

ISSUE 01

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BAYT ALAZIF

بيت الازيف

A MAGAZINE FOR CTHULHU MYTHOS ROLEPLAYING GAMES



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Maria Nguyen's cover was derived from HP Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu*.

She was inspired to create her illustration from the idea of Great Old Ones living among people...

...whether they know it or not.

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New issues of *Bayt al Azif* are published when the stars are right.

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for

John Scott Tynes

who knew the gate first

"It was the first issue, so I had to write a lot of it myself, okay?"

- JST, 1993

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Houses of the Unholy

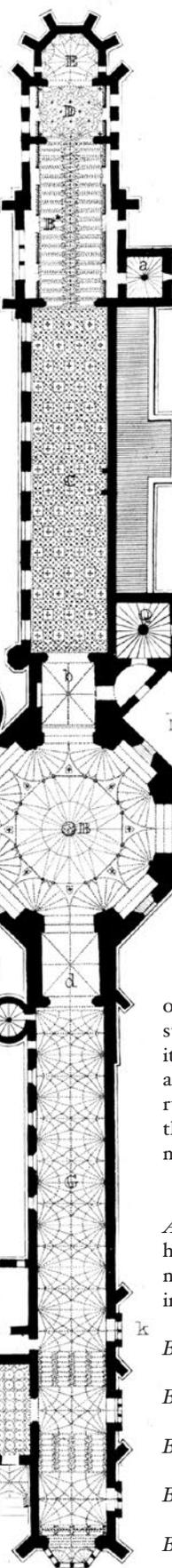
In 1927, H.P. Lovecraft finally put to paper his knowledge of the *History of the Necronomicon*. His account revealed that infamous book was titled *Al Azif* when scribed by “Abdul Alhazred” in the original Arabic - and that *azif* was the nocturnal sound of insects “suppos’d to be the howling of daemons.”

Lovecraft, not fluent in Arabic himself, had found the translation of *azif* in the notes that antiquarian and Doctor of Divinity Samuel Henley had added to a fantasy novel by William Beckford.

William Thomas Beckford, Esq. (1760-1844), purportedly the richest commoner in England due to his inheritance from his father (owner of slave plantations in Jamaica and twice Lord Mayor of London), amassed a great collection of art, including the library of Edward Gibbon, author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Beckford instructed noted architect James Wyatt to build Fonthill Abbey as his new home and museum. Fonthill was designed as an immense Gothic cathedral but was built at an unsafe speed. The central tower pushed the limits of construction, rising to 90 meters before collapsing and being rebuilt twice. Beckford lived alone in the Abbey from 1807 until 1822, at which point he auctioned off nearly every object in the Abbey, “the choicest books, pictures, and curiosities excepted”.

A fad for exotic tales of India and the Middle East had been sweeping through Europe when Beckford was in his twenties. And so, supposedly only over a period of a three days and two nights, Beckford wrote *Vathek*; *An Arabian Tale*.

Vathek is a tale of the Muslim Abbasid dynasty, focusing on a highly fictionalized version of al-Wathiq (anglicized as Vathek), grandson of the famed Haroun al-Rashid, and the *kbaliḥa* or caliph in Samarra from 842-847 CE, only a little over a hundred years after “Abdul Alhazred” had written *Al Azif* in Damascus. The historical Al-Wathiq was a noted patron to both scholars and artists, helping the flourishing of the arts under the Abbasids.



Beckford’s fictional version of Vathek instead describes his pact with dark powers, his witch mother, his continued corruption and subsequent supernatural downfall.

Reverend Henley (1740-1815) was a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and added his notes to the first version of *Vathek*, which was published anonymously as *An Arabian Tale, From an Unpublished Manuscript, with Notes Critical and Explanatory*. Strangely, Beckford initially wrote it in exquisitely fluent French instead of English. Dr. Henley’s English translation was published in 1784, but the original French version did not appear until 1786! Most curiously, the first English edition claimed to be translated directly from Arabic from a “man of letters” who Henley had met in the East in 1783. Stephen Weston accused Henley of writing the novel himself solely to transmit the notes that he added, though both he and Beckford denied this.

The University of Oxford library’s illustrated 1868 edition of *Vathek* has 74 pages of story with nine illustrations, followed by 55 pages of Henley’s notes! Many rely on his antiquarian knowledge, full of comparisons to Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Farsi, and Arabic culture and literature, including the *One Thousand Nights and a Night*.

But why would Henley add a translation of an obscure Arabic word when most of his other notes concerned cultural matters? Why the conflicting accounts of *Vathek*’s source, and the bizarre circumstances

of its publication? Why did Beckford accumulate so much art and construct the unsound Fonthill Abbey to house them, rebuilding it twice after its destruction? What made up the few choice works he saved? Did Henley and Beckford try to transmit some occult knowledge in this fable of a corrupted king sacrificing children for power granted by dark forces beneath the earth? Did Lovecraft understand more from their work than merely the meaning of the accursed tome of “Abdul Alhazred”?

Azif is a very obscure word. It can be translated as ignorance, or playing, hence the idiom of the rhythmic sounds of insects strumming in the dark nights of Arabia. But as a presage of evil, this sound could also be the howling of the shapeshifting *jinn* or daemons of the desert.

Bayt is Arabic for house.

Bayt al Azif is the House of Insects.

Bayt al Azif is the House of Demons.

Bayt al Azif is the House of Ignorance.

Bayt al Azif is the House of the Necronomicon.

Welcome, friends.

Sacrifices

Welcome everyone! I'm Jared, the editor. It's a real pleasure to present the first issue of *Bayt al Azif* to you! This has been a dream of mine for a long time. We really hope you enjoy this issue, and we would love to hear from you, both what you think and what you want to see in future issues. What did you like in this issue? Is there something you want to see more of?

We'd also like to know two things from our dear readers: do you like the idea of shorter issues coming out more often, or bigger issues infrequently? And what era or eras of *Cthulhu* are your favorite (and that you'd like to see more scenarios or information about)?

We are also open to submissions for issue 2, so send your comments and thoughts to sacrifices@baytalazif.com or

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We sent previews of this issue out to a few folks to get their reactions. Here are some of their responses.



Fonthill Abbey, View of the West, & North Fronts. From the *End of the Clerk's Walk* by John Rutter

I enjoyed Zach Howard's article on the history of the Cthulhu mythos in an early *Deities & Demigods*. It's always interesting to learn more about the history of our hobby, and I'd like to see more articles like this in the future. Also, kudos to Maria Nguyen for the beautiful cover art.

Brian

Thanks Brian, Maria's other art is equally astounding, her website dtnart.com has more. I was particularly struck by her use of color. Plus she has released some zines about horror manga which keep selling out. Print more Maria!

There's been a real growth of research on the early days of roleplaying games from a historical perspective, too. If you haven't read them yet, I recommend the dense but astoundingly thorough *Playing at the World* by Jon Peterson (Unreason Press) for just how roleplaying games developed, and *Designers & Dragons* by Shannon Appelcline (Evil Hat Productions) for the decade by decade history of the companies behind it all. A recent update to the history of *Chaosium* was just posted online by Shannon.

Dear Jared:

Thanks for sharing an advance copy of the first issue of *Bayt al Azif*! I found the solo adventure, "Overdue," a fun diversion from my own library researches into my genealogy.

One of the things I've learned, through correspondence with various amateur historians and volunteer archivists, is that my mother's family owns an old farm outside Pawtuxet! I'm going up there to check it out next week, and plan to bring a printed, bound copy of the magazine so I have something to read. I won't be bringing my phone, so the bullies from "Double Dare" won't be able to text me while I'm there!

Best regards,

Charles D. Ward
Providence, RI

Thanks Charles, I'm glad you had time to check out the PDF, but I hope you enjoy the print version even more. It's pretty cool when you have a vacation and can combine some good gaming with it, I've heard of several groups who make gaming getaways like that. I think *Cthulhu* RPGs can be especially enjoyable with the setting of a remote camping trip, for example. Good reading material is always a must though, you can only relax doing nothing for so long before some games should be started! I know "Overdue" isn't quite accurate to the layout of *Miskatonic's* library but I'm glad you enjoyed it while working.

Jared et al,

Congratulations on an informative and beautiful first issue of *Bayt al Azif*! As a casual Cthulhist, I particularly enjoyed your "How to Play" piece with advice as to how to get started playing *Call of Cthulhu*. My own introduction was very informal, having been thrown in (dragged? led blindly down a dark path?) as a first-timer to a one-off home-brew scenario at a gaming convention some years ago. Despite my lack of preparation, I found that my previous RPG experience – primarily in the world of online MUDs – was enough to let me quickly adapt to the system. As an individual whose real-life work commitments prohibit participation in an ongoing campaign, I appreciate that the system emphasizes story and flavor over competition and statistics. Familiarity with the Lovecraftian universe is not strictly necessary for players with excellent imaginations, but your advice to read at least some Cthulhu lore is excellent for engendering a unified sense of dread among players encountering the supernatural during a scenario.

Catherine Ramen's article "Rebooting Campaigns with a Modern Sensibility" also struck a chord. Today's gaming group is increasingly and joyously diverse in terms of gender, race, and sexuality. Adhering to Lovecraft canon can be particularly problematic in such a group owing to inherent racism as well as tropes and stereotypes typical of the era in which he wrote his stories. In my own gaming group this year, several women almost quit a scenario because of glaring sexism underlying the creation of the female roles for that game. In the process, the Keepers were able to identify their male-centered attitudes and to make appro-

priate adjustments based on our feedback. It was a difficult exchange and I am proud of our group for having worked through it. The resulting scenario was rich and full of unexpected twists owing to this collaboration and, as they say, good times were had by all.

Looking forward to your next issue!

Tara
Rocky River, Ohio

Thanks Tara! Most Cthulhu RPGs run well as generic horror, but it is important to have some sort of mutual idea on the inspiration for all this, or at least the game you are playing. (I was in one game that totally fell apart because a few characters didn't match the style of the others.) There is a lot to be gained from reading some set of Cthulhu lore as a group, but I know that Lovecraft is problematic to a lot of readers. I'd also recommend some modern takes on the myths, especially Lovecraft Country by Matt Ruff (Harper) and The Ballad of Black Tom by Victor LaValle (Tor), and on the RPG side of things, Harlem Unbound by Chris Spivey (Darker Hue Studios). Catherine's recounting of her Post-Modern Masks of Nyarlathotep is really worthwhile in that regard too. But I think you identified the real crux of it, most gamers are good people, and everyone working together can always make your game, and gaming in general, better. Really glad to hear it turned out so well for your group!

I agree that Cthulhu RPGs work really well for both beginners and more serious roleplayers compared to many other games, due to the classic tropes of horror, and the simplicity of the rule concepts, which I think allows for more roleplaying. We'll try to get the next issue to you soon!

I found her in college. Her name was Madeleine Emerson. She was a linguistics professor, equally capable with a dusty tome or a derringer. I was nervous, inexperienced, unsure of the rules but ready to play. Despite our connection, nothing ever came of us, and yet, all these years later, I still think of what could have been.

Almost two decades later, Diana Starr came into my life. She had been a Olympic-level gymnast whose career had been cut short by an unknown malady. The rumor rags touted stories ranging from addiction and rehab to mental breakdowns and suicide watches. Only one source, a Massachusetts high school newspaper, reported the true story: Diana's bloodline birthright had emerged, and she had been banned from the sport for wielding her psychic powers against her competitors. After years of honing her powers and her public image, she re-emerged on the regional talk show circuit with former bodybuilder Maxx Power, her co-star on Starr/Power!, the hit sensation that blended sex appeal, fitness, and new-age philosophy. Diana had potential that I was ready to tap, but again, something kept us apart.

Role-playing games have always appealed to me, but I never really found an outlet for that passion until I got married and became a part of my husband's gaming group. Our home circle has blossomed over the years, and we've experimented with many systems—*Pathfinder*, various versions of *D&D*, *Exalted*, *Savage Worlds*, *Through the Breach*, and others. However, we never really took a chance on *Call of Cthulhu*, in part because the horror aspect held little appeal for the majority of our group.

Then, in the summer of 2012, fate stepped in and changed my life. My gaming group made plans to travel to Columbus, Ohio for Origins. As I scanned the RPG options, I found what had tantalized me for years, what I had longed for and never quite managed to play: *Call of Cthulhu* and *Rogue Cthulhu*... or as my friends now call them, *Cheater Game*. So I enjoy the campaigns I play with my group throughout the year, knowing that I'll spend five days every summer cheating on them in a dark room filled with strangers who have now become friends through the years.

In the past I had made characters for various *CoC* games, but these

campaigns never got off the ground, leaving these women to languish in my mind. At Origins, however, scores of *Rogue Cthulhu* scenarios and characters beckoned me with their come-hither looks. Initially, I only registered for a few games, but soon I found myself spending almost every session in that darkly-lit room, waiting to see where and with whom I'd end up next.

With *Rogue Cthulhu*, I've rarely been disappointed. There is always something that will satisfy me. I've experienced so many different people—a geeky computer programmer, an orphan from the Baltimore streets, a nurse and multiple patients in mental institutions, a Wild West deputy, a Miskatonic University professor, and a producer of a hit television series, just to name a few. I've lost my mind a few times, including a 99 Sanity roll at a crucial moment in a session of Angela Souder's *After the Prom* which left me a raving lunatic. I've even died some glorious deaths. [Point of interest—I was one of the four who fell to their deaths in Byron Wingate's scenario *End of the Stair!*]

Reading the first issue of *Bayt al Azif* has opened my eyes to the larger world of Lovecraftian role-playing, and I fear that my desires may no longer be fulfilled by my summer fling with *Cheater Game*. I think I want a more serious relationship with *Call of Cthulhu*.

I hope my husband's okay with that.

Chantel K. (to protect my anonymity)
Saltsburg, PA

Managing your relationship with gaming is a treacherous course, for they always seem to demand more. It is interesting which games appeal to different groups. My regular group doesn't often play Cthulhu games, but right around Halloween the mood is always ripe enough to catch their interest for a single adventure, and it's now become somewhat of a tradition. Sounds like you need to run your gaming group through a Cthulhu adventure yourself! Maybe Emerson and Starr could make their triumphant returns as pre-generated characters for your friends to run. Then you can drag them all to Origins...

*It was real pleasure to interview the *Rogue Cthulhu* crew, as they really did welcome me into the Cthulhu circuit at conventions. I hope in future issues we can interview some of the other fan groups that run the ever-popular (and often sold out) Cthulhu games at other conventions.*

Sir—

I was pleased to find a copy of *Bayt al Azif* waiting for me upon my Return from a long and distant Voyage. The Curiosities and Amusements inside were well worth the ten Dollars advertised upon the cover — even though a Merchant, with any small Skill in Brokering, may purchase many Stone of Nut-meg, or any quantity of Essential Saltes of the highest Provenance, for such a Price!

I prithee send all subsequent Issues of your Magazine to me by Post with all Haste.

Charles D. Ward
Pawtuxet, RI

Thanks again Charles! I'm really glad you liked the print version too, that was a big part of my interest in starting this magazine, I miss the good old days of print gaming magazines showing up every month or so, especially in the mail! I don't currently foresee that we'll do a subscription service as you requested, since I'm not sure of the frequency that new issues will come out, but they will always be available to order on a case by case basis. Also, you can get Bayt al Azif in several formats depending on price, from cheaper digital PDFs to a nice hardcover if you want to put it in with the highlights of your personal library.

Finally, I'd like to thank all our contributors and playtasters. Enjoy the rest of the issue and please let us know what you think!



How to Play

by Jared Smith

Okay. Let's be upfront here. These are just *my* "suggestions" on how to learn to play Cthulhu RPGs (for free, even). If you disagree, or have better ideas, send them in for the next issue! (Contact info is in **Sacrifices** on page 3.) But the whole reason I'm writing this is that newcomers to Cthulhu RPGs seem to ask the same questions:

1. How should the game be run?
2. What scenario should we start with?

First, background is important to understand both the inspirations for the game and its tone, which can be very different from other RPGs. The person running the game *and* the players should read some Cthulhian horror stories. The titular *The Call of Cthulhu* by HP Lovecraft isn't the best for these purposes, I'd recommend trying some of Lovecraft's others instead:

- [The Shadow Over Insmouth](#), following a lone protagonist discovering secrets in a small town
- [The Dunwich Horror](#), where a group of professors and doctors investigate a strange backwoods family
- [At the Mountains of Madness](#), about a team of researchers venturing into the unexplored parts of Antarctica

There are many other great stories from other writers, but these are a good start.

The themes that are important to take away from these stories for Cthulhu RPG play include:

- Discovering the secret "true" history of the world
- The horrific supernatural that is hidden around us
- Good preparation and research can help survive encounters with those supernatural things
- The confrontation of the human mind with some awful truths can be too much for their sanity to take
- Sometimes people die or are driven insane by these truths

These are the foundations of good Cthulhu RPGs. Make sure everyone agrees this is what they want to play. Just one person treating the premise like a joke or being disinterested can ruin it for everyone else.

The original game for Cthulhu RPGs is *Call of Cthulhu*, first published in 1981 by Chaosium, and now out in a revised 7th edition. There have since been many other Cthulhu RPGs, many of which introduce clever additions or revisions to the original concepts that can make a better game, including *Trail of Cthulhu* from Pelgrane Press (more focus on character motivation and mystery investigation), and *Delta Green* from Arc Dream Publishing (dark paranoid government agencies in the mode of *The X-Files*), but start with *Call of Cthulhu* from Chaosium. The new edition is really well put together, and it's still the most popular version so it's a good entry point to find players and likeminded enthusiasts.

For learning actual gameplay, first download the free scenario *Alone Against the Flames* from [chaosium.com](#) It's a solo adventure that one player can enjoy by simply choosing options as you go through the book. It also elegantly introduces aspects of the game rules for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG in small sections as you read, so it is not overwhelming with too much information. I think it's a pretty fun introduction to the tone of adventures in the 1920s too, as well as some good Cthulhu horror ideas. Since it's a solo adventure, every player and the game master can try it out on their own too.

After everyone has tried that, there is a free download of *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition - Quick-Start* rules on [chaosium.com](#) This book has the basic rules and concepts.

Once it's time to play as a group, start with a short, stand-alone, published scenario. There are literally hundreds of scenarios available from

over the years, including some famous ones that are more ambitious, but a short, simple one that covers the themes above is the best place to start. The *Quick-Start* that you downloaded includes a classic one, *The Haunting*. Start with this scenario, which includes several "handouts" - literally things you print out and hand to the players at the appropriate moment. This includes newspaper articles the players might read, and strange symbols they might find. This is another aspect of Cthulhu RPGs that set them apart from other games. Handouts are not necessary to play the game, but a good set of handouts engages the players (not just their characters), and helps keep visual reminders of clues found during investigations. Plus they are awesome!

The Haunting has been around for a long time, so it has a lot of support from the community. Plus afterwards you will be able to compare your experience with many other players. There are several groups to join if you want to discuss the games, but first go to [yog-sothoth.com](#) - this fan website has free downloads of the handouts for *The Haunting* that look like real newspaper clippings.

Six pre-generated characters for *The Haunting* can be downloaded on our website. The *Quick-Start* has the rules to make your own characters too. Another difference to Cthulhu RPGs is that character creation is fast. If you need to make a new character due to your previous character resting in a sanitarium or a morgue, it won't take long to get back in the game.

Running the scenario itself should not get too caught up in the rules, which can be quite simple in the basics. The important things to remember are:

- Investigation and clue gathering is a major part of the game, especially at the beginning of a scenario
- Scares and horror will test the sanity of the characters
- Roll percentile dice equal to or less than skills, characteristics, and Sanity to succeed, roll above and fail
- The characters are normal people, not superheroes or tough warriors as in fantasy RPGs, so combat should be avoided until absolutely necessary, and injuries can incapacitate or kill characters very quickly
- Creepiness that affects the *players* will affect the actions of the characters too! Mood is very important to the game
- Sometimes going insane or failing to stop a monster can be more fun than defeating it!

Now that you have finished *The Haunting*, discuss what you want to do next. Players may wish to make new characters now that they realize what is important for this style of RPGs, or everyone might want to try adventures set in a different time. The 1920s and 1930s are a popular time frame for Cthulhu games, but a modern setting removes some unfamiliarity with what technology and such was around. (Lovecraft himself set most of his stories in his current times as "modern" stories, he just lived in the 1920s!) Or you can continue on with the survivors of *The Haunting*, with scarred characters who now know the horrific supernatural is real!

If you want to keep playing the *Call of Cthulhu* rules, pick up the [Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook](#) to learn the rest of the rules. This has all the rules you need to play, the [Investigator Handbook](#) has more options for players but isn't necessary. There are lots of other game systems and specific era settings from both Chaosium and lots of other publishers if you want to play in a different style. There are even *two* versions of the game where you can play as cats!

I hope this quick overview of how to play helps some new players out. I'd love to hear which of my suggestions helped, or what other advice new players found most useful. Good luck with your Sanity rolls!

CthulhuReview 2017

by Dean Engelhardt

Editor's Note: The explosion in Cthulhu mythos roleplaying game material is both heartening and overwhelming. Luckily for us, the list of yearly releases has been compiled and commented on by Dean Engelhardt, of the excellent Cthulhu Reborn site that formats old free scenarios in a nice format, as well as Convicts & Cthulhu, Lovecraftian horror set during the early penal days of Australia. Thanks for letting us share your review, Dean! Check out his work at CthulhuReborn.com

So, normally at the end of each year I like to look back over the previous 12 months and reflect on all the things that have happened in the world of Lovecraftian tabletop RPGs — all the new products, Kickstarters, and so on. Looking back over 2017... there were a *lot* of things that happened in the Cthulhu gaming world. First, I'd like to try to sum up 2017 events relating to People and Companies (in particular licensees).

Cthulhu's People

In a community as small and tight-knit as the Lovecraftian gaming world, the most important element is people — and in particular the personalities whose passion for Lovecraftian games drives thing forward. And while 2017 was, generally a great year for drawing some of the most experienced Call of Cthulhu writers of the game's "golden era" back into print, it was also a year marked by some sad news.



In November, the passing of Carl T. Ford — the founder and long-time publisher of the *Dagon* Fanzine — was announced. While those new to the hobby may never have heard of *Dagon* or of Carl, I think it is fair to say that the Lovecraftian RPG world owes a huge debt to both of them. At the very beginning of *Call of Cthulhu's* success, there really was no forum for fans to discuss the game, to publish their own scenarios and thoughts about rules, and to generally hone their skills as producers of game material. Semi-professional magazines like "*The Unspeakable Oath*" were still a glimmer in the eye of a few young fans, and even the concept of online discussion forums or communities was something akin to science-fiction. In that environment, the *Dagon* fanzine — an amateur publication, mimeographed and mailed out to subscribers — provided some extremely valuable "glue" to bind a nascent community together. If you've never skimmed an issue of this (now highly-collectible) mag, but are curious about what it contained, there are summaries of each of its 25 issues (1982-1990) available at yog-sothoth.com Several of the big names who went on to become major writers for *Call of Cthulhu* in the 1990s, first published in the pages of *Dagon*... and so its legacy as a fanzine cannot be underestimated. And neither can the importance of Carl's passion and dedication to tirelessly producing it, and bringing the *Call of Cthulhu* writing and playing world closer together. He will be missed by many.

Leaving aside the sad news about Carl Ford, 2017 was generally a very happy year when it comes to famous creators of *Call of Cthulhu* material — no less than four legends of the game all published new scenarios for the first time in many years. Perhaps the most notable of these was Kevin Ross, whose "old west" setting for *Call of Cthulhu* — *Down Darker Trails* — has been long in the making, and eagerly awaited by all those who knew of its existence. Here's hoping that Chaosium pushes forward

quickly with the publication of the two follow-up books of scenarios and mini-campaigns that are still sitting in the shed. Ironically, Kevin's classic-era writing also seems to have received some renewed attention in 2017, with the highly-successful Sentinel Hill Press Kickstarter to republish his 1980s-era scenario "*The Dare*". So, who knows, perhaps we are on the brink of a (much-welcomed) Kevin Ross avalanche.

In a similar vein, Scott David Aniolowski, a close cohort of Kevin's and another extremely well-accomplished writer from the 1980s and 1990s had one of his older (yet previously unpublished) pieces released as part of a Kickstarter. The campaign, run by Golden Goblin Press, funded not only the release Scott's scenario *Cold Warning* but a few others as well (although those unlocked scenarios have yet to be released).

A surprising publication from Chaosium in 2017 was *Reign of Terror*, a French Revolution-era off-shoot of the *Horror on the Orient Express* 2e campaign. This was notable because it represents the first new writing for *Call of Cthulhu* by Mark Morrison, one of the most popular writers of the "golden age" of Chaosium's line, in many years.

Finally, Sandy Petersen, primary writer of the first few editions of the *Call of Cthulhu* rules also returned to the world of scenario writing thanks to *Petersen's Abominations*, a volume that was co-written by Mike Mason (based largely on the sketch notes Sandy had created to run these scenarios at conventions).

Companies

Perhaps the biggest single change that occurred in the world of Lovecraftian RPGs in 2017 came about as a result of Chaosium's radical re-writing of the landscape surrounding licensed *Call of Cthulhu* products. Hunter S. Thompson once wrote "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro"... and the sentiment behind that quotation seem to resonate strongly with the changes that have reshaped Chaosium as a company in 2017.

To set some context: throughout most of its lifetime, the *Call of Cthulhu* line has supported some level of licensee model. This is basically a way for other companies to legally publish material for the game and even make some use of the core intellectual property contained within the game rules. Historically, Chaosium have approached licensing in a fairly laid-back way with most licenses giving the publishers freedom to create whatever they wanted within some pre-defined limits (usually this was a fixed number of product releases per year, to avoid any one company saturating the market). Because small publishers are typically cash-strapped, Chaosium introduced the notion that the "license fee" for using the Call of Cthulhu name could be paid in product — that is, a certain percentage of the print run would be supplied to Chaosium for them to sell via their web store. Licensee contracts usually allowed individual publishers to retain copyright in the material they had produced, providing they continued to pay the license fee (in books).

Fast forward to 2015, and Chaosium as a company found themselves on the brink of financial collapse (again)... and also heavily committed to deliver on not one, but two very large and expansive Kickstarter campaigns. To save the company — and also complete the Kickstarters — required an outside party to pretty much "buy out" Chaosium and its debts. That company was Moon Design, who to all intents-and-purposes are the "New Chaosium".

For the first year or two following the Chaosium buy-out, the new management focussed very heavily on finishing up the wayward Kickstarter campaigns, and to their credit they delivered to the satisfaction of most

backers (eventually). With those heavy millstones lifted from their necks in late 2016, they started planning for how the company — and its licensees — should operate moving forward. This planning has led to a few different announcements, and some knock-on effects.

The biggest single change has been the replacement of the previous (relatively “hands off”) licensing model with one that has three different tiers:

- Larger companies can still secure a **full commercial license**; this allows them to publish books by paying a fixed % of profits (not product) to Chaosium. Such publishers are also permitted to run Kickstarter campaigns;
- Smaller companies can secure a **“Small Publisher” license** which has some hard limits on the maximum income that can be earned, a % profit payable to Chaosium, and a limited period for which the publisher can make money from their creation. Small publishers can’t run Kickstarters;
- Individuals can create their own content and publish using a **“fan license”**, as long as they do not charge money and include a boilerplate paragraph. Fans can’t run Kickstarters.

For commercial licenses, the previously permissive approach to copyright, line management, and other moral rights has been significantly rewritten, with a focus on control and ownership falling to Chaosium. The notion of paying a licensee fee by product is no longer really viable or desirable for anyone (in part because of rising shipping costs), so has been dropped altogether.



To further complicate the picture (or, alternatively, to give people even more options), Chaosium also announced in December an entirely separate community for publishing original *Call of Cthulhu* material — the Miskatonic Repository. This community is based on similar successful online publication portals such as the “DM’s Guild” for D&D5, and has its own set of terms and conditions.

Overall, the longer term impacts of these changes — whether good or ill — have largely yet to be felt. We’ve already written on our blog about some of the complexities that the new Chaosium licenses pose for smaller operators (so we won’t rehash that here), but we were also very interested to see announcements in early December that Cubicle 7 (by far the most prolific of the current *Call of Cthulhu* licensees) has decided to not renew its licenses with Chaosium for both *Call of Cthulhu* and *Basic Roleplaying*. Other publishers, conversely, seem to be thriving under the new rules, including smaller operators like Stygian Fox, Weird 8, and Sentinel Hill Press. There have even been a couple of brand new smaller publishers that have popped up during 2017. This, coupled with a reasonable volume of material available on launch of the Miskatonic Repository, suggests that overall the revamping of licensing is largely delivering Chaosium the desired outcome. Though, only time will tell...

Now we’ll turn our attention to the products that were released in 2017... or at least those which made some reference or use of Chaosium’s venerable-and-much-loved game, *Call of Cthulhu*. As we will see below, this is only part of the story — recent years has seen a steady increase in the number of releases that aim to deliver Lovecraftian horrors using other game systems.

But, even considering the list of *Call of Cthulhu*-related products released in 2017 is not a small task. In a typical year, Chaosium and its licensees has historically released somewhere between 10 and 17 books for the game — in 2017 that number was 17. Additionally there were a few notable products that technically saw release in 2016 but finally emerged in print during 2017. And then there are the seven “launch titles” in the Miskatonic Repository that snuck out just before Christmas. So... a lot to cover.

Chaosium

As creators of the *Call of Cthulhu* game, and the largest publishing company currently producing for the line, it’s not surprising that Chaosium’s output in 2017 was the largest of any single producer: some 6 or 7 titles (depending on how you count it).

Probably the most significant Chaosium release for 2017 was *Down Darker Trails*, the “old west” setting that we already mentioned above in this review (since it also marks a much-welcomed return by industry veteran Kevin Ross). It’s not very often that Chaosium releases a fully-fledged and detailed new setting for playing *Call of Cthulhu* investigative horror, so it’s a bit surprising that they didn’t make a little more fanfare when this fine book came out. Delicately balancing historical realism with a pulpy sensibility appropriate to the western genre, *DDT* is a great addition to the game — and one that can be played with either *CoC 7e* or *Pulp Cthulhu* (for an even more two-fisted style). The book makes mention of two further books of scenarios/mini-campaigns that Kevin has already written/co-ordinated — here’s hoping that Chaosium has plans to get those out quickly to build a growing sub-line of western-themed *Call of Cthulhu* titles!

Another pulp-fuelled release from Chaosium in 2017 was the globe-trotting campaign *The Two-Headed Serpent*, which is intended to be a supplement to their 2016 release of the much-delayed *Pulp Cthulhu* setting book. This campaign definitely ticks a lot of the right boxes for a lengthy tale of two-fisted (not-really-investigation-based) battles against Mythos foes in numerous 4-colour locations around the world (and beyond).

