wrong before revealing himself. Depending on your evaluation of the arrangements they've made, the most directly responsible PC must make a Difficulty 7+ Conceal or Shadowing test to outwit the wily Bogdan. On a success, he wanders into the graveyard, shovel in hand. They can then capture and/or interact with him, as they otherwise would in "Mad Bogdan's Hut." On a failure, he melts away into the blackened forest, leaving behind fresher versions of the tracks described above. On a 3-point Outdoorsman spend, they can follow these tracks directly to Bogdan's hut. As it takes longer to follow tracks than to make them, he is inside the hut by the time they arrive on the scene.

The Crazy Englishman

Scene Type: Alternate (Physical Evidence / Handouts)

Inspector Schroth can lead the group to the hunting lodge until recently occupied by the man villagers call the Crazy Englishman. It is a small, ramshackle plank structure, its thatched roof in bad need of repair.

A pile of bones lies beneath its open porch. **Biology** identifies these as belonging to rabbit, deer, foxes and mink. **Outdoorsman** shows that the animals were disassembled with an expert human hand, presumably during the skinning process.

There is no one present to answer the investigators' hails. The door seems closed but on closer inspection turns out to be ajar. It swings open to reveal a rustic hunter's parlor in disarray. A table is overturned, the sole wooden chair smashed. A throw rug is crumpled against the threshold of the door. It bears several large, dark stains.

Evidence Collection recreates the scene. The throw rug was lying underneath a supine victim who was

dragged along the floor to the doorway. A faint pattern in the dirt indicates that the victim was then dragged off the porch as well.

Forensics confirms that the dark stains on the rug are human blood.

A hunting jacket, along with a pair of boots and several changes of clothing—including a suit of formal wear—hang in a tiny closet. In its pocket is a wallet containing a travel visa and other identification papers. They belong to one C. Aubrey Peckingham, and list his permanent address as Sussex By the Sea.

The closet also contains a hunting knife (-1), a Winchester M1912 20-gauge pump shotgun, and a Remington M34 .22LR sporting rifle (both +0), along with plenty of shells and ammo for each.

Under the mattress of his bed, which is undisturbed, lies a small leather bound diary. It begins last year, including entries for six months spent in London and the south of England. Its entries are mostly terse descriptions of where he was, who he dined with, and what

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animals he shot. Names of others are nearly always given as initials. His arrival here occurred about three months ago. An hour's perusal turns up the following relevant entries:

62 days ago:

Good to meet a proper white man after so long among the Huns and Gyppos. F.G. Canadian, and therefore a British subject, tho. sadly uninterested in the hunt. Would have thought living amidst the Esquimaux and polar bear would give all red-blooded men a taste for the sport of kings. Trade Great War reminiscences, privations and whatnot. F.G. remarks natives are in an uproar about some superstitious tomfoolery. I share w/ him the Peckingham motto: if you can't shoot it and skin it, it is of, at best, doubtful significance.

34 days ago:

P.G.W., K.S., F.F., and the redoubtable Simmons arrive. Brandies consumed, lies exchanged. Much delight. K makes fuss of his new elephant gun; fun had at his expense. Tomorrow: that fat boar I beheld on the ridge line.

29 days ago:

P loses reputation as man who can hold his port. Claims he saw white crawling thing shadowing us through the ravine. As an excuse for a poor catch I must score it points for novelty.

28 days ago:

Invite F.G. to join hunting party. Pleasantly surprised -- he joins us. Hits it off most particularly with the redoubtable Simmons.

27 days ago:

Lungs acting up again. Damn the Hun and his mustard gas. Rest

of party goes out with F.G. in tow. They will make a huntsman of him yet.

26 days ago:

F.G. sends manservant by with disappointing news -- P.G.W. & F.F. called back to England on urgent business. Nature of emergency unknown to F.G. Must be serious; others decide to accompany him, hying to train station post haste. Another good hunt prematurely spoiled. Next time we meet, must impress upon P & F the virtues of enforced idleness.

21 days ago:

Deucedly odd. Find K.S.'s lucky hat near south slough. Hard to imagine he would leave it behind; in Sumatra, risked tiger mauling to recover it.

19 days ago:

That leering cretin sniffing about my periphery once more. A good threatening and he shuffles off, tail betwixt legs. He will not return, of this I am sure.

The above is Peckingham's final diary entry.

Also found in the diary is a snapshot of five very English-looking hunters jauntily posing next to the corpse of a tiger at the edge of a jungle. **Biology** uses the vegetation seen in the background to identify the scene as the Sumatran rain forest.

Mad Bogdan's Hut

Scene Type: Core (Interview)

Geology, coupled with a survey map of the region, allows a character to pinpoint the nearby area where red clay soil is likely to be found. Schroth can supply the map. (The red clay clue is

found in "The Graveyard.")

The area in question is several hour's journey into the woods. Once in the general vicinity, **Outdoorsman** picks up a set of tracks matching those found at the cemetery. These lead the group to the edge of a bubbling marsh.

Chemistry reveals that the marsh gas is mildly toxic.

Medicine elucidates further: prolonged exposure to the gas could produce dementia, along with other unpredictable side effects. A 1-point spend from either **Medicine** or **Chemistry** shows that a few hours' exposure will do no appreciable harm to the investigators.

Rising from the middle of the swamp is a small wooden hut mounted on stilts. The stilts have been painted to resemble the legs of a chicken. **Anthropology** or **Occult** identify this as a visual allusion to the hut of Baba Yaga, the legendary witch woman of Slavic folklore.

The hut does not appear to have any doors.

Archaeology surmises that the entranceway is through a trap door in the bottom. In this way the hut mimics those of certain steppe nomads, who construct stilted huts to protect them from bears.

To get into the hut, one must climb a rope.

A raft can be seen alongside the hut's stilts. To get to the hut without it requires a slog through waist-deep stagnant water. A 1-point **Medicine** spend reveals that it is probably teeming with parasites.

Anyone walking through the marsh must make a Difficulty 4 Health test. Those who fail will, during the denouement of this scenario, lose 2

points of Health *rating* due to a severe case of intestinal worms. To regain the lost rating points, one must be treated with a successful First Aid test versus a Difficulty of 4. (Depending on circumstances, the Health test and parasite infestation might seem either entertainingly gruesome or boring and arbitrary. It will probably be fun only if the players know that the marsh harbors parasites and get doused anyway. If you don't think it will work, skip it.)

Bogdan is in the hut when the investigators arrive. Stealth is impossible if they slog through the marsh. If they burst up through his door, he has heard them and has his spear already in hand. His initial jab at the first Investigator to come through the door at him is treated like a trap, not a combat round: the character must make a Difficulty 5 Athletics test or take a die of damage. In an attempted invasion of the hut, only one character can occupy the frame of the trap door at once, allowing Bogdan to fight his enemies one at a time. For more on Bogdan in combat, see below.

A smarter way to lay hostile hands on Bogdan is to wait until he leaves his hut and rafts his way to the edge of the marsh. This requires a successful Stealth test against a Difficulty of 6 (factoring in his Alertness modifier.) An **Outdoorsman** spend allows the character to construct a blind out of loose branches and foliage found on the scene. Provided the entire group is hidden behind it when Bogdan comes out of his hut, this reduces the Difficulty by the number of points spent, which is up to the player. If the problem of staking out the hut seems to engage the players, prolong the process with additional suspense-inducing obstacles, from storm conditions to curious bears.

Bogdan chooses flight over fight if clearly outnumbered outside his hut, resulting in a chase sequence which, if he's lucky, will thin out the numbers of

possible combatants. He may choose to circle back and attempt to pick off solitary investigators if they pursue him partway into the woods and then lose him.

Despite the sinister aspect of his abode, and the probability that he killed Peckingham, the investigators may treat him as any other witness, calling out to the hut and asking to talk to him. Bogdan is your classic feral, gibbering madman. He grunts, curses, barks, and threatens. He assumes that all strangers want to harm him.

Bogdan surrenders his information to the group under one of two ways:

- They subdue him physically, after which he responds to **Interrogation**.
- They convince him to talk, which he does. Afterwards, he goes nuts and attacks them. Convincing him to talk requires **Bargain** (with a suitable offer of a reward useful to a crazed hermit) or **Intimidation** (with a credible threat of reprisal).

When he does talk, Bogdan's answers are peppered with the aforementioned barks, snorts, and imprecations. He volunteers nothing, responding only to specific questions:

- He does odd jobs for the new American baron.
- Yes, possibly he robbed a grave or two. (If pressed further.) Yes, he robbed many graves. He can't remember how many.
- He never killed anyone; just took dead bodies. (**Assess Honesty** shows this to be untruthful.)
- The baron isn't doing anything bad with the bodies. He's a man of science.

- Nobody better try to hurt Bogdan, or Bogdan will destroy them. Even if he has to come back from the dead to do it.

If a Hobo character makes a particular effort to relate to Bogdan, explicitly playing up the connections between them as untamed and footloose men, and the interview itself goes peacefully, he does not explode into violence afterwards.

If your group shows a strong desire to talk their way out of a fight by other means, you may allow Bogdan to be calmed on a Difficulty 6 Psychoanalysis test, or with a 2-point spend of Bargain, Flattery, or Reassurance. This choice may be especially appropriate in purist mode.

Fighting Bogdan

Athletics 12 Fleeing 12, Health 24,
Scuffling 12, Weapons 24.

Alertness: +2

Stealth: +2

Weapon: +0 (spear)

For the purposes of this encounter, Bogdan can't be killed. Instead, he becomes incapacitated but conscious when seriously wounded. Until that point, every hit he suffers from any weapon or firearm which does more than 4 points of damage creates a dramatic-sounding injury—which he then shrugs off with a wild-eyed grunt. Where you would normally describe a bullet hit that leaves him above 0 Health as having grazed its target or sent him scurrying for cover, here you describe it exploding into his chest. Describe gouts of blood, severed fingers, crunching bones... and then have him keep coming, as if only angered by the annoyance of it all. When his seeming invincibility becomes apparent to the players, the characters suffer a potential 3 point Stability loss. (If, after the fight, a player asks to use his **Medicine** ability to ponder Bogdan's curious

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resilience, the character concludes that he has mutated in response to the toxic chemicals exuded by the surrounding marsh.)

Bogdan is a fearsome but not especially clever opponent. Unless presented with only one target (as in an attempted hut incursion), he divides his attacks evenly between all party members within reach. “I keel you all!” he screams, as he switches from one enemy to the next.

For additional fun, you may choose to make Bogdan Undying (p. 20) and have him crop up in future Backlot Gothic scenarios, or in interludes between them. He retains the scars of whatever gruesome injuries the Investigators have previously inflicted on him. Over time he may acquire prosthetic replacements for lost fingers, hands or other extremities. Depending on how far you want to take the mutant angle, he might even regrow them.

The Doctor Consults

Scene Type: Core

The doctor’s castle is a blocky fortress wedged between two mountains; it resembles a gigantic pillbox bunker with turrets and towers attached as an afterthought. A crazily winding road leads to the edge of its empty moat, over which its drawbridge is permanently lowered.

Investigators can gain access to it by knocking on its mammoth oak doors. They are greeted by McHugh, the baron’s English butler. He is a punctiliously unflappable fellow who has served the family for many years and cannot conceive that his employer would do anything untoward.

McHugh

Fleeing 4, Health 4, Scuffling 2.

McHugh takes a visiting card from the



investigators, if proffered; otherwise he asks the callers to identify themselves and state the nature of their business. He invites them to wait in a small antechamber while he sees if the Baron is free to receive them. Like any proper servant, he politely refuses to be drawn into an discussion of his master or his business.

The antechamber is decorated with small portraits of the castle’s previous occupants. **Art History** dates them to the 13th and 14th centuries and judges their style primitive even for the era.

After a brief wait, the group is met not

by Fredric Gravenhurst, but by his wife, Eleanora. She’s a slim, attractive woman clad in a long, form-fitting gown. Her raven hair is perfectly coiffed. Her eyebrows, as contemporary style decrees, are painted on in the thin, sloping lines. As she hasn’t had time to change or do her makeup since the group’s arrival, players can safely conclude that this is her usual get-up for ordinary days around the castle. Eleanora greets the group as if they are long lost friends, exclaiming that it has been ages since they’ve had any visitors.

If asked about Peckingham’s guests, she

Disarmament is the Precondition of Etiquette

If the Investigators are carrying weapons, McHugh says something to the effect of “I see we’ve been hunting” and offers to secure them in the master’s trophy room. If players want to dodge this request, remind them that McHugh’s request is perfectly reasonable, and that to refuse is an unthinkable belligerent breach of etiquette. Invoke, if necessary, the characters’ Drives, to trigger the realization that the information they’ll get by playing along is worth whatever danger they face by surrendering their arsenals. Assuring them that the weapons will be kept safely under lock and key, McHugh calls for a footman, Jiri, who takes the weapons away. Under any circumstances short of actual physical hostilities, these are returned to the investigators on their departure from the castle.

Secretly recovering the weapons while staying in the castle requires a Difficulty 5 Stealth test (to evade the notice of McHugh or other servants) followed by a 1-point **Locksmith** spend to get into the trophy room and another 1-point **Locksmith** spend to open the weapons cabinet containing the group’s firearms. Weapons other than firearms are not locked up. A second Difficulty 5 Stealth test is then required to return to one’s room without attracting attention.

corrects herself: “Oh, yes, of course, we had a hunting party for ever such a short while, about a month ago.” If an investigator trains **Assess Honesty** on her, this reads as an innocent memory lapse.

She can, if prompted, supply the names to go with the initials: Philip Greet-Warmington, Kelsey Stoker, Frank Field, and Alistair Simmons. Her grasp of their biographies is vague: they were all English gentlemen with respectable professional interests and solid military backgrounds. Eleanora believes that they had to return to England on urgent business, the nature of which she did not inquire into. She’s fuzzy on the details because they left so quickly that she didn’t even get a chance to bid farewell to them.

Eager to chat about England, fashion, movies, horses, gardening or art, she ushers the group into the castle’s cavernous central hall. McHugh and a maid, Manuela, quickly set out a table with tea and cucumber sandwiches. Any English character with a **Credit Rating** of 6 or more can find a common acquaintance with her. Attempts to discuss

science or her husband’s experiments are charmingly brushed off—like politics, commerce and religion, she finds this an impossibly dreary subject. Provided at least a couple of the investigators make an effort to entertain her, the group can cruise the room, casually finding the following clue:

On a mantle sits a photograph of three men in a military field hospital, dated 1915. **History** identifies the doctors as wearing the insignia of a Canadian infantry unit. The three pose together in an operating theater, clad in surgical gowns. The man on the left is a dark-haired fellow blessed with callow good looks. The surgeon in the middle stares past the photographer with icy, piercing, bespectacled eyes. His hair is blond; his frame slight, his features symmetrical but curiously detached. A character with **Medicine** identifies this second figure as the notorious Boston physician Dr. Herbert West. This is a restricted clue; see sidebar.

The character possessing this restricted clue happens to know that West disappeared in 1921 in Boston, leaving behind a scene of violence and an

assistant driven mad by whatever had occurred there. A document written by the assistant was found the next year; it claimed that West had for many years engaged in a series of experiments designed to revive the dead. It included an account of West’s stint as a medical officer in a Canadian infantry unit in the Great War, during which his experiments, given a ready supply of fresh materials, continued apace. Although ordinary logic would dictate that the events described in the assistant’s account were a madman’s grim fantasies, medical officials found too many awful parallels to dismiss it entirely. Instead they quietly protected a vulnerable public from the dangerous knowledge contained in the document.

(In case you haven’t connected the dots, this plot element is drawn from H. P. Lovecraft’s 1922 serial *Herbert West, Reanimator*. Written in the first person, it takes the form of the unnamed assistant’s mad testament. Now in the public domain, it can be found in its entirety on various websites, should you wish to mine it for additional details.)

If asked about the photo, Eleanora says that the man on the left is her husband, Fredric. She doesn’t remember the others’ names. Fredric served as a doctor in the Canadian army. If they ask, she confirms that he is Canadian. She also provides any of the following answers about her husband, so long as the characters are able to mask their curiosity as the light conversation.

- She met Frederic in London, where he operated a private geriatric clinic.
- He comes from a wealthy family; they made their money in timber.
- The title to the barony was vacant for many years until Frederic undertook the expensive process of proving his ancestral claim to it. (This is not quite true, but she

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believes it.)

On a 1-point **Medicine** spend, a character searching his memory for recollections of Frederic's London practice remembers that he offered a secret rejuvenation process. Although wealthy patients attested to its success, Gravenhurst never supplied the long-promised scientific paper that would have made his methods more widely available. He was thus regarded as something of a quack.

When the scene begins to lag, Frederic appears, bounding energetically from the lab. He removes his lab coat and surgical mask and dons a jacket, joining the tea. Although (depending on when your campaign is set) anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five years have passed since the taking of the photograph with West, Frederic looks just as young and vital as he does in the picture.

Dr. Frederic Gravenhurst

Athletics 6, Firearms 6, First Aid 16,
Scuffling 6, Weapons 6
Alertness: +1
Weapon: +0 (Webley .32 revolver)

The storyline branches depending on how successfully the investigators have been in keeping Eleanora at ease:

- If she's relaxed, he adopts a jaunty, open demeanor, giving them jovial yet cagey answers.
- If the group has alarmed her, he supplies a few curt, non-responsive answers and shows them the door. He then dispatches a party of walking corpses to kill or capture them. See the Alternate Scene "Mandatory Invitation", below.

As long as their meeting seems conversational, Frederic willingly provides or confirms the following information. An egotistical man, he

New Rule: Restricted Clues

Certain clues which are necessary to the solution of a mystery will not be known to everyone with the ability required to access them. Instead, these are restricted clues—secret, esoteric or otherwise obscure facts which one member of the group just happens to know.

Mythos-related mysteries are often restricted clues. Only a select few people know about the naval operation to clean up Innsmouth, but if it is necessary to the completion of an investigation, an investigator will be one of them.

To preserve the sense that the group has access to little-known facts, only one group member knows the information in question; its revelation comes as news to all of the other Investigators, even those who have the same ability. The first character with the relevant ability to take an action that might trigger the clue is the one blessed with this fortuitous knowledge. Where no clear first actor exists, as in a clue provided as soon as the investigators enter a scene, the Keeper chooses the Investigator with the highest current pool in that ability (if applicable) or the Investigator who has had the least recent spotlight time or most requires a positive reversal of fortune. Alternately, the Keeper may allow applicable background considerations to determine the possessor of the restricted clue: for example, a doctor character with ties to the Boston area might be the most suitable Investigator to know about Herbert West.

Though especially pertinent to *Trail Of Cthulhu*, restricted clues can be used in any GUMSHOE game.

is more forthcoming in the face of **Flattery**. Additional information revealed through the use of this ability is given in underlined text.

- He acquired the barony by proving himself the rightful occupant of its empty seat. Actually, the case was less than clear, until some charitable donations were cleverly made to the right corrupt officials.
- He chose to come here because its isolation forces him to concentrate on his work. Rejuvenation procedures offered too many tempting financial and social opportunities, but were too narrow for his ambitions. With the heroic forbearance of his wife, he has come here, to free himself of distractions. (If a character uses **Assess Honesty**, this seems to be a shading of the truth.)

- His current experiments build on his experiments with cell rejuvenation. If realized, they may provide the secret of immortality itself.
- Yes, he served with Herbert West. It was West's dedication to science that convinced him to engage in research, rather than continuing as a surgeon.
- West's disappearance had nothing to do with attempts to revive the dead. His assistant—who Gravenhurst refuses to name, as he will not allow the name to sully his lips—killed him and wrote a bizarre document proving nothing other than his own madness. (**Assess Honesty** proves this to be a lie.)
- But if West *could* revive the dead, there is only one man who knew

his methods well enough to build upon them, and that man is Dr. Frederic Gravenhurst.

- Gravenhurst never hired Mad Bogdan to do anything. The bizarre creature came around demanding employment, and threatening to spread false rumors about the family if refused. Frederic showed him the door. (**Assess Honesty** says this is false.)
- Gravenhurst repeats the story about Peckingham's hunting party having to depart suddenly after receiving a telegram about an urgent business matter. (**Assess Honesty**: false.) He expresses concern if told about the signs of violence at Peckingham's cabin. (**Assess Honesty**: he is insincere.) Peckingham was a good fellow, and the only decent conversationalist for miles around. (**Assess Honesty**: true; Gravenhurst bore him no ill will. He simply needed his corpse.)

When the investigators show up, Gravenhurst sees in them the fruition of his ultimate plan. The number of additional walking corpses he needs to stage his ritual just happens to equal the number of investigators. The ideal way to capture them is to invite them to stay in the castle as guests. He will issue this invitation if their conversation has remained friendly and non-accusatory. However, if the group is openly suspicious of him, he knows that the invitation will make him seem even guiltier. In this case, he cuts their meeting short, instructs McHugh to usher them out, and resorts to the measures listed in "Corpses In the Woods."

If the tone of the meeting is ambiguous, players make Stealth tests against a Difficulty of 4. Successful tests indicate that they have successfully hid their suspicions, allowing Gravenhurst to

issue his invitation.

Corpses In the Woods

Scene Type: Alternate / Antagonist Reaction

If the investigators leave the castle on unfriendly terms (or simply refuse Gravenhurst's invitation to stay at the castle), he sends out a troop of reanimated corpses to capture them. Infused with Gravenhurst's intelligence, these are stealthier than West's original zombies. They find a gully the investigators must pass through to get back to the village, and surround it on three sides. Spotting them requires a Difficulty 5 Sense Trouble test. If they succeed, they can attempt to flee, avoiding the fight if they win their chase contests.

If a player asks, some of the corpses do indeed resemble Peckingham and his fellow hunters, as recalled from the snapshot in the diary.

The corpses fight to incapacitate, not to kill; any damage that would take the Investigators victims below -11 is ignored. Although Gravenhurst could still use the Investigators' bodies if they were slain, he wants to establish his intellectual superiority over them before killing them. What's the point of becoming a god if you can't brag about it a little beforehand?

Initially, there are half again as many corpses as Investigators. If a stand-up fight develops, reinforcement corpses can arrive midway through to ensure their capture.

Investigators who realize that they're losing can save themselves some pain by pretending to fall unconscious, at which point the corpses scoop them up to take them back to the castle.

Running is always an option, however. The corpses cannot move fast enough to

Reanimated Corpses

Abilities: Athletics 5, Health 7, Scuffling 10, Weapons 2

Hit Threshold: 3 (slow)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: - 1 (bone club)

Armor: none, but all weapons do half damage; firearms do only 1 point of damage even if point-blank; shotguns do 2 points of damage;

Stability Loss: +0 unless the zombie was known to the witness when alive; then +1

reinforce a chase, so Investigators who elude the initial ambush party get away. To move the investigation forward, they must then find their own way back into the castle, on their terms, and uncover the clues found in "The Lab Scene."

Corpses In The House

Scene Type: Core

Investigators staying with Gravenhurst are divided into groups of two to stay in the guest rooms. If the players declare that they're searching the rooms, Difficulty 5 Mechanical Repair tests reveal secret doors in each. These lead to a set of passageways which go down to Gravenhurst's lab. Through this passageway, the investigators can venture through the castle to another secret door taking them to one version of "The Lab Scene." (A general ability test is permissible here because, although it provides a possibly advantageous way to get the core clues in "The Lab Scene", it is not the only way into that sequence.)

The Investigators can block off the secret doors by moving pieces of furniture in their rooms. In this case, the walking

Secret Entranceway

A character examining the castle and environs with **Geology** notes that it likely overlies a network of limestone caverns, and identifies a likely exit point. **Outdoorsman** allows the group to navigate safely through a series of thickly forested ravines to find it. The entranceway is a narrow fissure in the side of the mountain. A character looking for danger around the entranceway makes a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test to discover a booby trap. A Difficulty 4 Mechanical Repair test neutralizes it. If not found and removed, it drops rocks and debris on the head of the first investigator to enter, for a damage die + 3.

Once past this point, the party can follow the passageway to Gravenhurst's lab. Along the way, they must make Athletics tests to shimmy across a narrow ledge and to climb up a sheer rock face. Both tests are Difficulty 4; in each case, failure leads to a fall and a die of damage.

corpses can't get at them. This buys them time to win Gravenhurst's trust, allowing them to experience "The Lab Scene" as invited guests, as opposed to experimental subjects. However, each time they return to their rooms, they'll find that the servants have moved the furniture back into their standard positions.

If the group allayed Gravenhurst's suspicions of them in "The Doctor Consults", they enjoy a quiet and restful, if slightly drafty, night's sleep.

If not, corpses burst in on them in the

middle of the night to overpower them and imprison them in Gravenhurst's lab. Sleeping characters get a Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble test to unconsciously realize that something is wrong and awaken before the walking cadavers come through the doors. Characters who have deliberately remained awake and on guard face a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test. Those failing the tests are caught unawares at the beginning of the fight. They go last in the order of action, and for the first round are treated as if they are Fighting With No Abilities (**Trail Of Cthulhu**, p. 60.)

As in "Corpses In the Woods," some zombies resemble the photograph of the English hunters. See that section for notes on their attempted non-lethal capture of the investigators.

The guest rooms are sufficiently distant from the servants quarters and Mrs. Gravenhurst's boudoir that even a gunfight can take place here without waking the castle's innocent inhabitants. (Remember, the investigators only have their guns if they surreptitiously recovered them from the trophy room; see sidebar, p. 60.) Gravenhurst can keep throwing corpses at them until they're overwhelmed.

If they escape the room and make enough of a ruckus during their running fight, they may awaken a horrified Eleanora, who suspects nothing of what her husband is up to. She appears on the scene, only to faint dead away.

Extremely good tactical choices may permit them to escape the castle. Gravenhurst responds by making immediate moves to start "The Ultimate Blasphemy."



The Lab Scene

Scene Type: Core

In this scene, the investigators learn that:

- Gravenhurst is indeed raising the dead.
- He has a means to command them with his will. Gravenhurst implants a culture of his own brain cells into each reanimated corpse. The process gives him telepathic control over them. (This knowledge shows them how to circumvent the army of zombies during the climactic sequence.)
- That he somehow plans to use them to become a god.

The circumstances under which they learn these things depends on their prior choices and successes. They can undergo the scene as captives, as guests, or as unwanted intruders.

Captivity: If captured by reanimated corpses, the characters are taken to the lab, shackled to chairs, and forced to watch as Gravenhurst kills one of their number, saws off the top of his skull and implants the brain cells, madly explaining all the way. Then he sews the head back on, and the corpse back jolts to life—*muttering in a groaning, inarticulate version of Gravenhurst's voice!*

This entire process poses a possible 8-point Stability loss.

Gravenhurst chooses the investigator with the lowest Health pool to be the first experimental victim. He kills with an instantly lethal injection. Other reanimated corpses are on hand to act as his lab assistants, and to guard the other investigators. While performing the procedure, Gravenhurst, anxious to boast to someone who will appreciate his genius, responds to the group's questions.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmland



No amount of persuasion saves his first victim. However, Gravenhurst rather enjoys having an audience and can be persuaded to prolong the captivity of the others. First give the group a chance to actively secure their own reprieve. They can make their case with **Bargain**, for example. If they wait passively for further demises, a *deus ex machina* becomes shamefully necessary—McHugh's voice on the intercom informs him that Inspector Schroth has come to pay another visit. Gravenhurst leaves, at which point the reanimated corpses slump into a dormant state. A Difficulty 5 Mechanical Repair test allows a character to break out of his own shackles; once free, he can find an ax and free the others. **Locksmith** allows them to exit the glass bubble for the surrounding cavern. It also warns them that an alarm will alert Gravenhurst to their departure. From the cavern, they can escape out through the secret entranceway (see sidebar) and into the woods. Their escape

prompts Gravenhurst to immediately commence "The Ultimate Blasphemy", even though he hasn't quite reached his preferred number of corpses.

False Colleagues: If the group has allayed Gravenhurst's initial suspicions, he sounds them out over a lavish breakfast. Gravenhurst engages them in conversation about scientific ethics. Are there certain avenues of inquiry where a researcher should fear to tread? Should one pay any heed to accusations that one is playing God? Gravenhurst wants to hear his interlocutors decry such superstitious nonsense, and proclaim that science has no limits. In other words, the investigators have a chance to convince him that they are budding mad scientists like himself. Like any would-be deity, the insecure Gravenhurst feels an acute need for worshipers. Any characters who catch on to this and butter him up are noted as potential followers. Any who credibly appeal to his megalomania gain invitation to his

Replacing the Dead

Investigators slain in this scenario—during the Lab Scene or elsewhere—can be replaced by village worthies, including Inspector Schroth, Doctor Gretler, or Norbert Schmied, quickly reconfigured as player characters. These can be temporary stand-ins until the next case begins, or, if the players in question desire it, can leave with the group to permanently join their crusade against Mythos evils.

lab. There they witness as the corpse of Aubrey Peckingham is animated and implanted with his cultured brain cells. Watching this version of the experiment imposes a possible 3-point Stability loss. He answers questions as

Dr. Grave Dust

he performs the procedure. Characters who don't present themselves as acolyte material are excluded from the invitation—perhaps being asked to accompany McHugh and Eleanora into town on a supply expedition. If no one paints himself as sympathetic, Gravenhurst waits to pull the zombie ambush on them the next night.

Intrusion: Sneaking into the lab without Gravenhurst's knowledge requires a Difficulty 5 Stealth test (piggybacked), followed by a Difficulty 5 Electrical Repair test to start the elevator without a key, of which Gravenhurst carries the only copy. Failing the Stealth test attracts a zombie horde.

Putting the clues together without Gravenhurst to answer questions is safer but requires an additional level of deduction. Once in the lab, **Biology** finds a series of Petri dishes holding cultured brain cells. The character can then use pulp science to identify the cells as Gravenhurst's. A pre-animated corpse is already laid out on the table, its brain case open. **Medicine** shows that the cells will be grafted into the corpse's brain. **Library Use** quickly finds, hidden inside an ordinary medical book, a handwritten transcription of a magical text. **Languages (Latin)** plus **Occult** (may be used by two separate characters) shows this to be a ritual for the summoning of a god, referred to as Cxaxukluth. This entity is described in the manuscript as an amorphous, androgynous cannibalistic deity. It is the spawn of Azazoth, and in turn spawned Cthulhu¹.

In versions of this scene where Gravenhurst is present, he can provide the following additional information. Although they come best as answers to investigator queries, insert them in appropriate spots if player passivity reduces him to monologue.

- He learned the secrets of reanimation from Herbert West, but he was a mere blind man in the darkness, compared to what Gravenhurst has found.
- At his rejuvenation clinic, he implanted the tissues of the dead into his wealthy clients, restoring the youthful elasticity of their wrinkled hides.
- Yet he reserved for himself the full extent of his process: that's why he, who was born in 1885, looks like a man in his late twenties.
- "Why did I come all the way to this remote province? One, isolation. Two, weak law enforcement. Three, West's process demands unembalmed corpses, and in this backwater they do not pickle their dead before burial."
- Immortality isn't enough, without the power to go with it. That's why he intends to make himself a god—and why the investigators can earn lofty perches for themselves, as his high priests. (Omit this last bit if they're uncooperative prisoners.)
- Regarding the exact means by which he intends to ascend to godhood, he remains coy. "Soon you will see with your own eyes!" If the investigators are prisoners, that last phrase is, "...with your own dead eyes!"



Alternate Endings

If the investigators cleverly manage to somehow derail Gravenhurst's plans before he can stage the ritual, don't railroad them into the scene. Instead, reward them for outplaying the scenario—then do your best to improvise an exciting conclusion. Doubtless this alternate conclusion will depend heavily on ravening zombies. In the primary ending, killing Gravenhurst neutralizes the reanimated corpses completely, sending them into a dormant state. However you may need to adjust the zombie rules a bit to weave a satisfying alternate ending.

Ultimate Blasphemy

Scene Type: Climax

After they discover Gravenhurst's secrets, the next major scene is the ritual, in which he uses his reanimated corpses to help summon Cxaxukluth—and then attempts to steal its godhood.

How you get to this scene depends on what the investigators and Gravenhurst have been doing immediately beforehand. They are probably traveling through the forest when they are drawn to the scene by the sounds of chanting and drumming. A character who asks for more information on the chanting realizes that it's a huge distorted chorus, all singing in Gravenhurst's voice—this insight occasions a possible 3-point Stability loss.

They might be coming from town, perhaps with authorities and/or angry mob in tow. Or they may be heading away from the castle when the ritual begins.

¹ Cxaxukluth appears in Clark Ashton Smith's genealogical fragment "Family Tree Of the Gods."

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmland

The ritual takes place in an overgrown Roman amphitheater. **Archaeology** identifies it as such; to the untrained eye, it looks just like a very evenly sloped natural bowl in the Earth.

Dozens of reanimated corpses are arranged along these terraces, chanting, banging on drums, and rending their bloodless flesh. At the bottom of the bowl, Gravenhurst manipulates banks of generator-powered electronic equipment, clad in a velvet robe and wearing a bizarre, antique-looking helmet. He leads the ritual chanting of his undead acolytes.

Unless the group has arranged for her safety, a screaming, traumatized Eleanora is present, shackled to a chair. McHugh lies in pieces at her feet, as if he tried to rescue her and was shredded by zombie minions.

If the investigators have brought a torch-wielding mob or police officers with them, they naturally panic and wade into the scene, to be torn apart by the reanimated dead. Should this happen, the maximum Stability loss from this scene goes up by 2. An Investigator can inspire them to hold off only with a 3-point **Cop Talk** spend, which permits him a suitably authoritative bellow of command.

Unless attacked, the undead chanters continue with their part in the ritual. As the investigators get closer to Gravenhurst, a rift opens in the sky above the amphitheater. There is enough distance between them and him that all of the following can occur before they get within firearms range of the mad scientist. On the other side of the rift is an amorphous being comprised of a thousand hairy, suppurating cones. These emit a piercing scream which is not conventionally audible, but instead registers directly in one's brain. **Occult** and/or **Theology** grant an awful, instinctive awareness that this is a malign and ancient god. **Cthulhu Mythos** reveals the entity, if so far unidentified, as Cxaxukluth, spawn of Azazoth and parent of Cthulhu. This insight costs 3 Stability and 1 Sanity. It also conveys the thought that the way to banish it and save the day is to disrupt the ritual by killing Gravenhurst.

Just as an investigator is nearly close enough to shoot at Gravenhurst, he activates his devices. They create a vortex of crackling, blinding energy, which strikes Cxaxukluth and seems to draw its essence into Gravenhurst's body. Cackling in triumph, the mad Canadian begins to swell up like a balloon.

To end all of this, all the investigators have to do is shoot him, or otherwise reduce him to 0 Health, at which point he explodes, the zombies fall dormant, and the rift in space vanishes, taking Cxaxukluth with it. As soon as he suffers damage, Gravenhurst directs zombies to attack the investigators. However, he needs most of them to keep the ritual going, and so dispatches only one at a time.

In his mutating present form, Gravenhurst has a number of Health points equal to six times the number of investigators. Aside from sparing a few zombies, he cannot defend himself against them.

The entire scene imposes a possible 9-point Stability loss and constitutes a Mythos Shock. Destroying Gravenhurst provides a 2-point Sanity refresh. If present, Eleanora is left teetering on the edge of irreversible madness. A Difficulty 5 Psychoanalysis test restores her to a semblance of sanity, earning the group another 1-point Sanity refresh.



DREAMS OF DRACULA

"HE HAD TALKED WITH THE MAN OF HORROR IN PRAGUE AND STAYED LONG WITH THE CREATURE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TRANSYLVANIA."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, *THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD*

This adventure is a tribute to the movie that started it all, Tod Browning's 1931 *Dracula*. The biggest problem with doing a Dracula adventure is that firewalled player knowledge is almost impossible: "It's an honor to meet you, mysterious Hungarian Count about whom I know nothing. Oh, pardon me, is that my stake in your chest?" This adventure aims to hang a lantern on that problem: Count Dracula is an immediately obvious threat. What's less obvious is what to do about him.

Like the movie, the adventure is set in Backlot Britain (see "Dread Albion," p. 11) by default. It can be Backlot Whitby, a scenic seaside town of Gothic houses clinging to cliffsides between the desolate Yorkshire moors and the wild North Sea. Or it can be the swank, glittering heart of Backlot London, full of Rolls-Royce headlights stabbing through the fog and friendly Cockney flower girls getting stabbed in the fog. Investigators of almost any stripe might routinely cross the Atlantic from America, even in this awful Depression, or stop off in Blighty on their way back from adventures further abroad. British Investigator teams, of course, are on home ground.

Introduction

The Spine

Following an **Invitation to a Nightmare** by their friends Helen and David Herald, the Investigators arrive and hear of the **Sanguinary Dreams** featuring the mysterious Count Dracula. The alienist Dr. Sievers pronounces himself helpless; Helen Herald and her friend Frances Arneston continue to suffer (or not) from these nocturnal attacks until Frances dies and rises again to slake **A Thirst Not Human**. The tracking and **Destruction of Frances** points to the Gables Sanitarium, on the former site of Rosse Abbey. Other research likewise calls **Dr. Sievers' Past** into question; the Investigators must **Invade the Sanitarium** and uncover the unholy secret of Dracula.

The Horrible Truth

These seemingly helpful alienist Dr. Sievers is actually a black sorcerer, a member of the Curwen-Orne-Hutchinson cult of Yog-Sothoth (as described in H.P. Lovecraft's novel *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*). While visiting Rumania in 1931, he managed to steal the skeleton of Vlad III Tepes, Count Dracula, from

its gravesite in Snagov Monastery. Rendering it into its "essential saltes" in his alchemical laboratory beneath his Sanitarium, he tried to resurrect Dracula as his servitor. This was a bad idea; Dracula nearly killed Sievers, and Sievers returned the monster to its essential saltes just barely in time. But Dracula was a powerful sorcerer in his own right; his saltes have been powering a being of dream-energy, a tulpa, to vampirize the young women nearby and restore the Count to life. Once fully strengthened, the Count plans to reduce Sievers to a puppet and take over the Sanitarium as his own occult power base. Sievers is caught between a rock and a hard place; he still wants to enslave Dracula, but he must take time to gain his own magical strength first. Meanwhile, the Dracula-tulpa is growing stronger every night.

The Scenes

Prelude

Although the relationship is least forced with a fellow dilettante, David Herald might be a friend or schoolfellow of any Investigator of Credit Rating 4 or higher who has ever spent time in England. Failing that, David has visited America (especially New York City) and has relatives there (coincidentally in a city closely connected to the campaign, perhaps). If an Investigator has a British upper-class contact, connection, or protégé, that contact might have introduced Herald to the Investigator; no doubt they hit it off, if only by mail.

Whichever Investigator is thus determined receives the following letter:

Old fellow,

I know it's deuced awkward, but I can't make heads or tails of it and I'm half off my head with worry. Poor Helen is taken ill with anaemia and brain fever — brought on by, as far as I can tell, nightmares. Her friend Frances Arneston (of the Wessex Arnestons) is staying with us and has the same ailment — and the exact same nightmares. I'm as healthy as a horse, as are the servants; Dr Sievers, who lives nearby and has been a brick throughout, doesn't pronounce himself baffled in so many words, but I rather think he's been thrown for a loop by this thing. I know I have.

I know you've gotten pals out of queer scrapes before — well, this may be the queerest. If you know anyone who might help, feel free to bring them along. My house is your house, as you know

Wire me with your schedule and I'll have Deane meet you at the station with the car.

For the love of God don't me let down

Your friend,

David Herald



David Herald, as the Investigator who receives this letter knows, is a good-natured chap ideally suited to a life of complete intellectual inactivity. He makes friends easily, especially among the professional classes: his respect and admiration for the Investigator's brains is one of the foundations of their friendship. His father Jonathan made a

pile in real estate of all things, leaving David a slightly socially insecure (but securely wealthy) idler with nothing better to do than dote on his wife Helen. Helen is a quiet, mousy girl from an impeccable family, now fallen on harder economic times; the match with David had advantages financial as well as romantic.

Any dilettante Investigator can know Frances Arneston by reputation (**Credit Rating**), and with either a 1-point spend or Credit Rating 6+, the Investigator can have met, and quite likely romanced, her. She is from one of the better landed families. This guarantees her entry to any party she wishes, and that frees her from any practical degree of social control. Her reputation is that of a fast girl, always looking for new experiences, and promiscuous in the way that only the very rich or very attractive can get away with. Frances is both. The Investigator who spends the Credit Rating point, romantic entanglement or no, will also know that Frances sort of adopted Helen as a "sidekick" at Girton College, Cambridge: she was good-looking enough, nice enough, and wore good clothes well enough, to provide Frances a suitable contrast for her own beauty, selfishness, and fashion daring. Frances and David had "a past," but she was rapidly bored by his domesticity as well as his lack of imagination. When David and Helen took up together, Frances was a good (if sarcastic) sport about it.

An alienist Investigator will know Dr. Henry Sievers (**Credit Rating** or **Psychoanalysis**) by reputation. Dr. Sievers is a Jungian, according to his publication record and personal interviews. He works with the criminally insane, supporting his charitable Sanitarium with the fees he charges his other clients, who are drawn from the extremely rich (such as David Herald). With a 2-point **Credit Rating** spend, any British (or British-connected) Investigator of Credit Rating 5+ will remember hearing something about Dr.

Sievers' clientele — it's mostly nouveaux riches, European exiles, and Americans: "Not our sort, dear."

House of Bad Dreams

The Herald house is a large pile in pseudo-Italianate style, with a back garden given over (with Helen's illness) to wild, almost lush growth. The aroma of roses hangs heavy throughout the garden, and fills the house whenever a rear window is opened. The Investigators arrive on the early morning train, and get to the house in time for luncheon. There are plenty of rooms for visiting Investigators; every Investigator can have his or her own. The house is luxuriously appointed, albeit in somewhat clashing taste (**Art**). There is a gun-room, billiard room, library, and all the trimmings.

David Herald and his wife currently sleep apart; his wife's bedroom and the Rose Room (where Frances is staying) both look out onto the back garden. Discreetly questioning the servants (**Reassurance**, or Investigative **Disguise** from an Investigator of Credit Rating 1-3 who can pass as a fellow servant, or **Credit Rating** from such an Investigator who actually is a servant) reveals that "Missus Helen moved out of Mister David's bedroom after that Arneston woman took sick and asked her to. Then she took sickly herself." It hardly takes **Assess Honesty** to notice that the respectable servants think very little of Frances Arneston and her carryings on.

David (after a little manly **Reassurance** from his friend the Investigator) gives the following basic breakdown of events: Frances came to stay with the Heralds to let some big love-affair scandal die down. Shortly thereafter, she became flushed and feverish, eventually unable to leave her bed. Helen began to develop the same symptoms about a week or so later; it's been about two weeks all told. Both women mentioned nightmares about a mysterious attacker who called

himself “Count Dracula.” He blushes to his roots and won’t go into any details about the dreams, insisting that it’s just “clouds and eyes and suchlike nonsense.”

Assess Honesty notes that David isn’t deliberately covering anything up, he’s just typically repressed.

David continues: Dr. Sievers has diagnosed brain fever, and noted that both women have become startlingly anemic, suffering serious blood loss. There hasn’t been any sign of blood in the bedding or blankets, though. Three days ago, the doctor actually went so far as to perform a transfusion on Frances. “Why Dr. Sievers? Well, he’s an old friend of the family ... knew my father quite well ... ultimately discreet, you know.”

Meet Dr. Sievers

The Investigators meet Dr. Sievers himself when he arrives to check up on his patients that afternoon. Sievers is compactly built, with a blocky, square head, glossy white hair, and a florid complexion marred only by an ugly burn mark on his neck almost completely covered by his high, starched shirt collar. The burn was made about six months ago (**Medicine**); if asked about it, Sievers refers curtly to “an unfortunate incident at the Sanitarium.” **Assess Honesty** indicates that this is true. (As indeed it is; Sievers was badly bitten by Dracula when he first resurrected the Count, and had to cauterize the wound or bleed to death.) If the Investigators ever see Sievers’ neck without his shirt collar on, with a 1-point **Medicine** spend and some excuse for close examination of the burn, it looks like the burn was made on top of some other kind of scar tissue. Sievers also wears spectacles and a suit that any Investigator with **Credit Rating 5+** can tell is bespoke tailored, of exquisite quality, and Parisian-cut. He’s carrying a medical bag and a parcel of medical and psychiatric books.

He gives an aura of arrogance and professional confidence, but a fellow



doctor using **Assess Honesty** knows he’s nervous and scared and putting on a brave bedside manner for outsiders. He calls the women’s illnesses “nervous excitement” or “brain fever” to non-medical types; with a fellow alienist or doctor he uses the term “incipient encephalitis.” With medical personnel he will discuss the symptoms: hallucinations, sleep inversion, photophobia, stiffness and pain in the neck, behavioral changes,

and persistent anemia. He mentions the transfusion he performed on Frances three nights ago, but admits its apparent uselessness. His current diagnosis is hepatitis, although he hasn’t ruled out the bite of some insect, or (in hushed tones) a “social disease.” **Medicine** can tell that this diagnosis is possible given the symptoms, but **Psychoanalysis** and **Assess Honesty** both note that it’s odd for a self-described Jungian to

ignore the dreams or rule out some sort of mental trauma.

Sievers describes the dreams only after bullying (**Intimidation**), well-played skeptical disinterest in Jung (**Reassurance**), or toadying (**Flattery**), and only to a fellow alienist or doctor, and only at David's insistence (which must be obtained with some sort of Interpersonal ability), invoking "doctor-patient confidentiality" with all other questioners. Sievers says each dreamer reports the same narrative: Waking up in her own bed surrounded by a cloud of fog, she sees the cloud condense around a glowing pair of reddish-gold eyes. The fog condenses still more, and the eyes become those of an elegantly dressed man in the height of 1930s formal fashion. This man then approaches the bed, seems to grow dizzyingly tall, and bends over the dreamer, who is helpless to resist as he kisses her passionately on the throat, shoulder, wrists, and elsewhere. (**Assess Honesty** indicates that Sievers is expurgating this recital considerably, although it's hard to tell whether that's from common decency or anti-Freudian prejudice. In fact, he's purposely leaving out the information about biting and blood to avoid drawing attention to the supernatural aspect of the case.) In the first dream, he introduced himself as "Count Dracula," but conversation does not seem to be a prominent feature of the experience.

An author with a 1-point spend, or any Investigator with a 2-point spend of **Library Use** or **Occult**, notices that one of the books Sievers carries is a copy of *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* by Alexandra David-Neel. If asked in conversation, either with brusque and sudden **Intimidation** or after suitable **Flattery**, he explains it as Jungian research, which **Assess Honesty** indicates is a lie. An Investigator with **Filch** can probably lift it (Difficulty 4), examine it, and replace it while Dr. Sievers is examining his patients.

If the Investigators cavil at petty larceny, a good library or excellent bookstore in the city will have a copy available with **Library Use**, but they won't know which section Dr. Sievers has been reading: the entire book is a farrago of traveler's tales about Tibetan magic, customs, and religious beliefs, told by a convinced believer in mysticism. Either having Sievers' copy with its convenient underlinings, or a 2-point **Library Use** spend, will allow the Investigators to focus on the passage very late in the book concerning tulpas, beings materialized by force of meditation or thought. According to the author, a powerful master of esoteric lore can, by sheer concentration, create a tulpa, or "thought-form," often a double of the sorcerer. Such beings exist both in the mind and, eventually, in material form; even the death of their creator does not kill them if the creator is powerful enough or has explicitly created his tulpa to survive his death. (Sievers' notes in the margin: "Then the Descending Node is worthless!") Without the spend, the book will take a day to read; the Investigator who read it can then use **Occult** to figure out that a dream predator might be a tulpa.

The Fair Patients

Dr. Sievers first examines Frances, absolutely refusing to let anyone in the room while he does so -- "if my medical and professional judgement is not trusted, then I see no reason I should continue to provide it" -- and then examines Helen, with the same proviso. David visibly cringes at Dr. Sievers threatening to abandon the case, and will reluctantly enforce Dr. Sievers' condition of privacy during the examination. Sievers leaves after a dinner that is most likely tense and uncomfortable, though excellent in every other respect.

He leaves with explicit orders that the patients are both sleeping and must be left strictly alone. If the Investigators want to see Frances or Helen, they will

have to persuade David to let them do it (pretty much any Interpersonal ability, or **Medicine** or **Psychoanalysis**), or sneak into their rooms after everyone has gone to bed (**Locksmith** and **Stealth**). The Investigators may want to sneak in anyway if the notion of watching the patients at night has occurred to them; the **Stealth** Difficulty is only 3 if they have taken the precaution of befriending the servants, 4 if they've left the servants alone, and 6 if they've made the servants antagonistic or suspicious.

Frances and Helen have, indeed, been given sleeping draughts of chloral hydrate, and so cannot answer questions at night unless the Investigators risk waking up the whole house in the process. (This will definitely count as antagonizing the servants. Worse, David Herald might even throw them out of the house to boot, either on Sievers' ultimatum or on his own notions of decency.) The Investigators may be able to seize a window of opportunity during the day, although between the fevers and Sievers' chloral hydrate, both women sleep nearly the clock around by now. However, **Medicine** allows either Helen or Frances to be awakened from their natural sleep in the morning to talk briefly.

Billowing white curtains cover the patients' windows, which are open, as the heavy scent of roses indicates. (This is irrelevant to the tulpa, which can simply appear in the women's dreams without bothering to seep through the windows in mist form.) Frances is a sultry blonde; to a certain class of man, even her sweat-soaked pallor cannot make her unattractive. (The filmy negligee in which she sleeps, likewise.) Examining her medically (**Medicine**) indicates not merely the symptoms that Dr. Sievers mentioned but blue-gray stains around the eyes and mouth. There is also a darker purple-gray stain on the inside of her elbow, where the transfusion needle was attached; it's almost invisible against the bruise. **Pharmacy** or **Photography**

Vampire-Proofing

It will not be long, in most campaigns, before the players start insisting on carrying crucifixes everywhere, ordering double garlic for dinner, wrapping wild hawthorn around the windows, or anything else they can think of. Unless the Keeper is interested in prolonging the scenario or turning it into a cat-and-mouse contest between the Investigators and the two thoroughly suborned sleepers, none of this has the remotest effect. Dracula's tulpas are not actually present on the material plane to be hampered by any of these folk motifs, and in a Purist game, they wouldn't necessarily work against even a material vampire.

On a similar note, players may become suspicious of Dr. Sievers: mysterious neck wound, uncannily lengthy past, and so forth. "Tests" of his vampirism (garlic in his food, holy water in the wine, sudden mirror presentation, and so forth) will "clear" him, of course -- he's an evil sorcerer; if he drinks human blood, it's for professional reasons. The Keeper may then want to play up the similarly mistaken notion that Sievers is a good guy (an NPC Investigator, if you will) trying to fight off Dracula with silver nitrate and spells, for complete confusion and great fun all around.

notes that the stain is a silver-nitrate stain; **Pharmacy** or **Medicine** then reveal that the eye and mouth stains indicate silver nitrate poisoning. (Dr. Sievers attempted to poison Dracula by infusing Frances' blood with silver

What You Can Find Out About This Dracula Person

Just like in the movies, practically nobody in the Backlot Gothic world has ever heard of "Dracula." There hasn't been a best-selling novel by Bram Stoker to stoke interest in obscure figures from late-medieval Rumanian history, so only eccentric scholars like Van Helsing, or the Investigators, even have a prayer of deciphering this arcane clue.

History tells of a 15th-century Rumanian duke or count called "Dracula" and famed for his cruelty to his own people and his constant warfare against the Turks. With a 1-point spend comes Dracula's real name, Vlad III of Wallachia (1431-1476), also called "Vlad Tepes," or "Vlad the Impaler." (**Languages: Rumanian** notes that *dracul* means "demon" or "devil".) Once an Investigator with **Archaeology** hears the name "Vlad the Impaler," he remembers hearing of an excavation in 1931 at Snagov Monastery in Rumania. The archaeologists were looking for the rumored tomb of Vlad the Impaler: they found a decapitated, richly-dressed skeleton underneath a stone in the doorway, but it mysteriously vanished shortly after being dug up. **Theology** notes that being buried in the doorway, rather than under the altar, indicates the dead man was not in the Church's good graces; **Occult** tells its user that such burials are intended to keep the corpse from walking by confusing him about which direction is which. Beheading, of course, is the traditional way to confound a sorcerer's corpse and prevent it from rising.

Library Use can find out anything History can, but it will take rather longer. The Investigator has to go into town to find a decent library, as Herald's library has been bought "by the yard" for display, except a few yellow-backed novels and blue-backed tour books. With a 2-point Library Use spend in Herald's library, however, the Investigator notices one interesting travel book: *Thomas Cook's Guide to the Balkan Countries*, which stands out in a collection otherwise devoted to New York City, Paris, and the milder fleshpots. Opening it reveals Dr. Sievers' bookplate, not David Herald's; apparently the servants found it in the house and assumed it belonged with Herald's collection. What's more, on a blank back page, Sievers has worked out a train itinerary to and from Snagov, Rumania. Underlines indicate that his trip also included a stop of three days at Rakus in Transylvania; the dates of his trip are in 1931.

salts. It didn't work; either vampires are immune to silver, or non-material tulpas are, or Dracula's tulpas are filtering the blood somehow.)

If the Investigators examine Helen, she shows no such symptoms, but then again, she hasn't had a transfusion. Nocturnal watchers in either woman's sickroom see nothing supernatural. But they smell a powerful odor of roses just as the patient begins to twitch and writhe about in the throes of a dream. Frances seems almost brazen and eager in her writhings; Helen shrinks back in fear, then submits. The

women also begin murmuring or even moaning in their sleep: "Your eyes! Oh! Biting ... blood for you ... my blood is for you ..." **Medicine** or **Evidence Collection** sees bruises rapidly forming under the sleeper's skin (at the throat, wrists, etc.), and just as rapidly receding; **Medicine** reads it as massive internal bleeding that unaccountably stops. Waking either sleeper up will interrupt the dream, but will also create the most unholy scandal and result in all the Investigators' immediate expulsion from the Herald household.

If the party includes a female Investigator, she will be visited by Dracula the first night that she sleeps in the house. (If more than one Investigator is female, Dracula will visit the one with the lowest Stability.) Upon going to sleep with her window open, she will experience a dream similar to the dream reported by Sievers. The Keeper should describe the dream to the extent allowable by player sensibilities; if the Investigator asks the Keeper to describe Dracula, describe Bela Lugosi without using the words "Bela Lugosi." Dracula's tulpas will bite the dreamer, occasioning a Difficulty 4 Stability test. If she fails, he drinks enough of her Health to lower her pool to 2, and she loses 4 Stability pool points. If she succeeds, he drinks only 1 Health point, and she loses only 2 Stability pool points. Either way, the player should decide how her character perceives Dracula: fearsome, compelling, seductive, passionate, misunderstood, noble, overpowering, or what have you.

The Problem of the Alienist's Past

By now, the gaze of suspicion may well (and rightly) have fallen upon Henry Sievers, M.D., Ph.D. **Library Use** only reveals his publication record; Jungian theories of archetypes and alchemy predominate. His entry in the current *Who's Who* gives his doctorate as "Univ. Ingolstadt, M.D. 1914; Univ. Geneva, Ph.D. 1920," but a 1-point Library Use spend finds citations for papers attributed to one Heinrich Sievers going back to 1881. (Those listed in *Who's Who* submit their own biographies; Sievers has simply added a few years every so often. Who double-checks *Who's Who* against old copies?)

Newspaper morgues (available to journalistic Investigators) carry plenty of stories about the Gables Sanitarium, especially when some mass murderer is committed there instead of hung, but little or nothing about Sievers, who is

either "a brave and generous pioneer in the fields of modern criminology and psychology" or "a dangerous quack who helps vicious fiends escape their just deserts," depending on the paper's politics. The photographs go back to 1913, and as one might expect, Sievers appears to be the same age in all of them. The first such photograph shows Sievers standing in front of the gates of the just-opened Sanitarium, shaking hands with Jonathan Herald, who is recognizable from the family resemblance to David, and from pictures around the Herald house.

The older servants were Jonathan Herald's younger servants; Hamilton the butler was Herald senior's valet back then. Only a fellow servant has any real chance at getting the dirt with **Flattery**; the secrets of the master are the valet's charge to keep. But the truth is not so sordid as all that; Jonathan Herald bought the site of the Gables Sanitarium for Dr. Sievers, who later asked Herald to look up a lot of other properties for him, but never actually bought any more. "The doctor's eyes were bigger than his wallet, I fear; but the old master never minded hunting through all those wills and deeds and muniments. The doctor accidentally tried to get the old master to buy a graveyard once, which was of course impossible, but they didn't discover the error until almost a year's worth of property exploration. Made a change from selling town house lots, though, I shouldn't imagine."

David is of little use, although he will remember (if pumped with **Oral History**) that his father "did a lot of looking into the Gables site when he bought it for Dr. Sievers. Sievers paid him in full the next year, of course ... that's right, he paid in gold for it! I remember as a lad seeing my father's face when he opened that big box. I played with the coins, called 'em pirate treasure. Awful row when I lost one; turns out it was a Maria Theresa thaler from 1744. Goodness, haven't thought

of that in years. I must have heard that chant a hundred times from my governess: 'How could you lose a Maria Theresa thaler from 1744' like she had any notion what one was. Heh." Herald doesn't know much more than that ("no head for business, I'm afraid") but allows that his father's business records are probably all up in the attic.

His friend, the Investigator, is of course welcome to poke around up there (**Reassurance**), where there is indeed a trunk holding a number of parcels tied up in ribbon and labeled "Sievers."

Library Use rapidly notes that Sievers was interested in properties with grave sites, especially unconsecrated ground associated with witchcraft and heresy trials. The Sanitarium, for example, was built on the site of the Rosse Abbey, founded in 1272 by Sir Gilbert de la Poer. Like all Catholic establishments, it was closed by Henry VIII; unlike most of them, it was burned to the ground rather than sold to Henry's cronies to raise cash. With a 2-point Library Use spend, the dossier Herald accumulated on the Abbey turns up, including a plan of the cellars and sub-cellars, "through which flowes ye Subterraneous Torrent, though it cleanseth nott ye Augaean Stables of Deviltry and Abominations thought too foul even for Papists."

Accounting indicates that none of the properties would make sensible investments, and further notes that besides the Sanitarium, Sievers never bought anything, ending his bids just after Herald finished researching the properties. With a 1-point Accounting spend, an entirely different ledger turns out to contain the transaction record for Sievers' purchase of the Sanitarium: he paid very handsomely in primarily German and Austrian gold coins going back to the mid-17th century at least, just barely getting his gold out of Germany before the Great War made bullion transactions from Germany to Britain illegal. Herald, unimaginatively but patriotically enough, converted the whole hoard to war bonds in 1915.

Frances, Revenant

The Keeper is free to stretch out the waiting game for a night or two, to allow all the researchers to catch up with each other, or if there's a female Investigator for Dracula to predate upon. As the nights pass, Sievers grows more and more hysterically insistent that nobody is to disturb Frances. **Assess Honesty** reads this as near-panic.