On the rules-side of things, Chaosium also released a large hardcover book detailing literally hundreds of spells and magical-effects which have appeared in previously published *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios/rules, all updated to 7th Edition. This book, *The Grand Grimoire of Cthulhu Mythos Magic*, is a nice counterpoint to the core 7th Edition *Call of Cthulhu* rules. For reasons of space, the core rules needed to cut back heavily on the space allocated to spell descriptions — previous editions had steadily grown this section of the rules each edition, bringing in material from scenario books and the like. This necessary trimming left a small gap: folks playing scenarios written for previous editions of the game might run into occasional spells (like the ubiquitous but absent “Change Weather”) that aren’t described in the rules. Although not a particularly serious problem — and not one I’ve heard anyone complain about — having an encyclopedic and complete set of 7th edition spell rules is nice (even if it does require the Gamemaster to carry around another hardcover).

A surprise release from Chaosium in 2017 was *Reign of Terror*, a two-part scenario by the illustrious Mark Morrison set around the time of the French Revolution. This release has quite an odd provenance, beginning life as a (final) add-on to the sprawly and mega-Kickstarter for *Horror on the Orient Express 2nd Edition*. As part of the KS campaign, a few backers were treated to an exclusive scenario written by Mark and run personally for them at GenCon. While this rare and exclusive scenario could have ended there, a decision was made by the uber-backers that this great material shouldn’t be locked away, but shared with all backers. Based on that, Mark brushed up the manuscript to become a free backer-only PDF that dove-tailed nicely with *HotOE 2e*. Somewhere along the line the development of this freebie kicked up a gear and a set of additional historical, rules-related and setting material relevant to the rather unorthodox setting was written. All of this was packaged into two

(somewhat-confusing) versions of the product — one being a free PDF with just the scenario text by Mark plus some basic formatting and illustration, and the other being a fully-fledged hardback book. The latter consists of everything that's in the free version, re-typeset in Chaosium's full-colour trade dress and re-illustrated with a lot more colour. Content-wise, it adds perhaps 20 pages of new material.

Another slightly surprising release was a book of modern-day scenarios by Sandy Petersen, the guy who was the primary writer for the first few editions of *Call of Cthulhu* (but who has largely been absent from the Chaosium line for the past few decades). The book, entitled *Petersen's Abominations*, compiles five scenarios which are co-written by Sandy and Mike Mason. These all began life as convention notes for sessions that Sandy had run over the years — most famously fulfilling player's wishes to be “killed by Sandy Petersen” (yes, really). One of the scenarios in this book, *The Derelict*, previously saw light-of-day as Chaosium's “Free RPG Day” release for 2016 but everything else is new.

Rounding out the 2017 *Call of Cthulhu* game releases by Chaosium is a revamped edition of the classic solo scenario *Alone Against The Dark*. This new version is substantially the same scenario as the originally, but upgraded for *CoC 7e* and re-illustrated.

In addition to these six titles, Chaosium also released a novelty item *Call of Cthulhu: The Coloring Book* which is arguably part of the company's game line (although it has no particular use in the game).



Although not released by Chaosium themselves, there were a few notable licensed items released by others in 2017 that tie-in directly to older Chaosium titles. The most impressive and exciting of these is the Audio Adventure “*Brotherhood of the Beast*” released by the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society as part of the Dark Adventure Radio Theater line. The HPLHS have been working tirelessly over the past several years to create some amazing “30s style radio drama” adaptations of classic H.P. Lovecraft stories. In the last year or so they've been getting a lot more creative and diverse with their releases, and this title is their first foray into the world of adapting a classic-era Chaosium *CoC* campaign (the Keith Herber campaign variously called “Fungi from Yuggoth” or “Brotherhood of the Beast”) to audio. Spread over 3 CDs and featuring four different optional endings, it's a great adaptation. But what makes this release particularly remarkable is the deluxe version which adds a huge satchel full of physical props (see the picture above; and yes it really does look just like that).

Another series of Chaosium-related physical props that were created in 2017 came from the two successful Kickstarter campaigns run by Delphes Desvoivres which produced beautiful prop-quality artefacts for chapters of *Masks of Nyarlathotep*.

Cubicle 7

Aside from Chaosium, the only company to produce two brand-new *Call of Cthulhu* titles in 2017 was Cubicle 7 who continue to impress with the high-quality items delivered as part of their *World War Cthulhu: Cold War*

Kickstarter. While the 1970s espionage setting is not an obvious one for Lovecraftian investigation, the previous work done in establishing a format for *World War Cthulhu* (in the WWII era) means that the format largely works. In 2017, Cubicle 7 was originally intending to release the final THREE books promised to backers of the Cold War Kickstarter, but due to a set of unfortunate circumstances the campaign book “*Yesterday's Men*” was ultimately cancelled after two different writing teams both failed to deliver. Backers were given credit for the undelivered book.

The two titles that did see release are *Covert Actions* and *Our American Cousins*. The former is a book of six standalone scenarios (or missions) which see players travel to a range of different 1970s political hotspots on the trail of the Cthulhu Mythos. The second book is a kind of add-on to the core “World War Cthulhu: Cold War” book, which itself takes a British-centric focus to Cold War spying. The new book counteracts that a little, by providing information about US operations around the globe, as well as an additional scenario.

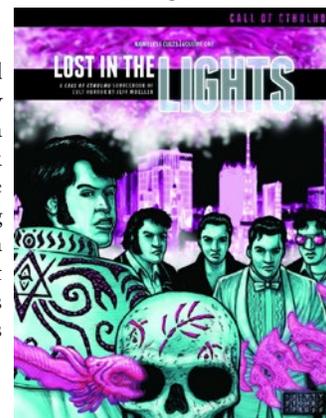
In addition to producing these two new books, Cubicle 7 also successfully closed out the very last parts of their earlier Kickstarter for the *Cthulhu Britannica: London* box. Although most items were delivered long ago, there remained two sets of cards to be delivered for backers — one set of **Postcards** (lots of period London-themed postcards with scenario hooks attached), and another set called “**Cards from the Smoke**” (a deck of threats and encounters which can be used for chases or improvised scenario building).

Sadly, none of the Cubicle 7 items mentioned above are available any more, due to their decision to terminate their license for *Call of Cthulhu*.

Sixtystone Press

Although Sixtystone did not publish any new products in 2017, they did achieve a couple of notable things — the first being the shipment of backer copies of the doorstop-sized “*Masks of Nyarlathotep Companion*”. This encyclopedic reference had been available to backers as a PDF for some time, but production problems had several times delayed its physical release. Finally, 2017 saw the end to this long (and, no doubt very painful, production process).

Also during 2017, Sixtystone released physical versions of the modern-day scenario “*Lost in the Lights*” which was released in PDF (for *CoC 6e*) back in 2013 but never saw print at the time due to a variety of problems plaguing some of the creators. Updated to 7th Edition, this new full-colour print looks very spiffy indeed — and the Las Vegas-based scenario by Jeff Moeller is about as bonkers as you'd expect.



Smaller Licensees

As mentioned above, changes with Chaosium's licensing model for *Call of Cthulhu* had some impacts in 2017 on smaller publishers. For a few it meant the opportunity to produce books under license for the very first time — all-in-all there were four brand-new licensees in 2017 (Dark Cult Games, Darker Hue Studios, Trepan, and Weird 8). Here's a quick round-up of the products they released:

- Weird 8 released “*Sun Spots*”, a 1920s scenario by Dave Sokolowski which has an interesting history. It was originally planned for a cancelled Miskatonic River Press book of scenarios about Lovecraftian god-like entities, and as such had been edited by the (now sadly departed) legend of the game, Keith Herber. Dave ran a very successful Kickstarter to revise and release this scenario as a self-published book.
- Darker Hues Studio released “*Harlem Unbound*”, which is an in-

teresting counterpoint to the traditional Lovecraftian tropes of all-white investigators plunging headlong into danger amid a society filled with (historical) racism. Chris Spivey ran a successful Kickstarter to publish a remarkable and unique sourcebook which focusses on the vibrant black society of 1920s Harlem and challenges players to take on the roles of black people who are the subject — as opposed to the perpetrators — of racism. An interesting book. Also interesting is the decision by Darker Hues to make the book a dual-stated release with both *Call of Cthulhu* and Gumshoe (*Trail of Cthulhu*) statistics.

- Trepan released “[The Haunted Clubhouse](#)”, a smallish PDF-only release by Melbourne-based writer, Leigh Carr. It features a modern-day scenario set in New Hampshire (although sadly I’ve yet to read it).
- Dark Cult Games released a sandbox-style scenario called “[The Star on the Shore](#)” before (somewhat confusingly) changing their company name to New Comet Games. The scenario is well-illustrated.

In addition to these four brand-new publishers, there were also another five established producers who also released one title in 2017. They are:

- Stygian Fox released “[Hudson & Brand](#)”, a setting/organisation book for Gaslight-era London. This rather beautifully laid-out book describes the Hudson & Brand Inquiry Agency, an established private investigation service that can either be a source of work for player characters or a source of baffling cases. The book also includes a couple of scenarios. Currently available to backers only.
- As mentioned earlier, a notable publication in 2017 was the Golden Goblin resurrection of a “lost gem” by Scott David Aniolowski, “[Cold Warning](#).” This 30 page scenario was the product of a rather unusual Kickstarter campaign that only ran for one week (but was still highly successful). Scott’s scenario is a great example of a “classic era” type scenario brought up to modern production and writing standards.
- The illustrious Sentinel Hill Press re-released Issue 1 of their *Arkham Gazette* magazine, dedicated to the town of Arkham and its inhabitants.
- Somewhat of a surprise, Modiphuis released part 3 of the “Zero Point” campaign for *Achtung! Cthulhu* — the first part of this multi-book campaign by Sarah Newton came out right at the beginning of *Achtung! Cthulhu*’s publication history ... though this third chapter, “[Code of Honour](#)” (set in Istanbul 1942), has been much delayed for some reason. Looks nice but I haven’t yet had a chance to read it.
- Also somewhat surprising from Modiphuis is the release of an [Audio drama](#) set in the *Achtung! Cthulhu* world.
- Finally Skirmisher, publishers of *Cthulhu Live* (which is technically a variant of *Call of Cthulhu*) produced a new LARP script called “[The Return of Cyris Crane](#)” (or more accurately an update of an earlier script with a slightly different name).

The MiskRepo

As mentioned in first part of this article, Chaosium launched the Miskatonic Repository, its community publication vehicle shortly before Christmas 2017. I haven’t yet read any of the titles available for sale... but here is a list of the seven that were made available prior to the end of 2017:

- “[The Scales of Time](#)” by Michael Nagel
- “[The Trail of the Monolith](#)” by Michael Nagel
- “[Terror Itself](#)” by James Coquillat and David Naylor
- “[Plague](#)” by Matt Ryan and Noah Lloyd
- “[Isle of Madness](#)” by Edward Possing
- “[Jasper St. Jones Got The Prettiest Bones](#)” by Tristan Jusola-Sanders
- “[The Idol of Thoth](#)” by Joe Trier

Phew... that was a lot of *Call of Cthulhu* stuff to describe. But that is only half the story for Lovecraftian RPG material produced in 2017.

So far, we have focused mainly on the squamous ecosphere that exists around Chaosium and its venerable *Call of Cthulhu* RPG. While this is where the idea of Lovecraftian roleplaying started, it’s certainly not true that Chaosium has a monopoly on the creations of HPL and others — and as such it is unsurprising that numerous other games release material that feature those dread horrors, sometimes in familiar context and other times in quite radically-different ways. This trend towards more and more non-*CoC* supplements featuring investigative horror scenarios and resources inspired by Lovecraft, has kicked into high gear over the last decade or so. Hence it’s hardly surprising that 2017 saw quite a number of new Lovecraftian RPG products that target non-Chaosium game systems.

This summary is, by necessity, going to probably be incomplete. There’s a lot of stuff out there and only some of it drifts across my consciousness — if you know of something important that I’ve missed, get in touch and I’ll try to remediate the oversight later.

Cthulhu Dark

One of the titles I’ve most looked forward to in recent months is the re-published (super-deluxe) hardback for [Cthulhu Dark](#), Graham Walmsley’s minimalist RPG of Lovecraftian terror. Those who have previously encountered *Cthulhu Dark* will know that it is extremely lean when it comes to mechanics — in fact the basic rules can be written down in just 2 or 3 pages of a book. So, you might be wondering how Graham’s highly successful Kickstarter could possibly take that super-simple system and turn it into a 192-page hardback book.



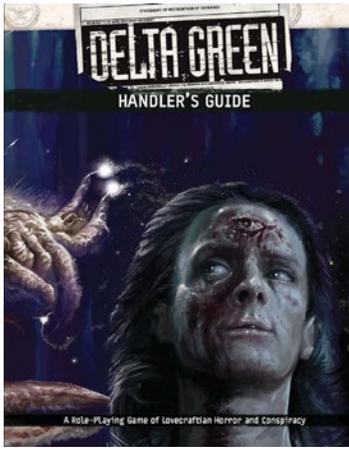
As it turns out, the answer is... very easily. The deluxe edition of *Cthulhu Dark* still features (slightly tweaked versions of) the same ultra-streamlined rules that has been published for free elsewhere. But it also includes a slightly more expansive explanation of those same rules and then a mountain of helpful resources and scenarios for the Game-master’s eyes. The rules themselves take up only the first 20 or so pages of the beautifully-illustrated book. The next 40 or so pages are given over to general advice about how to write compelling mysteries featuring Lovecraft’s creations (and more importantly his thematic elements). The remainder of the book is taken up by setting and scenario information.

In order to promote diversity, Graham has chosen to not just support the traditional “Arkham 1920s with stodgy old white professors” type of setting, either. Yes, you can certainly play *Cthulhu Dark* that way... but the settings described in the rulebook are much more unorthodox than that. There is a Gaslight setting which focuses on players taking on the roles of mudlarks rather than gentlemen; there’s an Arkham 1692 setting (by Kathryn Jenkins); there’s a modern-day setting in a fictional African nation (by Helen Gould); and there’s a Cyberpunk Mumbai setting. For each of these there is a scenario included in the book. All up that makes for a pretty full book.

Because the rules part of the *Cthulhu Dark* rulebook are so brief, it’s also very tempting to think of this book as much as a source of ideas for other Lovecraftian games — it would be quite easy to pick up any of the elements described in its pages and repurpose them for *Call of Cthulhu*, or any other system.

In addition to the printed book, the *Cthulhu Dark* Kickstarter unlocked two other PDF-only supplements as well. One of these is a 1930s “Dust Bowl” scenario by Mo Holkar; the other is a WWI scenario featuring African-American soldiers (by Chris Spivey of *Harlem Unbound* fame).

Delta Green RPG



Ever since Pagan Publishing first created *Delta Green* as a modern-day conspiracy-style horror setting for *Call of Cthulhu* (in the mid-90s), it has occupied a unique place in the world of Lovecraftian RPGs. Much-beloved by a loyal cadre of fans and almost blatant in its efforts to strike out on a different type of route for modern horror than the “default” *Call of Cthulhu* setting for modern-day, *Delta Green* has been continuously developed and detailed as a setting through a series of books sporadically published first by Pagan and then as joint ventures between Pagan Publishing and Arc Dream.

In 2015, the creative forces behind Delta Green surprised the *Call of Cthulhu* world with the announcement of a Kickstarter for a new “re-booted” edition of the setting. The surprise came not so much from the fact that the setting was being radically overhauled (to bring the pre-Millennial sensibilities of the original *DG* into the post-9/11 age) ... but from the announcement that the future *Delta Green* would *not* be a sourcebook for *Call of Cthulhu*, but have its own rule system, somewhat reminiscent of *BRP* but independent of it. Furthermore, the rule system developed for the new game (although not the *DG* setting itself) would also be released under the OGL, meaning that anyone could use it freely as part of a different game as long as the terms of the OGL license were honoured.

The first book release by Arc Dream’s hugely successful Kickstarter — the *Agent’s Handbook* — came out in 2016, and detailed the basic rules for the game. But it was in 2017 when the bulk of the books began to see the light of day. The biggest *DG* release during the year was the *Handler’s Guide*, a massive (370 page) book which outlines the past and present shape of the *DG* conspiracy, the forces of the Cthulhu Mythos, and a range of other things that a Gamemaster needs to know to run games using the setting.

In addition to this major milestone, Arc Dream have also slowly been drip-feeding the release of scenarios for the new game system, all of which are available for free to Kickstarter backers as PDF but also available as Print-on-Demand softcover books. In a generous move, Arc Dream have provided KS backers with discount vouchers on the print versions of the books. During 2017 six scenarios were released in this way:

- [Music From A Darkened Room](#) (34 pages, updated)
- [Extremophilia](#) (38 pages)
- [Kali Ghati](#) (36 pages)
- [Observer Effect](#) (40 pages)
- [The Star Chamber](#) (40 pages)
- [Viscid](#) (32 pages)

There were also several other Kickstarter-backer-only PDF releases during 2017 — so it was certainly the year that the “rubber hit the road” for the *Delta Green RPG*.

GUMSHOE / Trail of Cthulhu

Pelgrane Press have carved out a very enviable niche for themselves in the Lovecraftian and Horror RPG domain — they are kind of the folks whose experiments with form and structure continue to delight (and also keep winning ENnie Awards!). This probably shouldn’t be surprising since the company has a couple of the most prolific and accomplished writers in the industry working on their books... and is also the most professionally run of any of the companies producing Cthulhu-related material (and nice to work for as well).

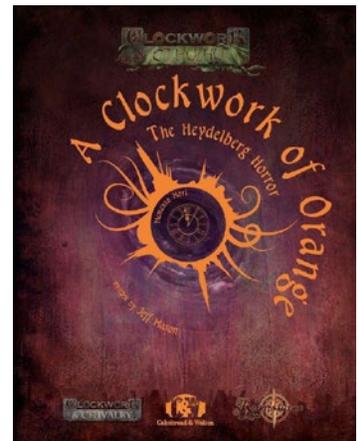
The main organ for Pelgrane’s forays into the Cthulhu publishing world has, til now, been the *Trail of Cthulhu* game — an adaptation of the GUMSHOE rules to the genre of Lovecraftian investigative horror. While the game system isn’t necessarily to everyone’s taste, I’ve always thought that the quality of the writing that Pelgrane brings to this line more than justifies picking up most of its releases... even if just as examples of alternative ways that the genre can work.

In 2017, there were two releases for *Trail of Cthulhu* — “[Out of the Woods](#)” and “[Cthulhu City](#)”. The first of these is a scenario anthology which weighs in at five scenarios spanning 168 pages. The theme binding all these tales together is the primeval ancient fear of the archetypal “deep, dark forest” and the opportunities for nasty Lovecraft-inspired horrors to lurk in such places. The second volume, “*Cthulhu City*” is something much stranger. Written by the always-impressive Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan this book offers a somewhat surrealistic alternative depiction of the town of Arkham which takes Lovecraft’s geography and twists it into a nightmarish world where cyclopean skyscrapers stand side-by-side with baroque ruined buildings... It all sounds weird and evocative (and since I haven’t yet read it, I can’t really say anything more).

Technically not part of the *Trail of Cthulhu* line, but a pioneer release of a new line called GUMSHOE One-2-One, [Cthulhu Confidential](#) is the other big Lovecraftian release by Pelgrane during 2017. The idea behind the One-2-One line is that it is an adaptation of GUMSHOE that’s especially designed for running games with one Gamemaster and one player. The *Cthulhu Confidential* setting is a hard-boiled “film noir” setting which plunges players into either the seedy underbelly of 1930s Los Angeles, or other similarly grimy American settings (the core book also includes a noir depiction of 1930s NYC, and a Washington, DC setting as well).

Clockwork & Cthulhu / Renaissance

For reasons described in mid-2017 blog postings on Cthulhu Reborn, we have recently been very actively looking around at other game systems that provide convenient (and license free) vehicles for publishing Lovecraftian material. Perhaps the biggest surprise to emerge from that survey of game systems was the (re-)discovery of the excellent work that has been done in recent years by Cakebread & Walton to create and support various Lovecraftian adaptations of their BRP-clone *Renaissance* system. In 2017, there was one notable release for this line — “[The Heidelberg Horror](#)”. This scenario, set in Europe of the early 17th Century, is the first part in an ongoing campaign called “A Clockwork of Orange” which promises to take investigative agents across Europe and into the heart of the Holy Roman Empire.



Systemless

One of the stranger Cthulhu-related tabletop RPG Kickstarters to be run in 2017 was the campaign to fund a systemless scenario called “[Pax Cthuliana](#)”, written by a couple of Norwegian guys. The approach taken to the challenge of avoiding all game mechanics — and thereby making the scenario equally playable (or non-playable, depending on your perspective) with any game system, make it a noteworthy experiment. Having recently received the print copy of the Kickstarter book it’s easy to see that a lot of work went into this book, which has some great art. The scenario also has its own musical soundtrack. Without having read the scenario itself I can’t really comment on whether it achieves its goal of making a fully-playable game without reference to specific rules. The idea certainly has promise, though.

Other Games

As well as the products mentioned above, there were a number of other game products released in 2017 that had ties to Cthulhu and Lovecraft in some way, shape, or form:

- The **“Leagues of Cthulhu”** Kickstarter by Triple Ace Games (which brings Lovecraftian gaming to the Ubiquity game system) delivered its final PDFs in 2017 (although print copies are still pending).
- The long-delayed **“Raiders of R’lyeh”**, which had previously released early PDF versions of their d100-inspired system in previous years. In 2017 they released a final version of the rules (although print copies are still pending).
- Another huge 2016 Kickstarter was one to create a guidebook outlining game statistics of Cthulhu Mythos horrors for the *Pathfinder* system. Drawing heavily on artwork created for *Cthulhu Wars*, this monstrously-huge (500+ page book) finally saw light of day in 2017. Titled (somewhat inaccurately) ***Sandy Petersen’s Cthulhu Mythos***, it includes game information relevant to all the standard open-source Cthulhu Mythos gods and monsters, as well as a handful of original creations designed for the *Cthulhu Wars* miniatures game.
- Lurking at the borderlands of being an “RPG product” is Cubicle 7’s boxed storytelling game **“Cthulhu Tales”**, also funded as a Kickstarter which delivered in 2017. This game features a deck of “story cards” and “hazard cards” and challenges players to each spin a tale using them (the central conceit of the game being that everyone is a patient in an asylum flashing back to the horrific situation that brought them there).

To round out the review (and bring it to a much-awaited close), I thought I’d include a quick roundup of Cthulhu-related RPG Kickstarter campaigns that were run in 2017 but haven’t yet delivered products — these are “leading indicators” of some of the cool products that will emerge in 2018 (or maybe 2019, or 2020, or ... :)). I also thought I’d briefly mention some amateur-press publications that came out in 2017.

Kickstarters of Doom

In March 2017, Stygian Fox completed their second successful Lovecraft-related Kickstarter campaign, for the creation of a book of short one-night modern-day scenarios. The book is called **“Fear’s Sharp Little Needles”**. This comes hot on the heels of the previous Stygian Fox modern-day *Call of Cthulhu* book which was an incredible collection of scenarios which went on to win a (much deserved) gold ENnie. “Fear’s Sharp Little Needles” went into layout in January.

Also in March 2017, Golden Goblin Press ran a successful Kickstarter campaign to fund the publication of their reboot of the ***Cthulhu Invictus*** setting for *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition*. This project is the first of many Roman-era books planned by the Goblin, who has received a license from Chaosium to be the “official” source of all things Invictus. The goals of this campaign seem mostly to involve rewriting the Cthulhu Invictus setting from the ground-up, which seems a little strange since the previous editions seem mostly to have been well-received by those who’ve run games set in Ancient Rome. I can only assume that it’s some kind of rights thing, where GGP do not have a license to reuse the text of the earlier versions. Either way it will be interesting to see how this project goes — it’s probably the most ambitious thing attempted yet by Golden Goblin, but they have a solid track record on delivering Kickstarters (albeit one that has gotten steadily more shaky as projects have gotten larger and larger).

In April 2017, Cubicle 7 & Make Believe Games (a company founded by Mark Rein-Hagen) jointly ran a Kickstarter to fund the creation of ***Un-speakable Sigil & Sign***, a tabletop roleplaying game in which players take on the roles of Mythos cultists. It makes use of the *Axiom* system created by MBG for its games, which uses a special deck of cards as the primary game mechanic. Target delivery date of March 2018.

In July 2017, Pelgrane Press ran what proved to be the biggest and most

expansive Lovecraft-related Kickstarter of the year, a monumental campaign to fund the launch of ***The Yellow King RPG***. Written by industry-veteran Robin D. Laws, this new gaming adaptation of the works of Robert W. Chambers isn’t strictly “Lovecraftian” but is probably of interest to many of the same crowd. *The Yellow King RPG* is another game fuelled by the Gumshoe system, and aims to provide four separate but inter-related “worlds” in which to set weird and surreal tales of terror. An interesting feature of the Kickstarter campaign — which also featured an insane number of small stretch goals — was the fact that Pelgrane released a text-only early draft of Robin’s text for all four books immediately after the campaign closed. So, despite the fact that the game won’t ship until December 2018, it’s easy to get some kind of idea about what it will cover.

In August 2017, Atomic Overmind Press ran a Kickstarter campaign to create a sequel to an earlier book of essays by Kenneth Hite about Lovecraft’s fiction. This new book, ***Tour de Lovecraft — The Destinations***, focuses less on the stories of HPL and more on the places (real and fictional) that they describe. Although not pitched as a gaming book per se, anyone who has read Kenneth Hite’s previous Lovecraft essays will know that pretty much any time he sets pen to page it produces something that could inspire a game scenario (or ten).

In the frightful month of October, there were two Lovecraft RPG-related Kickstarters run. The first was by Sentinel Hill Press, for the publication of a revised version of a scenario written by Kevin Ross back in the 1980s (and previously published in a long-out-of-print-and-impossible-to-find book by Triad). The scenario, titled simply ***The Dare***, is unusual in that it places players in the roles of teenagers who are faced with a range of horrors as they explore a “haunted house.” Given the recent pop-culture sensation that is Netflix’s *Stranger Things*, this seems pretty fertile territory to explore for *Call of Cthulhu*, so a reboot / rewrite of this classic-era scenario seems well worthwhile.

The second Kickstarter of October 2017 was the campaign by New Comet Games (the new name of the company formerly known as Dark Cult Games) for a new 1920s “sandbox style” *Call of Cthulhu* scenario called ***Devil’s Swamp***.

The final Cthulhu-related Kickstarter run in 2017 was a campaign by Delphes Desvoivres to fund the creation of ***The Idol of Cthulhu***. This is (I believe) the fourth Kickstarter by Delphes, but differs from previous installments in that it ventures beyond just providing physical props for use in previously-published *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios. This campaign (primarily to create a version of the Cthulhu Idol described by HPL in “The Call of Cthulhu”) also funded the publication of a brand new game scenario by Matthew Sanderson, ostensibly a sequel to Lovecraft’s tale.

Small End of Town

As well as being a great year for professionally-published material, 2017 also saw a good crop of amateur publications for *Call of Cthulhu* and related games. A couple of highlights were:

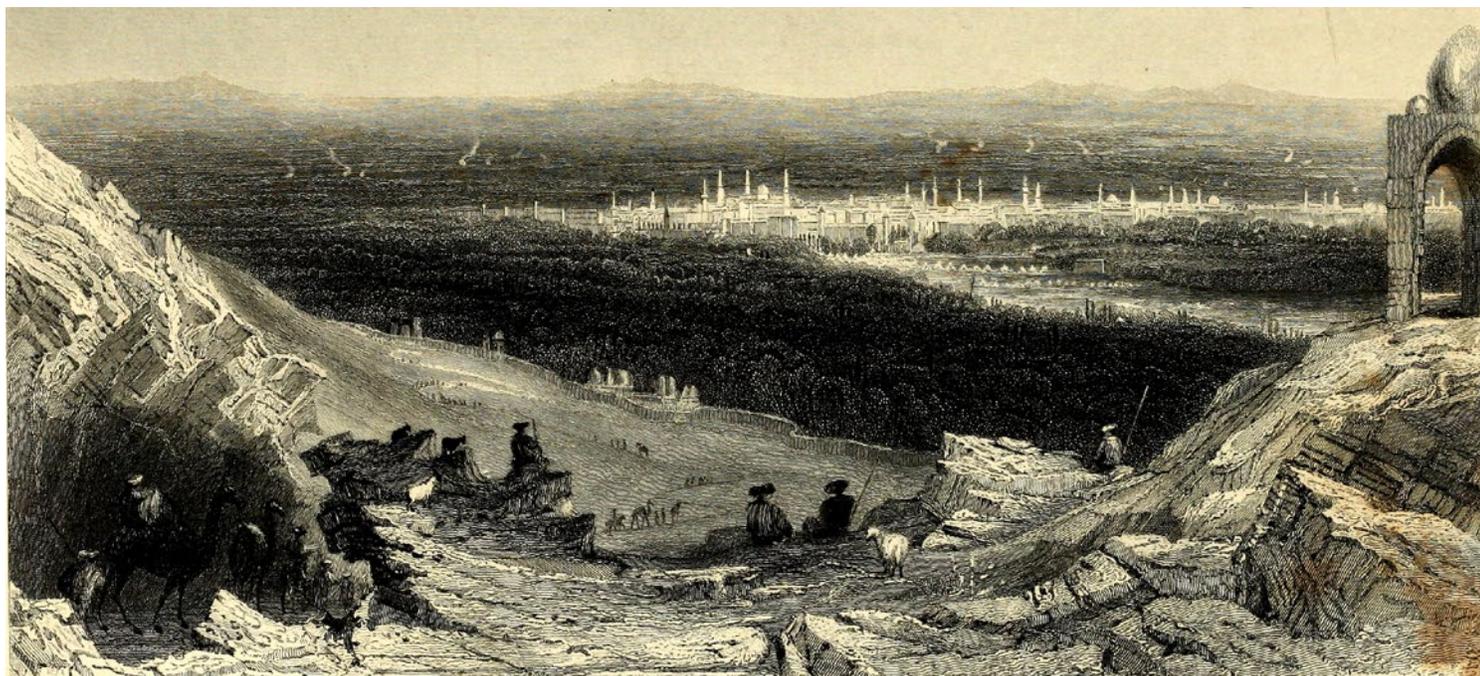
- ***Hypergraphia Magazine***: a new fanzine-style (physical print) magazine launched at Necronomicon 2017
- ***Dark Times Fanzine***: while this free PDF mag is notionally aimed at the *Dark Conspiracy RPG*, its first few releases have featured a fair bit of Lovecraft-related material

And last, but (hopefully) not least, it’s probably worth a quick summary of what we at Cthulhu Reborn have managed to publish in 2017. It has actually been a record year for us, releasing 7 PDF products. Six of them have been supplements to our surprisingly-successful *Convicts & Cthulhu* product line. The other one is a free “Scenario Upgrade” pack (prop/handouts and 7th Edition stats) for the older Chaosium anthology of modern-day scenarios titled ***The Stars are Right***. All of those PDFs are available over on RPGNow.com as either free downloads or “Pay What You Want.” Some are also available via the [Download page](#) on the Cthulhu Reborn blog.