One morning, at dawn, a maid flies into hysterics: Miss Frances is dead and cold! A medical Investigator can get in to see the body with **Reassurance**; other Investigators may be able to bully David Herald into allowing it (**Intimidation**), and when the police and coroner arrive, an Investigator with **Cop Talk** can gain access as well. Her room smells overwhelmingly of roses. **Forensics** makes the cause of death blood loss, not silver nitrate poisoning or any of her other symptoms.

The next day, headlines scream from the breakfast table:

OUTRAGE AT MORGUE

BODY OF SOCIETY BEAUTY STOLEN

The body of Miss Frances Arneston, who died yesterday at the home of Mr David Herald of complications from brain fever, has vanished from the St Elizabeth's Hospital morgue, according to Dr James Balder, the forensic clinician on duty. Balder believes her body was stolen by one of Miss Arneston's many lovers, deranged by grief at her passing. The theft occurred last night around 3 a.m., but no witnesses have come forward with descriptions of any strangers seen in the area at that time of night.

Police speaking privately with this reporter call our attention to the seemingly co-incidental failure of the hospital night watchman to report for duty at his day job, which would seem to suggest some degree of co-ordination with the ghoulish abductor. Dr Balder

refused to comment on allegations that he was asleep or otherwise derelict at the time of the incident, but was unable to give any other satisfactory account of how a corpse could simply vanish from behind a locked door. On a similar subject, this paper has long recommended a more intensive examination of the credentials and moral fitness of those persons given responsibility for the mortal remains of our loved ones. (See Editorial, page 13)



Investigating the theft with suitable Interpersonal skills (not least **Cop Talk** or **Medicine** for access) at the scene reveals little more:

- Interviewing Dr. Balder, he seems to have a peculiarly intense (even a little bit creepy) sudden interest in Frances; he didn't know her in life. **Assess Honesty** indicates that he can't actually remember that night, although his co-workers all say that sleeping on the job is completely unlike him. (Frances mesmerized him into opening the door for her and relocking it, leaving him supernaturally fixated on her naked, dead form.)
- The night watchman, John Sturbridge, was a reliable man who very badly needed both his jobs to support a family. He hasn't reported back yet. (Frances, of course, killed him, sucked him dry, and threw his body into the convenient river. Or the ocean, if this is Backlot Whitby.)
- Attending nurses on that floor did notice an overpowering odor of roses around 3 a.m., come to think of it.

Each night until stopped, the risen vampire Frances Arneston will kill another person. Now even more reckless

than when she was alive, she has stopped bothering to hide the bodies.

- A prostitute named Marie Delvoy; her bloodless body will be found stripped naked with her neck torn out as if by an animal. The photo in the paper indicates she was the same size and coloration as Frances.
 - A laborer named Tom Wyatt; he will be found in an alley around the corner from where he works, with his pants down and his femoral artery bitten through (**Forensics** to glean that datum from the reticent newspaper reports).
 - An extraordinarily beautiful woman, Katherine Hope, returning from a late-night spiritualist meeting; she will be found with her face smashed in, her shoes missing, and a messy (though remarkably bloodless) hole gouged in her shoulder. ...and so forth.
- Tracking Frances is simplicity itself for a team of devoted Investigators. Any remotely plausible scheme should be allowed to work. Such as:
- Physically tracking her across a heath near her last murder site. (**Outdoorsman**)
 - Remembering an unconsecrated graveyard at the midpoint of her latest murders. (**Accounting** or **Library Use** from the attic records.)
 - Identifying a dirt smear on one victim's clothes as dirt from a specific part of the city, where there just happens to be a graveyard. (**Evidence Collection** and **Geology**)
 - Knowing the rumored site of a witches' sabbat; an unconsecrated graveyard at the midpoint of her latest murders. (**Occult**)

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmland

- Getting access to police reports that have painstakingly narrowed down the search to the area of that graveyard with footwork and endless witness statements. (**CopTalk**)

Frances Arneston, New-Fledged Vampire

Frances is only unusually strong for a woman of her build. She has risen too recently to have prodigious vampire strength. She cannot transform into anything, either. She can bite, and she can mesmerize any heterosexual male with a single contest of her Health vs. her target's Stability.

For every full night that Frances has spent as a vampire, add 2 to her Health.

In a Purist game, Frances is not affected by crosses, crucifixes, or holy water. She may, at the Keeper's discretion, be affected by garlic, hawthorn, wolfbane, silver, or other Backlot traditional vampire repellents.

Abilities: Athletics 7, Health 4, Scuffling 9

Hit Threshold: 4 (vampiric speed)

Weapon: +1 (nails), -2 (bite)

Armor: Damage from physical weapons, except fatal beheading damage, refreshes fully at the beginning of the next round.

Stability Loss: +1 if the Investigators managed to see Frances before her death; +2 for any Investigator with a previous acquaintance with Frances; +4 for any Investigator who romanced her.

- Beating up local low-lives to get news of a "killer whore" or "bloody angel" on the streets (**Intimidation** or **Interrogation**), or just asking the right wrong people. (**Streetwise**)

However they do it, the Investigators can corner Frances at the Dade Street Burying Ground, where she has holed up in an unused crypt built by millionaires who went bankrupt before they could pay for it. She is awaiting the call from Dracula, and amusing herself in the meanwhile. Give the Investigators a Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** to notice the odor of roses coming from the crypt.

If they've come by day, they have but to open the luxury coffin she has abstracted from a recent interment and stake her while she sleeps: a 3-point, Difficulty 3 Stability test (6-point, Difficulty 5 if it's an Investigator who romanced her in the past doing the staking). With a success, the vampire must be beheaded (**Occult**) or she will rise again. If the staker muffs it, or if the Investigators have arrived by night, they must fight Frances.

Dr. Sievers has responded by holing up in the Sanitarium; he has abandoned Helen (and possibly any female Investigators) to her fate, and is desperately trying to find a way to control Dracula's tulpa.

If the Keeper worries that the Investigators still have too much Health, **Medicine** can warn that Helen will die the next day without an immediate transfusion. Just drain off all the Health you need from any too-buff Investigator -- who just so happens to be the right blood type. Even if the players don't fall for it, they'll have to go beard Sievers in his den sooner rather than later.

The Gables Sanitarium

As befits a sanitarium with criminally insane patients, the imposing bulk of the Gables Sanitarium is not quite a snap to get into. The Keeper should

gently discourage the notion of getting themselves committed: not only does such a plan put themselves exactly where everyone will be watching them most suspiciously, most Investigators would find it more difficult than they'd like to get out again. Nonetheless, the Investigators have a number of options:

- Climb the fence (**Athletics** at Difficulty 5; a failure catches you on the razor-sharp iron points for 2 Health), sneak across the grounds (at night, **Stealth** at Difficulty 4; by day, **Disguise** as an orderly at Difficulty 3), and in through a shady window. (**Mechanical Repair** at Difficulty 5 to avoid undue noise or breaking the window)
- Bluff their way in. (**Medicine, CopTalk, Disguise, Psychoanalysis, or Bureaucracy**)
- Bribe an orderly. (**Bargain**, and **Reassurance** for a convincing cover story)
- Use the Abbey cellar plan from the attic, together with a city sewer map, to enter from below. (**Bureaucracy** or **Library Use** to get the sewer map; **Athletics** at Difficulty 4 to avoid a nasty spill into the underground river, 1 Health point of bruising, and the concomitant drenching of everything.) If any Investigators are phobic, they may have to make a Stability test to get past the large number of bloated, unafraid rats down here.

If the Investigators entered the Sanitarium per se, they can tell that it has two wings: one for rich patients, and a secure wing for the criminally insane. **Bureaucracy** or **Architecture** will get the Investigators to Dr. Sievers' office, roughly between the two wings. Unless the Keeper wants one final confrontation with Sievers (keeping in mind that he can call for burly orderlies at the touch

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Dreams Of Dracula



of a button here), the doctor is not here whether the Investigators arrive during the day or night. With **Reassurance**, any medical or psychiatric Investigator can get Sievers' secretary to tell him that the alienist is "in intensive therapy with Fraydon," and any journalist, British policeman, or true crime devotee will know (**Law**) that Ennis Fraydon is a truly brutal serial killer who was committed to the Gables Sanitarium several years ago.

Getting past the secretary is easier for medical or alienist Investigators, although **Reassurance** works for anyone who can make up a convincing bluff about Sievers desperately asking for a meeting: **Assess Honesty** lets observers know that Sievers has gotten so strange recently that his secretary is all at sea, and grateful for anything that looks like direction. Inside Sievers' office are all the standard office furnishings: desk, chair, sideboard, alienist's couch, file cabinet, bookshelves, lamps, and so forth. **Craft: Printing** determines that the diplomas on the wall are forgeries, though the glass is intentionally dull and dusty to obscure that. **Library**

Use notes that the shelves hold a copy of *The Vampire In Europe*, by Montague Summers, but strangely not *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*. If the Investigators rifle through the patient files, they can find Fraydon's file: any doctor or alienist will know that Sievers should have taken that file with him on any genuine therapeutic visit. Furthermore, a 1-point **Psychoanalysis** spend indicates that Fraydon's last therapy session of any kind was hypnotherapy two years ago, after which Dr. Sievers hasn't even bothered updating the chart.

If the Investigators take the hint and go looking for Fraydon's cell, they can find it easily enough (it's No. 37, and listed on the chart, after all). Failing that, **Architecture** will indicate that the sub-cellar of the Abbey is directly below the secure wing, or **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 2) will hear Fraydon shouting ("The masters are at war! The glorious master will rise tonight! No, fool, the old master will bridle him! Fraydon hears you, master! He hears your promise!") or smell roses coming from that direction, or even get a strong mental image of the path from Dracula, who wants the

Investigators to come distract Sievers for him.

To do that, they will have to bluff their way past the two orderlies at the (locked) door to the security wing. (**Cop Talk, Disguise**) Getting the keys to the wing off an orderly's desk is a Difficulty 7 **Filch** unless an Interpersonal ability distracts or diverts the attendant, whereupon the Difficulty becomes 4.

The Keeper may want to just run a quick fight:

Burly Orderlies

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 5,

Scuffling 8, Weapons 4

Weapon: -1 (truncheon)

Or, if Dracula decides to take a hand, the Investigators see the orderlies stand up, get a glassy look in their eyes, and fatally stab each other in the neck with their keys. Blood sprays everywhere, but the way is clear into the security wing. (After a 5-point Stability test for all the witnesses, of course.)

Down the corridor, toward the back

wall of the Sanitarium, is Cell No. 37. Looking through the peep-hole reveals Fraydon moving around without any sort of restraint, waving his arms and arguing with himself. He is suffering from a schizophrenic breakdown (**Psychoanalysis**), which is odd because his chart gave no indication of such a disorder. (Fraydon was originally a megalomaniacal psychopath. Sievers mesmerized him into being a worshipful tool; now Dracula has done the same, and Fraydon is coming apart, split between two masters.) More interestingly yet, **Architecture** can spot a secret doorway set into the back wall of the cell just visible under the padding. (Sievers went through in a hurry and didn't quite latch it behind him.) Without the keys, it will take a 2-point Locksmith spend to go through the cell door rapidly and smoothly enough to avoid another alarm and more burly orderlies.

Again, it's up to the Keeper what happens with Fraydon. Psychological triage might steady him enough that he stands aside; he's a prime candidate for some hard-sell **Intimidation**; or there could be another fight:

Ennis Fraydon, Conflicted Madman

Abilities: Athletics 3, Health 6, Scuffling 10, Weapons 6

Weapon: -1 (fists and teeth with maniac's bonus; if an Investigator has a weapon, Fraydon will immediately attempt a Scuffling contest to grab it away and use it himself once successful)

The concealed door in the cell wall opens onto a circular stone staircase running down thirty or forty feet. **Architecture** or **Archaeology** notes the stonework changing from Edwardian to Late Romanesque, with carven roses intertwined across the ceiling and pillars; this is the cellar of the original medieval Abbey. Harsh, actinic light floods up

from below; Sievers has wired the cellar for electricity and hangs giant floodlights from the ceiling in places, filling the vast space with eerie shadows and stark glows.

If the Investigators took the route through the sewer tunnels and alongside the underground river, they can see (**Geology** or **Archaeology**) that the river runs underneath the lowest sub-cellar, speeding up as it flumes through the foundation pillars holding up the Abbey. There is a slick, steep, dangerous slope (**Geology** or **Architecture** can tell it's what's left of cut blocks, destroyed and fallen centuries ago, but can't guess what could have smashed a solid stone staircase of medieval construction) running up forty feet or so from the riverbank into the cellar level; it takes a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** test to climb, with Investigators getting the choice of losing 1 Health for each point by which they miss the test (from bruising and battering as they clamber up the sharp scree) or sliding back down and having to try again.

Whether coming down from the Sanitarium or clambering up from the river, the destination is the cellar, a rectangular chamber with open arched doorways at both narrow ends. The first doorway leads up the stairs into Fraydon's cell; the other once led to a stairway down to the river, but those stairs collapsed into the slope mentioned above. One side of the cellar is dressed stone walls covered in carved stone roses. The other side is open air, a vertiginous drop thirty feet down to the sub-cellar below. In the middle of the open side are two immense foundation pillars, rising up from the sub-cellar below and continuing up to the vaulted ceiling. A narrow iron spiral staircase (obviously of modern construction) has been bolted on to one of the pillars to allow slightly safer access to the sub-cellar rather than flinging oneself off the side of the cellar. Going down that staircase will make a lot of noise (**Stealth** Difficulty 6).

The Investigators can look (or fall) over the edge into the sub-cellar; what they see will depend on circumstances (see below).

The cellar itself has a lab table, cabinets, and equipment for a chemical laboratory (**Chemistry**). A shelf of books above one of the work areas includes *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, along with chemical, medical, and alchemical works dating from the 17th century to the modern day, in German, Latin, and English. **Library Use** notes that many of the texts are first editions, but almost invariably in bad, much-used condition. (A 2-point **Library Use** spend can turn up any other tomes the Keeper wishes to plant here, along with a slim notebook covered in gray calfskin embossed with the initials H.S. It has a list of numbers, each next to a name in Sievers' handwriting. After some of the names appears the notation *Unfertig*, the word "unfinished" in German.) Opening one at random reveals lots of marginal notes in crabbed handwriting recognizable as that of Dr. Sievers. **History** indicates that the writing, ink, etc. are contemporary with the books; which is to say, Sievers has been writing in his margins since the 17th century. A quick examination of the cabinets and chemicals shows a surprising amount of sodium citrate-glucose, which **Medicine** indicates is an anti-coagulant used to extend the life of stored blood. There are also jars of silver nitrate, as might be expected.

The floor of the sub-cellar is made of mortised stones; in some places, the stonework has fallen in or was never there to begin with, leaving open pits hanging over the rushing waters of the underground river. Anyone who falls in will be swept along in the current, banged repeatedly off the foundation pillars of the Abbey, and likely drowned before emerging in the Thames (or the North Sea) a smashed, unrecognizable corpse. A nine-foot-tall iron framework like a wine rack stands at one side of the sub-cellar. It is about half filled with large

Ye Booke of Borellus

Either ending will call the Investigators' attention to the battered, foxed book that Sievers is using for his resurrection magics: the 1671 edition of the *Bibliotheca Chimica* of Borellus. It also contains Sievers' extensive marginal notes (including lengthy quotations from Book XII of the *Necronomicon*) and tipped-in copies of letters to Sievers from Simon Orne, Josef Nadek (both in the same handwriting), and Baron Hadoth Ferenczy, as well as from any other necromancers the Keeper wants to plant for later adventures. The following statistics are valid only for this copy of Borellus.

Bibliotheca Chimica, by Petrus Borellus (1671, Latin)

A lengthy discussion of alchemy first published in 1654, combining Agrippa's astrological alchemy with Paracelsus' medical alchemy and Helmont's physical alchemy (what we would now consider chemistry). It discusses the nature of the life force, and the elemental composition of the body. This edition is far more explicit and detailed than the more common earlier editions. Skimming this book provides 2 dedicated pool points for any Investigative ability (or 1 each for any 2 abilities) involving alchemy or necromancy. Poring over it provides +1 to your Cthulhu Mythos rating. It also allows the reader to learn the spells Resurrection and CallYog-Sothoth.

jars recognizable with **Archaeology** or **Art History** as *loutophoroi*, or funeral urns. Two thirds of the urns are sealed with bronze stoppers, and the rest are open. If they are at the rack, the Investigators can see that each stopper has a number engraved in it. If opened, the urns turn out to contain a bluish-gray powder, similar in texture to heavy beach sand mixed with kosher salt.

Across the sub-cellar from the urn rack is a cleared space with two pentacles painted on the floor. Although only **Cthulhu Mythos** will recognize some of the glyphs painted in them as runes associated with Yog-Sothoth, **Occult** will recognize them as summoning pentacles. The magus stands in one, the dangerous demon or whatever appears in the other. Near one pentacle is a tall walnut book stand like you'd find in a well-appointed library. Near the other is a restraint bed like you'd find in the secure wing of the Sanitarium, bolted to the stone and complete with restraints for wrists, ankles, waist, and head. A small table nearby holds an array of syringes, surgical tools, and a large jar of chloroform and smaller phials of powerful sedatives (**Pharmacy**). (Sievers resurrects the dead in one pentacle, chloroforms them, and straps them to his table for questioning and mesmeric conditioning.)

Dracula Has Risen From His Grave ... Again

What happens when the Investigators enter the cellar depends on the Keeper's sense of the adventure's pacing, drama, and survivability.

Sievers is working in the cellar laboratory: Sievers is still frantically paging through his books and checking his bubbling retorts looking for a (metaphorical) silver bullet against Dracula's tulpa. The book he most frequently refers to is a large, leather-bound tome with flaking, foxed edges.

Dr. Henry Sievers, Outclassed Sorcerous Alienist

Although he knows the spells Resurrection and CallYog-Sothoth, neither of those seem immediately relevant to a fight in a cellar. The Keeper is free to add a generic "offensive" spell to his repertoire if she wishes to even the odds a bit. He does have the ability to mesmerize a helpless person with a single contest of Stability.

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 20, Scuffling 7, Stability 9, Weapons 5, Firearms 5

Hit Threshold: 4

Weapon: -2 (fist); -1 (ceremonial knife); +1 (.38 pistol)

Armor: None. He's immortal, not unkillable.

This is the option if the Investigators still have Stability and Scuffling to burn, or if the Keeper thinks the scenario's drama needs one more good fight before the climax. The Investigators have to get past Sievers to defeat Dracula. Sievers is not interested in any solution they have to offer that ends up with Dracula gone; he's risked death (a big deal for an immortal) to control the Count. It's almost certain, therefore, to come down to violence. (If the Investigators have all come up from the river, they might be able to rush him: **Stealth** 5 to get to him by surprise.) Only after they defeat Sievers will Dracula's tulpa materialize, most likely in the sub-cellar.

Sievers is trying another ritual in the sub-cellar pentacles: Sievers has a large, leather-bound tome with flaking, foxed edges up on the book stand, and he's reading from it in a sonorous voice that seems to cut through the sound of

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Count Dracula

In addition to the vampire powers on p. 157 of *Trail of Cthulhu*, Count Dracula can become invisible to anyone with a lower current Stability rating than his current Health rating by expending 2 points from his Athletics pool. He can also summon a swarm of 100 rats from the cellars of the Sanitarium by expending 1 point of Stability.

For every full night that Frances (or anyone else from the Herald house) spent as a vampire, add 1 to Dracula's Health.

In a Purist game, Dracula is not affected by crosses, crucifixes, or holy water.

If an Investigator approaches within close range of Dracula with a recognizable melee weapon, Dracula will immediately engage in a single contest of Scuffling to wrench it out of the Investigator's hand. Thereafter, using his eldritch speed he may strike with a weapon or with his talons and bite the target in the same round.

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 8, Scuffling 16, Stability 12, Weapons 7

Hit Threshold: 4

Weapon: +1 (claw); +0 (bite)

Armor: Damage from physical weapons, except fatal beheading damage, refreshes fully at the beginning of the next round.

Massive Swarm of Rats

See p. 156 of *Trail of Cthulhu*.

Abilities: Athletics 4, Health 23, Scuffling 23

Hit Threshold: 3 (small and nimble, but target-rich)

Weapon: +1 (many, many horrible bites)

Armor: none; hits with fire kill 2 rats and disperse 20.

the rushing water. If the Investigators make noise, set something on fire in the cellar, shoot at him, come clattering down the staircase, or otherwise create any kind of distraction, Sievers will look away from the ritual for a split second -- enough time for Dracula's tulpa to boil up out of nothing and tear Sievers' throat out for real this time. (This is dramatic, not game-mechanical, throat-tearing; Sievers' vaunted 20 Health points spray out in seconds.) Pentacles don't stop Dracula, or at least that one didn't. (Concerned Keepers can have **Evidence Collection** notice from closer up that a rat seems to have gnawed the paint off the floor in one ring of Sievers' pentacle.)

From that point, the Investigators can flee immediately (leaving Dracula to take over the Sanitarium and fully vampirize Helen) or fight Dracula's

tulpa, which is fully material enough to kill someone. Duty to Helen or Revenge for Frances will perhaps keep some Investigators there. This is the fast action end to the scenario, but it doesn't let the Investigators really confront Sievers. If the players really had it in for Sievers by this point, it may seem a little unsatisfying.

The Return of Dracula?

The final showdown between the Investigators and Dracula might end in any number of ways:

- Dracula's tulpa slaughters or mesmerizes them all. Dracula is fairly tough in this scenario; Keepers might want to tone him down if the survival of the Investigators is a high priority.

- The Investigators defeat Dracula's tulpa. If they don't seem to remember the urn full of Dracula's "essential saltes," let them declare victory and go home. Dracula won't send his next tulpa after Helen; there's plenty of fish in the sea, and he needs to survive for "The Preserve."

- The Investigators remember the urn full of essential saltes. Finding it is essentially impossible without the little gray notebook from the cellar bookshelf, which is the key to who is in which urn. Successfully pouring Dracula's essential saltes into the underground river will immediately transform the tulpa into mist; it drains through the floor and disappears. If the Keeper doesn't plan to run "The Preserve," this actually destroys the vampire. If she does plan to run "The Preserve," although Dracula is indeed gone, his tulpa is not; it is his tulpa that the Investigators face on the island.

- Or in the ultimate spirit of the inevitable sequel, the last scene of the game is a closeup of a whole horde of rats, each with a single grain of essential salte held in its mouth, streaming down the tunnel into the city's sewer system.

Rewards

Besides the book of Borellus, and any other grimoires the Keeper planted in the Sanitarium or its cellar, there is the reward of having saved Helen Herald (and perhaps one of their own) from slavery to Dracula. David Herald will gladly remain a contact for the Investigators, and use his wealth and (to the extent possible) position to help them out in Britain. There were no Mythos shocks, so even in a Pulp campaign, there can be no Sanity reward.

THE GREEN APE

"IT APPEARED TO BE AN ANTHROPOID APE OF LARGE PROPORTIONS, ESCAPED, PERHAPS, FROM SOME ITINERANT MENAGERIE."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE BEAST IN THE CAVE"

The investigators brave a remote jungle island in an effort to find the Green Ape, a legendary creature who has kidnapped a member of a previous expedition, beautiful explorer Clara Pence.

Introduction

The Spine

After an introduction to its setting, **The Isle Of Nambu**, the investigation proper commences with the interrogation of **Old Tarr**, a sailor who confesses to betraying expedition leaders Leo Bennett and Cooper LeRoy to a witch-doctor while under the influence of a strange drug. A dangerous **Jungle Walk** takes our heroes to the heart of the island, for a tense meeting with the **Spear People**, indigenous tribesmen who have long suffered attacks from a terrifying creature known as the Green Ape. Their journey continues until an unfortunate run-in with a **Prehistoric Behemoth** leads them to **A Secret Camp**. When the **Green Ape Screams**, they get a chance to piece together...

The Horrible Truth

Within the Green Ape's monstrous

cranium writhes the brain of Leo Bennett. His consciousness was cast into the creature by a spell cast by his devious ex-partner and romantic rival, Cooper LeRoy.

The Exciting Conclusion

Having tracked the ape to his lair, the Investigators now must defend him against the true villain of the piece, as LeRoy shows up to capture the Green Ape in hopes of making his enemy into a humiliated sideshow attraction.

Scenes

The Isle Of Nambu

Scene Type: Introduction

The action begins with the adventurers standing on the rusty deck of a tramp steamer bearing the somewhat ironic name *Land Of Fancy*. The crewmen of this reeking cargo vessel stare at them with trepidation, for they now have to venture close to an island they'd sooner avoid—the Isle of Nambu. The ship's grizzled captain, Eric "Whitey" Schiff, warns them that the *Land Of Fancy* will remain offshore for only the contractually

specified seven days. On no condition will any crewman from the ship set foot on the island, except to pick them up or drop them off. He hands over a flare gun; they're to use this to signal that they've returned to the rendezvous beach.

"YOU DAMNED FOOLS," HE INTONES. "HOW DID YOU GET YOURSELVES SIGNED UP FOR THIS?"

Flashback

At this point, the players are wondering the same thing, so it's time for a flashback.

The players are in the offices of the Transatlantic Geographic Society, situated in their usual base of operations, about to receive an intriguing offer of employment.

Their contact is the patrician Lawrence Claremont, head of the Transatlantic's board and a noted philanthropist. He may mention the name of a past prominent individual assisted by the investigators in a previous scenario, as having recommended their services. They're to rescue one of the society explorers. Her name is Clara Pence, which all of the Investigators recognize. Pence is a celebrated roving explorer. Her bracingly romantic travel prose and dramatically composed photographs are a staple of the society's popular magazine, *The Transatlantic*.

A month ago, *The Transatlantic* sent an expedition to the remote isle of Nambu, in the South Pacific. Clara Pence accompanied team leader Leo Bennett and a crew of eight men on a trip to find the legendary Green Ape. This creature is supposed to be the world's largest

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living simian, but is known only from native accounts, who describe it as being an absurd twenty feet high. Why they call it the Green Ape is unclear.

At any rate, the expedition members journeyed to the heart of the island, leaving behind a base station on the shore. Only one man came back to it. Using the telegraph aboard their ship, he reported that Bennett had been killed and Clara taken by the Green Ape. This fellow, who has refused to leave the base station despite his deteriorating health, told a wild story of ensorcelment by a witch doctor. "This," says Claremont, "is why we thought your past expertise might be salient here."

Characters with **Anthropology**, **Biology** or **Geology** who pose relevant questions to you regarding Bennett know the following:

- Until recently, he was part of a famous partnership with the showman and filmmaker Cooper LeRoy. LeRoy promoted their public image and kept the money rolling in, while Bennett choose the missions and conducted the scientific research. They conducted their explorations under the banner of LeRoy's Impossible Expeditions, Inc.
- Cooper's films, such as *Savage Relations* and *The Curse Of Kanaka*, play commercial movie houses throughout America. Serious scientists question their use of staged sequences.
- A few months before the expedition to Nambu, Bennett and LeRoy had a falling out, and Bennett left Impossible Expeditions to sign on with *The Transatlantic*.

If asked appropriate questions, Claremont can supply the following additional information:

- This was Bennett's first mission for *The Transatlantic*.
- Some Transatlantic Society board members were concerned that his swashbuckling reputation might bring discredit to the mission's scientific purpose. Others were pleased to recruit a man with so great a public following.
- It was Clara Pence who first heard that Bennett was leaving Impossible Expeditions and suggested that Claremont approach him.
- Claremont presumes that they knew each other through presentations at various geographical societies. As far as he knows, their relationship was strictly professional. (This last statement is honest but mistaken.)
- When they announced their Nambu expedition, LeRoy had his lawyer threaten to sue *The Transatlantic*. He claimed that he and Bennett had planned such an expedition themselves, and that Bennett was in breach of an "implied contract of exclusivity" by scheduling a trip to the island before he could get his own party there. As any character with **Law** will agree, the existence of a particular remote island is not a protectable trade secret, and there is no such thing as an implied contract of exclusivity.
- The expedition was to conduct a full general survey, with hopes of documenting the island's biology, geology, and anthropology. Fanciful rumors of giant apes and prehistoric creatures still extant on Nambu, though sure to arouse public interest, would obviously be dispelled by the thorough inquiry Pence and Bennett intended to perform.

Any character with **Anthropology** or **Geology** can make a 1-point spend to

know a rumor circulating in explorer circles: that Clara Pence and Leo Bennett were more than just colleagues...

After performing whatever reasonable preparations as might be reflected by Preparedness tests, the Investigators board *Land Of Fancy* at the seaport nearest their usual base of operations and have had an uneventful voyage to the Isle Of Nambu.

Players who know their pop culture references may already be thinking about gas bombs or other non-lethal ape capturing technologies; if so, see sidebar, p. 90.

Once the players run out of steam in the information-gathering phase of the set-up sequence, flash back to the present, right after Whitey has handed them the flare gun.

Back To the Present

A character who asks if **Oral History** has allowed the gleanings of any rumors from the crew while en route must sort out the following mixture of truths and falsehoods. (Try to weave them into dialogue with the characters, rather than giving a one-sided recitation.)

- Nambu is inhabited by motley indigenous people, the result of intermarriages between local islanders and the survivors of various castaways and mutineers. (*True.*)
- They are well known cannibals. (*Untrue.*)
- They sacrifice their most beautiful maidens to a dread god called Dhothlona. (*A grain of truth contained in a garbled myth.*)
- Several scientific expeditions have tried to map its mountainous interior, but all have come to fatal grief, either at the hands of the

The Green Ape

natives, or the ordinary hazards of its haunted jungles. (*True but embellished.*)

- The natives have learned to distrust the white man, whose arrival on their shores always spells trouble. (*True.*)
- White men should have learned long ago to distrust the island of Nambu, which always spells doom for them. (*Obligatory foreshadowing.*)

Grizzled crewmen assist the investigators as they lower themselves into a small launch, and take them to the base station where Old Tarr awaits. The launch is piloted by a one-armed Frenchman known only as Unbra. He's a thin man best known for his ability to perform any task without disturbing the lit cigarette that dangles perpetually from his lips.

The Shape In the Water

As the characters head to shore, ask the players to specify whether they're on the starboard or port side of the vessel. Those on the port side may make Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble tests to spot a dark shape moving below the surface of the ocean waters, headed toward them at a high rate of speed.

Unbra, seeing the fast approaching shape, stands frozen and impassive at the launch's controls. A character with Piloting can seize the helm and veer away from the oncoming shape on a Difficulty 3 Piloting test. If the test is not made at all, the shape corrects its own course and veers away from the boat on its own. On a failed Piloting roll, the shape collides with the boat.

The shape itself remains mysterious unless one of the characters gets the bright idea to shoot at it. In this case, it rises up from the waters, revealing itself as a gargantuan sea turtle. It clips the boat as it falls back down into the waves. If his player thinks to do it, a character

with **Photography** can make a 2-point spend to record an image of it in the split-second it spends above the waves. If any of his Pillars Of Sanity relate to scientific knowledge or the virtues of exploration, he gets a 1-point Sanity refresh. (To do this he must get the negatives safely home. In the grand tradition of lost world stories, you are well within your rights to contrive circumstances resulting in the destruction of any such evidence.) Any photographer faces a 2-point Difficulty penalty during the immediately following sequence:

If the boat is hit or clipped by the turtle, it flies up into the air, forcing all aboard to make Difficulty 4 Athletics tests or be thrown into the water. Those thrown in must make another Athletics test against the same Difficulty; on a failure, they begin to drown. Rescuing a drowning individual from aboard the ship requires a Difficulty 4 Athletics test; doing so while also in the drink is Difficulty 6, and cannot be attempted if one is still drowning oneself. Unbra is thrown from the vessel and requires rescuing. Divide rescue attempts into rounds, as per a combat. Each character capable of attempting a rescue may make one rescue attempt per round. After one round, drowning characters take one die of damage per round until rescued. During the second round, the fin of a great white shark is seen in the distance. During the third, it gets closer. If the rescue attempts get to a fourth round, Unbra (or a random Investigator, if Unbra has already been pulled out) is bitten by the shark, taking an additional die +3 damage.

Save Stability tests for the end of the sequence, adding together the following elements to get the total possible loss: 2 for clearly seeing the turtle, 2 if the ship is hit or clipped, and 3 to see the shark swimming up and eventually biting someone.

If the turtle is seen, **Biology** reveals it to be a previously unknown species. It

resembles the archelon of the Cretaceous period, but, unlike that extinct creature, clearly has a hard outer shell.

Old Tarr

Whatever the outcome of the encounter between boat and turtle, the group eventually arrives on the shore, where stands a lonely wooden hut. Its sole inhabitant is a filthy, bedraggled specimen of a man called Old Tarr. If still alive, Unbra shows an appalled avoidance of Old Tarr; **Assess Honesty** suggests that he sees in the old wretch a frightening prediction of his own possible future. He turns the launch around and returns to the relative safety of the *Land Of Fancy*.

Medicine shows that Old Tarr is malnourished, vitamin-deprived and suffering from heat stroke. Rashes on his skin indicate the presence of at least two particularly nasty tropical parasites. On a 1-point spend, **Medicine** also shows that, although he looks like he's in his mid-seventies, he's actually not a day over sixty. Tarr is a stoop-shouldered, mostly toothless man who speaks in Hollywood's old coot dialect (sub-category: sea salt.)

He wants nothing more than to help the investigators recover Clara Pence, who he "can feel in his bones" is still alive somewhere on the island, the prisoner of that infernal beast, the Green Ape. The filthy monster is in love with her, he claims. He could see it in the beast's lustful eyes when it came to snatch her up and carry her off to its jungle lair: a look of depraved, animal lust.

This will no doubt prompt the investigators to ask him to recount the story from the beginning. Unfortunately, Old Tarr's mind has been addled by the trauma of his encounter with the Green Ape. He has trouble staying on track, instead returning repeatedly to the look of desire in the filthy beast's eyes. Make the players work to extract a coherent story from him. This is what they can

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eventually piece together from his guilt-ridden ramblings:

- The mission seemed cursed from the start. On the launch ride from the main boat, one of the men,

Henderson, got a concussion from a flying fish that sailed across the bow of the boat and hit him square in the temple. He was never the same since.

- On their trip inland to the native village, a giant creature from hell, “like a pair of elephants stuck together”, came crashing from the wood. Two men were trampled.
- Relations with the natives went poorly. The crazy devils got offended by something or other, and drove the party from the gates of their bamboo fortress, at spear-point.
- That was when Velásquez lost his temper and started shooting at the villagers. They impaled him with a spear, and then Barclay, too.
- Then Henderson caught the fever and died. That left Tarr, and Bennett, and Clara.
- They were going to go back to the ship, when devils from the village showed up and took Clara with them. Bennett and Tarr followed them to an old wooden altar on the edge of a jungle clearing. Tarr has tried go back and find it again, without success.
- Then it appeared—the Green Ape! Thirty, forty feet high, his dark fur tinged with sickly green. A being of pure ancient evil!
- He and Bennett were afraid that the ape was going to attack Clara, but it seemed more frightened than anything else. Its frightful lust came about later, after it had time to think about her, and her fine blond hair.
- Then more devils came from the woods and started arguing with the first group, cussing in their damned pidgin tongue.
- They were too far inland to get to the shore before night fell, so they made camp.
- (core) That was a bad night; Bennett

The Green Ape

got drunk and weepy and said all these things that made Clara angry. [Here Tarr becomes reluctant to share the unwillingly shared confidences of his lost comrades, and must be fortified with **Flattery** or **Reassurance**.] Bennett said that he was being punished for doing a friend dirty, and Clara told him he was being stupid and male. She said it had never been anyone but him she cared about.

- Tarr has to admit that maybe he drank a bit too much that night, too, which in retrospect was a bad mistake, being in a hostile environment and such. He woke up with his head pounding, and Clara shaking him. Bennett had gone missing.
- They found signs of a struggle, like the devils had dragged him off, but the trail petered out.
- Tarr tried to convince Clara to go back to shore and from there to the boat. Then he'd get reinforcements from the ship and go back to find Bennett. She wasn't having any of it.
- And then the ape came crashing through the brush. That's when it grabbed Clara to carry her off, and Tarr saw this look in the ape's eyes. In a man, it would be love, but on that monstrous face, it was filthy, degenerate, lust.
- Tarr shot at the thing but it batted him away like he was nothing, and crashed off into the brush.
- Tarr went back to the boat but those lily-livered sea rats wouldn't perform but the most timid of searches, and then wanted to leave. So he sent a telegraph back to headquarters, and waited here for reinforcements. And now here they are.

- Bennett is no more; he can feel that in his bones. But Clara is still out there, terrified, probably starving. Being subjected to God knows what obscenities from that hairy, inhuman beast.

- "Nambu is cursed, I tells ye! *Cursed!*"

Tarr is a follower waiting for marching orders and has no suggestions to offer.

If asked to take them to the Spear People, Tarr says yes but explains that it's not smart for him to meet them again. They've already decided that they hate him, but maybe the investigators can sweet-talk them where Bennett failed.

Jungle Walk

Tarr knows only one way through the dense forests and mountainous terrain of the island interior to the fortified village of the Spear People.

If they decide against taking him with them, **Flattery** convinces him to draw a rough map. Should they start out with Tarr but lose him along the way, a Difficulty 4 Preparedness test allows a character to specify retroactively that he had Tarr draw the map.

The jungle walk consists of four stages:

- from base camp to the precipice
- from precipice to spider grove
- from spider grove to pit trap
- from pit trap to Spear People

With a map but without Tarr, a character with **Outdoorsman** can lead the group from one obstacle to the next, and finally to the Spear People. Without a map or Tarr, each stage costs 1 **Outdoorsman** or **Geology** point. If unable to pay the point, the group becomes lost; see sidebar.

The Precipice Under the Waterfall

The group travels through thick jungle for what seems like many miles. If Tarr is present, he leads the way, hacking furiously through the brush with his machete. Inquiring into his condition with **Medicine** reveals that he is putting a great strain on a body already compromised by old age and malnutrition. **Flattery** might convince him that he's too valuable a resource to lose and should therefore let the party's younger men take the lead.

Soon they reach their first obstacle; they must edge their way along a narrow shelf of rock which extends behind a crashing waterfall. A check of the feature with **Geology** shows that the rocks are wet and eroded to a slippery polish but capable of supporting the party's weight without collapsing. Though the shelf occasionally widens, at most points it is so narrow that the investigators will have to creep along with their backs pressed tightly to the cold, wet cliff wall behind it.

An **Outdoorsman** who schools the group on proper ledge-crossing technique, can, with a 1-point spend, decrease the Difficulties in the following two paragraphs by 1. If someone uses Preparedness to have a climbing harness on hand (Difficulty 4), a 2-point **Outdoorsman** spend can reduce all Difficulties by 2.

Have the group specify the order of their crossing, and whether they're going together or one at a time. Getting across the precipice requires a Difficulty 3 Athletics test. Each investigator rolls in the order specified. On a failure, the investigator slips forward into the pounding waterfall, plummeting into the frothing river below. On impact, the character takes 1 die + 6 damage.

Characters next to others who fail can try to catch them on a Difficulty 5 Athletics test. On a success, the falling character slips over the edge but can then

Lost In the Jungle

If the group becomes lost, they wander aimlessly for the remainder of the day and are stuck in the jungle when night falls. A character with **Outdoorsman** can set up a shelter, but the investigators remain partially exposed to the elements, placing their bodies under stress. Characters with **Outdoorsman** lose 2 Health points; those without lose 4 points. These losses are halved if a player thinks to use **Preparedness** to have warm camping gear on hand.

Being lost is primarily terrifying; characters with **Outdoorsman** test to avoid 2-point **Stability** losses; those without face possible 4-point losses.

While lost in the night, characters hear unnerving crashing in the underbrush. **Outdoorsman** pegs its source as the nearby movements of several large animals. If they remain in their shelter, the crashing grows closer, closer... and then stops.

If they head out to investigate, their flashlights briefly pick up some bizarre forms out in the jungle: strange armored quadrupeds with triangular heads and pig-like ears, each of them as big as a pony. **Biology** identifies these as an unknown armadillo, four times as big as the largest known species, the *priodontes maximus* of the Amazon basin.

Just as they're breathing sighs of relief, permit the character with the highest **Outdoorsman** rating to make a **Sense Trouble** test. On a success, he sees a sabertooth tiger about to leap on another party member (the one with the lowest **Health** pool.) On a **Difficulty 6 Athletics** test, he can knock the tiger's desired victim out of the way, becoming its target himself. He can take a free **Firearms** shot at the tiger on its way down, but this will not prevent it from landing on its victim.

Whichever character the tiger lands on, it does an automatic 6 damage with its claws and prodigious teeth. During its action, which occurs at the beginning of each combat round, it does an additional 4 points of damage per round to its target, also automatically. If reduced to half of its **Health** pool, it disengages and bounds off into the trackless jungle. Due to the darkness, hunters who wish to pursue the tiger face a **Difficulty of 6** on their **Athletics** tests against its **Fleeing**.

Saber-Tooth Tiger

Athletics 12, Health 12, Scuffling (Natural Weaponry) 12

Weapon: +2 (teeth and claws)

Special : if it pounces on a target from a significant height, it can then maul its prey, doing an automatic 6 damage on its first attack and an automatic 4 points of damage on all subsequent attacks against the mauling victim. Automatic successes end if it disengages.

Getting lost is suspenseful at first and then gets boring. Accordingly, the morning afterwards, the crisis ends. The group stumbles onto the next obstacle, and from there to the subsequent ones.

If the group does not get lost at this point but circumstances warrant it later in the storyline, insert this episode as needed. Do not allow the group to get significantly lost more than once. Where credibility demands that they spend time wandering through the jungle, elide quickly through this fact to the next interesting plot development. If you really feel they should pay a price for a later blunder, charge them a few **Outdoorsman**, **Athletics**, **Health** and/or **Stability** points for the elided incident.

be pulled back up again. On a failure, rescuer and rescuee plummet into the gorge together.

Even if none of the investigators slip, Tarr does. Unless caught by an Investigator, he falls into the waterfall and is never seen to surface. He cannot be rescued once he falls into the river; he, for all intents and purposes, vanishes.

Getting down through thick, brambly vegetation to the riverbank below requires a 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend or a **Difficulty 4 Athletics** test; otherwise the character reaches the shore eventually, but too late to aid any comrades drowning in the river.

Refer to "The Shape In the Water", previously, to see how to handle

drowning. Here, however, the river is too wide to allow rescuers to work from the riverbank. The rushing waters here increase all **Difficulties** by 1. A high shelf of rock prevents Investigators on the far shore from crossing to the other side of the river; they must swim back to the near shore.

If anyone dies during this sequence,

Stability tests are in order. The baseline possible loss is 1 for each death. Characters who tried and failed to save a comrade see that number increased by 2.

Spider Grove

Finally, after hours of tiring up-and-down hiking, the group reaches an expanse of relatively flat ground. A bamboo grove stretches as far as the eye can see, its tall, green pole-like trunks swaying in a gentle breeze. The two Investigators closest to the front of the party make Sense Trouble tests. Successful tests spot a nearly invisible network of silky threads woven between the trees.

Tarr, if present, doesn't remember these from his previous trip through the bamboo grove. They wrap between most of the trees; to avoid them requires a long detour: see "Finding Alternate Routes."

In the event of twin Sense Trouble failures, the two lead characters (and Tarr, if present) get stuck in them.

The strands are covered with a powerful adhesive; anyone coming into contact with them gets stuck in place. The strands then gain tension, pulling the subject several feet off the ground. Nearby strands then detach from their moorings on the bamboo trunks to wrap themselves more tightly around the victim.

The webs can be burned with a torch. **Outdoorsman** is required to produce a fire. Characters trapped in a burning web take a die -2 damage.

Chemistry plus a Difficulty 6 Preparedness test to have the right ingredients on hand allows the character to whip up a solvent to melt the webbing.

As the investigators monkey with the webbing, the character with the highest

Finding Alternate Routes

Although Tarr insists that his route is the only one, there's always more than one way to traverse an island. Tarr's route is the most direct, but by taking long circumventions past his obstacles it is possible to eventually reach the Spear People.

Your goal here is to find an entertaining middle ground between two boring possibilities. You don't want the group to uneventfully skip all of the obstacles. Nor do you want the story to grind to a frustrating and repetitive halt in the face of repeated failures to cross the same barriers.

Accordingly, the costs of skipping an obstacle the group hasn't yet tried are greater than finding a workaround after a failed attempt.

To skip an obstacle entirely and then get back on track requires a 2-point **Outdoorsman** or **Geology** spend and entails an additionally stressful and exhausting journey costing each group member 4 Athletics or Fleeing points, 4 Health points, and 2 Stability.

To navigate around an obstacle after a failed attempt requires only that the group have access to **Outdoorsman** or **Geology**, and pay an exhaustion toll of 2 Athletics or Fleeing and 2 Health.

Alternately, you can devise other obstacles or creepy encounters the group is better equipped for.

Sense Trouble pool spots a dark shape scuttling across the tops of the bamboo trees in the distance. It's a hairy spider, easily ten feet in diameter. **Biology** estimates that it weighs half a ton. The sight of the spider triggers a possible 3-point Stability loss.

This not being a D&D session, the creature does not skitter over to suicidally attack a party of humans. It watches for a while, then disappears deeper into the bamboo canopy. As the group destroys its webbing, keep describing movements and calling for fake Sense Trouble tests, to build up the tension of the expected giant spider attack. (If you're feeling generous refund any Sense Trouble points spent on unnecessary tests at the end of the sequence. This not being a D&D session, why feel generous?)



Pit Trap

Tarr (or his map) tells the group that they're getting close to the village of the Spear People when they reach the edge of a clearing. Call for Difficulty 5 Sense Trouble tests all around—Difficulty 4 for characters with Conceal of 4 or more. If anyone fails, the investigator with the worst result falls into a pit trap, carefully disguised with a layer of false ground cover over a breakaway lattice of bamboo. The pit is filled with sharpened bamboo stakes. On a Difficulty 6 Athletics test, the falling character misses the stakes and suffers damage -3 from the fall. A failure means that he has landed on one of the stakes, taking damage +4. If this causes him to become seriously wounded, he is impaled on the stake.

If someone examines the stakes, they turn out to be smeared in a thick paste that smells of almonds. **Biology** identifies its active ingredient as a toxin, perhaps from a tree frog or jellyfish.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmland



A Difficulty 6 **First Aid** test clears any poison from a stake wound. Otherwise the victim suffers the poison effects listed below. On a failure, the would-be medic must also make a Difficulty 4 First Aid test to avoid being contaminated by the toxin, too.

If poisoned, the character suffers the penalties associated with being *hurt*. Also, every six hours, the character must make a Difficulty 4 Health roll, or take an additional die of damage.

Climbing out of the pit requires a Difficulty 4 Athletics test—Difficulty 5 if no ropes are available. On a failure, the character slips, either losing a single Health point (if one or more Athletics points were spent on the test) or falling onto the stakes, for damage +4 and a possible poisoning.



The Spear People

Tarr, if still present, hangs back at the edge of the clearing as the investigators make their way to the fortified village of the Spear People. It is an impressive structure, surrounded by walls of bamboo, complete with parapets and a watchtower. A character with **Architecture** reasons that these so-called indigenous tribesmen must have had some Western contact, as the fortifications reveal a familiarity with medieval castle design. **History** leads the character to question what sort of threat could lead a primitive village to construct such a bulwark: surely there can't be siege warfare on Nambu!

The wooden gates of the village are open, but swing shut as the investigators come near. Drums ring out from the watchtower. Calls up to the parapet remain unanswered, until finally a forbiddingly handsome figure dressed in an elaborate robe and headdress appears atop the gate.

This is Kerdan, King of the Spear

People. He speaks to them in a pidgin dialect that will be comprehensible to English speakers, though in a halting and vocabulary-starved manner. Characters speaking only English will have to talk to him in similarly simple terms. Those who also speak at least two of the following tongues can engage in fairly sophisticated dialogue with him: French, Dutch, Chinese, Malay.

Kerdan stands among a retinue of bodyguards, each of whom points a spear at the party. Characters with **Physics** know that from their current distance, the weapons pose only a symbolic threat.

Anthropology shows that Kerdan and his people share a mixture of physical racial traits, including European, East Asian, South Asian, and Polynesian.

If a character tries to use **Anthropology** to figure out how to behave in Kerdan's presence, he realizes that a ceremonial laying down of weapons is appropriate. They should place all of their visible weapons in front of them, then take

The Green Ape

several steps back, to show that they mean no harm.

Having performed this ceremony, the gates open, and the characters are permitted to enter the village. They need not leave their weapons behind.

Kerdan greets them from an elevated throne of bamboo, decorated with the skulls of saber-tooth tigers. He offers them the hospitality of the village, commanding the women to assemble a quick feast. After they introduce themselves, the adventurers are served fruits, a fibrous root vegetable stew, and a variety of unrecognizable meats. An examination with **Biology** recognizes certain ingredients: monkey brains, snake flesh, deer tripe. **Anthropology** reveals that to refuse any of it would be an insult to the king. The characters of players who react squeamishly must make Difficulty 3 Health tests to keep these rich, unfamiliar foods down.

Once the eating is dispensed with, the group senses that they are now free to speak of their business and ask Kerdan questions.

- The last group of white men were refused entry, because they had no manners and acted belligerently. Then they started a fight, proving that they were bad.
- The woman with hair the color of the sun seemed angry at the group's leader, when he refused to show proper politeness to the king.
- The green ape is very real. It is why they have made their village a fortress. He is called Dhothlona, and is a terrible god of death.
- The village is in a state of great alert, as it has been many months since Dhothlona last attacked. He is sure to come crashing from the trees any day now.

- If asked, Kerdan says that Dhothlona's last rampage happened several weeks before the arrival of the last party of white men.
- (core) Provided with a map of the island (or drawing one in the sand), Kerdan shows the investigators the area of the island his people always avoid, because it is the haunt of Dhothlona. He also pinpoints the site of an old sacrificial altar where victims used to be left to Dhothlona, back in the old days, when his ancestors were ignorant savages.
- Once you find one of Dhothlona's tracks, there is no difficulty in following him further. Of course, the Spear People never want to find the green ape—they want only to escape his attacks.
- By no means is Dhothlona a gentle or misunderstood creature. He's a vicious monster who devours men whole. (*This was true, but has changed now that the ape's body holds Bennett's consciousness.*)

Whether they ask or not, Kerdan makes it clear that, if they bring the great ape's head to adorn his throne, he will reward them with a great fortune. He offers each male Investigator a commission in his army, a sacred spear, and a young, strong wife if they succeed.

Prehistoric Behemoth

On their way to the old sacrificial altar, the group is attacked by a two-ton, eight-foot-tall, rhino-like prehistoric beast. **Biology** identifies it as a titanotherium, also known as a brontotherium. The creature dashes from a stand of thick jungle foliage.

If Tarr is still present, he is the victim of the beast's attack. Otherwise, have each investigator make an Athletics or Fleeing test as a Zero Sum contest.

The titanotherium butts the victim up onto its two-pronged nose horn and then thunders off into the bush, leaving the character clinging to its the horn. Investigators can shoot at the beast but risk hitting their comrade; on any shot that misses its Hit Threshold by exactly 1, the clinging character takes the normal damage for that firearm type.

The creature is an angry, territorial herbivore, and simply wants the group to get the message about whose pasture this is. If no one shoots at him or otherwise tries to harm him, he clomps to the edge of his territory to unceremoniously deposit his prisoner in a clump of bushes, then gallops away. If shot or attacked, he tosses his victim in the bushes and then turns around off to stomp whichever Investigator has so far done the most damage to him.

Titanotherium

Athletics 12, Fleeing 12, Health 40,
Scuffling 24

Stealth Modifier: -3

Weapons: +1 (head butt), +2
(trample)

The creature moves with surprising speed, given its bulk. To take a clear shot of it requires a 3-point **Photography** spend. This may make him eligible for a later 1-point Sanity refresh—see the notes on photographing the sea turtle for more.

If an Investigator gets tossed into the bushes, he finds a torn safari jacket nearby. If it's Tarr, the first one to check on his condition sees the jacket. It contains the following clues:

- (core clue a) The torn safari jacket bears the insignia of the Transatlantic Society on its chest pocket. In a side pocket is a folded, wrinkled and water damaged photograph of a beautiful blond woman.
- (core clue b) A character with

New Rule: Zero Sum Contests

A zero sum contest occurs when something bad or good is definitely going to happen to one of the Investigators, and you need to find out which one takes the hit. Each player makes a test of a general ability. A zero sum contest can be positive or negative. In a positive contest, the character with the highest result gets a benefit. In a negative contest, the one with the lowest result suffers an ill consequence. When embarking on a contest with an open Difficulty, inform the players that this is an open Difficulty, and whether this is a positive or negative test. They then decide in advance how many points to spend to modify their rolls, keeping this number secret from other players by writing it down on a piece of paper. They then roll the dice, reveal their expenditures, and announce their final results.

Grace Prister (played by Lynne), the Reverend McNeill (Rich) and Armondo Blackbrooks (Steve) flee from a titanothere on the Isle Of Nambu. The Keeper, Rachel, has determined that, for story reasons, one of them will be definitely be caught by the creature, making this a zero sum contest. (If she wanted all of them to have a chance of getting away, it would be a contest of its Athletics versus their Athletics/Fleeing, but here the creature doesn't enter into the process at all.) Lynne decides to spend 8 Fleeing points, and rolls a 1, for a result of 9. Rich adds 4 Athletics to the mix, and gets a 5. Steve spends 4 Athletics and 4 Fleeing, rolls a 5, for a result of 13.

Rich's 5 is the lowest result. The unfortunate Reverend gets clipped by the titanothere.

Be cautious when treating events with negative outcomes as zero sum contests. Because they guarantee that something bad will definitely happen to one of the Investigators, make sure that the negative consequence is distressing but does no permanent harm to the character. For example, it's acceptable in the titanothere scene in this scenario, because the creature dishes out only a token amount of damage. It might likewise be acceptable to decide that one PC falls into a trap, but not that the trap then crushes him to death—or seriously wounds him, for that matter.

Worse results of zero sum contests are acceptable if the characters have had some other fair chance to avoid exposure to the bad situation.

If players are tied for best result (in the case of a positive test) or worst (in a negative test), the tied players may subsequently spend any number of additional points from the pool in question, in hopes of breaking the tie in their favor. Should results remain tied after additional expenditures, the Keeper chooses the winner based on story considerations.

This rule is suitable for any iteration of the GUMSHOE system.

Library Use who attempts to identify the photo remembers this as the image of Clara Pence, seen in back issues of *The Transatlantic*.

- (core clue c) Examination of the jacket's with **Forensics** shows that the blood-soaked rips in its back were not inflicted by a prehistoric creature or other animal, nor with one of the primitive weapons available to the Spear People. They were left by a very sharp, modern hunting knife.

These core clues, though necessary to the solution of the central mystery, do not directly bring the group to the next scene. To get there, they need merely continue along to the sacrificial altar.

A Secret Camp

The rotting remains of an old gallows-like structure is found in a clearing a few hour's hike from the titanothere's territory. **Outdoorsman** finds countless tracks of an ape-like creature, each more than three feet across. **Biology** suggests that the creature belonging to the tracks might be in the neighborhood of twenty feet high. None are fresh. The clearest line of tracks leads away into the jungle. If they follow them, the investigators find themselves in a circle of vegetation which **Biology** shows that the circle is newer than the jungle around it, as if it has recently grown back after having been cleared by fire. **Outdoorsman** indicates that this was a man-made, controlled burn, not a natural fire. **Anthropology**

points out that the Spear People are hunter-gatherers, not agriculturalists, and so would not use the slash and burn technique. This was done by someone else.

To get at the rest of the core clues, the team must hack down this fresh foliage.

- (core clue a) This uncovers a circle of ash-strewn soil. Intermixed in the ashes are flecks of red paint. **Archaeology** shows that although both are recent, the paint covers the ash, rather than the other way around. So the clearing was made through burning, and *then* the paint was applied. **Archaeology** further reveals that the paint was arranged in a pair of interlocked circles.

The Green Ape

- (core b) The first character applying **Occult** knowledge to the interlocked circles recalls an obscure reference to a ritual for an “exchange of irreducible essence between two beings”, whatever that meant. This passage, found in an 4th century Greek survey of magical knowledge, referred to the magic as intrinsically evil and warned all good thaumaturgists to avoid it.

Cthulhu Mythos provides more specifically brain-blasting information on the interlocked circles. Surely these correspond to a ritual described by von Junzt, which allows for the exchange of consciousnesses between two beings. There are those who say that the poet Edward Pickman Derby, author of *Azathoth and Other Horrors*, was subjected to a similar spell in 1932, by his wife, Asenath Waite, who used it to occupy his body. This use incurs a 2-point Stability loss.

Forensics shows that something is buried under the circle—possibly corpse-sized.

If they dig up the circle, the investigators find the badly decayed corpse of Leo Bennett. **Forensics**:

- pegs his death as occurring at about the same time as Clara Pence’s abduction by the green ape.
- shows that he died from a single stab wound to the back. This corresponds to the tear in the jacket recovered in the previous scene.
- finds an inhuman toe stuck in his oral cavity

Biology: An examination of the toe, which is also severely decayed determines that it belongs to an unknown species of primate, closely related to the gorilla. It is the creature’s big toe, from its left foot. The toe fits

one set of tracks, coming into the area.

Outdoorsman: another set of giant ape tracks leads deeper into the jungle. These are missing the left big toe, and are staggered in a pattern suggesting not only pain, but severe disorientation. Following the tracks to the edge of a bog, the **Outdoorsman** finds a set of scattered human bones

Forensics identifies these as the left arm of a human male, and can supply the following facts as answers to specific questions about the bones:

- They show signs of consistent good nutrition and access to vitamins and minerals—as if they belonged to a well-fed Westerner.
- They bear a number of healed breaks and fractures sustained over a period of years, suggesting that the subject led an active and dangerous life.
- Cartilage stuck to the ball socket suggests that the arm was torn from the victim’s body with extreme force.

No other bones from this or any other human victim are found in the immediate vicinity. **Evidence Collection** does, however, turn up an lens-like item on a leather thong, as if meant to be dangled from the wrist. **Photography** identifies this as a view-finder, used by motion picture directors to line up shots without having to manipulate the actual unwieldy camera.

(Successfully pieced together by the players, these clues allow the group to conclude that the arm belonged to Cooper LeRoy.)

- (core) And **Outdoorsman** finds yet more tracks, eventually leading toward the jagged peaks at the center of the island.

The Green Ape Screams

The tracks end when the jungle gives way to sharp expanses of exposed volcanic rock, leading up into a crown-like circle of vine-tangled mountains. **Geology** spots a probable cave mouth several hundred feet up. Getting up safely up the side of the mountain to the cave requires a Difficulty 4 Athletics test, on which Outdoorsman points may also be spent. Those who fail still get where they’re going, but at the cost of a die -2 of Health points. These measure scrapes and contusions, and also reflect the character’s general state of exhaustion.

During the trek up the rocky slope, all characters with **Sense Trouble** pools in excess of 4 (or, failing that, the character who has had the least spotlight time during the last few scenes) hear the echo of nearby gunshots. **Anthropology** reminds the players, if they need it, that the Spear People don’t use firearms. (LeRoy’s party has had to shoot a rifle to ward off a hungry and gigantic Pleistocene bird.)

The cavern is quite large, with ample room for a twenty-foot beast to roam about in. The cave’s mouth reeks with an almost overpowering animal stench. Anyone not making a Difficulty 4 Health test embarrassingly vomits on the spot.