A Conspiracy in Damascus

(8th century scenario)

by Jared Smith



Damascus—Distant View from the Mountain Side. by William Henry Bartlett

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, it has been 91 years since the faithful swept from the Arabian deserts to bring down the Sassanid Empire and push back the edge of the Roman Empire toward Constantinople. Now the caliphate of Hisham ibn Abd-al-Malik stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indus River. Its new capital lies in ancient Damascus, while the caliph has moved his palace north to Resafa to be closer to the battle lines with the Romans.

Controlling such a far flung caliphate is helped by the courier network that carries official messages and reports back and forth. The couriers also serve as spies of the caliph, watching the distant governors and newly conquered people of the caliphate to insure that corruption and rebellion does not gain hold.

You have been recruited from across the caliphate to serve as members of a secret group within the courier network, agents to preserve the community.

Now your team of agents has been summoned back to Damascus itself, where your spy chief suspects a merchant of smuggling something strange into the city.

But what if the merchant does not work alone? What if the conspiracy goes deep? The City of Jasmine is one of the oldest cities in the world, ruled through the ages by Arameans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Alexander the Great, and the Romans. What if something unnatural lurks beneath its aged stone walls?

Only God knows all things...

Author's note: I was lucky enough to travel through Syria in 2010 right before the civil war began. A truly astonishing country, layered with history upon repurposed history upon buried history. I hope this scenario conveys a bit of my love for the country, and I hope its people find peace and justice.

This adventure is set in Damascus, capital of the Umayyad caliphate or empire, in the year 725 CE. The players are government spies who must investigate a suspicious merchant who is connected to a Cthulhu cult. The cult has recently smuggled a reptilian humanoid sorcerer from a race called the masqut into the underground aquaduct system of Damascus where it plans to conduct a destructive ritual. The players must defeat the masqut and the cult leader without being murdered by the Demon of the Wastes that is enslaved to the cult leader.

A Conspiracy in Damascus is a medieval/Dark Ages scenario. Stats are shown as **Call of Cthulhu [GUMSHOE]**.

Background

Two years ago, an opium addict in Damascus named Kyriakos had a frightful dream, filled with sensations of drowning and a dark, foreboding city beneath the seas. This was his first contact with the nightmares transmitted by Cthulhu, who lies dead but still dreaming, deep under the Pacific Ocean in the sunken city of R'lyeh. Kyriakos began to receive more and more dream visions from Cthulhu, until the mental disturbances caused by them became more addictive than even the smoke of opium. During the hours of the day, Kyriakos wandered in a drugged daze, trying to achieve the dreamstate of his Cthulhu visions by greater and greater use of opium. His actions to sustain his addiction became more and more depraved, theft and burglary finally leading to murder.

Then one night, Kyriakos awoke from his most terrible dream yet to



The Nameless City by Jensine Eckwall

find a man standing over him. The man called Kyriakos by name and said he had come to lead him on the next step in receiving the blessings of Cthulhu. The man spoke with the accent of someone who was from Yemen, far across Arabia on the edge of the Indian Ocean. In a daze, Kyriakos followed the mysterious stranger through the dark streets of Damascus until they came to a building.

The door opened as they approached, and the stranger led them inside. After a strange gesture, the man spoke words that burned the ears of Kyriakos, and the stones of the floor lifted up to reveal a dark space below. He led Kyriakos downward into the darkness, through a space covered in strange carvings of monsters, to an even deeper tunnel into the rock. A foul odor rose from the tunnel and Kyriakos nearly fainted from the stench. The man urged Kyriakos onward, and as Kyriakos stumbled deeper, his head began to pound with the painful sensations he suffered after awaking from a Cthulhu dream.

At last they came out into a massive chamber where the noxious vapors poured out of a black pit. Perched above the pit was an outcropping of stone carved into a loathsome depiction of dread Cthulhu himself. At the sight, Kyriakos fell prostrate in awed horror at his dream made reality. The stranger explained that this was an ancient place where Cthulhu had once been worshipped freely but had been buried and forgotten. The fumes came from the deep places of the earth and would enhance the mind-altering messages of Cthulhu to greater heights of ecstasy.

With the guidance of the stranger known only as al-Yamani, or “the man from Yemen”, Kyriakos began recruiting other addicts into the cult where they worshipped Cthulhu in a drugged haze of increasingly debauched violence, soon sacrificing victims to terrible monstrous beasts

that would crawl up from the bottomless pit at the height of their rituals. Al-Yamani then left Damascus for over a year, only returning four months ago to inform the cult that they would need to prepare for the arrival of an inhuman sorcerer called a masqt, an ancient reptilian race that once ruled the area eons ago when the deserts were fertile. From the ruins of their Nameless City deep under the Arabian desert sands, the masqt plot for the day when they can regain their power. The masqt hope to open a portal in the Cthulhu temple to the oceans around sunken R'lyeh and flood Damascus with poisonous salt water that will destroy its viability for humans but provide them a place to expand into.

But for now, al-Yamani has left Damascus on a mysterious mission, leaving the fulfillment of the plan in the hands of Kyriakos. Before he left, the cult summoned a jinni called the Demon of the Wastes to serve Kyriakos. This Demon of the Wastes must obey Kyriakos' orders but hates his enslavement. Just two days ago, the masqt sorcerer finally arrived in Damascus, smuggled through the gates by the front man for the cult, a slimy merchant named Majd al-Din. The cultists intensified their preparations under the masqt's guidance for the ritual that would destroy the city and open a portal to their terrible god, Cthulhu.

Unfortunately for the cult, the strange activities of Majd al-Din have been detected by the secret spy service of the government, which has assembled a team of the Player Characters to investigate. Their investigation of Majd al-Din will hopefully lead them to uncover the secret location of the ritual under Kyriakos' house, and interrupt it before the entire city is rendered uninhabitable. This will require them to circumvent, free, or kill the magical being called the Demon of the Wastes that serves as bodyguard and servant to Kyriakos. Tomorrow night, the ritual will begin...

Timeline of Events

- 2 years ago, 723 CE, 105 on the Islamic calendar: A Mythos sorcerer known only as al-Yamani, “the man from Yemen”, approaches Kyriakos in Damascus and shows him the underground Cthulhu cult site beneath the city. Kyriakos pledges his assistance and begins recruiting members into his opium-enhanced Cthulhu dream cult. Kyriakos moves into the building above the Cthulhu cult site, **The House with the Copper Door**. The cultist Zubair uses funds provided by al-Yamani to also purchase a building to recruit new members through their drug experiences, **The Den of Smoke**. Al-Yamani leaves Damascus.
- Present year: 725 CE, 107 on the Islamic calendar
- 4 months ago: Al-Yamani returns and tells Kyriakos that a creature of great power called a masqut will be coming to the city. Al-Yamani and the cultists summon and bind the Demon of the Wastes to the service of Kyriakos in **The House with the Copper Door**. Al-Yamani again leaves Damascus for unknown reasons.
- 3 months ago: The cult calls on merchant Majd al-Din to be the front man for their new commercial requirements. Majd al-Din rents space in **The Warehouse**.
- 11 weeks ago: Majd al-Din rents the house above **The Lair** for the cult. The cultists immediately begin excavating the basement to break into the aquaducts beneath the nymphaeum fountain.
- 2 weeks ago: Kyriakos sends Majd al-Din into the desert to retrieve the Ark of the Masqut.
- 1 week ago: Majd al-Din meets a group of strange Bedouin and retrieves the Ark.
- 2 days ago: Majd al-Din returns to Damascus and bribes his way into the city without the Ark being inspected. The Ark is delivered to **The Lair** where the cultists revive the masqut. The masqut begins instructing the cultists to prepare for the ritual.
- 1 day ago: Spy chief Marwan Abd-al-Aziz discovers the bribed gate guard.
- Today in the afternoon: Marwan Abd-al-Aziz meets the Player Characters at **The Mosque** and orders them to investigate Majd al-Din.
- Tomorrow night: The cultists perform their ritual at the Cthulhu cult site beneath **the House with the Copper Door**.

KEEPER NOTE: There are two important points early on to help the adventure go well.

- Make sure the Player Characters get enough clues in **The Warehouse** to reveal the three points of investigation: Zubair (**The Swordsmith**), the rented house on Mustaqim Street (**The Lair**), and the house of Alcmene and Mereruka (**The Den of Smoke**). Any two of these points can combine to lead the Player Characters to the **House with the Copper Door**, and the finale of the investigation.
- The Demon of the Wastes should appear at the end of investigating **The Warehouse**. He is a complicated NPC, but will show a potential solution to the investigation, offer some clues, and limit the Player Characters from simply calling in outside help. This is a vital interaction, so consider carefully how you will play it out!

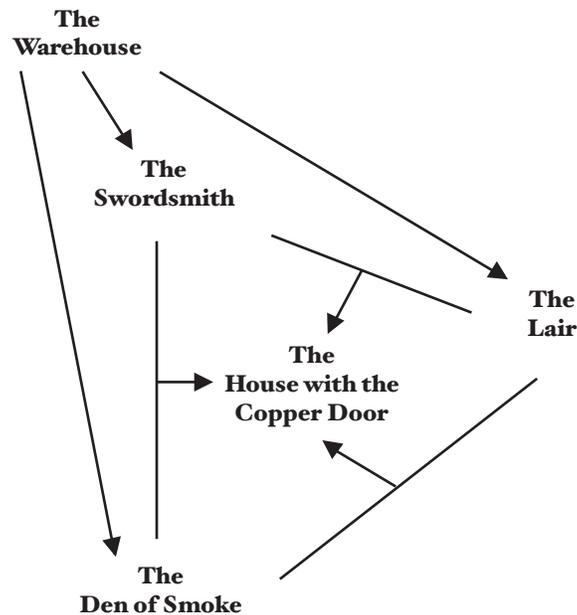
The Clue Flowchart

The investigation of this scenario is organized around six physical locations. The clues in the first location, **The Warehouse**, leads to three middle locations: **The Swordsmith**, **The Den of Smoke**, and **The Lair**. These middle locations each have sets of partial clues. The information gained from combining any two clues from two of the three middle locations should lead clever investigators to the final location, **The House with the Copper Door**. The sixth location is **The Sage**, who can help with magical clues and language translations. These clues will be listed at the end of each location as “Clue Flowchart”. On the other hand, the NPCs will react to the actions of the investigators. You can use their decisions to either help the Player Characters if they missed some vital clues, or to hamper their actions if things are going too easily.

Be sure to communicate that the clues found are partial, or require an extra step, to prevent player confusion or frustration. For example, if they find the design of a copper door at The Swordsmith, you could say, “The door sounds so unique it would be instantly recognizable, but it will take over a day to ask throughout the whole city. If you knew what area to search, you would probably be able to find it very quickly.”

The investigators can discover the House with the Copper Door more directly if they follow escaping cultists or something else clever, but they have a greater chance of succeeding in stopping the ritual if they obtain clues from most of the locations. If they choose to immediately confront the cultists at the House with the Copper Door, that is on them!

The locations with clues are set up as follows:



Sanity Checks

- 2/1D4+2 [5 **Stability**] – See the Demon of the Wastes appear from nowhere in an indoor sandstorm and brutally murder Majd al-Din
- 1/1D4 [1 **Stability**] – See the carnage of Majd al-Din’s murder (only if they didn’t see the murder first hand!)
- 0/1D3 [2 **Stability**] – Realize the Demon of the Wastes is somehow communicating in a way that sounds like everyone’s native tongue
- 0/1D3 [2 **Stability**] – See the Demon of the Wastes is impervious to mortal weapons
- 1/1D6 [5 **Stability**] – Kill someone to activate a *Blade of Unending Torment*
- 0/1D3 [1 **Stability**] – Witness the Cthulhu dreamers in the cavern
- 0/1D6 [4 **Stability**] – See the masqut
- 0/1D3 [4 **Stability**] – See the Demon of the Wastes change shape

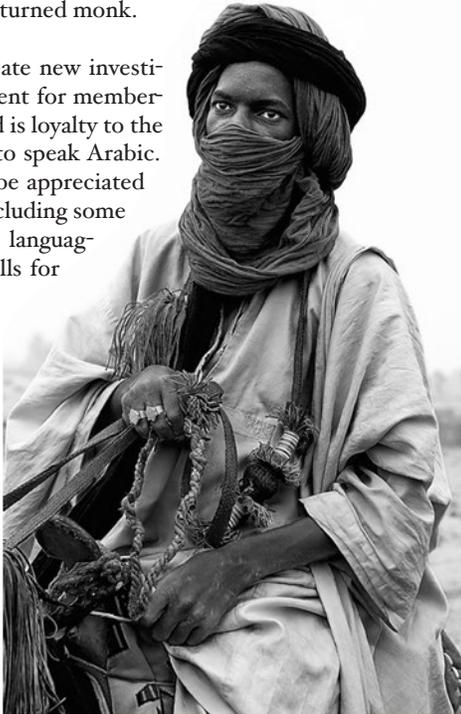
Introducing the Player Characters

Pre-generated characters are available as downloads. They represent a cross-section of the caliphate. All speak Arabic but are a variety of ethnic backgrounds and religions and skillsets. They were recruited by the Diwan al-Barid for exactly this reason, as they can interact with a variety of people in the caliphate and have a complementary set of knowledge. The pre-generated characters include a charming merchant, an educated scribe, an alchemist/astronomer, a soldier of the frontier, a tough blacksmith, and a former thief turned monk.

If the players wish to create new investigators, the only requirement for membership in the Diwan al-Barid is loyalty to the caliphate and the ability to speak Arabic. A variety of skills would be appreciated by the Diwan al-Barid, including some combat ability, multiple languages, and good personal skills for gathering information.

Possible occupations that might catch the eye of Diwan al-Barid recruiters include:

Book Dealer, Burglar, Forger, Lawyer, Librarian, Member of the Clergy, Rabbi, Sailor, Soldier, Spy, [Clergy, Criminal, Military, Private Investigator].



Start

(to be read to the Player Characters)

You are all members of the Diwan al-Barid, the courier service of the Muslim caliphate. The Diwan al-Barid runs messages from the capital in Damascus to the edges of the caliphate, west across the coast of Africa to al-Andulus on the Atlantic Ocean, to the southern tip of Arabia on the Indian Ocean, to the east to the Indus River, and north to the caliph himself, Hisham ibn Abd-al-Malik, where he leads the fight against the Roman Empire of Constantinople. But the Diwan al-Barid also serves as the eyes and ears of the caliph throughout the vast expanses of the caliphate, with local postmasters watching both the restless conquered population for rebellion and the distant governors for corruption.

You report to Marwan Abd-al-Aziz, the spy chief of Diwan al-Barid. He assembled your diverse group from across the caliphate to deal with peculiar problems that required a special touch. He has told you to gather in the grand courtyard of the Great Mosque of Damascus, one hour after the afternoon prayer, for your briefing.

The Mosque

The Great Mosque of Damascus is rather quiet after afternoon prayer, as the rest of the city goes about their day in the baking heat. The central courtyard is surrounded by beautiful mosaics on all the walls that show a wonderful vision of verdant greenery, but the marble floor is hot to the touch. The pillared arches of the colonnade around the courtyard provide a welcome bit of shade during the day. A few stragglers from the afternoon prayer still linger about the courtyard, talking or studying the Quran.

Underneath one of the arches sits a beggar in a tattered robe, which you recognize as one of Marwan Abd-al-Aziz's favorite disguises. He gestures you all to sit around him.

"One week ago, at an oasis east of the city, a group of Bedouin from an unknown tribe led a camel caravan out of the desert. The camels carried a massive object but the Bedouin kept to themselves. The few words they said had a strange accent.

"A few days later they returned through the oasis but the camels no longer were carrying anything.

"Two days ago, a merchant named Majd al-Din entered Damascus with a large train of goods, but bribed his way inside the city without a proper inspection. Majd al-Din's goods included a covered object large enough to be whatever the Bedouin had carried, and the path of their travel could have easily crossed each other. The bribed guard spent some of the money from Majd al-Din and we got one of the coins."

Marwan Abd-al-Aziz flips a silver coin in the air, catches it, then hands it to you to be examined. "I took the coin to the souq to get it identified. Moneychangers agreed it was real, but could not identify it. I finally spoke to an old woman named Lavinia in the Book Bazaar just outside the mosque. She says the symbols on this are ancient Persian, and it is a silver siglos from the Empire of Cyrus the Great. This coin is over 1000 years old.

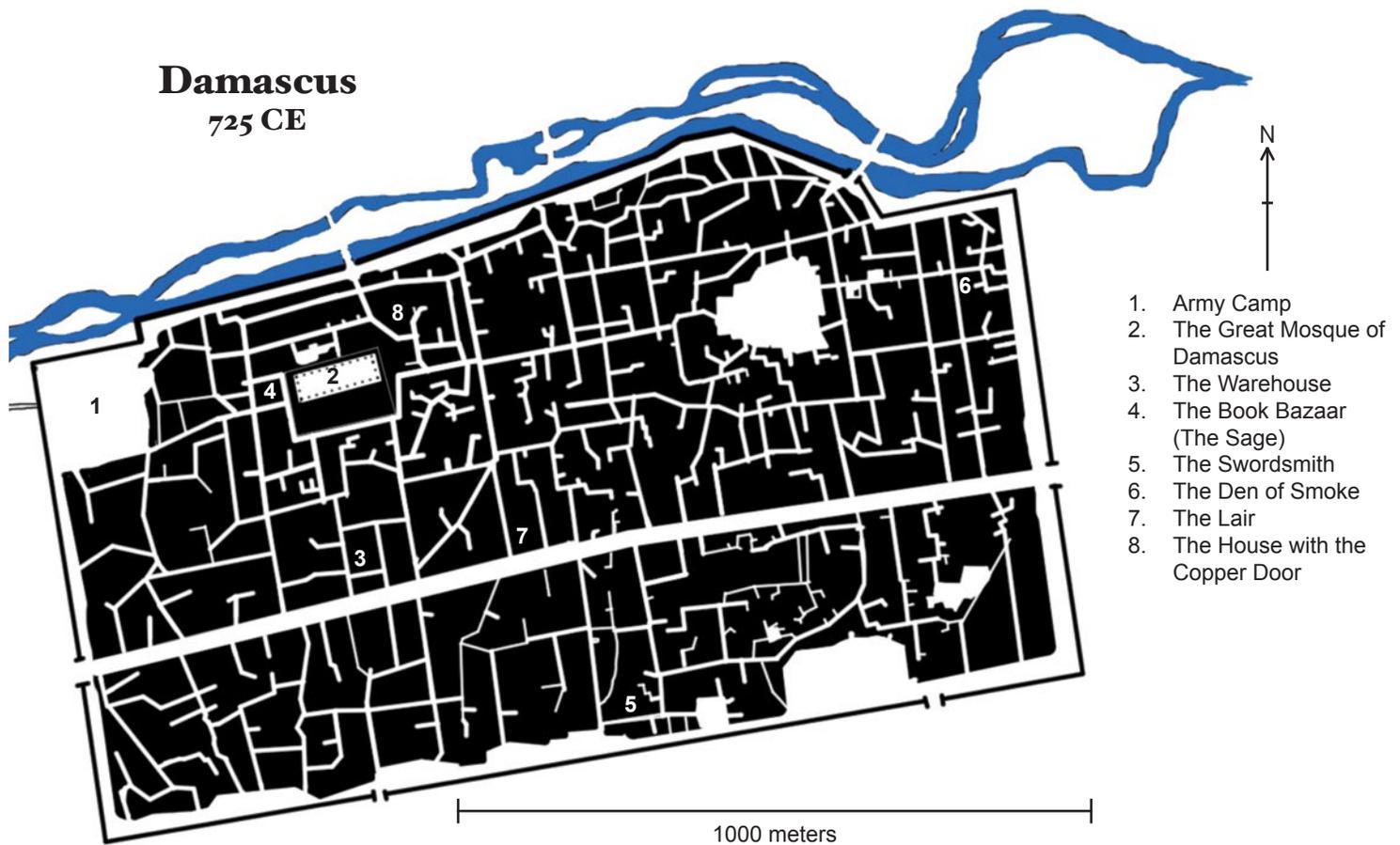
"I need you to enter Majd al-Din's warehouse tonight and find out what was worth transporting so far, and why it had to be smuggled inside."



The Great Mosque of Damascus viewed from the south, with a cemetery and the oasis beyond the city walls

Damascus

725 CE



Other information:

- The city gate guard that Majd al-Din bribed is being watched, but will not be arrested until this is all taken care of, for fear of tipping off Majd al-Din if the guard suddenly disappears.
- Majd al-Din's warehouse is inside of the big khan in the Buzuriyah Bazaar, which is located just to the south of the mosque. The khan is two stories with an interior courtyard. Majd al-Din rented a two-roomed storage space inside the khan within the last year. Majd al-Din's space is on the ground floor, where he lives and also keeps his office. His two assistants sleep in a rented room on the second floor. Their names are Hanud and Ibrahim. The other storage spaces inside the khan are rented or owned by other merchants, so there may be people there at all hours.
- Marwan has rented a room for the characters as a merchant group on the first floor across from Majd al-Din's warehouse space.
- Majd al-Din is a local merchant who never had much to make him stand out. He seems to have come into some luck in the last few years, as he has begun running bigger and bigger caravans, and he has recently rented new warehouse space in the large Buzuriyah Bazaar khan. It's possible that the smuggling is the source of his new success and wealth.
- Majd al-Din is of average height but noticeably thin. He has a short cut beard and his face is covered by pock marks.
- Hanud is in his teens and somewhat clumsy, with long black hair.
- Ibrahim is in his twenties, and is tall with lanky arms.
- Marwan will be at **The Mosque** every day one hour after the afternoon prayer. If he needs to be contacted at any other time, a message can be left at the mosque with a lawyer named Reza "for the old beggar."
- When the characters have proof of what Majd al-Din has been up to, Marwan will send guards in to arrest him. Until then, they must operate in secret.
- The characters will have standard petty cash but not the funds or authorization for funds to buy anything extravagant.
- The characters are on their own.

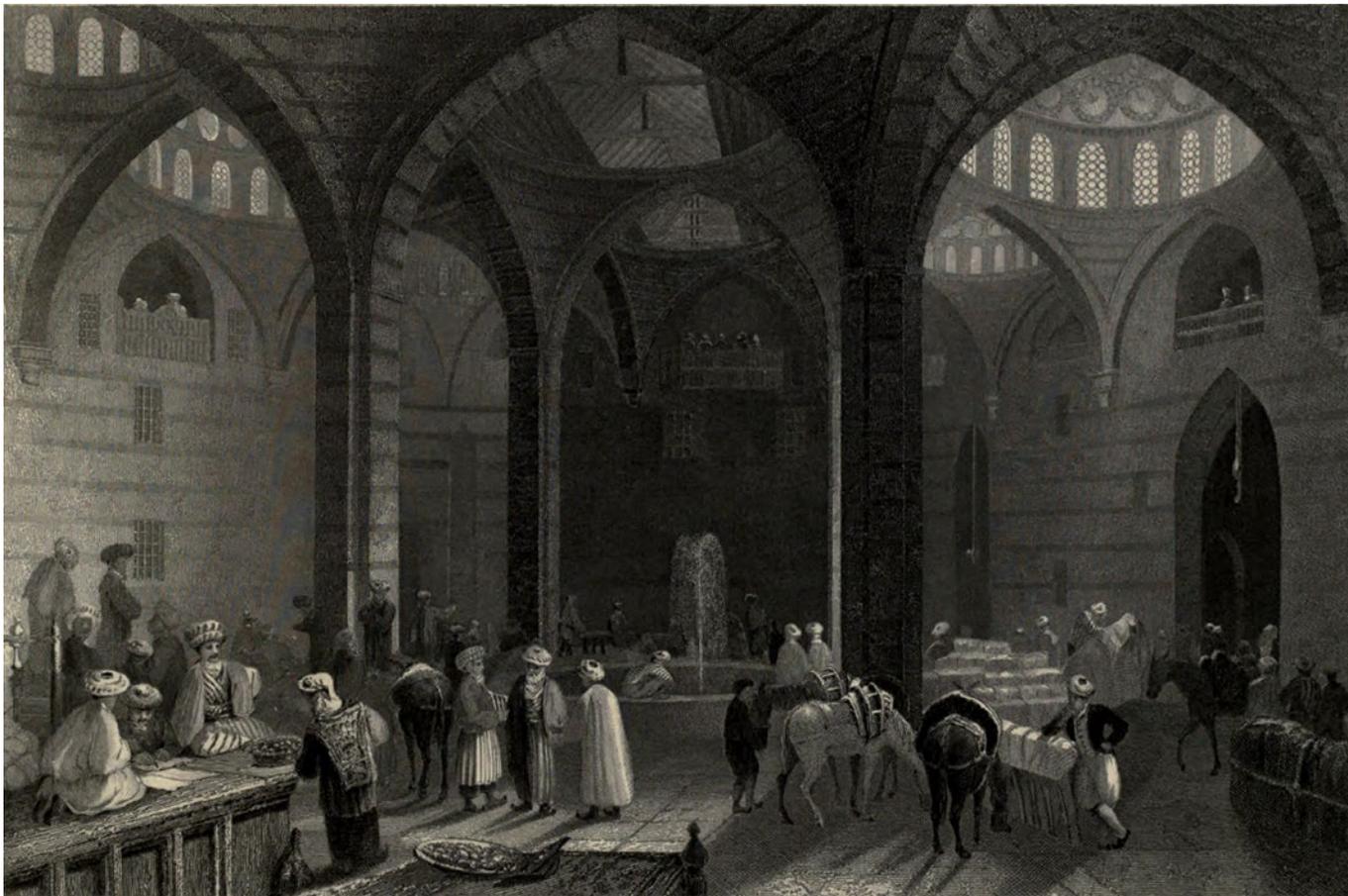
KEEPER NOTE: Asking Marwan for help later will be highly problematic after they have met the Demon of the Wastes! When you have read **The Warehouse** section, refer to the **KEEPER NOTE** there for further details.

The Sage

When the characters need an ancient language translated or a spell explained, they will need to find someone to help. They will automatically know there might be someone like this in the city, it is just a matter of finding them. If asked, Marwan will suggest Lavinia in the Book Bazaar. An **Idea** roll will remind the characters that Marwan had the coin translated by Lavinia. Otherwise a search through the city will eventually lead them to her as well.

Lavinia is an ancient woman who runs a stall in the Book Bazaar immediately to the west of the Mosque, regardless of time of day. She is well known in the bazaar as an expert on ancient languages and strange knowledge. She should be used as both a source of knowledge and some good advice if they characters need help. She can:

- Identify any coins found in the **Warehouse** as from the same time period as Marwan's coin
- Give a rough description of the powers and invulnerability of jinn
- Both translate **The Tablet of Enslavement of Evil Beings of Air and Fire** (see *Items and Spells* below) and explain how to undo the spell by reciting it without using the true name of the enslaved being
- Provide a phoenic transcription of the Old Persian cuneiform on the tablet into Arabic
- Explain how the **Blade of Slow Torment** (see *Items and Spells* below) works and how to create one with the **Infuse with Blood** spell



The Great Khan at Damascus by William Henry Bartlett

The Warehouse

The Buzuriyah Bazaar is directly south of the Great Mosque, and is full of spice merchants. The khan (warehouse) that Majd al-Din is renting space in is on the east side of the main north-south street through the bazaar. As the largest khan in the bazaar, any local can give directions to it. The khan has two floors around an enclosed courtyard with a fountain in it. The ground floor is made up of large rooms that open onto the courtyard that can be used by merchants for storage and sales. Two staircases to either side of the entry hall lead up to the second floor, which has a balcony that runs around the courtyard and smaller rooms that can be rented for travelers or merchants to stay in.

The khan is extremely busy especially in the courtyard itself, with donkeys and horses being unloaded and loaded, people buying and selling items, stacks of goods piled everywhere, and many people enjoying the atmosphere to shop or browse, or just relax by the fountain for a time.

Visitors and shoppers are welcome and have easy entrance to the khan. A bedroom may be rented on the second floor for the night with a successful **Credit Rating** check [**Credit Rating**], but all the warehouse space on the ground floor is currently occupied. Marwan Abd-al-Aziz had one of his agents rent the last space in the warehouse on the first floor, across the courtyard from Madj al-Din's space, as a base for the investigators. Hiding within the mass of goods and warehouses requires a Hard **Stealth** check [**Difficulty 3 Stealth**] during the day (due to the number of people who might notice), or a regular **Stealth** [**Stealth**] check at the end of the day when the warehouses begin to close and customers leave.

Majd al-Din has rented two connected rooms on the ground floor, where he works and sleeps, and a bedroom on the second floor shared by his two assistants Hanud and Ibrahim. He has only started renting these spaces three months ago since the uptick in his fortunes after being funded by Kyriakos, so he is a newcomer to the khan and his newfound wealth has been noticed by many.

Entrance Hallway:

The hallway is open to all during the day. The outer door is closed and barred at night. A big guard named *Jibril* is stationed here at night. He will only allow in people after dark if they have already rented a room, otherwise he will instruct them to return in the morning. If befriended, he is happy to talk about the khan inhabitants.

Majd al-Din's Front Storage Room:

The door to the courtyard is closed when the characters arrive. The door is locked at night (successful **Locksmithing** [**Locksmith**] to unlock or **STR** [**Athletics**] to force open).

Hanud is here or in the courtyard talking to other merchants or outside of the khan on errands during the day.

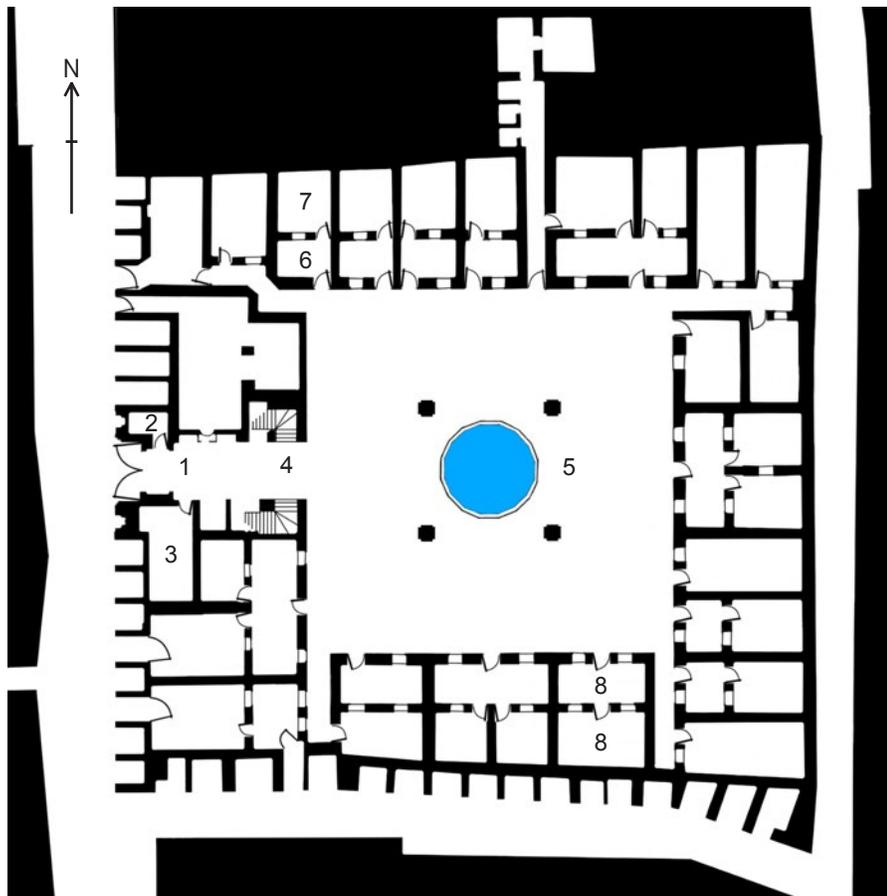
Ibrahim is here or in the Rear Storage Room during the day. He will not let anyone inside since they are closed for business that day.

The room is filled with unused goods that Majd al-Din uses as a cover for his drug smuggling. Dust covers everything: rolls of cloth, carefully stacked towers of glassware and clay jars of oil, showing that most of the goods are not actually sold. Narrow walkways lead between the huge stacks. Nothing in this front room is incriminating in any way. Majd al-Din is careful to keep all suspicious items and activities in the Rear Storage Room. Anyone searching through the wares in the room will quickly notice that the stacks of goods are very precarious. If they persist on moving items to search, it will take a **DEX** [**Stealth**] roll to prevent something from falling.

Majd al-Din's Rear Storage Room and Office:

Majd al-Din is here during the day and night.

This backroom is Majd al-Din's office and includes a table and chair, but it is also crammed full with the same types of wares as the Front Storage Room. A small bed is in the corner, concealed from view by stacks of merchandise.



Map of the Warehouse Ground Floor

1. Entrance Hallway
2. Jibril's Guard Station
3. Jibril's Bedroom
4. Stairs to Second Floor Rooms
5. Courtyard Fountain
6. Majd al-Din's Front Storage Room
7. Majd al-Din's Rear Storage Room and Office
8. Player Characters' Rooms

Clues: Several items in this room will be of interest to Investigators. All the papers that Majd al-Din's uses to keep track of his investments are spread in a mess across his desk. A successful **Accounting** roll [**Accounting**] will immediately find many strange discrepancies which are listed in **Majd al-Din's Ledger**. There is also a **Property Deed** for the Den of Smoke and a **Rental Agreement** for the house above the Lair (see [Handouts](#) below for all three). Also on the desk is a new scimitar made by Zubair that has his name stamped on the blade. Any swordsmith in Damascus can identify the maker and give directions to his shop (see **The Swordsmith** below). A small sack under the bed contains a stash of 200 silver coins. The coins look similar to the coin Marwan Abd-al-Aziz showed off at The Mosque, and bear unknown faces and languages on them (Old Persian). A Hard **Appraise** roll [**Difficulty 4 Bargain**] will identify them as various Archaemenid Empire coinage, circa 500-300 BCE. These are some of the coins Zubair paid Majd al-Din with, and were retrieved for the cult by the Demon of the Wastes. An **Idea** roll will suggest showing them to Marwan Abd-al-Aziz or asking experts in the souq. If they look for an expert, they can find **The Sage** (see sidebar above).

These documents and the sword point towards three locations, **The Den of Smoke**, **The Lair**, and **The Swordsmith**.

Hanud and Ibrahim's Bedroom:

Hanud and *Ibrahim* are here at night. Their room contains only two beds and their minimal possessions. It is locked during the day (successful **Locksmithing** [**Locksmith**] to unlock or **STR** [**Athletics**] to force open).

The Warehouse Scene

Conversations: Jibril knows that Majd al-Din rarely leaves his storage rooms. He is suspicious of Majd al-Din, distrusting his sudden wealth, and disliking his sleazy ways. Jibril can describe a man (Zubair) who regularly visits Majd al-Din every few weeks, but does not know his name. He believes Zubair to be an opium addict, based on his behaviour.

Hanud and Ibrahim know that Majd al-Din is engaged in illegal activities involving smuggling and drugs. He does not share any secrets with them, but they have both observed him writing notes on a series of papers in his office in the Rear Storeroom. They know nothing further than that. Neither greatly respect or like Majd al-Din, he is merely their boss.

Most of the other merchants have a low opinion of Majd al-Din. They know he does not sell quality goods like the rest of them (since he is mainly using the shop as a front for his drug business). He also is rarely open (for the same reason). He is a newcomer to the warehouse, and will probably be out of business soon. All can confirm he was on a trip until just a few days ago, but none of them saw him bring in any object big enough to be the mysterious object from the caravan.

After Hours: When the sun sets, the shops will close up and the customers will leave. Some merchants will retire upstairs to their rented rooms, others leave to their houses. Hanud and Ibrahim go upstairs to their room. Majd al-Din locks his shop from the inside. Jibril bars the front door entrance when everyone has left. The characters can stay since they have rented a storage space.

Majd al-Din: To keep things simple, Majd al-Din should remain inside his storage room from the time the characters arrive until the next morning. He will not be interested in any business. Ibrahim has been instructed to admit no one for the day.

The Break-In: At any time during the night, the characters can attempt to break into Majd al-Din's storage room. Majd al-Din will be asleep at his desk after having had several drinks from a wineskin.

The Confession: Majd al-Din does not believe in any of the vague supernatural ravings he has heard from Zubair about the power of his leader. He will conceal his illegal activities in the face of all questions, but is at heart a coward. A successful **Intimidate** check [**Intimidation**] against him during the day will cause him to tell all he knows in exchange for his life. His confession is detailed below in **Majd al-Din's Story**. If

the characters break in at night, have Majd al-Din awaken as they are near. If he finds himself surrounded by strangers he will immediately break down and confess his story! This is fun to roleplay in a babbling nonstop rant of terror.

Majd al-Din's Story

Majd al-Din would sell opium to one of his clients, a swordsmith named Zubair who would pay for the drugs by trading his swords to Majd al-Din.

A few years ago, Zubair approached Majd al-Din about purchasing a cheap building, which he did over in the eastern part of the Christian Quarter. Zubair financed the purchase with a pile of silver coins. Majd al-Din doesn't know where Zubair suddenly got the money from. Soon after, Zubair began increasing his opium orders but had them sent to the house that he had purchased.

Around 3 months ago, Zubair approached Majd al-Din about arranging several complicated things for his unnamed "friend". Zubair warned Majd al-Din to not speak of this to anyone or he would suffer a terrible death. Since then, he has received regular payments of silver from Zubair every few weeks. Majd al-Din has used some of the money to rent the Storage Rooms and Bedroom in the khan.

About 2 months ago, Zubair asked Majd al-Din to try to rent any house that was near the old Roman fountain in the center of town. Majd al-Din found an unused house on Mustaqim Street that was next door and rented it under his name.

3 weeks ago, Zubair told Majd al-Din he would need to bring a "large object" into the city without it being inspected. He would receive the object from some Bedouin in the desert near an oasis.

1 week ago, Majd al-Din met the Bedouin in the desert and received the object. The Bedouin spoke little and had a strange accent. The object was about 2 meters long and 1 meter deep and 1 meter wide. It was heavy, and wrapped in cloth. Majd al-Din snuck a look at it, it was a box made of copper covered in strange markings.

2 days ago, Majd al-Din arrived back at the gates of Damascus with the copper box. He bribed a guard he knew with some of the silver coins Zubair had given him and got into the city without the copper box being inspected. He took the copper box to the old house on Mustaqim Street he had rented. Zubair had also asked for daily animal delivery to the old house, which Majd al-Din has arranged.

That is all he knows.

The End of Majd al-Din's Story

As soon as Majd al-Din has finished speaking, a whirlwind of blinding sand fills the area. Everyone must make a **DEX** roll [**Sense Trouble**] to close their eyes or cover their face. A failure leaves the investigator blind for one round. As the whirlwind begins to die down, the Demon of the Wastes appears immediately behind Majd al-Din with his jambiya dagger already plunged through Majd al-Din's back and heart. He will then pull the dagger out, spraying blood across the room in all directions, with Majd al-Din falling to the floor dead. However, no spot of blood will mar the Demon's white robe or the dagger blade (**Sanity** roll, $2/1D4+2$ SAN loss) [**5 Stability**]. Characters who do not witness this occurring, due to being blind at the time or entering the room late, will only see the carnage of the murder (**Sanity** roll of $1/1D4$) [**1 Stability**].

The Demon will then sheathe his dagger and place his sleeved hand over his heart, and politely bow to the investigators, saying, "Good morrow, mine friends, and peace upon thee."

Any physical attacks upon the Demon are ineffective and will be ignored by the Demon at this point, as he wishes to both display his invulnerability and attempt to gain the assistance of the investigators. Projectiles will bounce off his robe without leaving a mark, while stabs and cuts will slide off (**Sanity** roll, $0/1D3$ SAN loss) [**2 Stability**].

The Demon of the Wastes

The Demon of the Wastes is the main impediment to the successful conclusion of the scenario, but also a major interaction point for the investigators that will require careful handling. He is an unnatural creature similar to the jinni or genie of Arabian myth, summoned and bound to the will of Kyriakos through a spell on **The Tablet of Enslavement of Evil Beings of Air and Fire** (see [Items and Spells](#) below) that is in **The House with the Copper Door**.

The Demon of the Wastes appears as a tall, 6'6" Bedawi Arab of an unknown tribe in a long white robe with headwrap pulled around his face so that only his eyes are shown. There is golden trim on edge of his headwrap and robe. His headwrap continually flutters away from mouth in strange ripples even when he is not speaking.

A bejeweled jambiya dagger is sheathed in a black leather belt at his waist. His feet are always concealed under his robe. His hands are always hidden inside his sleeves.

The Demon of the Wastes always stands with his sleeved hand over heart, and gives a slight bow before addressing someone for the first time, or when leaving. He is unfailingly polite, and always addresses the investigators as "mine friends."

He speaks a VERY archaic language, but every listener believes he is speaking to them in an archaic form of their own language. If a character has a different native language than the language the group communicates with, a successful **INT** check [**Languages**] will let them realize everyone is hearing a different language at the same time (**Sanity** roll, $0/1D3$ SAN loss) [**2 Stability**].

Conversation: The Demon wishes to communicate several things to the characters.

- "I am known as the Demon of the Wastes."
- "I have been looking forward to meeting you. For what slave does not wish to be free?"

The Demon is under four outstanding strictures while he is enslaved:

- "I must obey all commands of my master."
- "I am proscribed from seeking vengeance on the allies of mine master."
- "Mine master hath said I must slay any who inform another of his plans."
- "Mine master hath proscribed me from speaking of the conditions of mine imprisonment."

He cannot be freed until the tablet is destroyed, but cannot reveal this. At this point, he is unkillable, and can easily murder the investigators if Kyriakos orders it. However, he chafes under his magical enslavement and sees the investigators as a way to escape. He will try to give as much help as possible under the strictures above, but otherwise will not make his move to defy his master until **The Ritual Scene** (see below).

When the conversation winds down, the Demon will vanish. If the characters ask, he will take Majd al-Din's body with him. Otherwise they must deal with the murdered body and the blood that is all over them!

The Swordsmith

Zubair is a well known swordsmith in Damascus who has his shop in the blacksmith bazaar in the Muslim quarter near the south wall. Any merchant in the city can give directions to it.

KEEPER NOTE: Now that the characters have been snared within the threat of the Demon of the Wastes, any character with a background in Arabia or Persia, or who is Muslim, or with a successful **Occult** [**Occult**] or **Religion** roll [**Theology**], will know the following as fact: The fastidiousness of jinn when it comes to contracts means that the Player Characters cannot tell anyone of what they have discovered without being slain by the Demon of the Wastes. Clever characters may find some loopholes around this. If Marwan is approached obliquely with a request for help, he will go along with the character's request, even as far as giving them a document seconding six soldiers from the army camp to their temporary command. Or a character may even decide to make the sacrifice of being killed by the Demon to alert Marwan, but then Marwan will be in the same situation. In such a case, you might let the player take on the role of Marwan for the rest of the adventure, but hopefully the rest of the group will dissuade this dire option until all other hope is lost.

If the players are paranoid or cautious, some of their group may be watching outside or elsewhere when the Demon of the Wastes first appears. You don't want to have characters unable to tell the absent characters about the main plot points for fear of the Demon killing them! In this case, I would have the voice of the Demon be supernaturally audible to the other characters as well. The Demon wants to be freed, after all!

His shop is a simple affair, with the forge and workshop on the ground floor, and Zubair's bedroom above it. His apprentice Faisal sleeps on the ground floor. A recently built wooden closet dangerously close to the forge conceals the magical **Copper Fount** (see [Items and Spells](#) below) that Zubair used as a source for creating the copper *Blades of Slow Torment* and copper elements for the **House with the Copper Door**. The Copper Fount was created by the Demon of the Wastes and is constantly full of bubbling hot copper.

Zubair's bedroom upstairs contains both his **business ledger**, which shows his numerous monthly sales of swords to Majd al-Din (but nothing else incriminating), and two **sets of designs** covered in strange markings and symbols (**Occult** roll [**Occult**] to recognize they are magical markings). The first design is for the copper weapons that he has been making with Faisal for use in the ritual. The second design is for a copper door and several bands of copper that were used to bind The Demon of the Wastes when he was summoned.

If the alarm has been raised, Zubair told Faisal to close the shop. Faisal is inside. Zubair is at the **House with the Copper Door** preparing for the ritual.

If the alarm has not been raised, Zubair will be here working in the forge. He is immediately suspicious of everyone but also is an extremely talented liar. He will not deny any hard evidence (such as being shown a sword he made), but will attempt to deflect questions by fetching his sales records from his office upstairs. If he is able to go upstairs by himself, he will attempt to escape out the window onto the roof of the neighboring building. If he gets away, he will head to the **House with the Copper Door**, but only if he thinks he is not being followed. If he is being followed, he will go to the **Den of Smoke** for reinforcement from Alcmene and Mereruka and to warn them.

Zubair is very short but brawny man with a receding hairline and thick hairy arms. He is a longtime opium addict, which is how he was initially drawn into Abu Firas's dream cult, as opium greatly enhances the rituals to receive dreams from Cthulhu. He is also sly and cunning. Some quotes:

"Of course I am proud of my work, it is some of the finest in all of Damascus."

"The world is a lie! We can only survive by destroying his tomb!"

Faisal is a strong man in this twenties. He has been apprenticed to Zubair since he was a child.

- Faisal knows Zubair is an opium addict, as he regularly uses the drug after working hours. However, a few years ago Zubair's behavior began to change, becoming angry often and violent. He also began to cry out in his sleep, and began to spending lots of time with some new friends named Alcmene and Mereruka. (This was when Zubair first joined the Cthulhu cult).
- Faisal knows Zubair would trade new swords for opium from Majd al-Din.
- They have been working on strange copper blades for the last few months, having just finished the fourth a few weeks ago. Faisal does not understand why, as they are too soft to make a good weapon with. Zubair took all four copper weapons away but Faisal does not know where or who they were made for.
- Faisal does not know where the strange copper fount came from.
- If Faisal is shown one of the copper blades with runes on it, he can identify it as one of the ones they made, but he will not know what the runes are or who put them on the blade.

Clue Flowchart

The design of the copper door is so unique and bizarre that it should be easily recognizable, if shown around every part of the city (though this will take over a day to do). If asked about or shown in the correct neighborhood (learned from the addicts in the **Den of Smoke**) or the name of the owner of the building (learned in **The Lair**), they can find **The House with the Copper Door**.

The Den of Smoke

This decrepit one-story building is on Monastery Street in the Christian Quarter on the east side of the city in a very poor, run-down neighborhood. The cult had Majd al-Din purchase it two years ago when the cult began to expand its numbers and recruit new members (see **Property Deed** in *Handouts* below). It is well known in the neighborhood as a drug den, but no one is aware of its more sinister uses.

The building only has three rooms. Two cultists, Alcmene and Mereruka, live here in the back room. The two front rooms are full of 2 to 10 sleeping opium addicts at any time. If anyone knocks on the locked front door (**Locksmith** roll [**Locksmith**] to open) or attempts to enter, the door will be opened by one of the addicts, a man named Haroun, who blearily will ask if they want "Smoke of the air, or smoke of the earth?"

Haroun will let anyone in who shows interest in either, but will point out that, "Only Alcmene or Mereruka can help you with smoke of the earth. You'll have to wait for them."

"Smoke of the air" is opium, which is readily available in the Den. "Smoke of the earth" refers to the more powerful Cthulhu drug dream visions that Alcmene and Mereruka lead selected addicts in. They take victims who are already drugged on opium away to the **House with the Copper Door** to partake in these visions. None of the addicts in this den know where exactly they are taken for these other visions, only that they are taken to a new building somewhere north of the Mosque, and the visions happen underground. (They are heavily drugged when escorted.) Those selected for the more powerful experience are either being recruited as members of the cult or will be sacrificed in a cult ritual.

A trapdoor in the floor of Alcmene and Mereruka's room opens onto the basement, accessed by a ladder. The basement is where the cult has been sacrificing addicts to empower the *Blades of Slow Torment* that Zubair has been creating. A shovel in the corner stands above a shallow pit, and there are three other spots of turned earth covering the previous three victims.

If the alarm has been raised, then Alcmene and Mereruka will have left the Den and be at the **House with the Copper Door** preparing for the ritual.

If the alarm has not been raised, they will be in the basement, preparing to sacrifice an unconscious addict. A **copper blade** made by Zubair rests on a table, next to a **scroll** with the spell *Infuse with Blood* (see [Items and Spells](#) below) and a **drawing** of a blade with Sumerian cuneiform written on it (“blood”, “pain”, “salt”). If they are uninterrupted after an hour, they will complete the spell, then kill the unconscious addict with the copper blade. They will then use the victim’s blood to trace the cuneiform words onto the blade, where they will burn into the metal. This transforms the weapon into a *Blade of Slow Torment* (see [Items and Spells](#) below). They will take the blade to the **House with the Copper Door** for the ritual.

Alcmene is a woman in her forties with black hair that she wears in a long braid. She was a weaver before she joined the cult. Some quotes: “I have learned so much. Would you like to learn as well?” “Killing is the ultimate ecstasy! Your visions after bloodshed are the purest!”

Mereruka is a twitchy man in his thirties with a limp. He was an oil seller before he joined the cult. Some quotes: “You don’t have to be alone anymore. There is always someone waiting for you.” “I have seen the city! I have felt his touch! He pulls me beneath the waves!”

Clue Flowchart

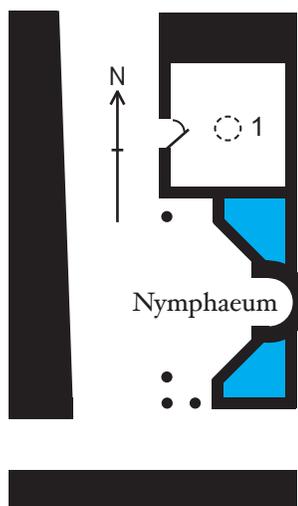
Hanoud and the other addicts know that the dream rituals take place underground in a new house somewhere north of the Mosque. If this is combined with looking for a building owned by Kyriakos (learned in **The Lair**) or a house with a copper door (learned at **the Swordsmith**), they can find **The House with the Copper Door**. Alcmene and Mereruka will both die before they betray the cult. If provoked or tricked they may let something slip, but never the name of Kyriakos.

The Lair

This one-story building near the center of the city looks abandoned at a distance, but close examination reveals the door is recently repaired and locked (**Locksmith** roll [**Locksmith**] to open). It is adjoining the old Roman nymphaeum, a niche open to the street that was designed to honor nymphs. It contains a fountain and mosaics.

The single room on the ground floor is empty except for a few things. A sturdy **tripod** sits above a hole in the floor with a rope running through a pulley down into the hole. The hole has been recently broken open and is wide enough to fit the **Ark of the Masqut** (see [Items and Spells](#) below). The filth of the room shows several footprints, including those of a sheep or goat (the live meals sent by Majd al-Din for the masqut were simply dropped down the hole), and the signs of something large and heavy being dragged across the room to the hole (where the Ark was attached to the pulley). Next to the hole is a **copper lid** two cubits (1 meter) wide and four cubits (2 meters) long. It is covered in strange pictographic markings. Lying on top of the copper lid is a slightly smaller sized **glass lid in a wooden frame**. The dark wood is of an unknown source and the glass is both perfectly clear and unbreakable (**Sanity** roll for anyone who succeeds on an **Art** [**Art**] or **Science** skill [**Chemistry**] roll, o/i SAN loss) [**1 Stability**]. The rope on the pulley goes through the room below through a second hole into the water of the aquaduct. The rope is still tied to the Ark. It requires a Hard **STR** roll [**Difficulty 5 Athletics**] to pull the Ark up as it is now full of water. A **Listen** roll

Ground Level



[**Sense Trouble**] will reveal the running water of the aquaduct. A **Hard** success [**Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble**] will also hear voices echoing below.

The room below is part of the old Roman foundation of the city. A set of stone steps in the wall continues below into the aquaduct. A second hole in the floor has also been recently broken open, and a **broken pick** lies nearby. The rope from the pulley above continues through this hole to the water in a tunnel below, where the submerged Ark rests. Looking through the hole will only show the rope going into the water, as the water is too opaque to see through. The tunnel connects to the aquaduct but is only one and a half meters high, and the water fills it. The sound of water is automatically noticed on this level, and a **Listen** roll [**Sense Trouble**] will hear indistinct voices.

The steps continue to the floor of the aquaduct, which is 4 meters tall and held up by arched pillars. The water is 2 meters deep at this point. A torch attached to the far side of a pillar throws shadows onto the walls.

The Lair Scene

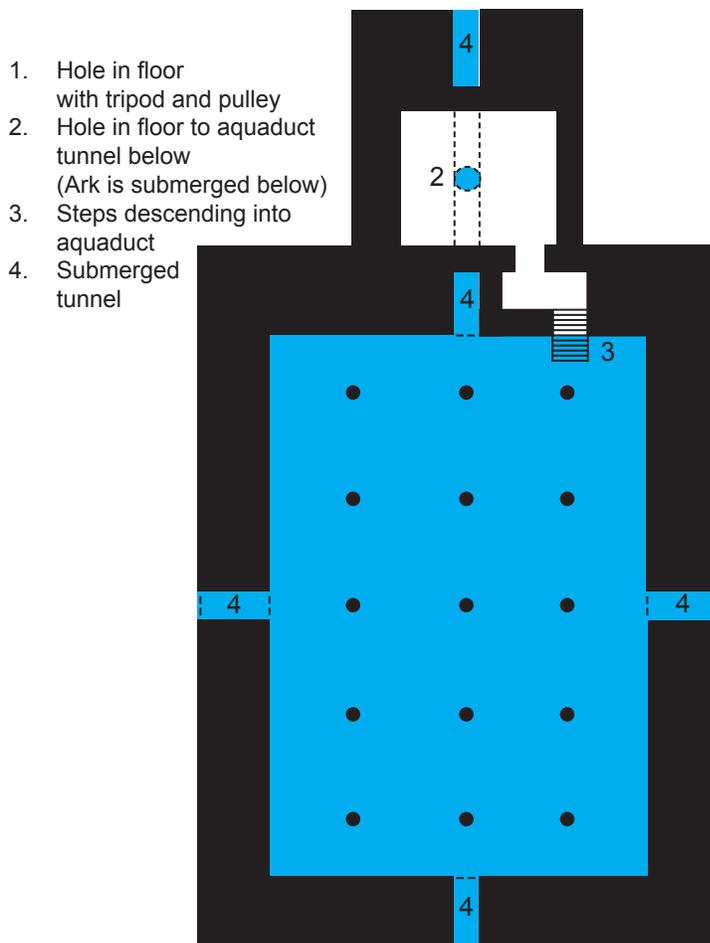
As soon as the investigators are close enough to hear the conversation, they will hear three voices:

- An unknown male speaking Arabic (cult leader Kyriakos)
- An inhuman monstrous growling and hissing (the masqut)
- The Demon of the Wastes (translating between the two)

They are discussing the ritual planned for that night. The Demon of the Wastes is aware of the presence of the characters and so will try to give them some hints as to how to help free him. Since his translations always appear as the speaker’s native language, it will sound like he is repeat

Map of the Lair

Subterranean Aquaduct Level



ing Kyriakos' statements to native Arabic speakers. He will become even more florid than normal, and will slip in references to his master's name and the ritual taking place that night. Some quotes:

"Oh, my most noble master Kyriakos, the masqut sorcerer says tonight is the most auspicious for the ritual based on the alignments of the planets."

If the characters attack, they will have to swim through the water to reach them. Startled by the unexpected presence, the masqut will dive and swim out of a connecting tunnel to safety. Kyriakos will demand the Demon of the Wastes kill the intruders. If the characters do not possess a **Blade of Slow Torment**, they will probably be killed or have to flee. Kyriakos will try to escape if he is threatened at all. If he dies, the ritual will be performed by other members of the cult, and mastery of the Demon of the Wastes will transfer to another cult member.

If the characters merely observe and listen, the conversation finishes soon after they all agree to meet tonight to perform the ritual. The masqut will then swim away, and Kyriakos will exit with the Demon of the Wastes. You can decide how they leave based on the progress of the characters. They can travel directly back to the **House with the Copper Door** if the characters are well prepared for the final showdown, with the Demon of the Wastes dawdling just enough to allow them to be followed through the streets. Otherwise, you might have them disappear magically if the characters need to investigate further.

Clue Flowchart

Make sure the characters learn both the name of Kyriakos and that the ritual will take place later that night. Kyriakos' name can be combined to find **The House with the Copper Door** either by looking for a house with a copper door owned by someone named Kyriakos (learned at **the Swordsmith**), or a house on the north side of the city by the Mosque owned by Kyriakos (learned at the **Den of Smoke**).

The House with the Copper Door

This modern house just north of the Mosque shows an Arab influenced architecture. It is immediately noticeable for its bright copper door that is covered in symbols, identified as magical wards with an **Occult** roll [Occult]. The inside of the house is an open courtyard with three rooms off of it. One room is the bedroom of Kyriakos. The second is a combination of kitchen and dining room. The corners of the third room are covered in copper, and is where the Demon of the Wastes was summoned.

The courtyard contains **The Tablet of Enslavement of Evil Beings of Air and Fire** (see [Items and Spells](#) and [Handouts](#) below) on a **tripod** of copper rods. The edges of the opening in the roof around the courtyard are covered in a copper band inscribed with more magical wards as on the front door. The tablet and tripod cannot be moved. The tablet can only be destroyed by a magical weapon like a **Blade of Slow Torment** or by reciting the spell on it. The spell will have to be transliterated by someone who can read Old Persian like **The Sage** (see [sidebar above](#)). If the tablet is destroyed, the Demon of the Wastes will appear and thank the Player Characters, as well as answer any questions they have, but he will not join them to confront the cultists in the cavern.

A noxious stench rises from the very worn, ancient spiral **staircase** next to the tripod. The steps of the staircase are both too tall and too shallow for comfortable human movement. The steps wind down about 40 meters until they come out in a natural rock tunnel. Anyone descending the staircase must make a **CON** roll [1 **Stability**] or suffer 1d6 damage [1 **Health**] from the toxic fumes that fill the underground areas. A second roll may be called for during physical exertion (such as running or fighting). In addition to the damage, the fumes produce mild hallucinations of whatever type is most creepy or pertinent to the situation!

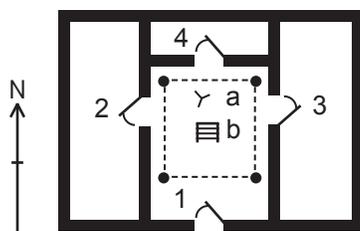
The noxious vapors at the bottom of the staircase are so thick at this point they are visible and cloak the bottom half meter of this level. Several inches of water also cover the floor under the fog (adding a penalty die on any **Stealth** rolls) [Difficulty 4 **Stealth**]. The tunnel opens onto a large natural cavern.

At the far end of the cavern is a pit 10 meters in diameter that the vapors emanate from. **Chains** to hold sacrificial victims dangle from the ceiling above the pit. An outcropping of the cavern wall on the far side of the pit has been carved to represent Cthulhu. **Candles** all over the spur of rock dimly light the far side of the room.

Hidden by the toxic fumes on the floor of the cavern are the unconscious bodies of **dozens of dream-maddened addicts**. Shrieks and moans echo throughout the room, and they thrash about in the water and mist as the visions of Cthulhu get stronger, so occasionally an arm or leg will rise up from the vapor (**Sanity** check, 0/1D3 SAN loss) [1 **Stability**].