Inside the cave is a bamboo cage bearing the unconscious form of Clara Pence. **Medicine** shows that she is feverish and probably suffering from malaria. Around the cage are scattered fruit rinds and edible plants, as if someone is keeping her fed. Still, she’s emaciated and dehydrated. A Difficulty 4 **First Aid** test revives her a little but does not bring her back to lucid consciousness. She’s able to fitfully murmur only a few cryptic phrases: “Leo... the ape... Cooper... Never led him on...”

Near the bamboo cage is a scattering of bone shards. A character using **Biology** to identify them finds no human bones: instead they are of large mammalian

species that supposedly went extinct in the Pleistocene era. Many of the bones are fresh; others, several years old. The fresh bones bear large chunks of desiccated flesh and have not been cracked open to get at the marrow, indicating a wasteful predator that feeds inefficiently. It also suggests an absence of scavenging animals—perhaps because they're too afraid to approach the primary predator's lair.

In one corner lies a stack of logs and a large sharpened stick. Anyone trying to use **Evidence Collection** to figure out its purpose finds small scorch marks on the tip of the stick and on holes in the logs, as if an awkward, fumbling attempt was made to set a fire, and then abandoned in frustration.

- (core a) A character using **Evidence Collection** or **Archaeology** to discern the pattern in the bone shards realizes that, if viewed from a height of about nineteen to twenty feet off the ground, it would resemble the insignia of the Transatlantic Society, and the initials L.B.

(If characters wonder why the Green Ape didn't use an easier method of sending his message, **Biology** reveals that the local flora is bereft of plants that can easily be converted into any sort of lasting pigment.)

As soon as the characters have had a chance to examine the bone pattern, the Green Ape appears in the cave mouth, shrieking its inarticulate fury. The sight of the giant ape provokes a Stability test, with a possible 5-point loss.

If a player thinks to ask, the Green Ape is indeed missing its left big toe. A quick glance with **Medicine** reveals that the wound healed over within the last few months.

Leo Bennett, his mind present within the ape but clouded by its predatory animal

Gas Bombs

Cooper LeRoy will shortly show up with gas bombs, intended to knock out the Green Ape. Perhaps knowing their cinematic reference points, the group may have already decided to synthesize their own non-lethal ape-capturing technology.

If they thought to do this before embarking on the trip (during the initial flashback), creating gas bombs requires a 2-point Chemistry spend and a Difficulty 5 Mechanical Repair test. To synthesize gas bombs while on the island increases the Difficulty of the Mechanical Repair test to 6, and requires a Difficulty 6 Preparedness test to have the right materials and chemical compounds on hand.

You may not want the characters to have ready access to gas bombs for later episodes of your series. (Note that they probably don't work on any Cthulhoid entity worth its tentacles anyway.) Merely specify that unknown technical problems have prevented them from successfully repeating whatever it was they did during the Case of the Green Ape, and take the gas bombs back off the table.

Creating other devices for non-lethal ape capture should be about as difficult as the above, provided that they seem plausible (within the very elastic limits of the pulp genre and/or thirties thrill cinema.)

instincts, assumes that the investigators are confederates of Cooper LeRoy. He completes a display of gorilla-style intimidation before charging at them.

If they've pieced together the truth—that Bennett's brain is in the ape's body, and that he clearly has not meant to harm Clara—the group can use **Reassurance** to blurt this out, forestalling his attack. Otherwise the Green Ape attempts to rip them to shreds.

The Green Ape

Athletics 18, Health 54, Scuffling 18

Weapons: +4 (bash, arm-pull, or foot crush), +2 (massive jaws); attacks once per round, striking at the character who hurt him most recently, or otherwise appears most aggressive

The Strange Secret Of Cooper LeRoy

Soon afterwards, Cooper LeRoy shows up at the cave mouth, with a party of well-appointed porters and hunters in tow. Several of them are overcome by the stink, but LeRoy, clean and dapper in his safari gear, remains composed.

The timing of his appearance depends on how the investigators are dealing with the Green Ape. He shows up when:

- they Reassure the ape or
- the investigators have reduced him below 9 Health. (LeRoy doesn't want the ape dead; he wants to complete his vengeance on his former friend by humiliatingly exhibiting him back home)

LeRoy speaks in the fast-talking patter of a New York show business impresario. He demands that the investigators stand aside and allow him to gas the ape and take Clara back to his ship for treatment. Clara is too dazed to voice



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Green Ape



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her preferences on the matter. However, if the investigators have put the pieces together correctly, they know that LeRoy is no rescuer, but is instead the villain of the piece. Further clues are on his person:

- If someone asks about the arms he carries, they see a steel hunting knife on his belt—one consistent with the bloodied cuts in the back of the jacket found in “Prehistoric Behemoth.”
- He wears a prosthetic in place of his missing left arm. He manipulates it poorly, as if it is still new to him.
- Of course LeRoy has changed his clothes since the day, months ago, when he killed his former friend and cast his mind into that of the Green Ape. His boots, however, are the same ones he wore then. If character with **Evidence Collection** specifying that he’s examining LeRoy’s person spots tiny flecks of red paint in the seams and laces of his boots. A later lab test using **Chemistry** confirms that the paint matches that used at the ritual site.

To crack his demeanor of honest concern for Clara, the investigators must present him with a fairly complete reconstruction of his misdeeds. Until then, he issues denials. **Assess Honesty** suggests that he’s worried less about the investigators than the support of his own men, as if they’ll throw him over should they suspect him of wrongdoing. A recap should include most of the following points:

- LeRoy was on the island during the loss of the Bennett expedition.
- He stabbed Bennett in the back.
- He conducted a ritual to place the dying Bennett’s consciousness in the body of the Green Ape.

- He was probably motivated by desire for Clara.

As their case becomes increasingly detailed, LeRoy becomes more visibly defensive. (You should be able to convey this through acting, but can throw in confirmation with **Assess Honesty** if need be.) Eventually he cracks, addressing the ape, blaming him for going after Clara “when you knew I had dibs on her.” Pressed on where he learned the ritual, he confesses that he uncovered it while preparing a documentary near the legendary Plains Of Sung.

When it becomes clear that his evil-doing has been exposed to his colleagues, he takes out his pistol and attempts to fire on the ape. An Athletics contest allows an Investigator to wrestle the gun out of his hand. If they stand by, even a dying ape rallies long enough to surge at him and rip him limb from limb. (Don’t roll for an interaction between two NPCs; just narrate it.)

Cooper LeRoy

Athletics 6, Firearms 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Weapons 6.

Weapons: +0 (pistol), +2 (elephant gun), -1 (knife)

This is only the most likely and dramatic outcome of this climactic scene. If the investigators are slow in getting LeRoy to crack, he and his men might succeed in gassing the ape. Then they’ll have to figure out what to do with LeRoy. **Law** reveals that no national authority has legal jurisdiction over this island. Do they take the law into their own hands? Turn him over to the Spear People for trial? Let the Green Ape awaken, allowing Bennett his bloody revenge?

If the group fails to piece together the evidence in time, LeRoy can probably capture the Green Ape and planning to exhibit him. Unless they stop him, he takes Clara with him on his journey back to civilization, too. Perhaps the

investigators figure it out later and confront him when he arrives at the campaign’s base of operations—before the ape escapes and rampages through the city. Should they blow it entirely and give up, they may read in the papers about the ape’s escape, its killing of LeRoy, and its being killed by authorities—with Clara also accidentally dying along the way.

Should they crack LeRoy on schedule, the adventure ends with a sad farewell between Clara and the ape. She may have had feelings for him before, but can’t live on a remote island as the mate to a monstrous gorilla. After a tearful parting, the group sets off the flare to summon the launch that will take them back to the *Land Of Fancy*.

In the event that the conclusion seems anti-climactic, you can throw in a final scene in which the Spear People—or maybe a miraculously reappearing Old Tarr—attempt to kill the Green Ape, and the investigators must intervene to save him.

Sanity Refresh

This being more a pulp adventure with a Mythos twist than full-on horror, the potential for Sanity refreshes are slim. Rescuing Clara and leaving the Green Ape to prowl harmlessly the jungles of Nambu allows a 1-point Sanity refresh.



THE LORD OF THE JUNGLE

"WITH HIS FANCIFUL MIND HE THOUGHT OFTEN OF THE PREHISTORIC CIVILISATION IN WHICH THE MAD EXPLORER HAD SO IMPLICITLY BELIEVED, AND WOULD WEAVE TALE AFTER TALE ABOUT THE SILENT JUNGLE CITY MENTIONED IN THE LATTER'S WILDER NOTES AND PARAGRAPHS."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "FACTS CONCERNING THE LATE ARTHUR JERMYN AND HIS FAMILY"

The jungle adventure movies of the 1930s and 1940s generally combined a light tone and lion attacks with dramas of identity: Who are we when we leave civilization? Can we reshape our identity in the primordial jungle? Does man mean anything when set against nature in the raw? Do we carry our own "dark continent" of greed and suspicion with us wherever we go? Such questions even inform (if feebly and intermittently) the endless series of amiable Tarzan films and their hacked-out imitations, and the few ambitious jungle movies tackled them almost head-on. In the ungainly 1940 film *Green Hell*, James Whale (the director of *Frankenstein*) manages to combine lost cities and angry natives with strong character conflicts and one stark episode of actual psychological horror. In that tradition, this adventure has the potential to pit Investigators against each other as it pitilessly destroys and remakes one of their fellows — a Purist fate in a Pulp world.

The Keeper will need to keep track of elapsed time in the jungle, even as it blends into a seamless hell of insects, heat, and danger for the Investigators. She will also need to keep track of the tension, and even moreso of the

Investigators' fund of ability pool points. As the Investigators' resources dry up, the Keeper can better tempt them with the poison gift of the White God.

Introduction

The Spine

For their own reasons, the Investigators **Enter the Backlot Jungle** in search of the Lost City of Ilarneek. Their expedition goes poorly: **Stalked By Rivals** and **Plagued By Setbacks**, the Investigators find an unlikely ally in a **Mysterious Stranger**. But their ally demands that one Investigator pay **A Terrible Price** for its aid. Even if **The Investigators Achieve Their Goal** with the stranger's help, have they paid so much that their success proves meaningless?

The Horrible Truth

The Investigators' trail leads through the crater of Dzéwà, one of the plant-gods of the planet Xiclotl, fallen to Earth centuries ago from a shan spacecraft. Dzéwà seeks worship, and selects one Investigator to adore it. To that Investigator, Dzéwà provides unearthly power — power which warps its wielder

into a horrific travesty halfway between human and Xiclotlan. Dzéwà wants its chosen acolyte to stay in the jungle with it forever, and gods are not used to being refused. Using the power granted by Dzéwà is the only way for the expedition to succeed: Will the Investigator pay that price? Will the other Investigators make him pay for their dreams?

The Scenes

Prelude

This adventure begins with the Investigators hacking their way through the Backlot Jungle in search of the Lost City of Ilarneek. If the Keeper needs to set it up further, or more thoroughly tie it into an ongoing campaign, she can always run a quick montage sequence of stock footage:

- Finding Ilarneek. (See p. 94, below)
- The liner *Queen Caroline* pulls out of the dock at night. Its horn sounds low, echoing across the black ocean. The word "Leopoldville" (or "Zanzibar" or "Rio de Janeiro" or "Singapore" or ...) shows in square, white letters on its stern.
- A red line crawls across a sepia map, from the Investigators' home port to the coast of the Dark Continent. Or somewhere just as good, anyway. (See "Which Jungle?")
- The Investigators step off into a hive of activity on the docks of a sun-baked river town. Cranes swing crates off the ship behind them over their heads, longshoremen from the ship curse in pidgin and shout "Vast there!" Sweating native work gangs,

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Which Jungle?

This adventure takes place in the Backlot Jungle. The default assumption sets Ilarneq somewhere beyond the west coast of tropical Africa, the broad location of both *Tarzan* and *Heart of Darkness*. That said, moving the action to East Africa (*King Solomon's Mines* country) is trivial. Changing the scene to the Amazon (the setting of *Green Hell*), Southeast Asia (the setting of *Jungle Menace*), or the East Indies (the setting of *East of Borneo* and *King Kong*) requires a cosmetic shift of proper names and dangerous animals if you suspect anyone is paying attention. But don't worry about it too much: the Backlot Jungle grows from Brazil to Bora Bora, just as the Backlot Gothic looms everywhere from Yorkshire to Yugoslavia.

Africa

Lions
Crocodiles
Elephants
Black Mamba
Rock Python
Tsetse Flies
Killer Ants
Anziques

Asia/East Indies

Tigers
Crocodiles
Elephants with smaller ears
Cobra
Boa Constrictor
Black Flies (chew up exposed skin)
Killer Ants
Tcho-Tcho

Americas

Jaguars
Alligators
Uh... tapirs?
Bushmaster
Anaconda
Vampire Bats
Killer Ants
Akakori

stripped to the waist, tie off ropes and heave heavy loads, watched over by a florid-faced European in a stained khaki uniform with a whip in his belt.

- "Others seek the Lost City." (See p. 97, below)
- On a warped pier sticking out over a sweltering, soupy river, the Investigators dicker with a swarthy, rat-faced river pilot. His ship wallows in the background, a slapdash paint job barely covering the streaks and craters of rust.
- A gang of native workers unloads the Investigators' gear. Their trusted guide Ngambu has arrived, with *pagazi* (bearers) and *askari* (guards) from his tribe. He worries about the route, the lateness of the season, and the dangers of the jungle. But it is too late to take counsel of his fears – the expedition must go forward!



Why Seek Ilarneq?

For Investigators with **Adventure**, **Antiquarianism**, **Curiosity**, **Scholarship**, or **Thirst for Knowledge** as Drives, the answer is obvious. Other Drives can also come into play:

Artistic Sensitivity: The dextrous jade goblets of Ilarneq inspire you; a city built by such craftsmen must be a thing of wonder to behold!

Duty: If your rivals are Nazis or Commies, you owe it to your country to beat them to Ilarneq. If they're cultists, you owe it to the world.

Ennui: In the midst of fecund Nature at its most raw and primal, perhaps you too will feel alive.

Depending on previous events in the campaign or Investigator back stories, Investigators with **Follower**, **In the Blood**, or **Revenge** may also be driven into the jungle. The Keeper can feel free to consider the various disasters that befall the Investigators on the path **hard drivers**, posing existential challenges to the searcher's sense of self.

In addition to their Drives, every Investigator should provide a more concrete motive for the search. One possibility is tying a successful outcome to a Source of Stability: "With the treasure we find, I can finally propose to my rich girlfriend Joan." "Once I find the lost city, my mentor Professor Levy will consider me his equal." "My share of the find will get little Timmy that operation." Failing that, the Investigator hopes that successfully finding Ilarneq produces a major change or opportunity: "This story will get me hired full time at *Life* magazine." "What I paint here will hang in the Fitzwilliam Museum." "Beating the Russians to Ilarneq will get me that promotion to Major." "The results of this expedition will get me tenure." It is up to the Keeper whether or not these dreams are realistic; the point is to provide strong human motives to press on.

Finding Ilarneq

How do the Investigators know where to look for Ilarneq? Ask the players which one of them knows where Ilarneq is and how they know it, or use one of the following explanations.

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- An academic Investigator (an archaeologist, explorer, or historian) stumbles over the right series of clues to nail down Ilarne's location.
- A likely Investigator (an antiquarian, criminal, or military officer) finds a hand-drawn, stained, and torn map to Ilarne's location, perhaps bound into a diary or logbook hinting at the legend.
- Any Investigator might also get the map in a will, find it in another adventure, remove it from a dead body, or receive it from an old Navy buddy in a waterfront sailors' bar.
- Any Investigators might be approached, recruited, or hired by a Backlot Expert (see below) to bulk up the expedition.

Again, this can be assumed as the scenario opens, or added into a sequence of stock footage at the beginning.

Backlot Experts

If no Investigator is an archaeologist, historian, or explorer, the Keeper may wish to add a Backlot Expert NPC to the team. Recruited back home, or met in a riverfront bar, they provide just enough specialist knowledge to be dangerous. With an Interpersonal ability of the right kind, an Investigator can use the expert's Investigative ability pools as though they were her own: "Tell me, Professor, what do you make of those markings?" "Carl! Don't tell me you're fluent in their tribal dialect, too?"

The roguish adventurer **Carl Stokely** has been chasing rumors of lost cities, elephants' graveyards, dinosaur sightings, and King Solomon's Mines all over the tropics ever since the War. His gray stubble contrasts with his sleek black hair; neither goes well with his sallow skin. Whether the glitter in his eyes comes from malaria or from visions

Backlot Natives

Ngambu, your guide, is a grizzled fellow who wears a Western shirt and pants that clash oddly with the ritual scars on his face and trinkets in his hair. He knows the jungle like the back of his hand; with **Reassurance** that you know what you are doing, he offers his Outdoorsman wisdom.

Outdoorsman 5

Athletics 4, Firearms 2, Fleeing 6, Health 3, Scuffling 5, Weapons 2

Alertness: +2

Stealth: +2

Weapon: +0 (.32 pistol or machete)

Juma, an askari from a warrior tribe, towers over the smaller natives. He is grim and stoic, but his white teeth flash when he is issued ammunition or a really good knife. Without **Intimidation**, he loses respect for white men too incompetent to hunt or kill for themselves.

Athletics 8, Firearms 3, Health 5, Scuffling 8, Weapons 6

Alertness: +1

Stealth: +1

Weapons: +1 (assegai stabbing spear or War surplus rifle), +0 (club)

Armor: An askari often carries a wooden or even iron-rimmed shield that offers -1 or -2 protection against bullets at Near or greater range, and -5 protection against any other weapon. To avoid his shield, enemies must spend 2 points from their attack pool; this spend does not add to the die result.

Uledi is a great favorite with the other bearers. He is always ready to lead a song by the firelight, or to joke and laugh when things are good. When things are bad, however, he succumbs to superstitious muttering and starting at shadows. He can be brought around with the promise of a small gift. (**Bargain**)

Athletics 3, Fleeing 7, Health 4, Scuffling 4, Weapons 1

Stealth: +2 (only while deserting)

Weapons: +0 (machete), -1 (knife)

of emeralds, he won't give up easily. He responds best to **Flattery** from an attractive woman, or to someone with a **Credit Rating** high enough to keep his interest.

Anthropology 3, Archaeology 1, Languages 5, Outdoorsman 4 Athletics 7, Firearms 4, Health 4, Scuffling 5

Stealth: +1

Weapon: +1 (Lee-Enfield rifle)

The intense, weasel-like **Dr. Laszlo Szukics** is from one of the finest universities in Backlot Gothic. "What

exactly are you a doctor of, Dr. Szukics?" "It's pronounced Szoo-KEESH. And you would not understand it." "I'll bet they didn't understand it back at the Academy, either." "FOOLS! Soon they will be forced to recognize my genius!" He bobs his head forward, and wrings his hands in his twitchy excitement: With the discovery of Ilarne, the Szukics Unified Conjectural Prehistory will be proven! He requires frequent **Reassurance** that the Investigators believe his theory, which is self-evident to even the meanest intellect.

Anthropology 2, Archaeology 2,

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History 3, Languages 4, Occult 1
Athletics 4, Firearms 1, Fleeing 6,
Health 5, Scuffling 2, Stability 2

Alertness: +1

Weapon: +0 (tiny Eastern European
pistol)

It's a miracle that **Professor Stevens** even managed to get off the boat without drowning himself. Puffing his pipe, he tends to wander about as he ponders some abstruse element of epigraphy or rock strata. His rats' nest of white hair is uncombed, and his lean face alternates between intense attention to minutiae and dreamy absent-mindedness about everything else. Polite but firm **Intimidation** is required to snap him out of his reverie and get a useful answer to anything.

Anthropology 2, Archaeology 4,
Geology 3, Languages 4
Fleeing 2, Health 3

Alertness: -2

Regardless of which, if any, Backlot Expert the Keeper adds, his job is to deliver exposition, push his glasses up on his sweaty nose, fan himself with his pith helmet or fedora, and eventually die interestingly.



What You Know About Ilarneek

Given Investigative abilities provide the following about the Lost City of Ilarneek:

Occult: It is said that Ilarneek was the second city of the land of Mnar, after Sarnath. When Sarnath succumbed to its mysterious doom on the thousandth anniversary of its victory over prehuman Ib, Ilarneek survived and flourished. *1-point spend:* It may have survived because it held the Star-Stone of Mnar, a mighty relic of a previous race.

History: The *Papyrus of Ilarneek*, in the British Museum, is the source of the occultist legend of Sarnath. It dates the fall of Sarnath to approximately 8,000 B.C., long before conventional history begins even in Egypt (3100 BC). *1-point spend:* The papyrus itself is a late copy of a much earlier original; the copy dates from the reign of Necho II (610-595 BC), who sent out a Phoenician expedition to explore Africa.

Archaeology: No satisfactory origin or dating scheme has yet been proposed for the various anomalous city-sites in tropical Africa, from Bigo in Uganda to Great Zimbabwe. Hence, they could perhaps be the last remnants of some lost higher civilization in the interior. *1-point spend:* There are mines in South Africa and Rhodesia that show signs of sophisticated work dating back 10,000 to 30,000 years: before the end of the last Ice Age.

Art History: A few very old pieces of carved jade have been found in tombs from Zhou Dynasty China, 26th Dynasty Egypt, and Persia. All the tombs date from the 6th century BC, but the jade is much older than that. The motifs of all these jades are very similar, depicting a large, humped lizard and a star-shaped stone.

Geology: Africa's climate shifted radically at the tail end of the last Ice Age. The Sahara was once a grassland dotted with lakes and rivers; the tropical jungles may well have been more temperate for several thousand years during the Ice Age itself. *1-point spend:* Grossularite, a kind of garnet very similar to jadeite, is found in Africa from Kenya to Swaziland.

And now they have a map, or an expert, or both. If the Investigators don't have the necessary abilities, the Keeper can assume that their interest in the lost city fired heroic feats of **Library Use** (or pestering contacts) to uncover any or all of the backstory above as she sees fit.

City of Dreams

In his story "The Doom that Came to Sarnath," Lovecraft explicitly sets Mnar and Ilarneek in Earth's prehistory "when mankind was young." His later novel *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* mentions Ilarneek, like many other Lovecraftian locations, implying that it is a city of Dreamland rather than Earth. *At the Mountains of Madness*, later still, returned Mnar (and thus Ilarneek) to the immemorial, but terrestrial, past. Despite this, most published *Call of Cthulhu* materials, and some later fiction, leave Ilarneek in the Dreamlands. This adventure assumes that Ilarneek is an ancient, but human, city from the long-forgotten civilization of Mnar.

If your campaign has already ventured to the Dreamlands (or plans to), and has established Ilarneek as a Dreamland city, you have a few options:

- Change the name of the Lost City to Nyhargo, or to something else, or leave it nameless. ("The Arab slave traders here call it Hamiya, the Hidden City, the city only the blind can find.")
- The ruins of Ilarneek *are* in the Dreamlands; the Investigators enter the Dreamlands during the expedition (when crossing the marsh) and leave the same way. Even if Ilarneek is normally a flourishing city in the Dreamlands, the Investigators reach it at some time in the past (or future) when it is ruined.
- This is the "waking world version" of Ilarneek, much as some dreamers have both waking-selves and Dream-selves.

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“Others Seek the Lost City”

The Investigators are not the only ones looking for Ilarneek. A rival expedition is also underway to the lost city. These rivals have a marginal lead, of a week more or less. But more importantly, they have turned a key tribe against the Investigators’ expedition, blocking off the most convenient route into the interior and forcing the Investigators to take a less explored, likely more perilous path. The Keeper can explain this to the players as the adventure starts, or the Investigators can learn it in a quick dialogue scene at their jumping-off point:

- **Bureaucracy** can find it out from the colonial authorities, who issued the rival team a permit to explore the interior.
- **Cop Talk** can find it out from the local gendarmes, who had to clean up after the rival party left.
- **Credit Rating** can find it out from local merchants, who sold the rivals lots of guns and trade goods.
- **Streetwise** can find it out from criminals or black-marketeers, if the rivals are those sorts of people.

As a general rule, the rival expedition is better equipped (especially with weapons and trade goods) and has more manpower than the Investigators.

The Keeper determines the identity of these rivals, based on the campaign’s feel and ongoing history. Some possible rivals appear below, in increasing order of ruthlessness. A more ruthless rival is more likely to attack the Investigators directly, providing a broader range of obstacles and problems for our heroes.

Turning aside to attack or deal with rivals costs 2 days of marching.

Rival Scholars

If the Investigators are from Miskatonic, these guys are from Harvard. If the Investigators are from Harvard, these guys are from Oxford. They are better equipped, with a bigger budget and more allies on the ground. They wear white suits and pith helmets, annoyingly clean and superior. If they get to Ilarneek first, they will use their connections in the colonial administration to get exclusive rights to the dig; nobody will be able to publish so much as a sketch without their approval.

Their aggressive moves will be restricted to sending a scout to bribe the Investigators’ native bearers to desert. This will happen 10 days into the expedition, or when the Keeper judges the rhythm needs it. An Investigator who knows the native language (an empty slot in Languages: “I’ve picked up a few words of their lingo, and they don’t sound happy”) will be able to use **Assess Honesty** to detect the approach; the Investigators can then block it with an expenditure of 2 points of **Bargain**. The rival scholars will try again each time the Investigators’ expedition runs into problems.

If the Investigators try anything aggressive in their turn (trying to steal animals or gear, for example), the scholars will respond tit for tat, and send word to the colonial administration.

They will have one or two experienced guides (white or native) and hunters armed with rifles (likewise), but the scholars themselves will pose little physical threat:

Athletics 4, Firearms 1, Fleeing 5,
Health 5, Scuffling 3
Weapon: +0 (machete or .32
pistol)

Poachers or Tomb Robbers

Wearing fedoras and khakis, this group of low-life scum are only after what they can steal. They have plenty of guns, and hideouts and allies (coerced or bribed) all along the trail. If they get to Ilarneek first, they will loot it to the bare walls and dynamite what they can’t take.

They will escalate slowly, beginning by driving off the Investigators’ mules. Tomb robber scouts (white or native) will set snares and traps in the Investigators’ path: **Sense Trouble** to detect, and **Mechanical Repair** to disarm. If a trap goes off, it will cost the Investigators 1 day of travel, 1 bearer, or 2 points of Health. Difficulty levels will increase with time; then possible Health damage will begin increasing as the traps become spikes, pits, and such.

If the Investigators try anything aggressive in their turn, the tomb robbers will strike back forcefully. The first strike will just be a raid, aiming to bloody the Investigators’ noses and get them to turn back. If the tomb robbers believe a second strike is needed, they will hunt the Investigators from the shadows.

The tomb robbers have plenty of native soldiery (use the askari statistics from the Backlot Natives box), and they are likewise formidable foes:

Athletics 8, Firearms 6, Health 6,
Scuffling 8, Weapons 4

Alertness: +1

Stealth: +1

Weapons: +1 (Lee-Enfield rifle
or Winchester shotgun; Colt .45
pistol), +0 (machete), -1 (bullwhip)

Nazis or Commies

At least one pale, arrogant officer type moves through the forest in full SS or Red Army regalia, swastika or red star displayed for all to see. The others may be in the same sort of jungle gear the Investigators favor, or in anonymous feldgrau or mud-brown uniforms. They

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seek the riches, or the knowledge, or both, found in Ilarnek. If they discover a Superior Aryan Civilization or Pre-Colonial People's Paradise, it will be a huge propaganda sensation.

The totalitarians will simply push ahead, arrogantly confident in their ability to out-march the decadent Western Investigators. They will, however, stop long enough to supply one tribe with crummy surplus Spanish-made Mauser rifles and send them to loot the Investigators' expedition:

Athletics 6, Firearms 1, Fleeing 6,
Health 4, Scuffling 6, Weapons 5
Stealth: +1

Weapons: +1 (Mauser 7x57mm
rifle; 5 shots; jams up on a roll of 1),
+0 (spear)

Using **Firearms** to examine a captured rifle identifies it as from a lot used by the SS (or Comintern) to reward local allies. Should the Investigators make it all the way to the Anzique village (see below), they will find the SS (or the NKVD) already there, aiding the cannibals. Once the totalitarians are involved directly, they will strike hard with all the force at their disposal, which is to say with Red Army or Waffen-SS escort soldiers:

Athletics 8, Firearms 8, Health 5,
Scuffling 6, Weapons 3
Weapons: +1 (Mauser or Moisin-
Nagant rifle), +0 (bayonet)

Cultists

If the Investigators have made cult enemies in a previous adventure, these cultists may well decide to follow them to the Backlot Jungle and do away with them without witnesses or interference. In a more Derlethian game, a cult might have mounted a parallel expedition to Ilarnek for its own purposes; the Keeper has a free hand to introduce a possible continuing villain here.

Although the specifics will vary, a cult

will probably summon a monster to attack the Investigators: Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath are most suited to the jungle, but anything is possible depending on the cult's theology. Most cults will be satisfied with repeated magical attacks, and only fight physically if the Investigators attack them:

Athletics 5, Firearms 2, Health 3,
Scuffling 5, Weapons 3
Alertness: +1
Weapons: +1 (rifle or pistol), +0
(machete), -1 (sacrificial dagger)

A rival scholar, tomb robber, or totalitarian might have sought information about Ilarnek in a Mythos text, only to be corrupted by its fell wisdom. A Nazi rival expedition may well be an Ahnenerbe mission, with its own cult agenda at the Keeper's discretion. Cultist versions of the other three sorts of rival use those stats, not "pure cultist" stats.



Welcome to the Jungle

The Investigators (or their guide) calculate that it will take 40 days to reach Ilarnek. Their bearers and mules can carry food and supplies for 60 days; the usual recourse to make up the difference is to bring *hongo*, or trade goods, to exchange for food with friendly tribes along the way. (Unless the Keeper is feeling very generous, there are no friendly tribes along the way.) The Investigators (and a Backlot Expert, if any) begin with Ngambu, a number of askaris equal to the number of Investigators, a number of bearers equal to 6 times the number of Investigators, and a number of mules equal to twice the number of Investigators.

Each bearer that dies reduces the expedition stores by 1 day; each mule that dies reduces the expedition stores

by 3 days. *Example: On day 4 of the expedition, a leopard drops into camp, eats a mule and kills two bearers. The expedition had 56 days of stores left; with the mule gone, it now has 53 days of stores, the two dead bearers reduce that total to 51 days. The Investigators' cushion is dwindling.*

Forced March

By spending 1 pool point from **Intimidation** or **Bargain**, the Investigators can order a forced march, covering 2 days worth of ground in 1 day. (One Investigator can spend 1 point for the whole party.) Each day of forced marching requires a Difficulty 4 Athletics test from all Investigators; each Investigator who fails loses 1 point of Health. Investigators at Health 0 or less cannot force march.

Ongoing Miseries

The Keeper should emphasize the hostile, miserable nature of traveling through the jungle. The air is thick and oppressive, the path is full of clinging vines and tangled branches, the smell of rot and mud is everywhere, insects whine and bite. The sun boils down; even the shade is stifling hot.

Heat

The expedition must stop during the midday heat. Investigators who engage in any strenuous activity (such as combat) during this period must make a Health test against Difficulty 4 or be considered **hurt** until the next day.

Infection

The saturated air, and the omnipresent parasites, mold, and fungus, mean that any open wound becomes infected almost immediately. Each First Aid point spent on any injury that pierces the skin restores 1 fewer Health point than normal.

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Disease

For every week in the jungle, each Investigator must make a Health test against Difficulty 3 or come down with a serious disease: dysentery, malaria, tropical ulcers, hepatitis, worms, etc. Treating a disease requires **Medicine** and 2 days of lost time (1 day with a spend). Leaving a disease untreated results in the loss of 1 Health every day by the suffering Investigator, who is also considered **hurt**; First Aid cannot help with this loss. If the sufferer succeeds at the next week's test, she throws off the disease. The Difficulty of this Health test increases by 1 for each previous failure by the Investigator.

Jungle Madness

For every week in the jungle, each Investigator must make a 3-point Stability test as the oppressive isolation bores in on her.

Resentment and Desertion

Once half the bearers are dead, or once

the Keeper judges that things have started otherwise getting rocky, the Investigators need to spend 1 pool point per day from **Intimidation**, **Bargain**, or **Reassurance** to keep their native bearers and askaris. (One Investigator can spend 1 point for the whole party.) Once those points run out, the natives (except faithful Ngambu) desert, taking the party's remaining food stores with them.

Short Rations

Without food stores, the Investigators must either give up the quest or travel hungry and light, losing 1 pool point from Athletics or Fleeing per day (again, one Investigator can lose 1 point of "short rations" for the whole party) and giving up any specialized heavy gear. An Investigator with **Outdoorsman** or **Shadowing** can spend 1 day hunting for game; this consumes 1 day but puts off the next "hungry and light" period for 1-3 days. The Keeper is welcome to have a wild animal attack the hunter, of course, while he's off alone in the jungle.

Starvation

Once all the party's Athletics and Fleeing pool points are gone, real hunger sets in. This is where the Keeper should cut to stock footage of vultures wheeling overhead. After two days, the cost of all investigative spends increases by 1, and automatic clues now require 1-point spends. All general ability Difficulties increase by 1 as well.

After 7 days, the cost of all investigative spends increases by 1 again, as do all Difficulties. After 14 days, this cumulative increase occurs again. After 21 days, Investigators must make a Difficulty 7 Health test each day, or lapse into unconsciousness and die.

Wilderness Encounters

The Keeper should scatter choice bits from the next batch of unpleasantness wherever she feels that the story needs some excitement and local color, that a Backlot Expert has outlived their usefulness, or that the Investigators need to soak off some more pool points.

Most of these encounters are “one-offs” — once you’ve seen one quicksand pit, you’ve seen them all. But as always, the Keeper should go with what seems to be working.

Black Mamba

This 12-foot ebony-colored serpent lies in wait under a shady bush, striking out when its sanctuary is disturbed.

An Investigator can make a Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble test to see the black mamba before it strikes a bearer and kills him. If she chooses, she can attack it and draw its attention to herself. Once the mamba has killed a bearer, unless the Investigators instantly kill it, the panic and slowdown will cost the Investigators 1 day of travel or 1 pool point of **Reassurance, Intimidation, or Bargain**.

Athletics 8, Health 3, Scuffling 10
Hit Threshold: 4 (lithe)
Stealth: +2
Weapon: -2 (bite)

Venom: On a successful bite (even one that does no damage), the victim must make a Difficulty 5 Health test against the mamba’s venom. On a failure, the victim loses 5 Health points, goes into convulsions, and begins to suffer respiratory arrest, losing 1 Health per hour until treated with **First Aid** or **Outdoorsman**. On a success, the victim loses 2 Health points but suffers no other damage. In either case, the victim is considered **hurt** (or worse, if her Health drops below -5) until she is treated.

Elephants

A stampeding herd of elephants tears across the column, sending bearers and mules flying with every toss of their tusks. “It is *must*, the time the elephants go mad,” says Ngambu through clenched teeth, fighting against terror or despair. An Investigator can make a Difficulty 3

Sense Trouble test to hear stampeding elephants on the way. **Outdoorsman** advises an immediate halt to construct a thorn *boma* hedge; building it costs 1 day’s travel, a total of 5 pool points from either **Mechanical Repair** or **Outdoorsman**, and a Difficulty 4 Athletics test from every Investigator to avoid stabbing themselves on the thorns for 1 Health point of damage.

Failing that, **Outdoorsman** or **Biology** notes that killing the lead elephant will drive the others off in a different direction. Now is the time for Investigators with **Preparedness** and **Firearms** to insist that *of course* they brought an elephant gun (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 186); the Difficulty for the Preparedness test is 4 or 5 depending on the plausibility of the players’ arguments.

If the elephants tear through the expedition, they kill 1-6 bearers and destroy 2-12 days’ worth of supplies flung aside by the panicked survivors.

Athletics 10, Health 24, Scuffling 18
Hit Threshold: 2 (elephantine)
Stealth: -2
Weapon: +12 (tusk gore), +10 (trample), +3 (trunk sweep)

Trunk Sweep: The elephant’s first Scuffling attack is always a trunk sweep, then a trample, then a gore. On a successful trunk sweep, the target must make an Athletics test (Difficulty equals the damage result) or be knocked supine.

Killer Ants

As the expedition stops for the night, a millions-strong column of the dreaded *siafu*, or driver ants, pours implacably across their path, devouring everything in its wake. By spending 1 **Outdoorsman** pool point or 2 **Preparedness** pool points, the Investigators can build a ring of bonfires and divert them away from the main camp. (Any **Outdoorsman**,

Right Between the Eyes

Even an elephant gun won’t kill an elephant unless you hit it right in the forebrain (1-point spend of either **Outdoorsman** or **Biology**).

This involves, first of all, standing right in front of a charging elephant, which is to say, a 1-point Stability test. On a failure, you must make a Difficulty 4 Athletics or Fleeing test to dive out of the elephant’s way, or freeze up and suffer automatic trample damage (+10).

Second, you must aim at a spot just above, on a line right between, the elephant’s eyes. This raises the Hit Threshold to 6, not 2.

However, if you hit, you do *quadruple* damage. (Roll, add +2, multiply by 4.) If it’s not dead yet, there’s still one more barrel left ...

including Ngambu, can tell them this without a spend.)

A success costs 1 day of travel, as the Investigators have to replenish the wood supplies of the expedition. A failure costs 1-3 mules, as they are devoured or bitten into madness, or flee into the jungle to be lost forever.

For each round a person spends inside the column of ants, he loses 2 Health and 1 Stability. Fortunately, the ants are relatively slow: even in the Backlot Jungle, they can be outrun. Evading the column of ants requires a Difficulty 3 Athletics or Fleeing test.

Lions

Two lions have caught the party’s scent, doubtless because of all the bleeding

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bearers. An Investigator can make a Difficulty 7 Sense Trouble test to spot the lion skulking in the crotch of a high jungle tree (Difficulty 6 if that Investigator also has Outdoorsman). It disappears before the Investigator can get a shot off.

Each night, one of the two lions will silently drop into the expedition's campsite and attack. Roll randomly to determine the lion's target:

- 1: Investigator (4/7)
- 2: Expert or Ngambu or Askari (4)
- 3-4: Bearer (5)
- 5-6: Mule (6)

The number in parentheses is the Difficulty of the Sense Trouble test for the other Investigators to detect the lion in time to reach the attack after its first Scuffling test against its prey. If the lion's target is an Investigator, that Investigator must make a Sense Trouble test at Difficulty 7 if awake to detect the lion before it attacks, and gets no roll at all if asleep. (Lower all Sense Trouble Difficulties by -1 for an Investigator with Outdoorsman.) Against anyone but an Investigator, one attack is all the lion needs; its prey is dead and the lion is carrying the tastiest parts back into the jungle. If the Investigators don't catch the lion in the act, they will awaken to a bloody mess (3-point Stability test to see the remains of a human victim).

Tracking the lion back into the jungle requires **Outdoorsman**; doing it without alerting either the lion or its mate requires a Difficulty 5 **Shadowing** test. (Difficulty 4 by day.) On a failed Shadowing, the lions can either escape or ambush the hunters. Hunting the lion will cost 1 day of travel.

As long as the lions are out there, **Outdoorsman** advises stopping each night to build a thorn *boma* fence. This one doesn't have to be elephant-

proof, so it only requires a Difficulty 5 **Mechanical Repair** test; Difficulty 4 if the builder has or is assisted by someone with Outdoorsman. Against a camp protected by a boma, the lion must first roll a die; on any result but a 6, the lion goes elsewhere for food. After 8 days without a kill, the lions will abandon the expedition. A 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend will let the Investigators know when the lions have given up. However, stopping early each night will cut travel time by one third; it will take 3 days of marching to get 2 days closer to Ilarnek.

Use the lion statistics from p. 156 of *Trail of Cthulhu*.

Quicksand

A pool of deadly quicksand covers a low spot in the trail. All Investigators must make a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test. (Difficulty 3 if they have Outdoorsman.) Any Investigators who fail, and 1-6 bearers, are caught in the quicksand. If no Investigator fails, only 1 bearer and 1 askari are caught in the quicksand.

After three rounds in quicksand, anyone caught begins drowning as per p. 68 of *Trail of Cthulhu*. If they fail the Athletics test, they lose 1d6+3 points of Health each round from inhaling quicksand. An **Outdoorsman** knows that you can swim in quicksand; a Difficulty 3 Athletics test keeps you afloat and not drowning. It takes a Difficulty 5 Athletics test and two rounds to pull someone out of quicksand. A 1-point Preparedness spend produces a convenient rope, if nobody is carrying a bullwhip; throwing a rope to a trapped person is a Difficulty 3 Athletics test.

River Crossing

The trail ends abruptly at the edge of a river. The river runs steadily, if lazily, between high, crumbling banks. Crocodiles sun themselves on mudflats in the center of the river, slipping into the brown water with a muffled "blorp."

The riverbanks are 20 to 30 feet higher than the river; the river is 60 yards across at the trailhead. The river can be forded with a Difficulty 5 Athletics test; a failure either traps the crosser in a mudflat or drops him into the water. Either way, the crocodiles will attack. To get out of the river, the unfortunate must either succeed at another Difficulty 5 Athletics test, or beat the crocodiles at three Fleeing contests in a row.

Shoving the entire party across the river requires 2 points of **Intimidation**. It will cost 1 day of travel, and 1-6 bearers will die or desert.

Building a bridge across the river requires a great deal of rope (available with a 1-point **Preparedness** spend) or strong lianas (2-point **Biology** spend). It also takes 3 days and 11 pool points of **Mechanical Repair**. For each additional day, the Investigators can spend 1 fewer Mechanical Repair point.

Use the crocodile statistics from p. 155 of *Trail of Cthulhu*.

Rock Python

A 20-foot python dangles from an extended tree limb, ready to snap a mule's neck with its coils and feast for a week.

An Investigator can make a Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble test to distinguish the python from the normal net of vines and creepers overhanging the path. If she chooses, she can attack it and draw its attention to herself: in the Backlot Jungle, pythons know no fear!

On a failure, the Investigators turn and see a mule go down kicking in a nest of mottled gray-brown coils.

Athletics 10, Health 6, Scuffling 13

Hit Threshold: 4 (surprisingly elusive); 2 (for those crushed in its coils)

Stealth: +2

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Weapon: +1 (crush)

Armor: -2 vs. blunt or fist attacks, -1 vs. blades or fire, none vs. spears or bullets (thick scales)

Constrict: When the python attacks a human, its target gets a Difficulty 4 Athletics test to keep one arm (ideally the one holding a weapon) out of the coils. Once a python has succeeded in its first attack against a target, it does its crush damage to that target automatically each round until killed or driven off. A python can only attack one target at a time. To free oneself requires two Difficulty 5 Athletics test successes in a row.

Thorn Forest

A dense forest of iron-hard thorn trees has grown up across the trail. Birds, snakes, and small animals hang, impaled on the wicked thorns by unknown predators.

Cutting through the thorn forest will cost 2 days of travel, and require a Difficulty 4 Athletics test from all Investigators. On a failure, an Investigator loses 2 Health points from the needle-sharp thorns gouging his flesh.

Torrential Downpour

The skies open up in a cacophony of thunder, and sheets of rain blanket the Investigators' camp and everything else as far as they can see. Which rapidly becomes "barely a foot in front of them." The rains continue on and off for several hours, enough to drench everything and everybody in the camp.

For each point of Preparedness the Investigators spend, they can salvage one item of the following from being washed away or destroyed by mud and leakage:

- The medicine chest. Without it, First Aid can heal 0 points of any wound that breaks the skin, and tropical disease cannot be treated.
- The elephant gun, or the heaviest

weapon in camp.

- The second-heaviest weapon in camp.
- All of the askaris' ammunition.
- All of the Investigators' ammunition.
- The trade goods.
- Any single specialized piece of equipment the Investigators brought along: a camera, surveying gear, etc.
- A mule.
- A Mythos tome or other vital book or document, such as the map to Ilarne.

The next 2 days' travel are at half speed through squelching mud; the Investigators only get 1 day closer to Ilarne.

Tsetse Flies

A high, peculiar buzzing sound seems to come from all around. Tiny, horrible flies bite everything in sight. They are the dreaded tsetse fly, whose bite brings sleeping sickness.

Each day over the next 1-6 days, 1 mule slowly drops by the side of the path, to sleep unto death.

Medicine can diagnose the disease, but there is no way to prevent it.

The End of the Trail

Three days from Ilarne, the trail widens out and begins to pass small meadows with clumps of yams or date palms in them. **Anthropology** identifies these as signs that a village is near. A village means food! And rest! And indeed this one does, just not in a good way.

The Village of the Anziques

If the Investigators' rivals are Nazis or Commies, the Anziques lay an ambush in their village, backed up by Waffen-SS or Red Army soldiers. A Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble will see the glint of sunlight off a rifle barrel before the trap can be closed.

If not, the Anziques will tailor their response to the Investigators' approach. If the Investigators attempt to bargain or beg for food, the Anziques will welcome them in and host a great feast in their honor. If the Investigators openly threaten or force the Anziques to feed them, the Anziques will pretend to submit, and again host a feast.

If the Investigators sneak up on the camp, it takes a Difficulty 5 Stealth test to get within eyeball range undetected. If the Anziques do detect the approach, they lay an ambush for the scouts on their way back through the jungle (Difficulty 5 Sense Trouble to notice) and then surround and attack the base camp once the scouts are taken care of (Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble to notice being surrounded in time).

Whether honored guests or sneaky spies, Investigators notice the following about the Anziques:

- **Languages:** Any speaker of a West African language catches some words of Bateke. Sharing this information reduces the cost of the 2-point Anthropology spend below to 1 point.
- **Forensics:** There are charred human bones sitting in the lee of a hut. If the Investigators can see them from up close, or spend 1 point of either Forensics or **Evidence Collection**, they can see that the bones have been split for marrow.
- **Evidence Collection:** If the Investigators' rivals were rival scholars, one or two items

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belonging to that party appear in odd contexts: a native woman wearing a Yale University scarf around her head, or a child playing with a pair of platinum-rimmed spectacles. The Keeper can omit this clue if she wishes.

- **Architecture:** One of the huts is very strongly built, of stone and logs. It doesn't seem to be the chief's hut, though. *1-point spend:* The door of that hut can be sealed from outside.
- **Anthropology:** The tribesmen are peculiarly Caucasian in appearance, almost as if they were Hollywood extras in unconvincing native makeup. *1-point spend:* They don't seem to keep any pigs, which is odd for a jungle tribe. *2-point spend:* The tribe's designs (on facial scars, idols, etc.) are characteristic of the Anziques, who were driven out of the French Congo generations ago. The Anziques were rumored to be cannibals.

At the Anzique feast, food (yams, peanuts, manioc porridge, and spiced pork) and palm-wine come fast and furious. The native girls are friendly and enticing, the native chief and headmen are glad and welcoming. Who cares that a 1-point **Assess Honesty** spend indicates the natives are waiting for something? It's probably dessert; everything smells delicious. Any Investigator who has gone on short rations will bolt his food as fast as it comes unless he suspects the true origin of the "pork." Suspicious Investigators can make a Difficulty 3 Disguise test to pretend to eat the pork, and another to pretend to drink the palm-wine.

Less suspicious Investigators must make a Difficulty 6 Health test or pass out from the drugged palm-wine. (Another Disguise test at Difficulty 3, or an Athletics test at Difficulty 4, lets an Investigator fake being drugged.) All

drugged Investigators make a Difficulty 4 Health test to awaken before the Anziques return for them. Investigators who fail can be awakened by untied Investigators with a Difficulty 4 First Aid test. They will awaken inside the secure hut, tied with creeper vines.

An Investigator can spend 1 point each of **Conceal** and **Preparedness** to have a knife hidden away in a boot. Failing that, freeing oneself is a Difficulty 5 Athletics test. Getting out of the hut requires a 4-point Mechanical Repair test to lift the bar outside from within, a surprise attack on the Anziques when they return for their late-night snack, or some other plan that sounds good. If no Investigator awakens in time, they will come to tied to a spit being roasted over slow coals for immediate damage of 2 Health and a 4-point Stability test.

Any Investigator who has eaten the "pork" must make a 6-point Stability test once they realize what it is: human flesh.

At some point, it will likely come down to combat with the Anziques:

Archery 5, Athletics 7, Fleeing 4,
Health 7, Scuffling 6, Weapons 5
Hit Threshold: 3
Stealth: +1
Alertness: +1
Weapon: +0 (bow or axe)

Poison Arrows: Any target hit with an Anzique arrow that does damage must make a Difficulty 4 Health test or lose 2 Health and 2 Athletics or Fleeing pool points each round. When either pool reaches 0, the target is paralyzed. A 1-point spend of either First Aid or **Pharmacy** can stop the poison working. On a success, the target only loses 1 additional Health point besides the arrow damage.

The Anzique village holds 40 Anzique warriors, and about 120 noncombatants. If the Investigators kill over half the warriors, the rest will flee. At the

Keeper's discretion, the village witch-doctor may have Mythos spells.

The Swamp of the Ai

Past the Anzique village is a wide, flat swamp. Eerily regular shapes loom out of the mist across it: the lost city of Ilarneq.

Crossing the swamp requires canoes, which can be stolen from the Anzique village with a Difficulty 4 Stealth test, or chopped and burned out of a tree in 2 days by anyone with an axe and **Outdoorsman, Craft: Woodworking, or Mechanical Repair**. A canoe holds two people.

Once supplied with canoes, a Difficulty 2 Piloting test gets the party across in straightforward fashion. A failure dumps 1 canoe into the water; the passengers must make a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble (Difficulty 3 if they have Outdoorsman) to notice the leeches clinging to them before losing 2 Health pool points of blood.



The White God

During their miserable slog through the jungle, the Investigators are being watched by an unknowable alien intellect.

The Sighting

Once the expedition reaches 30 days out from Ilarneq, an Investigator will see a mysterious white figure standing on a branch high above him. It vanishes before anyone can usefully react.

The next sighting comes during the next crisis the Investigators face. Once it is resolved, an Investigator sees the same figure watching, again from a branch. This time it remains in sight long enough to appear human, but with absolutely

no color to its skin or hair. Again, it vanishes. If the Keeper wishes, and if the crisis is a grave one, the figure may help an Investigator in some fashion.

At 20 days out from Ilarneek, **Geology** notes a rise in the terrain that doesn't seem to be explained by underlying tectonics. A 1-point spend indicates that it might be the lip of an impact crater centuries old. Exploring the crater would cost at least 2 days of travel each way.

The Approach

During the next crisis after crossing the crater lip, the White Figure appears again, quite close to an Investigator, not necessarily the one in gravest danger. (Though that forces the issue nicely.) Close up, the Figure appears less like a person, and more like a mannequin. The face appears sculpted or carved, though with no known artistic sensibility; the "hair" is all one piece; the surface of the "skin" more resembles pitted porcelain or hard wax. **Biology** notices a thick vine or creeper shot through with emerald and magenta highlights, trailing away from the Figure's hand into the jungle. A 1-point **Medicine** or **Evidence Collection** spend notes that the vine seems *grown into* the Figure's hand.

The Investigator does not hear the Figure's voice in his head per se; rather, concepts of foreign feel suddenly blossom in his brain. His mind translates some of them into words and the rest into uncanny sensation. The Keeper should paraphrase the following concepts in her own words; if she feels comfortable presenting the information as a dialogue between the Investigator and the White Figure, that's okay. The whole process seems to take minutes of subjective time, but no objective time; the Investigator can perceive the difference.

- "I am of Dzèwà."

- "I am the White God."
- "You are in my embrace."
- "You require my arm to survive this."
- "I will extend my arm to you."
- "I am at home here in this jungle domain."
- "So too can you be."

During or after this barrage of concepts, the White Figure will clearly show the Investigator a vision of the current crisis being resolved: the Figure swatting a lion aside, or parting the rainwaters, or blowing the tsetse flies away in a gale, or whatever need be done.

If the Investigator appears at all willing for this to happen, the Figure extends its hand and touches the Investigator on the arm or shoulder. If not, the Figure simply stands and waits for the Investigator to request its aid.

If the problem can be solved with the expenditure of pool points, the Investigator refreshes enough pool points to fix things. If it requires a more active intervention, the Figure will so intervene, holding the Investigator's arm while doing so. The Keeper should ask the player to direct the Figure's actions and should describe a satisfying resolution of the crisis at hand. During this period, the chosen Investigator completely refreshes whichever of his ability pools has dwindled lowest, except Stability.

With the crisis over, the Figure again vanishes into the jungle, moving very fast. The whole incident triggers a 3-point Stability test in the chosen Investigator. Afterward, that Investigator (if he accepted the Figure's hand) notices a magenta-and-emerald stain on his clothing and eventually his skin where the clothing touched it, but

The Chosen Of Dzèwà

Which Investigator does Dzèwà pick for its acolyte-consort? The Keeper is at liberty to decide by whatever criterion she likes:

Pick whichever Investigator was in trouble during the contact crisis.

Pick the best roleplayer.

Pick an Investigator with a strong tie to another Investigator: wife, follower, student, etc., setting up a triangle.

Pick the player who is already leaving the gaming group and run this as that player's last hurrah; this telegraphs the "right" decision, but keeps the drama mostly in the game and not around the table.

feels no pain or illness. The stain doesn't go away with any sort of treatment except cutting and cauterizing the flesh (+0 damage), but it doesn't spread or contaminate other Investigators.

During each crisis afterward, the chosen Investigator feels the White Figure blossom in his mind. By uttering the word "Dzèwà," he can refresh as many pool points in any ability (except Stability) as he likes, once per scene. Each time he does so, however, that emerald-and-magenta stain reappears somewhere on his body. If the Keeper judges the White Figure's active aid is needed instead, the Figure will appear and again save the day, again after touching the chosen Investigator to receive direction. Again, the Investigator refreshes whichever of his ability pools has dwindled lowest, except Stability.

Each incident engenders a 3-point Stability test for the chosen Investigator.

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The Price

The Keeper should keep track of how many points the Figure refreshes for the chosen Investigator.

At 20 points: The chosen Investigator can manipulate objects at a distance, seemingly by telekinesis. By spending 3 Health points, he can create a force capable of manipulating up to 7 lbs or doing -2 damage at up to near range; by spending 6 Health points, he can move 14 lbs. or do -1 damage at near range, etc. Since he can fully refresh Health at the end of any scene, this seems cost-free -- except for that odd spreading stain, and the 3-point Stability test.

At 30 points: The chosen Investigator can sense things all around the jungle. This manifests mechanically as the ability to refresh Sense Trouble at will. This allows the expedition to double its speed.

At 40 points: The chosen Investigator can levitate with the expenditure of 3 points of Athletics (or Health, if he has

no Athletics ability).

At 50 points: The chosen Investigator has another blossoming bouquet of visions and concepts. The Keeper can handle this through dialogue with the White Figure or just as a dream or vision.

- Two emerald suns hang in the sky over a slab-sided pit; faceless beings with six arms ring the pit, giving worship and moaning adoration. Every so often, they fling themselves in, toward the viewer. "Xiclotl."
- Horrible little insect-bird things flit about the faceless beings, herding them with whips. "Shan."
- A pyramid of metal, somehow impregnated with the insect-bird things, fleeing. A sense of clinging, of catching, of ineffable separation and loneliness in the gulfs of interstellar space.

- A fiery crash into the African jungle; the slow awakening from the pit. "Not/New Xiclotl."
- The fashioning of the White Figure from the patterns of human brains. "The (Eyes/Hands) of Dzèwà."
- An enormous magenta excrescence, like an orchid or a lamprey mouth. Emerald tentacles tipped with hands of sublime beauty emerge from the magenta bloom, reaching out for the Investigator. "Dzèwà."
- The Investigator now sees himself, his skin mottled with magenta and emerald or white and waxy. "Chosen of Dzèwà for Not/New Xiclotl."

The Investigator realizes that his "telekinesis" is merely tiny invisible tendrils growing out of his new flesh; his "danger sense" is new eyes opening in the buds on their ends; his "levitation" is a new umbilical cord holding him up.

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Shadows Over Filmland



The whole vision triggers a Mythos shock, an 8-point Stability test. It also grants 2 points of Cthulhu Mythos, while costing 4 Stability and 1 Sanity pool points even on a success. Any Pillars of Sanity depending on personal integrity are likely to crumble, for a loss of 2 more Stability and 1 more Sanity pool points.

Ridding the Investigator of the new flesh of Dzéwà is impossible; an examination with **Medicine** can tell that the magenta-and-emerald stain is inside his lungs, throat, blood, urethra, and elsewhere.

It is up to the Keeper to determine how many more points the Investigator can refresh before completely succumbing to Dzéwà; the scenario gains pathos if he must continuously destroy his own humanity to save his fellows from the dangers of the path. The Keeper may want to adjust the speed with which the effects above occur, depending on the crisis and on the chosen Investigator's refresh rate.

The Lost City of Ilarneq

Reaching the lost city of Ilarneq may seem like something of an anticlimax at this point, but it has its attractions. The city is carved with two overriding motifs: a humped lizard, and a star shape. Bas-reliefs and stelae await translation and confirmation of pet theories. Broken pillars and tumbled walls stretch into the mists, or into the limits of the matte-painting budget at least. Jade ornaments – cups and pectorals, especially – sit in a broken building, and probably litter the whole site.

The specific encounters in Ilarneq are essentially up to the Keeper. They might include any of the following possibilities.

Last Combats

The Investigators may need to confront, attack, or ambush their rivals, who have camped on the crumbled basalt stones of Ilarneq's main plaza. With the

Chosen of Dzéwà and surprise on their side, victory is surely theirs.

Lizard Guardians of Ilarneq

If the Keeper wishes, Ilarneq might be guarded by 20-foot giant lizards, the eidolons of its ancient god Bokrug. In a properly Backlot game, they look like stop-motion Dimetrodons left over from another movie.

A Lizard Guardian can either claw or bite two separate targets in the same round.

Athletics 7, Health 20, Scuffling 15

Hit Threshold: 3 (big)

Alertness: +2

Weapon: +3 (bite), +1 (claw)

Armor: -2 vs. any (hide)

Stability Loss: +0

In The Temple of Bokrug

Archaeology can easily locate the major temples in Ilarneq; one of them is

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devoted to the humped lizard figure. (If there are Lizard Guardians, they will roam these temple grounds.) Inside is an enormous altar of chrysolite, carved with a strange hieroglyph. A generous Keeper can allow a 2-point **Occult** spend to recognize it as the symbol of DOOM that destroyed Sarnath.

If the Chosen of Dzèwà touches the altar, the results are up to the Keeper:

- He is stricken by the DOOM and dies, but the new flesh of Dzèwà dies with him.
- The entire city begins to shake in a terrible earthquake. Ilarneke begins to fall to pieces, giant stone blocks and pillars tumbling everywhere and bounding about as though built of painted cardboard. The surviving Investigators flee for their lives as any remaining NPCs are trapped in the rubble. The chosen Investigator might even hold up the doorway until the others escape, then willingly be crushed under the falling ceiling.
- The all-pervading mist begins to thicken into the form of Bokrug, the giant lizard god of Ilarneke and Ib, even as the White Figure appears. Dzèwà boils out of both the White Figure and the chosen Investigator, and the gods meet in a terrible struggle that sets off an earthquake as above. Witnesses who don't flee the instant the scene begins must make a 6-point Stability test or suffer a Mythos shock.

The Star-Stone of Mnar

If the Keeper wishes, either a combat with the rival expedition or a 1-point **Archaeology** spend can secure the Star-Stone of Mnar from a temple to an unknown bearded god. This star-shaped carving is approximately 2 feet across; its weight constantly changes. Geology

is mystified by its composition: the closest parallel is opal or jade, as the grey-green stone is shot through with fire-colored striations that seem to move and twist. They form a glyph at the center that stubbornly resists perception.

The actual function of the Star-Stone is up to the Keeper, who can choose between any of the following or make up her own:

- It serves as a permanent Elder Sign.
- It acts as an anchor for the Dreamlands.
- Its lambent radiation burns away all the new flesh of Dzèwà from the chosen Investigator. Whether any of the Investigator, or any of the Star-Stone's power, is left at the end is up to the Keeper's sense of the dramatic and appropriate. In a Purist game, neither Stone nor victim survive; in a Pulp game, one or both do.
- It anchors the city: removing it triggers (you guessed it) an earthquake.

Exits and Rewards

Once the larger story is wrapped up, in earthquake or self-sacrifice or both, friendly tribesmen appear on the shore of the swamp, attracted by the noises and lights. The Investigators can return home by the easier path at their leisure.

In a Pulp game, if the chosen Investigator is still alive, every Investigator except him can refresh 1 Sanity pool point.

Other rewards, at the Keeper's discretion, might include:

- Translating the glyphs requires months, even years of work with

Languages and Cryptography, but creates a new Mythos tome: *The Inscriptions of Ilarneke*. Skimming the translation grants 3 dedicated pool points for any Investigative ability regarding human prehistory; poring over it adds +2 to Cthulhu Mythos. If the Investigators only escaped with a few rubbings or photographs before the earthquake, reduce those bonuses to 1 dedicated pool point and +1 Cthulhu Mythos.

- The knowledge of a spell or technique to enter the Dreamlands, either learned from the *Inscriptions* or from a single surviving stele.
- If the city survives long enough to be looted, it contains enough treasure for everyone to either go up 1 point of Credit Rating or make a major purchase (vehicle, house, laboratory, art masterpiece or rare tome) if they so desire. If the city was destroyed, a single jade goblet saved from the wreckage provides such a reward for one Investigator.
- The personal gains, the fulfilled hopes, the Investigators brought into the jungle with them. But probably not.



THE NIGHT I DIED

"AND WHEN I, WHO WAS COLDER AND MORE SCIENTIFIC THAN THE REST, MUMBLED A TREMBLING PROTEST ABOUT 'IMPOSTURE' AND 'STATIC ELECTRICITY,' NYARLATHOTEP DROVE US ALL OUT, DOWN THE DIZZY STAIRS INTO THE DAMP, HOT, DESERTED MIDNIGHT STREETS."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "NYARLATHOTEP"

A friend of the Investigators, Kent DeWitt, approaches them with a delicate problem—his fiancée, Therese Dumond, has been acting strangely, and he fears she might be under a supernatural influence.

This scenario is our tribute to the atmospheric, subtly chilling horror films produced by filmmaker Val Lewton at RKO. His signature works date from the 1940s, not the thirties, but who's counting? If you don't know the name, check out the superb nine-film DVD box released by Warner's in 2005.

"The Night I Died" is set in an urban environment, most like the group's base of operations. With some changing of names and tweaking of details, you could move the setting to Backlot Gothic.

Introduction

The Spine

At first, **Talking To Therese** elicits nothing but bland denials. **Shadowing Therese**, the investigators discover that she leaves the house at night in a trance-like state. When they confront her, they learn that she believes herself to be a

ghost! Unable to shake her conviction that she perished in a recent accident, the Investigators investigate further, while the power of suggestion plagues them with a series of **Ghostly Events**. They look into the car accident she says ended her life in **The Man Who Killed Me**, find her mentor in occult matters through a visit to the **Galerie Nocturne**, and then discover, in **The Final Release Of Juanetta Crain**, that the mentor has already gone to her grave. Legal suspicions surrounding Crain's bequest to **The Anthropos Foundation** lead them to a charlatan called Trey Natal. In **Nyarlathotep At the Zoo**, the group must save Therese from a hypnotically planned demise, before discovering the truth about Therese's supposedly devoted housekeeper, **Mrs. Buettel**.

The Horrible Truth

Therese was recruited by an older acquaintance named Juanetta Crain into the Anthropos Foundation, a philosophical foundation used as a front by occult swindlers. The charlatans running the scam invoke the Mythos as part of their routine, but, in true Val Lewton fashion, the apparently supernatural events of this scenario can

all be explained away as tricks of the mind.

The foundation's leader, who calls himself Trey Natal, uses advanced hypnosis techniques to convince wealthy, suggestible victims to leave him money in their wills, and then to commit suicide. In fact, his mother is Therese's kindly-seeming housekeeper, Mrs. Buettel, who herself is a master of hypnosis and used her skills to lead Therese's parents into a fatal accident.

Scenes

The Wandering Fiancée

Scene Type: Intro

A member of the group is approached by Kent DeWitt, a dashing young banking executive, for help with a delicate personal situation. DeWitt may be socially connected to a character with a Credit Rating of 6 or more, or might have had the group recommended to him by a previous patron, such as Lawrence Claremont from "The Green Ape", Polton Williams (*Stunning Eldritch Tales*, "DimensionY") or Landers Jennings (ibid, "Death Laughs Last.")

The problem concerns Kent's fiancée, Therese Dumond. For the last few months, her usually bubbly, quick-witted personality has given way to a sense of overpowering melancholy. Therese has become pale and withdrawn, hardly eating and rarely leaving the house during the day. Most of the time she pretends that nothing is wrong, though on one night she confessed that she felt like she was haunted by an oppressive cloud of death. Kent sent her to an alienist, to no avail. The other night, he had occasion

The Night I Died

to telephone her late at night, to ask if he'd left some important papers at her apartment. Receiving no answer, he became concerned and drove to her place, finding her sitting in the living room, alone in the dark. She wore her housecoat, sleeping gown, and slippers, and her skin was cold to the touch. The poor girl appeared to be deep in a trance of some kind, her features frozen in a rictus of terror. When she realized Kent was there, she seemed to snap out of it, only to recoil from him and beg him to leave.

If asked how he got into her apartment, he explains that the door was unlocked. (Though engaged, Kent and Therese's relationship is conducted with the chaste propriety of the times.)

Kent hates to think it, having been raised to be a hardheaded, practical sort, but he has the oddest feeling that Therese's malady has supernatural overtones. Could she be possessed? "It sounds crazy, now that I say it out loud, but the thought preys on me. I was hoping that you, as experts, can dispel it."

On this note, he asks the Investigators to follow him to Therese's apartment. It is located in a townhouse, brownstone building, or the local equivalent.

A character who knows Kent can explain to the others that he's a stable and upstanding member of a wealthy, highly respectable family. He went to a top school, where he served as captain of the debating team as well as football quarterback.

Should they apply **Assess Honesty** to his account, the investigators find it entirely on the square. Kent believes what he is saying, and expects others to as well.



Talking To Therese

Therese occupies an apartment in a brownstone building in a quiet, wealthy neighborhood. **Architecture** shows that it harbors one other tenant, in the upstairs half of the house.

Kent rings the doorbell, which is answered by Mrs. Buettel, Therese's housekeeper. DeWitt confers with her before speaking to Therese. Although she later turns out to be the mastermind behind the whole plot, play her in this scene as Kent and Therese see her: a kindly, matronly old woman utterly devoted to Therese's welfare. She's too seasoned and heartless a swindler to tweak the investigators' **Assess Honesty** suspicions. Instead, Mrs. Buettel seems deeply worried by her charge's condition: "She hardly touched anything on her plate, Mr. DeWitt, and I made her favorite—beef with Yorkshire pudding."

Therese is reading a book in her parlor when Kent goes in to greet her. The investigators hear the sounds of a brief conversation, which seems strained. A character with **Streetwise** can engage in a little unobtrusive eavesdropping, hearing Therese tell Kent that he's overreacting, and that she's in no mood to entertain strangers. As Kent beckons them into her parlor, Therese surreptitiously puts the book she's been reading in a drawer in a nearby end-table. It is obviously a vintage copy: **Antiquarian** identifies it at a glance as the 1845 first edition of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven and Other Poems*.

Therese denies that there is anything wrong with her. She's merely feeling a little low, and is sure to perk up soon. She provides the following honest answers to specific questions:

- Mrs. Buettel has been with her for four years now, hired by her mother.
- Mr. Dumond was an inventor of

medical technology. His patents earned a modest fortune, which Therese inherited after the deaths of her parents.

- Therese's parents were killed a year ago, in a boating accident.
- She is no book collector; the rare Poe volume belongs to her father's collection, which she inherited.

Therese also provides the following dishonest answers:

- She picked up the Poe book on a whim; this in no way indicates a sudden fascination with the morbid.
- She has been feeling out of sorts recently, but can't explain why, and thinks Kent is worrying over nothing.
- At Kent's urging, she went to an alienist, Dr. Rudolph Dorfman, but he could find nothing wrong with her. (If they call Dorfman, using **Medicine** to skirt confidentiality standards, Dorfman says that she showed up for only one session, and was unresponsive during their interview. Based on this brief interaction, Dorfman believes that she suffers from a deeply rooted neurosis of unidentified type.)
- Therese has nothing to do with the occult and no time for foolish superstitions.
- If asked about the "oppressive cloud of death" conversation she had with Kent, she says that she was just being silly and over-dramatizing her low feelings, as women are wont to do.

(core) **Assess Honesty** gives the investigator the sense that Therese is being intentionally deceptive, but for reasons which she believes to be kind

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or unselfish. On a 1-point spend, an investigator discovers that she's also afraid on Kent's behalf.

Shadowing Therese

Scene Type: Core (Surveillance / Interview)

Kent's account of finding Therese in her apartment after an apparent night jaunt should prompt the group to keep her under surveillance. If they stake out her front door late at night, they see her slip down the steps in the middle

of the night. She's wearing a housecoat, nightgown and slippers, and walks with a somnambulatory gait. Her eyes stare raptly ahead, as if entranced. Leaving her door not only unlocked but ajar, she stumbles off into the night. Utterly unaware of her surroundings, Therese can be shadowed without chance of failure.

The investigators can wake her up at any time. If they do so before her colloquy with Nyarlathotep (below), they fail to get the information they need and must repeat the surveillance on another night.

She continues walking through her exclusive neighborhood, until she reaches a seedier and more trafficked part of town. A group of predatory-looking toughs take note of this beautiful and apparently intoxicated woman and swerve toward her. Investigators can scare them off with a verbal confrontation (1-point Intimidation spend), by brandishing a firearm, or by entering into a fight and doing any damage to any of the toughs. Therese continues on her sleepwalk, noticing none of this. (This happens only once, even if the investigators wind up shadowing her on multiple evenings.)

Toughs

Health 6, Scuffling 6

Finally Therese winds up on the grassy grounds outside the city zoo, where she enters into a one-sided conversation with an unseen interlocutor:

- *"Yes, I am ready."*
- *"But I have been waiting for so long."*
- *"I have been trying, trying to do what you ask."*
- *"I beg of you, Nyarlathotep, let me be free!"*

She then awakens, with a visible start. If the investigators have been making an effort to hide from her, and succeed at a Difficulty 4 Stealth test (piggybacked), she doesn't see them. Obviously distraught, she gets her bearings and rushes home through the deserted city streets.

If, either immediately or later, they confront her and threaten to report this interchange to Kent, Therese breaks down and begs the investigators to leave her alone. They don't understand, can't understand, and anyone she gives her secret to will be cursed and destroyed.

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The last person she wants to know about this is Kent.

On a **Reassurance** use, she tells her story—or part of it, anyway. First she extracts a promise to keep Kent in the dark and seeks absolution for any curses they may suffer after hearing her secret.

Six weeks ago, Kent was driving her home from an art gallery opening (core clue) when another car slammed into their vehicle from the side, hitting the passenger side door. Kent believes that she was only shaken up in the accident—but in fact, she suddenly died in the hospital that night. Her soul migrated to heaven, but something pulled her back: it was Kent's love for her, his inability to let her go. She was pulled back to earth, and is now doomed to walk it as a ghost. Her everyday existence seemed normal, except that she knew she was dead. Finally, she met an angel, someone born in ancient Egypt and who now walks to earth to guide lost souls such as herself. This being, called Nyarlathotep, warned her that if she told Kent what was going on, the power of their connection would sever both of their spirits. He would die and go to heaven, but she would be banished to a grim, gray spirit world for all eternity. They would be forever separated.

Ghosts like her are safe for others to be around, so long as they don't know what she really is. Once people know, all sorts of bad spirit manifestations surround them, trying to pry through the boundaries between worlds to drive them mad. *Now that the investigators know, they are in terrible danger!*

Nyarlathotep can show her how to break her connections to this world, but won't appear if there are living souls around.

She refuses to say anything more about Nyarlathotep and his plans for her, and begs them to tell Kent that everything

is fine. If she follows instructions, she'll die and go to heaven, and he'll be able to move on with his life.

Ghostly Events

Scene Type: Antagonist Reactions

The subtle horror characteristic of the Val Lewton thrillers scares by inference, through suggestion. Emulate their atmosphere by confronting the Investigators with a constant series of low-key events which serve more to unnerve than to jolt.

As they are drawn into the world of Therese Dumond, the investigators begin to see it through her eyes. Suddenly signs abound that a ghostly world is increasingly impinging on this one. Immediately after meeting Therese, and thereafter whenever the mood seems to level out, confront an investigator with a ghostly event. Ghostly events are always explicable as the result of an overheated imagination and occur to only one character at a time. Make a list of Investigators, from the lowest to highest Stability. Dole out ghostly events in that order, until all characters have had at least one occurrence. Then mix up the order as events in the story seem to dictate.

At first, call on the targeted player for a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test. They experience the event only on a success. If they miss the test, look worried on their behalf and move on. Missing a ghostly event may be creepier than actually perceiving one.

If the players eventually grow jaded by the various subtle events, switch out the Sense Trouble tests for Stability tests. On a success, the character sees nothing. On a failure, he loses 2 Stability and undergoes the manifestation.

Create unnerving events to suit the scene at hand. Wherever possible, work in the themes of death and ghostly return.

When in doubt, take an event from this list:

- The shadows of that tree over there seem to be reaching for you.
- Your heart rate abruptly accelerates, for no reason.
- A chill wind comes up from nowhere to freeze your marrow, then just as quickly disappears.
- Cold sweat soaks your clothing.
- Those dry leaves skitter your way, as with a purpose, but not toward the others.
- You feel cold breath on the back of your neck.
- In the yowls of a distant cat fight, you think you hear the words, "Give us Therese!"
- You get dizzy and have to sit down.
- A creaking sign seems to call your name.
- You wake up inside a coffin. [Pause for freaked-out reaction.] Oh wait, it's just a dream. Now you wake up.
- [To same character, a scene or two later.] It occurs to you that maybe you're still asleep and dreaming.
- As you turn on the lights in your bedroom, you see a gravestone bearing your name in the bed. As soon as you blink, the apparition is gone.
- Ahead of you in the crowd, you see someone you could swear is [name of NPC the character killed or saw dead in a previous scenario.]
- For an instant, you feel like you can see through Therese Dumond.

- Gazing at your reflection in a pane of glass, you briefly see the face of [a dead loved one] looking over your shoulder.
- You feel like someone walked over your grave.
- Passing a graveyard, you feel an urge to go there and lie down on one of the graves. [If the character goes there, he finds a freshly dug grave and a headstone matching his own name—for real. On investigation, this proves to belong to a recently deceased namesake. Pick the character with the most common-sounding name.]
- [Use on character who has had near-fatal incident in this or a past scenario] For a very strange moment, it occurs to you that you yourself are a ghost, having died back when... [fill in details of incident.]

The Man Who Killed Me

Scene Type: Alternate

Neither Kent nor Therese recall the name of the man who ran into them with his car. They know that police were at the scene, as well as the ambulance drivers who took them, and the driver, to the hospital for examination.

A trip to the local precinct house, plus **CopTalk**, prompts the desk sergeant on duty, one James O'Leary, to dig up the six week old accident report. The driver of the other car, a beat-up Packard, was Wally Cripps, a butcher from a nearby working class neighborhood. The incident report indicates that the officer on the scene, Philip Riordan, considered a negligence charge but did not pursue it on "grounds of insufficient evidence."

Bureaucracy, at the hospital, gains improper access to Cripps' medical records. He was treated for minor

scratches and bruises. **Medicine** secures a consultation with the treating physician, a harried young doctor called Milton Frames. Dr. Frames gave the examination little thought at the time, but once prompted to reconsider it, considers it remarkable that Mr. Cripps was so lightly injured, given that the description of the accident.

A character with **Streetwise** engaging in conversation with Officer Riordan quickly pegs him as a bent cop. A threat to blow the whistle to the desk sergeant (**Intimidation**) inspires Riordan to make with the truth. Cripps seemed hinky to him, so he braced him for a \$100 gratuity and let him off the hook. Why, the guy had hockey padding in the back seat of his car, and his clothing was rumpled. It was as if he'd been wearing it during the accident and then quickly ditched it before Riordan arrived. He's vague if asked for a description of Cripps: "You know, average height and weight, no distinguishing features, somewhere in his thirties, lightish-darkish hair..."

The address listed for Wally Cripps takes the group to a modest, well-kept bungalow in a neighborhood on the cusp of working class and skid row. Answering the door is Helga Cripps, a worn-looking woman in her sixties. Wally Cripps is a butcher, all right, but a retired one. He can't have been the driver: he doesn't own a Packard, is in his late sixties, and is confined to a wheelchair by a degenerative disorder.

Should they check again with Riordan, he confirms that he never bothered to note the license plate number, much less run a registry check to match the car to the name given. The financial transaction occurred before it got to that point.

The Boating Accident

Scene Type: Alternate

Investigators looking into the accident that killed Therese's parents can use

Library Use to find a brief account in the newspaper archives: Philip and Michelle Dumond were killed off the coast of Florida when the motorboat Dumond was driving hit a rocky shoal near their winter house near Miami. Authorities attributed the accident to Dumond's unfamiliarity with the controls of his new boat. This seemed the likeliest explanation, given that Dumond knew the waters around their beach house well and was an experienced boater. The Dumond's local caretaker witnessed the accident, saying that the boat seemed to veer directly for the rocks at a high rate of speed. Both Dumonds were thrown from the vessel, struck the rocks, and died instantly.

The article doesn't mention who else was present at the house when the accident occurred. Therese or Kent can confirm that she was up north, visiting the DeWitts. Therese knows that Mrs. Buettel was at the beach house; the housekeeper readily confirms this apparently innocent fact.

Galerie Nocturne

Scene Type: Core (Interview)

The Galerie Nocturne is a narrow exhibition space in the city's arts district.

Architecture notes that it is ornamented in a decadent version of the art nouveau style, with moldings and window frames suggestive of a corrupt, rotting grove. (1 point spend:) These surely mark the gallery fixtures as the work of the late decorative artist Edward Daniel Cornford, who shot himself in Paris after extensive absinthe abuse convinced him that he was the earthly incarnation of the inhuman moon deity Mnomquah.

The gallery is currently exhibiting the works of a painter named Richard Upton Pickman. These dark, grotesque landscapes depict graveyards, dark

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Pickman's Paintings

The works on display here range in price from \$400 to \$1800. The more expensive paintings are those including the monstrous figures. Anyone buying one of the latter pictures and hanging it where he has occasion to look at it frequently loses 1 Sanity, and, if he already has a Cthulhu Mythos rating, gains an additional point in the ability.

woods, and ancient ruins. A few include weird, bestial figures, rendered with a distressing realism. **Art History** recalls that Pickman committed suicide in 1926, and that his works enjoy a devoted following among collectors with a taste for the macabre. The works here are not among his best; they're early pieces, or studies. Still, it's an impressive assemblage for a small gallery; Pickman's top paintings rarely come up for sale.

Anyone spending time carefully examining each paintings risks a possible 2-point Stability loss, which counts as a Mythos shock. Investigators who have encountered ghouls (or perhaps other Mythos creatures) may find the grotesque beasts in the paintings distressingly familiar, occasioning a traumatic flashback and possibly higher Stability loss, at your discretion.

The gallery is quiet, and supervised by its proprietor, a hulking, Saturnine fellow named Othon Frakes. He favors a cravat and red velvet smoking jacket, and smells like clove cigarettes. His manner drips both decadence and condescension.

Othon fancies himself a master of esoteric wisdom but is largely ignorant of the Mythos. A voraciously effective salesman, he remembers everyone who steps into his gallery. However, if he suspects that the investigators are representatives of the blinkered daylight



world, he remains tight-lipped and deflective. Frakes becomes cooperative if:

- an Artist or character with Ennui engages him in a discussion of matters aesthetic,
- an investigator buys a painting
- or convincingly portrays himself as a potential buyer (**Bargain.**)

Once rendered cooperative, Othon reveals the following. He does not know Therese by name and must be

shown a picture or given a good verbal description.

- Yes, she was at the gallery during the show's opening, six weeks ago.
- Her handsome paramour showed up only to sweep her away at the end of the evening. He seemed quite uninterested in paintings.
- (core clue) She arrived in the company of Juanetta Crain, a frequent client of the gallery. Crain seemed to be tutoring her in art appreciation. He overheard the two

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of them talking about the world beyond. Asked for her address, Othon insists that they prove their devotion to art by purchasing a painting (if they haven't already done so.)

- Crain is a wealthy widow known for her interest in spiritualism. She is forever seeking mediums and joining occult circles in hopes of contacting her deceased husband. Othon wonders why she bothers; the husband was a complete bore.
- Therese seemed distressed by the paintings, but intrigued.
- Othon smelled money on her and tried to sell her one of the works that drew her attention, but she proved resistant.
- The paintings are weird, and exert a destabilizing mental effect, but
 - Othon's never heard of them turning people into ghosts. If that was the case, there'd be ghosts swarming across the city, as this show has been his best attended ever.

Therese, if asked about Juanetta Crain or an interest in the occult predating her accident, visibly blanches (**Assess Honesty**) but reveals nothing more. "Please simply leave me alone to complete my ascension," she begs.

The Final Release Of Juanetta Crain

Scene Type: Core

Juanetta Crain lives in an exclusive residential neighborhood. When the investigators arrive there, they find the streets choked with traffic. Juanetta Crain has died, and this is her funeral procession.

Reassurance allows the group to

discreetly collar a mourner and ask a few hushed questions. Juanetta has no living relatives. Credit Rating 6+ identifies the mourners as coming from the older generation of local socialites. Likely mourners include:

- Robert R. "Bob" Robson, a gray-faced gent from an old money family who raises funds for various charities
- Allan Beaumont, drunken bon vivant
- Edythe Brill, snobbish society matron
- Joan Dunn, Juanetta's mousy private secretary

Although the nature of their approach may vary according to who they try to talk to, they get the needed information from any of the above, provided they ask the right questions:

- (core) Juanetta had no close living relatives, so it is presumed that her fortune will go to charity. The executor of her estate, Hugh Conrad, will know for certain, of course.
- Juanetta frittered away vast sums on mediums and spiritualists over recent years. Thankfully, none of those charlatans have the audacity to show up at her funeral.
- She befriended Therese only in the last six months or so. They met at a luncheon for the city's largest public art gallery.
- If Juanetta dragged Therese into her hocus-pocus, that wouldn't be out of character. However, no one here would know about that.
- Juanetta died peacefully in her sleep, from a heart attack. (This is untrue, but believed by the teller.)

She seemed perfectly healthy, and was only in her late fifties.

Last Will and Testament

Scene Type: Core

Crain's executor, Hugh Conrad, is a junior partner at Chambers, Ingraham, and March. A top law firm in the city, it discreetly serves a large roster of respectable, wealthy clients. A character with **Law** knows that the firm is a first-class outfit catering to the WASP elite, but is unfamiliar with Conrad himself. Conrad turns out to be a fussy, professorial sort in a tweed jacket and bow tie. Though at first reluctant to expose his client to posthumous ridicule, **Bureaucracy** or **Law** can convince him that the investigators have a legitimate interest in a sneak preview of her will.

(core) It turns out that the sole beneficiary of Crain's will is a charity unfamiliar to Conrad, known as the Anthropos Foundation. "It is some kind of new religion, I think," Conrad ventures. Its presiding officer bears the unlikely name of Trey Natal. A document supplementary to the will lists a downtown headquarters for the foundation, who Conrad has yet to contact.

What Conrad won't share are his suspicions about the nature of his client's death. If asked, he confirms the heart attack story, but in a manner that triggers **Assess Honesty**. He assures the group that Mrs. Crain's attending physician, Dr. Harley Proctor, is a man of the finest caliber. Characters with **Medicine** or **Credit Rating 6+** know Proctor as both a good physician and a dutiful caretaker to the city's upper crust.

The Anthropos Foundation

Scene Type: Core

A survey of one's **Occult** contacts

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Dr. Proctor

Dr. Proctor will, under the code of collegial confidentiality, speak the truth only to another Doctor, or on a convincing **Bureaucracy** use. Juanetta Crain suffered from severe back pain, for which he prescribed powerful pain killers. Her death showed all of the signs of an overdose on medication. Naturally, to protect the family's good name, Proctor specified the cause of death as cardiac failure. **Medicine** shows that this would be considered the right and proper thing to do for a woman of Crain's standing, and is in no way unethical.

Proctor is a tall, silver-haired man who radiates poise and quiet competence.

regarding the Anthropos Foundation reveals that it is a high-class outfit run by a slick character named Trey Natal. On a 1-point spend, the character hears from several sources. The more skeptical among them believe him to be a clever charlatan, while believers hint that he's an initiate into Egyptian magics, including the hermetic death rituals of Anubis. (Whatever that means.)

The address of the Anthropos Foundation corresponds to a large office suite in a neo-Classical downtown low-rise. A check of the building with **Accounting** shows that many of the financial companies that once occupied the structure have now shuttered their offices there, and that only a fraction of the offices are currently rented.

If the investigators arrive during the day, Trey Natal is the only person present in the office. He's in his thirties, somewhat swarthy, and dressed casually yet stylishly, in a sweater and wool slacks.

A character inquiring into his ancestry with **Anthropology** indicates possible Middle-Eastern or North African roots. Natal fixes the first investigator in front of him with a piercing gaze. **Assess Honesty** suggests that he is using advanced psychological observation techniques on them as they speak.

The foundation's offices are modestly appointed, with rows of books taking up most of the wall space. Investigators of any Academic discipline find sections devoted to their fields, but note that the selection seems arbitrary: important works sit next to outdated obscurities and tomes of outright quackery. The occult section is larger than any other. No Mythos volumes are on display. **Occult** experts notice felt banners hanging from the door; they contain a hodge-podge of mystic symbols from various contradictory traditions.

Investigators asking about Juanetta Crain, Therese Dumond, or other aspects of their cases get the following story. Facts marked (A) register as skillful deceptions to characters actively checking them against their **Assess Honesty** abilities.

- The Anthropos Foundation is an educational charity devoted to the proposition that philosophical and spiritual concerns are central to human development, and should be taught alongside fundamentals such as reading, mathematics, and civics. (A)
- Natal is the foundation's chairman.
- It was established by a small group of enlightened philanthropists who wish their contributions to remain private. (A)
- Juanetta Crain was one of the society's greatest patrons; her loss is a great personal blow to the foundation.

- Natal expresses surprise upon hearing that the bulk of her estate will be going to the foundation. "Still this does not diminish our pain at Juanetta's passing." (A)
- Therese came along with Juanetta to several lectures, but seemed less than interested. Natal admits that those not already well steeped in philosophical and spiritual concepts may find his presentations rather dry. (A)
- Although it advocates the keeping of an open mind toward unorthodox spiritual traditions, the Anthropos Foundation is ecumenical in its outlook and in no way meets the definition of an occult organization.

To learn the truth about what goes on at an Anthropos Foundation meeting, group members will have to present themselves to Natal not as investigators of Therese Dumond's mystery ailment, but as well-heeled, naïve seekers of occult wisdom. They'll glean maximum information if they think to split into two groups, one openly acting as investigators and the other running an imposture routine. Investigators already known to Natal can pass themselves off as entirely new marks with Difficulty 6 Disguise tests.

A meeting of the Anthropos Foundation takes place in its offices, but after the main lecture area has been rendered a more theatrical setting through the use of prop pillars, red drapes, and unfurled banners bearing hieroglyphic characters. (**Languages: Ancient Egyptian** and/or **Languages: Sumerian** identify the languages, and can tell that the characters are gibberish, arbitrarily arranged by someone lacking even a glancing understanding of them.) About a dozen and a half people attend, all of them well-dressed and of at least professional social class. An observer training **Assess Honesty** on them spots the telltale signs of heightened receptivity—what

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Supporting Players

Wheaton Davies is a silver-haired patrician hoping to contact the reincarnation of his wife, who died twenty years ago. He believes he'll find his old love in a new, nubile body, and has gone through a succession of psychics in his effort to locate her.

The babbling, less than beautiful socialite **Lorna Geary** believes herself to be suffering from a love curse after being duped by a series of gigolos, and thinks Natal can connect her to her inner goddess spirit.

Barbara Halligan was a passenger in a train derailment a few years ago and has been in constant pain ever since. She seeks spiritual healing. Natal now grooms her as his next victim.

Renowned ballet choreographer **Feodor Kuznetzoff** (will be known to anyone with **Art History** or **Craft: Dance**) seeks a fresh guru before embarking on any major new work.

Banana magnate **Cyril Nesmith** became entranced with the occult when he heard that rival plantation managers were using hypnotic magic to turn workers into compliant zombie slaves. He knows that Natal is a powerful hypnotist and hopes to inveigle his secrets from him.

Zoo employee **Vernon Glen** is out of place here; he's just a lonely, curious soul hoping for some excitement in his boring life. He shyly shuts up and avoids the investigators' notice, though not so much that they won't remember him when he crops up in the story later. He does not reveal his profession even if singled out.



cynics would call gullibility. Attendees display varying levels of commitment. The audience members are meant to be essentially walk-on characters; check the sidebar for quick details should the Investigators want to chat with them. All are here to understand themselves and the universe better—after a touch of preliminary digging, they reveal more practical desires.

Natal begins the evening with a long, boring lecture on the esoteric relationships between the various afterlives envisioned by ancient cultures the world over. A character testing his statements against his **Occult**

knowledge judges the lecture as uninspired and ill-informed. However, Natal does occasionally drop names like “the Great Old Ones”, “the dark ghoul god Mordiggian”, and “Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos”—though never to any informative effect.

Having tested the resolve of the partially committed, Natal calls for a break. About half of the crowd leaves. The others (including the supporting players listed in the sidebar, except Vernon Glen) form a knot around Natal, all anxiously vying for his attention. The investigators aren't sure whether the evening is over or not. Here an investigator who takes

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the initiative in making an impression can make a 2-point **Flattery** spend to impress Natal as an especially ripe mark.

After about twenty minutes of chatting, Natal begins the real meat of the session, “a directed awakening.” In the event of the above Flattery spend, the Investigator is given the chance to serve as its subject. Otherwise, it’s Barbara Halligan.

Natal seats the subject in a low chair and commands the others to form a circle around her. He asks her to specify the goal she pursues. (For Halligan, it’s freedom from pain.) Natal then begins to perform what anyone with **Hypnosis** or **Medicine** recognizes as a hypnotic technique, drawing on the attention of the others to focus the subject’s mental energy. Natal is outwardly trying to draw spirits to the subject to eliminate obstacles to her goals. These entities, who he characterizes as spirits of positive energy, have names like Meldek, Chan-Tsha, Shub-Niggurath, and Ithaqua. Characters with the above abilities spot that this masks what he’s really doing: putting the subject in a trance, then bringing her out, then putting her under again. This technique deepens the trance, heightening the subject’s vulnerability to future hypnosis.

Anyone employing **Cthulhu Mythos** for insight into his patter recognizes that he’s using these terms as he does with the rest of the occult cultural references that sprinkle his pronouncements: as poorly understood window-dressing. This rare instance of the ability showing that things are less horrible than they appear grants the user a 2-point Stability *refresh*.

Should the investigators behave clumsily while undercover, Natal takes notice. If a character has a chance to explain his actions, a Difficulty 6 Disguise test may allay his suspicions.

Natal breaks the hypnotic link, then bids

the group an abrupt farewell, urging them to keep the magic of this moment alive in their minds as long as possible. They are not to discuss it among themselves, or to others. Esoteric mysteries must be protected by secrecy. His trio of tall, grim-faced assistants (who the investigators suddenly notice, as if they’ve materialized from nowhere) expertly deploy subtly intimidating body language to quickly herd the group from his presence.

As soon as they’re out the door, the other participants immediately fall to chattering amongst themselves about the thrilling intensity of the experience. Disobeying Natal’s final exhortation, all but Vernon Glen go off together to a nearby Russian tea room to endlessly dissect the evening’s lecture and demonstration. Investigators can go as well, perhaps learning the various backstories of these incidental supporting players.

If Barbara Halligan was the subject, she skips the tea room, wandering to her car in a post-hypnotic haze. Still in Natal’s thrall, she’s reluctant to speak to investigators—not that she has any useful clues to impart. As she departs, the characters may well conclude that she’s entered a dangerous situation not unlike Therese’s.

If the investigators aroused Natal’s suspicions during the event, Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble tests tell them that they are being shadowed, not inexpertly, by a pair of his forbidding bodyguards. They will break up any attempt to buttonhole an unwilling Barbara Halligan.

Trey Natal

Firearms 6, Health 6, Scuffling 2.

Alertness Modifier: +2

Weapons: +0 (pistol)

Anthropos Bodyguards

Athletics 12, Health 12, Scuffling 12

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapons: -2 (punch), -1 (kick)

From Suspicion To Proof

Scene Type: Protagonist Action (Open-Ended)

After checking out the Anthropos Foundation, an astute group ought to have a good idea of what’s going on: Therese has been hypnotized by Trey Natal. Now all they have to do is prove it, and snap her out of it. This is easier said than done.

If they shadow Natal, as well, he may notice them, with his Alertness modifier of +2. If they do evade his notice, they find out that his routine outside the foundation borders on the dull. He lives a quiet existence in a modest flat, decorated with quaint furniture and banal scenes of country life. For entertainment he goes to ballet performances, especially those choreographed by prospective mark Feodor Kuznetzoff. He also does his part to keep the city’s struggling fine dining establishments in business. To add excitement to a dead-end shadowing sequence, have Natal’s bodyguards show up to threaten a beating if they don’t leave their boss alone. The guards hew strictly to the law in such matters, using violence only in self-defense.

Attempts to track down Natal’s past through **Library Use** or **Bureaucracy** establish a negative: he only appears in public records as of a decade ago, as if he simply appeared from nowhere. (In truth he fabricated a new identity for himself.)

If confronted about the Anthropos Foundation, Therese admits to having been there a couple of times, confirming that it was Juanetta Crain who brought her in. She denies participating in any rituals or being the subject of a directed awakening. (**Assess Honesty**: this registers as deceptive.) Therese will not allow anyone to hypnotize her; the angel Nyarlathotep has warned her against this. People may come to her, he has warned, to convince her that she is not really dead. They’ll be under the sway

Shadows Over Filmland

The Will

When they finally get a chance to speak with Ian Hogarth (a jolly father figure resembling the actor Edmund Gwenn) he confirms that Therese recently changed her will, naming her housekeeper, Mrs. Buettel, as the primary beneficiary. (Nyarlahotep warned her against giving the money to Kent, as it would pollute the bond between them and prevent them from meeting in heaven.)

of bad spirits, who want to doom her to limbo and keep her soul from ever reaching heaven. She therefore does her best to seem normal, while shutting down all attempts to break through the thick layer of delusion that Natal has placed her under.

Therese also denies changing her will, another claim that registers as false if a player uses **Assess Honesty**. Kent DeWitt knows that her lawyer is Ian Hogarth of Hodgson, Lewton and Hogarth, who is also his attorney. Hogarth is returning from business out of town, and remains conveniently unavailable until after the scene "Nyarlahotep At the Zoo" has occurred.

Nyarlahotep At the Zoo

The party will likely decide to shadow Therese some more, assuming that she will meet up with Natal. Perhaps to their surprise, she never does. Instead, the next night the investigators attempt to shadow her she heads to the zoo. She slips in through an unlocked gate. Making her way through the spooky, darkened zoo, the caged animals shrieking in agitation as she passes by, she comes to the big cat exhibit. This has been fitted out in an Egyptian theme, in keeping with the King Tut mania of the past decade. (Natal has chosen the eerie location of a zoo at

night, and the pseudo-Egyptian theme of this particular exhibit, to enhance her suggestibility.) Left to her own devices, Therese stops to talk to Nyarlahotep.

- "Yes, Nyarlahotep, I have done all you have asked of me."
- "Yes, the preparations are made."
- "Yes, I am ready to exit this world."

She bows to the invisible figure, then strides ahead to a rock, where she finds a large key. Then, in the heavy strides of a somnambulist, she moves toward the leopard cage, key in hand. At this point, it takes a Difficulty 5 Athletics test to bolt from their distant vantage point and wrestle her into submission before she opens the leopard cage. If she does get to the cage, it leaps on her and begins to maul her. They must then drive off the leopard, by reducing it to half of its Health points, before it kills her.

Therese Dumond

Health 8.

Leopard

Athletics 8, Health 12, Scuffling 8.

Alertness +2

Stealth modifier +2

Weapons: +1 (combined bite & claw attack)

Mrs. Buettel

Scene Type: Conclusion

After this scene, the investigators can finally meet with Therese's lawyer, discovering that Mrs. Buettel is the main beneficiary of Therese's will.

By performing a background check on Mrs. Buettel (**Bureaucracy**), they discover that she has one son by her late husband, Mohsen Handy. Handy was an Egyptian national, a stage magician and mentalist who died in prison after his arrest on fraud charges. The son was named Andrée Handy, and would be the

same approximate age as Trey Natal. After her husband's death, Mae Handy reverted to her maiden name, Buettel. (If the players get suspicious of Buettel early, you can make this a time-release clue, so that they have to wait for the results of their bureaucratic inquiries to come back to them. On the other hand, if you think that you can accommodate their early leap to this conclusion while still sustaining a satisfying mystery, by all means reward their cleverness.)

If they make sure she is otherwise occupied and then sneak into her room in Therese's apartment (**Locksmith**), they find hidden childhood pictures of Andrée Handy, which bear a clear resemblance to Trey Natal.

Natal was not the only hypnotist carefully working Therese until she was ready to commit an untraceable suicide. Mae Buettel is also an experienced practitioner, who has been supplementing her son's efforts. Natal did the difficult part of placing her in a receptive state, and Mae has been maintaining the bond, so that the connection could not be traced to the Anthropol Foundation.

Only when Therese realizes that Buettel has been conspiring against her does the horrible realization break her delusion of being a ghost. However, if the investigators arrange a confrontation between Mae and Therese, Mae has a final ace up her sleeve. She's encoded a key word into Therese's consciousness, causing her to lunge for a kitchen knife and hold it to her throat. Mae demands to be let go, or she'll order Therese to open her jugular vein.

The investigators can counteract this with:

- Hypnosis of their own, to suddenly break Mae's conditioning (Difficulty 6)
- a Scuffling test (Difficulty 7) to wrest the knife from her before she

The Night I Died

can harm herself. If the latter test fails, she slashes herself, suffering a potentially mortal wound that drops her to -11 Health.

If she tries this and fails, or if she is simply detained by the Investigators and confronted with a strong case against her (**Interrogation**), Mae cracks. The stress of pretending for years to be a sweet, subservient old lady, only to lead nowhere, turns her into a gusher of recriminations and confessions. Mae admits to the whole scheme, including the hypnotism murders of Therese's parents. She was just one step away from a huge fortune! Mae even offers to give up her son, in exchange for a shorter sentence—although it's she who seems to have been the mastermind.

Freed of Mae's malign mental control, Therese falls into Kent's arms, weeping tears of relief. Kent tells the investigators that they're all invited to the wedding.

If Therese was killed by the leopard, these scenes play out in a grimmer way. Perhaps a revolver must be wrested from Kent's hand before he can take lethal vengeance on Mae or (more likely, given the gender mores of the time) Natal.

Natal flees if somehow warned. A 1-point Cop Talk spend leads the character's police contacts to put out an all-points-bulletin, leading to his capture a few days later. He offers to roll over on his mother, and reveals, if asked, that it was Vernon Glen who deliberately hit DeWitt's car, and that he left the zoo gate open and left the key to the leopard cage out for her.

Neither Mae nor her son have any Mythos secrets to surrender. The names they used, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, and so on, were just that—names they picked up over the years as pseudo-occult grifters. They don't mean anything.

This then, becomes what the pulps

would term a weird menace tale: a story whose supernatural elements turn out to be mundane. As such, its successful completion, showing that Cthulhu isn't lurking in *every* dark corner, allows for up to 3 points of Sanity refreshment: 1 if Therese is still alive, 1 if Mae is alive and headed to prison, 1 for Trey Natal in the same state.



The Two Nyarlathoteps

If your players are always slightly disappointed when their Cthulhu mysteries turn out to have non-supernatural explanations, you can depart from a purist Val Lewton mode to introduce the real Nyarlathotep into the mix. To bring him in, however, the players will have to be proactive—and reckless.

In this version, Trey Natal identifies himself even more explicitly with Nyarlathotep, openly referring to himself by this name during the hypnotism session at the Anthropos Foundation. Characters consulting their **Cthulhu Mythos** abilities recall this as the name of a dreadful messenger deity who, unlike most of the Great Old Ones, walks among men. Since this Nyarlathotep, though a compelling showman, radiates none of the inscrutable evil associated with the deity, one can only conclude that this is an impostor. (This exclusionary use of the ability costs no Stability or Sanity.)

At this point, the players might get the bright idea that the real Nyarlathotep might not take kindly to having his name taken in vain. On a 3-point **Occult** spend (may be undertaken by multiple characters working in stages), the team can trawl the occult scene for a guy who knows a guy who thinks he knows

another guy who might be able to get a message to a heavy-duty sorcerer who just maybe possibly is in contact with the genuine, original Nyarlathotep. (**Credit Rating** points of any level may be substituted for Occult points, at a rate of 2 Credit Rating for 1 Occult, provided at least 1 Occult point is spent.)

Should they send the message, a strange, hunchbacked man with a distinctly batrachian face meets the investigators without a prior invitation, and in a way that invades their privacy and implies a troublingly specific knowledge of their activities. Perhaps he's waiting for them in their hotel room, or in the VIP room of the men's club where they meet, or in the elevator to an investigator's apartment. Introducing himself as Robert Blake, he explains that he is an emissary for "the one you have been attempting to contact." Blake wears an old-fashioned suit and bowler hat, and smells like mothballs. Never mentioning Nyarlathotep by name, he explains that his master is indeed displeased to have his name disrespectfully appropriated by a mere charlatan. He hands the group a discolored, out-of-date map of the city. When they have solved their problem with the girl, Blake says, they are to secure those responsible for this effrontery and take them to the location given on the map. By doing so, they will earn his master's gratitude. Blake then tips his bowler hat and bids them good night (even if it is the middle of the day.) Attempts to follow him mysteriously fail; as soon as he leaves their immediate sight line, he seems to vanish into thin air. The mere presence of Mr. Blake occasions tests against a possible 2-point Stability loss—3 points if they try to tail him and note his odd disappearance. Meeting Mr. Blake constitutes a Mythos shock.

A character with **Art History** knows the name "Robert Blake" as that of a Milwaukee-based painter and writer of weird fiction. If this scenario takes place after 1935, the character also knows that Blake was found electrocuted in his

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rooms in the wake of a thunderstorm, after confessing to friends a series of weird events centering around a church on French Hill, in Providence, Rhode Island. Before or after 1935, **Library Use** turns up a newspaper photograph of the real Robert Blake, who bears no resemblance to Nyarlathotep's emissary.

If they look at the map right away, the investigators see nothing marked on it. Once they have Natal and Mrs. Buettel in custody (having either cured Therese of her induced delusion, or seen her mauled to death), they can then check the map again and find a red star marked on the map as if by a scratchy, palsied hand. This leads the group to a condemned, deconsecrated church on the outskirts of town. Should they drag their prisoner(s) inside, the doors and windows slam shut, trapping them inside. A mist appears from the cracks in the church's walls. It drifts eerily toward the prisoners. When it reaches them, they scream. The mist tears them apart, layer by layer: first the skin, then the muscles, then the organs, and finally, their snapping, twisting bones. They remain alive under this assault, screaming and wailing, for a surprisingly long time. Observing this event risks a possible 5-point Stability loss—unless any player inquires into the nature of the mist. That player's character then undergoes a horrible epiphany, realizing that the mist *is dread Nyarlathotep himself!* The character must make a Difficulty 8 Stability test (no risk of loss for this roll) to suppress the temptation to blurt this out to his companions. If this realization occurs, the possible Stability loss is 9. Needless to say, this is a Mythos shock.

Relying on Nyarlathotep to do one's dirty work should engender crises of conscience in honest men. Characters with the Duty drive who fail their Stability tests lose the Pillar of Sanity most closely associated with honor and justice.

Calling On Nyarlathotep's Favor

On the plus side, handing Natal over to Nyarlathotep earns the group a favor they can call on later. (Wait, did we say *plus side*? Perhaps we speak blithely...)

Although no one explains this to them, the group can call on Nyarlathotep for this favor simply by taking another glance at the map. It will now be a antiquated map of their current general area, no matter what that is. Marked on the map will be a location, where they can drop off prisoners for execution, find an enchanted weapon, or uncover a crucial clue they've failed to look for. At some point, however, Nyarlathotep arrives, perhaps in mist form, to engage in another act of mind-blasting cosmic malignity on the group's supposed behalf. He makes sure to do this when the Investigators are present to witness the majesty of his appalling power.

Seeing the changed map provokes a test to prevent a 3-point Stability loss; the manifestation of Nyarlathotep should cost around 9 points. Both are Mythos shocks.

Anyone reduced to 0 Sanity by the direct presence of the Crawling Chaos (either here or during the original manifestation) lopes off into the night to become an NPC, eventually returning as a Nyarlathotep-worshipping antagonist.



THE NON-EUCLIDEAN MAN

"DISINTEGRATION IS QUITE PAINLESS, I ASSURE YOU -- BUT I WANT YOU TO SEE THEM. I ALMOST SAW THEM, BUT I KNEW HOW TO STOP."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "FROM BEYOND"

The characters attend a scientific symposium held at an imposing chateau, only to find that their illustrious colleagues have been targeted for murder.

Although set by default in the Backlot Gothic world, you can transpose it to a standard setting, like Arkham or New York, by altering a few names and descriptions.

Introduction

The Spine

The scenario begins with **A Coveted Invitation**, in which the investigators arrive at the gloomily picturesque Chateau Alexandru, to attend the annual symposium of the Pneumametric Society, a multi-disciplinary group dedicated to exploring the far limits of human consciousness. Before they know it, a scream summons them to investigate an apparent suicide in a locked bathroom—which they soon realize is **The First Murder**. Soon a **Second Murder** proves to all concerned that something both nefarious and supernatural is afoot. In **Mothballed Experiment** they follow the Society's leading lights into a laboratory, where they learn...

The Horrible Truth

The killer is a former lab assistant, Griffin Kemp. He is taking vengeance on the men whose reckless secret experiment shunted him into a world between dimensions.

The last time the Pneumametric Society met at the Chateau Alexandru, its top board members stayed behind to witness an experiment conducted by the chateau's owner, Victor Petroff. Kemp volunteered to be bombarded with radio waves emanating from the recently discovered trans-Neptunian planet called Pluto. In the wake of the exposure, Kemp experienced a series of bizarre visions. At the height of his ecstatic madness, he wounded an onlooker, Professor Lambert Kingsford, and then apparently disintegrated before their eyes.

The participants, and thus his chosen victims, were:

Professor Victor Petroff: designer of the radio bombardment device, owner of the chateau, and president of the society.

Sir Lambert Kingsford: discoverer of the radio beam from Pluto.

Professor Walter Reicher: builder of Petroff's radio bombardier.

Dr. Howard Hillyer: the attending physician.

George Bastin: industrialist and project funder.

The bombardment from Yuggoth did not kill Griffin Kemp. Instead, it shunted him into a permanent transitional state between dimensional realities. Unencumbered by our puny notions of spatial reality, he can move about unseen, and even penetrate what we consider to be solid barriers. Driven mad by his constant perception of an impossible geometry overlaid over the world we once knew, Kemp blames the scientists for his fate. Able to briefly exert control over objects and forces in ordinary Euclidean space, he sets about tormenting and killing the five men he holds responsible for his doom.

The Chortle

The invisible villain of the piece sometimes gives his presence away through his sadistic chortle. Before running this scenario, take some time to practice your ominous laugh. Keep at it until you've got something creepily menacing that you can consistently repeat. Make sure that you can perform the chortle at differing volumes, to suggest variations in distance. At various points in the scenario, investigators may hear it from a distant ridge, or with Kemp literally breathing down their necks.



The Climactic Conundrum

Having discovered the culprit, the investigators face a conundrum—how do you stop a man who can't be seen or touched?

Scenes

A Coveted Invitation Scene Type: Intro

The investigators are drawn into this investigation when they are invited to attend a prestigious private symposium at the Chateau Alexandru, deep in the heart of the Backlot Gothic world. The invitation comes from Sir Lambert Kingsford, an internationally renowned astronomer. They might receive the invitation in various ways:

- They are already in the Backlot Gothic setting. Hearing of their presence via the grapevine, and knowing their reputation as inquirers into unearthly matters,

Kingsford arranges to contact them. Under no circumstances does he admit that he's worried about the return of Griffin Kemp. Instead he says he wishes to sound them out on their experiences, and introduce them to some of his more hidebound colleagues.

- Kingsford is a friend and colleague of the group's resident Scientist.
- The group's Journalist is assigned by an editor to cover the conference.
- A Police Detective, Private Investigator or Military man is hired or assigned to provide security, on the grounds that secrets of possible strategic implication might be discussed at the conference. With Europe overrun by spies, one can't be too careful.
- A Dilettante is approached as a possible donor to expensive research projects.

- When given no fresher alternatives, grasp for the "distant relative" justification.

Ask each player to devise a personal goal for the conference, one that offers reward but can be attained only by overcoming resistance of some kind. These need not pertain to the reason for the invitation. To help in formulating them, they know the following about the conference and its sponsoring organization, the Pneumametric Society:

Library Use: The society was established fifteen years ago. Full membership is a coveted perk offered to a select few scientists, philosophers, and other intellectuals. Associate membership can be purchased in exchange for significant patronage. Its charter states its primary goal as "multi-disciplinary research into the frontiers of human awareness, unfettered by tired orthodoxies." The current president is Victor Petroff, world-renowned pioneer in radio astronomy.

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The Non-Euclidean Man

Ion

Petroff's trusted primary servant is a funereally thin man who does his job dutifully while saying as little as possible. He wears a perpetually mournful expression and keeps his hair in a severe, monkish cut, with closely shaved temples. Despite his ominous appearance, he's an upstanding man who would never obey an order contrary to his sincere religious faith.

Ion will not do bad things, or betray his master, but might be coaxed to perform other risky or troubling tasks with a **Reassurance** spend.

Athletics 4, Health 4.

Madame Petroff

Maia Petroff is the professor's formidable, matronly mother. She wears her white hair in a bun and fixes interlocutors with a piercing, judgmental stare. Used to great deference, her demeanor remains formal and composed even in the direst emergency. She suspects that something terrible happened after the last symposium at the chateau, and, on a **Reassurance** use by someone with a **Credit Rating** of 6 or more, can name the five men who stayed behind.

Health 2.

Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry or Physics: Membership in the society is coveted even by scientists who have no interest in its vague, high-flown goals, because of the connections one can develop through it.

Collaborate with the players to ensure a range of contrasting goals to pursue at the conference. These give the Investigators specific things to do during

the opening sequences, rather than milling about waiting for cut scenes and exposition to be shoveled at them. Allow players to create new supporting characters. Better yet, modify any of the five main characters to create a stronger connection to an investigator. Strong example goals might include the following:

- the establishment of professional or business connections (suitable for Alienist, Doctor, Professor, Scientist)
- chance to test academic theories or confront a critic
- seduction
- good eats (suitable for Hobo)
- find a profitable scam or target for theft (Criminal)

If you can't imagine an entertaining early scene centering around the pursuit of a proposed goal, work with the player to adjust it so that it suggests action on the part of the character, and an obstacle he or she has to overcome.

The Chateau Alexandru

The Chateau Alexandru is a picturesque, French-style manor plunked into the midst of a jagged mountain range. Perched on the edge of treacherous cliff, it overlooks a vast plain of toppled trees, felled by a recent storm.

It's pouring rain. As the carriage ferrying the group to the chateau rounds a sharp bend onto the final leg of sloping road, a huge boulder detaches itself from the surrounding cliff-face and bounces down at them. On a Difficulty 6 Athletics test, a character inside the carriage can swing out of the passenger compartment and into the driver's seat up front. He can then seize the reins from the driver to perform a Difficulty 6 Driving test. (Horse-drawn carriage must be one of

the character's specified vehicles.) If successful in both instances, the carriage veers past the bouncing boulder.

Otherwise, the boulder strikes the side of the carriage, toppling it over. All characters make Difficulty 4 Athletics tests; those who fail take a die of damage. Clambering from the ruined vehicle, the group discovers that the driver is dead. Forensics shows that he was thrown from the carriage and instantly died of a broken neck. The two coal-black horses lie on the road, screaming, legs broken. The only merciful thing to do is shoot them. This incident imposes a possible 2-point Stability loss.

The character with the highest Sense Trouble pool hears a distant, momentary sound that might just be a trick in of the wind against the rocks, but sounds eerily like a sadistic, satisfied chortle. If the player asks to locate the origin of the sound, a Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble test places it up on the ridge, near the site of the rock fall.

With the driver dead, one or more investigators must walk to the chateau to tell them of the accident. The chateau's steward, Ion, comes out with several other servants to make necessary arrangements. If an investigator checks Ion's reaction with **Assess Honesty**, he'll see that the man is genuinely grief-stricken, and can presume that he knew the driver. (The driver's name is Ákos, if anyone asks.) Ion sends a fellow servant to the police station, and has the others carry his body into the manor. Before they go, they drag the horses off to the side of the road. If asked what will happen to them, Ion explains that Gaspar's family will probably take them away to be butchered.)

Upon arrival at the chateau, the group is greeted by Madame Petroff (see sidebar.) She welcomes the group to the symposium on behalf of her son and expresses sympathy over their jarring accident (if it occurred.) Then she bids

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them to enter the great hall, where most of the symposium's several dozen attendees are already in the midst of a welcome reception.

The great hall is a vast, domed affair framed by a pair of curving marble staircases. Gilded rococo decorative elements cover its columns, balustrades, and wrap-around balcony. **Architecture** reveals that these were all recently restored.

Ion shows them to their rooms at the chateau. Lacking the splendor of the great hall, these are modest, narrow affairs, featuring drafty windows and a musty, mothball odor. Their beds are cots, and structurally uncertain ones at that.

On a Difficulty 4 Mechanical Repair check, the investigators are comfortably certain that no secret doors or passageways intrude into their dorm rooms.

Their fellow guests will clearly be staying in other similar rooms arranged along the same corridor. Washing up occurs in a toilet facility at the end of the hall.

Champagne, brandy and gluey central European canapés flow freely in the great hall.

At this point, the investigators are at loose ends, and free to pursue their previously outlined goals. During these sequences, they encounter the five prospective future victims in the course of these pursuits. Adapt their personalities and backstories as needed to better integrate them with these scenes. Although you should ideally introduce all five of the main supporting characters, you may also fold Investigator goal scenes together, where a single NPC seems best suited to several of their stated goals.

Examples:

- An investigator bent on seduction may discover that the gorgeous

woman he's subtly propositioning is the wife of Professor Walter Reicher.

- A hobo gobbling down the free food and drink may find that his partner in dipsomaniacal gluttony is George Bastin, who protects him from the disapproving gaze of Madame Petroff.
- A seeker of business connections soon realizes that George Bastin is the room's reigning mogul.
- Scientific hobnobbing can draw in Petroff, Kingsford, or Reicher.
- A person from whom an investigator wants something may faint in his or her presence, occasioning an encounter with Dr. Hillyer.

Award yourself Keeper bonus points if you're able to work references to the scenario's twin themes: revenge, and the arrogant quest for mind-searing knowledge.

Victor Petroff

Victor Petroff prefers to be referred to as Professor Petroff, even though he is a full-fledged count. A short, dark man, he holds himself in a commanding manner and speaks in a thick Eastern European accent. (Think Bela Lugosi.) Anyone with **Medicine** knows the following about him:

- His specialty is the use of energy waves in psychiatric treatment. In his papers, he lays out a compelling theoretical case that certain energies can be used to reorient the psyche, suppressing negative character traits like aggression and fearfulness, while enhancing the subject's empathy, confidence, and contentment.
- Though not a founder of the Pneumametric Society, he is now its dominant figure.

- A persuasive and forceful man, Petroff surrounds himself with willing cronies.

- Like many academics, he is willing to take his verbal battles with critical colleagues to an almost childish level of scathing insult.

Occult reveals that Petroff is no stuffy rationalist, but an open-minded student of eastern and mystic philosophies. He draws inspiration from the Anthroposophy movement of the late mystical philosopher Rudolf Steiner. (Brush up on your Steiner with a quick Wikipedia scan.)

By discussing the occult with him, and using a little **Flattery**, a character can induce him to share his so far unprovable theory that among the radio waves from space found by Professor Kingsford is one which, if successfully decoded, will be revealed as an expression of the thoughts of God.

As the action begins, Petroff believes his position to be unassailable. He's put the death of Griffin Kemp out of his mind, having abandoned that failed experiment in favor of his radio-psyhic healing technology. He is certain that he will one day be classed among such titans of medical science as Mendel and Pasteur.

When the murders occur, he tries to hide his growing sense of panic by projecting a sense of authority. His arrogance leads him to dismiss investigator's concerns for his well-being. This can't be happening to him—it can't be—not when he is destined for greatness! If he realizes he's facing the vengeance of Griffin Kemp, he is shocked to think that he might be brought low by such a non-entity.

A lonely bachelor, Petroff might be smitten with a suitably worshipful female investigator. The only person in this world he defers to is his mother.

Health 4.

Alertness Modifier: +1.

Ancillary Characters

If you give speaking roles to only the five prospective victims and their hangers-on, you'll make it too easy to figure out who the possible victims are. Here are quick sketches of other symposium attendees, who you should work into the opening scenes as red herring characters. Be careful about the amount of narrative weight you grant them. Sometimes a player will fixate on a secondary character, prompting you to do the same. Either deemphasize the character, or tie him more tightly into the Kemp backstory.

Some might make suitable replacement Investigators, temporary or permanent, if any of the initial crop of investigators are killed. For this reason we list PC occupations for each. Although they'll probably want to remain consistent with the way they've been portrayed by you so far, tell players taking them as characters to adjust them as desired. They are in no way obligated to use any quirks or backgrounds you've yet to establish in play.