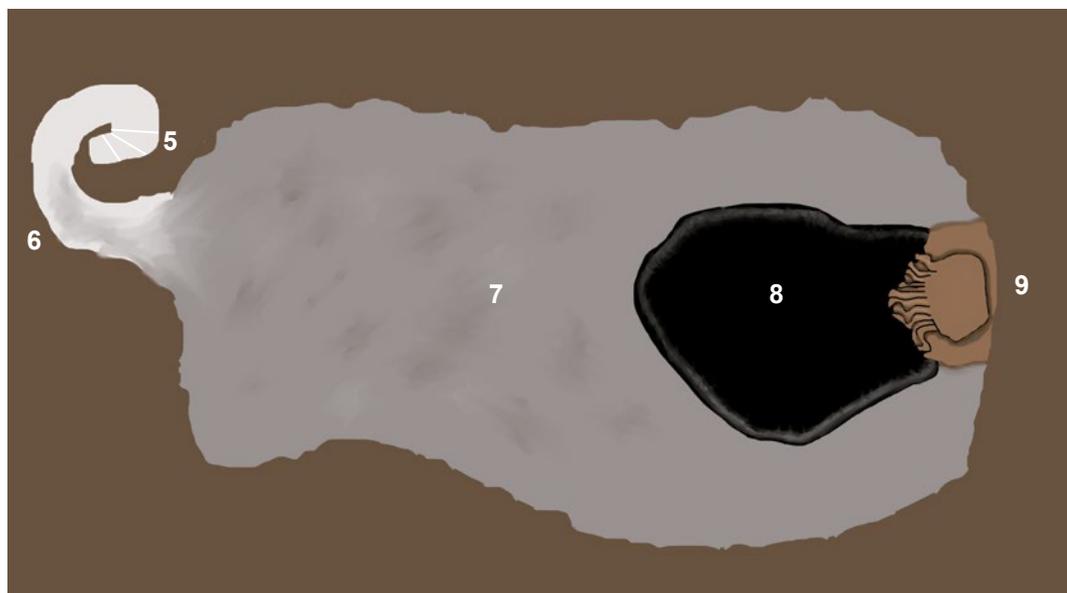
Map of the House with the Copper Door

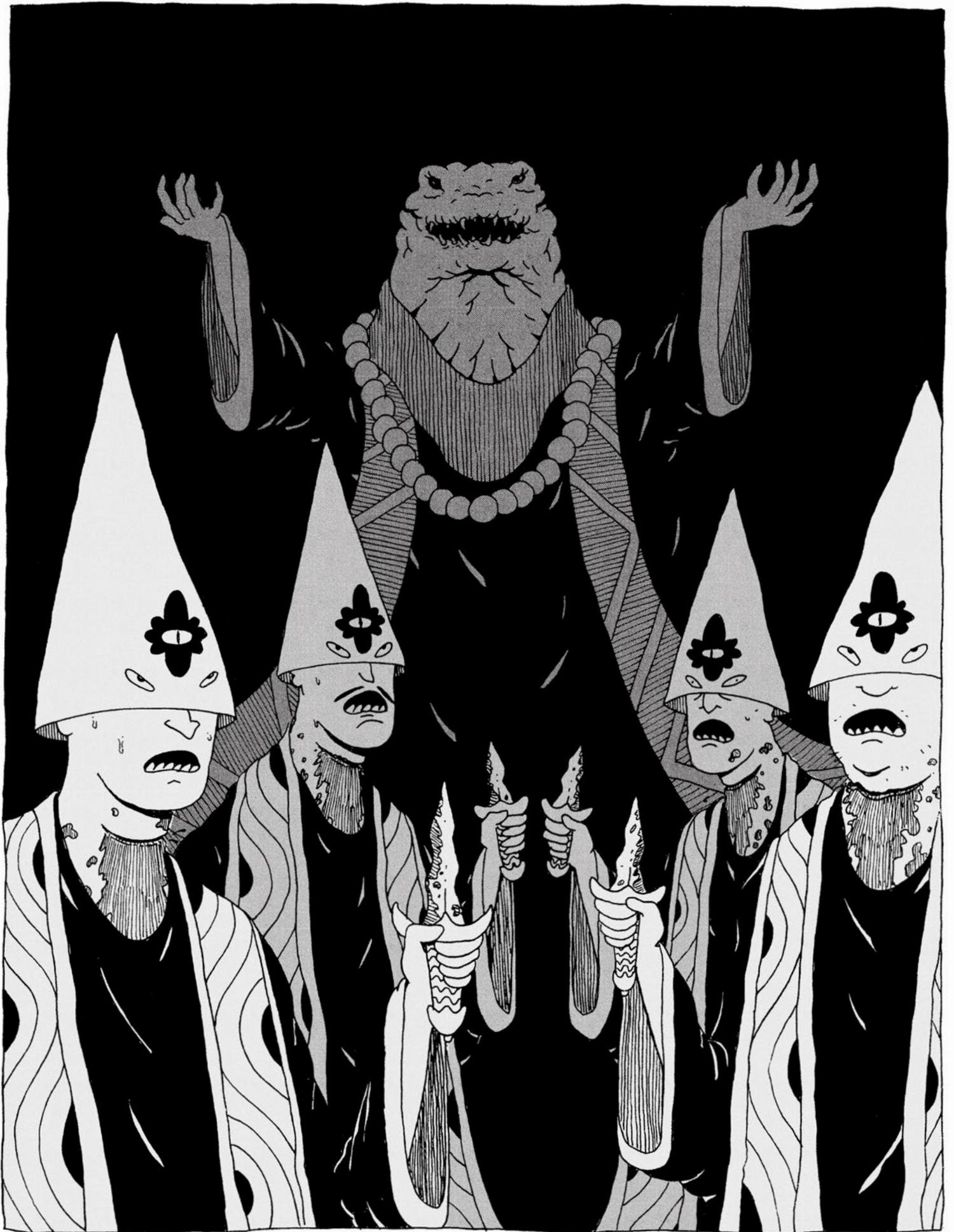
Ground Level



1. Open courtyard
 - a. Tablet on tripod
 - b. Descending staircase
2. Kyriakos' Bedroom
3. Dining Room and Kitchen
4. Summoning Room
5. Ascending staircase
6. Natural rock tunnel
7. Vapor filled cavern
8. Bottomless pit
9. Cthulhu carving outcropping

Subterranean Level





The Ritual by GREG STEELE 2018

The Ritual Scene

Gathered around the pit are four members of the Cthulhu cult. If they survive, these are Kyriakos, Zubair, Mereruka and Alcmene. If any of them was killed or captured, replace them with a new unnamed cultist. Three of them each carry a **Blade of Slow Torment** (see [Items and Spells](#) below). If Mereruka and Alcmene completed the spell at the **Den of Smoke**, the fourth cultist will also have a blade. If the Demon of the Wastes is not free, he will be next to Kyriakos. The masqut hides somewhere beneath the vapors, but his croaking hissing can be heard.

- The masqut begins casting **Alignment of the Spirits**.
- The room will begin to fill with water, rising a quarter meter every round (despite a huge amount of water draining into the pit). The vapor will stay above the water, obscuring sight in four rounds.
- Dreamers (and unconscious characters) will start to drown or be pulled into the pit.
- On round two, or as soon as the player characters are noticed, anyone with a **Blade of Slow Torment** will cut themselves on the neck (see the item description for the effects). If they only have three blades, one of the cultists will cut the fourth cultist on the next round. Once they have all been cut, the cultists will try to stop the Player Characters from finding the masqut.
- The masqut will remain hidden and continue to cast the spell.
- If the Demon is here, he will be ordered to kill the intruders. He will turn into a giant constrictor snake and be as slow as possible about squeezing the investigators to death, in the hopes that Kyriakos will be too distracted to clarify instructions, and that the other investigators will deal with Kyriakos and free the Demon.
- When the spell is complete, the water flowing into the pit will reverse as a gateway is open to the Pacific Ocean above sunken R'lyeh, flooding the room with seawater, drowning anyone who cannot escape.
- The only way to stop the spell is to by stopping the masqut from chanting the spell OR heal everyone wounded by a **Blade of Slow Torment** (including any Player Characters) so that the spell is no longer powered by their bleeding.

Possible Conclusions

If the ritual is stopped:

The masqut and cultists will fight to the death. Marawn Abd-al-Aziz will send in the army to clear out all the known cult locations.

If the ritual succeeds:

The poisonous saltwater of the Pacific coming through the gate floods the subterranean parts of Damascus, contaminating the city's wells, aqueducts, the local watertable, and downstream in the Barada River. The oasis around the city shrinks, then the orchards and fields wither, the harvest fails, which leads to mass starvation. People begin to emigrate away, and the capital of the caliphate moves from Damascus north to Aleppo, along with much of the population. Masqut from the Nameless City begin to arrive in Arks to establish a new colony in the flooded undercity. The remaining humans in Damascus become prey for the masqut each night, until Damascus is known only as a ruined city that is haunted by demons. Any surviving members of the cult are go-betweens for the masqut and may even head to other cities to repeat the process.

Rewards

Kill the masqut: gain 1D6 Sanity
Stop the ritual: gain 1D8 Sanity

Further Adventures

If Marwan Abd-al-Aziz survives, he will be fascinated by the events. He will have a use for agents who have faced down the supernatural and won. Who knows what other problems hide in the edges of the caliphate?

If the investigators succeed in freeing the Demon of the Wastes from the control of Kyriakos, he will be greatly indebted to them. This can be used as a hook for further adventures, or perhaps he will merely take a peculiar interest in their further exploits.

The other masqut in the Nameless City will make note of the mortals who stopped their plan in Damascus. They will sleep in their Arks, waiting for revenge. And maybe the masqut in Damascus left a clutch of eggs deep in a corner of the sewers that will soon hatch, hungry for meat.

At some point, the sorcerer known only as al-Yamani will return as well. Where has he been all this time?

Adapting to Other Eras

A Conspiracy in Damascus can be moved to different times with the only major change being the employer of the Player Characters. They could work for the Empire during the Roman era, the Ottomans in the 19th century, or the French under their mandate in the early 20th century. Modern adventures would be somewhat messier, but could be under a foreign secret service such as the Israelis or Americans (or Russians once the Syrian Civil War begins in 2011). Conversely, the premise could be turned on its head and the Player Characters could all be locals working outside or even against the government.

The cult of Cthulhu never sleeps for long...

Personalities and Monsters

CULTISTS and OTHER HUMANS

STR 50 CON 60 SIZ 50 DEX 50 INT 50 APP 50 POW 55
EDU 30 SAN 55 **HP:** 11

Damage Bonus: none. **Build:** 0 **Move:** 8 **MP:** 11

Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+DB

Fighting (Sword) 20% (10/4), damage 1D6+1+DB

Dodge 25% (12/5)

Armor: None or see below

Skills: Listen 20% (10/4), Spot Hidden 25% (12/5)

Jibril/Soldier: Fighting (Sword) 50% (25/10), damage 1D6+1+DB, **Armor:** 5

Zubair: Fast Talk 70% (35/14)

Abilities: Athletics 3, Health 7, Scuffling 5, Weapons 2

Weapon: -2 (fist) or -1 (knife)

Armor: none or see below

Jibril/Soldier: Weapons 6, +1 (sword), **Armor** 1

Cultists: +0 (Blade of Unending Torment)

THE DEMON OF THE WASTES, *invulnerable jimni*

STR 100 CON 90 SIZ 75 DEX 80 INT 80 APP 80 POW 70
HP 30

Damage Bonus: +1D6 Build: 2 Move: 9 MP: 14

SPECIAL POWERS:

Immunity: The Demon is immune to all physical weapons.

Invisibility: At will, the Demon can become invisible. If invisible, those attempting to attack him suffer a penalty die to hit.

Possession: The Demon can possess any humanoid. Victims must make an opposed POW roll versus the Demon's POW to resist.

Shapechange: At will, the Demon can take on the form of any animal, preferring the shape of a Nile Crocodile in water, a Jackal (use Wolf statistics) on land, and a Constrictor Snake in combat.

Summon Sandstorm: At will, the Demon can create a blinding sandstorm up to 10 meters in diameter. Anyone inside the sandstorm when it is summoned must make a **DEX** roll to close their eyes or cover their face. A failure leaves them blind for one round. Visibility within the sandstorm is reduced to 2 meters. The Demon is unaffected by the sandstorm and can see through it.

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting (Brawling) 45% (22/9), 1D3+DB

Fighting (Jambiya dagger) 45% (22/9), 1D4+2+DB

Dodge 40% (20/8)

Armor: Cannot be harmed with physical attacks.

Skills: Charm 80% (40/16), Disguise 70% (35/14)

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3 Sanity points to see the Demon change shape.

1/1D8 Sanity points to see the Demon possess a human.

At will can: **Turn Invisible**, **Transform** (as Vampire but no Health cost), **Summon Sandstorm** (**Sense Danger** or blinded for 1 round), or **Possess** (as *Mind Exchange* spell but controls the target instead of swapping)

Abilities: Athletics 9, Health 16, Scuffling 15, Weapons 11

Hit Threshold: 7 (while invisible), 4 (when visible)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +2 (while invisible), +1 (when visible)

Weapon: +0 (Jambiya dagger)

Armor: cannot be harmed by physical weapons

Stability Loss: +0

MASQUT, reptilian humanoid from the Nameless City

STR 80 CON 50 SIZ 50 DEX 70 INT 80 POW 65 **HP:** 10

Damage Bonus: +1D4 **Build:** 1 **Move:** 9, 10 swimming **MP:** 13

SPECIAL POWERS:

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting (claw) 45% (22/9), 1D6+DB

Bite and hold (mnvr) 50% (25/10), 1D6+DB, followed by DB each round while held or drowning

Dodge 35% (17/7)

Armor: 4-point hide.

Skills: Listen 35%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 50% (in water 70%), Track (by smell) 50%

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to see a masqut.

Spells: Alignment of the Spirits

Abilities (land/water): Athletics 6/8, Health 7, Scuffling 16, Weapons 10

Hit Threshold: 4

Weapon: -1 (bite), +0 (claw or mace)

Armor: -5 vs any (hide)

Stability Loss: +0

Items and Spells

ALIGNMENT OF THE SPIRITS

Cost: 20 magic points; 1D6 Sanity points [4 **Stability** or 8 **Health**]

Casting Time: 10 rounds

This spell draws an abundant element (water, sand) toward the caster. At the end of the spell, a gate is opened to a place of the caster's choosing that contains a greater amount of that element (small desert to large desert, pool to ocean, etc.), which immediately floods into the caster's location. Either step in the process can be fatal to anyone nearby.

ARK OF THE MASQUT

These copper arks are used by the masqut as a hibernation transportation container when they will be away from moisture for long. In appearance, it is a rectangular copper box, four cubits (2 meters) long by two cubits (1 meter) wide and deep. The outside is covered in strange carvings and pictograms of jagged teeth and water. The lid fits tightly but the seam is visible, and can be slid off the top of the ark. A thick green opaque liquid fills the box. The liquid is caustic and will cause 2 hp of damage [2 **Health**] if touched. It moves unnaturally in a clumping fashion (**Sanity** check 0/1 SAN loss) [2 **Stability**]. Under the liquid is a box made of a dark wood with a glass lid. Any creature that can fit inside the box when it is sealed and covered with the green liquid will enter a state of hibernation.

BLADE OF SLOW TORMENT

This magical weapon is made of copper and inscribed with the words blood, pain, and salt in Sumerian cuneiform. Any humanoid cut with this blade will take exactly 2 hp of damage (damage bonus is not applied) [2 **Health**]. They will continue to bleed another 1 hp [1 **Health**] each consecutive round until the application of a successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** check [**First Aid**] or they die. They also lose 1D6 magic points [1

Stability] in the first round which will be added to the nearest spell or ritual being conducted within 10 meters. Against certain magical creatures like jinn a *Blade of Slow Torment* will function as a normal weapon (1D6+1+Damage Bonus) [+1 **Sword**].

INFUSE WITH BLOOD

Cost: 5 POW; 1D4 Sanity points [3 **Stability**]

Casting Time: 1 hour

A variant of **Bless Blade** (*Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook* page 246) [**Enchant Item** *Trail of Cthulhu* page 115] that requires a human blood sacrifice (**Sanity** check, 1/1D6 SAN loss) [5 **Stability**], followed by using the victim's blood to trace the Sumerian cuneiform for blood, pain, and salt, onto the blade, where they will burn into the metal. This transforms the weapon into a *Blade of Slow Torment*.

THE ENSLAVEMENT OF EVIL BEINGS OF AIR AND FIRE

Cost: 1 magic point per 10 percentiles chance of success; 1D4+1 Sanity points [3 **Stability**]

Casting Time: 5 minutes per magic point spent [5 **minutes**]

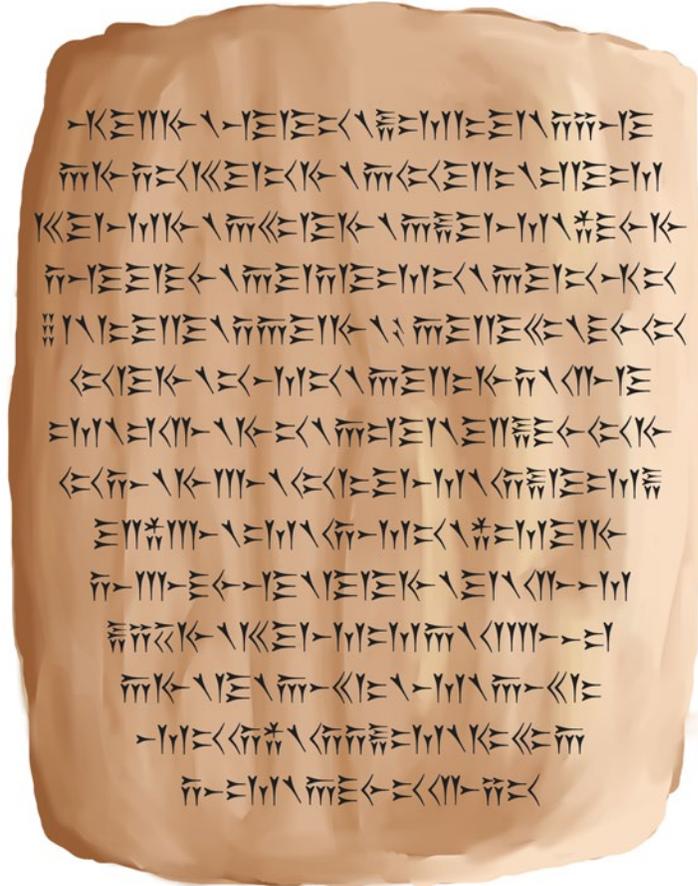
This spell to summon and bind a jinni is inscribed on a baked clay tablet and must be read aloud while adding the jinni's true name. The binding is permanent until the tablet is broken. The tablet can only be broken by a magical weapon (such as a *Blade of Slow Torment*) or by casting the spell again but omitting the true name portion of the spell. In either case, the tablet will dissolve into dust and the binding will be broken.

UNENDING FOUNT OF SOLOMON THE WISE

This carved cylinder of greenish stone has an opening at the top that is filled with hot liquid copper (which will cause 3 hp of damage [3 **Health**] if touched or thrown on someone). The copper can be removed and used as a normal metal and the fount will refill. If the fount is ever moved, knocked over, or completely drained, it will cease to function. King Solomon used this to provide building materials for jinn he commanded.

Handouts

The Tablet of Enslavement of Evil Beings of Air and Fire



The Tablet of Enslavement of Evil Beings of Air and Fire

Transliteration

Translation from Old Persian

Jadiya vasna patikara- daiva- ayadana-
Fra-naya- ahrika- basta- fra-maya- anusiya- aparam
viOiya- duvarOi- ardstana- aranjana- karsa- daraniya- arasni
Oaha- hasiya- naman- ahrika-
Yada- gasta- бага- yana-
A-bara- dipi-
Oahaya- haca yatu-
Hakaram upasta- pa-
Duviti tauman- vi-taraya-
Citi Oava- xsaya-
Ragam paisiya framatar- Kutula
A-yasa- ahrika-
Ma ahrika- manauvi- ud-pata- munOa cita aOangaina-

I ask by the greatness of the representation of this (*foreign*) god in this sacrificial place
To bring forth evil and to bind and to order it as a loyal follower afterward
In a house with portals decorated with seven karsas weight of copper over 20 cubits
To speak the true name of the evil
To sacrifice to the foul god a gift
To bring about this inscription
To be said by the sorcerer
Once for assistance to protect
A second time for power to cross over
A third time burning to control
To swear in the presence of great ancient one Cthulhu
To assume command of the evil
Let not the evil be angry or rise up in rebellion or flee for as long as this binding lasts

Unreconciled and Suspicious Entries in Majd al-Din's Ledger

- 3 years ago: An entry, for an extremely overpriced shipment of oranges to "Z", payment is marked as "sword".
- 1 month later: Another entry, for an extremely overpriced shipment of oranges to "Z", payment is marked as "sword".
- 1 month later: Another entry, for an extremely overpriced shipment of oranges to "Z", payment is marked as "sword". (*These entries continue on a monthly basis.*)
- 2 years ago: An unexplained influx of money, with regular payments every few weeks, with only a blank section where the source of money should be recorded
- 2 years ago: Entry for purchase of a house in the poor part of the Christian quarter in the east side of Damascus. The source of payment for this is marked with a question mark.
- 2 years ago: The next entry for an extremely overpriced shipment of oranges is for four times as many oranges, and it has a new note that says "Deliver to new house", but the payment is still marked only as "sword".
- 12 weeks ago: The next entry is for the first rent on the storage space in this warehouse.
- 6 weeks ago: An entry for a rental of a "house on Mustaqim Street by the old fountain" for two months, with payment source marked with a question mark.
- 3 weeks ago: Entry on organization of a camel caravan with a travel time of two weeks of supplies.
- 2 weeks ago: Another entry for the Mustaqim Street house rent, with payment marked with a question mark.
- 2 days ago: A notation of an expensive "meal with friend".
- 2 days ago: A recurring daily payment is started for "1 live goat/sheep" delivered to "old house on Mustaqim Street"

KEEPER NOTE: Explanation of Ledger

- 3 years ago: Majd al-Din sells opium to Zubair for the first time. Zubair pays with one of his swords.
- 1 month later: The next opium shipment.
- 1 month later: The arrangement is now monthly.
- 2 years ago: Zubair begins funding Majd al-Din to get supplies for the cult.
- 2 years ago: Purchase of the **Den of Smoke** for the cult.
- 2 years ago: Shipments of opium increase to support new cult members, and the shipments now go directly to the **Den of Smoke**. Payments for the opium is now in cash but Majd al-Din doesn't update the notation.
- 12 weeks ago: Majd al-Din finally has enough money to start renting the storage space in **The Warehouse**.
- 6 weeks ago: Rental of the house on Mustaqim Street for the cult. (Unbeknownst to Majd al-Din, this is so they can excavate into the aqueducts below.)
- 3 weeks ago: Caravan to retrieve the Ark of the Musqut is organized.
- 2 weeks ago: Second month of rent on the house above **The Lair**.
- 2 days ago: The bribe to get into the city.
- 2 days ago: Daily live food for the masqut.

Property Deed

In the year 105, the 5th day of the month of Safar

The house on Monastery Street in the Christian Quarter formerly owned by the tanner Abu Firas is sold to the merchant Majd al-Din.

Rental Agreement

In the year 107, the 12th day of the month of Rajab

The old house in the center of the city on Mustaqim Street next to the old fountain is rented for a period of 2 months to the merchant Majd al-Din.

KEEPER NOTE: Explanation of Property Deed

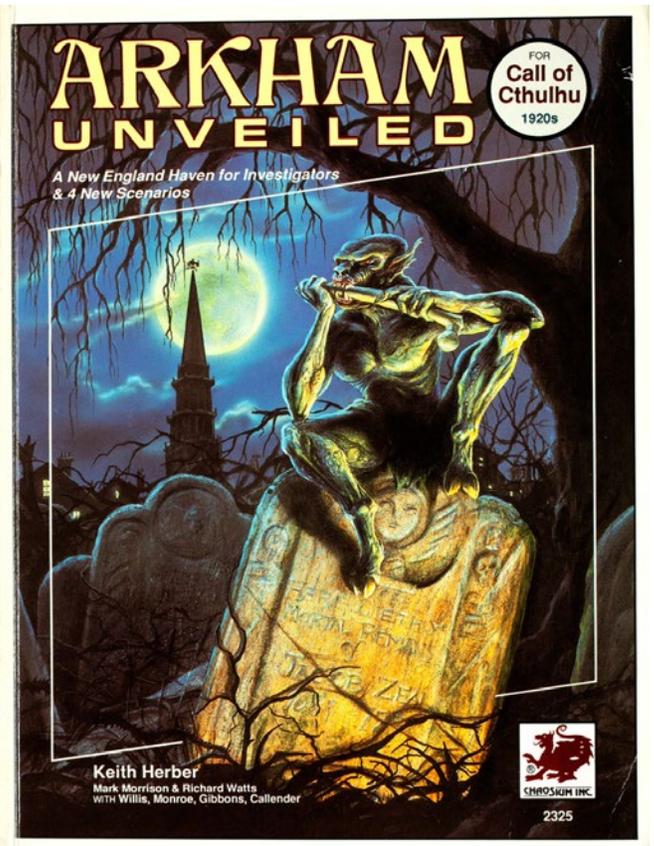
2 years ago, Majd al-Din purchases a cheap house in the east side of Damascus for Zubair. This becomes the central location for cult opium activities, **The Den of Smoke**.

KEEPER NOTE: Explanation of Rental Agreement

6 weeks ago, Majd al-Din rents an old house on Mustaqim Street for Zubair for 2 months. (Unbeknownst to Majd al-Din, the cult excavates through the floor of the building into the aqueducts of **The Lair** below.)

Vintage RPG

by Stu Horvath



Editor's Note: The Call of Cthulhu RPG first came out in 1981, so there is a LOT of material for it out there. A common question I see from new players is "What should I start with?" Plus it's hard for collectors to even know what was created over the years. Luckily for us, there is Vintage RPG, a loving look back at the impressive personal collection of RPGs owned by Stu Horvath. He posts every day about some of the best and worst RPGs of the 20th century. He agreed to let us use some of his thoughts about early Cthulhu books - thanks Stu! Follow [Vintage RPG](#) for more.

Welcome to Lovecraft Country! This series of sourcebooks, edited by the late, great Keith Herber, is one of many high water marks for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* line and heralds the start of its 1990s golden age. Disclaimer: I love these books so very hard.

Arkham Unveiled was first written by Herber and published in 1990. It details, block by block, H.P. Lovecraft's famed witch-haunted town of Arkham, Massachusetts, home to Miskatonic University and no shortage of terrible mysteries.

This is an ambitious book and I can't think of any RPG sourcebook project quite on the same scale as *Lovecraft Country*. When I said block by block, I wasn't being facetious - the book details every noteworthy building, person and secret within the city limits, from Keziah Mason's Witch House to Herbert West, Reanimator. This is everything you need to run scads of games in Arkham, even after you've finished the four pre-written scenarios included in the back. The book also includes, in true handouts-loving Chaosium fashion, a lovely reference map for players and a copy of the local newspaper (this is silly, but it also blew my mind when I saw it as a kid).

That said, *Arkham Unveiled* is a touch on the dry side, perhaps necessarily so, as it is the first example in a new kind of sourcebook. It does provide a solid foundation for the other volumes in the series, which get increasingly wild (see my coverage of



the final and perhaps best sourcebook in the series, *Escape From Innsmouth*, on [page 45](#)).

Also of note: the series was revised, expanded and reprinted in the early 2000's. In *Arkham Unveiled's* case, it was reissued under the name *H.P. Lovecraft's Arkham*. The 1990 edition is superior - the 2003 edition does switch out one of the scenarios, but is bogged down with a section that makes the book compatible with the loathsome D20 system and features hideous 3D videogame-style character portraits. Avoid.

COUNTY RESERVOIR PLAN

The Supreme Court of Massachusetts yesterday upheld the decision of the lower court and reinstated an injunction against construction of a reservoir to be located a few miles west of Arkham.

Judge Harris, presiding over the court, announced the 3-3 decision.

The injunction was first filed last August by Robert Angley of the University Board of Trustees.

Professor Angley claims that several species of rare wildflowers exist in the area to be flooded and that these rare species cannot be found anywhere else.

Commonwealth engineering officials termed the injunction meaningless, pointing out that only surveys and planning are scheduled to be performed before August of next year and that the present injunction bans only said last year.

Town Reaction

Mayor Peabody and the selectmen were unanimous in their condemnation of Professor Angley's action and, by implication, of the interference of the state courts in "a matter purely local in its import," as

SATURDAY

The University plays its annual Homecoming football game this Saturday afternoon against the Dartmouth Big Green.

Miskatonic's Bulldogs hope to put themselves on the winning track with the inspiring presence of honorary friends and benefactors of that town of knowledge.

Thousands of alumni, their families, and friends of the University have begun to arrive for the big game and other weekend festivities.

Head Coach Dr. Eilber ("Pip") Parkerson predicts the Bulldogs will retain possession of the Carter Jug, symbol of the school's long and amiable rivalry with the heavy men from New Hampshire.

'Frat Trial' Postponed

By Roberta Henry

The trial of three Miskatonic University students accused of killing domestic animals as part of a fraternity stunt has, for a second time, been postponed.

Judge Deane of the Essex County criminal court today granted the defendants a second

ANGRY EXCHANGES AT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Memorable Words from the Reverend Mr. Bishop

By Roberta Henry

Attempts to bill the University for its calls upon Town police and fire services created another uproar at the weekly Council meeting last night.

The issue was finally tabled and discussion re-scheduled for the next Council meeting.

Other Council Business

The increase in visitors to the city, as connected with the University or the hospital was also cited as a reason for expansion of the city.

The Reverend Mr. Bishop, rector of Christ Church Episcopal, spoke eloquently against the expansion of Sunday services, saying that our forefathers who held that the Sabbath "was a observance to men and a sign of the Almighty."

The council agreed to take the case out of its own consideration.

Sites of Antiquity

The Old Ones and their cults always seem to lurk in the most forbidding places, the center of the Arabian desert or the plateaus of Antarctica. Many sites from human history provide ideal settings for a climactic showdown or forgotten areas that must be discovered to reveal important clues.

Husn Suleiman (Stronghold of Solomon) is the modern Arabic name for a site in the mountains of Syria at [34°55'49.4"N 36°14'43.3"E](#), about midway between the port of Tartus and the city of Homs.

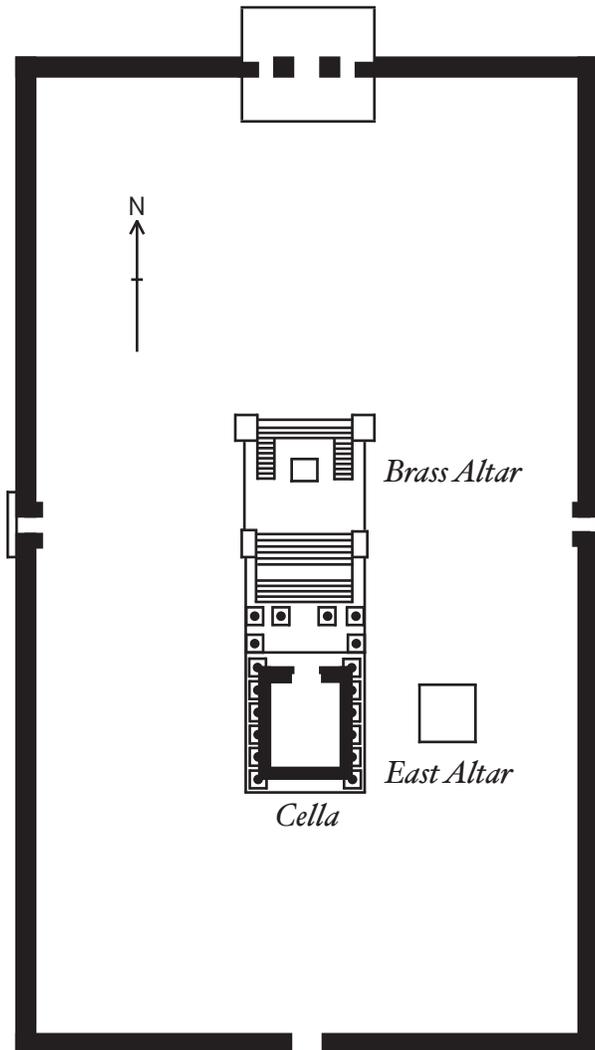
Like many such amazing sites that seem to be beyond the capacity of ancient humanity to erect, local legends ascribe its creation to the powers of *jinn* or genies.

It is probable that Husn Suleiman has been a cult site for millennia, under Phoenicians, then Persians, then a local version of Baal, that was eventually dedicated to Zeus Baotececian, a Roman mingling of Zeus with Baal. It is notable for the extreme remoteness of the site, and the titanic stones that form the walls, the largest being over 50 tons.



The north entrance to Husn Suleiman. Note the size of people in the entrance and on the left
All photos by Jason Smith

Husn Suleiman circa 300 CE



The site itself is a simple open walled enclosure with doorways in each wall, and a temple in the center. The enclosure is a rectangle about 134 meters long and 85 meters wide. Some of the stones in the walls are over 10 meters long and 2.5 meters tall. Parts of the walls have collapsed, and earth has covered the foundations in several spots. The propylaeum at the main north entrance is gone, and the niches for statues are empty.