Gerhardt Pfister is an eccentric chemist considering membership in the Society. **Chemistry** identifies him as a pioneer in toxicology. A Nazi sympathizer, he hopes that pneumametric principles might be somehow applied to aid the German military. In a game acknowledging post-pulp social realities, Pfister is a self-loathing homosexual who may make a clumsy advance on a handsome investigator. If you're using this element, **Assess Honesty** shows that he presents a false front to the world.

Cynical young society dame **Margaret Hillman** seems like a dilettante searching for an exotic charity to fund, but is actually a private investigator looking for dirt on George Bastin. **Assess Honesty** indicates that she's not who she pretends to be. She's been hired by Bastin's business rival, coal mining magnate Charles Buford, in the hopes that his connections to the Pneumametric Society can be painted in the yellow press as somehow un-American or otherwise Communistic.

Alienist **Alphonse La Mal** is a Society member fervently looking forward to hearing Petroff's paper. Like many psychologists he got into the field to deal with his own neuroses, which in his case is a thundering case of father fixation. He vehemently defends Petroff, who he identifies with his own missing papa, from any criticism, no matter how slight. La Mal becomes compliant in the face of **Intimidation**, transferring his daddy fixation onto whoever subjects him to his authority.

Archaeologist **Dudley Fallon** joined the Society after discovering that a geometric pattern on a pot found in Central America matched the wave pattern of a cosmic radio signal Kingsford published in the *Proceedings of the Pneumametric Society*. Fallon's goal is to convince Kingsford to co-author a paper for him; he may try to get the professor away from an investigator who seems to be monopolizing his conversation.

Lambert Kingsford

Sir Lambert Kingsford, dean of Oxford's sub-department of astrophysics, is a kindly soul torn by guilt over the demise of Griffin Kemp. He's a tall, white-haired man clad in tweed and sporting a trim snowy mustache. He punctuates his sentences with periodic pauses to puff away on a small mahogany meerschaum pipe. Those who meet him may be most struck by the black patch he wears over his left eye.

Astronomy reveals the following about him:

- One of the world's most renowned astronomers, he is best

known for his discovery of radio transmissions from space.

- Kingsford's colleagues regard him with respect and affection, although some whisper that his association with the domineering, unorthodox Petroff and his Pneumametric Society have damaged his reputation.
- (1-point spend) The character has read Kingsford's most recent paper, in which he seemed to hint that an intelligence lay behind some of the cosmic radio waves he's intercepted, and that a greater discovery is just around the corner. Unusually for an

astrophysics paper, it cites works on radio waves by Professor Petroff, whose work is far afield from Kingsford's.

After the failed Kemp experiment, Kingsford buried himself in a safer project with no need for human subjects. Now he seeks to systematically decode the radio signals he's been receiving from Pluto. He believes that by the next symposium, he'll be able to announce proof of intelligent alien life elsewhere in the universe. His biggest fear at the symposium is that he'll be unable to resist making hints to this effect, even though this would be indiscreet in the extreme. (In fact, a little **Flattery** about

his work will slowly wrinkle this out of him.)

Lambert's wife Iris doesn't like to travel and remains at their home near Oxford.

Howard Hillyer

The jolly, rotund Dr. Howard Hillyer fancies himself a doctor, raconteur and connoisseur of fine food and drink. He acts as Petroff's foil, playing the matter-of-fact medical practitioner to the count's genius theoretician. Hillyer regrets Kemp's demise but doesn't think much about it. He warned Kemp many times that the experiment held untold dangers. He's had patients die under much worse conditions than that poor lad, whose end seemed quick and painless.

Unlike Petroff, Kingsford and Reicher, Hillyer is not especially well-known. On a 1-point **Medicine** spend, a character can place him as taking co-credit on several of Petroff's recent scientific papers.

Among other mild vices, Hillyer loves to play cards for money. **Streetwise** allows a character to lose to him on purpose, without seeming to do so, winning his affection. He then becomes a friendly conduit for any information you later find you need to impart to the investigators.

Dr. Hillyer will naturally do his best to patch up anyone, Investigators or otherwise, injured during the symposium.

First Aid 12, Health 2.

Walter Reicher

The broodingly handsome Walter Reicher is famed for his accomplishments in electrical engineering, and feared for his violent temper. He is the youngest and most athletic of Kemp's five targets. Like many self-taught geniuses, he never stopped to acquire social graces

and may treat the investigators with peevish impatience. He softens visibly in the presence of his beautiful blond wife Inga. The Investigators may hear symposium attendees outside of Petroff's circle wonder aloud what she sees in him. He secretly worries about this, too, but shows it disastrously, by becoming irrationally jealous if she shows the least bit of attention to any male stranger.

Walter is a well-known figure in the world of **Physics**:

- A tenured professor at California's prestigious Strickfaden Institute, Reicher is famed for being able to take the wispiest schematic diagram whipped up by an ivory tower theorist and turn it into a belching, sparking, *working* prototype.
- None of his colleagues understand his allegiance to the airy, quasi-spiritual Pneumametric Society.
- Reicher not only takes academic disputes personally—on a couple of occasions, he's threatened to sock his critics in the jaw.

Reicher knows enough to shut up about the Kemp incident, but doesn't see what the fuss is. The idiot *allowed* himself to be destroyed, ruining months of Reicher's hard work. Walter offered to serve as subject for a second attempt, but the others refused him.

An investigator can win Reicher's trust by siding with him during a flight of jealousy. Perhaps one Investigator might openly pull another away from Inga.

George Bastin

A gravel-throated bear of a man, George Bastin is the deep-pocketed industrialist funding the Society and Petroff's various pet projects. Used to bellowing orders, he puts up an intimidating front, to keep people at bay. Otherwise he'd be deluged

by importuning sorts begging for favors, donations, and introductions.

Accounting reveals the following:

- Bastin is a wealthy industrialist who bootstrapped himself from a modest upbringing to an empire of coal mines and electric plants throughout the Americas.
- He's a notoriously gruff man who does not suffer fools gladly.
- His interest in the mystical science of the Pneumametric Society seems out of character for him. It started after he became a widower.

Bastin has yet to recover from the cancer death of his beloved wife, Amelia. His ultimate hope for Petroff's projects is that they'll allow him to communicate with her, wherever she is now. A hard-headed rationalist who believes that all mediums and occultists are con artists, he requires that all of his approaches to this problem have a scientific veneer. Petroff's experiments have never been about talking to the dead, but Bastin always twists them in his mind, thinking that one day a pneumametric discovery will deliver his heart's desire. His drive to contact the great beyond is monomaniacal. When Kemp shows up, Bastin may (if this plot thread fits your version of the story as it unfolds) leap to the conclusion that he's a ghost, and demand his capture, so that he can be studied.

Fearing ridicule, he keeps this side of his life secret. Any questions about his wife must be handled with extreme delicacy. He remains standoffish until the crisis begins, and investigators demonstrate a pragmatic competence in the face of apparently supernatural events.



The First Murder Scene Type: Core

After the initial player-driven scenes play out, decide which of the four potential victims other than Petroff had the least interesting interaction with the Investigators. You will probably find that at least one of the scenes didn't catch fire, because it didn't offer enough conflict or give the investigator a powerful stake in the outcome.

This is the character who is the first to die. Let's call him Victim One. The death happens late in the evening, after the reception has ended and symposium participants have begun to turn in for the night. The storm outside has broken, giving way to the quiet murmurings of the various guests in their rooms. A character with **Biology** hears a distinctive piping bird cry outside; if the player asks to identify it, it turns out to be that of the European nightjar, a cousin of the North American whip-poor-will.

The sudden quiet is just as quickly shattered by a scream. Madame Petroff stands terrified at the end of the hallway, a key in her hand. She wears a house coat over a nightgown. Her hair is in disarray. The door to the toilet swings open; a gush of water soaks into the corridor's rug.

If the investigators rush to her side to see what has happened, they find Victim One lying on the bathroom floor, his throat slashed open. A bloodied razor lies in the bathtub. Shaving lather covers the left half of his face, but not the right.

Reassurance calms a traumatized Madame Petroff. (A player volunteering a 1-point spend earns the demanding woman's permanent warmth and cooperation.) She spotted water spilling out beneath the door frame and found the bathroom to be locked. She knocked on the door and got no response. She unlocked the door and found Victim One. "Why would he kill himself?" she quails.



If the Investigators dive into investigative mode, the numbed supporting players accept their assumption of authority. (Maybe a character who has reason to dislike them challenges them a bit later—but is put off with a display of **Cop Talk** or other another appropriate Interpersonal ability.)

(core) Examination of the body with **Forensics** shows that this was no suicide:

- the angle of the cut, and its excessive depth, are both inconsistent with a self-inflicted wound.

- the blade is too far away from the victim. If he'd slashed his own throat, the blade would have dropped at his feet.
- the blood spatter indicates that the blade was flung away from the victim's throat as part of the same slashing motion that inflicted the wound. In other words, it was inflicted by someone facing the victim, and with unusual force.

Locksmith shows that the lock has not been tampered with, and was presumably latched shut from the inside until Madame Petroff opened it.

The sink has spilled over, as if the victim died while filling it. Players may note this as another indicator that this is no suicide. Who leaves the tap running before killing oneself?

A player with **Evidence Collection** who asks about the water flow can use it to estimate that it was stoppered about fifteen minutes ago.

At this point, none of the prospective victims connect the victim's death to Griffin Kemp. Their responses to questions reflect genuine bafflement.

Victor Petroff angrily concludes that one of his many short-sighted, Lilliputian rivals has been driven to madness by jealousy of his accomplishments, and has done this to sabotage the symposium. In tribute to his fallen friend, he will deliver his paper as scheduled.

Saddened and shaken, Lambert Kingsford insists that the group must be misreading the evidence. As awful as it is to contemplate, the poor victim must have killed himself. To posit any other possibility is to depart utterly from scientific logic.

Walter Reicher takes a different tack: if scientific analysis indicates that the victim didn't kill himself, there must be a previously unknown force at work—but one which can be understood through rational observation.

Dr. Hillyer seeks out strong drink and does his best to blot out all rumination on the murder and its implications. If pressed, he retreats into talk about how a physician must, in the face of death and suffering, learn to slog ever onwards. **Assess Honesty** shows that this is a front, and that he is in fact deeply upset.

George Bastin seems both distressed yet curiously excited by the event. He asks the group if they think it's possible that it might be a ghost, that this horrible event might be proof of life after death.

By seeming open to the idea, they can draw out Bastin's secret motivation—to finance research which might allow contact with his dead wife.

Obviously, one of the above witnesses is the dead victim and therefore unavailable for comment. None of the interviews provide core clues, so keep them short. They may be colored by prior player-driven interaction scenes. For example, Walter Reicher might be particularly surly to anyone who was making eyes at his wife. Get through interviews with ancillary characters as quickly as you can without giving away their tangential status.

Madame Petroff starts to say something, but then flushes and cuts herself short. **Reassurance** (or the previous spend that won her permanent cooperation) leads her to confess to legends of a ghost in the castle. An ancestor, Count Nicolai Petroff, is said to haunt the corridors of the chateau. She has never believed this, but now... no, on second thought, she still doesn't believe it.

Library Use, spent in the chateau's book room, turns up the legend of Nicolai Petroff. He was killed in the 17th century by a mob of angry peasants, who accused him of slashing a servant girl's throat. Troops from the capital had to come to put down their rebellion. Legends say that Petroff still stalks the hills where he was killed, frightening young maidens like his victim.

History shows that this account lacks modern rigor and reeks of invention.

If the players decide to keep looking in the shelves, another **Library Use** finds a more recent account suggesting that the peasants rebelled against Petroff's overly zealous witch-burning campaigns. They were led by members of a deeply entrenched cult, which Petroff eventually exterminated, confiscating their obscene books of magic.

The Second Murder

Scene Type: Character Development

The next morning, the symposium lurches to a halt. Attendees gather in the main hall to trade fearful whispers about the case, which most still insist on calling a suicide. Petroff announces the cancellation of all morning sessions, but still plans to deliver his paper in the afternoon. Characters are free to pursue their established personal goals, if they still care about them. Keep them busy pursuing the red herring of the ghost legend, or with other obstacles:

- Some guests voice a desire to leave. **Cop Talk** commands them to remain in place. Everyone here is, of course, a murder suspect.
- The village's comically pompous police official, Inspector Popa, shows up to quiz the investigators as if they are suspects, and to threaten to take control of the case. An investigator with **Law** realizes that the count is still chief legal authority on the grounds of his own estate, and that Popa has no jurisdiction here. They must still find an ingenious way to get this bumbling, intrusive man out of their way.

Now choose the second victim. This should be the surviving experiment participant, other than Petroff, to whom the players seem to have the most tenuous emotional attachment.

The symposium attendees file into the library, which has now been outfitted with seating to become a cozy lecture hall.

On the way into the library, which has only one entrance, a character with **Occult** or **Cthulhu Mythos** notices a strange sigil incised over the archway, as part of the rococo gilt work. The latter ability identifies this as the Elder Sign, granting the characters the information

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given for it on p. 115 of *Trail Of Cthulhu*. (Later, they can ask Petroff or his mother about this; either can explain that these moldings were installed by Victor's ancestor, Nicolai Petroff. If asked about Petroff's involvement in the occult, they can confirm that he was a famous witchfinder.)

A shaken Kingsford (or if he's dead, Bastin) introduces Petroff and remarks on the importance of his paper. Copies of it are already available on a side table; investigators skimming it with **Medicine** or **Physics** determine it to be interesting but highly specialized and abstruse—a step along the way to a great discovery, perhaps, but nothing that will rock the foundations of science.

Petroff begins his remarks by dedicating this paper to the first victim, then realizing that one of his colleague's chair in the front row is still empty. He asks about the whereabouts of the second victim. He's never late for something like this.

Anxious whispers break out in the lecture hall. The same thought has clearly occurred to everyone present: what if something horrible has happened to him, too?

Another of the original five takes the Investigators aside and quietly asks them to find Victim Two, before the entire assemblage loses its collective mind.

If the investigators first search the grounds outside the chateau, they find the Second Victim's upper half, severed at the waistline, lying in the brambles under a tower window. If they first search inside the chateau, they find the lower half of him in Petroff's tower office. His abdomen and legs dangle from a window ledge. The cut is pressed up against a window, as if he was leaning out the open window when someone slammed its pane with such force that he was cut in two. A flap of his torn jacket, pinned under the pane, holds his lower

half in place. The sight of this gruesome killing (from above or below) triggers a possible 3-point Stability loss.

It doesn't take **Forensics** to know that under ordinary circumstances, a falling window pane would never drop with enough force to cut a man in two.

The drawers of a filing cabinet are open. **Evidence Collection** infers, from the spacing of the files, that one of them has recently been removed.

(core clue) An **Evidence Collection** search for fingerprints on the filing cabinet not only fails to find Victim Two's prints on its metal surfaces, but finds no ordinary human fingerprints at all. Instead, the dust on the cabinet handle has been displaced in a strange, mathematically complex whirling pattern. **Physics** indicates that the dust motes, and the surface of the cabinet itself, have been somehow disturbed on the atomic level.

The remaining folders in this particular cabinet contain pedestrian financial records and other accounts of the chateau's day-to-day affairs. Some documents are in Petroff's handwriting, while other accounts are managed by his mother. **Accounting** finds nothing untoward on an initial glance. A detailed examination of the records finds that Madame Petroff's meticulously kept household accounts fail to balance at one point a little more than two years ago. \$1816.03 is missing from the family accounts. The Petroffs agree to a detailed records examination only if she is already well-disposed toward the investigators, or he is subjected to **Intimidation** or **Reassurance**.

Scientific records seem to be stored elsewhere.

If Investigators canvass the servants, a maid, Magda, says that she saw Victim Two headed for the master's office about half an hour ago. She meant to check

up on him, because she knows Madame Petroff wouldn't like anyone other than her or her son messing about in there. But then this terrible chill seized her, and she heard a nasty chortle coming from the hallway right in front of her—but *there was no one there!* She panicked and went down to the busy kitchen where she knew she'd feel safe.

Should the investigators question her account, the head cook, Jana, confirms that she came down not long ago, white as a ghost.

Shown the scene, Petroff blanches. **Assess Honesty** shows that he is genuinely surprised and horrified. Anyone who specifies that they're watching Petroff's reactions catches him discreetly (some might say guiltily) checking to see what has been removed from the filing cabinet. He then attempts to remain impassive in the face of a pained realization. If confronted about this, he unconvincingly denies knowing anything of interest in the case. The deaths of two of his closest associates have understandably upset him, he argues.

The Kemp File

Scene Type: Core

Kemp becomes interested in the investigators as a means to tighten the screws on Petroff and company as he waits to kill them. Sometime after the second murder, when the group seems in need of a fresh shot of information, a file folder containing financial records and a telegram form appears in their possession. It shows up in a place where it should not be, in a creepy and intrusive manner. It might appear unbidden in a pocket or under the character's pillow while he sleeps. It could show up on a surface that the character saw to be empty mere moments ago. This can occasion a Stability loss of up to 4 points, depending on the overt impossibility of its arrival.

The folder has been taken from Petroff's office; it matches others found there. Financial records contained therein document Petroff's arrangements to wire \$1816.03 to a Mrs. Adelaide Kemp in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They show that the wire transfer was received in Minnesota in good order. According to the dates on the papers, the transaction occurred a little more than two years ago.

The telegram reads as follows:

With great regret I inform you that your son, Griffin Kemp, was fatally harmed in a laboratory accident at the Chateau Alexandru. Also regret that remains are in no condition to send home to you. My solicitor will contact you shortly to transfer to you the contents of Mr. Kemp's savings account, held at the local postmaster's office.

Victor Petroff

Mothballed Experiment

Scene Type: Core

Seeing what file is missing from his office, Petroff finally realizes that Kemp has somehow come back to wreak vengeance on those who took part in the experiment that killed him. Because knowledge of the accident would discredit him in the scientific community, he decides to conceal his conclusions from the investigators. Petroff also tells himself that only his brilliant mind can find a way to stop this invisible killer. This proves to be a dramatic overestimation of his abilities.

(Although he is too preoccupied to think of it himself, Petroff is more than willing to cancel the remainder of the symposium and send the attendees home, once it is clear that none of them are suspects in the murders.)

The investigators can advance the

investigation by Shadowing Petroff. This is the more fun and rewarding option, but requires a Difficulty 4 test and is therefore not guaranteed to succeed. Shadowing allows a character to discreetly tag along after Petroff through the chateau without seeming to do so. The investigator sees him first in hushed discussions with the two other remaining prospective victims. Then, looking around in the false hope that no one is watching, they open a secret doorway and head down to Petroff's basement laboratory. Confronted as they attempt to slip into the lab, Petroff and company relent and confess to their past negligence.

Alternately, once in possession of the Kemp file, they can break Petroff's resistance with **Intimidation**. Threatening his precious reputation cracks him especially quickly.

As always, any other believable attempt to achieve the same ends should succeed, overcoming relevant obstacles as necessary.

Petroff's lab is a sleek, cold affair of ultra-modern chrome, in stark contrast to the rococo splendor of the chateau around it. Its central feature is an enormous telescope. By pulling a lever, he can activate a mechanism in the chateau's outer wall, exposing a porthole-like opening for the telescope to protrude through. Although Petroff refers to it as a radio telescope, it looks exactly like a large astronomical telescope. There is no large receiving dish, for example. However, the end which would normally house the viewing lens instead contains a battery of electrodes. These point at what looks like an electric chair, but with a full helmet attached to a bank of instrument panels.

Petroff and the remaining participants reveal the following:

- Griffin Kemp was Petroff's lab assistant. He was passionately

devoted to the cause of the Pneumametric Society, if a little too concerned with the credit he received for his work. (A character subjecting this statement to **Assess Honesty** suspects that this means he wanted credit for his work, period.)

- The original goal of Petroff's work was not merely to cure mindsick wretches, but to gain cosmic awareness.
- The telescope experiment was meant to beam the knowledge of the spheres directly into the recipient's mind. If Petroff's calculations had been correct, this would have transformed the subject's brain into a new stage of evolutionary development.
- Petroff wanted to test it on himself but the others refused to let him, so Kemp volunteered to take his place.
- Before they conducted the experiment, Kemp and Petroff quarreled over the yield calculation. Kemp claimed Petroff had committed a math error, but Petroff, embarrassed in front of the others, overruled him and commenced the procedure.
- The cosmic ray bombardment seemed to work at first. Kemp leapt from the chair, babbling ecstatically about a planet called Yuggoth. He could see its black spires with his naked eye, he said. Energy creatures from the distant past sang into his ear. Grabbing a piece of chalk, he leapt to a blackboard to lay out a complex equation Petroff has yet to decipher.
- Then Kemp underwent a series of convulsions. He referred to the others as fungus creatures, which he called Mi-Go. Then, merely by pointing at it from across the

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What Kemp Can Do

Kemp exists in the space between realities, but can extend his physical presence into our world at will. He can manipulate objects, including people, by handling them invisibly. To the observer this resembles a classic poltergeist effect. Kemp can invest these manipulations with extreme kinetic force, turning even ordinary objects into devastating weapons.

A limited ability allows him to damage opponents from afar with psychic force. He can shape this into a slashing, blade-like attack or blunt force trauma, as the whim strikes him. To make a successful attack, he must make a Psychic Attack test against a Difficulty of 3, or 4 for player characters with Stability pools of 8 or more. The attack carries a damage bonus of 3. Successful attacks against NPCs typically inflict gruesome damage: fingers snapped backwards, eyes plucked out, and so on. His Psychic Attack points do not refresh in the course of a scenario, so he husbands them carefully, attacking directly with physical objects found on the scene whenever possible.

Because the Non-Euclidean Man does not occupy ordinary space, he is not subject to common means of detecting a merely invisible man. Floorboards don't creak when he walks on them. He leaves no tracks in snow or sand. Paint thrown in his general vicinity merely splashes on the walls behind him.

He is not, however, without limitation. Though he remains essentially invisible, he must partially materialize to manipulate an object or use his psychic attack. This renders him vulnerable to physical attack, if he can be seen. He remains in this state for one round after a manifestation.

His Hit Threshold depends on how effectively his opponent can pinpoint his location.

Condition	Hit Threshold
Location cannot be reasonably pinpointed	16
Kemp has just spoken or chortled	10
Kemp has manipulated a physical object in the last round (or few seconds)	8
Attacker has extraordinary means of detection	3

Kemp can't teleport or be in two places at once. He moves through our space at the same rate as a normal man, on foot. (For long distance travel, he must tag along as an insubstantial stowaway in a vehicle.) He can't come within thirty feet of an Elder Sign. Any damage he suffers from spells or enchanted weapons increases by 3. Finally, sustained exertion of his otherworldly abilities eventually forces him to temporarily dematerialize. He can only perform 7 tests in any given scene, at which point he vanishes. Of the investigators observing him, the one with the highest Sense Trouble rating sees his distortion field twist, shrink, and swirl away. After vanishing in this way, he is unable to perceive or act upon the material world for a six-hour period.

General Abilities: Athletics 48, Health 12, Psychic Attack 8, Scuffling 12, Weapons 30.

Damage: improvised weapon (+4), psychic attack (+2)

chamber he pulled Kingsford's eye from its socket.

- (core) Before he could harm them any further, he was pulled apart, as if by gigantic unseen hands. Kemp was torn into smaller and smaller pieces, until there was nothing left of him but a sprinkle of dust.
- They later analyzed this residue found it to be desiccated, pulverized

human tissue.

When you sense that the steam is about to run out of the interview, let out Kemp's chortle. It builds slowly, then reaches a crazy crescendo.

The character with the highest Sense Danger pool briefly senses a distortion in the air, like a heat ripple, from the direction of the chortle. Just as quickly it fades from sight. This sight occasions

a possible 2-point Stability loss. If the character also has **Medicine**, he deduces that his limited human consciousness is disabling his ability to perceive the transfigured Kemp, because the actual sight would be too strange for ordinary senses to endure.

Petroff tries to run for the only door out of the lab. As he draws near it, he is picked up by an invisible force and hurled across the room. This stops him from

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Shadows Over Filmland



trying any further. He loses no Health points. Anyone checking his reaction sees a mixture of terror and humiliation on his face.

Investigators can't attack Kemp; they can't see where he is. Use their Drives to keep at least some of them in the room for the ensuing interaction and a horrifying murder.

Kemp can be drawn to answer a handful of questions. He is dismissive, sneering, and cruel. The translation of his mind to an interdimensional energy state has irreversibly maddened him. Locked forever in indescribable torment,

revenge is now his only pleasure. As soon as the investigators ask him a question he considers boring (that is, one with no answer given here), he kills Victim Three.

- He is now in a space beyond space, a time between moments, a vortex of madness. He is one with the universe, and the universe is incalculably malign.
- He is killing his former colleagues because he hates them. Because they covered up the means of his death. Because they lured him to his destruction with his naïve

eagerness. Because they are alive.

- Humanity means nothing to him now. From his new perspective, he sees that the homo sapiens is nothing but bacteria with a high self-opinion. He can smell people's souls, and they stink.
- Everything he believed when he was a man is wrong. Knowledge is doom. Blindness is bliss. Science is arrogance.
- Kemp doesn't know what he will do when he finishes killing the men responsible for his suffering. "Maybe I'll kill all of you," he says.
- "H. G. Wells wrote about an invisible man, but I am more than that—the first Non-Euclidean Man!"

Questions about his capabilities or limitations are greeted only with another chortle.

Victim Three

Take the three surviving prospective victims. Eliminate Petroff. Eliminate the character for whom the group seems to show the greatest affection. The one who remains becomes Victim Three.

The electrical equipment in the laboratory shudders suddenly to life, its gears and levers spinning as if activated by an unseen hand. Its sparking antennae twist and contort. Cables unplug themselves, live voltage sending them snaking across the room. Victim Three is lifted from the ground and—unless stopped by Investigator action; see below—is hurled onto the equipment, where his juddering body is horribly electrocuted. The air fills with the disquietingly appetizing smell of sizzling meat.

Intervening investigators are unlikely to succeed and may put themselves in

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danger. A Difficulty 6 Athletics test is necessary to react in time. Then the investigator must try to hold onto the victim, preventing him from being thrown across the room. An Athletics contest ensues; Kemp spends 3 points on each test. However, a character able to keep up with his spending may be able to run out the clock, forcing Kemp to perform seven tests, causing him to temporarily dematerialize (see sidebar.)

It is more likely that Kemp will kill Victim Three. He then tells the appalled onlookers that he'll let them gather their thoughts for a while, and then come back to enjoy their helplessness in the face of his awesome power. His chortle is then heard ebbing away as he departs.



Killing a Ghost

Scene Type: Open-Ended

The mystery now solved, the investigators must now figure out how to destroy or neutralize Griffin Kemp. Kemp, growing bored with the one-sidedness of the challenge, gives them an hour to plan before returning to invisibly spy on them. (Or six hours, if he reached his seven-test limit.)

Characters recalling the elder sign over the library arch might decide to hold their discussions there. He can't get close to the sign, so, provided they speak quietly, they'll be able to plan without his knowledge.

Any suitably creative plan to defeat Kemp should be allowed to work. The most obvious solution is to combine Electrical Repair, **Physics** and some pulpy, pseudoscientific theorizing to modify Petroff's technology into an anti-Kemp device. The Difficulty of the Electrical Repair test depends on its proposed effectiveness.

Device	Difficulty
Is a firearm or other weapon that does normal combat damage to Kemp	3
Allows one character to perceive Kemp	4
Allows all characters to perceive Kemp	5
Contains Kemp in a small area	5
Banishes Kemp to other reality	8
Kills Kemp outright	10

Use the above Difficulties as a guide if players propose slightly different devices. The cannibalization of Petroff's lab yields only enough parts to make one device at a time. The time to create each device equals the Difficulty, in hours.

After moving some parts and equipment, device creation can take place in the library, where, with some clever placement of curtains or other barriers, Kemp is unable to observe or interfere. If they try to make the device in the lab, Kemp appears just as the device is ready and attempts to smash it—ideally killing the next victim as he does so.

Investigators recalling Petroff's witch-hunting ancestor Nicolai might ask if the books of magic he is said to have confiscated are anywhere on the estate. Petroff leads them to a secret bookshelf in the library, revealing a number of nameless handwritten manuscripts, in German. These take an hour to study, provide 1 point of Cthulhu Mythos, and 1 dedicated pool point to Sense Trouble for investigations taking place in the Backlot Gothic setting. Its pages provide partial descriptions of several basic rituals; from

these the reader can cobble together a ritual to create a magical enchantment duplicating any single one of the above device functions. This requires a Stability test against the above Difficulties, and a number of hours equal to the Difficulty.

Regardless of what the Investigators attempt, Kemp tries to kill the last remaining victim other than Petroff sometime during the coming night. This entails a defensive situation, which can be tricky to pace, as roleplayers can be depended on to grind pacing to a halt as they attempt to plan for every possible eventuality. When they start to plan their protection measures, tell them they can accomplish anything reasonable-sounding that they can describe to you after twenty minutes of real time. Then they can either address other tasks, or declare "pencils down", allowing you to move on to the confrontation scene.

Unless forced to dematerialize after his seven test quota expires, Kemp will immediately return to try to thwart any attempt by his targets to flee the chateau.

If it seems fun to extend the pacing, Kemp can decide to kill off loved ones of his designated victims before coming after them. He might target Madame Petroff or, if Walter is still alive, Inga Reicher. On the other hand, savvy Investigators will clear the chateau of all possible victims of opportunity. Investigators who antagonize him, verbally or by blocking his plans, may wind up on the victim list, too.

The final confrontation is largely dictated by your player's actions. They may use the remaining targets as bait to lure Kemp in, and then try to destroy or banish them. Through good play they should be allowed to save their favorite victim. It would be thematically appropriate for Petroff to die in the final struggle with Kemp, expiating his sin of scientific arrogance.

THE BLACK CHATEAU

"YET WHEN I LOOKED FROM THAT HIGHEST OF ALL GABLE WINDOWS ... ONLY THE BLACKNESS OF SPACE ILLIMITABLE; UNIMAGINED SPACE ALIVE WITH MOTION AND MUSIC, AND HAVING NO SEMBLANCE OF ANYTHING ON EARTH."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE MUSIC OF ERICH ZANN"

This adventure pays tribute to Edgar Ulmer's bizarre, Expressionist 1934 film *The Black Cat*, starring Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. Primarily an exercise in psychological stress and horror, it attempts to recreate the dream-like atmospherics of Ulmer's brilliant, uncanny work. Therefore, it uses the players' own imaginations and creativity as the building blocks for the "old, dark house" of the past in which their Investigators find themselves trapped. Should they survive, it can serve as an excellent introductory adventure for an Investigator group. Or, it might simply be one more nightmarish incident in the lives of those who peer into the Abyss.

It works best with four Investigators. If the group is normally larger, the Keeper might hold this scenario in readiness until someone inevitably misses a session; it shouldn't take more than one session to play out. If the group is normally smaller, the Keeper might try inviting a friend to sit in as a guest player. (Failing those options, see the "More or Fewer" box on p. 140) Keepers may want to keep a more than usually careful eye on the Stability burn rate in this scenario, juicing or freezing it as need be. Much of this adventure's tension comes from

the steady erosion of the Investigators' minds and personalities.

Introduction

The Spine

While traveling in darkest Backlot Gothic country, the Investigators survive a **Motor-Coach Crash**, but a storm forces them to take refuge in the **Black Chateau** of the mad architect Adhemar Grau. Here, they find themselves possessed by the spirits of **Four Victims**, people that Grau manipulated and destroyed. Yielding to their psychic invasions and reliving their histories risks madness, but it may point the way toward **Destroying Grau** in his turn.

The Horrible Truth

The mad architect Adhemar Grau is a devotee of Hastur. He has designed his modernist Black House as a monument, a temple to that entity, a fane of despair and desolation. At the same time, he designed a metaphysical Black House: the debasement, desperation, and destruction of four victims over a period of decades. When both his physical and metaphysical Black Houses were

complete, seven years ago, Grau brought the four to his chateau to taunt and derange them into committing suicide, sealing the connection between his chateau and Hastur's own awful realm of Carcosa. Those four spirits now relive their doom whenever Carcosa is tangent to Grau's house, as it is tonight. When such times come around, Grau arranges a convenient accident on the road, luring new hosts for his four ghostly actors into another performance of his deadly play.

Scenes

The Prelude

The scenario begins late at night, with the Investigators traveling by motor-coach through a particularly backwater stretch of Backlot Gothic Europe. If "Black Chateau" is the introductory chapter of a campaign, the players can provide whatever reason they wish for their Investigators' presence on the doomed bus. In an ongoing campaign in the Backlot Gothic setting, this scenario drops neatly into the travel time between other adventures: thanks to the weather, or political turmoil, or a strike, or bandit activity, the direct rail line is closed, and all passengers must transfer to the motor-coach for an overnight trip to the next open station on the line. Alternatively, the Keeper can simply begin *in medias res*:

"The bus jolts over a particularly vile stretch of road, waking you with a start. Fuddled by the long journey, you don't know exactly where you are, and looking out the windows you see only darkness and sheets of rain spreading against the glass. A flash of lightning turns the night sky white, but reveals only muddy hills and gullies cutting the land like postmortem mutilations of a corpse."

The Black Chateau

The dreamlike atmosphere of this scenario makes such a contrived opening more appropriate than it might otherwise seem.

The Motor-Coach Crash

Whether waking from unknowable dreams or grumbling about the ineptitude of Backlot railways, the Investigators are suddenly thrown into the present moment by a sickening “bang” from somewhere, a rapid slide, and a seemingly slow-motion careen into the shallow ravine by the roadside, tumbling the Investigators around the inside of the bus. Each Investigator must make a Difficulty 3 Athletics test or get banged around in the crash for various contusion, sprain, and even fracture damage (-1 modifier). The ideal result of this is no fatalities (except the NPC bus driver, and any other inconvenient passengers) but at least one fairly serious-looking injury for an Investigator. (The injury is optional, but killing an Investigator in the opening hook just shouldn’t happen.) The Investigators are dumped, bruised and perhaps bloody, into a muddy ravine strewn with unidentifiable rusting garbage -- in the middle of the night, in the middle of a howling thunderstorm, in the middle of nowhere.

The Investigators can salvage their luggage from the wreck, less any excessive item of gear the Keeper was particularly looking for a way to deprive them of. Assessing their situation:

Driving or **Mechanical Repair** (as investigative abilities) reveal, among other things, a snapped and twisted axle: the bus is wrecked beyond any possible capacity of repair. A 1-point spend on either ability notes a spiked chain tangled in the coach’s undercarriage and two blown tires; perhaps this accident was no accident.

Outdoorsman tells them that the ravine is filling up with rainwater, and a flash flood can’t be ruled out. A Difficulty

4 Athletics test lets the Investigators get to higher ground; a failure still gets them out, but only after a splashing fall or two into viscous mud.

Once out of the ravine, it takes no abilities whatsoever to notice that the only shelter visible for miles around is a stark black mansion, looming on a ridge about half a mile away. Walking back to the nearest town, or ahead to wherever the bus was going, is a matter of thirty or forty miles, injured in the dark, over bad roads in a thunderstorm. Should logic fail, Investigators with the Artistic Sensitivity or Curiosity Drive will want to check out the mansion, and others may feel a Duty to any injured fellows to get them dry as soon as possible.

Across No-Man’s Land

The walk to the mansion is a rapid-fire series of nightmarish images illuminated by lightning blasts and then wiped out by black sheets of rain. Patches of fog cling to the mounds and well up from sink-holes and craters (former shell-holes) across the Investigators’ field of view.

- Barbed wire left over from the Great War twists across one stretch of hill.
- A sudden slide of earth from the side of a nearby ravine reveals a pile of dismembered skeletons, obviously a mass grave.
- A shift of the wind blows a sharp, chemical scent of pineapple and pepper their way; **Chemistry** (or Great War experience) knows it as chlorine gas. If that fog contains chlorine, leaving the path could be fatal.

The only consolation is that the way is easier than first thought; there is some sort of graveled road – pitted by ponds and split by runoff to be sure -- running in the direction the Investigators are traveling.

- About 150 yards from the house, the Investigators must pick their way across a line of barbed wire tangled with logs and boards (a Difficulty 2 Athletics test to avoid a 1-point injury on the jagged wire). Architecture identifies it as a collapsed gate. A convenient lightning blast reveals a shattered sign reading ‘TVERÖDA KASILDA’ which **Languages: Backlot** translates as “Fort Kasilda.” A 1-point **History** spend recalls that Fort Kasilda was a major chemical weapons depot seized during the War; a 2-point spend recalls that its commander betrayed the fort to the enemy in what became a major postwar scandal.

By this time the Investigators are close enough to the house to pick out details even against the lowering, storm-wracked skies. It is closer to forty feet tall than thirty, but seems to have only three visible stories. Its lines are stark and modern, not the sort of Gothic pile one might expect in this country. **Architecture** (core clue) identifies it at last: it is the “Black Chateau,” the final masterpiece of the architect Adhemar Grau. With a 1-point spend, the Investigator recalls that Grau, a fanatical Modernist and disciple of Le Corbusier, exhibited the plans at various academic shows and conferences for years before he disappeared seven years ago. It was supposedly never built – but here it is. (Hearing this, any Investigator with Artistic Sensitivity, Curiosity, or Thirst For Knowledge as a Drive will very much want to explore further.) Once the players have recognized the house (or once they approach the front doorway), a silvery, actinic light floods simultaneously from all the windows on the ground floor. The house, it seems, has recognized them in turn.



Shadows Over Filmiland

The Black House

The exterior walls of the House are smooth, polished black stone; **Geology** identifies the material as basalt. The enormous double front doors are made of burnished, heavy steel, but swing inward noiselessly as the Investigators approach. A large, impassive man dressed head to toe in black (a tightly buttoned tunic over trousers and soft boots) ushers them inside. His complexion is pallid, almost gray; he wears mirrored spectacles tightly covering his eye sockets; he is completely hairless. He is mute. (**Medicine** identifies his condition; a 1-point spend notes the tiny surgical scars to the throat indicating the operation that made him that way.) He is Grau's manservant Zoltan, and he cannot be influenced by anything the Investigators do: in his own devotion to Hastur, he attempts to become a completely impassive "black box," capable of absorbing all stimuli without reflecting anything. Zoltan will only attack them if they attack him, or if they attempt to leave the House while Grau is alive. If Grau dies or leaves Earth, Zoltan stiffens into final, blessed, permanent immobility.

Zoltan, Servant of a Servant of Hastur

Athletics 9, Firearms 6, Health 10, Scuffling 10, Weapons 6

Alertness Modifier: +3 (his communion with Hastur has attuned him to the House)

Stealth Modifier: +1 (crepe-soled boots)

Weapons: +1 (9mm Luger pistol), +0 (metal baton), -1 (kitchen knife or heavy cut-glass decanter), -2 (fists)

Special: Zoltan only dies at -12 Health; he suffers no ability penalties from any wounds or environmental effects including chlorine.

He will obey Grau to the death; right now, Grau's orders are to get everyone

inside with a minimum of fuss. If an Investigator is injured, Zoltan will usher them through the entry hall and library, and into the drawing room (see below). He will provide wine, bandages, or anything else a good butler might, without needing to be asked. He cannot provide a telephone, as the House has none.

Once the Investigators have all entered the House, and ideally once they have all left the entry hall, Zoltan will close and lock the front doors. The lock is a time lock; the doors cannot be opened until dawn. (This unpleasant fact only

Window, Mirror

If the Keeper wants to emphasize the mutable geometry of the House, this can be an interesting option. However, it can potentially slow down the scenario and distract the players from their situation, trading momentum for atmosphere and weirdness.

Once an Investigator's Stability reaches 0, she can use the right-hand dials to make any mirror or window in the House reveal any other view. For example, an exterior window in the library can look out into the entry hall from the perspective of the mirror below the staircase; the mirror in the drawing room can reflect a view of the outdoors from upstairs, and so forth. Every so often, the view from the windows and mirrors shifts "by itself," showing the Investigators eerie vistas of Carcosa, Grau gloating in his third floor chamber, each other in other rooms, or (if the Keeper needs to feed the players some clues) increasingly revealing scenes from the four victims' last night.

becomes apparent if a character with **Locksmith** or **Mechanical Repair** examines the door mechanism.)

In all the rooms, the interiors are painted matte white; the carpets are some sort of artificial fiber in a complementary gray. The air of the house is warm and very dry; metal gratings for a forced-heating system are set along the walls near the ceiling. (A 1-point **Architecture** spend finds this curious: warm air rises, so heating grates are commonly put at the bottom of the wall.) The windows are thick, polarized glass. (Later experimentation, should it occur, will prove them shatterproof and bulletproof.) An intricate system of recessed lighting can be used to polarize the glass of any given window to opaque black, translucent, mirror-reflective, or transparent. A dashboard set into a burnished steel plate near each window mounts three black Bakelite dials. A modicum of experimentation (or an investigative use of **Electrical Repair**) notes that the two right-most dials seemingly do nothing; the left-hand dial controls the polarization.

Entry Hall

The front doors lead into this two-story room, which is dominated by the staircase leading upstairs. A large, open rectangular doorway leads into the library; on the wall below the staircase is mounted a mirror the size and shape of that doorway.

Upstairs

This floor holds nothing more interesting than a set of four bedroom-bath combination suites. They are all clean and neat, as if made up for expected company. Each bedroom has a large window of its own.

Although the House is obviously three stories high from the outside, there is no immediately visible way to access the

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upper floor. **Architecture** can discover the existence of a counterweighted staircase set flush into the ceiling; activating it from below is impossible.

Library

On one wall of this L-shaped room, high windows look out over the unprepossessing landscape. On the other walls, white metal shelves hold rows of books, mostly on architecture, modern art, and industrial design. (**Library Use** indicates that no books here are newer than seven years old; anyone looking into any of the books will see a bookplate: *Sammlung von Adhemar Grau : Architekt*. This provides the core clue of Grau's identity if no Investigator had any Architecture ability.) Two modernistic metal chairs, neither of them particularly comfortable looking, complete the furnishings. One end of the room opens into the gallery and dining room; a doorway on the other end opens onto the drawing room.

One shelf holds nothing but a sculpted diorite hand; on its ring finger is a thick signet ring. This ring is a **trigger** for Xavier (see below).

Drawing Room

The walls of this smaller room off the library hold (going clockwise from the doorway) an outside window, a large mirror the same size as the window, and an architectural drawing of the House the same size as both the window and the mirror. The drawing is an exterior elevation of the House at night, not a plan or blueprint. **Art: Drawing** (or similar) indicates that this relatively simple drawing is the result of laborious effort. It bears the imprint "Adhemar Grau : Architekt" and is labeled "*Schwarze Wohnung*" (German for "Black Residence") for the benefit of Architecture-free Investigator teams. Anyone looking at the drawing notes that the House sits on the brink of an enormous lake; there is no lake in the area that the Investigators know of,

The King in Yellow

In his earlier years, Grau read this play (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 106), although it conflicted with his stark Modernist sensibilities. At the Keeper's discretion, Grau's copy of *Der König ins Gelb* might be in the library, awaiting a new victim. (If even one line is read, the play requires a Stability test against a Difficulty 5 to avoid reading the entire play.) Putting the play here risks distracting the Investigators (or the one who reads it, anyhow) and tipping off the players to Grau's devotions early on. (Although it might only appear on the shelves after the possessions have begun; it's that kind of book.) That said, it's thematically appropriate for it to nestle here amongst the works of Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Taut, and reading the play only takes an hour. If no Investigator has a spare spot in the Languages ability, Grau's copy can be in English or French (*Le Roi en Jaune*).

An Investigator who reads the play here, or who has already read it, will see the Yellow Sign in a mirror or glass reflection after spending 10 or 15 minutes in the House. The Yellow Sign, a mysterious glyph or portent related to the immanence of Hastur, grants the viewer 2 dedicated pool points to Sense Trouble for Hastur-related phenomena. (In this instance, although the whole House is a fane to Hastur, the most likely specific dangers the Investigators face are mental disintegration and chlorine gas, neither of which are susceptible to Sense Trouble tests.) Seeing the Yellow Sign is a 3-point Stability test. Although the Keeper can have sights of the Sign crop up repeatedly, only the first sighting triggers the test.

That said, if Zoltan is ever alone with an Investigator who has read the play, that Investigator will hear the mute ask him: "Have you seen the Yellow Sign?" That encounter will also trigger a 3-point Stability test; 4-point if the Investigator knows that Zoltan is mute.

If such an Investigator's Stability drops to 1 or below, when he looks out the window, he doesn't see the expected Backlot landscape outside. Rather, he sees a vast black lake underneath a white sky spangled with black stars — the dread landscape of Carcosa. Seeing Carcosa is a 5-point Stability test.

and certainly not one right against the walls of the House. **Architecture** can tell that the House is not oriented to the compass grid, but to some other coordinates. A 1-point **Astronomy** spend notices that in the elevation the house is oriented to the Hyades star cluster in the constellation of Taurus.

The drawing room is furnished with two angular chaise lounges (both white), two more of the chairs from the library, and a white metal sideboard equipped with decanters of wine, brandy, and vodka, as well as a soda siphon, glasses, and a square ice bucket full of ice.

A child's doll (an Antiquarian notes that the doll was expensive, and is about 30 years old) sits on one of the chaises. The doll is a **trigger** for Karin (see below).

Gallery

Another L-shaped room; one end opens onto the library and the dining room. The window in this room is opposite the door (burnished steel) into the bathroom.

A row of four odd negative-image photographs hangs on one wall; each one shows a different building at night. (Hence, the skies are white and the stars

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are black.) **Photography** indicates that the same photographer shot each picture, and that they were lit with great care (or some sort of special filter) to avoid washing out the stars. The buildings are: Savior's Church in Baku, USSR by Adolf Eichler; Magerstadt House in Chicago, Illinois by George W. Maher; Headland Hotel in Newquay, Cornwall by Silvanus Trevail; City Hall in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia by Alexander Wittek. Identifying the buildings requires a 1-point **Architecture** spend or an hour of **Library Use** in the library. With a 2-point **Architecture** spend or a 2-point **Library Use** spend, an Investigator can uncover what these disparate buildings have in common: they were all designed by architects who committed suicide.

The gallery also displays a portrait of a woman looking away from the artist. She is beautiful and haughty, and wears a dress of yellow silk. Any Artist (or a use of **Art History**) will note that its late-Fauvist style conflicts with the Modernist look of the House. It is a **trigger** for Emil (see below).

Bathroom

This is a standard half-bath in the European style, with bidet, toilet, and sink, all on stark Modernist lines. Above the sink, instead of a mirror, there is a handle similar to a faucet handle.

If an Investigator tries to turn it before all four victims have possessed the Investigators, it does not turn. (Grau has an override catch upstairs.)

Once all four Investigators have been possessed (and have thus learned what the handle does) it can be turned easily one way. Turned that way, it opens the chlorine flow into the House from the pump in the sub-basement (see below) through the forced-air vents in all the rooms. It is a one-way handle; once opened, the flow cannot be shut off from here. The flow is strong, and will fill the entire House (except Grau's third

Chlorine Gas

Chlorine is heavier than air; standing on furniture away from the vent will give an Investigator another 5 or 10 minutes of free breathing time.

An Investigator with **First Aid** or **Medicine** (or one with military experience) will know that covering your face with a wet cloth is the best you can do in the absence of gas masks. (If it needs to be said, Preparedness will *not* supply you with a gas mask.) A wet cloth buys 3 minutes (or 3 rounds during combat) of free breathing time for each point in the wearer's Athletics pool (breath control is important).

Once breathing chlorine gas, the Investigator will lose 1 Health every 2 minutes until dead, or 1 Health every round if forced to fight while in the cloud. The Investigator must also roll a die after each 3 points lost; on a result of 1, she is blinded by the gas as her tears turn to hydrochloric acid.

For Kindly Keepers Only

If the Keeper feels like a total party kill is unfair or will wreck her campaign, she can allow a 2-point **Chemistry** spend to compound sodium thiosulfate by boiling water with sodium sulfite (found in the preserving and canning supplies in the basement) and sulfur (obtained by breaking the heads off every match in the house). Alternately, a 1-point Chemistry or 2-point **Photography** spend will remember that photographic fixer is dilute sodium thiosulfate; an Investigator with Photography and **Preparedness** might have a tin of it in his camera kit.

This compound bonds with chlorine chemically; enough can be made (or found) to clear out the chlorine in the downstairs bathroom or any of the upstairs suites (the only rooms in the house with a door). Keeping the room clear requires a **Mechanical Repair** test at Difficulty 4 to seal off the heating grate, and wet towels continuously stuffed under the door crack. If he is still active, Zoltan will try to batter the door open, of course.

floor retreat) within 60 minutes. The air in the House takes on a greenish-yellow tinge as it fills with chlorine, which **Chemistry** will note means a very high concentration of chlorine in the air.

If the Investigators try to break off the handle, it requires a **Mechanical Repair** test at Difficulty 6 to avoid opening the vent during the attempt.

Dining Room

The end of this L-shaped room opens onto the gallery and library. There is another sideboard in this end as well, stocked with wines. The polished ebony dining table runs the length of the L; the

chairs here are black-lacquered metal. On opposite sides of the table are a tall window and the doorway to the kitchen.

At the far end of the table, an officer's sword from the Great War hangs on the wall. It is a **trigger** for Reinhard (see below).

Kitchen

This thoroughly modern kitchen has an electric range, refrigerator, and other up-to-date conveniences. It also sports the standard complement of knives and utensils; the food stocks, by contrast, are scanty and bland. It has a window and a

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steel door; if opened (with **Locksmith**) it gives onto a staircase running down to the basement.

The Basement

Surprisingly clutter-free, the basement is notable for two features. First, the exceptionally large and peculiar forced-heater built into the floor. **Mechanical Repair** notes a system of wheels and stop-cocks that appear to over-control the mechanism; it's as though there are two parallel ventilation systems in the House. The heater also extends through the floor; it looks more like the upper section of a much larger chamber than a complete apparatus.

The other unusual feature of the basement is that the floor is smooth black glass mounted between metal girders. **Evidence Collection**, **Mechanical Repair**, or **Electrical Repair** (give it to a player who hasn't had spotlight time if nobody explicitly searches) will find a control panel set into the wall, just like the ones on the windows upstairs.

Twisting the knobs produces nothing until suddenly the floor becomes completely transparent, revealing an immense, brightly lit chamber below the basement.

This chamber is at least 20 feet deep, and rather larger than the House; its

walls appear with **Architecture** to be pre-stressed concrete, not smoothed stone. A 1-point spend identifies it as a Great War-era bunker, obviously once part of Fort Kasilda. It holds a mound of skeletons piled around the bottom of the "heater" apparatus. The lower skeletons are wearing Great War uniforms; a

Using Cthulhu Mythos

The use of **Cthulhu Mythos** after investigating the House confirms that the Black Chateau is a fane to, or embodiment of, or focus for, Hastur. Grau is obviously therefore a cultist, devotee, or sufferer of Hastur. After the four victims have started possessing the Investigators, Cthulhu Mythos will also note that the House and its foundations extend into the metaphysical realm of despair itself; it may (if the Investigator has read *The King in Yellow*, the *Celaeno Fragments*, or any other Hastur-related tome) even identify the realm as Carcosa, where black stars burn in a white sky by the desolate Lake of Hali.

On the bright side, this local manifestation of Hastur in a deserted battlefield in a Backlot backwater of Europe does not particularly threaten anyone except occasional unfortunate passersby. Unless the campaign has Hastur and its spread as an ongoing leitmotiv, or the Investigator has aesthetics or artistic principles as a Pillar of Sanity, using Cthulhu Mythos in this scenario only imposes a loss of 2 points to the Investigator's Stability pool.

scattering of skeletons on top wear civilian garb. One of the skeletons is clad in a bright yellow dress tattered but recognizable from the portrait in the gallery.

With a good view of the entire apparatus (and of the fading red KFOR and GAZ warning labels on the walls and tanks), **Mechanical Repair** can recognize it as a compression, storage, and distribution tank-and-pump system for chlorine gas. There is no immediate way to access this sub-cellar from inside the House. (Grau and Zoltan used a secret passage from outside to dump the four victims' bodies there, and those of any other strangers who have been lured into the House in the seven years since then.)

Seeing the gas tanks and skeletons is a 3-point Stability test, and a **trigger** for all four spirits.



The Four Spirits

Over a period of decades, Adhemar Grau planned and completed the destruction of four people. Their despair, a crucial buttress of his metaphysical Black House, culminated seven years ago when Grau invited them all to his new Chateau, revealed his work, and drove them to suicide. The ghosts of these four victims remain imprinted on the House, and the weight of their psychic agonies invades the Investigators, causing flashbacks, personality displacement, and eventually total identification. If it goes too far, the Investigator-victims will re-enact their suicide, further strengthening Grau's occult design.

The four spirits are:

Emil

An ambitious, starving artist, Emil was consumed by obsessive, unrequited love for the cruel, haughty, high-society courtesan Karin. In order to move in her circle, he blackmailed the aristocratic politician Xavier, who he discovered was secretly guilty of treason. Once he destroyed Xavier, however, he no longer had the income to move in Karin's circle and she rejected him scornfully.

Karin

A young, innocent girl from a bourgeois family, Karin was debauched by the soldier Reinhard (either seduced and abandoned, or simply raped) and became a street whore. After the War, she managed to claw her way into high-society life as a fashionable courtesan. She felt only contempt and disgust for the social-climbing Emil and his foolish love for her, and told him so when he ran out of funds.

Reinhard

While a young buck officer, Reinhard debauched Karin. During the War, he fought in the trenches and then became a high-ranking officer at Fort Kasilda. The aristocratic politician Xavier betrayed the fort to the enemy, and framed Reinhard for treason. Reinhard went from a POW camp to imprisonment for treason, only being released when Xavier fell from power.

Xavier

The scion of an aristocratic family of politicians, Xavier betrayed Fort Kasilda to the enemy during the War and framed Reinhard for the crime. Between the scandal and the payoff, Xavier was able to rise in office. His new prominence put him in Emil's sights; Emil found out about the betrayal of Fort Kasilda and blackmailed Xavier for years. Finally bankrupt, Xavier was unable to maintain his political fortunes and resigned in disgrace.

More or Fewer

If there are only three Investigators, remove Karin. In the three-person circle, Reinhard humiliated, brutalized, and emasculated Emil when he had him under his command before the War, or before taking command at Fort Kasilda. The Keeper will need to alter the questions to suit this new structure, and possibly remove one suite from the upstairs and one photograph from the gallery.

If there are five Investigators, Zoltan also died; the extra Investigator is possessed by Zoltan. (If an Investigator has already read *The King in Yellow*, or reads a copy in Grau's library, he's the one that Zoltan is drawn into.) Zoltan remains devoted to Hastur, and works to drive the other four into their possessed personae. Rather than flashbacks, Zoltan's possession consists of leaving his host unable to speak; the Keeper may also wish to improvise hallucinations, the Yellow Sign, and similar nightmarish effects. At the Keeper's discretion, Zoltan might resent Grau, and as he gains more control over his host, attempt to draw Hastur's attention himself per the "Invitation to a God" section below.

Visions of Despair

The four victims' psychic invasion takes the form of visions, mediumistic flashbacks to emotional trauma in the victim's life. Grau engineered many of those traumas, and the framework of despair he built eventually draws all the victims' visions onto it.

Each victim "possesses" a single Investigator; the Keeper can select the

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specific host in any way she chooses:

- **Personality:** Victims are drawn to Investigators with similar personalities: a dramatic, melancholic type attracts Emil; a self-satisfied, egotistical type attracts Karin; a violent, choleric type attracts Reinhard; a pompous, stuffy type attracts Xavier.
- **Drive:** Victims are drawn to Investigators with similar or complementary Drives: Emil battens on those with Artistic Sensitivity, Ennui, or an obsessive Thirst for Knowledge; Karin on those with Bad Luck, Curiosity, or Revenge; Reinhard on those with Adventure, Arrogance, Duty, or Follower; Xavier on those with Antiquarianism, Arrogance, or In the Blood.
- **Occupation or Ability:** Victims are drawn to Investigators with similar occupations or abilities: Emil seeks out an artist or those with high Art or Art History pools; Karin seeks out a dilettante (especially of the social butterfly sort) or those with high Flattery pools; Reinhard seeks out an Investigator with a military occupation or a high Firearms or Weapons pool; Xavier seeks out an Investigator with a high Bureaucracy pool, or (failing any titled aristocrats in the party) the more politically-active sort of dilettante, an antiquarian interested in family history, or a professor who highly values tenure and reputation.
- **Trigger Objects:** Grau collected a specific trigger item for each of the four victims (Emil's portrait of Karin, Karin's favorite childhood doll, Reinhard's sword, and Xavier's signet ring) when he initially designed the Black House. The victim's ghost possesses the

first Investigator to touch or closely examine their trigger item.

- **Location:** The Keeper might simply have the spirits flow into Investigators who separate from the group; each Investigator succumbs to possession when he is first alone in any room. (The Keeper might have spooky noises or poltergeist phenomena draw off Investigators to create just such opportunities.) A further refinement of this method would

Torture Your Friend

Optionally, the Keeper could ask another player to describe the necessary flashbacks for a possessed Investigator, as follows:

- The player of the Investigator possessed by Xavier describes the torments of Emil.
- The player of the Investigator possessed by Emil describes the torments of Karin.
- The player of the Investigator possessed by Karin describes the torments of Reinhard.
- The player of the Investigator possessed by Reinhard describes the torments of Xavier.

What this method loses in player identification with their Investigator's possessor it might gain in detail and cruelty of the flashbacks. This option will likely work best with groups that have both a high tolerance for character pain and a willingness to surrender individual character agency. Of course, both traits may be more common in *Trail of Cthulhu* players than in those of other games.

depend on the specific room: Emil possesses the first Investigator alone in the gallery; Karin the drawing room; Reinhard the dining room; Xavier the library.

- **Randomly:** The Keeper might sprinkle the possessions randomly through the opening acts of the adventure to suit her sense of drama, to increase spotlight time for a player, or for any other reason.

The first possession is essentially the same for all four victims: the victim (and hence, the Investigator) relives the moment of their despair and death in the House seven years ago. The Keeper should paraphrase the description for each death-vision below.

After that initial Keeper-driven vision, each time a new vision is triggered for an Investigator, the Keeper asks the player of that Investigator to describe the specific events of the scene recalled from the victim's life. The player should give the answer in the form of a narrated scene, description of a memory or event, or other dramatic element. A series of questions intended to set up such flashbacks appears under each of the victim entries below. The Keeper should encourage the player to wax eloquent and even melodramatic in their descriptions, prodding for extra detail if the vision seems flat or bald. Keepers blessed with more time to run this scenario, or with players comfortable with melodrama, may want to turn these flashback visions into directed scenes, as described in *Fear Itself*.

During a flashback, the Investigator rants, sobs, or gasps out the details, but cannot use any ability pools. Regardless of its subjective length, the flashback takes a few minutes if it occurs out of combat, or two rounds if it occurs in combat.

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Emil

"YOU'RE IN FRONT OF THE PORTRAIT, OF COURSE. GAZING AT IT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS; YOU HAD TO SELL IT TO SEE HER AGAIN IN THE FLESH. NOW HERE IT IS, AND YOU'RE UNSURPRISED SOMEHOW. YOU INHALE A GREAT LUNGFUL OF GAS; ITS SCENT SEEMS TO CLARIFY AND REVIVE YOUR ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY. THE WHOLE THING IS A DESIGN, A PORTRAIT. YOU WILL DIE CHOKING IN AGONY; EVEN NOW YOUR THROAT CLOSSES AND YOU ALMOST VOMIT BUT SINK TO YOUR KNEES. YOU CHOKE, YOUR LUNGS SEEM SWOLLEN SHUT, BUT FINALLY YOU AND KARIN WILL BE TOGETHER. SHE CANNOT REJECT YOU AGAIN WHEN YOU ARE BOTH DEAD."

After Emil's first possession, he impresses himself upon his host Investigator under any of the following stimuli: seeing the trigger portrait, the portrait's destruction, seeing the skeletons in the sub-cellar, seeing the Investigator possessed by Karin, being asked a question about Emil, being left alone in the gallery, using Art or Art History, the smell of chlorine or paint or turpentine, physical or emotional trauma (such as being attacked or wounded in combat), whenever the player should get spotlight time, or any other stimulus the Keeper considers dramatically appropriate.

Subsequent flashbacks include:

- "Which of your paintings told the world the most about you? Why did it not sell?"
- "Describe your worst memory of Karin's cruel rejection of your love."
- "When in your career did you stop believing in your art?"
- "Describe your first meeting with Adhemar Grau, and the piece that attracted his attention to you."
- "Describe your first suicide attempt. What did your note to Karin say?"
- "Describe the moment you decided

to blackmail Xavier; was it personal, or did you just need the money? Recall the way Xavier grovelled to you."

- "Describe the social event where Grau introduced you to the courtesan Karin."
- "Describe your meeting with Grau at which he gave you the proof that Xavier was a traitor. What did you ask of Grau first?"

Karin

"YOU SMELL SOMETHING SHARP AND THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE DRAWING ROOM SEEM TO GO AS FLAT AS THAT DRAWING. ARE THE OTHERS HERE? IT SEEMS LIKE THEY WERE. IT'S LIKE WATCHING A PLAY, OR A DANCE. MAYBE YOU NEED TO GO LIE DOWN ON THE CHAISE. EVEN LYING DOWN DOESN'T HELP; YOU'RE CHOKING AND YOU CAN FEEL YOUR EYES AND SKIN ROUGHEN AND BURN. AT LEAST THAT BASTARD REINHARD WILL DIE, TOO. HE MADE YOU WHAT YOU ARE, BUT THAT SCUM WON'T LIVE TO BRAG ABOUT IT AGAIN."

After Karin's first possession, she impresses herself upon her host Investigator under any of the following stimuli: seeing or handling the trigger doll, the doll's destruction, seeing the skeletons in the sub-cellar, seeing the Investigator possessed by Reinhard, being asked a question about Karin, being left alone in the drawing room, using any Interpersonal ability, the smell of chlorine or perfume, physical or emotional trauma (such as being attacked or wounded in combat), whenever the player should get spotlight time, or any other stimulus the Keeper considers dramatically appropriate.

Subsequent flashbacks include:

- "Describe your worst memory of life on the streets as a whore."
- "Describe meeting Reinhard, and

why you went off alone with him."

(It's up to the player whether Reinhard seduced, debauched, and abandoned Karin, or simply raped her. In most groups, a flashback to a rape will be too sensitive to describe; the Keeper should use her best judgment to guide the episode while still making sure everyone knows what transpired between Reinhard and Karin, and that Reinhard was scum.)

- "Describe your entrée into the postwar salons. Who did you use to get it?"
- "Who was the first person you consciously destroyed? How?"
- "Elaborate on your contempt for Emil. Would he have been worth torturing even if Adhemar Grau hadn't paid you for his pain?"
- "Recall the one time your parents met Grau, before you had to leave their house. What do you suppose they wanted from him? What do you suppose they got?"
- "Describe the social event at which Grau introduced you to the weakling arriviste artist Emil." (This should come after Emil's flashback to the same event.)

Reinhard

"AS YOU TURN THE HANDLE IN THE BATHROOM, YOU HEAR THE HISSING BEGIN, JUST AS YOU THOUGHT. YOU RECOGNIZE THE SMELL OF CHLORINE GAS INSTANTLY, OF COURSE. YOU SMELLED IT OFTEN ENOUGH, ON THIS VERY SPOT DURING THE WAR. IT'S ALL VERY NEAT; A PERFECT DOUBLE-ENVELOPMENT MANEUVER. PERHAPS TURNING THE HANDLE SOME MORE WILL OPEN THE PIPES EVEN WIDER, AND YOU'LL SIMPLY CHOKE AND DIE BEFORE YOU VOMIT YOUR LUNGS OUT. AS LONG AS THAT TRAITOR XAVIER VOMITS HIS LUNGS OUT FIRST. THEN YOU'LL HAVE SERVED YOUR COUNTRY, EVEN IF IT HAS

The Black Chateau

Four Victims Timeline

This timeline is intended to provide the Keeper with a blueprint of Grau's machinations. The present day is arbitrarily set at 1934; if the campaign has a different "present," change the asterisked dates to correspond to the correct year. (Keepers can also alter the interval between the original death of the four and the present day.) Birth years of the four are sheer suggestion; player flashbacks may change this freely. If a player flashback contradicts this timeline, most of these dates can slide around a bit, with the obvious exception of the Great War.

1865? Xavier born.

1880? Grau born.

1885? Reinhard born.

1900? Karin born. Emil born.

1905: Grau becomes a devotee of Hastur; begins planning the Black Chateau.

1913: Reinhard debauches the youthful Karin; she is forced into whoredom.

1917: Xavier betrays Fort Kasilda to the enemy and pins the blame on Reinhard, who is taken prisoner.

1919: Reinhard is freed from the POW camp, but imprisoned for treason. In the postwar decadence, Karin becomes a high-society courtesan. Grau buys the ruined site of Fort Kasilda.

1923: Emil becomes obsessed with Karin, who rejects him.

1925: Emil begins blackmailing Xavier. Grau begins construction of the Black Chateau.

***1926:** Xavier is completely bankrupted by Emil and loses his political position, Reinhard is released from prison.

***1927:** The four arrive at the just-completed Black Chateau; Grau gloats over their misery and they commit suicide by chlorine inhalation, completing the metaphysical Black House and consecrating the fane to Hastur.

***1934:** The present day.

CRUSHED YOU UNDER ITS HEEL."

After Reinhard's first possession, he impresses himself upon his host Investigator under any of the following stimuli: seeing or handling the trigger sword, damage or disrespect to the sword, seeing the skeletons in the sub-cellar, seeing the Investigator possessed by Xavier, being asked a question about Reinhard, being left alone in the dining room or bathroom, using Intimidation or any combat ability, the smell of chlorine or gunpowder,

physical or emotional trauma (such as being attacked or wounded in combat), whenever the player should get spotlight time, or any other stimulus the Keeper considers dramatically appropriate.

Subsequent Reinhard flashbacks include:

- "Describe your most vivid memory of the Great War."
- "Whom did you step on or backstab to get the plum

assignment at Fort Kasilda?"

- "How did Xavier betray Fort Kasilda? How did he make you appear responsible? Describe the enemy attack."
- "When did you stop seeing the men under your command as human?"
- "Describe meeting Adhemar Grau in the café before the War; what did he tell you about the girl Karin?"
- "Recall your most vivid memory of winter in the enemy POW camp."
- "Why did you tire of Karin?" (This should come after Karin's flashback to meeting Reinhard if he merely seduced and abandoned her; if Reinhard raped Karin, the Keeper may not want to invite a flashback from Reinhard's perspective of the event.)
- "Remember the most shattering experience in the prison that you came home to after the War."

Xavier

"YOU SMELL SOMETHING SHARP; NOT FOUL, EXACTLY, BUT DANGEROUS. YOUR EYES WATER, YOU START TO CHOKE. PERHAPS IT'S THE GAS; PERHAPS THAT WAS THE SCHEME ALL ALONG. YOU CAN BARELY SEE; BREATHING IS PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT. BUT IT'S THE GAS CHOKING YOU, NOT THAT FOUL SNAKE EMIL. HE'S PROBABLY CHOKING TO DEATH, TOO; BOTH OF YOU CAUGHT IN SOMETHING BIGGER. GOD, IT HURTS. HURTS YOUR LUNGS. CAN'T SEE TO READ, CAN'T SEE IF EMIL IS STILL HERE. BUT HE'S CHOKING. THAT'S WHAT MATTERS."

After Xavier's first possession, he impresses himself upon his host Investigator under any of the following stimuli: seeing or handling the trigger ring, damage or disrespect to the ring, seeing the skeletons in the sub-cellar,

Shadows Over Filmiland

seeing the Investigator possessed by Emil, being asked a question about Xavier, being left alone in the library, using History, the smell of chlorine or wine, physical or emotional trauma (such as being attacked or wounded in combat), whenever the player should get spotlight time, or any other stimulus the Keeper considers dramatically appropriate.

Subsequent Xavier flashbacks include:

Name Triggers

A Keeper who wishes to accentuate the Modernistic, machine-like nature of Grau's madness (or of Grau's conception of Hastur, assuming there's any difference) can trigger flashbacks at predetermined intervals instead of by other methods. (Obviously, the first flashback happens without any names being spoken.) For each victim, the Keeper rolls a die and adds 3 to the result. Each time any player speaks that victim's name, the Keeper makes a surreptitious check-mark by that name; when the check-marks equal the modified die result, that victim once more possesses their host. The Keeper then rolls again to establish a new trigger level; she may want to start lowering the triggers across the board as players catch on to ratchet up the tension.

For example, the Keeper begins by rolling 4, 2, 3, 5. She writes down Emil 7, Karin 5, Reinhard 6, Xavier 8. Karin's ghost will possess her host Investigator once her name has been spoken 5 times. After that possession, the Keeper rolls a 6; Karin won't reappear until her name is spoken 9 more times.

- "Remember your first day as a Cabinet minister. Who did you reward? At whose expense?"
- "Why did you betray Fort Kasilda to the enemy? What did you get out of the deal?"
- "What was the worst single loss that Emil's blackmail drained from you? Describe the meeting with Emil that day."
- "Which of your political rivals took revenge on you when you fell from power last year? How? For which of your acts were they revenged?"
- "What was the first political favor that Adhemar Grau did for you? How did you think he

Hypnosis

An Investigator with Hypnosis can get another Investigator to recall a specific event in his possessor's life with a Difficulty 4 test. Recalling the event under hypnosis does not reduce the Stability cost, if any, of the flashback.

Attempting to erect a "mental block" in another Investigator against being possessed is a Difficulty 5 test of Hypnosis. An Investigator with such a mental block can make a Difficulty 4 Stability test to avoid suffering another flashback when presented with a trigger stimulus. However, the first time he fails and suffers a flashback, the vision causes a 4-point Stability test instead of a 3-point test. An alienist can erect further mental blocks, but each one that collapses increases the potential loss from a flashback by 1 more point.

accomplished it at the time?"

- "When did Emil tell you he had learned your secret? What did you offer him for his silence?" (This should come after Emil's flashback to the same event, above.)
- "Did you hate Reinhard, or was pinning the blame on him merely a convenient ploy? When did Grau first suggest it?"

The first death vision causes a 4-point Stability test; subsequent visions cause 3-point Stability tests. These values are slightly higher than similar examples in the corebook for two reasons: Grau's Mansion amplifies the individuality-corroding nature of these episodes, and the scenario depends on a relatively rapid downward Stability spiral to maintain tension.

An Investigator with Psychoanalysis can use psychological triage to snap another Investigator out of possession after the first incident ... until the next trigger.

Into Madness

As the four victims' personalities merge with their host Investigators, the Investigators' own individualities erode. Slowly, they succumb to the power of the Black Chateau and to their possessors' despair. As the Investigators' Stability drops, the Keeper should encourage them to take on the personality traits of their haunter. The Investigator possessed by Emil becomes increasingly self-pitying, dramatic, and jealous; Karin makes her Investigator increasingly self-absorbed, haughty, petty, cruel, and vindictive; Reinhard drives his Investigator toward violent outbursts of temper, vainglory, and black manic-depression; Xavier's Investigator becomes prone to manipulative, condescending, and paranoid behavior.

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When an Investigator's Stability reaches 2, he sees only his possessor instead of himself in the mirror.

When an Investigator's Stability reaches 0, she makes a Sense Trouble test at Difficulty 4. If she fails, she merely has a strong sense of being watched. If she succeeds, she sees a man watching from behind the mirror, or reflected in the window; thanks to her possessor's memories, she recognizes the man as Adhemar Grau, and the room behind him as his study on the third floor. She also loses 1 rating point of Sanity; exposure to the Black Chateau is a Mythos shock.

When an Investigator's Stability reaches -1, he can see other Investigators only as their respective possessors.

Once an Investigator's Stability reaches -6, she loses another rating point of Sanity and her possessor takes over. Emil will engage Karin's host in a whining diatribe, pleading for love; Karin will flee Reinhard's host or attempt to wheedle other Investigators into killing him; Reinhard will strike out physically and try to kill Xavier's host with his fists (or his sword, if he still has it); Xavier will alternate between groveling fear and vituperation toward everybody, but especially Emil.

Once an Investigator's Stability reaches -12, he will open the chlorine vent using the handle in the bathroom unless he is forcibly restrained or killed.

The Chateau Defeated

Derailing Grau's blueprint can come about in a number of ways, some of them more costly than others. Zoltan will interfere (eventually violently) with any attempt to evade the coming of Hastur and despair, of course.

- A **Chemistry** spend will let an Investigator create hydrochloric

acid (damage +1) from chlorine, an exposed electrical wire, and water. This requires opening the vent to get chlorine, unfortunately; it takes 30 minutes, minus 3 minutes for each point in the Investigator's Chemistry pool. Multiple Investigators can contribute Chemistry pool points to this effort; each assistant point contributed after the first likewise reduces the time by 3 minutes. With this acid, some clay from an artist's kit or wet bread from the kitchen, and a Mechanical Repair test at Difficulty 4, an Investigator can burn through the second-floor ceiling and into Grau's study in 30 minutes, or through a girder in the basement floor enough to loosen a glass pane and get into the sub-cellar in 20 minutes. (Like the glass bottles used to hold hydrochloric acid in the laboratory, the glass in the floor and windows are treated to be acid-resistant.)

- An Investigator can combine ammonia (in cleansers in the kitchen) and chlorine, or chlorine and grease (lard from the kitchen or lubricant from the basement) into **Explosives**. Mixing the explosives safely is a Difficulty 4 test. It takes 30 minutes, minus 5 minutes for each additional degree of Difficulty the Investigator accepts. (For example, the Investigator could try to mix up a grease bomb in 20 minutes at Difficulty 6.) Setting the charges and then blowing open the ceiling door or sub-cellar floor is a Difficulty 4 test. Blowing open the thick steel front doors without a shaped charge is a Difficulty 8 test, as the explosives expert will know. A failure either on mixing or setting the charges sets off the explosion, doing +7 damage to any Investigators at point-blank (likely the Explosives expert at least), and +4 at close range. A failure by 1

while setting the charges still blows open the door or floor; this may console the survivors. Investigators can cooperate to mix, but not to set, these explosives.

- If the Investigators can get access to the sub-cellar, they can rig the chlorine tank to build up enough pressure in the House's ventilation system that it blows the House and Grau sky high. Working hip-deep in skeletons is obviously a trigger event for the victims, and may instigate an additional 4-point Stability test on its own merits. Blowing up the chlorine system requires a **Mechanical Repair** test at Difficulty 5; doing so without flooding the sub-cellar with high-pressure chlorine in the process increases the Difficulty to 7. (An alternative method, as either a 1-point **Chemistry** spend or **Explosives** will note, is pouring ammonia into the tank to create a pressure bomb; this requires an Explosives test at Difficulty 4 and a Mechanical Repair test at Difficulty 4.) The explosion does a die of damage +3 to everyone in the sub-cellar when it happens, but it does demolish Grau and the House. Surviving Investigators can then crawl out of the smoldering crater and spend a horrible night wading through dilute hydrochloric acid for one die of damage each.
- A kindly Keeper may also allow Investigators in the sub-cellar to find a case of gas masks (each provides 12 hours of protection from chlorine) with **Evidence Collection**, or the other end of the secret passage to the outside with **Architecture**. Fleeing the House across a hellish blend of Carcosa and Backlot No-Man's Land is horrific (5-point Stability test; Difficulty 4 Athletics test to avoid 3 Health damage from

falling into shell craters, chlorine pools, and such) but survivable by morning.

Confronting Grau

If the Investigators get access to Grau's room on the third floor, they can attack Grau himself and hope that killing him breaks the keystone of the House. They cannot surprise the supernaturally aware Grau: When they emerge through the wrecked door in his floor, he is holding a Luger pistol trained on them. (See p. 65 of *Trail of Cthulhu* for the ugly consequences of rushing a man with a gun trained on you.) Every Investigator must make a Difficulty 4 Stability test to avoid the sight of Grau triggering an immediate possession. He will not shoot them unless they attack; he prefers to menace them back downstairs to continue their disintegration.

- Besides a gun-toting mad architect, Grau's chamber contains only a bed and a drafting table covered with designs. If the Keeper wants to plant a resource tome here, Grau can have the traditional shelf of horrible volumes.
- The other way to get at Grau is to lure him downstairs. Once the Investigators realize that Grau is watching them, they can taunt him into coming down. **Assess Honesty** clearly indicates that Grau is supremely overconfident, with plenty of psychological weak spots. If something specific has emerged in the flashbacks, the Investigators can use it. Otherwise, an Investigator with **Psychoanalysis**, **Oral History**, or **Reassurance** can get some leverage on Grau from a possessed Investigator. Using that leverage requires an ability spend by the Investigator. For example: Using **Art History** or **Architecture**, and information from Emil,

Option: Possession Points

The Keeper can offer further incentives to players who get into the spirit of the scenario. For each flashback in which the player contributes something really horrible or brilliant, shows good roleplaying, or otherwise goes above and beyond, give that player 1 Possession Point. The Keeper should tell the player why he got the point, and say that it's a reward. For every in-character argument between two Investigators over their own shared past, the Keeper should add 1 Possession Point in secret to each Investigator's stock.

Once the players have gone through most of their flashbacks and settled on a plan to stop Grau, the Keeper tells each player that Possession Points can be converted at any time (on a one-for-one basis) to refresh point pools for any ability except Stability. She then reveals each player's total, and stops handing out Possession Points.

someone can mock Grau's terrible draftsmanship – like Gropius, Grau can't actually draw very well – or refer to a specific humiliation at a Bauhaus show in 1920. Karin can provide ammunition for an Investigator to use **Intimidation** (or reverse **Flattery**) to discuss Grau's obvious failings as a man and lover, etc. Reinhard might provide evidence of Grau's cowardice, or Xavier of Grau's hopelessly bourgeois family background, for similar japes. Once the Investigators have spent 6 combined pool points on taunts, Grau comes downstairs to teach them the error of their ways.

Adhemar Grau, Architect of Hastur

Athletics 5, Firearms 4, Fleeing 8, Health 10, Intimidation 4, Scuffling 6

Alertness Modifier: +3
(his communion with Hastur has attuned him to the House)

Weapons: +1 (9mm Luger pistol), -2 (fists; being attacked by Grau triggers a possession in any Investigator hit)

Special: Instead of a combat action, Grau can spend an Intimidation point to taunt one of his four victims into triggering a possession. In a very Pulp, Derlethian game, Grau can blow his Fleeing and 2 combat rounds to summon a byakhee to help him to either kill the Investigators or to escape.

Invitation to a God

- Finally, the Investigators might decide to beat Grau at his own game and produce their own monument to Hastur, their own dream of Carcosa. Tangent to the House at two points, Carcosa will disincorporate the Chateau entirely when it manifests, leaving Grau and the Investigators in arm's reach of each other in Carcosa. (This is the "solution" that **Cthulhu Mythos** will suggest; the Investigators may also Call Hastur outright if they know that spell – its Inertia here is 4.) Invoking Hastur in this fashion requires a combination of 6 points of **Art** and **Occult** spends, and an hour to paint a horrific mural of despair, compose and sing a hymn of misery, perform a drama of ennui, etc. The Occult spends encourage the Investigators to

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Black Chateau

take the components of Grau's House (the photographs, the trigger items, etc.) and incorporate them into the art. Performing or creating such an invocation costs 5 Stability from the lead artisan and 4 from the others. If there is a copy of *The King in Yellow* available to the Investigators, performing that play requires only a 1-point spend from any Art pool, but costs the same amount of Stability given above for an artistic ritual.

- If the players are mad enough to do this, the manifestation of Hastur as the King in Yellow disincorporates the House, just as predicted. The immanence of Hastur causes a Stability test at Difficulty 5; failure costs 7 Stability and 1 Sanity pool points, success costs only 1 of each.
- Killing the ecstatic Grau or the completely sessile Zoltan in Carcosa is trivial, costing only the 5-point Stability test for cold-blooded murder. Anything else in Carcosa is up to the Keeper.

Come the Dawn

Assuming Grau is defeated without blowing up the House, the adventure has two possible end scenes following the final confrontation.

Nightmare

Any Investigators not permanently insane at the end of all this suddenly wake up on the bus at dawn when it arrives at their original destination. There was no crash, and no Black Chateau, save in their dreams. Permanently insane Investigators are simply gone as if they never were; the survivors' memories of them fading like a dream as the daylight strengthens. But if the Investigators found a copy of *The King in Yellow* in the house, it turns up in their luggage, complete with Grau's bookplate ...

Ordeal

Time itself has come unhinged; the windows reveal the stuttering, accelerated rising of the sun. The front doors unlock and swing open. As the Investigators step out onto

the blasted (but blessedly terrestrial) landscape around them, the Chateau groans and collapses in upon itself, as though its supporting foundation shafts had suddenly disintegrated. Its walls and glass slide and tumble into the eroded sub-basements beneath Fort Kasilda, leaving only a stagnant tarn of hydrochloric acid behind. Its outline looks like the Lake of Hali from Grau's drawing.

Refreshing Sanity

In a Pulp campaign, killing Grau and seeing his House destroyed refreshes 1 pool point of Sanity.



UNDER A WEREWOLF MOON

"THAT PREYING WOLF IN MY BODY -- YOU OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN THE DIFFERENCE!"

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE THING ON THE DOORSTEP"

After the sanity-scorching rigors of a previous scenario in the Backlot Gothic setting, the Investigators go to a luxury spa to recuperate.

Introduction

The Hook

It is not long, however, before their peace of mind is challenged—first by talk of a local werewolf legend, and then by a gruesome murder.

The Spine

In **Spa Life**, the heroes meet the cast of characters before the horrors begin. **The Werewolf Of Reisbaden** introduces the area's local legend of lycanthropy. In **Ravaged**, the first victim is found; **Second Victim: Helga** increases the stakes with another attack. An encounter with **The Mad Midwife** sends the group toward **The Unquiet Grave Of Count Friedrich Braak**, where they begin to sense an unpleasant connection between the possible villain of the piece and one of their own. An interview with **The Repentant Hangman** leads them to a final confrontation in **The Ice Caves**.

The Horrible Truth

The investigators realize that all clues point to one of their own, hereafter referred to as the lycanthrope, as the werewolf killer. In fact, his true form makes a mere werewolf seem quaint. His true parent, on his human side, is a necromancer, the supposedly deceased Count Friedrich Braak. Proximity to the site of the awful ritual that led to his conception has triggered the lycanthrope's inner monster.

The Climactic Conclusion

Can the lycanthrope, with the aid of his friends, defeat his father and renounce his unearthly heritage? Or is he doomed to degeneration and ultimate monstrosity?

Scenes

Spa Life

Scene Type: Intro (Prelude)

Open by explaining that the investigators have been installed at an exclusive spa high in the luxury alpine skiing region of the standard unnamed European region. They've earned their stay there after completing another scenario here, to the

gratitude of the locals. Their invitations may have been secured by Burgomaster Weber of "Dr. Grave Dust," or by Dr. Victor Petroff (or a grateful surviving relative) from "The Non-Euclidean Man," or any NPC taking a similar role from another adventure.

The spa is known as Römisches Haus. **History or Languages (German)** reveal the meaning behind the name: this is the site of an old Roman bath, outfitted with all the modern amenities a timeless backwater of the 1930s can provide. The resort's architecture builds neo-Classical detail around restored Roman elements, icing the cake with a series of decadent Art Deco flourishes. The effect resembles the bizarre spawn that would result if the sets from *Bride Of Frankenstein* mated with those of an Astaire-Rogers musical.

Resort staffers include:

- Glamorous proprietress **Christa Frohlich**, who slinks through her luxury preserve in a series of clinging silk gowns, each more devastating than the last, trailing languorous smoke from the tip of her long cigarette. She can be convinced to do things

Before Starting

Ask each of the players to specify their character's ages. Ideally, do this before you start running this scenario, so they won't make the connection between the lycanthrope's age and the end of the last werewolf epidemic; see "Werewolf Of Reisbaden", below.

Spa Amenities

Römisches Haus' facilities do not play a direct role in the adventure as written, but may come into play during improvised sequences. In brief, these include:

- mineral water baths, segregated into separate men's and women's sections
- a patio overlooking a scenic forest view.
- a library, stocked with outdated travel books and light novels and decorated with mounted heads of local game animals. Smelling heavily of cigar smoke, this is mostly a male preserve. A heavy billiards table dominates the center of the room.
- an airy salon, furnished with light French chairs and accented with feminine window treatments. The female guests tend to gather here.
- a hunting lodge stocked with weapons and outdoor gear.

with **Flattery** (if it comes from a ruggedly handsome man) or **Bargain**. Christa grudgingly allows men to prostrate themselves at her feet and to shower her with expensive gifts. The spa itself was just such a gift, from an admirer who died in the throes of ecstasy with her.

- At first, the naïve yet voluptuous **Helga Christenson**, may seem a less daunting target of seduction. To get anywhere with her, one must use **Theology** to overcome the inhibitions instilled in her by a strict religious upbringing.
- Supercilious head butler **Lewiston**

Choosing Your Lycanthrope

This scenario will rise or fall depending on which PC you choose to be a secret lycanthrope.

If you think it will run more than one session, make sure that you're picking a player who attends regularly. The mystery here is on the simple side, to confine the scenario to a few sessions and lessen the likelihood that you'll be left without your central character when you reconvene. Be prepared with an alternate one-shot game to slot in as an emergency replacement if your designated lycanthrope uncharacteristically fails to show.

The eternally annoying factor of spotty attendance aside, your main consideration will be to pick a player who will find it cool to have his character radically reordered by a surprise narrative fiat. Some players delight in this sort of surprise curveball. Others, feeling that you've trampled upon their creative autonomy or fictional alter ego, become genuinely upset.

Where a player has selected "In the Blood" as his drive, he's given you permission—nay, he's all but *demand*ed—that you do something like this to him. Lycanthropize him guiltlessly.

If you're still unsure which players will enjoy the scenario's central twist, poll them, asking them to decide, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much they'd object to a horrific character transformation. Have them write the numbers secretly on slips of paper and pass them to you. The one with the highest tolerance for character-torquing becomes the lycanthrope. Do this several scenarios ahead of this one, so they have time to forget that you've asked.

never permits himself to be referred to by his first name. He delivers sparkling service and unspoken, snobbish disapproval in equal measures. Characters with Credit Rating of 6 or more will escape his dripping distaste if they behave with impeccable discretion, no matter what they do behind closed doors. A stickler for details, his cooperation can be gained with **Bureaucracy** spends.

- Hot-headed chef **Giuseppe Villella**. His loud shouts can be heard from the kitchen at all hours. **Flattery** of his food turns him into a pussycat.
- Head housekeeper **Frau Lindner** is a tough old battle-ax with her young maids and a meek, taciturn servitor to the guests. **Intimidation** secures her trembling cooperation.

- Hearty huntsman **Hugo Hauptman**, who happily takes characters of an outdoorsy bent on all the hiking, shooting, and fishing trips they desire. Hugo is an almost oppressively jolly fellow, except when frightened by the thought of monsters or werewolves. He forms a loyal bond to anyone who demonstrates proficiency with **Outdoorsman**.

Start the scenario by asking each player to list his character's ideal form of recreation. Then create an extremely brief scene in which the investigator seeks that recreation, meets minor resistance, and then achieves what he or she was seeking, in spades.

Examples:

- The group's resident scholar seeks a suitably weighty tome to pore over. He finds a measly selection, but then uses **Evidence**

Collection to find the key to a secret compartment packed with rare first editions.

- A rakish investigator might be rebuffed in his initial efforts to charm Helga, only to figure out the religious angle and make evident progress in his campaign.
- A character anxious to improve his target shooting tramps with Hugo Hauptman through the dark and scraggly wilderness for hours—until he finally spies a white hart posing majestically on the crest of the hill, waiting for him to bring it down.
- The parapsychologist hopes to survey local gypsy tarot readers in hopes of finding the true psychics among them and performing a Zener card test. He spends a day in fruitless travel before finally locating Lady Olga, whose initial performance on the test is his most compelling evidence to date of the existence of psychic powers.

Foreshadowing alert: During the sequence involving the character you have designated as your lycanthrope, slip in, as off-handedly as you can, that the he feels a strong affinity to the stark and awesome beauty of the place.

Players well attuned to the rhythm of horror tales should start to become uneasy as these innocuous scenes tick by. When does the contrasting jolt of fear start?

The Werewolf Of Reisbaden

Scene Type: Intro (Foreshadowing)

That night, the group gathers in the drawing room to sip brandy with the other guests around a roaring fire, having enjoyed a stultifyingly delicious meal from Giuseppe's kitchen. There

are only a half dozen or so other guests at the spa. Specifically introduce them only as needed. They include:

- The fabulously rich and thoroughly vacuous **Edna St. Thomas-Smythe**, who laughs like a horse and isn't so terrible to look at, if you squint. Adores being drawn by **Oral History** to tell her interminable family stories.
- Her older and tubbier husband, the pipe smoking ex-army officer **Brigadier General Ernest St. Thomas-Smythe**. He is perpetually in a state of harumph. He warms up to an Investigator who demonstrates his skill as an **Outdoorsman**.
- Oleaginous journalist and Franco sympathizer **Fernando Renau**. Folds under **Intimidation**.
- Corpulent American businessman **Harry Driscoll**, who was dragged here by his Europhile wife and wishes he was back home tending to his wounded financial empire. Is impressed by a solid management tip, delivered via **Accounting**.
- The aforementioned wife, **Amalia Driscoll**, a sweet, rhapsodizing woman who hopes to forget that she's growing older. Reacts best to **Flattery**.
- Cynical Hollywood screenwriter **Wilson Dickson**, hoping to soak up some atmosphere for "a fright flick more realistic than any other." Willing to **Bargain** for the rights to an investigator's lurid past.

(If any of these characters fit your player-driven scenes of ominous relaxation, introduce them then.)

Christa and Hugo are present as well. Lewiston and Helga move in and out of the room, serving drinks, cheese,

and pastries.

After a lull in the chit-chat, Edna giddily cries, "How about ghost stories? Why, this place is virtually made for them! Someone tell some ghost stories!"

Staff members visibly stiffen at the suggestion; as good residents of Backlot Gothic, this is a topic they prefer to avoid. If quizzed on their reactions by an Investigator, Christa or perhaps Lewiston says that it's best not to invite bad thoughts.

Edna remains irrepressible. She first begs the Investigators to attempt a fright tale, favoring those with high Credit Ratings, or who have already befriended her.

The Investigators can tell tales, or keep their counsel, as they prefer. There is no Stability or other penalty for spooking it up. If none of the investigators are the type to tell guest tales, guests take up the slack.

As they finish, an eerie wolf howl echoes through the room. (If you game with a laptop, grab a wolf howl sound file from the net and cue it up for this moment.) Hugo grows agitated. Christa, to cover up her own unease, snaps, "Don't mind Hugo. He is just afraid of the werewolves."

At this point, the Investigators presumably work to worm an explanation out of them. Hugo tells the story of the Werewolf of Reisbaden.

He starts by saying that this happened about X-1 to X+1 years ago, where X is the lycanthrope's age. At this time, Reisbaden was plagued by a series of terrible murders. Over a dozen people were killed in all. Initially it was thought that all of the killings coincided with the full moon, but then they continued at other times. Eventually the townsfolk cornered the beast, trapping him in a cave until dawn. An American tourist, Harry Wilton, staggered out of the

cave, the blood of his last victim on his hands and shirt. The villagers hung Wilton from a sturdy oak, ending the murder spree. Some say, when the howl of the wolf rings out through the barren hills and blasted pines, that the ghost of the werewolf is abroad, looking for a countryman to gift with his terrible curse.

As Hugo concludes, another round of wolf howling penetrates the cozy confines of the drawing room. The huntsman breaks from his reverie, chuckles, and says it is all child's foolishness. "Everyone knows there is no such thing as werewolves."

Unless they wish to extend their daytime subplots into the late evening, the investigators then presumably retire for the night. Each sleeps alone in an exquisitely appointed room.

Ravaged

Scene Type: Core (Physical Evidence)

Shortly after dawn the next morning, a piercing scream awakens the investigators. One of the guests is found dead in the gardens outside the chateau. This section refers to Amalia Driscoll as the victim, but if the preliminary subplots have more firmly established another supporting player, substitute that character instead.

The body has been found by Helga; she's the screamer. Assuming that they move with any kind of haste, the Investigators are the first on the scene, after her. Helga stands trembling, nearly paralyzed with terror. Amalia's sprawled and copiously bleeding corpse lies amid a stand of tall rose bushes.

"A wolf," Helga stammers, "she was mauled by a wolf."

A **Forensics** examination shows that:



- despite her indelicately splayed legs, Amalia does not appear to have been sexually defiled before or after her death.
- she has been dead for a few hours and most likely died between 3 and 4 am.
- (core) **Biology** shows that the mauling wounds do not remotely resemble those of a wolf—even a partially anthropomorphized wolf, if such a thing existed. These wounds are far stranger than those caused by any known predator.

Forensics use produces a closer description of the wounds. They are two-way puncture wounds, of a roughly circular pattern. It appears that they were created by some flexible, rubbery weapon—perhaps biological in origin—punching through the skin, then widening as it pulled out again. The veins and arteries beneath these wounds are both shredded and collapsed. This suggests that the murder weapon somehow drained vast quantities of blood from the victim in a matter of seconds. It also appears to have drained her lymphatic system.

Harry Driscoll reacts stolidly to his

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wife's death. **Assess Honesty** reveals that this is the genuine, well-concealed grief of a deeply undemonstrative man. He desperately wants to believe that this was a random animal attack and reacts angrily to questions about possible motives anyone might have had to harm him or his wife. If asked why Amalia might have been out in the garden in the middle of the night, Harry responds, with some embarrassment, that she was going through "the change of life" and often walked in the cool air at night when unable to sleep.

Driscoll attempts to make immediate arrangements to leave with his wife's body, and is distressed to learn that local funeral directors do not practice embalming. He sees to it that she is cremated in Reisbaden and then leaves before the evening is up—unless the investigators for some reason convince him to stay, a feat of persuasion requiring a 1-point **Reassurance** spend.

This leads to a spate of legwork which serves only to eliminate investigational dead ends (and mark time until the next attack.) Zip through it quickly.

Outdoorsman shows a path of broken branches leading from the nearby woods. The rocky ground nearby is a poor medium for prints, so it is unsurprising that none are found. The path breaks off a few hundred feet from the chateau. Perhaps with Hugo in tow, the group can spend much of the day tramping through the forest, following apparently promising leads which never pan out.

A trip into the nearest village, Reisbaden, takes several hours; a washed-out bridge necessitates a long detour. The villagers of Reisbaden all confirm the basic parameters of the werewolf legend. The only significant departure in detail from Hugo's account are the abilities of the lycanthrope, whose powers seem to increase with each telling. First he's six feet tall, then seven, then eight. Then he can see in the dark, become invisible,

command a pack of bloodthirsty timber wolves, and so on.

Names of potential informants include: Burgomaster Siodmak, Adia (village gossip), Torben (blacksmith), Hans (undertaker), Egon (village idiot) and Emmerich (know-it-all amateur scholar.) Keep these scenes quick, so that they waste the investigators' time, but not yours and the players'. Don't let the NPCs here become too interesting; play them all as simple clichés.

As the investigators ask their questions, they realize that they're fomenting a panic. As they leave town, they may see the villagers gathered to share ever-wilder rumors and stock up on pitchforks and torches. A 2-point **Reassurance** spend (may be made by two characters working in tandem) calms them down, preventing you from using the pitchfork-wielding villager alternate ending (p. 153.)

Second Victim: Helga

Scene Type: Core (Physical Evidence)

In the early morning hours, another person associated with the chateau, probably Helga, is attacked by the "werewolf." Adjust details depending on what measures, if any, the investigators take to keep potential victims out of harm's way during the night. At this point they should not suspect that the lycanthrope is one of their own and have no reason to monitor their own activities at night. However, they might keep shifts or stick together, in which case you'll have to improvise a way to separate the lycanthrope from the others long enough for the transformation to take place.

Before the attack becomes known, the lycanthrope wakes up with grains of damp sand and pine needles in his bedsheets, near the foot of the bed.

New Rule: General Spends

(This rule was originally introduced in *Stunning Eldritch Tales*.) Occasionally you'll want to create a task at which there is no reasonable chance of failure, but which should cost the characters a degree of effort. To do this, simply charge the character(s) a number of points from relevant general ability pools. Where tasks can be performed by cooperative effort, multiple characters may contribute points to them. The expenditures should usually be on the low side, at least if more than one character pitches in.

The task of digging for water at patches of lush green vegetation serves as an example of this technique.

This rule can be applied to any iteration of GUMSHOE

Then a commotion is heard in the chateau; Helga is missing.

On a search outside, **Outdoorsman** finds recent tracks consistent with her size, headed into the woods. The tracker finds her, unconscious and bleeding, in a gully deep in the forest.

Medicine shows that she has lost a great deal of blood. First Aid is best used in sanitary conditions, back in the chateau. By making a First Aid general spend (see sidebar) of at least 2, the investigators can return her to a state of woozy consciousness, during which she can provide a brief account of the incident and then add more answers to investigator questions.

Helga replies as if breathlessly reliving the attack:

- She went into the woods because

she heard a strange tootling on a tin flute. Recognizing this as the music habitually made by Camilla, a local madwoman, she went to warn her about the creature.

- Camilla seemed to know about the werewolf, but expressed no concern for her own safety. Instead, she warned Helga to get back in the chateau.
- Then the creature came at her, from behind.
- During the attack, Helga could swear she heard the old woman calling the name “Joachim”, over and over. If she didn’t know better, she’d say Camilla was calling out to the creature.

(core) Helga doesn’t know where Camilla lives, but Hugo can draw a map to the old catacombs, where she makes her camp.

Evidence Collection finds a set of five footprints preserved in the soft, sandy soil of the attack site. They lead toward the depression where they found Helga, presumably marking the attacker’s approach toward her. The first two prints are bare human feet. The next two are strangely distorted. At first glance they appear to reflect a sliding or shuffling movement made by the suspect, but on closer inspection it appears as if *the shape of the foot has changed from step to step!* The fifth print is wholly inhuman, an asymmetrical, amorphous, clawed shape.

If the investigators place the lycanthrope’s bare foot in either of the human-shaped prints (or compare them later to a plaster cast), they match precisely.



An Exercise In Restraint

Scene Type: Protagonist-Turned-Antagonist Reaction

The investigators now have enough evidence to deduce that the monster is a specific Investigator, who transforms in his sleep and does not remember his attacks.

On a Difficulty 4 Hypnosis test on the lycanthrope, they can confirm this. As the hypnotist leads the character to recall the events of the previous two nights, describe his induced flashback. First there is the feverish, painful transformation into a bloodthirsty

beast. Recount the monster’s inner state, a ravening lust for violence and death, which will awaken the somnolent god within, secretly imprinted on the cells of his bloodstream. Then retell the attacks from the monster’s point of view. In the hypnotic recollection, the lycanthrope gets only brief glimpses of himself. He sees that his arms are covered with hairs, but they are long, sparse hairs, not the pelt of a wolf. When the attacks occur, fleshy feeding tubules sprout from his chest to attach themselves to the victims, siphoning their bodily fluids.

If the hypnotist allows the lycanthrope

to retain these recovered memories, he must take a Stability test, with a possible 7-point Stability loss, which is also a Mythos shock. (If the lycanthrope ever drops to -12 Stability for any reason, he instantly transforms into the creature, no matter when it is or in what configuration the stars are overhead, and remains in that state until destroyed.)

Knowing that the lycanthrope is likely to transform again the next night, his fellows will doubtless want to keep watch over him, to observe his transformation and to try to stop him from breaking loose and attacking anyone else. If they wish to do so secretly, they must improvise their own system of restraints. Decide the Difficulty of breaking free of them depending on the players' description of them. It is unlikely that they can do better than the dungeon restraints, below.

Should they seek Christa's advice, she informs them that the chateau has a dungeon in its basement. It has, naturally, not been used since the bad old days of cruel Eastern feudalism; she plans to convert it to a steam room. The damp, mossy dungeon is equipped with heavy chains affixed to its stone block walls. Ripping the chains from their moorings in the wall requires a Difficulty 12 Athletics test and is a feat that can only be accomplished by a being of superhuman strength. Unfortunately for all concerned, in his lycanthrope form, the monstrous Investigator is capable of just that.

In monstrous form, the Investigator gains 24 Athletics, 12 Fleeing, 30 Health, and 24 Scuffling. He gains 2 natural weapons, its feeding tubules. These are used with Scuffling, do -1 damage on a normal attack, and can each be used each round. However, once an attack is successful, the creature automatically does 8 damage on each subsequent round, no attack

test required. This process continues until the victim reaches -12 Health, or the creature is forcibly pulled from the victim. The latter requires an Athletics vs Athletics contest (if the rescuer is pulling on the creature) or a Difficulty 6 Athletics test (if the rescuer has grabbed the victim.) Damage done automatically refreshes the creature's pools, on a 1 point for 1 point basis, in this order: Health, Athletics, Scuffling, Fleeing. While in monstrous form, the Keeper takes control of the character; its sole motivation is to kill. It prefers helpless and terrified female victims, but if deprived of choices will attack whatever human quarry it can find.

After having attacked a single victim, leaving it either dead or on death's door, the creature instinctively heads back to what its human self would consider a place of safety, and then transforms back. The character's Health refreshes to its maximum normal value. Lingering visual remnants of sizable wounds suffered while in monstrous state briefly linger in human form, but cause no pain or impediment.

The transformation tears an observer's mind: the lycanthrope writhes, sweats, vomits, and then is pierced from within by hundreds of long, insectoid hairs. His face distorts into an ever-shifting mass of mandibles, floating eyes, and bubbling spheres of energy. The torso suppurates, opening up a pair of bleating mouths where the pectoral muscles should be. Witnesses take Stability tests to avoid a 5-point loss and the results of a Mythos shock.

However, before they worry about restraining their resident shape changer for the night, the group is likely to want to follow up on the core clue from the attack on Helga...



The Mad Midwife

Scene Type: Core (Interview)

A pile of fallen Roman columns mark the entrance to the ancient catacombs where Camilla is said to dwell. **Archaeology** finds the spot, overgrown with brambles. On the other side is a set of very ancient stairs (late Roman, says **Archaeology**) eroded by centuries of water damage. Have the players specify what order they're going down in, and what precautions they take. Difficulty 4 Athletics tests are required to retain one's footing on the steps; characters who fall tumble down. Preparedness (Difficulty 5) produces climbing equipment, reducing the Difficulty of the Athletics test to 2. Anyone tumbling into someone else ahead of them can be stopped on a Difficulty 5 Athletics test. Characters who tumble and are not stopped take a die of damage. Reward other plausible-seeming measures to reduce these risks.

At the bottom of the steps, the group reaches a winding tunnel. They pass piles of human bones. They've all been here for over a thousand years, **Archaeology** says.

Finally they turn a corner and find themselves in Camilla's warren-like den. Stacked high with rotting furniture, damaged antiques, and animal bones, it smells like human waste and rotten meat. Camilla is present, shotgun in hand, ready to defend herself against intruders.

Camilla

Firearms 8, Health 4.

Weapon: +0 (shotgun)

The trick with Camilla is to disarm her without killing her, so she can provide her testimony. She remains uncooperative while she has the shotgun and believes herself to possess the upper hand. Only when defeated or disarmed can **Interrogation** prompt

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her to spill what she knows. After the confrontation, but before the dialogue begins, the lycanthrope notices:

(core) Propped up against a wall is a painted portrait of a nobleman, an intense, brooding figure who stares out at the viewer with intelligent, insinuating eyes. The nameplate on the gilt frame identifies it as a portrait of Count Friedrich Braak. In the portrait, the subject appears to be in his late thirties or early forties. It bears a date: two years before the lycanthrope's birth. *The man in the portrait bears a shocking resemblance to the lycanthrope!*

(If the lycanthrope is not present, the character with the highest Art History pool notices the painting instead.)

Camilla natters incoherently in response to questions, as if talking to herself. She refers to herself in the third person. Things she might say include:

- “The Count, the Count, his honeyed words, his hard embrace.”
- “Could not be his wife. No human wife would do.”
- “Oh, the thing that came through the gate. No, no, didn’t come through the gate. *Was* the gate.”
- “The spheres, the terrible spheres.”
- “May Eve. Came on May Eve. Real birthday is May Eve.”
- “Was both male and female, as needed. Was neither male nor female, nor human, neither.”
- “Couldn’t bear to leave the child with his father. Father thought he was a thing. I knew he was a little boy. A sweet little boy.”
- “Gave him to the family. The family would take him far away from here.”

Third Victim

Scene Type: Alternate (Physical Evidence)

If the group is slow to leap to the correct conclusion, they may not realize, as they turn in for the third night at the spa, that the killer is one of them. The supposed werewolf’s third encounter with a prospective victim should cure that uncertainty.

The group wakes up in the middle of the night, hearing a crash from the chateau’s upper floor. However, the lycanthrope is missing. The other Investigators can run up to the source of the noise—Christa’s room.

Christa shows the large wood-chopping ax she used to fend off the creature. She’s confident that the werewolf is dead. The thing came through her picture window, shattering the panes of glass and the heavy wooden frames separating them. She lunged for the ax

she'd stashed under her bed as it came toward her. Christa describes the thing as not looking especially like a wolf. It was covered with hair, and had a large, humped back reminiscent of a timber wolf in its hunting crouch. Aside from that, though, it was some other beast entirely, so monstrous that she can hardly describe or remember it. At any rate, she swung the ax just as the thing came for her, and it staggered back, clutching its throat. Blood sprayed everywhere. It yelped in pain and jumped back out through the gaping hole in the window. The wound had to have been fatal, Christa declares. The Römisches Haus is once again a safe recuperation ground for the discriminating person of means.

Meanwhile, out in the woods, the lycanthrope wakes up on the forest floor, an angry red slash mark running along his throat just below his jawline. It heals quickly, and after an hour or so is almost completely gone. If he does not take care to conceal this before it goes away, Hugo or another chateau regular may head down to Reisbaden to collect a pitchfork-wielding mob, intent on a lynching.

Evidence Collection finds blood spatters all over Christa's night dress, bed, carpet, and walls. **Forensics** suggests a massive, gouting blood loss—enough to kill any normal man. **Chemistry** can match the blood type of the spatter to a sample of the lycanthrope's.

MORE ATTACKS?

In the unlikely event that the group gets bogged down and extends the investigation for more than four nights, plan for additional transformations and attacks, at a rate of one attempted murder per night. Rely on your sense of drama for choice of victim.

If the Investigators follow the trail of the creature out the window, they find a trail leading into the woods—but one that trails off partway through. From this the players can deduce that the creature's rapid healing kicked in as it staggered for safety.

This encounter should eliminate any doubt as to the identity of the alleged werewolf.

If the Investigators already know that they have a lycanthrope in their midst, this attack may or may not happen, depending on the measures they take to restrain him when he transforms. Determine the results of their efforts based on the situation, rewarding smart choices.

The Unquiet Grave Of Count Friedrich Braak

Scene Type: Core (Exploration)

The painting of the count in Camilla's catacomb should lead the group to make inquiries back at the spa. Christa and Hugo know that it used to be the chateau of the area's last count, Friedrich Braak. He died without heirs, and is buried at the old cemetery, outside town, which is hardly used anymore.

Investigators going to the old cemetery find a crypt bearing the Braak name and family crest. Friedrich Braak's name is incised on a copper plate on a coffin occupying the center of the crypt. Older coffins sit on shelves in the crypt's walls, to the right and left.

If the investigators stop to carefully examine the coffin before heaving it open, a Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble test finds a tiny metal flange between the lid and casket. On a Difficulty 5 Mechanical Repair test, an investigator can use a tool to keep the flange depressed while the lid is removed. Otherwise, a trap releases a toxic gas doing Damage +4 to everyone within the crypt.

The coffin, once opened, turns out to contain sacks of moldering grain. **Evidence Collection** suggests that the sacks are about X years old, with X corresponding to the age of the lycanthrope.

More can be discovered from the acting chief clerk of the Reisbaden town hall, Ludwig Dahmen. He's a cherubic-looking man in his mid-twenties, with ruddy cheeks, bright blue eyes, and a tousle of white-blond hair. He's been left in charge while his uncle visits relatives in another town, and is terrified of making an error of protocol. **Bureaucracy** coaxes him to dig up the necessary records. This is what he can tell the group about Count Braak:

- He was hanged X years ago (where X equals the lycanthrope's age), judged guilty of murder and treason by a special jury of his aristocratic peers.
- "Hmm, this is highly irregular..." The records of the trial are missing; instead a minister's warrant appears in their place. The document explains that the government has, in a measure to protect the public welfare, had the records destroyed. Penciled in its margin is the word *witchcraft*.
- **(core)** The hanging was carried out by Klaus Lederer, the local tanner. That, Ludwig reasons, must be a reference to Old Klaus, elderly father to the present tanner, also named Klaus.

The Repentant Hangman

Scene Type: Core (Interview)

Old Klaus has waited for years for a foolish, long-ago act of mercy to come back to haunt him. Though mentally alert, his body is broken. He's confined to a sickbed. Before he talks, he must be **Reassured** that no harm will come

to his son's family as a result of what he says about the hanging of Friedrich Braak. Wheezes and wracking coughs punctuate his account:

Braak's execution, he explains, took place in private, due to the blasphemous blackness of his crimes. There was no gallows built in a public square. The jury of his peers stood by as Klaus hanged him from a sturdy oak tree, then rode off.

Even though all present heard the bones of his neck snap, Braak was still breathing after Klaus cut him down. Braak gazed into his eyes, and Klaus was overcome with sympathy for the poor devil. To this day, he can't explain why. He agreed to fill his coffin with sacks of grain, and (**core clue**) to take him to a cave entrance in the nearby mountains. If given a map of the region, Old Klaus can pinpoint the location of the cave.

- His brief tale may inspire further questions, which Old Klaus answers as follows:
- Braak was accused of witchcraft, murder, and endangerment of the public at large.
- Townsfolk were attracted to the grounds around his chateau by weird lights in the sky and a series of unearthly shrieks reverberating through the countryside.
- There they found a sacrificial altar, on which he'd slaughtered four of his serving girls. Also present was a stone circle and other evidences of witchcraft, including an old book in Latin, which was later consigned to the fire.
- Braak eluded capture for several weeks. During this time, seven other villagers were killed. Some at the time said that the killings were done by a mass of burning purple spheres. (Upon learning this damning fact, **Cthulhu Mythos**

allows an investigator to realize the horrible truth: Braak summoned Yog-Sothoth, the guardian of the gate, and mated with it, producing a child—their own fellow investigator! Proximity to his primal birthplace has awakened the horror in his blood, periodically turning him into a murderous half-avatar of Yog-Sothoth! This revelation costs 4 Stability and 1 Sanity for any character other than the lycanthrope, for whom it costs 6 Stability and 2 Sanity.)

- In the years that followed Braak's hanging, the legend changed. Rather than purple spheres, the people told a tale that made sense to them, like the stories of old. They spoke of a werewolf committing the murders. Soon Braak's name was forgotten, too, as if his misdeeds were too gross to pass even into folklore. Eventually people started to blame it all on an imagined American named Harry Wilton. Still, he kept his counsel; he couldn't tell people that the true evil still lived, and that he was responsible.

When you sense that the players have gleaned all the useful details they're going to get from this scene, Old Klaus thanks them for allowing him to finally unburden his conscience—then slumps back into the bed, stone dead.

The Ice Caves

Scene Type: Confrontation

The ice caves are accessible from a breach in the wall of a sheer cliff face overlooking a raging ocean. To get there requires a trip by boat. If an investigator has invested in Piloting, here's a chance for him to shine, with a Difficulty 5 test to avoid capsizing in choppy waters. If not, the boat trip is uneventful. Clambering up jagged rocks to the breach requires a Difficulty 4 Athletics test; failures slip and fall, taking damage –2.

Once inside, the caves grow steadily colder, until they are eventually filled with drifts of snow and coated in a thick layer of ice. **Geology** shows that this unusual set of climactic conditions can be attributed to the rarely documented Higson-Dean Effect². Preparedness may provide hot coffee or other means of staying warm (Difficulty varies); otherwise the characters each lose 2 Health to the cold.

Eventually the caves lead to a steel door, like a bank vault. **Locksmith** gets the group through it, into the warm and lushly appointed den of Count Friedrich Braak. The room contains all of the amenities of a local aristocrat, from a library of prestigious leather-bound volumes, to Persian rugs, to an overstuffed armchair, in which Braak sits, smoking a pipe and rereading Walpole's *Castle Of Otranto*.

Friedrich is a cruelly handsome man, who looks like he hasn't aged a day since his portrait was painted, a few years before the lycanthrope's birth. He pomades his coal-black hair, plastering it close to his dome-like skull, balancing it with a well-trimmed beard. His eyes blaze with mad brilliance; his broad shoulders suggest a powerful physique. The count wears a red velvet smoking jacket, a puffy white shirt, and dark slacks. Braak greets his progeny with a gloating swagger, providing answers to the following questions. (He can also supply information they failed to gather in previous scenes.)

- The lycanthrope's transformations become possible not during the full moon, as is true in the werewolf legend, but when certain unseeable stars are in alignment. Your vulnerability to the phenomenon changes depending on where you are on earth, in relationship to the invisible constellation. A period of

² In the real world, there is no such thing as a Higson-Dean effect. This is the geological equivalent of technobabble, meant to justify an atmospheric piece of set dressing in the unreal Backlot Gothic setting.

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susceptibility lasts for about five nights.

- With the help of confederates like Udo (see below), he spread the Harry Wilton story, to keep meddlers from interfering with him while he waited for his child to return.
- Braak won't specify what magic powers he possesses. (Deduction from his current appearance and Old Klaus' account shows that they include resistance to aging and death, plus some sort of charm or mesmerism ability.)
- Even though it was interrupted by meddling townsfolk, the ritual that night was a success. He mated with Yog-Sothoth, and a squalling baby infant was the result.
- Alas, when the pitchforks and torches arrived, he was separated from his bundle of joy. His lover Camille scooped up the naked babe and carried him into the woods.
- Unfortunately, the useless wench's mind was broken by her glimpse of the magnificent Yog-Sothoth. Instead of caring for the babe while he endured his tedious trial, she gave him to a couple of young foreigners, who were traveling through the region and unlikely to return. (Modify as needed to fit the investigator's backstory.)
- When Braak finally managed to use his magic to escape the noose, he was enraged to find his son gone. Still, he knew that one day his spawn would be irresistibly drawn to him.
- His heart swells with pride to see how accomplished, how wise in the ways of the wider world, his child has become. Undoubtedly this was part of Yog-Sothoth's plan: to create

a herald fully able to navigate the modern world.

- Now, the two of them can get to work ushering in Yog-Sothoth's eon of dominion over the earth.
- Is there a cure for the lycanthrope's condition? What an absurd question! Would Shakespeare or Da Vinci seek a cure for genius? There is no cure for godhood, but to seize your destiny! (**Assess Honesty** notes that this is a carefully phrased non-answer.)

If the investigators make a move on him, Braak reveals that he has kidnapped the chateau guest or staffer to whom the lycanthrope enjoys the closest connection. A thuggish confederate, Udo, brings the kidnap victim out from an alcove, a blade at his or her throat. Until they get the NPC away from Udo, most likely by negotiation, Udo is considered to have the drop on the NPC and can kill automatically kill him or her in a single action.

Udo

Athletics 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Weapons 6
Weapons: -1 (knife)

Count Friedrich Braak

Athletics 12, Firearms 6, Health 20, Scuffling 6, Weapons 6.
Alertness Modifier: +1
Stealth Modifier: +1
Weapon: 0 (derringer pistol), -1 (sword cane)
Special: can exert a charm effect on NPCs, persuading them to perform non-life threatening favors for him.

To resolve the situation, the group must find a solution to the stand-off. Although you should allow any good (and/or lucky) plan to succeed, the most obvious one is for the lycanthrope to pledge allegiance to the count in exchange for the prisoner's freedom. With the other Investigators safely away, he can betray

him at an expedient later moment. Poetic justice would suggest that he wait to transform into his monstrous form and then kill Braak. Braak expects his progeny, once informed of his destiny, to willingly obey his beloved papa, and will fail to exercise proper caution against betrayal.

Ring Of Yog-Sothoth

This enchanted item is a one-of-a-kind piece, forged of a cold, blackish metal which **Chemistry** cannot identify and can only presume to be of alien origin. It is a wide, simple band of metal marked with crude interlocking circles.

Investigators can only make use of it if they have ratings of 2 or more in both **Occult** and **Cthulhu Mythos**. They must also know what it does—either because they've seen it in action, or by making a 2-point **Occult** spend.

A character using the ring can change the lycanthrope character from his human to monstrous form or vice versa, at a cost of 2 Health and 3 Stability. This occurs regardless of the current star configuration.

He can mentally command the monster to attack a human target that both he and the monster can currently see, at a cost of 4 Stability. The monster attacks only one target at a time, and instinctively flees to transform back into a human afterwards. Overriding this impulse to command an additional attack costs another 6 Stability for a second victim, another 8 for a third, and so on.

If the lycanthrope is killed while in monstrous form, the ring turns to molten metal, severing the finger it is worn on. The character loses a damage die of Health and permanent use of the finger.

If a big gory fight is more your group's cup of tea, Braak possesses an enchanted ring, imbued with magic during his ritual mating with Yog-Sothoth. He can use this to force the lycanthrope to transform, and then to attack his comrades. (This option may be less interesting if the group has already fought the character in lycanthrope form.) To activate its power, he must gesture obviously with the ring, demonstrating its purpose to the Investigators and allowing them to make later use of it; see sidebar. Assess Stability tests for the ensuing carnage depending on exactly what carnage transpires, using the chart on *Trail Of Cthulhu*, p. 71, as a benchmark. During the fight, Braak attempts to escape through a secret passageway which leads through an icy tunnel network to Camilla's Roman catacombs. If cornered, he fights either by taking potshots with his pistol or by unsheathing the secret blade in his sword cane.

If the group defeats Braak in a manner that the players seem to regard as disappointingly anti-climactic, they emerge from the ice cave only to confront a mob of pitchfork-wielding villagers. Young Klaus was listening in on his father's confession and, leaping to a more-or-less accurate conclusion, has spread word among the villagers that the investigators are harboring the werewolf of Reischaden. They swarm toward the group, intent on seizing the lycanthrope and stringing him up. If that Investigator is no longer present, they pick another likely target and attempt to grab him. Comrades coming to his defense are also seized for hanging.