The central temple is 15 meters wide and 25 meters long. A series of steps the width of the building lead up first to a platform with only a foundation remaining where an altar of brass once sat. The steps then continue to the interior cella, but most of the walls have collapsed. A larger altar was set to the east of the temple. A natural spring lies at the center under the temple, described by Samuel Jessup as "the most delicious I ever tasted". The collapse of the temple means that now the water comes out from under the western wall.

A large dedication carved on a tablet on the wall to the right of the main north entrance in Latin and Greek was placed between 253 and 259 CE, in the name of the co-Emperors Valerian and Gallienus. The site had a guild of priests and controlled much of the surrounding country for revenue, including a slave trade. As a pilgrimage site, it could have been reached from the cities of Tartous or Arwad on the coast, or over the mountains to the east, where the Roman Legio III Gallica was stationed 8 miles away in Raphanea. The temple remained active until a Christian church was built to the north in the 4th century CE.



Eagle carrying a caduceus under the east entrance lintel, flanked by two retreating figures



The remains of the cella from the north

In 1872, Samuel Jessup described the journey to Husn Suleiman by sailing to the port of Tripoli, 50 miles north of Beirut, and then riding northeast by horse for fifteen and half hours over two days. Here is his itinerary and waypoints.

- 3 hours along the coast to the town Nahr al Barid and through the wheatfields of the plain of Aakkar to the Akkar River
- 3 hours to the Nahr al Kebir River
- 1 hour to the Medhaly stream
- 1 hour to the Erzuni stream
- 1 hour to the Aroos stream
- 1 hour to the Abrush stream
- 1 hour through the oak covered hills to the town Burj Safita, where the Chastel Blanc of the Knights Templar is found
- 4 and a half hours to the top of the ridge overlooking Husn Suleiman



Husn Sulayman, from the southeast by H. H. Jessup

Mythos Uses

Here are some suggestions for how to use Husn Suleiman in your game. Any, all, or none of these can be true.

Mi-Go: The elevation and remoteness of Husn Suleiman make it an ideal spot for contact with the mi-go. The temple priests ran the slave trade to obtain a certain type of human specimen for the mi-go. The sweet spring under the temple is a source of ingredients to make space-mead. When drunk, the space-mead allows the user (or victim) to be transported out of the atmosphere by the mi-go. The proper ritual (or human specimen) will summon the mi-go to return again.

Sealed Secrets: In addition to the rumors about jinn moving the titanic blocks to create the site, locals also believe there are sealed vaults beneath the ruins. Perhaps both are true, unnatural creatures created the site aeons ago, while others were summoned to build additions by a mortal cultist. The previous covered ruins are dedicated to the Old Ones, as the center of the cult of Great Cthulhu is rumored to be across the mountains to the east in the great deserts of Arabia. Cultists still live in the surrounding countryside, returning on propitious nights to conduct their ceremonies.

Wards Against Evil: The Roman Emperor Elagabalus rose to power to the east in Raphanea, the territory of the Ismaili Assassins is just to the north, and the Crusaders built many fortresses around the area as well. The temple is a modern attempt to seal away a great evil: a well that leads to a city of flying polyps. If the site continues to fall into ruin, they may be able to breach the seals and reemerge into the world again.



The cyclopean wall blocks that have collapsed inward to the east of the north entrance, with the eastern entrance in the background

Rebooting Campaigns With a Modern Sensibility

by Catherine Ramen

Editor's Note: While searching for Cthulhu resources, I stumbled upon the campaign writeup that Catherine Ramen did for her epic run of Masks of Nyarlathotep (on Obsidian Portal at pmon.obsidianportal.com), an epic recounting running over nineteen episodes with flashbacks, famous guest appearances from fiction, and crazy twists. It reads like a compelling novel with asides about what game abilities the characters just used. I highly recommend checking it out if you plan to run Masks. I was immediately struck by the changes Catherine had made to the notoriously pulp sensibility of the Masks campaign: the character who was foundational to the players' involvement, Jackson Elias, was now the brassy Jax, a dynamic woman, the weak female antagonists now had compelling motives, a set of supporting characters had a strong queer relationship, and the weird colonial overtones were removed. I immediately approached Catherine about her thoughts and advice on running classic campaigns, or campaigns set in classic times, with a modern sensibility. Thanks Catherine!



ten down. It's also quite possible that the source material itself will be conflicted—for example, the Kenya chapter of *Masks* is relatively sensitive to matters of race and caste in Kenya while sinking into pulp tropes about the people living in the interior; and in the same work, the New York chapter has a rather insensitive portrayal of the vibrant, multicultural community that was Harlem in the 1920s. (My great regret with my own hack of *Masks* was to not do better by the Harlem section.)

Even if you find that you do want to include some elements that might be problematic, you still need to see if there is more to the story, if you can use those elements in a way that feels more naturalistic, more in line with the motivations of the characters involved.

It's very easy to fall into a pattern of faceless cultists in exotic lands, smacking of pulp exoticism. Don't give in to this.

In 2013 I began running a campaign I somewhat fancifully named *The Post-Modern Masks of Nyarlathotep*. I chose that name because I felt that what I was doing was essentially a reboot of the classic Chaosium campaign, remixing the original elements with some of my own interests and increasing the presence of women, queer people, and people of color wherever I could. Since then I have applied similar techniques to my run of Pelgrane's *Eternal Lies* and my heavily altered version of *Tatters of the King*, resetting that campaign to take place in 1950s America. I've also received a handful of requests from GMs who read my writeup of *The Post-Modern Masks* and wanted advice on how to fashion their own rebooted campaign.

I had less than grand ambitions when I first set out on the project of running *Masks of Nyarlathotep*. Mostly I wanted to make some changes so that the three players in my group who had played with me on a previous run of the campaign would still have some surprises. Initially I thought this would mostly involve moving a few of the locations around—for example, I pushed the London chapter to Paris because I am very familiar with that city and could change some of the details to restore mystery. However, I quickly discovered that having given myself this little bit of license... I soon took license with many, many more matters.

Groping my way forward, I eventually evolved some principles that I used in preparing my two later campaigns, *Eternal Lies* (which I ran more or less straight) and *Tatters of the King*, which needed substantially more work to bring forward into 1950s America. I've listed some of those principles I have used below as a guide to rebooting your own campaigns.

I use that word very deliberately, because that is exactly how I think of the process: taking elements from the original but giving them either very different presentation (for example, in the new *Battlestar Galactica* Starbuck was still a slick and irreverent pilot but was now female) or very different rationales (Baltar cooperated with the Cylons out of greed without knowing what he was doing, and then shame and vanity kept him from admitting his crime).

Interrogate Your Sources

No work of art exists in a vacuum, not even an RPG campaign. What might have been acceptable or overlooked in the past may no longer work in the present. It's important to critically examine the elements of the campaign and not simply accept everything just because it is writ-

Give Marginalized People a Voice

Let me start by saying right away I am not really qualified to speak on this subject, and certainly not for most of the marginalized groups in *Masks*. (Of course, the groups that I *am* a member of are completely unrepresented in *Masks*, but we'll get to that in a bit.) *Masks* and *Eternal Lies* have extensive sections set in places where the local people have been marginalized by the dominant culture—Harlem, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, Australia... you get the picture. And an unfortunate fact of most of these locations is that these populations are rarely given their own voice, rarely allowed to be more than villains or backdrop. This is, quite literally, dehumanizing.

Don't let this happen. Give your group people to talk to, make them real characters, have them express something of the nature of their lives. This will be hard. You'll need to do research. If you are a member of a dominant group in your society, you will likely mess it up. But that shouldn't keep you from trying, because ignoring the issue is worse. (For a Cthulhu gaming context—especially one with relevance to *Masks of Nyarlathotep*—let me recommend the excellent *Harlem Unbound* by Chris Spivey.)

For example, while I made many changes in my run of *Masks*, the most important was changing the gender of Jackson Elias. An easy criticism of *Masks of Nyarlathotep* is that it lacks many female characters: of the two, M'Weru is an outright villainess who is rather questionably presented (alone of the major villains, she received her abilities as the result of a gift from Nyarlathotep, not her own education or ambition) and Hypatia Masters is essentially an incubator. In the end my portrayals of these women was where I deviated most from the text.

But it all started with Jax. By making her a woman I had far more sympathy and understanding of her—struggling to make her way in a man's world, using every means at her disposal to get ahead, often underestimated but never left behind. When during character generation one player character ended up with Jackson as his former fiancée, I knew I had found the key to making her tragic death haunt the early sessions of the game.

This doesn't mean that you can't have antagonists from marginalized groups, but it does say that you should consider what they would *want* from their antagonism. (In passing, let me say that the "because cultist"

motivation of a lot of the antagonists in these games is generally pretty weak.) In my run of *Masks*, Omar Shakhti's cult in Egypt was a club for the powerful that they used to oppress others; I introduced the idea that his "family" (really his own immortal self) had been tied to the government of Egypt for centuries, whether caliphate, Khedive, or British colonials. On the other hand, M'Weru's motivation was to wipe the planet of the evil of European colonization... mostly by wiping out the Europeans. It was evil, but also a rational (or at least rationalizable) response to the oppression of her homeland.

Find Out What Speaks Urgently to You and Use it to Animate Your Portrayals

Nobody can be expected to bring the same level of engagement to every part of a work of art. And when it comes to the nature of oppressions and marginalizations, there are confusing and overlapping circles of power and deference that are difficult or even impossible to completely untangle. Thus you will quite naturally tend to focus on things that are most urgently important to you.

I'm a queer woman. The lack of many major women characters in *Masks* and the complete absence of openly acknowledged queer characters was an absence I felt keenly and knew I would rectify from the start. I looked for places to give the women more agency (I knew from the start that Hypatia as written—the victim of an interdimensional rape, it would seem, and reduced to the incubator of Nyarlathotep's spawn, was not going to happen in my game). I also increased

the importance of M'Weru as a character and allowed her to interact earlier with the player characters. (I also made her accomplished in her own right rather than the passive recipient of an infodump from Nyarlathotep).

And I made the Jack Brady-Roger Carlyle relationship explicitly queer. To be honest, the first time I played *Masks*, with a group that included several queer people, I just assumed that it was intended to be read that way; certainly that version of their relationship is far easier to understand (why did Roger bail out Jack in California despite barely knowing him?) There are other ways of playing that and I'm not saying their relationship *has* to be queer or that it's even *meant* to be queer; but it's the easiest place to put queer characters into the game, and it even combats stereotypes of gay men by making the capable, macho Jack Brady queer. In the end I also made Roger trans, which was a bit more fraught a subject but one that was satisfying to me creatively.

What animates you is going to be different than what animates me. But you should use it, bring its intensity into your game, even use it as a way to frame things so that the viewpoint of the "Other" is relatable. I can use my experiences of suffering prejudice and rejection because of my queerness and femaleness as a way to understand how other groups can be rejected and suffer from prejudice. This isn't to create a false equivalence, of course; the experience of other groups is not the same as my own. But I can use my experience as a way to understand theirs a little better.



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Double Dare

(modern scenario)

by Jared Smith



Bill Wessler is the biggest bully in high school. Heck, he is probably the biggest bully in the small rural town you live in. You've all had run-ins with Bill and his two sidekicks.

Just this week, Bill dared anyone brave enough to spend the entire night in the old Denford school on the edge of town.

Now you are all standing outside the ruined building that was the town school over 100 years ago.

Some of you answered his dare. Some are there to support your friends, or to prove something to yourselves.

The old 2-story building is surrounded by a tangled meadow of chest-high weeds and brambles. The walls are covered in ivy, the windows boarded up. The front door is slightly open.

Bill and his two friends stand far behind you at the edge of the meadow, the lights of their car on, playing loud music, drinking beers and laughing amongst themselves.

"We'll be watching!" he shouts. "No sneaking out unless you wanna be known as chicken!"

Once you enter, you can't leave until sunrise tomorrow morning. It is almost sunset on Halloween night.

Author's Note: I ran this as our gaming group's annual Halloween Cthulhu one-shot, originally as a somewhat nebulous "haunted house" the teens were dared to stay in. Thanks to the help of Ash Delvillan, I was able to format it into a much more tight plot by the antagonist, just in time to run at Origins for my first con game. Sadly, no Player Character is trapped alive in a mannequin shell in this version.

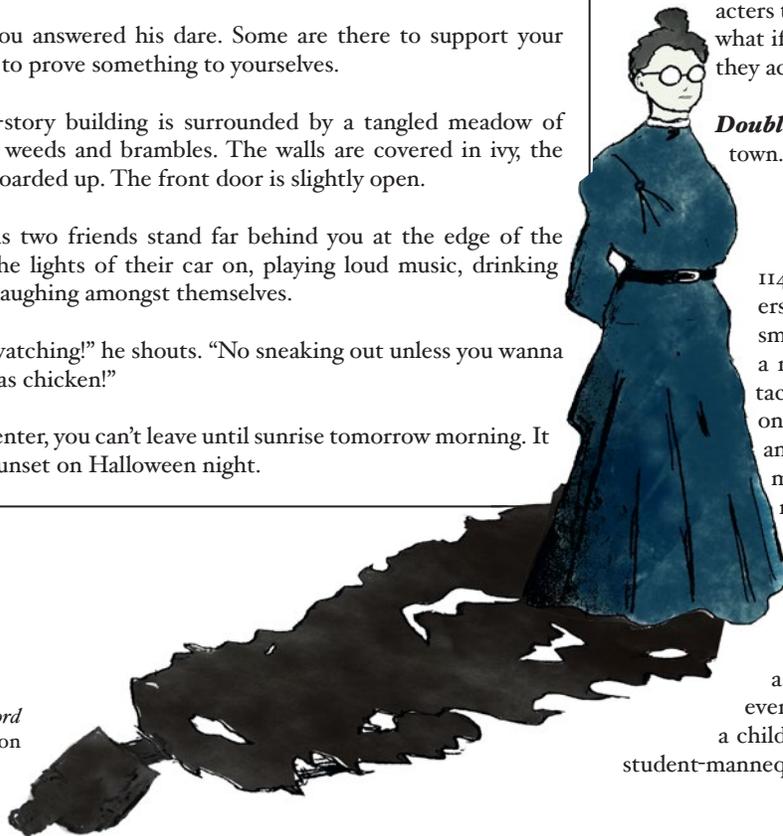
Cthulhu Mythos games work easily as a one-shot adventure, but are harder to maintain as a campaign due to character death and/or insanity. Plus, how do you tie together a disparate set of characters that all want to keep fighting the Mythos together? Well, what if they all faced the horrors together as teenagers... when they accepted a Double Dare.

Double Dare is a modern scenario that can be set in any small town. Stats are shown as **Call of Cthulhu [GUMSHOE]**.

Background

114 years ago, teenager Joseph Watts used his occult powers to sacrifice the life-force of six other students at his small rural boarding school to gain immortality. Watts used a magical 2-foot-tall marionette to control people by attaching an image of whatever person he wanted to control on the marionette. He used a spell to turn the students and their teacher Miss Amabel Denford into human-sized mannequin puppets with painted faces who could not move, but only speak. Watts then drained their life-forces and pinned the "disappearance" of the six students on Miss Denford, who Watts used as the focal point of the ritual.

The students slowly faded from the town's memories as an aftereffect of the sacrifice, so that, within a week, even their grieving parents didn't remember they once had a child. Once forgotten, Watts carved out the mouths of the student-mannequins to prevent their speech and hung the mannequins



Miss Denford
by Evan Johnston

in the school's basement — where they still remain — with the spirits of the children trapped inside. The school was since abandoned, and only vague whispers of something bad happening there remained as creepy rumors in the town.

Watts is now perpetually 18ish in appearance, but every 19 years he must return to the ritual site to replenish his immortality with six new victims. The school remains a functioning occult sigil, as anyone inside slowly becomes stiffer and more wooden each hour, eventually turning completely into an immobile human-sized mannequin. The to-be sacrifices must willingly enter the school on Halloween night. Before sunrise the next day, Watts must recreate the original ceremony with the Miss Denford mannequin in front of the six new mannequins. If the ceremony is incomplete, Watts will age to his current real age (128 years old!) and collapse and die.

Watts has since completed the ritual five more times, leaving a total of 36 marionettes dangling from the basement roof, each with the painted face of a former student. To prepare for the seventh ritual, Watts has returned to the area and enrolled in the local school as a transfer student under the pseudonym “Joe Canning”. He quickly ingratiated himself with the school bully, Bill Wessler, and Bill's girlfriend Tanya Becker.

Tonight is Halloween. Watts has convinced Wessler to dare six students (the Player Characters) to spend the night in the abandoned Denford School. Watts waits outside with Wessler and Becker to see that the dare is fulfilled.

The 36 mannequins of the former sacrifices still hang in the flooded basement. The mannequin of Miss Denford lies on the wreckage of her bedroom on the second floor. To make sure that nothing goes wrong, Watts has wired pinhole cameras into all the rooms to keep an eye on students inside. A laptop, hidden in the attic's secret room, sends the images from the cameras to Watts's cellphone. The 2-foot-tall marionette that Watts uses to control the mannequins is also in the attic, with a picture of Miss Denford nailed to its face. In Watts's hubris, the attic also contains his trophies of each successful ritual: sets of newspaper clippings about the original blame of Miss Denford and the repeated disappearance of six students every 19 years, including pictures of Watts, Denford, and the 36 missing students, and the eventual clippings showing that the search for the missing victims is forgotten as the spell erases them from memory. Miss Denford's picture is cut from one of these old newspapers.

Using his spy cameras, Watts will keep watch over the Player Characters through the night. He is unable to move the control marionette from the ritual premises or it will cease functioning, but he has a spell on it so that he can teleport it throughout the house at will. If he sees the Player Characters attempting to steal or damage it, he will teleport it to a new location (**Sanity** check $0/1D3$ to witness [**2 Stability**]). Only if the cameras are discovered and disabled will he be unable to do this without direct sight of the marionette. If the Player Characters manage to get ahold of the control marionette, they will be able to control the Miss Denford mannequin. If the picture of Miss Denford is removed and replaced with another image (from the newspapers in the attic, or a picture of a Player Character that has become a mannequin), they will be able to control that mannequin instead.

The Ritual and Transformations

The mannequins cannot be damaged in any way.

Anyone who enters the house willingly will become more wooden over the course as noted below on the *Steps in Becoming a Puppet* chart (loss of sensations and eventually loss of control of extremities, skin becoming hard and grained, joints hinged with pegs, until in the final stage their heads are wooden with their faces only painted on). They will still be able to see, hear, and speak, but NOT move. This will allow unlucky Player Characters to still participate in the adventure. Seeing someone turned completely into a mannequin is a **Sanity** roll $1/1D6$ [**3 Stability**],

or realizing it is happening to themselves is a **Sanity** roll $1/1D6+1$ [**5 Stability**]. An hour before dawn everyone in the house will be completely transformed, allowing time for the ritual to take place before dawn.

If anyone leaves the house, they will accelerate the transformation process. Allow one chance to turn back (describe their body hardening and loss of feeling), then they will collapse as a mannequin about 3 meters outside the exit.

As soon as someone is transformed fully into a mannequin, an ancient desk and chair will suddenly assemble itself from the wreckage of the classroom (**Sanity** roll $0/1D3$ to witness) [**1 Stability**]. The Miss Denford mannequin will activate and collect the fresh mannequin, carrying it to the Classroom on the ground floor where the ritual first took place (**Sanity** roll $0/1D4$ to witness) [**1 Stability**] and she will place the new mannequin in the chair. Once six mannequins are placed in a circle, Miss Denford will take a seventh place at the head of the circle. Then Watts will enter the center of the circle at dawn and be rejuvenated for another 19 years.

KEEPER NOTE: Do not allow a bout of random insanity force someone to flee the house involuntarily, as this will unwillingly make a Player Character become a mannequin. Let Player Characters decide to try to flee on their own!

Clues

- Very modern scraps of Siamese cable with video and power - in various rooms - accidentally left by Watts when he set up the cameras
- Miss Denford mannequin - on the bed in the Master Bedroom on second floor - has the painted face of Miss Denford and an **arcane sigil** carved onto the forehead and back (see [Handouts](#) below) that imply she is the center of a ritual involving six other people (the Player Characters) with a transfer to a seventh (Watts)
- **Miss Denford's Diary** (see [Handouts](#) below) - hidden under her bed in the Master Bedroom - her suspicions about her strange student, Joey Watts, the peculiar marionette he was always playing with, and the strange illness affecting everyone except Watts (as they slowly became mannequins in the first ritual)
- 36 student mannequins - in the Basement - with the painted faces of their former living selves, arranged in groups of six, each ritual group slightly more rotted
- Watts's trophies - in the Attic - **Newspaper Clippings** (see [Handouts](#) below) about the original blame of Miss Denford and the repeated disappearance of six students every 19 years, including pictures of Watts, Denford, and the some of the other missing students

Key Moments of the Adventure

- The bullies Wessler, Becker and Watts tormenting the students with anonymous texts, throwing things at the house, and spooky noises.
- The Player Characters exploring the house to find clues that they are being watched and that a ritual might take place, and that Watts is behind it.
- Finding the sheet covered mannequin of Miss Denford lying in her old bed, with an arcane sigil carved into her forehead and back.
- The slow realization that the Player Characters are becoming mannequins.
- The animation of Miss Denford's mannequin the first time someone else becomes a mannequin.
- If the players miss the attic, the 36 mannequins can animate enough to point upwards. If they are cut down from the basement ceiling, they will march towards the attic.
- Wessler and Becker will be adversaries at first but can become allies. Watts will use them as part of the ritual if he needs to. A jarring moment could be Watts suddenly attacking one of them with a baseball bat (**Sanity** check $0/1D3$) [**1 Stability**] to get them to enter the house and become mannequins.

Recommended Player Characters

Pre-generated characters are available as downloads. Since the Player Characters are all high school students, it is fun to assign pre-generated characters or suggest school stereotypes to create, such as Athlete, Cheerleader, Computer Geek, Rich Kid, Stoner, Tough Kid, or Transfer Student.

All the characters should have cell phones (except perhaps a Tough Kid), some will have sleeping bags and backpacks, but they should not have much other than that. See **Starting Items** in [Handouts](#) below for extra items that characters can start with.

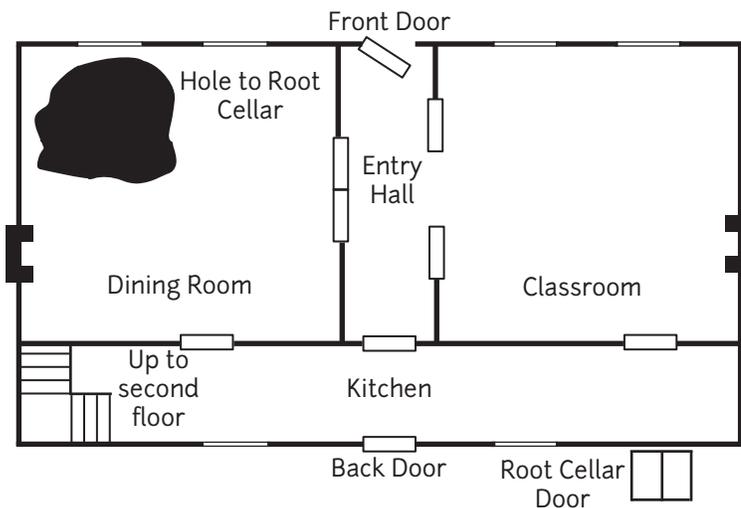
Dealing with Cell Phones

The bane of most modern horror stories, cell phones can be used to great effect in this scenario. First, the Denford School is in a remote area in a small town, so constant **Luck** rolls can be called for to see if a battery is nearly drained or a phone has tried in vain to get any signal. Second, Bill and the other bullies will be sending anonymous texts to the characters throughout the adventure. The texts will just be meant as vague threats to scare the characters, but can easily be far more accurate than the bullies intended! Since Joseph Watts is one of the bullies, he can send more pointed texts, as he enjoys toying with his victims. Third, the spirits trapped in the mannequins in the house can attempt to manifest through texts, so if the Player Characters are stuck perhaps a helpful text might arrive.

An attempt to search the internet for clues will not turn up much, but a Hard **Library Use** [**Difficulty 6 Library Use**] roll might turn up a conspiracy website detailing the missing children from the last ceremony 19 years ago (see the 1999 newspaper clippings in [Handouts](#) for the names of these missing children). Since all memories about the missing children are erased a few days after each ceremony's completion, the website would not reference the older events, but the disappearance of seven children in the internet age might have reached out further, and been picked up by a curious outsider later.

Denford School Layout

All windows are boarded up. All doors are unlocked. Microcameras are hidden in each room except the turn in the staircase. These cannot be spotted unless the Player Character knows to look for them, and then requiring a Hard **Spot Hidden** roll [**Difficulty 5 Evidence Collection**].



Ground Floor

Entry Hall – The front door is already slightly open. Dirt, dust, and leaves cover the floor. A Hard **Spot Hidden** [**Difficulty 5 Evidence Collection**] will notice recent shoeprints in the debris. Sliding pock-

et doors are on either side of the hall. The doors to the Classroom are already open. The pocket doors to the Dining Room are jammed shut (**STR** roll to open) [**Athletics**]. A microcamera is in the top corner above the front door to the right.

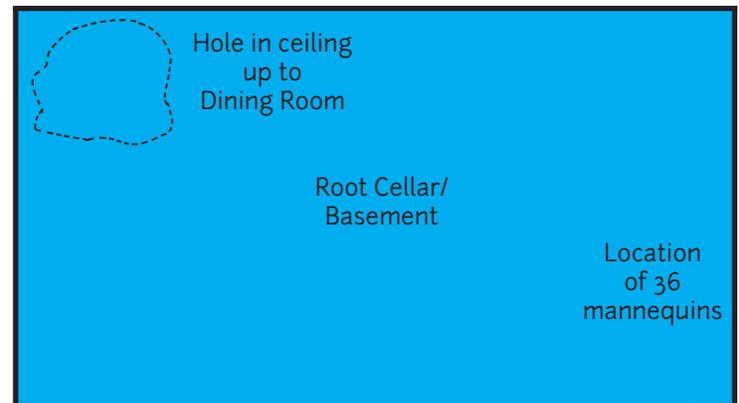
Classroom – A fireplace is in the wall. A door leads to the Kitchen. A chalk board hangs on the back wall. The remains of broken school chairs and desks are piled in the corners. A microcamera is in the top corner in the bottom left side of the room.

Each time a human is turned completely into a mannequin, an ancient desk and chair will suddenly assemble itself from the wreckage of the classroom (**Sanity** roll o/I_{D3} to witness [3 **Stability**]).

Dining room – A fireplace is in the wall. A door leads to the Kitchen. The remains of broken dining chairs lie about the room, but nothing is left of the table. The floor has collapsed in the top left corner, opening down into the Root Cellar. The floor near the hole slopes downward. Anyone attempting to look into the hole must walk on this weak floor, falling through if they fail a **DEX** roll [**Difficulty 4 Athletics**]. From this level, only dark water can be seen in the Root Cellar. A microcamera is in the top corner in the bottom right side of the room.

Kitchen – Doors lead to the Classroom, Dining Room, Entry Hall, and outside to the back of the school. A staircase (with an empty cupboard built in beneath) leads up to the Second Floor Hallway. The kitchen fixtures have been smashed and destroyed. A **Spot Hidden** roll [**Evidence Collection**] can find a **hammer** in the debris. A microcamera is in the top corner in the bottom right side of the room above the sink.

Back Door – The back door opens onto the overgrown meadow behind the house. There is a door on the bottom right corner of the house leading down to the Root Cellar but it can only be seen in the weeds with a Hard **Spot Hidden** [**1-point Architecture or Evidence Collection spend**]. Getting to the cellar door requires leaving the house. A microcamera is above the door looking toward the cellar door.

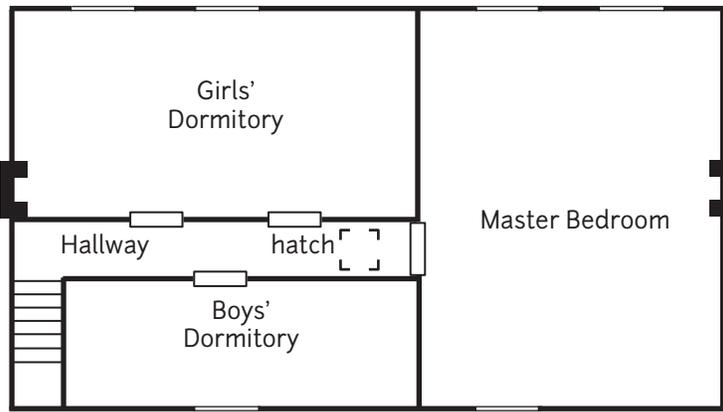


Root Cellar/Basement

The former root cellar is a single room, only six feet tall. It is now completely flooded, with the water being five feet deep, so that short characters may have to swim. Cellar doors in the bottom right corner lead up a short flight of stairs to the outside.

In corner by the cellar doors, **36 mannequins** of former students hang from the ceiling, only their heads visible above the dark water. The faces of the students are painted on, but all have their mouths gouged out of the wood (so they cannot speak). They are clumped in groups of six, each set more decayed than the next. Characters who have seen the newspaper clippings in the attic will be able to recognize the faces of the students in the photo in the oldest set of six mannequins.

There are two microcameras in the Basement, one by the hole in the ceiling, one by the mannequins and the cellar door exit.



Second Floor

Staircase – The old, narrow, and creaky staircase is the only area in the house that cannot be seen by a microcamera.

Hallway – The hallway has a concealed and locked attic hatch in the middle of the ceiling (Hard **Spot Hidden** [Difficulty 8 **Evidence Collection** or Difficulty 5 **Architecture**] to find, and only if someone says they are looking at the ceiling). It requires a **Locksmith** check [**Locksmith**] to unlock, or the key which Joseph Watts carries. If the hatch is opened, a built-in ladder can be unfolded from inside the hatch to climb into the attic. A microcamera is in the top corner by the stairs, facing down the hall, but the stairs are not in the field of vision.

Girls' Dormitory – This room is the former girls' dormitory, filled with the broken remains of four beds. A fireplace is in the west wall. Unlike every other room in this house, the walls of this room are covered in spray-painted graffiti. The graffiti has no pattern or words in it, but you can have the mannequins in the basements manifest words in the graffiti to either terrify the characters or provide clues if they need a hint. A microcamera is in the top corner of the room.

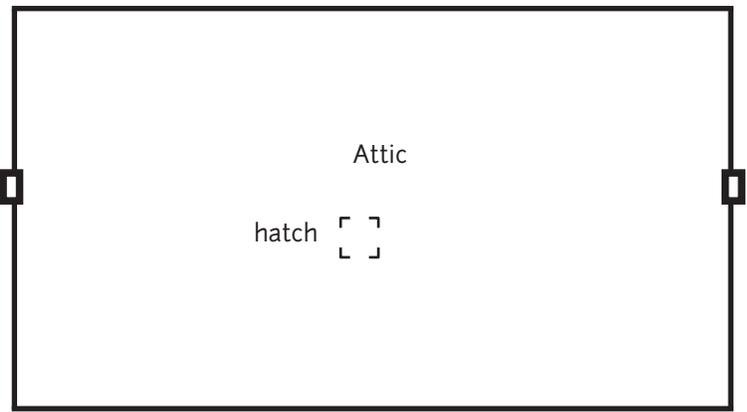
Boys' Dormitory – This room is the former boys' dormitory, filled with the broken remains of three beds. A pile of charred wood is piled against the wall where a previous group of trapped teenagers attempted to destroy a mannequin by burning it. If the burnt wood is moved, the outline of a human body can be seen where the wood of the floor and wall did not burn (since it was protected by the mannequin which was not damaged by the fire). A microcamera is in the top corner of the room.

Master Bedroom – A fireplace in wall connects to the chimney leading to the Classroom. The **mannequin of Miss Denford** lies under a dusty sheet on her old four post bed.

Miss Denford's mannequin still wears a rotten and faded black school-teacher dress. Her face is carefully painted on, but her mouth has been gouged out of the wood (so she cannot speak). Stringy clumps of her hair still cling to her head but come off if anyone touches them. Visible on her forehead is a burned groove leading over her head, under her hair, down under her dress to her back where it connects to the sigil (see [Handouts](#) below) that Joseph Watts burned into her to force her to recreate the ritual every 19 years. The sigil is what will animate her to collect people who have been turned into mannequins and take them to the Classroom. She will do this regardless of whether Joseph Watts is still alive. An **Occult** roll [**Occult**] will reveal the mannequin is the focus of a ritual drawing power from six locations.

A **Spot Hidden** roll [**Evidence Collection (Core clue)**] will find **Miss Denford's Diary** (see [Handouts](#) below) hidden in the bed.

There are two microcameras in the Master Bedroom, both in the top corners. One is in the top right corner, the other is in the bottom left corner of the room.



Attic

The attic is a single open space, only five feet tall at the peak in the center and sloping down to meet the floor on the front and back sides of the house. On a table sits an open laptop with a password-protected login screen. Sitting in the chair at the computer is a two-foot tall marionette. Nailed into the mortar of the chimney is a set of newspaper clippings.

If the computer login is bypassed with a Hard **Computer Use** roll [2-point **Cryptography spend**], it will show the views of all the spy cameras throughout the house, as well as the fact that an outside source is also viewing the video feed (Watts is watching the videos through his cellphone to keep tabs on the actions of the characters in the school). The views of the cameras rotates to show the video feeds, so Player Characters can loop videos, switch what is shown, or simply cut the feed to Watts' phone. If Watts is aware that his video feed is interrupted he may enter the house to directly confront the Player Characters, as he will not be confident he can protect the marionette.

The marionette is over 100 years old, and has a picture of Miss Denford nailed to its face. (The picture is mentioned in **Miss Denford's Diary**, see [Handouts](#) below.) If anyone attempts to touch the marionette, it will vanish to reappear somewhere else in the school (Sanity roll 0/1D3 to witness) [2 **Stability**]. The marionette is the original magical object Watts used to control her. Any person turned into a mannequin can be controlled by the marionette if their image is attached to marionette's head. A cellphone showing someone's picture will work for the image. If any of the Player Characters are turned into mannequins, they can be controlled this way. The marionette will continue to teleport away as long as Watts can see it in person or through the cameras, but he cannot teleport the marionette out of the school.

The **Newspaper Clippings** (see [Handouts](#) below) [**Evidence Collection (Core clue)**] are Watt's trophies. They are nailed to the mortar between the bricks of the chimneys in a single stack for each year. Each year's stack has the oldest article on the bottom, with the newer ones on top. The clippings show the initial reaction to each group of students disappearing as Watts took them in the ritual. Then, as the memory of the victims faded, the local newspaper returned to its usual coverage. Thus, the mundane article on the top of each group is his true trophy - he has gotten away with it again. Most importantly for the Player Characters, the picture in the first article shows Watts appearing only a few years younger than he looks currently in his guise as "Joe Canning." He also overconfidently uses some variation of Joe as his name each time he returns for the ritual.

There are two microcameras in the Attic, both near the top peak of the roof above each chimney.

Possible Conclusions

If the ritual succeeds, outsider memories of the Player Characters are erased within the next few days, and Watts will return in 19 years to do it again.

If the ritual is unsuccessful, Watts's body will rapidly age to 128 years old in appearance, killing him if he is still alive (**Sanity** check 1/1D4 [2 **Stability**] to witness). All the old student mannequins and the Miss Denford mannequin will dissolve into sawdust.

Any Player Characters who become mannequins can either be turned back to normal if the ritual is stopped, or their wooden bodies can turn to dust if the Keeper is particularly cruel! In that case, the survivors will have a traumatic time explaining the disappearance of their friends without any evidence...

Rewards

If the ritual is stopped, the Player Characters gain 1D8 Sanity.

Sanity Checks

- 0/1D3 [1 **Stability**] – Surprised to see Joseph Watts attack other bullies
- 0/1D3 [2 **Stability**] – See control marionette vanish
- 0/1D4 [4 **Stability**] – See teacher mannequin or student mannequins move
- 0/1D3 [3 **Stability**] – See chair and desk assemble from wreckage
- 1/1D6+1 [5 **Stability**] – Discover your body becoming wooden and hinged
- 1/1D6 [3 **Stability**] – See a friend COMPLETELY transformed into a puppet
- 1/1D4 [2 **Stability**] – See Watts's body change to its real age if the ritual fails

Further Adventures

As stated in the introduction, *Double Dare* could be used to launch a campaign now that the Player Characters know the powers of the Mythos are real. Possible connections could involve discovering just who (or what) Watts first gained his magical powers from. Previous generations who lost their friends or family to Watts could also supply “replacement” characters if any of the initial characters do not survive.

Watts' temporary abode in town could have all sorts of clues leading to further adventures, and if his real home could be located, who knows what secrets might be revealed? Just what *has* he been doing for all these immortal years when he is not in this little town renewing his life?

Adapting to Other Eras

The cruelty of children knows no limits in time. *Double Dare* can be easily moved to a classic 1920s or Gaslight or Old West eras, simply update the dates on the newspaper articles. To replicate Watts spying on the Player Characters, the cameras can be replaced with his sorcerous spies, perhaps literal bugs that he can see through the eyes of. For Roman era or Dark Ages, the school could be moved to another setting for education, like a monastery or academy. The newspaper articles could be replaced with a set of scrolls kept by Watts as a boastful diary.

Steps in Becoming a Puppet

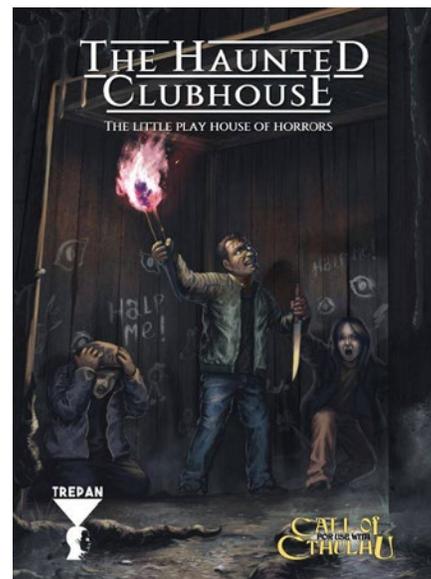
- 1 - Stiff muscles
- 2 - Bone joints aching
- 3 - Fingers and toes no long bending under your control
- 4 - Skin becomes hard and wooden in appearance, creases turn to wood grain, cold to the touch (**Sanity** check 1/1d6+1) [5 **Stability**]
- 5 - Digits become hinged, develop pegs
- 6 - Loss of all body control except voice, body is puppet, puppet face has painted image of human face (**Sanity** check for anyone viewing 1/1d6) [3 **Stability**]

The Haunted Clubhouse

The little play house of horrors



TREPAN



Available via [DriveThruRPG.com](https://www.drivethurpg.com)

Starting Items

Each character can have one item from this list. A good way to distribute them is each character making a **Luck** roll, then taking the player to the side and showing them all the items, but letting them pick only one, leaving fewer for the next luckiest player, and not letting the characters know what items the other players might have. You can easily add or swap items on this list too.

- Your father's revolver and 6 bullets
- Canister of mace
- Pack of 20 cigarettes and a Zippo lighter
- Extra batteries
- Bottle of whiskey
- Swiss Army knife

Starting Rumors

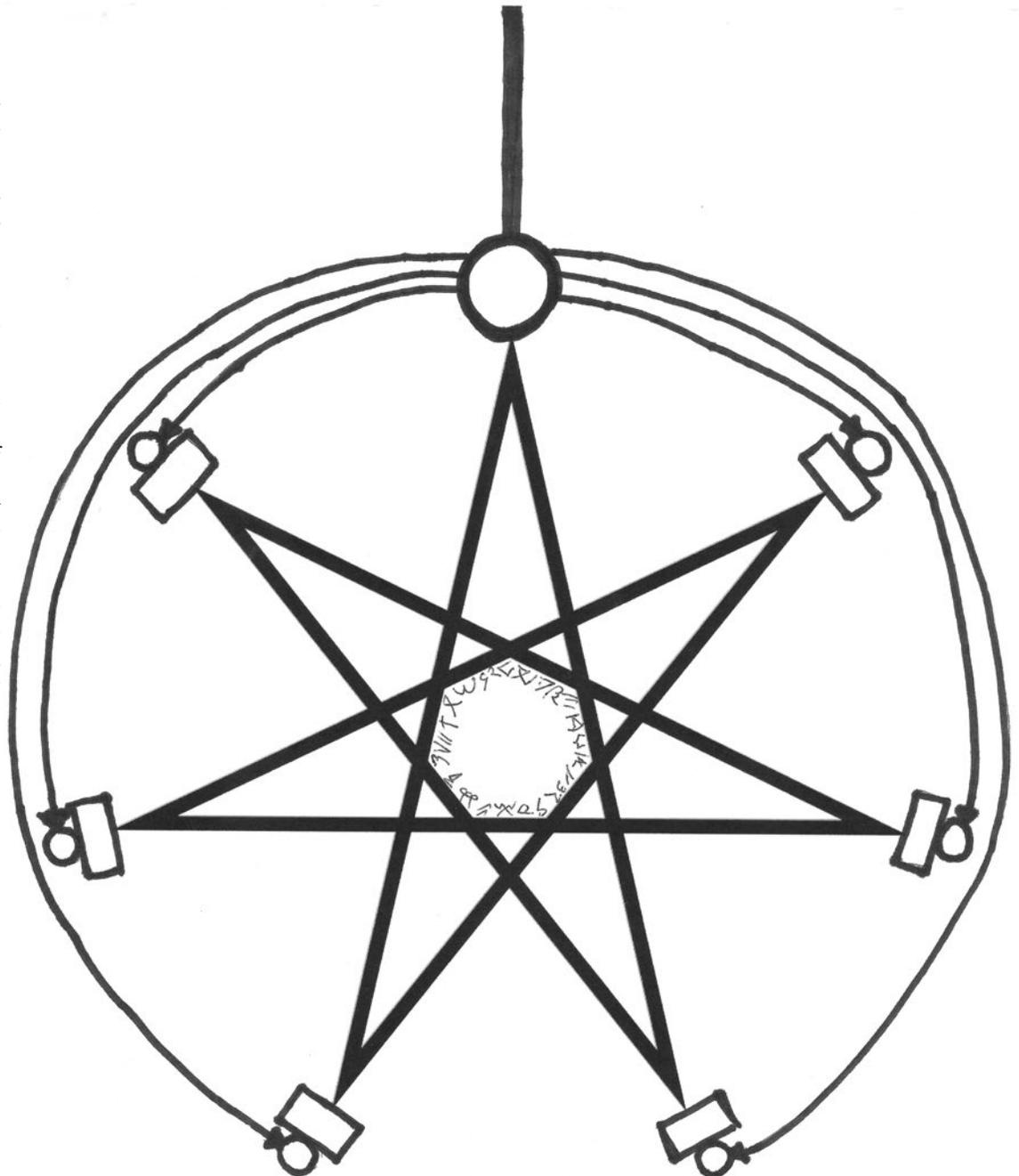
The characters have all heard some sort of rumor about the abandoned Denford school. Give each character a different rumor right as the scenario starts.

- You heard the ghost of a dead student still haunts the old Denford school.
- You heard Miss Denford who used to run the school committed suicide in the school.
- You heard Miss Denford who used to run the school beat a kid to death.
- You heard a kid at the old Denford school died in a fire and that's why they shut the school down.
- You heard a monster lives in the basement of the old Denford school.
- You heard anyone who goes into the old Denford school is never heard from again.

Handouts

This is the sigil found on the back of the Miss Denford mannequin found in the Master Bedroom. The sigil is burned into the wood. The line at top runs up and over the top of her head, under her hair, to the top of her forehead. The script is Egyptian cursive, and can mean whatever you want it to mean if the Player Characters are able to translate it with internet searches. The circle at the top represents the Miss Denford mannequin, connected to the six sacrifices, while the center of the 7-pointed star is where Joseph Watts will stand in the ceremony to draw the lifeforce from the sacrifices.

An **Oculta** roll [**Oculta**] determines the sigil represents a magical ceremony, with the mannequin the focus of a ritual drawing power from six locations.



Miss Denford's Diary

The diary of the schoolteacher Miss Denford is concealed under her bed in the Master Bedroom on the second floor. You can print it out as is, or recopy it into a small journal. October 30 is the final entry, but there are several blank pages after that, showing the the diary was not kept up past that date.

The Diary of Amabel Denford

September 8, 1904

Joey was playing with his doll in class again today. I had to confiscate it.

September 15, 1904

Someone stole the picture I had on my desk of myself with my parents, no one admitted to the theft! If I find out who did it they will receive quite the caning!

September 16, 1904

Found the picture of my parents in the boys' room, but my face was cut out and missing.

September 29, 1904

Awoke to find myself sleepwalking outside the school, saw light in window of boys' dormitory, hope no one saw me, how peculiar and embarrassing. All were asleep when I checked on them afterwards.

October 5, 1904

Hit Rebecca in class today, don't know what came over me, Joey laughing about it in back of class. What a miserable child.

October 15, 1904

Awoken in the middle of the night by noise downstairs, found Joey rearranging the classroom furniture. I gave him a few good strokes with the cane and sent him back to bed. He was furious.

October 28, 1904

Woke up with terrible stiffness in my joints, I hope it is the cold nights and not my age!

October 29, 1904

The children complaining about aches too. But the weather still mild, perhaps an illness? Tomorrow I will send for the doctor in town.

October 30, 1904

Doctor Elias said he has never seen anything like it, some sort of muscle disease? I am very afraid that we all have it. Only Joey seems spared so far, I have ordered him to sleep away from the rest of us until we are better.

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The newspaper clippings on the following pages are Joseph Watts' trophies of each successful ritual. The first few show the locals reacting to the children disappearing and the frantic attempts to find them. But as the effects of the ritual take hold, memories of the children are erased until soon the community forgets they were missing. He has arranged

each year's clipping together in the attic. You can print them out and group each year together to give to the Player Characters. Be sure to put the "normal" headline on top of the missing children headlines for each year. These are his real trophies, when everyone has forgotten, and he has gotten away with it again.

Times Picayune

November 3, 1904

One cent

STUDENTS, TEACHER MISSING!

The entire student body and the headmistress of Denford Boarding School have not been seen since last Friday morning. Yesterday, a report of their absence was made to the sheriff and the school was searched.

The students were last seen Friday by milk deliveryman Edward Schmitt, during his regular rounds. Mr. Schmitt contacted the sheriff after his previous delivery had not been claimed and no one answered the front door at the school.

The school is run by Miss Amabel Denford, a native of our fair town. The students included Michael Valencenti, aged 15 years, Hannah Olmen, aged 14, Rebeccah Lieb, aged 12, sisters Alice Herman, aged 13, and Rosie, aged 11, Joseph Watts, aged 14, and Daniel Knerr, aged 13.

Miss Denford's address is at the Boarding School. She is in her thirties, of the brunette type and possesses a vivacious disposition. She is a graduate of Ulster Academy and afterward attended Spencer's teaching college. Later she taught for a time in Spencer's teaching college in Schenectady and then returned home to found the Denford Boarding School in 1894.



Seen here in a 1902 school photo (from L to R): Miss Denford, Olmen, A. Herman, R. Herman, Watts, Lieb, Valencenti

November 4, 1904

MISSING STUDENTS SEARCH INTENSIFIES!

Authorities began searching the woods today after completing a search of Denford Boarding School yesterday. All seven students at the School have not been seen in five days. Miss Amabel Denford, head of the school, is also missing.

November 5, 1904

Town Market Plans Expansion

Garcia's Market, the oldest market in our town, has announced plans to expand their storefront by taking over the space of the former

KEEPER NOTE: Be sure to tell the first character examining the articles that Joseph Watts in the 1903 photo is a dead ringer for Joe Canning, the sidekick to the bully Bill Wessler! If you change the date of the adventure, be sure to update the years. The "default" current year is 2018.

STUDENTS MISSING AFTER TRICK OR TREATING

Seven high school students have not returned home after going trick or treating with their friends Halloween night. Reported missing are Elisha Alvord, Olvie Kernagar, Waller Brown, Erline Mott, Joe Cummings, Hasting Crumpacker, and Lemuel Daniels.

November 3, 1923

MISSING STUDENTS LEFT TOWN TOGETHER

Further investigation by the sheriff has revealed that all seven missing students had planned to meet outside of town on Halloween night. The search has expanded to the area they were last seen heading towards.

November 4, 1923

Warm Weather Today

7 MISSING AFTER HALLOWEEN

Several high school students did not return home Saturday morning from Halloween activities with their friends. A report has been filed with the sheriff by several of the parents. Reported missing are Ida Dozier, Tilmon Rinehart, Lissie Campbell, Malissa Sinn, Rose Elia Gathany, Joseph Delpriore, Haskell Maynard.

November 3, 1942

NO PROGRESS ON MISSING YOUTH

Sheriff Denkins reported no progress in the search for the missing students. He stated that deputies would be organized if

November 4, 1942

Apple Harvest Above Average

Times Picayune

November 1, 1961

Seven cents

SHERIFF REPORTS CHILDREN MISSING

Several families reported that their children did not return home after Halloween events last night. The families reported that the missing included Joe Simmons, Todd Vickery, Ross Winkler, Genvea Hartman, Stephen Foster, Diedrich Gill and Zeke Abrams.

November 2, 1961

Local Man Wins Art Contest

Times Picayune

November 1, 1980

Twenty cents

TEENS MISSING

Several high school students were absent at school today and have not been seen since last night. The sheriff has put out a notice to be on the lookout for them. The students are Brooklyn Jacobs, Elisha Allen, Joseph Panetta, Caroline Irish, Keenan Bland, Roberta Marshall, and Jeffrey Moartz.

November 2, 1980

Local Spelling Bee Planned

Times Picayune

November 1, 1999

Thirty-five cents

LOCAL TEENS VANISH

A large group of teenagers has not returned after spending Halloween night out together. The missing include Alice Bostwick, Katrina Ivie, Brendan Rouger, Seth Leach, Joe Kotts, Sally Guy, and Adam Hersey.

November 2, 1999

Prize Hog is Ill

Clerical Cosmic Horror

The Brief Era of the Cthulhu Mythos as Dungeons & Dragons Pantheon

by Zach Howard

The *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game, first published in 1981, was not the first attempt at bringing the Cthulhu Mythos into gaming. For a few years before this the Mythos served as a “standard” (albeit dangerous) *Dungeons & Dragons* pantheon, due in large part to the efforts of Dr. J. Eric Holmes. Best known among *D&D* players for his work editing the first *Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set* (1977), Holmes had gotten into the original *D&D* game not long after its release through his teenage sons, and ran an extensive campaign for them. Holmes had been a fan of Lovecraft’s writing since his teen years in the 1940s, and was inspired to include Mythos elements in his *D&D* games. For example, in the March 1977 issue of the fanzine *Alarums & Excursions*, he describes an adventure where the party finds excerpts of the *Necronomicon* and encounters the Spawn of Cthulhu. And in his 1980 article in *Psychology Today*, “Confessions of a Dungeon Master”, Holmes relates a game where a paladin is whisked away by the Mi-Go to a “black starlit cyclopean city” on the planet Yuggoth. He further relates that “my players have wandered through bits of Barsoom and Hyperborea, through worlds created by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, H. Rider Haggard, A. Merritt, H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. Sometimes they recognize where they are, sometimes they do not.”

Holmes, a professor at the USC medical school, eventually wrote to TSR and offered to edit the original *D&D* rules to make them easier for beginners to understand. Gary Gygax of TSR agreed to this and Holmes’ efforts eventually yielded the first introductory *D&D* rulebook, published in the summer of 1977. Holmes even slipped a Mythos reference into this work, writing that “When characters swear they call on the wrath of their appropriate deities, be it Zeus, Crom, Cthulhu or whatever” (page 39).

There were a number of supplements to the original *D&D* rules, and one of these, *Gods, Demi-Gods & Heroes* (1976), provided a number of pantheons for characters to interact with, whether to worship or oppose. While this book included “Robert E. Howard’s Hyborea” [sic] among the mythologies, even referencing “Tsathoggus” [sic], it did not include any of Lovecraft’s specific creations. Later in the same summer that the *Basic Set* was released, Holmes and Rob Kuntz met at Gen Con X and discussed a write-up of the Mythos for a revision of *Gods, Demi-Gods & Heroes*. Holmes and Kuntz then corresponded, resulting in an article, “The Lovecraftian Mythos in *Dungeons & Dragons*”, published in issue 12 of *The Dragon* magazine in February 1978.

The original typed manuscript for this work shows that Holmes wrote the bulk of the article, including the main introduction and all of the entries except Cthuga [sic], Ithaqua and Yig. Kuntz added these and made a few edits to the entries, but for the most part Holmes’ original text is printed verbatim in the *Dragon* article. Holmes presented the Mythos in two sections. The first is “The Lovecraftian Gods, the Great Old Ones” and includes Azathoth, Cthulhu, Hastur, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, Cthuga [sic], Ithaqua, Yig, and Yog Sothoth [sic], plus descriptions of the *Necronomicon* and Elder Sign. Being a follower of one of these deities is more dangerous than usual in *D&D*, as “Evil clerics or magic users who call upon the Old Ones, using the spells from the *Necronomicon* or the other books of elder lore, run a 25% chance of being destroyed by the gods they evoke, 50% chance of one of the servants of the Old Ones appearing, 25% chance of the god appearing and cooperating. If the god attacks he will then ravage the countryside for 1-6 turns and disappear”.



A Mi-Go Abducting a Human by Chris Holmes

The second section covers “Inhuman and Partly Human Races” - the Byakhee, Deep Ones, Great Race, Old Ones (the aliens from *At the Mountains of Madness*), Mi-Go and Shaggoths [sic]. A great line-up of monstrosities that could function as proper *D&D* adversaries, but unfortunately no illustrations were included with this article to help readers visualize them.

A letter from a reader in *The Dragon* #14 took issue with some details of the Mythos, to which Holmes replied with style in “A Rebuttal to “The Cthulhu Mythos Revisited”” in issue 16 of *The Dragon* (May 1978). For example, he writes, “Guinn objects to the various hit point assignments

CTHULHU

Greater god

ARMOR CLASS: 2
MOVE: 18"/36"
HIT POINTS: 400
NO. OF ATTACKS: 30
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-10 (x 30)
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to magical control, +2 or better weapon to hit, regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 80%
SIZE: L (100' tall)
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
WORSHIPER'S ALIGN: Chaotic evil
SYMBOL: Image of Cthulhu
PLANE: Prime Material Plane
CLERIC/DRUID: Nil



Part of the Cthulhu entry in *Deities & Demigods*
Art by Erol Otus

given to the Lovecraftian Gods and races. This is too arbitrary a subject to justify serious contention. Any appropriate hit point assignment can be used by the DM. One of my concerns in writing up the gods was that players encountering them in a game might well want to call upon Zeus or Thor or Ra for help and the gods should be scaled to make this a reasonable confrontation". In this letter Holmes also points readers to his sources, writing that "I would hope anyone using [Cthulhu] in his game would read "The Call of Cthulhu" and get some idea how fearsome he really is. In an early version of "the Gods" I said "if Cthulhu breaks out of R'lyeh, everyone in the world must make a saving throw or go insane". I later reduced this as being a bit too gross". In addition to Lovecraft's own work, Holmes points out two early surveys published by Arkham House: "The Cthulhu Mythos: A Glossary" by Francis Laney, in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (1943), and "H.P. Lovecraft: The Gods" by Lin Carter, in *The Shattered Room and Other Pieces* (1959).

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons was on the horizon, and by mid-1979 the *Dungeon Masters Guide* was out, and included Gary Gygax's now-legendary list of inspirational reading material, Appendix N. Among the names included there were H.P. Lovecraft and August Derleth, although no specific works of theirs were cited. Shortly after this, *Gods, Demi-Gods & Heroes* was revised by James Ward and Rob Kuntz and published in the summer of 1980 as *Deities & Demigods*, the fourth *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* hardcover rulebook. Naturally the material from the Lovecraftian Mythos article was included, retitled as the Cthulhu Mythos, along with fantastic weird illustrations by TSR artist Erol Otus.

Many old-school *D&D* players will remember that the Cthulhu Mythos was later excised from this book. But not many realize that this chapter is a direct revision of the earlier article by Holmes and Kuntz. This is partly because Holmes is not given a proper co-author credit for the chapter in *D&DG*, being merely thanked "especially for his help with the Cthulhu Mythos" in the Credits and Acknowledgements section. However, a comparison of the two shows that the later work was clearly modeled on the earlier one, with some of the text hardly changed. For example, compare the material concerning Alhazred in the original article and in *Deities & Demigods*:

"Alhazred was seized in the streets of Damascus by invisible demons and devoured horribly in front of many witnesses. Those who have studied his writings have sometimes met a fate nearly as terrible"
("The Lovecraftian Mythos in D&D", pages 18-19)

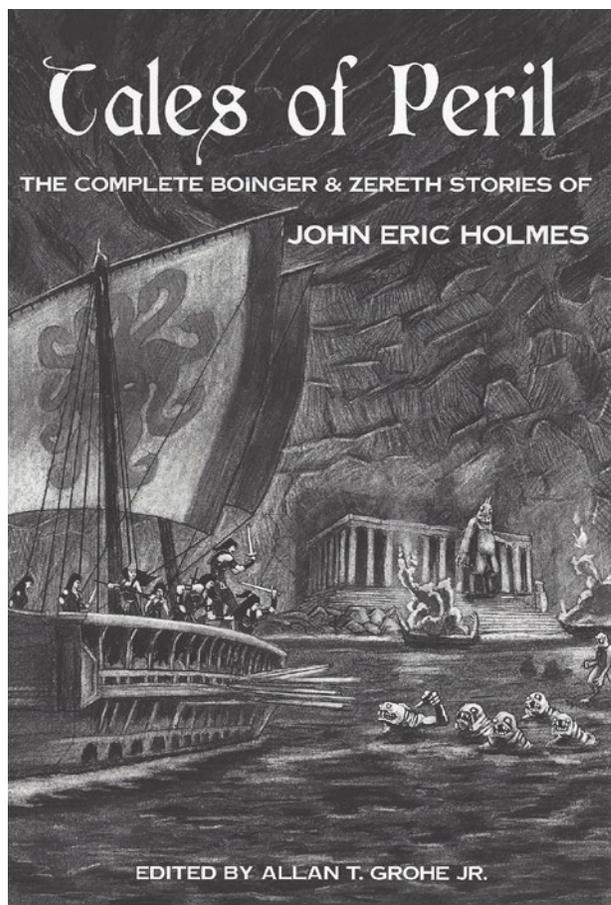
"Alhazred was later seized in the streets of a desert city by invisible demons and devoured horribly in front of many witnesses. Those who have studied his writings have sometimes met a fate nearly as terrible"
(*D&DG*, page 48)

Other entries were revised more, but each entry in the *Deities & Demigods* chapter corresponds to one found in the original article, and only one entry in the original article (Yig) is not found in the later work. I have also seen correspondence indicating that Holmes was sent the *Deities & Demigods* chapter for review prior to publication.

The Cthulhu Mythos remained in the *Deities & Demigods* for the first two printings, with the second printing adding a note thanking Chaosium for permission to use them. However, the Mythos was then removed by TSR for the third printing, along with the Melnibonéan Mythos, reducing the size of the book from 144 pages to 128 pages. Many rumors have circulated regarding why this occurred, but Jim Ward recently stated on Facebook this was done by TSR in response to a cease and desist letter from Chaosium that they received despite the fact he had written permission from both Arkham House and Michael Moorcock to use the material. This removal, along with the publication of the *Call of Cthulhu* RPG in 1981, marked an end to the short era when Lovecraft's creations were a *Dungeons & Dragons* pantheon. *D&D* still contains many elements of cosmic horror influenced by the Mythos (mind flayers, for example), but not the specific entities referenced by Lovecraft. But for a brief time in the late '70s and early '80s, they were there, waiting for your characters.

Holmes' own use of the Cthulhu Mythos did not end with his write-up of the pantheon. In the next few years he wrote fiction inspired by his *D&D* games, featuring the adventures of his son's characters, Boinger the Halfling and Zereth the Elf. The longest of these tales, the novel *The Maze of Peril*, features Dagonites (essentially Deep Ones) as the primary antagonists. These stories, along with the "Confessions of a Dungeon Master" article referenced above and a bibliography of Holmes' writing by myself, were recently republished in the compilation *Tales of Peril*, available from [Black Blade Publishing](http://BlackBladePublishing.com).

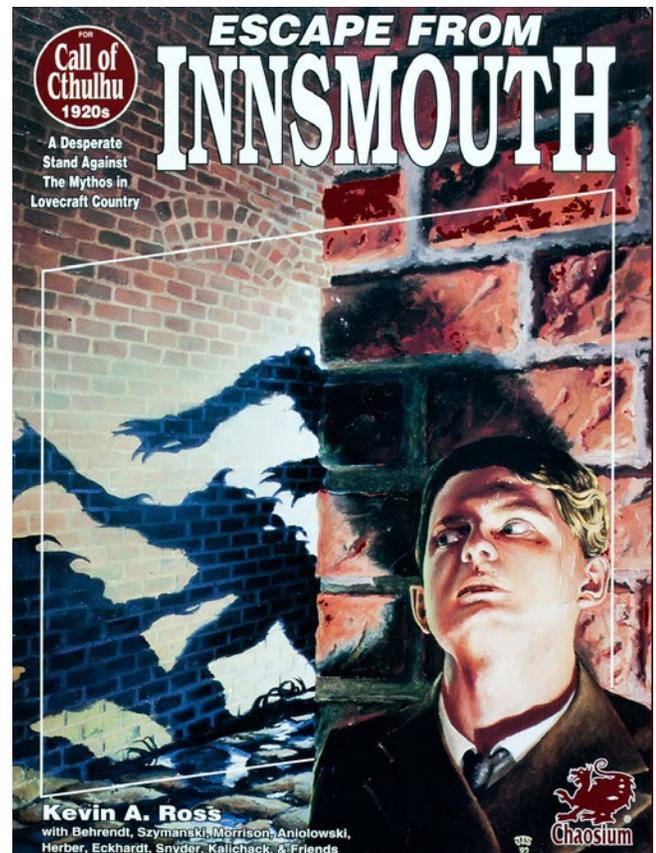
For further information on the writings of Dr. Holmes please visit my blog, the Zenopus Archives: zenopusarchives.blogspot.com



The cover of *Tales of Peril*, showing Dagonites swimming before their temple *Amazons Attack the Temple of Dagon* by Ian Baggeley

Vintage RPG

by Stu Horvath



This is *Escape from Innsmouth*, by Kevin A. Ross, the culmination of the Lovecraft Country sourcebooks detailing fictional locales made famous in Lovecraft's stories (the preceding volumes tackle Arkham, Dunwich and Kingsport). Each describes a town practically house by house – its residents of note, its landmarks, its secrets (and endless adventure hooks). Each captures the town's unique atmosphere – Kingsport's dreaminess, the isolated forelornness of Dunwich, the tension between the modern world and the superstitious past in Arkham. As great as those books are, none accomplish their goal as clearly as *Escape from Innsmouth*.