Any shot taken with a firearm into the mob immediately and grotesquely slays at least one of its members, occasioning a test to avoid a 5-point Stability loss for the shooter. There are too many villagers to physically resist; the only way to escape capture is to flee into the dark woods. Resolve pursuit with Athletics/Fleeing vs. Athletics tests; the mob has a collective Athletics pool of 12 points

Living With Lycanthropy

By default, this scenario does not offer a cure for the character's monstrous transformations. Coupled with the Ring Of Yog-Sothoth, it may become a useful means of winning physical confrontations—and of whittling away precious Stability.

If this thought troubles you, render the ring unusable by Investigators. The lycanthropy angle can then be removed from any scenario it would disturb simply by specifying that the stars aren't right.

You can also allow the group to establish a protocol when the constellations are aligned that effectively imprisons the character, so that his transformations never lead to murders. This becomes a background element in the character's lives between scenarios. Naturally, when you decide to bring this plot element back to the forefront, you can engineer a failure of this elaborate system, whatever it is.

The character's search for a permanent cure may be rewarded with a sequel. A document turns up referring to an old case where a supposed child of Yog-Sothoth renounced her inhuman heritage. Perhaps this requires the enactment of a counter-ritual at a place where the adventurous obstacles come thick and fast—Dreamlands or Plateau Of Leng, here we come!

On the other hand, you may not want the lycanthropy story to persist at all, past this scenario. If so, allow the group to find both the ring and a ritual of undoing after defeating Braak in the ice caves. This should cost Health and Stability points to enact, and perhaps accidentally summons some creatures to fight, but then permanently strips the character of his eldritch heritage.

per escaping character. Characters who fail their Fleeing or Athletics are seized and dragged back to the village for a kangaroo trial presided over by panicked local officials.

Characters pleading their case at the trial may be set free on a 1-point **Law** expenditure per defendant—except for the lycanthrope, who, once identified, will never be knowingly pardoned. Investigators may be able to talk their way to freedom with the use of particularly good arguments coupled with other interpersonal spends.

Freeing remaining prisoners becomes a matter for a climactic jailbreak from the cells of the village's ill-manned police station, or perhaps an ambush of the deputies on the way to the gallows tree outside town. Manage these sequences depending on the brilliant plans the players cook up; they probably require at least one Stealth test of at least Difficulty 5, and possibly a fight against a few

overwhelmed villagers.

Villagers / Deputies

Athletics 4, Health 4, Scuffling 4,
Weapons 4.
Weapon: -1 (pitchfork)

Family Repercussions

Scene Type: Denouement

If the investigators end their stay in the Backlot Gothic world to return home, a final scene might consist of the lycanthrope's confrontation with living parents or relatives, if any, in which the truth of the mysterious Eastern European adoption is confirmed. Whether the scene ends in tearful forgiveness or bitter recriminations depends on what seems dramatically satisfying and emotionally plausible, based on what has been established about the character and his relationship to his family.

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"THANK HEAVEN WE DID NOT SLACKEN OUR RUN. THE CURLING MIST HAD THICKENED AGAIN, AND WAS DRIVING AHEAD WITH INCREASED SPEED..."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS"

What tribute to classic horror movies would be complete without a monster team-up? This scenario unites the antagonists of "Dreams Of Dracula," "Dr. Grave Dust," and "The Non-Euclidean Man," and should therefore be played after those three cases. Ideally, it also precedes "Death Across the Nile," as the characters may encounter a nod to that scenario if they take an unwarranted risk in one of the final scenes.

Like the team-up movies, it may play as lighter in tone than the originals, more a supernatural-themed adventure than a true horror show. With luck, it won't be quite as silly as the films it evokes!

Introduction

The Spine

In **The Bait**, the Investigators learn that an acquaintance has gone missing while investigating a possible return of the mad reanimator Dr. Frederic Gravenhurst. Finding **The Files** he's amassed to date leads them to **The Body**, where a planted clue takes them to **The Island**, the soon-to-be hunting ground of General Ivan Mazurov. **The Fortress** introduces them to Mazurov and his decadent-seeming guests. When they explore his island, they find themselves the quarry in **The Hunt**, with Dracula, the Non-Euclidean Man and an undead Gravenhurst as the hunters.

Substitutes For Inspector Schroth

Schroth might have died during "Dr. Grave Dust," or established himself as an unsympathetic character. If another existing NPC in your campaign would provide greater motivation to the characters, use him instead. He might be a previously established mentor or colleague in an organization like the Armitage Inquiry or Project Covenant. If no existing NPC fits the bill, work with the players to create one to whom they can, with some expository backstory revelation, establish a commitment.

Substituting another character for Inspector Schroth will require you to create a different lead-in scene, though this may be as simple a matter as slightly rewriting the letter from Deputy Jutzi.

The Horrible Truth

Mazurov has assembled an elite crowd of decadent gamblers to bet on which of the three creatures will succeed in killing the most investigators. They're all competing for a previously unknown original Greek version of the Necronomicon. The investigators can induce the three creatures to turn on Mazurov by discovering that his supposed book is a forgery.

Scenes

The Bait

Scene Type: Intro

The investigation begins when the team learns that a trusted ally in the fight against supernatural enemies has gone missing in the depths of Backlot Gothic.

For the purposes of the written adventure, we assume that this character is Inspector Schroth, from "Dr. Grave Dust." Inspired by the awful revelations of that scenario, he has gone on to follow in the Investigators' footsteps, becoming something of an occult investigator himself. Now the group hears that he has gone missing while looking into a series of bizarre murders.

The investigators are drawn into the case when they receive the following letter:

Dear Sins:

You do not know me. My name is Deputy Ingo Fischer. You will no doubt recognize the name of the village postmarked on the

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envelope from which this letter is from. Please excuse my poor writings, as I am unaccustomed to correspondence which such international worthies as yourself.

You do not know me, but you do know, or did, my superior, Inspector Schroth, with whom you worked in the terrifying case of Dr. Frederic Gravenhurst, which happened before I lived in this town.

The reason I right to you is that Inspector Schroth has not been heard from for many days. The Inspector left town abruptly when he heard that creatures not unlike the walking dead of Dr. Frederic Gravenhurst were seen in other village. Then there was a killing there, and then a killing in a nearby village, to which he also went, and then from there followed a clew of some kind unknown to me to yet a third village, Bolnoycerno, to which I also enclose directions. It was from here that he seems to have disappeared, after before keeping regular telegram contact with the station here. Although I have alerted my superiors, I fear that they refuse to believe the contents of my report, as they did Inspector Schroth's after the incidents in which you participated in. Also, your experience with matters ghastly and unearthly far exceed those of my superiors and also I cannot leave my post here. It is my most fervent hope that you will go to Bolnoycerno and rescue the good Inspector from whatever terrible fate the dread Dr. Gravenhurst has consigned him.

Respectfully yours,

Ingo Fischer

Deputy

The Files

Scene Type: Core

Bolnoizernho is a gloomy village suffused by the wretched stink of a nearby paper mill. Its disconsolate inhabitants exhibit a yellowish pallor and, thanks to their poor wages at the factory, a propensity toward malnutrition. They view newcomers with self-pitying suspicion, but become almost uncomfortably friendly when subjected to a little unwarranted **Flattery**. Hungry chickens flood its streets, pecking at the corpses of their fallen fellows.

The local police inspector is a porcine and unpopular outsider, Urs Stocker. He responds to inquiries about his colleague, Schroth, with ill-concealed annoyance. Schroth's aggression in pursuing a case outside his jurisdiction rubbed him the wrong way. It's as if it implied that Inspector Stocker cares for nothing more than sitting behind his desk eating pastries! (While interacting with the Investigators, Stocker will go to any lengths to remain at his desk, eating strudel; he can be spurred into a modicum of cooperation by using **Bureaucracy** to invoke his fear of his superiors' attention.)

Prompted by relevant questions, Stocker confirms the following:

- Schroth was in town X days ago, where X is a reasonable interval from the Investigators' receipt of Deputy Fischer's letter.
- Then he did not come back. Stocker thought nothing of it, assuming that he had failed to find anything of interest in his ridiculous investigation, and moved on to trouble colleagues in some other town.
- His investigation was ridiculous because he seemed to think he was chasing monsters.

The Plot From the Villain's Point Of View

Mercenary General Sergei Mazurov has engineered a ghoulish entertainment for a small circle of his fellow wealthy thrill-seekers. On the grounds of his remote island estate, three powerful supernatural beings will compete to destroy a small cadre of their common enemies—a troop of occult investigators each of them has tangled with in the past. In exchange for their services, Mazurov has promised the winner of this blood sport a copy of the heretofore unknown Greek original of the *Necronomicon*. His guests are to pay an enormous entry fee; Mazurov will also supervise betting on the event's outcome, taking a percentage of each wager.

Having gathered his creatures together, his next step is to lure the Investigators, whose backgrounds and past exploits he has thoroughly researched, to his estate. He does this by arranging for Schroth to be killed, a clue planted on his corpse.

Accompanied by Griffin Kemp, the new, undead version of Dr. Gravenhurst (see "Inevitable Revivals" sidebar, p. 169) allowed himself to be spotted in the countryside near the village of Aalbend, then committed a murder there, selecting the victim arbitrarily. Then Dracula slew another random victim in Kreigersberg. Schroth then surprised the group by heading to a third village, Bolnoizernho, before they could direct him elsewhere. Griffin Kemp followed him to its graveyard, and killed him. Then Max Tourjansky placed a clue in his pocket, to direct their true quarry, the investigators, to his fortress-slash-chateau in the middle of Lake Strakh.

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- Schroth asked about vampire legends in Bolnoizernho
- Stocker has never heard the people here talk about vampires. But then, they are a clannish and superstitious lot, and no doubt speak all kinds of nonsense outside the presence of educated men.
- Schroth was staying at the village's sole inn, operated by Mrs. Izotov.

Mrs. Izotov is a snobbish, pug-nosed woman who decorates her musty-smelling establishment with images of ballet dancers. A character with **Art History** can share his observations of the better-known prints and castings of her collection, earning warmer treatment. She says that Schroth did not come back to his room for his things, and that she fears something has happened to him. Her concern was not great enough, however, to send her to Inspector Stocker for help; "He is a pig," she sniffs, if pressed on the matter. Investigators agreeing to settle up Schroth's outstanding bill (equivalent of \$5) can then gain access to his room.

Schroth left the room in immaculate order. His toiletry kit sits on a side table near the hallway. A bag, containing a few changes of clothes and little else, sits, closed, near the foot of the bed. Mrs. Izotov insists that she has taken nothing from the room, nor cleaned it even, since Schroth's failure to return.

(core) A search of the room turns up a loose floorboard under a worn throw rug. In the flooring is wedged a small, leather valise, secured with a tiny padlock. **Locksmith** opens it. Inside is a copy of the Bible, a somewhat outdated travel guide, and a biography of the German composer Johannes Brahms. (This was Schroth's light reading material for his journey.) Also

included are maps, train and carriage tickets, receipts, and a small account book listing Schroth's expenses over the course of his investigation. On the backs of used envelopes, addressed to the police station from his home village, are his case notes for the investigation so far. These evidently comprise the jumbled roughs from which he will later compose his official reports. (These may need a rewrite for a character less Teutonically terse than Schroth.) They are as follows:

Convinced that one of Frederic Gravenhurst's undead creatures is on the loose in this town, and wreaking murderous havoc.

First sighting: naked, bloated, death-white figure, seen by cemetery. Affinity of these grave-robbing beasts for such environs previously established. Sighting by local gentleman, wishes to remain unnamed.

2nd sighting: Farm girl sees scuttling shape in woods, next morning. Hears a strange laugh, then a growl. Feels sudden sense of danger, withdraws to house, locks door. Malign presence felt until arrival of men from field.

That night, huntsman Andreas Steck found dead not half mile from farmhouse sighting. Body hideously dismembered, but with surgical precision, as if disassembled for butchery. Paradoxically, seemed to have been torn apart manually, rather than being cut by knives. Arranged on forest floor in orderly fashion. Could remaining revenant somehow persist in manifesting Gravenhurst's sick consciousness?

Two days of fruitless searching.

Then receive word from village of Kreigensberg; similar killing there.



Surprised by condition of Kreigensberg corpse—no similarity to Aalabend murder. Body of one Klaus Noever, off-duty railroad conductor, found on road near Alpine Tavern. Discovered in middle of road, ergo officials forced to move the body immediately thereafter. Relying only on descriptions of local colleague, Inspector Witters: corpse was found headless, and with wooden stake driven through heart. Both head (found in nearby bushes) and body completely drained of blood. Interviews suggest nothing in Noever's uneventful life that would lead to occult misadventure. Local physician, Nemec, studies corpse and claims beheading and staking performed post-mortem.

Can this truly be what it seems—a vampire murder? If so, what to make of impaling and decapitation after death? Legend states victims slain by vampire also rise from the dead, becoming creatures of the night. If one is a vampire, and one wishes to kill without leaving behind a body which will rise from grave...? Why leave it in open road, for everyone to find? Attempt to terrorize populace, perhaps.

Kreigensberg lacks history of vampire legends. Librarian, Miss Bär, suggests village of Bolnoizernho, as "cesspool of superstition". With no better direction before me, I head there, increasingly puzzled by variance in slayings. Can

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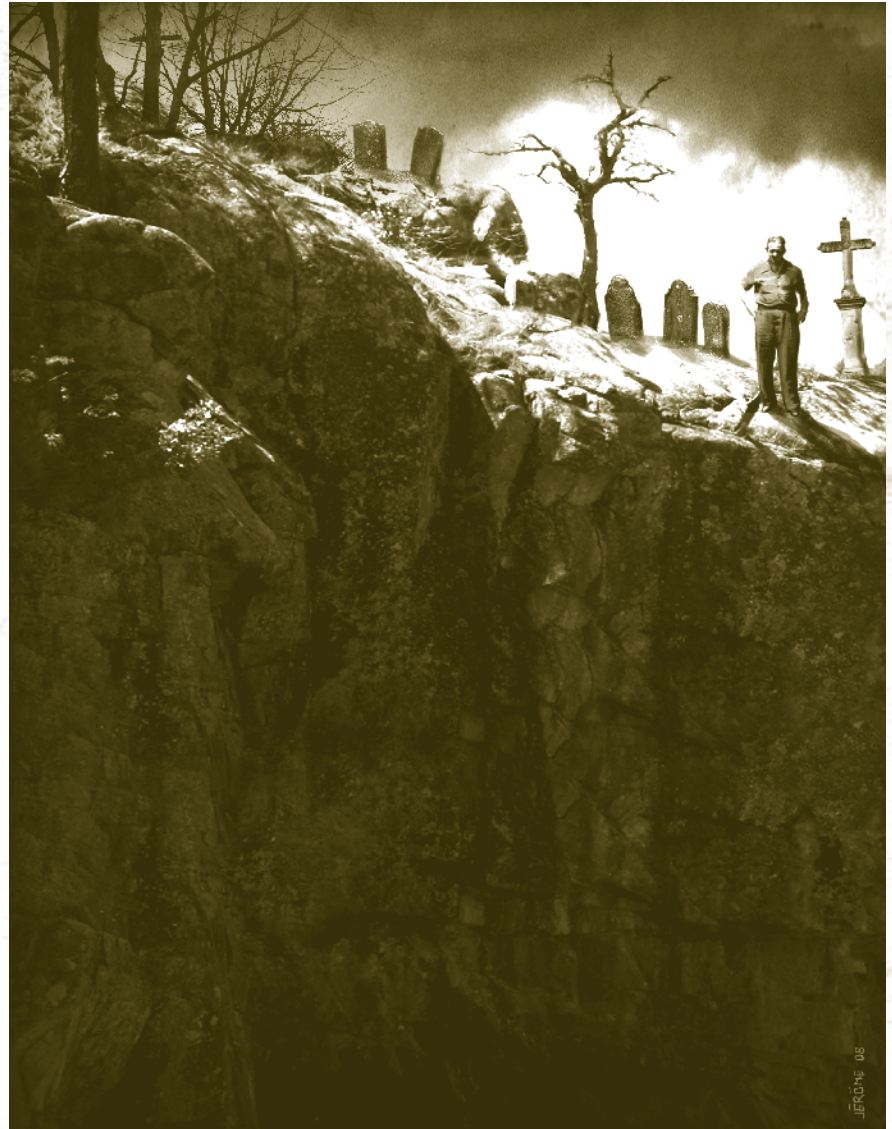
there be two monstrous killers, operating independently? If so, have I departed from Gravenhurst's trail?



Am now in town of Bolnoizernho. Distressingly Slavic territory. Local inspector pleasant, not bright. Have inquired with him re: local legends of a blood-draining killer. He laughs as if this is absurd, as I myself once thought these eruptions of the irrational to be. Find myself consulting local gypsy woman. Maia is her name, or Mala. (Her papers are not in order.) Insists on reading my palm before telling me what I wish to know. Foolish woman recoils as soon as she looks at it. Mutters something about my being a pawn in a greater game, urges me to take myself off the board. Ignore her nonsense, pump her for vampire legendry. Believes the undead are further to south and west, but suggests crypt in local cemetery as source of recent strange noises. Detect something peculiar in her tone. Untruthful? Telling me what I wished to hear, so that I might remove from her my baleful presence? Nevertheless, after breakfast shall head out to Bolnoizernho cemetery, find crypt.



Attempts to find the gypsy woman prove fruitless. Although they may take a long period of game time, dispense quickly with the failed attempts in real time.



The Body

Scene Type: Core (Physical Evidence)

The Bolnoizernho cemetery rests uneasily on the edge of a treacherous, eroding ravine. **Biology** notes that most of the nearby vegetation has been deadened by exposure to toxic fumes from the nearby paper mill. It also points to an eerie absence of wildlife. (If two characters have Biology, spread these observations between them.)

Schroth's splayed body is found at the bottom of the ravine alongside the graveyard. His head has been not so

much crushed as utterly pulped. A gravestone lies nearby, spattered in dried gore, with bits of hardened brain matter fixed to its granite surface.

Forensics:

- places the time of death on the same day as his last entry in his notes.
- shows that the stone was used to bludgeon him. First, it hit him in the left side of the jaw. Then it came crashing down on the back of his skull, smashing it.
- uses the position of the body to

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reconstruct the attacks: the first strike occurred up on the ridge, in the graveyard itself. It knocked him into the ravine. Before he could stagger to his feet, the stone then hurtled down on him from above.

Evidence Collection estimates the stone as weighing approximately fifty pounds. Patterns of wear and dirt on its base show that it was heaved from its well-anchored place in the soil recently—presumably at the same time it was used as a weapon.

Savvy players will not need to be told that a fifty-pound gravestone is not a murder weapon an ordinary person is capable of wielding. On a 1-point **Physics** spend, any character who was present for “The Non-Euclidean Man” compares this strange murder to those committed by Griffin Kemp, who was able to manipulate objects from afar, investing them with supernal force to use them as unlikely implements of murder.

The grave is that of Pea Heerwagen, 1801-1868. **Languages: German** translates its epitaph as “Devout Wife and Mother.” This is a red herring; investigators who head into the nearest town can find a descendant, Thomas. This semi-prosperous merchant evinces an ear-bending interest in his thoroughly boring family tree but has no relevant information to share. Kemp selected her gravestone opportunistically; it has no bearing on the case, except as a weapon.

(core) If they search Schroth’s pocket, the investigators find a map of the region, folded to display a nearby bend of the dark and languid River Krovi. Circled in blue grease pencil is an island on the nearby Lake Strakh, with the word “Fortress Volk” marked next to it, followed by a question mark.

Lines connecting this spot, and the sites of two previous murders, to the lake. If

an investigator measures them he finds that each site is, as the the crow flies, a distance of exactly six miles from Lake Strakh.

The map is bloodied, but a player asking to make a 2-point **Forensics** spend notices that the blood pattern is inconsistent with the location of Schroth’s wounds. If it had been in its present location in his pocket when his skull was crushed, it would be soaked completely through with blood. Instead it appears as if someone placed the map in his pocket post-mortem, after smearing it on his bloodied jacket.

Although the group may be tempted to translate “volk” from German, to mean “folk” or “people”, **Languages: Russian** notes that the other nearby place names are Russian in origin, and that the place name probably translates to “Fortress Wolf.”



The Island

Scene Type: Core

Nobody in Bolnoizernho knows anything about Lake Strakh or Fortress Wolf. No regular carriage routes pass by it, but the investigators can make special arrangements with Vasily, a carriage owner in the village, to take them there, for a mere \$3. Vasily, a wide-eyed fellow struck by a permanent palsy, cites this fee defensively, as if expecting to be upbraided for quoting such an extortionate figure. Unless prompted, Vasily keeps his mouth shut during the ride. Asked for his opinion, he ventures that there’s a reason why certain places do not have regular carriage service, and that people who go off looking for trouble usually find it. Questions about the occult clearly terrify him.

The carriage ride takes the group out of the rolling hills around the village, past a series of marshes and through a flattened plain of blackened, wind-toppled pines. Eventually the road ends; Vasily tells them they’ll have to walk the rest of the way. He cannot be induced to wait around for them.

No lake is visible from their stopping point; **Outdoorsman** (core) predicts that it will be found behind a distant ring of thick vegetation. There, a grove of gnarled deciduous trees stands out like a beleaguered legion, surrounded by conifers. The difference in vegetation suggests the presence of a lake.

Now comes an exhausting tramp through the muddy tree-strewn plain. If a player with **Outdoorsman** asks to find an advantage, a 1-point spend allows the character to navigate a circuitous route through the driest ground. Without this spend, each character loses 2 Health from nicks, bruises, and general exhaustion. Along the circuitous route, the guiding character sees signs that multiple people have preceded him over the past few days, in at least three separate small groups.

During the hike, ask the group to specify the order they’re walking in. The first and last characters in the line make Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble tests—Difficulty 7 if they did not participate in “The Non-Euclidean Man.” Successful characters get the eerie feeling of being watched. (This is Griffin Kemp, observing them invisibly, searching for advantage in the upcoming game. He doesn’t act against them, as this would disqualify him.)

Finally the group breaks through the trees to find themselves on the edge of a dark, circular lake. From the center of Lake Strakh juts a craggy island, a fortress-like structure visible on its high, southernmost point.

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Geology allows a character to expound on Lake Strakh's unusual geologic history. It started its life as a bend in the meandering River Krovi. Sedimentation cut off the bend from the rest of the river, leaving it as a horseshoe-shaped oxbow lake. Then earthquake activity transformed it yet again, forming a ring of water around its craggy central island.

If the characters made the **Outdoorsman** spend to find the best route, they break from the woods immediately within a hundred yards of a dock. Without it, they're five hundred yards out when they come through the trees. Six armed and uniformed men guard the dock. **Anthropology** identifies them as cossack mercenaries. Tied to the dock is a bulky wooden motor boat.

The mercenary in charge is named Pavel Gruzinov. He's a tall, broad-shouldered man boasting a bushy chestnut-colored beard. The smartest

of General Mazurov's guardsmen, he's been assigned an important and difficult task: he must fool the investigators into thinking they've fooled *him*. They mustn't know that Mazurov is expecting them.

(core) If they approach him, he asks to see their invitations. No matter what tactic they use to wangle their way onto the island, Pavel puts up enough resistance to seem credible, then, with feigned reluctance, gives in. They might:

- pretend to have misplaced their invitations, trying to bully their way past him with **Intimidation**
- likewise, but with sweet promises that the general will surely understand (**Reassurance**)
- offer up a bribe (**Bargaining**)
- send a pretty female team member to cozy up to him (**Flattery**)

While interacting with him, they can learn the information given in the bullet points below. However, if posing as invited guests, they may avoid asking questions that would give them away.

- The chateau on the island belongs to General Ivan Mazurov.
- His rank dates back to his time as a high officer in the Czarist army.
- The General is hosting an exclusive hunting retreat for a select roster of prestigious guests.
- He has not met all of his guests in person.
- Although such matters are above his station, Pavel is under the impression that his boss may be hoping to make a business proposal to them.
- He has never heard of Inspector Schroth and knows nothing about

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Cossacks

Athletics 6, Firearms 6,
Health 14, Scuffling 12, Weapons
12.

Alertness: +1

Weapons: +0 (rifle butt), +1
(Moisin-Nagant M10 7.62 mm
combat carbine)

mysterious murders. The map
means nothing to him.

- Monsters? Pavel has fought in wars. “It is on the battlefield that you find monsters, and they look just like you and me.”

Assess Honesty only kicks in if a player specifically invokes it, and shows that Pavel is making strictly correct statements while engaging in an overall deception of some kind.

Having been instructed not to let his interaction with the investigators to escalate into a fight, Pavel remains professional and polite at all times.

If the investigators leave and watch from afar, Pavel tempts them into trying to steal the boat and get onto the island. A second motorboat comes to pick up all but two of the Cossacks. The two Cossacks then do a deliberately poor job of guarding the first boat, allowing the Investigators to get the drop on them and steal it. They then send flashlights to send a Morse code message to the island. Investigators who sneak onto the island then go immediately to the hunt phase of the scenario without stopping at the fortress for all-important context.

Should the group avoid Pavel and company entirely, they can walk along the lake’s circular shoreline until they come to the hut of an old hag, Vladenka. She owns a small fishing boat, which they can borrow in exchange for the gift of something useful or shiny. Or they can

wait until she’s gone pattering off into the woods, and steal it. Vladenka works for Mazurov, too, and has been stationed on the shoreline to provide an alternate means for them to get onto the island if they’re scared off by the Cossacks. She too uses a flashlight to signal the island when they take her boat. A genuine hermit, she knows much less about the general and the island than Pavel, supplying the following information in response to specific questions:

- The chateau is occupied by “some big man” who has men with guns working for him.
- Several small parties recently arrived. They smelled like money and the big bad city.
- Of course the area is haunted by ghosts and demons. Everyone knows that!



The Fortress

Scene Type: Alternate

If the investigators sneak onto the island, they probably go straight to island exploration; skip to “The Hunt.”

If they cross the lake with Pavel’s approval, they walk the steep stone pathway up to the chateau accompanied by a couple of Cossacks, who with the payment of a modest gratuity (**Bargain**) can be pressed into service carrying the group’s bags.

Architecture notes that the chateau, with its high granite walls and position atop a rocky promontory, is a converted fortress, dating back to the early middle ages. The original structure had to be repaired after an earthquake. On a

1-point spend, it becomes apparent that its main feature, a watchtower, is now absent, although traces of it can still be seen in the building’s foundations. (This becomes important later.)

Armed with the information on Lake Strakh’s peculiar geology from the last section, **History** allows a character to accurately speculate that the fortress was originally meant to control river traffic in the region. Of course, it became useless after the erosion cut it off from the River Krovi.

At the door, they are greeted by Mazurov’s majordomo, a squat, impassive man whose stiff manner suggests a military background. **Languages: Russian** identifies his accent as from the former ruling class. Like any good servant, he does not supply his name unless asked, and then provides only his given name, Semyon. Acting as if they belong here, he arranges for their belongings to be taken to their rooms. He invites the investigators to “join the others in the salon” but demurs in the face of all questioning.

If the Investigators bypassed Pavel, Semyon has also been instructed to pretend to be fooled by their attempts to gain admission to the chateau. He however remains tight-lipped when asked for information. A player using **Assess Honesty** on him during this exchange senses an unspoken agenda.

In the salon, about a dozen well-dressed men, accompanied by a couple of glamorously attired women, drink cocktails and engage in murmured small talk. A hush suddenly comes over the room when the investigators arrive, but the atmosphere of gaiety quickly recovers. A player asking to use **Assess Honesty** feels that everyone is trying a bit too hard to act normally.

These are the wealthy and decadent bettors who have been gathered by Mazurov to place wagers on the

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upcoming hunt. Bets cover a wide variety of possibilities: how many investigators each creature will kill, how quickly they'll fall, who will die first, and so on. None of the wagerers want to give the game away before it starts. They do, on the other hand, wish to get a sense of the investigators' mettle, to better gauge their chances against the creatures.

Focus on only a few of the guests, highlighting the first ones the players choose to interact with. Guests include:

Joel Banks: Rakish son of a wealthy industrialist who looks like an All-American college quarterback gone to seed. Expelled from Miskatonic University for moral turpitude.

Adamo Larrinaga: Former jockey and race horse owner with a sideline in blackmail. Enjoys good connections with the Mussolini regime and Sicilian mafia.

Ignace Longet: French aristocrat and authority on vegetarianism whose works grace Hitler's private bookshelf. Also a secret practitioner of cannibalism.

Françoise Longet: His toothsome wife, who carries a cigarette holder and wears a succession of silky evening gowns. An eager participant in her husband's secret hobby, she drools ever so slightly in the presence of a well-muscled male or soft-fleshed female.

Günter Jahraus: Berlin club owner and secret Ahnenerbe officer looking to harness Mazurov's monsters as weapons for the Reich.

Philip Gerstinberger: Fashion designer with a dark past in the white slavery trade.

Carroll Linwood: Weedy, lisping former British colonial administrator in Africa seeking to relive the thrill

he experienced when he ordered the massacre of one native tribe by another.

Adriana de Poul: Bored daughter of a French real estate speculator is looking for spectacular ways of garnering Papa's attention.

Clem Whately: Rough-hewn Texas oilman looking to reconnect with his family's old-time Cthulhu-worshipping religion after crediting the Old Ones for his lucky strike near the Oklahoma border.

The following information, slanted appropriately, can be garnered from any guest:

- Their host is General Ivan Mazurov.
- The guest and Mazurov travel in the same rarefied social circles.
- They're here for an exciting weekend of hunting.
- When asked what they're hunting, each guest has a different answer: elk, bear, stag, boar, quail, pheasant, and so on. However, guests who have already heard another guest answer repeat the already floated lie. (Registers as deceptive if player invokes **Assess Honesty**.)
- None of them have heard of Schroth or know anything about the murders he was investigating. (Truthful.)
- Mazurov is looking for funding for a freelance mercenary army, which the guest is either able to provide, or able to facilitate with connections.

If any of your roster of NPCs from past scenarios includes any surviving rich, decadent types who maintained a quasi-antagonistic relationship with the

investigators, you could add them to Mazurov's guest list.

When the guest interactions flag, the Investigator who had the shortest or least revealing encounter with them notices that a new figure has appeared in the room, and is studying them intently. When spotted, he makes a good but transparent attempt to appear nonchalant.

Max Tourjansky is a slim, nattily dressed man who always has a cigarette in his hand but never seems to smoke it. His manner of speaking is vague; his eyes, glassy. A character with **Medicine** studying his demeanor pegs him as a heavy morphine user. He talks to the investigators as if he knows them, inquiring into their occult adventures. If asked to identify himself, he says merely that he is a man of various curiosities. In fact, he is Mazurov's house sorcerer and advisor on matters supernatural. It was his researches that led Mazurov's emissaries to Kemp, Dracula, and Gravenhurst. He also inscribed the ward (p. 172) ensuring that none of the three monsters can get at Mazurov's copy of the Necronomicon. On a 2-point **Occult** spend, a character has heard nasty stories about him emanating from Parisian occult circles, where it is (correctly) rumored that he has dabbled in human sacrifice.

He never mentions their investigations involving the three monsters, but otherwise seems to know a great deal about their past work. Tourjansky subtly pumps them for information about other cases, perhaps searching for a means of contacting the real Nyarlathotep ("The Night I Died"), learning Cooper LeRoy's brain-switching ritual ("The Green Ape") or inquiring into the secrets of Adhemar Grau ("The Black Chateau.")

Almost any answer to a question posed by the Investigators will be deceptive. These might include:

Shadows Over Filmland

- He is General Mazurov's personal secretary.
- He has no idea what the connection between the murders and the island might be.
- The general does not share Tourjansky's interest in occult forces.
- If asked about the general's resume, he does have a few true facts to share:
- The General bravely served the Czarist forces during the regrettable uprising of 1917.
- Before his unfortunate injury, he served as a commander for hire, in various conflicts around the globe. He proved an able advisor to governments in China, Africa, and South America.
- Some have called Mazurov a mercenary, but this is unfair: he never works for Reds, no matter how much they offer him.

Assess Honesty provides the rather obvious suggestion that Tourjansky is a slippery character, but sheds no light on the nature of his dissimulations.

As this encounter winds down, the General himself rolls into the room. Paralyzed from the waist down, he is confined to a clunky wheelchair typical of the 1930s. With his gleaming bald head and glaring green eyes, he remains an impressive figure nonetheless. He allows the investigators the pretense of explaining who they are and why they crashed his exclusive party.

If they tell him the truth—that they need to speak to him regarding Inspector Schroth's disappearance, he accompanies them to his library for a private conversation. He expresses concern over the fate of the late

inspector and provides the following information in response to specific questions:

- He did not know Schroth, nor any of the victims in the murders he

Rules Of the Game

Mazurov will award the Necronomicon to the contestant scoring the highest number of points over the course of a single evening, from dusk till dawn. The rules are designed to increase the excitement for the participants and increase opportunities for betting.

Creatures get 10 points for killing an investigator. If the killing occurs more than half an hour after the creature's previous killing, this score is doubled (thus encouraging them to draw the game out rather than slaughtering an entire party at once.) Kill-stealing is discouraged by a rule that halves the score for a victim who was harmed by another creature in the previous fifteen minutes.

Killing anyone other than an investigator results in immediate disqualification.

Rules adherence is adjudicated by armed Cossacks. They report back to the chateau via portable radio, allowing updated betting in real time.

(Naturally, all three of the creatures plan to gain the book by nefarious means if they lose, but until a winner is declared, they're all going to play by the rules. All also assume that the other two will try to get the book away from them when the winner is named.)

was investigating.

- His purchase of the island and fortress took place two years ago. All told, he has spent only a few months here since taking possession of it.
- Locals say that the island is haunted, but then they say that about every forbidding-looking piece of this grim landscape.
- When he bought the place, the island was rumored to be a hideout for bandits. That's why he keeps a party of armed men around him at all times.
- Perhaps the murders were committed by bandits hoping to cover their tracks by making the deaths seem supernatural.
- If there are murderers hiding on the island, he certainly wants them dealt with before his potential business partners venture out into the woods. He is more than willing to extend permission to the Investigators to scour the island. If only his guests weren't here, he could afford to send some of his guards out to help them...
- Mazurov can also convey the same facts about his own background as seen above in Tourjansky's entry, though with a clipped sense of modesty.

None of what this confident liar says registers as false to **Assess Honesty**.

The Hunt

Scene Type: Core

Arriving on the island without inveigling their way into the chateau leaves the Investigators with less context as they attempt to figure out what's going on. They can explore the island during the

The Preserve

Inevitable Revivals

The three monsters who return here may well have been killed during their initial appearances. As any student of the movies knows, mere death is no impediment to a horror sequel.

The Frederic Gravenhurst who appears here is not the original, but the original's mind, which has awakened inside one of the animated corpses from "Dr. Grave Dust." As you'll recall (and as the corpse-Gravenhurst may remind the Investigators in an expository monologue before he attempts to kill them) Gravenhurst implanted his own brain cells in his zombie servitors in order to gain telepathic command over them. This gave him, if not the divine immortality he sought, an escape route from death. One of the zombies limped away from the conflagration at the end of that scenario; over time, its Gravenhurst brain cells assumed full control of its undead brain. Gravenhurst then conducted experiments on his new, deathless body, strengthening it into a grotesque, bloated killing machine. It has swelled to a height of eight feet, gaining grotesque musculature, augmented in places with crudely welded pieces of blackened steel. A metal neck brace keeps his now oversized head affixed to his torso. A set of goggles, around which the flesh of his temples has grown and fused, more than compensates for his dead eyes' cataracts, enhancing his vision beyond human norms.

The New Dr. Gravenhurst

Athletics 18, Firearms 6, First Aid 24, Health 28, Scuffling 28, Weapons 6.

Alertness: +2

Weapons: +2 (Scuffling; reflects inhuman strength)

Armor: none, but all weapons do half damage; firearms do only 1 point of damage even if point-blank; shotguns do 2 points of damage; shotguns firing rock salt do full damage.

Stability Loss: +1

If the resurrected count from "Dreams Of Dracula" was destroyed in that scenario, the version found here is another brought back from his essential salts by Max Tourjansky. Prospective access to the Necronomicon has prevented Dracula from attempting to do to Tourjansky what he did to Dr. Sievers. Dracula's game statistics match those of his previous appearance, but he retains no memory of his previous run-in with the Investigators. If Dracula's latest incarnation survived the previous scenario, he reappears here and remembers its events.

Whether the Investigators destroyed The Non-Euclidean Man by pseudo-science, magic, or through some other means, it now transpires that he was able to reconstitute himself, after an agonizing period spent in transdimensional limbo. Their efforts weren't entirely in vain, though: he reappears in diminished form. He can now be seen on a Sense Trouble test. Difficulty of the test ranges from 6 to 8, with the highest Difficulties occurring against complex backgrounds (like forests), and the lowest against uniform ones (like a wall painted in a single color.) Once seen, a character can spend 1 Sense Trouble point per minute (out of combat) or per round (in combat) to continue seeing him. His Hit Threshold is 3 against an opponent who can see him. Also, he now leaves a physical trail behind when he moves across good tracking mediums like snow, mud and sand. In these situations he can be tracked at a cost of 1 Outdoorsman point per instance. Finally, he now lacks his psychic attack. His revised game statistics are as follows:

General Abilities: Athletics 16, Health 6, Scuffling 12, Weapons 12.

Damage: improvised weapon (+4)

If "The Non-Euclidean Man" resolved without Kemp's apparent demise, he retains his original, more potent suite of statistics and supernatural abilities.

daytime without incident. They find themselves unable to leave—and then the hunt begins.

As soon as they go back to find their boat, they discover that it is missing. If they post no guards, the Cossacks

take care of it. If they leave someone to keep an eye on the boat, it drifts off and capsizes before their eyes. This is the work of The Non-Euclidean Man, who can be observed with a Sense Trouble test. Unless it is already dark out, he does not engage them at this point,

as the rules of the game allow it to be played only when Dracula is able to take active part; see sidebar.

If the Investigators gain access to the chateau, the hunt begins when they go out to explore the desolate island.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmland

Mazurov has set up the lure so that they'll want to go out there without further prodding. Should they prove reluctant, use their Drives to get them out the door.

Each of the three creatures attacks separately, in approximately half hour intervals, beginning at dusk. Rank the creatures according to the apparent fear and loathing the group feels toward them. The least feared and loathed attacks first, with the worst enemy coming last. Continue to improvise further attacks, according to what seems most exciting, until all of the investigators are dead, all of the creatures are vanquished, or they solve the mystery by revealing to the creatures that Mazurov's *Necronomicon* is a fake. Location of attacks depends on where the investigators go.

Although Dracula is coolly predatory, Gravenhurst, scientifically grandiose and Kemp, chortlingly psychopathic, all share a fundamental arrogance allowing investigators to draw them into conversation before the killing attempts begin. Verbal revelations occur only when the creature thinks he has the upper hand and can afford the time to gloat. Each, if he was apparently destroyed during his last encounter with the Investigators, is more than happy to provide exposition accounting for his startling return. (Alternately, it may be possible to extract information, via **Bargain** or **Interrogate**, from a helpless or disadvantaged creature.)

The first creature encountered provides hints allowing astute players to deduce that they're caught in a three-way monster rally homage to "The Most Dangerous Game."

The second confirms this theory, providing any information on Mazurov's scheme except the nature of the prize. He may venture to say that it is the greatest prize of all.

(core) The third creature identifies the nature of the prize they're all contending for: a copy of the fabled Greek translation of the *Necronomicon*, as written in 950 A.D. The following answers come in response to relevant questioning:

- (Gravenhurst only) The mad doctor wants the book to restore his rotting body to a better semblance of life.
- (Dracula only) The count has reason to believe that the Greek translation will show him how to overcome his vampiric limitations, permitting him to openly stalk the daylight hours, perhaps even rendering him immune to a staked heart.
- (Kemp only) Kemp hopes that the tome contains a spell which will enable him to fully materialize as a normal man again. Pressed further, he admits that he yearns for the warmth of human touch. Goaded even further, he concedes that he doesn't want to give up his extraordinary abilities—his true goal is to be able to switch

back and forth. He believes that eventually this capability would grant him the wherewithal to rule the world.

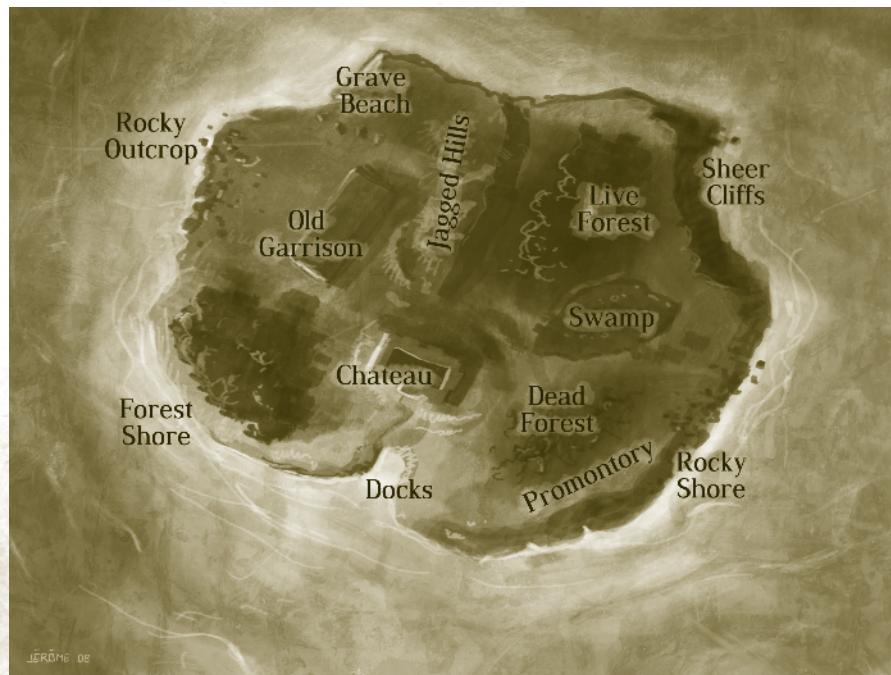
- (any creature) The other two also believe that the book contains occult formulae which will serve their sinister desires—the arrogant fools!



Island Locations

Island locations may add fun terrain complications to these creature fights. If the Investigators are on speaking terms with Mazurov before the hunt begins, he sketches out a map of his island (no better surveys exist) for them. Otherwise they can explore by themselves.

Exact effects vary situationally. Use them only where they add suspense and variety to encounters; ignore them if they threaten to bog the action down.



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Preserve

The chateau sits atop a rocky *promontory*, from which combatants could easily fall after failed Athletics tests. Falls could also be an issue in the deep *ravine* or the *sheer cliffs* along the island's eastern edge, which drop directly into the sea. Drowning may be a risk there, or after a fall from the *rocky outcrop* from the island's northwest quadrant, as neither allows easy access back from the water to the land. The densely vegetated *live forest* reduces visibility, making Stealth attempts easier and Sense Trouble harder. The *dead forest* is a maze of fallen trees, reducing mobility and increasing the Difficulty of Fleeing attempts. A triple threat, the *jagged hills* reduce visibility, hamper movement, and pose a falling hazard.

Dracula's coffin is well-hidden somewhere on the island outside the chateau. The spot is left unspecified so you can make sure that the investigators don't stumble across it until they've had at least one run-in with the count. Even then, locating it should require a 2-point **Archaeology** spend.



The Book

Scene: Core

Once they know that the creatures are motivated by the promise of a Greek *Necronomicon*, players may conclude that best way to end the hunt is to find the book.

A Difficulty 5 Stealth test (piggybacked) is required to get back into Mazurov's manor after the hunt begins. For every room they thoroughly search, another Difficulty Stealth 5 test is required.



Getting Caught

On a failed test, a member of Mazurov's crack staff of Cossack guardsmen spots them and alerts his fellows to their presence. The general wants the investigators to be killed by the monsters, not by a guardsman, and so has instructed them to deal non-lethally with them should they intrude back into the castle. They allow the group an opportunity to surrender, only to be marched out into the woods again. If the investigators fight them, they respond with fists and rifle butts, until the Investigators yield or lose consciousness. Ignore any damage that would take Investigators below -11

Health. During the fight the Cossacks remind the investigators that they're better off giving up and going willingly—if they lose they'll be dumped helpless in the woods, easy prey for their real pursuers. This is in fact what happens if the characters take the fight with the guardsmen to the bitter end.

There are three times as many Cossack guardsmen on the premises as there are Investigators in the group. As many guardsmen as Investigators will show up in response to any disturbance. Reinforcements arrive as necessary. Even if some of them are slain by investigators, the others cling fiercely to their sense of

professionalism, restraining themselves from exacting fatal revenge.

(Note that the Cossacks' Alertness is already factored into the above Stealth difficulties.)

Finding the Book

The general's supposed copy of the *Necronomicon* is kept hidden in a secret vault, located in the foundation of the missing watchtower. **Architecture** reveals the existence of the missing tower if no one learned about it with a spend in an earlier scene. If the spend was made, remind the player about it now, awarding the character an immediate 1-point Sanity refresh.

The vault lies beneath the chateau's pantry. A search with **Architecture** turns up the well-concealed join points in the tile floor indicating the presence of a trap door. Once the trap door is found, **Architecture** then allows a character to notice that one of the old bronze sconces mounted in the pantry walls has a spot where its patina has been rubbed away, leaving a ring of polished metal the size of a hand. This suggests that this portion of the scone is frequently handled. By grabbing and turning the scone, the characters activate a mechanism causing the trap door to slide into the surrounding floor, revealing a set of stairs leading down into a dank, unlit underground chamber. If the investigators lack a light source, they can find a flashlight by searching the pantry drawers, one of which is devoted to a jumble of tools, cleaning supplies, and assorted junk.

The steps are eroded and treacherous. If the player of the character taking the lead doesn't indicate a cautious approach or examination of the stairs, a Difficulty 4 Athletics test is required to avoid a nasty fall down the steps, causing a die of damage -1. If the group is too complacent and a nasty additional obstacle seems appropriate (as opposed

to posing a boring delay), the fall might also cost the group its light source, forcing further Stealth attempts within the chateau as they seek a replacement.

Anyone searching the wall alongside the steps finds another wall scone. If turned, it closes the trap door.

The vault itself is a bare room stacked high with crates, boxes, and chests. Paintings in gilded frames lean semi-haphazardly along its walls. **Art History** identifies some of them as anonymous old junk, and others as notoriously missing or stolen works of old masters. Some crates contain gold coins and bullion. Valises contain stock certificates and negotiable bonds.

Anyone with **Firearms** recognizes other crates as bearing the factory marks of Soviet munitions factories; these contain as many rifles, pistols, and grenades as the characters can carry. The sidearms are Tokarev pistols (+0), while the rifles are Moisin-Nagant M10 7.62 mm combat carbines (+1).

The most notable items in the room are a lead sarcophagus and, sitting on top of it, a small metal footlocker on which a steady hand has painted an apparent occult diagram.

The sarcophagus is a poisoned red herring. It has been welded shut. The solder used to seal it can be broken open by whacking at it with a rifle butt (or similar object, like an ax.) Alas, this causes enough noise to attract a party of cossack guardsmen. If no one thought to search for the button to close the trap door again, the guardsmen find it open and confront the investigators. If the trap door has been closed, their footsteps and voices are heard overhead. **Languages: Russian** allows a character to hear them speaking to one another, wondering where the noise came from. (Evidently they don't know about the secret vault; this should prove unsurprising, given

that it's stuffed with loot.) A Stealth 4 test (piggybacked) keeps the group quiet until the Cossacks go away again, bewildered. Astute players will realize that the clock is now ticking: if the guards report the mysterious noise to Mazurov, he'll know that his secret vault is below the pantry, and send them back with rifles at the ready. In fact, the group now has fifteen minutes of game time to find what they're looking for and get out of the fortress.

Inside the sarcophagus is not what they're looking for: it's a mummy of Nitocris (see "Death Across the Nile"). **Archaeology** matches its age and preparation techniques to the mummies encountered in that previous scenario. Mazurov had it stolen from an Egyptian tomb in hopes of animating it and adding it to his squad of competing human-hunters. Without Anankaresh choosing to activate it, it has remained a dry and useless corpse, despite Tourjansky's best efforts.

The genuine McGuffin is in the footlocker. A character with **Occult** doesn't recognize the ward painted onto it, can reason that it is intended to keep away supernatural beings. In fact, this is an effective barrier preventing Gravenhurst, Dracula and Kemp from taking the book without Mazurov's consent.

A 1-point **Locksmith** spend gets its lock open soundlessly. Otherwise the group must resort to bashing it open, with the same noise risks as hacking open the sarcophagus.

Inside the box is the supposed copy of the *Necronomicon*. It looks authentic at first glance, but study of its pages with any of the following abilities show that it's a fake:

- **Languages: Classical Greek** shows that the style of its Greek postdates 950 A.D.

- **History** finds the layout of its frontispiece and manuscript pages to be anachronistic. The stitching in the binding is also not right.
- **Chemistry** spots telltale signs of faked aging on the pages and binding.
- **Occult** judges the content itself to bear little resemblance to known copies of the *Necronomicon*.

All in all, this would trick someone given a quick, teasing look, but not stand up to prolonged scrutiny. *The prize that General Mazurov has been dangling in front of his pet monsters is an egregious fake!*

The End

Scene Type: Conclusion

To end the hunt, the investigators need merely wait for the monsters to come to them, and then show them that Mazurov has played them for fools. Kemp, Dracula, and Gravenhurst all have the same reaction to this news—they band together, then head toward the chateau to wreak gruesome havoc. The first creature to whom the investigators show the faked *Necronomicon* allows the investigators the opportunity to get off the island, while also warning that they will not be safe from him the next time they meet.

If the Investigators wait around to survey the carnage afterwards, they witness the aftermath of an astounding slaughter. Walls are splashed with blood. Spilled entrails stain carpets and hang from curtain rods. Pulped, decapitated heads sit in a pile by the door. These sights occasion a possible 7-point Stability loss. Amid the dismembered corpses of Cossacks and gamblers, they find partial remains of Mazurov and Tourjansky. They find the general's treasure room open and partially

looted—Gravenhurst and the Count have taken easily transportable loot to caches elsewhere on the island, to return to at their leisure. Even so, they leave behind a small fortune, enough to enrich the group, should they choose to fund their lives or operations with the general's blood money. If they make an effort to return the stolen paintings to their rightful owners, they gain a 1-point Sanity refresh.

Perhaps armed with the arsenal from the treasure room, the Investigators may try to finish off one or all of the monsters for good. Their bloodlust temporarily sated, none of the three seeks a fight after the chateau slaughter. Dracula and Gravenhurst find separate hiding places for the general's loot, and might at that point be intercepted by vengeful investigators. Kemp dematerializes as soon as the slaughter is over. Although neither Dracula nor Gravenhurst are spoiling for a fight, they'll defend themselves if attacked.

Rather than alert the monsters to Mazurov's deception, the group may wish to use that knowledge to negotiate their way off the island. As they try to blackmail him, Mazurov keeps his other option in mind—if it's safer for him to simply have his men kill the Investigators than to let them go, he'll wait for a good opportunity and order the Cossacks to open fire on them. This probably forces the surviving Investigators to retreat into the woods, where again they may find that their best option is to enlist the creatures on their behalf. This is only possible if they retain possession of the fake tome.

Although there are no boats on the island while the hunt is in progress, Mazurov's servants wait on shore, ready to send vessels over to pick up the guests when the event has ended. The Investigators can use Mazurov's radio to **Bargain** their way to transport off the island.

Alternate Endings

As the hunt begins, the situation becomes open-ended. Although the neatest ending is one in which the players discover that the book is a fake and set the creatures on Mazurov, be prepared to follow the players' leads and take the story toward another satisfying conclusion. Other possible endings might include:

- the team simply defeating the creatures in combat, then going after Mazurov.
- taking Mazurov hostage and securing an escape from the island, at which point they must flee the pursuing monsters. (This might extend the hunt further into Backlot Gothic, as the three continue to vie for the fake *Necronomicon*.)
- destroying the book, then somehow convincing the creatures that vengeance is futile.

Sanity Refreshes

Although Mythos references abound, this pulpy monster team-up does little to expose the team to the mind-shattering truths. With no Sanity at stake, no universal Sanity refreshes are possible. (If you're feeling like a real softy, you might provide a 1-point refresh to anyone playing their Drives in an entertaining and self-sacrificing manner.)



THE FINAL REEL

"SOME DAY THE PIECING TOGETHER OF DISSOCIATED KNOWLEDGE WILL OPEN UP SUCH TERRIFYING VISTAS OF REALITY, AND OF OUR FRIGHTFUL POSITION THEREIN, THAT WE SHALL EITHER GO MAD FROM THE REVELATION OR FLEE FROM THE DEADLY LIGHT ..."

-- H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE CALL OF CTHULHU"

Called upon to help shut down production of a horror movie promulgating disturbing themes, the investigators enter the glamorous and treacherous world of 1930s Hollywood.

Although with adjustments it can be run at any time, *The Final Reel* is best presented as a caper to a series of Backlot Gothic adventures. Set up and character motivations are easier to establish if the Investigators are already well acquainted with the Mythos and its dangers. Ideally, they already know enough about the Old Ones to experience an instinctive chill at the thought of a film starring Cthulhu playing at movie palaces across the nation.

Introduction

The Spine

The case begins when the FBI requests the group's assistance in the performance of a delicate task. Their contact, **Mr. Verity**, putatively works for the Hays Office, the self-censorship board set up by the Hollywood studios. In reality, he has a second job—to

ensure that the output of America's movie industry remains free of occult influence. Alarmed by the production of a film entitled *Call Of Cthulhu*, but lacking the authority to shut it down outright, he wants the Investigators to find a pretext to quietly halt production of the film.

The scenario unfolds in a player-directed manner, as they probe into the dark pasts of the **Cast and Crew**, hoping to find the scandal they need to bring an end to the Dreamer In the Deep's first talking picture. While doing so they must dodge the dangers of a haunted film set, and the reactions of the cultists secretly sponsoring the production.

If they choose to track down the Hollywood Cthulhu cult, the Investigators will solve a Tinseltown mystery and uncover the final fate of **The Transfigured Man**.

The Horrible Truth

One of the central figures involved in the production, either on screen or off, doubles as head of a local Cthulhu cult. The scenario is written so that any of

ten characters can turn out to be the primary human villain. You may also decide that another of these characters is a secondary member or unwilling/unwitting accomplice to the cult.

Careful not to overplay their hand while the cameras are rolling, the cultists strike back with a vengeance when the Investigators achieve their objective. This climactic struggle brings to light a strange truth involving the disappearance of silent-era scream star Kenneth "The Man Of Masks" Beaumont.

Scenes

Mr. Verity

This scenario assumes that the investigators have already cracked several Mythos mysteries. These successes are significant enough to attract the notice of forces in the government who see the breadth of the global threat. Campaign frames like the Armitage Inquiry or Project Covenant allow for the Investigators to be loaned out for this purpose. Otherwise, contrive a reason for an Investigator to be contacted by a trusted FBI source and sent on an undercover mission into deepest, darkest Tinseltown.

They are to arrive in Los Angeles discreetly and report to an operative codenamed "Mr. Verity." He is an FBI special agent named Ed Stacker; the investigators are to protect his identity at all costs. (Groups may include characters, like hobos, criminals or charlatans, who wouldn't logically be trusted with sensitive information like this. If so, the trustworthy types complete the rendezvous and are

The Final Reel

Crossover Potential

The “Mr. Verity” codename is a reference to *Trail Of Cthulhu*’s sister game, *The Esotericists*. In its present-day continuity, briefing agents for the benign, anti-occult conspiracy Ordo Veritatis always adopt this code name.

Use this detail if your players know *The Esotericists* and will enjoy the hint of crossover, or if you plan to one day run an *Esotericists* game and would like to drop in a little foreshadowing.

It can easily be omitted if you fear that mixing the two settings, which share genre elements but very different occult cosmologies, might lead to distracting continuity questions for you or your players.

instructed to keep their less savory comrades in the dark.)

Ed Stacker is a balding, open-faced man in his mid fifties who looks more like a friendly store clerk than a federal agent. In his old-fashioned suit and accountant-like tie, he also seems out of place amid Los Angeles’ swaying palm trees. **Medicine** notes Stacker’s halting gait and limited mobility, which are suggestive of multiple gunshot wounds. If asked, Stacker humbly admits that Mr. Hoover put him out to pasture after a little run-in with a bank robber’s tommy gun.

He meets with the Investigators in a cramped room in an office suite belonging to the Production Code Administration.

History reveals that the PCA added teeth to previously unenforced content guidelines for Hollywood studios in 1934. It is usually called the “Hays office”, after Will Hays, who was head

Freelance Censors

If the Keeper doesn’t want to add any U.S. Government Mythos investigations to the background of her campaign, the Investigators can stumble upon the *Call of Cthulhu* film project in some other way:

- Any Investigator in Los Angeles (for another adventure, or because the campaign is set in L.A.) might overhear some mention of Capitol’s new monster flick, perhaps emphasizing its unfilmable working title.
- A dilettante, or another Investigator with a Credit Rating of 5+, might meet a Broadway or film producer in New York or Chicago (or somewhere else) who mentions the movie.
- An archaeologist, anthropologist, parapsychologist, or similar sort of Investigator might get a letter from Ted Poster looking for a consultant willing to be used in film publicity in exchange for shockingly small compensation.
- Without government contacts, getting set access will require a different cover story. This can be as challenging or as unimportant as the Keeper desires. Some possibilities:
- Journalists may wangle press passes; detectives might bluff or bully their way in; hobos might take day labor gigs building a set.
- Rich dilettantes might work their personal connections in L.A., or with Ted Poster’s bankers, to get an invitation onto the set.
- Any sort of Investigator might worm their way into an NPC’s confidence, romantic life, or friendship, and trade on that to get set access.

of the industry trade association when the original code was first proposed. In fact, it is run by a determinedly censorious man named Joseph Breen.

(If your series is set prior to June 1934, Stacker works directly for Will Hays at the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association, trying to get producers to heed its then toothless content code.)

Stacker reveals his secret role, in addition to serving as an assistant to Mr. Breen. Although the PCA is an arm of a private association, its ultimate boss, Will Hays, is well-connected in Washington. J. Edgar Hoover asked him to install Stacker at the PCA to ensure against the release of motion pictures with true occult content. (As the Investigators may or may not have discovered at this point in their Mythos-

busting careers, Hoover has had an eye on Cthulhu cult developments since the 1928 Innsmouth raids.)

Now, after looking over scripts for several years, Stacker has found his first case of Mythos subversion in a Hollywood movie—a horror film now shooting at Capitol Pictures, provisionally titled *Call Of Cthulhu*. Although studio chief Ted Poster has personally assured him that it won’t go out to theaters under such an unpronounceable name, Stacker remains concerned. If the Old Ones enter public consciousness alongside classic horror characters like Frankenstein, the Mummy, and Dracula, there’s no telling what effect that could have on public sanity.

Ed argued against approval of the script as soon as he saw the name, but Breen instead requested his usual round of

changes and let the picture go ahead. Breen is unaware of Stacker's true role.

Stacker's problem is that he can't shut the production down without revealing what he, and the government, know about the Cthulhu threat. He needs intermediaries, and a pretext unrelated to the supernatural. That's where the Investigators come in.

They're to find a reason requiring Poster to fire a principal of the production on grounds of general moral turpitude. Once he's forced to suspend production, Stacker can quietly lean on him, making the whole thing go away.

Stacker has no reason to think that there's anything supernatural actually occurring on set. If the team encounters creatures or cultists, they're free to deal with them as they normally would. But he expects this to be a case where they can end a grave menace without ever encountering anything eerie.

To this end, he has arranged for them to be given relatively free access to Capitol's soundstages. They'll be operating under the guise of staffers to various US Senators. Even with the production code in real force, there is still occasionally pressure for the government to legislate movie content. This thought terrifies the studios. Ted Poster can be relied on to order everyone on his set to curry favor with the Investigators. Members of political delegations to Hollywood always turn into starstruck saps. So long as the Investigators throw in enough stupid questions to disguise their true intent, they'll be able to poke around and dig up the dirt Stacker needs.



Cast and Crew

This section provides character write-ups for the ten central NPCs, any one of whom might be the scenario's ultimate villain. Write-ups are broken down into the following components:

First Impressions: This section provides an initial description of the character, as might be provided to the players when their Investigators watch him or her at work or in a social situation.

Deeper Observations: If investigative abilities provide any other further insights into the character, these are given here.

Biography: Basic background information on the character's past appears here, along with the investigative abilities required to uncover it. Note that film journalism is in its infancy in the 1930s. Academic interest in what is universally regarded as disposable trash culture is next to nonexistent. Profiles of better known figures, like Oliver Ates, may be found with the aid of **Library Use**, in newspapers or respectable magazines. Others may lack any significant public profile outside of the world of fan magazines—which anyone with **Library Use** knows to be unreliable products of studio publicity departments. To learn about them requires the Investigators to ask around the Hollywood community, using **Oral History**.

Mundane Secret: Most of the major NPCs harbors a dark secret which might, if properly exposed, lead to scandal and the pretext Ed Stacker needs to shut down production.

Esoteric Motivation: If (and only if) you decide to make this character the main antagonist, this section provides information on their true, Mythos motivations. If the character is a secondary antagonist, the main antagonist has probably blackmailed him or her into cooperating, using knowledge of the mundane secret.

Oliver Ates

The visionary director Oliver Ates is quite frankly wasted at a second-rate studio like Capitol. Just ask him.

First Impressions: Forty-six year old Oliver Ates conducts himself as a suave, debonair man of letters. Impeccably attired at all times, he speaks with a rich, plummy English accent. At work, his chummy, nurturing manner of guiding actors and issuing instructions to crew varies sharply with the standard image of the gruff taskmaster barking orders through a megaphone.

Deeper Observations: **Assess Honesty** shows that he is hiding something. **Languages (any)** shows that his upper-class English accent is skillfully feigned. A 1-point **Languages (any)** spend places his birth accent as deriving from a working class background in England's West Midlands. A 1-point **Streetwise** spend suspects Ates of homosexual tendencies. An attractive, youngish male Investigator making a combined 1-point **Flattery** and 1-point **Reassurance** spend might induce Ates to make a pass at him. Any advances Ates makes are discreet, allowing him to disavow their true intent if the object of his attentions reacts poorly. A 1-point **Oral History** spend reveals the widespread assumption that Ates is "funny that way", but no direct evidence of moral turpitude.

Biography: Oliver Ates grew up as a meatpacker's son in the town of Dudley, England. During the Great War, he served as a merchant marine crewman, running the German blockade; he survived two submarine attacks. After the Armistice, he went to London and reinvented himself first as an actor and then as a stage director. His involvement as director of the original 1923 production of the hit play *The Clouds Are Rolling In* led to his being hired to helm its 1925 film adaptation. He moved to Hollywood, only to follow his debut with a trio of high-profile

dramatic flops. Only when he teamed with macabre star Kenneth “the Man Of Masks” Beaumont (see sidebar) for a series of silent bloodcurdlers did his career revive. In 1931 (or two years ago, for a game set in 1930 or ‘31), he severely blackened his reputation with the extremely distressing *Carnival Of Sin*. This thriller, his first without the presumably deceased Beaumont, was deemed so shocking that it was suppressed after a few riot-provoking screenings. In the film, real carnival freaks play the largely sympathetic monsters who hunt and destroy a trio of rich socialites who drunkenly kill one of their number in a hit and run accident. **Oral History** (to gather Hollywood scuttlebutt) shows that Ates’ career now hangs by a thread. If *Call Of Cthulhu* does not perform well, or engenders similar controversy, he’ll be unhireable.

Mundane Secret: Ates is indeed a homosexual (the term “gay” won’t be adopted for another generation or so), part of a small, discreet cadre among the Hollywood creative types. Their deviance, as the mores of the day consider it, is tolerated so long as it can be safely concealed from a generally naïve public. Only an Investigator willing to get himself into a likewise compromising position can expose Ates’ sexuality directly, by luring him into a pass, reciprocating, and allowing himself to be photographed by another investigator. Concerned for the moment with his rapidly dying career, Ates is not currently pursuing any romantic or sexual options. However, an infiltration into his palatial home (requires tests of Conceal and Filch, probably with Sense Trouble and Fleeing when caught in the act) yields old, graphic photos of young men that are clearly his handiwork. This grants Stacker the grounds to call off the Cthulhu shoot without blowing his cover.

Esoteric Motivation: Torpedoed by a

The Man Of Masks

With the possible exception of Rin Tin Tin, Kenneth Beaumont, “the Man Of Masks” was the most unusual superstar of the 1920s silent screen. Born in 1883, he ran from an abusive Prairie home at the age of fourteen, first to join the circus, and later to migrate to Vaudeville. He came to Hollywood in 1919, where he started as a make-up artist, served as a stand-in, and eventually got a big break playing a brutish backwoods wildman in 1921’s *Sierra Wives*. Teamed with director Oliver Ates (p. 176), he scored a series of hits as grotesque and monstrous figures. Although his skill at creating elaborate prosthetic makeups served as the basis of the studio’s publicity campaign for him, his stardom would have been fleeting were it not for his ability to imbue his disfigured characters with striking pathos.

In 1930, while he and Ates were preparing their magnum opus (and Beaumont’s first talkie) *Monsters of Paris*, Kenneth went missing on a camping trip to the San Gabriel mountains. A year later partial skeletal remains were found near his last known campsite.

A condensed version of the information found in this sidebar is known to any character with **History**. A 1-point spend provides all the details.

As Kenneth Beaumont features in a possible dramatic ending for the scenario, try to work in at least a subtle, early reference to him, even if the Investigators fail to focus on Ates or Elmer Sedlock.

German submarine in 1916, Ates’ ship was left adrift and sinking in a remote stretch of the North Atlantic; prey for a colony of Deep Ones. His crewmates were promptly slaughtered or pulled under the icy waves, but the Deep Ones spared Ates to be rescued by a passing trawler. Oliver became obsessed with his mysterious survival, and the next year sabotaged his own ship to deliver another crew to the Deep Ones. Again they spared him, and this time, as if in answer to his questions, the dreams began. He learned of the splendor of the deep, and of the Great Old One Cthulhu, priest and god, who personifies and dwells beneath it all. Shell-shocked and shorn of sanity, Ates swore to use the esoteric knowledge conveyed to him by the dreams to destroy humanity. Any species that could devise the titanic, industrialized slaughterhouse that was the Great War deserved to be extirpated by the Great Old Ones. Even then he planned to get into the film directing trade, to bring

down civilization by one day making a moving picture that would force upon mankind a shattering anagnorisis.

Warren Ballenger

Broodingly handsome leading man Warren Ballenger plays *Call Of Cthulhu*’s starring role, that of heroic dilettante Frank Thurston.

First Impressions: Ballenger displays the dark, slightly pretty good looks of an early thirties male lead. For his role as Thurston he wears his hair slicked back and has darkened his lips and eyes with heavy makeup. (Delete this last detail if you’re playing in the later thirties.) Out of character he wears tweeds, a flat cloth cap, and riding boots.

Deeper Observations: **Psychology** shows that he is acting hardest when playing the role of Warren Ballenger. When plied with **Flattery**, he tries to seem pleased, while **Psychology** shows him

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmland



to be secretly annoyed. **Streetwise** notes the behavioral tics of a dedicated sousé.

Biography: (**Oral History** or **Library Use**) Originally a stage star in England, Ballenger's classy diction and penetrating voice won him a successful Hollywood audition during the first gasp of the talkie craze. Though he has a series of high profile roles to his credit, he is usually overshadowed by his female co-stars. He's appeared opposite Norma Shearer, Barbara Stanwyck and (in an ill-advised pairing) Mae West.

Mundane Secret: Ballenger's stability

hangs by a fraying thread. His alcoholism has advanced to the point where he has to drink formaldehyde to get a buzz. Special effects man Clyde Methvin, who supplies him with his libation of choice, is the only person on the set who knows this. Ballenger is completely asexual, a fact disguised by publicity stories linking him to a raft of starlets, including Evelyn McAvoy. His crazed drinking may stem from the sense of alienation his lack of sexual interests provokes in him. An Investigator might create the necessary scandal surrounding him by accompanying him on an evening of berserk carousing (spends of Psychology, Streetwise, and

Flattery may assist here.)

Esoteric Motivation: Ballenger's self-destructive streak has turned outwards, at the same time that his desperate quest for sensation has led him (via flagellant orgies that left him likewise unmoved) to the Cthulhu cult. Aspiring to an act of suicide that will envelop the entire world, Warren has secretly engineered Cthulhu's cinematic debut in hopes of triggering a supernatural apocalypse.

Lillian Mayes

Blond actress Lillian Mayes plays Denice, the hero's scrappy love interest.

First Impressions: Deprived of the glorious glow of klieg lights, Lillian appears a notch less beautiful than on the screen. She's warm to those who can advance her career and imperiously cool to anyone who cannot. Until they can demonstrate their usefulness to her, she looks right through the Investigators, as if they aren't even there.

Deeper Observations: Any **Bargain** that increases her status or comfort seemingly awakens a sweeter, kinder version of Lillian Mayes—until the benefit expires. **Medicine** suggests that she's in her mid thirties, not her late twenties, as she claims. **Oral History** shows that many doubt her ability to play horror, having established herself as a musical comedy performer.

Biography: A protégé of Ted Poster's, Lillian started as a dancer and quickly rose from bit part to lead status. Her big hits include *The Broadway Brats*, *The Sky Is Sunny*, and *Ants In Your Pants Of 1933*. (Adjust date if necessary.)

Mundane Secret: Last year Lillian was present during a boat cruise during which studio mogul Bernard Bendixen died, supposedly of a heart attack. Also on the boat that day were its owner, Ted Poster (p. 182), comedian Joe E.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Final Reel

Call Of Cthulhu: The Movie

The troubled production appears to be in a state of perpetual rewrite, with scripter Lee Walling (p. 181) burning the midnight oil with revisions to please contradictory demands of director Oliver Ates (p. 176) and studio chief Ted Poster (p. 182.) Even so, a look at the current shooting script allows the characters to extract the following synopsis:

Dashing millionaire explorer Frank Thurston (Warren Ballenger) interrupts plans for an expedition to the jungles of Borneo when news comes that his uncle George Gammell has taken violently ill. Thurston finds his uncle in the last stages of a fatal delirium seemingly caused by his researches into a mythical creature called Cthulhu. Accompanied by Gammell's lovely young ward Denise (Lillian Mayes), Thurston tracks down and interrogates the dissolute artist Henry Wilcox (Rudi Rother.) Wilcox describes the dreams of cyclopean spires (shown in a special effects sequence designed by Clyde Methvin) that led him to Gammell's doorstep, prompting the old man to revive his dormant researches. Wilcox escapes and is found murdered. Thurston's pursuit of his killers leads him to the bayous of Louisiana, where, aided by an Inspector Legrasse, he busts up a cult of insane worshipers, led by the alluring young witch doctor, Madame Lita (Evelyn McAvoy.) After rescuing Denise from her hypnotic clutches, Thurston makes Lita talk: she may have failed to sacrifice Denise to Cthulhu, but he's rising just the same, from his sunken island in the Pacific. Ignoring Denise's pleas to leave well enough alone, Thurston flies with Legrasse to Valparaiso to charter the whaling vessel Emma, helmed by a captain Gustav Johansen. Traveling to the lonely coordinates supplied by Madame Lita, they come upon the risen city of R'lyeh, fight a legion of native islanders, and witness the waking of Cthulhu. They flee to the Emma, with the sea creature in hot pursuit. Thurston seizes the helm to ram the creature, then finishes it off with a well-placed harpoon. Denise, revealed to have stowed away on the Emma, rushes into his arms. END.

Characters who know the real-life events (for example through access to the files of the Armitage Inquiry or Project Covenant) can see that the script combines elements of the 1925-26 wave of cultic activity, the 1907 New Orleans raids, and the 1925 encounter between the armed yacht *Alert* and the temporarily risen Cthulhu. These quite disparate cases have been roughly wedded together into a single snappy adventure narrative. Alternately, resort to **Cthulhu Mythos** senses a terrible reality behind this apparently fanciful script (cost: 4 Stability/1 Sanity).

The script battle currently underway concerns the native warriors who appear on R'lyeh. Ates wants them cut, as it makes no sense to have living people on an island that's just risen from the sea. Poster says the scene needs more action, and wants to reuse costumes and props from his recent production *Jaguar Bay*. Walling dreams of throttling both bosses.

Brown (b. 1892) and singer Rudy Vallée (b. 1901). This item can be gleaned with **Oral History** (as juicy gossip about Lillian's sexual voraciousness, or about Poster's willingness to pimp her) from the enemies or rivals of either Lillian or Poster (such as Evelyn or Ates, respectively), by journalist Investigators gossiping with fellow reporters (**Reassurance**).

In fact, Lillian, jealous of his attentions to a rival starlet, stabbed Bendixen to death with a letter opener. Poster

cleaned up the crime scene and used his private studio cops to suppress unwanted inquiries. Even other guests on the boat, including Brown and Vallée, honestly believe the heart attack story.

Esoteric Motivation: Lillian's yearning for the worship of others, probably instilled during a loveless childhood, has been left unslaked by mere filmic stardom. She joined the cult, and worked her way quickly through its hierarchy to the top, in pursuit of apotheosis. Lillian

has convinced herself that if she enables Cthulhu's rise, he will return the favor by making her a literal goddess. That this would entail transfiguration into a gruesome non-Euclidean form troubles her not at all.

Rudi Rother

The eccentric line readings of cherubic German émigré Rudi Rother have made him a sought-after character actor. Here he plays the doomed, decadent artist Henry Wilcox.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Shadows Over Filmiland

First Impressions: Rother comes off as a typical extroverted, attention-seeking actor. When Investigators seek him out for information he bombards them with an unending stream of petty complaints, in which none of his collaborators are spared.

Deeper Observations: **Streetwise** spots a successful attempt by a studio functionary to keep nubile underage fans out of Rother's eye line.

Biography: After his magnetic role as the Robot King in the German expressionist sci-fi epic *Prayers Of the Moon*, Rother skedaddled to Hollywood. He usually plays monsters, effete gangsters, and other weirdos. If your game is set later in the decade Rother, who is half Jewish, fled the Nazi regime. With the colossal solipsism of the true actor, he speaks of Hitler's ascent as a conspiracy against him, personally.

Mundane Secret: As suggested above, Rother's weakness is underage girls. His celebrity status, and the shame felt by victims' families, has so far allowed him to wriggle free of statutory rape charges. Revelations of his predatory sexual behavior would certainly torpedo production.

Esoteric Motivation: Even cultists mistake actors with their screen personae. Rother was recruited by the cult, believing that his sinister performances had to bespeak a distant, inhuman heritage. Rudi played along at first, in exchange for free access to their teen daughters. Exposure to their rituals shattered his sanity, turning him into the monster they thought he was all along.

Evelyn McAvoy

Though of Irish-British heritage, dark-haired siren Evelyn McAvoy specializes in characters of supposedly exotic extraction. Her role here as seductive cult leader Madame Lita is typical of her output.



First Impressions: McAvoy can switch on a dime between her real-life persona of a tomboyish girl next door to a smoldering femme fatale. She is not only approachable, but flirtatiously over-familiar. She touches and hugs male investigators after the briefest of introductions, giving receptive seeming males special pet names.

Perpetually hovering in the

background is her mother, Fiona, who serves as her assistant and makeup artist.

Deeper Observations: When men try to take her up on her seeming advances, she dismisses them with a laugh. She eats up **Flattery** but always gives up a little less than she knows, hoping to keep the Investigator coming back for more. Her fondness for rich

The Final Reel

gentlemen may provide information to those of **Credit Rating** 5+.

Biography: Born in Dublin but raised in New York City, Evelyn first hit the stage as a child actress—pushed into the footlights by Fiona. Ted Poster signed her to the Capitol roster four years ago. Often cast as a villainess or the romantic rival to the leading lady, she has yet to land a leading role.

Mundane Secret: Careful Shadowing reveals that Evelyn has been secretly seeing Los Angeles mob figure Massimo Ocone. Confident in the secrecy surrounding their affair, Ocone has taken the risk of using her apartment to stash guns, money, and stag reels. A police raid on Evelyn's place would end her career—and the production.

Esoteric Motivation: Evelyn is a third-generation cultist. Her mother sent her into show business on the grounds that the 20th century would belong to movies and entertainment. In this setting, the followers of the Old Ones would finally grasp the levers of power. To play Fiona as the ultimate stage mother, make her the power behind the throne, with Evelyn as her *lā lā*-chanting front.

Lee Walling

Nervous and harried, writer Lee Walling peers at his lurid studio world through glasses perpetually fogged by his constant perspiration.

First Impressions: Walling treats everyone who tries to talk to him as a distraction from his frustrating task of continually rewriting *Call of Cthulhu* to meet the contradictory demands of his director and studio boss. After a little **Flattery**, especially from someone of a literary bent, he opens up with delightful anecdotes of the juggernaut of stupidity that is the movie business.

Deeper Observations: **Streetwise**

Sample Screenplay Page

EXT. BAYOU. NIGHT.

LEGRASSE'S DEPUTIES frog-march the hissing, spitting, fighting MADAME LITA away through the flame-lit cypresses.

MADAME LITA

It's too late, Thurston! You may have saved your woman, but Cthulhu will rise! Cthulhu will rise!

FAT DEPUTY

Save it for the funny pages, girlie!

MADAME LITA

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn!

DENICE slips away from LEGRASSE. As she nimbly dodges cypress roots, the blanket he has wrapped around her shoulders falls to the ground, exposing her torn silk nightgown. She rushes to THURSTON's side.

DENICE

Tell me it isn't so, Frank! You can't be planning to go to, to -- this island in the Pacific Ocean.

THURSTON takes her in his arms, shielding her shivering body from the cold night air.

THURSTON

I've no choice, darling. The very fate of the world is at stake.

DENICE

But it might be a trap!

THURSTON

It might at that.

DENICE

What if -- what if it's real?

THURSTON

Don't you see? That's why I have to go. It might be real.

indicates that his seeming casual, reckless conversation is carefully calculated to conceal something.

Biography: Born Leopold Walberg in Poughkeepsie, New York, Walling worked as a sports writer and

political columnist in New York and Chicago. Newspapermen are routinely hired as screenwriters in 1930s Hollywood. Lee got the call thanks to a recommendation from fellow ex-journalist Stanley von Eltz. **Library Use** must be used to glean

these facts, as nobody in Tinseltown bothers to gossip about the lowly writers.

Mundane Secret: Lee is a card-carrying member of the American Communist Party. He attends regular meetings, in which the leadership exhorts him to ideologically righteous behavior and urges him to insert pro-Stalinist messages into the escapist claptrap he's paid to write. His cell, led by fellow screenwriter Stanley von Eltz, genuinely believes it will bring about revolution through its slow infiltration of show business. Although hysteria surrounding pinko sympathies in Hollywood won't erupt in full force for another twenty years, revelation of its screenwriter's role in a Soviet cell would be enough to kibosh the Cthulhu picture.

Esoteric Motivation: Disillusioned by the sterile cant of the Party, Walling stumbled across a force offering far greater rewards for his obedience. His gift for internecine struggle honed by years as a Red, he quickly rose to a dominant position in the Los Angeles cult. In addition to successfully pitching the Cthulhu picture to the oblivious Ted Poster, he's slowly converting his comrades into cultists.

Elmer Sedlock

Make-up artist Elmer Sedlock labors to create masks and prosthetic make-up rigs for the hideously deformed, fish-like cultists featured in the bayou ritual sequence. He's also responsible for the ordinary and glamor make-up effects for other members of the cast.

First Impressions: Thick-necked and broad-shouldered, Elmer's air of jaunty masculinity may be unexpected in a makeup man. A gruff, inconsiderate genius, he gives the impression of caring about nothing other than his obscure craft.

Deeper Observations: Sedlock becomes

instantly defensive when challenged on any matter pertaining to his art. **Psychology** suggests a deep-seated insecurity, and that his ego is completely bound up in his professional skills. **Streetwise** guesses that Elmer has a violent temper. **Medicine** spots broken and rehealed knuckles, suggesting his participation in multiple youthful brawls.

Biography: **Oral History** discovers that Sedlock began his career fresh out of high school, as an assistant to Man Of Masks Kenneth Beaumont (p. 177.) The depressive Beaumont clashed with the fiery Sedlock, repeatedly firing and re-hiring him in the most humiliating way possible. With Beaumont, Sedlock signed on with Capitol Pictures, creating a series of classic make-ups for fright films, mostly directed by Oliver Ates, and mostly credited to Beaumont.

Mundane Secret: As much as he hates to admit it, Sedlock did steal everything he knows—or knew, early on, from Kenneth Beaumont. Eventually he grew to despise Beaumont as a constant reminder of his limitations. So he followed his boss out on a camping trip to the San Gabriel mountains, where he attacked him and left him for dead.

Normally the revelation of a crime by a mere makeup man would not be enough to kill a picture, but Sedlock's contribution to *Call of Cthulhu* is so prominent that Ted Poster will close it down.

Esoteric Motivation: Sedlock committed the unwitting mistake of murdering Beaumont on the sacrificial grounds of the Los Angeles cult. Beaumont came back from the grave, an insane version of his former self. He promised to show the cultists how to get a Cthulhu movie made—provided they blackmailed his rival into acting as a front. Though terrified that he'll be expendable after the movie comes out, Sedlock has no choice but to obey—and to bury

himself in his work, knowing that it may be his epitaph.

Ted Poster

Ted Poster runs the scrappy small studio Capitol Pictures.

First Impressions: Younger, trimmer, and more fashionably dressed than his fellow moguls, Ted cuts a dashing figure on the Hollywood social circuit. He walks briskly, gesticulates with his ever-present cigarette holder, and constantly dictates story ideas to a hovering stenographer.

Deeper Observations: **Psychology** guesses that his physical restlessness masks a bottomless self-doubt. **Credit Rating 5+** shows that his upper-class east coast American accent is affected. **Outdoorsman** catches him in a boast about his equestrian skills that shows he actually knows very little about horses. Ashamed of his ethnic background, he treats apparently Jewish Investigators with disdain. He makes veiled anti-Semitic remarks in an attempt to impress WASP Investigators of **Credit Rating 4+**.

Biography: (**Oral History**) Born Theo Pustel in Teaneck, New Jersey, Poster renamed himself and followed his uncles in their transition from garment makers to silent movie producers. In 1929 he forced his uncles out of the company in an internal financial coup. Since then he has rescued it from near bankruptcy by cheaply following popular trends. Low budget musicals, in imitation of MGM, have now given way to a series of Universal-inspired scare flicks.

Mundane Secret: Like all good studio heads of his era, Poster protects his investment in his contract stars by cleaning up after their scandals. Unlike them, the budget-conscious Poster personally retains incriminating records of their misdeeds to maintain the upper hand in future contract negotiations.

The Final Reel

In an apparently safe location the Investigators can locate after following three core clues, Poster maintains a safe. It contains details of Lillian Mayes' boat murder of mogul Bernard Bendixen, and secret settlement deals with the parents of two of Rudi Rother's underaged conquests. Also included is a dossier on the Communist connections of Lee Walling and several other Capitol writers.

Esoteric Motivation: Ted Poster originally joined the Los Angeles cult hoping that its ritual magic would bring him the wealth, success, and recognition he craved. Drawn in ever deeper, he gradually realized that these goals were meaningless in the face of the Old Ones' cosmic indifference. Now, by heralding the world's end, he hopes to curry the favor of Cthulhu and Azathoth, as he once struggled for the approval of the old-money rich.

Clyde Methvin

Special effects wizard Clyde Methvin designed the large puppet Cthulhu which appears in the climactic boat attack sequence. He supplied the whizzing, popping array of spectacular-looking electrical equipment found on the R'lyeh set. In his basement lab he's working on the film's brief stop motion shots, which will be intercut into the boat attack.

First Impressions: Gray-haired and slightly stooped, Clyde Methvin may remind investigators of an enthusiastic high school science teacher. Sleeves rolled up, his drooping pants held on by overworked suspenders, he runs from set to set, tinkering with his beloved creations.

Deeper Observations: **Chemistry** spots telltale stains from several extremely hazardous chemicals on his clothing. Conversing with him about **Biology**, **Chemistry**, **Physics** or **Pharmacy** shows him to be an enormously

knowledgeable auto-didact in many scientific fields.

Biography: Before settling in to his role as a special effects pioneer for Capitol Pictures, Methvin led a knockabout life worthy of a *Trail of Cthulhu* Investigator. He's been an aeronautics engineer, war photographer, jungle explorer, journalist, and shop teacher.

Mundane Secret: None. Clyde may neglect his marriage in favor of his gadgets, but, like many behind-the-scenes technicians, is ultimately an ordinary, well-adjusted working man. Even if he were up to something scandalous, he's not important enough that his ousting from the set would allow Stacker to close down production.

Esoteric Motivation: Clyde's journey as a self-taught scientist has taken him down some peculiar alleys. He sourced his electronic gadgets from underground contacts with occult connections. His gadgets are based on alchemical diagrams found in a variety of forbidden texts. Exposure to these tomes shattered his sanity, leading him into a leadership position in the Los Angeles cult, and the scheme to show the face of Cthulhu to the masses.

Paul Daniel

Art director Paul Daniel designed the sets and costumes used in *The Call of Cthulhu*, including the vertiginous Dreamland set and the vast and eerie R'lyeh Temple.

First Impressions: With pale hair pomaded down and glittering blue eyes, Daniel looks and acts like a stereotypical artist, dreamy and intense by turns. He seems young even for a man in his thirties, although he is thin enough to have lost his puppy fat.

Deeper Observations: Over time, the Investigators will notice Daniel drinks a lot of orange juice and eats a lot of

Connections

If you've run the "Dimension Y" adventure from *Stunning Eldritch Tales*, Investigators covertly checking out Methvin's lab with **Evidence Collection** find packing labels indicating that some of his electrical components were designed by that scenario's antagonist, David Fearn. **Intimidation** prompts Methvin to confess that he purchased both equipment and designs from Fearn—who the Investigators presumably dealt with in some definitive fashion during the conclusion of "Dimension Y." He denies all knowledge of Fearn's unsavory doings—which is true, unless Methvin is your primary or secondary antagonist.

Investigators who have encountered working versions of such equipment in a Backlot Gothic scenario, such as "Dr. Grave Dust" or "The Non-Euclidean Man," might instead find that parts of Methvin's devices were shipped to him by Frederic Gravenhurst or Victor Petroff.

On a related note, Investigators who have gone through "The Black Chateau" may discover that Paul Daniel's sets are inspired by Adhemar Grau drawings.

candy bars for a grown man. He has a restless leg and a hitching gait; a 1-point **Medicine** spend will notice dilated pupils beneath his sleepy eyes, even under the stage lights. Eventually, **Streetwise** or **Pharmacy** will identify him as a heroin addict.

Biography: Born in Posen (part of Germany then, part of Poland after the War) as Paul Danielowicz, he was

part of the revolutionary cinema in postwar Germany. During the Weimar era, he produced and directed various films, but soon found his niche as an art director. He worked with Rudi Rother on *Prayers of the Moon* and either followed him to Hollywood or fled with him from Nazi harassment, depending on the year the adventure occurs. (If it's early enough, Daniel worked with Ates and Beaumont on the "silent chillers" of 1927-1929.) He is well aware of Rother's proclivities, and can helpfully drop a dime on his irritating prima-donna fellow exile in exchange for a decorous silence about his own habits. Likewise, he buys his heroin (and sales stock) from an Ocone-connected dealer, and can point cooperative Investigators at Evelyn instead of himself. And as a former Weimar "degenerate Red," he might have recognized one of Walling's occasional lunch partners as a Comintern operative.

Mundane Secret: Daniel is a heroin addict, and has been ever since his glory days in the early 1920s. This, not Nazi persecution, is the real reason he had to leave German film work. Once in America, he cleaned up his act for a while, but his less satisfying artistic experience in Hollywood drove him back onto the needle. To pay for his habit, he sells drugs on the side. While revealing a mere art director as a doper might not be enough to close the production, Daniel has provided other drugs (marijuana, cocaine, and pills) to enough other members of the crew that a "Capitol Pictures Dope Ring" headline could stick.

Esoteric Motivation: While in Berlin, Daniel fell in with the occult-minded crowd around F.W. Murnau and Fritz Lang, and posturing black magic gave way to deeper and deeper meditations on the true lore of the Mythos. Depending on the Keeper's whim, Daniel might: have fled the nihilistic Berlin cult of Yog-Sothoth only to be drawn back in by the Cthulhu cult in

Minor Character Name List

Here are some period names to attach to minor NPCs, like extras, day players, or crew members, as they're required in the narrative:

(Male) Milt Rogozinsky, Guy Bennett, Mack Sheesley, Philip Ivers, Victor Irving, Alex Brody

(Female) Betty Schuyler, Nancy Hopkins, Sally Levien, Bernice Neill, Olive Moore, Kathryn Sullivan

L.A.; have been sent by the Berlin cult to establish fraternal ties with (or take over, or found) the Cthulhu cult in L.A.; be an Ahnenerbe deep-cover agent intending to pour the toxin of the Mythos into America's movie screens.



Introductions

Studio welcome (Ted Poster):

Arriving at the Capitol Pictures under arrangement with Ed Stacker, the Investigators are met by studio head Ted Poster and entourage. Poster briskly greets them and escorts them to the soundstage where a scene from *The Call Of Cthulhu* is now being shot. His motivations in the scene are twofold:

- to do his bit for the industry by showing "Senate staffers" that the PCA's voluntarily censorship is working as is
- in his ongoing effort to distance himself from his Jewish roots, to make social connections with any apparent old WASP types

If you eventually decide that Poster is a cultist, these motivations later turn out to be feigned—a smokescreen from his true goal of stopping snoopers from disrupting the shoot.

After getting a read on the Investigators, Poster takes them to an enormous set.

Dreamland (Oliver Ates & Rudi Rother):

Weird art nouveau spires lean in forced perspective over a nightmarish plain of plywood, *papier maché*, and glued burlap sheets. Character actor Rudi Rother sweats and trembles in an oversized costume, running through this strange landscape. Director Oliver Ates orders the cameraman to cut and walks onto the set, talking soothing words into the unhappy actor's ear. Ates seems to want Rother to move differently. The actor throws a tantrum and walks off the set. Poster takes this opportunity to introduce the Investigators to an unruffled Ates. If asked, he explains that Rother needs to throw a fit, and will then come back and do the scene as required.

After engaging in whatever dialogue they want with Ates, allow the Investigators to dictate scene order as they prowl around the set, slowly coming into contact with all of the principals. They might encounter them as follows:

A frantic production assistant tries to rouse **Warren Ballenger** from a formaldehyde-induced slumber on the other side of a locked dressing room door.

Lillian Mayes confronts either Ted Poster or Oliver Ates to complain about the skimpy ripped dress she's required to wear in the bayou scene. Whoever it is then shows her a design for Evelyn McAvoy's even more revealing costume as Madame Lita, causing Lillian to abruptly change her tune.

An Investigator comes face-to-face with a horrifying Deep One-human

The Final Reel

hybrid—only to realize a second later that it is an extra wearing a makeup test for the bayou scene, as supervised by **Elmer Sedlock**.

Choking smoke billows out from a soundstage door. Following it to its source, an Investigator finds a frustrated **Clyde Methvin** tinkering with one of his electrical machine props.

When **Paul Daniel** arrives with the final designs for the R'lyeh Temple set for either Ates or Poster, their quick approval triggers another screaming fit from **Lee Walling**, over the ongoing “is it stupid to have native tribesmen on R'lyeh?” controversy (sidebar, p. 179.)

Evelyn McAvoy arrives on set late, straightening her clothing as if returning from an impromptu tryst. A hairdresser starts working on her as she runs for the set.



Devising and Running the Mystery

This scenario provides two investigative tracks, either of which can end in multiple conclusions, depending on what the players choose to focus on.

Digging the Dirt

A successful resolution can occur by ignoring the question of who's behind the supernatural plot, concentrating instead on finding the incriminating scandal that causes production to close. This begins after the first introductions, as the Investigators begin to make their Deeper Observations and research the various Biographies of the cast and crew. The precise course of the investigation is up to the Keeper, but some possible avenues (and scenes) include:

- Gossip with enemies, rivals, and bored assistants hanging out on the set, or in bars after the shooting day ends. (**Oral History** or other Interpersonal abilities)
- Close observation with **Assess Honesty, Medicine, Streetwise**, or other diagnostic-type abilities.
- **Library Use, Credit Rating**, or **Oral History** to track down jilted partners, disillusioned comrades, or other people willing to dish dirt and name names; **Bargain, Flattery**, or **Reassurance** to get them talking in their turn.

Once the players zero in on their likely target, improvise three core scenes standing between them and the proof of moral turpitude they seek. These scenes might include:

- **Shadowing** their chosen target to his or her illegitimate destination (Ballenger on a bender, Rudi to an assignation with a groupie, Evelyn to a gangland hangout, Walling to a Party meeting, etc.)
- **Locksmithing and Evidence Collection** to search dressing rooms or offices for incriminating material (formaldehyde, heroin works, Party pamphlets, matchbooks from dubious establishments, pornography, checkbooks, etc.)
- **Accounting** to track payoffs to potential blackmailers.
- **Photography** to catch perpetrators in the act, complete with breakdowns, threats, and promises of hush money.

Having found certain NPC secrets, the players may be reluctant to expose them. For example, while hardnosed cops or private eyes of the 1930s might

not see anything wrong with averting a supernatural threat by exposing Oliver Ates as a homosexual, that outcome feels creepy and wrong to most modern gamers. After some interesting scenes of ethical dilemma, the group's collective moral compass may require it to keep sniffing around until it finds an unequivocally dark secret to bring to light—like Lillian Mayes' murder or Rudi Rother's taste for jailbait.

Find the Cultist

On the other hand, players may consider themselves less than thorough if they don't root out the cause of the celluloid Cthulhu plot. If they seem interested in this thread, decide who the lead cultist is after the Investigators have interacted with all or most of the principal NPCs. Pick a character who has made a vivid impression, without being the most obvious suspect. Following where the players choose to go to find information, link together at least three sequences with core clues moving them from one to the next. Some possible information to seek, and relevant scenes of such seeking, include:

Whose idea was a movie about Cthulhu, anyway? In most campaigns, even the word “Cthulhu” is so esoteric that its presence in a B-picture is evidence of Mythos activity. The word comes from the script, so logically Lee Walling must be the cultist. If the Keeper doesn't want to pin it on the scriptwriter, Walling explains (after sufficient **Flattery**) in a tortured tone: “I'm just a hired gun on this piece of crap. Poster brought me his illiterate idea and I just typed it. Over and over.” Or **Locksmith** can let the group find Oliver Ates' original memo or story treatment (“Untitled Sea-Monster Project”) in Walling's (or Poster's) office. Perhaps Walling was given a dream-inducing soapstone amulet by Evelyn (**Art History** to notice such a rare piece of Celtiberian workmanship in Walling's office or around his neck) or

The Suppressed 1928 Silent Film

It's up to the Keeper whether or not to include this background element, and whether it's a red herring, another mystery, or a clue to the current investigation.

In 1927, the director Wellman Rand shot a film called *Call of Cthulhu* for Odeon Films in Jacksonville, Florida. (Jacksonville was a major film colony from 1908 to about 1920, with some studios keeping facilities there into the 1950s – Universal's last "classic" horror flick, 1954's *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*, was partially shot in Jacksonville.) By all reports, it follows the action of the 1908 and 1925 incidents even more faithfully than Walling's script.

However, on February 20, 1928, the night of the film's premiere, the audience rioted and destroyed the theater. **Library Use** uncovers an article from the *Jacksonville Herald* claiming the riot was because the film used black actors to play the sailors on the *Alert* and some of the Louisiana cultists. (The article calls the film *Call of the Cult*, a providential correction by an overzealous copy editor.) Three days later, Rand killed himself and burned the Odeon studios to the ground. (If the Investigators have access to Professor Angell's original clipping file on the Cthulhu Cult, this *Herald* article is in it, doubtless added by his nephew Francis Thurston before Thurston's death.)

If any prints survived, they were snapped up by collectors, suppressed by the Florida state government (or by the moralizing Jacksonville authorities), or awarded to the insurance company. If Walling (or the real cultist, if it's not Walling) doesn't have a copy, **Credit Rating**, **Law**, or **Cop Talk** might get an Investigator access to the reels. Although he is credited as "Robin Matheson," probably to evade his Capitol contract, any film buff Investigator can recognize Kenneth Beaumont in the role of Old Castro, the aged, batrachian chief swamp cultist.

Rand's film may have no connection to the Capitol Pictures film at all – it's just that Something wants this story told in flickering light and shadow, and will keep pushing until it happens ...

It's up to the Keeper whether viewing Rand's film costs Stability or imparts any Cthulhu Mythos ability points.

(This story element pays affectionate homage to Andrew Leman's 2005 silent film *The Call of Cthulhu*, a wonderful attempt to imagine a film shot contemporaneously with Lovecraft's short story. Viewing it would make a fine capper to the final game session, in our opinion.)

by the formerly globetrotting Methvin (did I say Celtiberian? I meant pre-Inca Peruvian) and typed the script straight from his nightmares. Perhaps such a dreaming stone or runic parchment was merely hidden in Walling's office (**Evidence Collection**) by Lillian or Sedlock. Perhaps Rudi or Daniel smuggled a Mythos tome out of

Germany (**Library Use** or **History**) and cunningly slipped it under Walling's nose while he was moaning about writer's block and the absence of any *really* original monsters. Or perhaps one of the nine worked under another name on the suppressed 1928 silent film *Call of Cthulhu*, and Walling wrote his script from that film. Or from its script. Or

from descriptions. If it ever existed at all, that is (see sidebar).

Where and what is the Hollywood Cthulhu cult? Alternatively, the Investigators may approach the problem from the other end. Given that there is a Cthulhu cult influencing a Hollywood movie, finding the cult may lead them to the cultist on the set. Although the global seaport cult of Cthulhu has a presence in Long Beach, its shifty and pop-eyed membership don't really mingle with the Johnny-come-latelies up in the Hollywood Hills. (Investigators might find this out by Interrogation, Shadowing, or the like.) The Hollywood cult is called the Radiant Temple of Ascension, and it was a Theosophist colony until March of 1925, when the risen R'lyeh overwrote its programming. Robed in white, they climbed a hill in the San Gabriel mountains to await a "glorious fulfillment," but came down changed. Shortly thereafter (or later yet, depending on the other points on the timeline), the antagonist joined the cult and began maneuvering its membership toward Hollywood influence. (How far that influence extends is up to the Keeper; their goal is to recruit enough rich, powerful, stupid actors and producers to guarantee a never-ending flow of cash and of would-be cultists desperate for connections.) In 1930, they lucked into (or manipulated events in order to cause) Sedlock's murder of Beaumont on their San Gabriel "energy nexus." Their next step: spreading the word of Cthulhu to the world in film.

Finding any or all of this out requires: shaking down contacts in L.A.'s occult community (**Credit Rating**, **Occult**, **Oral History**); a 2-point **Library Use** spend to notice that the Radiant Temple of Ascension's "glorious fulfillment" in 1925 took place on the same spot, and on the same date, of Beaumont's disappearance in 1930; **Cop Talk** to hear about "weirdies in robes" and illegal fires up in the hills,

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Final Reel



and **Outdoorsman** or **Shadowing** to track them back to their Hollywood temple; **Accounting** to follow the money (and Intimidation to get Poster or the antagonist's manager to show the "Senate investigators" the relevant books), **Library Use** or **Bureaucracy** to find that the owners of the San Gabriel hillside and the Hollywood Temple are the same, and **Theology** or **Occult** to recognize the real freaky turn that the Radiant Temple's literature has taken from conventional theosophy; some other investigative angle the Keeper or players originate; or the kind of dramatic-idiot attack by a cultist that serves only to point the Investigators in the right direction ("You shall never uncover our Mask of Shadows! His death and life prefigure that of Lord Cthulhu!") after suitable **Scuffling** or **Interrogation**.

What's the connection to Kenneth Beaumont? The Keeper can leave Beaumont completely out of it if she wishes, or make Beaumont the driver

of the whole plot. He puts the cult onto the notion of filmic apocalypse (intentionally or unintentionally), blackmails Sedlock and any other antagonists (or gives the cult the idea and information to do so), and provides all the magical force needed to manifest Cthulhu's will on a movie set. Getting the players to follow this thread requires some deft hint-dropping. Failing that, perhaps the phantasmal specter of Kenneth Beaumont shows up in the rushes from that day's shooting. He appears in the crowd of Louisiana savages, or hovering over Wilcox in the Dreamland, or capering on the deck of the Alert. He haunts the film itself, and the Investigators must learn his secret to stop it.

Who is the cultist at Capitol? The conclusive revelation of the cultist's identity may take place when the group finds the headquarters of the Los Angeles cult, with someone from Capitol's roster playing a starring role in a bizarre ritual. It might also come

about when an antagonist reaction leads the group to the perpetrator: Evidence Collection at sabotage sites, Intimidation (or even Interrogation) of captured thugs, or a good old-fashioned chase sequence.

Secondary Antagonist

As you improvise scenes and add complications, you may find it useful to have one of the other principals act as a secondary bad guy—in league with the cult and furthering the Cthulhu film scheme, but not in charge. How enthusiastically (or knowingly) the secondary antagonist serves the cult is up to you. You may need a second hateful bad guy to invest the Investigators emotionally in their goal. Alternately, you may find it dramatically powerful to make the secondary bad guy a quasi-victim, duped or blackmailed into participation. Resolution of the cult mystery allows the investigators to liberate this character from cultic bondage.

Trouble On the Set

Hampering the investigators' efforts are a series of supernatural occurrences which threaten their lives and psyches. Use the following suggestions, or allow menacing situations to build logically from actions undertaken by the Investigators.

Some antagonist reactions may be mundane in nature, though arranged by the cultist or cultists:

- Teamsters or studio guards chase and possibly attack trespassing Investigators.
- Heavy lights come crashing from the rafters.
- Set pieces topple.
- Someone is weighted down and tossed into the water tank used for the model ship sequences.
- When in doubt, an anonymous cultist comes through the door with a gun.

Other antagonist reactions are spontaneous manifestations of Cthulhu's sleeping consciousness, as summoned by events on set. The movie making process is inherently ritualistic. Clyde Methvin, in making the large and small Cthulhu puppets, is, knowingly or not, creating idols to the prime Old One. Rehearsals and repeated takes of the bayou ritual, complete with authentic chant, also attract his attention.

- Extras wearing Methvin's grotesque makeup are possessed by the spirits of actual Deep Ones, who attack the investigators. (Use standard Deep One game statistics, including Stability/Sanity losses.)
- The dreamlands set temporarily transports the characters to the

The Slush Pile

If you're running "The Final Reel" as an installment in a long-running campaign, the following red herring can offer a useful frisson of terror—and possible springboard to a future story arc.

At some point in the scenario, the Investigator's search of a likely clue location provides not the information they're hoping for, but a stash of scripts for follow-up adventures in a planned series of Frank Thurston supernatural adventures.

The twist: each is apparently based on a case the Investigators themselves participated in! If using other scenarios from this book, they appear under the same titles we've given them: *Black Chateau*, *Under a Werewolf Moon*, and so on. While the incidents are refashioned to make doughty dilettante Thurston the heroic protagonist, thinly renamed versions of the Investigators appear as secondary characters. The portraits are unflattering; the fictional counterparts usually die, while Thurston solves the case. Like Ates' movie version of *The Call Of Cthulhu*, their exploits have been refashioned into acceptable 1930s thrills. Disturbing elements have, for the benefit of the Hays Office, been removed.

The scripts do, however, reveal a degree of knowledge about the Investigators' activities that no single mortal could possibly possess. The dawning awareness that some alien mind has been tracking them and communicating the results to a human accomplice provokes a possible loss of 5 Stability and 2 Sanity.

If Lee Walling is an antagonist, these are finished scripts written in (as **Art: Writing** or **Languages** confirms) his distinctive style. Otherwise they are rough treatments, copied down in a trance by an antagonist, and set aside for Walling to later turn into full screenplays.

Discovery of the scripts may send the investigators, in a scenario or arc of your devising, looking to find the entity or cult that has been supernaturally spying on them.

real dreamlands, or causes a vivid hallucination of having done so. (Stability loss 3)

- Minor characters aiding the Investigators are found horribly murdered, as if slain by Cthulhu himself. (Stability loss 3)
- As with the dreamlands set, but with the R'lyeh set, and a real momentary trip to R'lyeh. May occasion powerful drowning sensation which, if not resisted with Difficulty 5 Athletics tests,

results in real physical harm in the form of heart damage.

- As if we need say it, the giant Cthulhu puppet comes to herky-jerky life and wraps its strangling tentacles around Investigator necks.

The Transfigured Man

In one possible climax, the Investigators penetrate the secret temple of the Hollywood cult, confronting the main antagonist and perhaps a legion of

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screaming cultists. There, permanently crucified on its altar, they find the agonized, partially resurrected corpse of the Man of Masks, Kenneth Beaumont. Seeing him may cost 4 Stability.

Occult theorizes an explanation for his presence: as a famous figure of fictional fright, Beaumont has become a numen, a personification of dark forces. By keeping his consciousness alive and subjecting him to the tortures of the damned, the cultists use him as a receiver and battery of magical force.

If Sedlock is your main antagonist, freeing the undead Beaumont from bondage allows him to lurch free of the altar and tear him limb from limb,

before gratefully expiring.

In pulp mode, dispatching a thankful Beaumont (or freeing him so he can kill Sedlock and die) earns the group a 2-point Sanity refresh.

Epilogue

If the team belongs to a group like the Armitage Inquiry or Project Covenant, Stacker allows them to take away the completed footage and any dangerous-seeming props and costumes for safe storage. They may stand by as the negatives are placed in the organization's vault, along with such other dangerous cinematic treasures as the 1928 silent *Call Of Cthulhu*, and the extended cut of

Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1932 silent film *Vampyr*, in which a horrifying sequence of real vampirism can be clearly witnessed.

If the Investigators haven't smashed the Radiant Temple of Ascension but have stopped the movie, it purges the on-set cultist anyway. (An accident on the docks during the filming of *Devourers In the Mist*, as it happens.) The Temple decides to return to its plan of recruiting malleable Hollywood types for longer-term subversion; whether the cult plans further revenge on the Investigators who thwarted it, and comes back for a sequel, is up to the Keeper.



APPENDIX: BIBLIOGRAPHY/FILMOGRAPHY

Movies

Gods and Monsters, 1998, dir. Bill Condon

Shadow of the Vampire, 2000, dir. E. Elias Merhige

Val Lewton: Man In the Shadows, 2007, dir. Kent Jones

DVD Commentaries

Rudy Behlmer & Scott McQueen on *Frankenstein* (1931; on *Frankenstein: The Legacy Collection*)

Kim Newman & Steve Jones on *I Walked With a Zombie* (1941)

David J. Skal on *Dracula* (1931; on *Dracula: The Legacy Collection*)

Tom Weaver on *The Wolf Man* (1941, on *The Wolf Man: The Legacy Collection*)

Books

Hollywood Babylon, Kenneth Anger (factually unreliable but dramatically indispensable)

Resources

See the Trail of Cthulhu website (<http://www.pelgranepress.com/trail>) for downloadable hand outs for these adventures.



DEAR SIRs:

YOU DO NOT KNOW ME. MY NAME IS DEPUTY INGO FISCHER. YOU WILL NO DOUBT RECOGNIZE THE NAME OF THE VILLAGE POST-MARKED ON THE ENVELOPE FROM WHICH THIS LETTER IS FROM. PLEASE EXCUSE MY POOR WRITING, AS I AM UNACCUSTOMED TO CORRESPONDENCE WHICH SUCH INTERNATIONAL WORTHIES AS YOURSELF.

YOU DO NOT KNOW ME, BUT YOU DO KNOW, OR DID, MY SUPERIOR, INSPECTOR SCHROTH, WITH WHOM YOU WORKED IN THE TERRIFYING CASE OF DR. FREDERIC GRAVENHURST, WHICH HAPPENED BEFORE I LIVED IN THIS TOWN.

THE REASON I RIGHT TO YOU IS THAT INSPECTOR SCHROTH HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM FOR MANY DAYS. THE INSPECTOR LEFT TOWN ABRUPTLY WHEN HE HEARD THAT CREATURES NOT UNLIKE THE WALKING DEAD OF DR. FREDERIC GRAVENHURST WERE SEEN IN OTHER VILLAGE. THEN THERE WAS A KILLING THERE, AND THEN A KILLING IN A NEARBY VILLAGE, TO WHICH HE ALSO WENT, AND THEN FROM THERE FOLLOWED A CLEW OF SOME KIND UNKNOWN TO ME TO YET A THIRD VILLAGE, BOLNOYCERNO, TO WHICH I ALSO ENCLOSE DIRECTIONS. IT WAS FROM HERE THAT HE SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED, AFTER BEFORE KEEPING REGULAR TELEGRAM CONTACT WITH THE STATION HERE. ALTHOUGH I HAVE ALERTED MY SUPERIORS, I FEAR THAT THEY REFUSE TO BELIEVE THE CONTENTS OF MY REPORT, AS THEY DID INSPECTOR SCHROTH'S AFTER THE INCIDENTS IN WHICH YOU PARTICIPATED IN. ALSO, YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH MATTERS GHASTLY AND UNEARTHLY FAR EXCEED THOSE OF MY SUPERIORS AND ALSO I CANNOT LEAVE MY POST HERE. IT IS MY MOST FERVENT HOPE THAT YOU WILL GO TO BOLNOYCERNO AND RESCUE THE GOOD INSPECTOR FROM WHATEVER TERRIBLE FATE THE DREAD DR. GRAVENHURST HAS CONSIGNED HIM.

RESPECTFULLY YOURS,

INGO FISCHER

DEPUTY

The Times

Monday, June 6, 1932

OUTRAGE AT MORGUE BODY OF SOCIETY BEAUTY STOLEN

The body of Miss Frances Arneston, who died yesterday at the home of Mr David Herald of complications from brain fever, has vanished from the St Elizabeth's Hospital morgue, according to Dr James Balder, the forensic clinician on duty. Balder believes her body was stolen by one of Miss Arneston's many lovers, deranged by grief at her passing. The theft occurred last night around 3 a.m., but no witnesses have come forward with descriptions of any strangers seen in the area at that time of night. Police speaking privately with this reporter call our attention to the seemingly co-incidental failure of the hospital night

watchman to report for duty at his day job, which would seem to suggest some degree of co-ordination with the ghoulish abductor. Dr Balder refused to comment on allegations that he was asleep or otherwise derelict at the time of the incident, but was unable to give any other satisfactory account of how a corpse could simply vanish from behind a locked door. On a similar subject, this paper has long recommended a more intensive examination of the credentials and moral fitness of those persons given responsibility for the mortal remains of our loved ones. (See Editorial, page 13)

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OLD FELLOW,

I KNOW IT'S DEUCED AWKWARD, BUT I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF IT AND I'M HALF OFF MY HEAD WITH WORRY. POOR HELEN IS TAKEN ILL WITH ANAEMIA AND BRAIN FEVER? BROUGHT ON BY, AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, NIGHTMARES. HER FRIEND FRANCES ARNESTON (OF THE WESSEX ARNESTONS) IS STAYING WITH US AND HAS THE SAME AILMENT? AND THE EXACT SAME NIGHTMARES. I'M AS HEALTHY AS A HORSE, AS ARE THE SERVANTS; DR SIEVERS, WHO LIVES NEARBY AND HAS BEEN A BRICK THROUGHOUT, DOESN'T PRONOUNCE HIMSELF BAFFLED IN SO MANY WORDS, BUT I RATHER THINK HE'S BEEN THROWN FOR A LOOP BY THIS THING. I KNOW I HAVE.

I KNOW YOU'VE GOTTEN PALS OUT OF QUEER SCRAPES BEFORE? WELL, THIS MAY BE THE QUEEREST. IF YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO MIGHT HELP, FEEL FREE TO BRING THEM ALONG. MY HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE, AS YOU KNOW. WIRE ME WITH YOUR SCHEDULE AND I'LL HAVE DEANE MEET YOU AT THE STATION WITH THE CAR. FOR THE LOVE OF GOD DON'T ME LET DOWN YOUR FRIEND,
DAVID HERALD

DEAR SIRs:

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RESPECTFULLY YOURS,

INGO FISCHER

DEPUTY

AM NOW IN TOWN OF BOLNOIZERNO. DISTRESSINGLY SLAVIC TERRITORY. LOCAL INSPECTOR PLEASANT, NOT BRIGHT. HAVE INQUIRED WITH HIM RE: LOCAL LEGENDS OF A BLOOD-DRAINING KILLER. HE LAUGHS AS IF THIS IS ABSURD, AS I MYSELF ONCE THOUGHT THESE ERUPTIONS OF THE IRRATIONAL TO BE. FIND MYSELF CONSULTING LOCAL GYPSY WOMAN. MAJA IS HER NAME, OR MALA. (HER PAPERS ARE NOT IN ORDER.) INSISTS ON READING MY PALM BEFORE TELLING ME WHAT I WISH TO KNOW. FOOLISH WOMAN RECOILS AS SOON AS SHE LOOKS AT IT. MUTTERS SOMETHING ABOUT MY BEING A PAWAI IN A GREATER GAME, URGES ME TO TAKE MYSELF OFF THE BOARD. IGNORE HER NONSENSE, PUMP HER FOR VAMPIRE LEGENDRY. BELIEVES THE UNDEAD ARE FURTHER TO SOUTH AND WEST, BUT SUGGESTS CRYPT IN LOCAL CEMETERY AS SOURCE OF RECENT STRANGE NOISES. DETECT SOMETHING PECULIAR IN HER TONE. UN-TRUTHFUL? TELLING ME WHAT I WISHED TO HEAR, SO THAT I MIGHT REMOVE FROM HER MY BALEFUL PRESENCE? NEVERTHELESS, AFTER BREAKFAST SHALL HEAD OUT TO BOLNOIZERNO CEMETERY, FIND CRYPT.

SURPRISED BY CONDITION OF KREIGERSBERG CORPSE—NO SIMILARITY TO AALBEND MURDER. BODY OF ONE KLAUS NOEVER, OFF-DUTY RAILROAD CONDUCTOR, FOUND ON ROAD NEAR ALPINE TAVERN. DISCOVERED IN MIDDLE OF ROAD, ERGO OFFICIALS FORCED TO MOVE THE BODY IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER. RELYING ONLY ON DESCRIPTIONS OF LOCAL COLLEAGUE, INSPECTOR WITTERS: CORPSE WAS FOUND HEADLESS, AND WITH WOODEN STAKE DRIVEN THROUGH HEART. BOTH HEAD (FOUND IN NEARBY BUSHES) AND BODY COMPLETELY DRAINED OF BLOOD. INTERVIEWS SUGGEST NOTHING IN NOEVER'S UNEVENTFUL LIFE THAT WOULD LEAD TO OCCULT MISADVENTURE. LOCAL PHYSICIAN, NEMEC, STUDIES CORPSE AND CLAIMS BEHEADING AND STAKING PERFORMED POST-MORTEM.

CAN THIS TRULY BE WHAT IT SEEMS—A VAMPIRE MURDER? IF SO, WHAT TO MAKE OF IMPALING AND DECAPITATION AFTER DEATH? LEGEND STATES VICTIMS SLAIN BY VAMPIRE ALSO RISE FROM THE DEAD, BECOMING CREATURES OF THE NIGHT. IF ONE IS A VAMPIRE, AND ONE WISHES TO KILL WITHOUT LEAVING BEHIND A BODY WHICH WILL RISE FROM GRAVE...? WHY LEAVE IT IN OPEN ROAD, FOR EVERYONE TO FIND? ATTEMPT TO TERRORIZE POPULACE, PERHAPS. KREIGERSBERG LACKS HISTORY OF VAMPIRE LEGENDS. LIBRARIAN, MISS B?R, SUGGESTS VILLAGE OF BOLNOIZERNO, AS "CESSPOOL OF SUPERSTITION". WITH NO BETTER DIRECTION BEFORE ME, I HEAD THERE, INCREASINGLY PUZZLED BY VARIANCE IN SLAYINGS. CAN THERE BE TWO MONSTROUS KILLERS, OPERATING INDEPENDENTLY? IF SO, HAVE I DEPARTED FROM GRAVENHURST'S TRAIL?

CONVINCED THAT ONE OF FREDERIC GRAVENHURST'S UNDEAD CREATURES IS ON THE LOOSE IN THIS TOWN, AND WREAKING MURDEROUS HAVOC.

FIRST SIGHTING: NAKED, BLOATED, DEATH-WHITE FIGURE, SEEN BY CEMETERY. AFFINITY OF THESE GRAVE-ROBBING BEASTS FOR SUCH ENVIRONS PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED. SIGHTING BY LOCAL GENTLEMAN, WISHES TO REMAIN UNNAMED.

2ND SIGHTING: FARM GIRL SEES SCUTTling SHAPE IN WOODS, NEXT MORNING. HEARS A STRANGE LAUGH, THEN A GROWL. FEELS SUDDEN SENSE OF DANGER, WITHDRAWS TO HOUSE, LOCKS DOOR. MALIGN PRESENCE FELT UNTIL ARRIVAL OF MEN FROM FIELD.

THAT NIGHT, HUNTSMAN ANDREAS STECK FOUND DEAD NOT HALF MILE FROM FARMHOUSE SIGHTING. BODY HIDEOUSLY DISMEMBERED, BUT WITH SURGICAL PRECISION, AS IF DISASSEMBLED FOR BUTCHERY. PARADOXICALLY, SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN TORN APART MANUALLY, RATHER THAN BEING CUT BY KNIVES. ARRANGED ON FOREST FLOOR IN ORDERLY FASHION. COULD REMAINING REVENANT SOMEHOW PERSIST IN MANIFESTING GRAVENHURST'S SICK CONSCIOUSNESS?

TWO DAYS OF FRUITLESS SEARCHING. THEN RECEIVE WORD FROM VILLAGE OF KREIGERSBERG; SIMILAR KILLING THERE.