Based on Lovecraft's masterpiece "A Shadow Over Innsmouth," this is a fishing town in decay, largely abandoned, with half its xenophobic residents actually half-human hybrids of the fish men – Deep Ones – that live beneath Devil's Reef off the coast. The deal between the two groups was made generations ago through sorcery and lingers on as a curse of the blood.

Because the town is so depopulated, there's room for a short two-part campaign that ranks among *Call of Cthulhu's* very best. The first part takes place after Lovecraft's story and partly reenacts it – investigators visit the town looking for a disappeared grocery clerk and wind up having to escape when the hybrids come for them at night. The second acts out the raid mentioned in Lovecraft's story, where the federal government takes military action against the town and its Deep One allies. The raid has multiple objectives (with players shifting roles from their investigators to stock soldiers) that occur concurrently, with the action cutting cinematically back and forth. In terms of construction alone, it is a masterpiece.

The book's art is fantastic as well, if subdued. Jason Eckhardt has a special talent for drawing gloomy, abandoned buildings. Those drawings provide much of the rich atmosphere for the first half of the book.

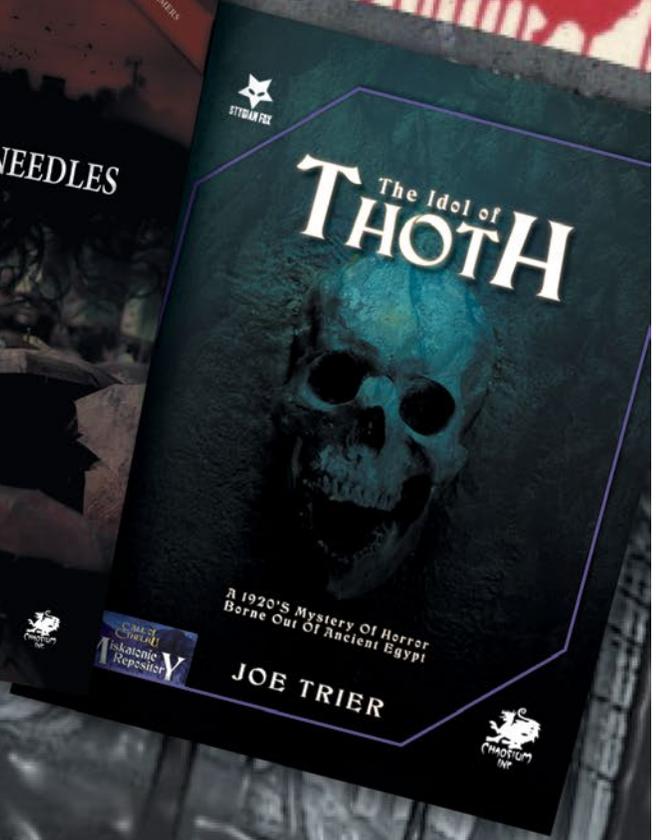
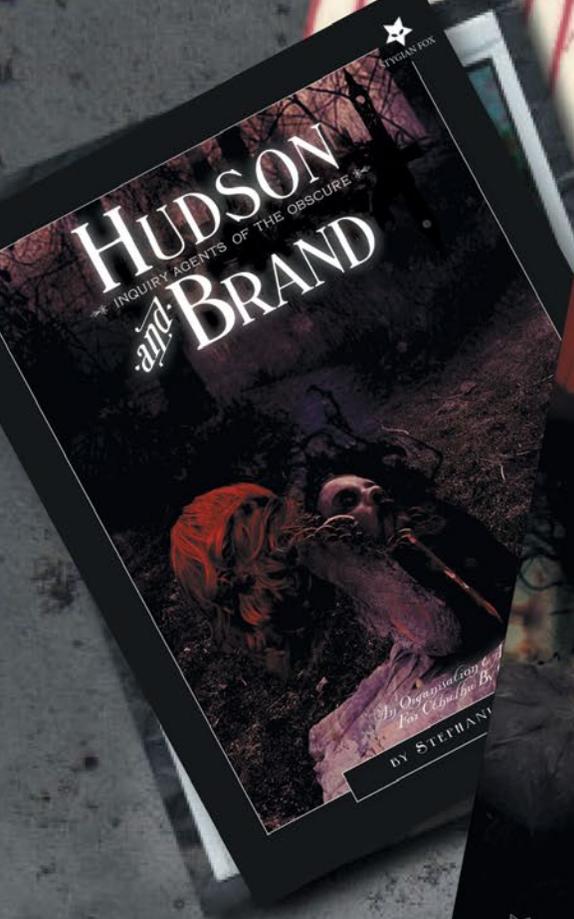


Meanwhile, John T. Snyder's line work creates evocative portraits and horrific action moments. It is one of Chaosium's best looking books.

One final note – if the plot of the adventure sounds familiar, you probably played the *Dark Corners of the Earth* videogame, which draws heavily on this material and is one of the best horror videogames out there.



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WE
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for
CALL OF CTHULHU
MODERN ERA



Overdue

(solo scenario)

by Jared Smith

You're not much of a gambler. Not at cards, not at love, not at business. Maybe that's why you ended up alone as a maintenance worker at one of the big east coast universities.

Miskatonic U.

Ivy League snootiness, but not Ivy League rich. Still, their library was something, and that's where you spent most of your time now, maintaining the old library, and cleaning up after those idiotic rich kids who didn't appreciate a book if it didn't have dirty pictures in it.

Your only tools of the trade, as it were, are the ridiculous big set of keys you need to get around the university and the library. Seems like they built everything with a huge lock back when, even stuff that didn't need one, and without those keys you'd be locked out when it's raining, or even worse, locked in when no one was around to let you out. In fact, most of the time, you were the one who had to let out some lost freshman who swore he'd not locked the door behind him.

Librarians are often on the forefront of the Cthulhu Mythos, either as intrepid investigators or extremely important researchers. But what about the lowly staff who maintain those libraries? Even one as hallowed as the library at Miskatonic University?

For this adventure, assume your character has 50% Sanity to start. If you encounter something horrific, you will be told to "make a Sanity check." Then roll percentile dice. If you roll above your Sanity, you may have to subtract an amount from your Sanity. That means the next time you have to make a Sanity check, your target will be the new lower number, as you become more and more mentally unstable! If your Sanity ever gets to 0 or less, you are too crazy to continue and your adventure is over! You will also occasionally be able to use an item that might lead you to another option, those choices will have a mark beside them: ¶ Each item will tell you to add a different number to your current entry, so make sure to remember the number of any item you find! Read the whole entry, then add the number for the item to the current entry number and go to that entry before moving on. For example, if you finish reading entry 7 and see the symbol, and want to try your keys (which say add 4), then go to entry 11 instead of the given options. If the entry you go to doesn't make sense, then that item was probably not appropriate for the situation, so return to the entry you just read, in this example, go back to entry 7.

Overdue is a solo scenario set at Miskatonic University. Go to entry 1.



1

Tonight looked to be another slow one. It was storming, an unpleasant time to be out. Classes wrapped up, building locked up, time to walk one last time through the library and make sure all was well. You pulled your peacoat tight around you and looked around your little supply room before you left to run over to the library entrance. Sitting on a shelf was your trusty flashlight.

If you take your trusty flashlight, go to 7.

If you don't want to lug that heavy thing around tonight, go to 17.

2

You try to run, but slip in the blood and ichor staining the floor. The jaws open from all sides, slowly ripping you to pieces.

Luckily, you are already too insane to realize you have met...

YOUR END

3

The door creaks open, but you remain frozen in place. The snuffling sounds gets louder but you are able to remain hidden.

If you wish to attack, go to 18.

If you wish to cast the spell you found, go to 37.

4

You move through the bookcases towards the noise. You hear another scrape, then finally come around the corner. Crouching in the aisle before you is an impossibility. A winged, oily-skinned, black creature, barbed tail whipping back and forth above it, and a smooth faceless head. It fills the low ceilinged aisle, its bulk looming over you.

A scream comes out of your mouth as it begins to move towards you.

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll higher than your Sanity, subtract 5 from your Sanity.

Go to 23.

5

You move across the open space between the cleared tables and suddenly can't move. You are paralyzed in place in midstep. You are stuck like this for minutes... maybe hours? Your panic and tension grows and grows but you are unable to make a sound. Finally you hear the door behind you open and know that help is at hand for whatever has happened to you. But then an ugly prehensile paw settles on your shoulder, and a black,

oily, whale-like thing moves around into your line of sight. It is a horned head, but with no face. You feel a barbed point sliding up your body, touching you lightly, bringing a laugh to your mouth as it tickled its way up your body. But you are still frozen... you cannot laugh... only be held in terror as it clutches you close for hours... and hours... and hours... will it ever be...

YOUR END

6

You weave your way through the tangle of bookcases toward the noise, and suddenly your light is shining on a person leaning up against the shelves! They moan as the light touches them. You move closer and see it's one of the students! She looks up at you with wide unseeing eyes. She is clearly in shock. Blood covers the front of her shirt and she is cradling a book in her hands.

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll higher than your Sanity, subtract 5 from your Sanity.

She begins to speak. "I thought it was just a joke. I didn't believe him. He was trying to impress me. So we did it. We read the book. We made the pentagram. But something really came. It killed him! I ran and ran. The spell didn't work. It shouldn't have happened. It was just a joke. Take it away!" She thrusts the book she was holding towards you and begins to cry. She seems unharmed but will need help soon.

You carefully take the book out of her hands. It is the Necronomicon, a 17th century spellbook. It should have been safely locked up in the Rare Books room! It is open to a page that is now covered with her blood. It seems to be a spell to summon a demon into a pentagram to serve you. (If you keep the Necronomicon, subtract 3 whenever you want to use it.)

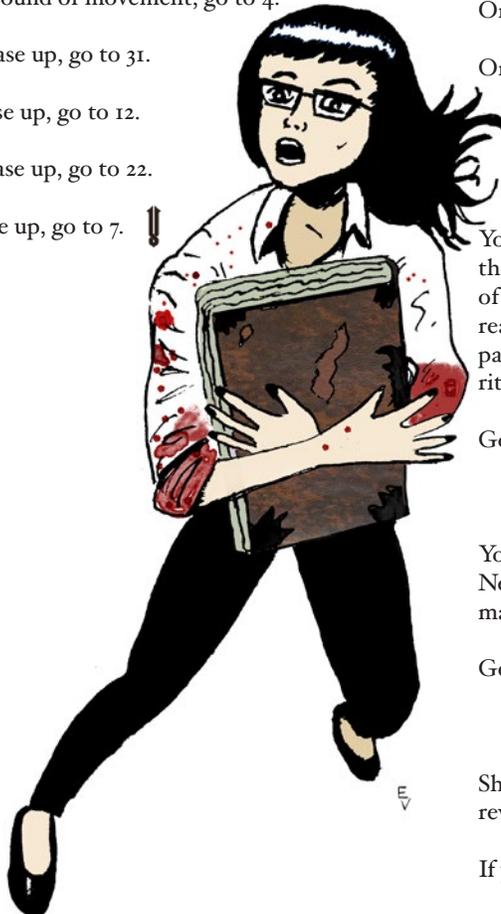
If you now go towards the sound of movement, go to 4.

If you take the north staircase up, go to 31.

If you take the west staircase up, go to 12.

If you take the south staircase up, go to 22.

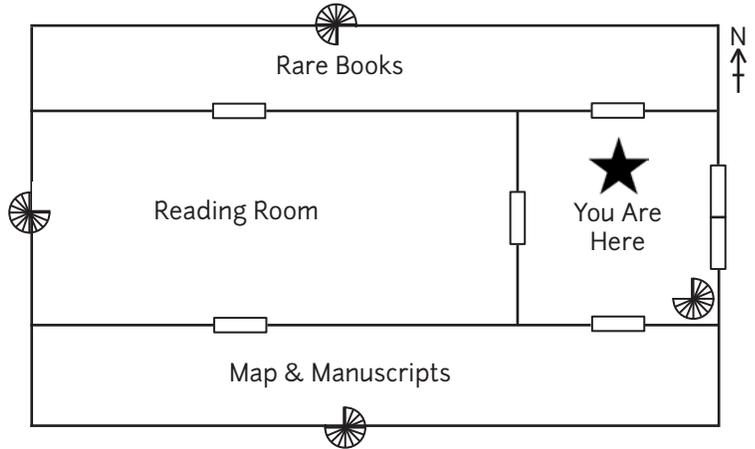
If you take the east staircase up, go to 7. ↓



The Student with the Necronomicon by Evan Johnston

7

You shine your light back and forth, keys jingling at your hip, as you look around the entrance to the library. The old stacks of books downstairs on the lower level almost make a maze, there are so many piled up. Good thing they have a map on the wall, otherwise freshmen would get lost every day. You've memorized it by this point though.



And good thing you brought your flashlight. Easy to trip on something in here.

(Anytime you want to use that flashlight to see something or do something unusual when this mark ↓ is at the end of an entry, add 7 to the number of the entry you are on. Same for that ring of keys. But for the keys, add 4.)

If you want to double check no student fell asleep in the Reading Room, go to 12.

Or you can go to Maps & Manuscripts, go to 22.

Or Rare Books, go to 31.

Or go downstairs to the lower stacks, go to 41. ↓

8

You pull the scrap of paper out of your pocket and look at it. Based on the note, it seems to mean to look at the first syllables of each sentence of the instructions at the end or beginning of the spell. Doing this, you realize that the syllables create a new sentence, instructing you to repeat part of the incantation backwards! (If you want to use this version of the ritual, add 5 instead of subtracting 3.)

Go back to 6.

9

You fumblingly attempt to read the ancient Latin words out of the Necronomicon. Your tongue is twisted, but you think you are approximating the sounds. Nothing seems to happen.

Go to 12.

10

She laughs evilly. "I knew the time would come when my plan would be revealed. Now it is time for you to die!"

If you attempt to deflect her attack, go to 33.

If you decide to take cover, go to 49.

You try your keys on all the doors to make sure things are locked up tight. What is going on?? The door to the Reading Room is unlocked. The librarians are supposed to lock up hours ago.

Go back to 7.

12

The reading room is full of reading tables and chairs for the students to work at, with doors in three of the walls and staircase going down in the fourth wall. Tonight a lot of the reading tables have been moved out of the center of the room, leaving a big open space. Something is definitely wrong. The librarians would have told you if the tables needed to be moved, and no student could have done it with one table without being yelled at by other students for being loud, and certainly not moved a lot of them without the librarians coming down on them.

If you investigate the open space, go to 5.

If you go to the door in the south wall, go to 21.

If you go to the door in the north wall, go to 31.

If you go to the door in the east wall, go to 7.

If you go down the stairs, go to 41.

13

Your mind quails. Black sticky oil. Pain. A horrific tail lashing the air. Blood. Screams from a mouth... your mouth? A knife plunging. Silence. A sense of relief. The proper ordering of the world.

Go to 27.

14

You shine your light around before deciding, and see a weird stain on the floor by the staircase down to the stacks. Looks like someone spilled some soda or something, it's black and sticky. Drinks aren't allowed in here! You'll have to clean it up in the morning, and talk to the librarian about checking that kids aren't bringing in drinks.

Go back to 7.

15

You quickly pull out the ceremonial knife of the Great Old Ones and put her out of her misery. Pathetic human! Now with her death and the sacred tome you have been searching for in your possession, you will be unstoppable!

...wow, I really didn't see this coming. Good for you, cultist! When your Master arrives on Earth as the stars turn, you will never have to worry about...

YOUR END

16

You fumblingly attempt to read the ancient Latin words out of the Necronomicon. Your tongue is twisted, but you think you are approximating the sounds. Nothing seems to happen.

Go to 12.

What, are you kidding me? You soon stumble in the dark on one of the old staircases deep in the stacks, falling down the entire flight, landing so badly you break your neck and are completely paralyzed, slowly dying in a broken heap, alone and forgotten, unable to call for help. You needed to be smart to make it through this night! If you believe in second chances or reincarnation, go back to 1 and try again.

Otherwise this is already...

YOUR END

18

Your furious attack knocks the hunter back, but you are not sure you can ever defeat it. You run back to your hiding spot.

If you wish to hide until the next one arrives, go to 3.

If you wish to cast your spell, go to 37.

19

You shine your light around the weirdly cleared space and see that there is a giant pentagram drawn on the floor! It is made of a black sticky-looking substance, with strange symbols daubed around the edges. There seems to be a splatter of blood on one side.

If you go investigate the center of the pentagram, go to 5.

Otherwise go back to 12.

20

You fumblingly attempt to read the ancient Latin words out of the Necronomicon. Your tongue is twisted, but you think you are approximating the sounds. The beast seems to pause for a moment when you begin, but then it suddenly lunges forward and grabs you in its strangely humanlike paws. The book tumbles from your terrified hands. It is...

YOUR END

21

The door between these rooms has been forced open! The frame around the lock has been shattered as if some terrific force collided with it and the wood was simply unable to withstand the blow. Splinters of wood lie all around the frame.

If you go to the room to the south, go to 22.

If you go to the room to the north, go to 12.

22

This room has cabinets and drawers everywhere. Two doors leave the room, and a staircase descends in the south wall. Some of the cabinets are in a strange disarray, as if something large shoved them to the side. But tonight the room is also filled with a strange smell – blood!

If you go through the right door, go to 7.

28

If you go through the left door, go to 21.

If you go down the staircase, go to 41.

23

The beastly monster is coming right at you. Due to the narrow spaces between the bookcases, you must make your choice quickly!

If you now go towards the sound of pain, go to 6.

If you try to find the north staircase up, go to 31.

If you try to flee up the west staircase, go to 12.

If you attempt to run up the south staircase, go to 22.

If you hope to escape up the east staircase, go to 7.

24

You pull out the book and stumblyingly recite the words from the blood-stained page. Your throat aches with the effort, but suddenly you hear a crashing noise and lurching into sight is a horrific winged creature, horns on top of its oily skin, but it has no face! NO FACE!

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll your Sanity or less, go to 34.

If you roll higher than your Sanity, subtract 5 from it, and go to 5.

25

You point your gun at the man's face. "Drop the crystal or I'll shoot!"

A look of fear crosses his face. Then he turns to run.

If you shoot, go to 44.

If you try to knock him out, go to 47.

26

You check all the cabinets but they are all locked as they should be.

Go back to 22.

27

You gasp for air against the pain that floods your battered and aching body. You suddenly notice that daylight is shining through the windows into the upper parts of the library as you realize the terrible night has passed. You laugh with an insane joy – you have done it! Your luck has finally turned. Maybe it's time to get out of this sadsack job and try something new. Your cousin told you a church down in Innsmouth is looking for a handyman...

THE BEGINNING

Shining your light closely, you see the splinters and damage seems to have been caused by the claws of some terribly strong beast! It would have to be at least the size of a bear. A strange black, oily substance fills the crevasses of the slash marks.

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll higher than your Sanity, subtract 5 from your Sanity.

Go back to 21.

29

You shine your light around and find the source of the blood... a body is lying on the ground, covered in terrible claw marks, with a horrific smile upon his face! You realize it is one of the librarians!

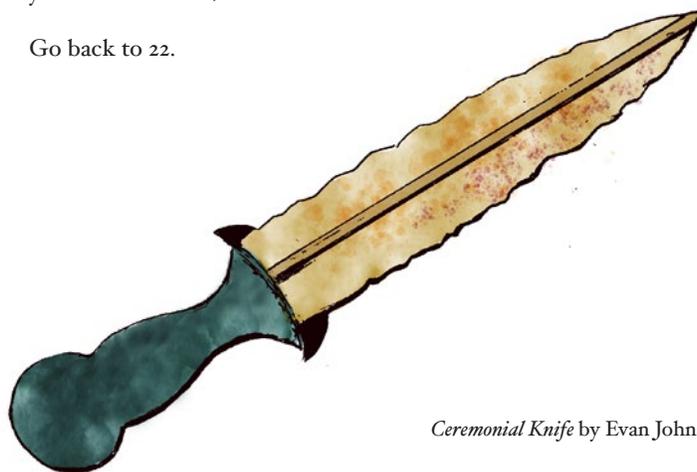
Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll higher than your Sanity, subtract 5 from it.

If you roll your Sanity or less, you hold it together despite the shock of finding the librarian's body.

You examine the body closely and see a strangely carved knife in the hand of the unfortunate librarian. (If you take the knife, add 9 whenever you want to use it.)

Go back to 22.



Ceremonial Knife by Evan Johnston

30

You shine the light in its face but that only reveals even more the insanity of it all. This inhuman beast has NO FACE and yet it comes for you! You scream in terror but are unable to move before its prehensile paws close around you, and its jagged tail tip begins to slide up your body. It is...

YOUR END

31

The Rare Books room is rarely accessed by anyone, even the librarians. Some professors are allowed access to the collection, but even they have limits. Too many strange stories about the books in this place. There are two doors in one wall, and opposite them a staircase going down.

If you go through the left door, go to 7.

If you go through the right door, go to 12.

If you go down the staircase, go to 41.

You stab crazily at the monstrosity with the knife but it slides right off of the oily blackness that is its skin. Standing so close to it, you realize you cannot escape. It reaches for you and it is...

YOUR END

33

You hurl one of the heavy books on the floor at her. It catches her in the temple and knocks her backwards. She yells in pain and anger and then begins moving her hands in a strange way. Her left hand begins to glow! "Do you want to see the true nature of power?"

If you answer yes, go to 10.

If you decide to take cover, go to 49.

34

You struggle to keep focused and ignore the terrible beast in front of you, sweat dripping off of your face onto the ancient pages held in your sweaty hands. You finish reading the twisted words but keep staring down at the tome, as you know the monster sits in the center of the room before you, barbed tail lashing the air around it, terrible paws reaching for you, faceless horned head swinging back and forth in your direction as if smelling your fear. But it is not coming forward... at least for a time.

But now you can run while it is held in place!

Go to 50.



35

The floor tilts crazily and you find yourself sliding UP the wall! Your mind twitches as reality reasserts itself in a way that defies all known physics.

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll your Sanity or less, go to 40.

If you roll above your Sanity, subtract 5 from your Sanity, and go to 46.

36

You carefully lower the lid back onto the box. There is a quiet click as it locks itself. It now seems to be safely locked away. So what are you doing on this one? Maybe some of the entry numbers got mixed up but this is not a real target number. Are you cheating? Subtract 5 from your Sanity for breaking the fourth wall.

Go to 1.

The spell rips across realities, tearing your mind asunder again. Subtract 5 from your Sanity.

If you wish to hide, go to 3.

If you wish to attack, go to 18.

38

You flash your light across the ancient books in their protective shelves, when you suddenly notice that there is a gap! One of the books is missing. You look at the section and realize it's one of the rarest books in the whole collection, the 17th century printing of the Necronomicon! The large protective case that was designed to hold the Necronomicon in place is still locked shut so that you can't quite see into the space where the book was, but somehow the book has been removed. Does anyone besides a librarian have a key?

Go back to 31.



39

The gate snaps shut as you are only partway through it. Rather than cutting you in half, your mind is split between the two realities.

Part of your mind is now free of our mundane reality, and begins a journey deep into the Dreamlands on an epic quest for your meaning.

But for the rest of your mind, trapped in our reality without your imagination, you are soon locked up in a sanitarium for your own safety, where you quietly wait out the days until...

YOUR END



by Evan Johnston

40

You are able to somehow reconcile the strangeness of what is happening to you and run along the wall that is now acting as the floor. At the far end, the gate begins to close.

If you try to jump through the gate, go to 39.

If you try to throw the amulet through instead, go to 45.

41

You step into the twisting labyrinth of the lower stacks. Cases of books rise to the ceiling in all directions, with narrow spaces to barely squeeze between the shelves laid out in a haphazard direction.

In the muffling silence of the surrounding books, you hear two noises:

The scrape of someone moving across the stone floor, and a stifled sound of pain.

If you go towards the sound of movement, go to 4.

If you go towards the sound of pain, go to 6.

If you take the north staircase up, go to 31.

If you take the west staircase up, go to 12.

If you take the south staircase up, go to 22.

If you take the east staircase up, go to 7.

42

You go through your keys until you find the old one that unlocks the protective case that should have kept the Necronomicon safe. Lying in the dust behind where the book sat on the shelf is a small scrap of paper. It seems to be old, perhaps it fell out of the book when it was picked up? In a spidery, cramped script, it reads:

“At the end or the beginning, look back at the first parts of each of your thoughts and the inner secret will be revealed.”

You put it in the pocket of your peacoat. (If you wish to use the note, add 2.) When you find the missing book, you can put it back inside for the librarians to deal with tomorrow.

Go back to 31.

43

You draw the strange knife out of your peacoat and step towards the horror, trying to keep your eyes on the ground as much as possible, to avoid looking at the deadly barbed tail, the clutching paws, the faceless oily head... but it stays before you, not fleeing nor leaping for you. Finally you stand before it, and it seems to be shaking... with anger or fear? You raise the knife high in your sweaty palms.

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll your Sanity or less, go to 13.

If you roll above your Sanity, go to 5.

44

Your gun bucks in your hand, but it misses him by a hair's width. He stops and turns back at you, fists raised.

If you threaten him with your gun, go to 25.

If you try to knock him out, go to 47.

45

The amulet flies through the gate just as it snaps shut. There is a blinding flash then you lose consciousness. When you come to, you are standing

in your supply room, getting ready to check up on the library before the end of your shift.

This is why you try not to nap on the job, such weird dreams recently.

Go to 1.

46

The floor tilts crazily and you find yourself sliding UP the wall! Your mind twitches as reality reasserts itself in a way that defies all known physics.

Make a **Sanity** check.

If you roll your Sanity or less, go to 40.

If you roll above your Sanity, subtract 5 from your Sanity, and go to 35.

47

You crash your fist into his jaw, and he falls to the ground. He stumbles back to his feet, blood trickling from his nose. “You need to do more than that to stop me!” he yells.

If you threaten him with your gun, go to 25.

If you shoot him with your gun, go to 44.

48

You shine your light around but don't see anything unusual.

Go back to 41.

49

You dive behind one of the bookcases, knocking books everywhere as you. You pick up several of them as makeshift weapons to throw. Silence descends upon the room. Then you hear her speak again. “Are you there, coward?”

If you give her time to speak, go to 10.

If you attempt to deflect her attack, go to 33.

50

You dash for the entrance, running out of the doorway into the storm outside, rain whipping across you. You know that the beast will be free soon, to hunt and grasp at prey throughout the university and the world. Perhaps someday it will come for you, having sensed your delicious terror. But for now, you have escaped, running into the night, alive in body if not wholly in mind, running into a future of nightmarish dreams and a life that always will ask the question: When will it be...

YOUR END

Going Rogue

An Interview with Rogue Cthulhu

Editor's Note: When I went to Origins Game Fair for the first time a few years ago, I signed up for lots of Call of Cthulhu games in advance. All the games seemed to be organized in a section of the convention called Cthulhuthon. When I arrived for my first game, I confusedly entered a single giant room full of tables and realized that the entire room was run by Rogue Cthulhu, a Cthulhu RPG fan group that had been putting on Cthulhu games at Origins for almost 20 years. Not only did I play in some great groups, I was really impressed by the ambiance. Much of the room was in shadows with only little lights on the tables, and there was a giant bloody sheet covered in spiders hanging on the wall for my first game in a spidery mental hospital, where we were all given hospital gowns to wear. In another game where we played cultists, we were given one of the best props I've ever seen, a gigantic tome of insanity that most of us spent the whole game finding more clues inside of. But what impressed me most was how welcoming the Rogue Cthulhu group was (confession: I now run games for Rogue Cthulhu!), so I wanted to interview them to get some more background. Three of the ringleaders agreed to do a joint interview: Byron Wingate, Matt McCloud, and Angela Souders. Thanks, Rogue Cthulhu!



game with some friends. I had only played *AD&D*, *Gangbusters*, and *Marvel Superheroes* at the time, so I was intrigued. We got our characters and I was just a average citizen. I died horribly but it was fun. Unfortunately, it would be another 26 years before I was able to run my own games.

So what is Rogue Cthulhu, and how did it start?

ANGELA: Ok, so our boss will tell you the lengthy version, but I shall keep it short and sweet. Back before I was ever there (so they say ^_^) there were some GMs who wanted to break away from a group they were in to do right by the players. They wanted the games to be meticulously planned, the GMs to be experienced and skilled, they wanted the best of the best for the people who would pay money to play games at cons. So – THEY WENT ROGUE – and broke away calling themselves – Yes! You guessed it! ROGUE CTHULHU! That hap-

pened 20 years ago and well, we are still here, so I guess we're doing something right! ^_^.

Let's start with your first exposure to Cthulhu roleplaying games.

Angela Souders: I first encountered the *Call of Cthulhu* RPG in the mid-1980s. I was already involved in RPGs (had been a GM since 1972), so I tried lots of different games. It just so happened that *CoC* was gaining popularity, so I tried it, too. In fact, I had the rare pleasure of spending an entire day with Sandy Petersen and his family. He was going to be in the area and looked me up to show him around my historic neighborhood. I was at a con where Sandy Petersen was a guest, I had a brief conversation about where I was from. I live in Hagerstown, Maryland. It's basically a stone's throw away from the Antietam Battlefield and many towns and landmarks of the Civil War. While having our brief chat, I mentioned how I gave ghost tours at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, (about 25 minutes from my home). It whet his whistle and the next thing you know, we're making plans for me to give him and his family a personal tour.

Matt McCloud: Probably the first exposure was seeing the Cthulhu Mythos in the *Deities & Demigods* book long, long ago. They were so weird looking! That got me interested in Chaosium games.

Byron Wingate: My first exposure to *Call of Cthulhu* was in the summer of 1985, yeah, that was a while ago. I was asked to go and play a



The darkened room full of games (note the bloody sheet!)

MATT: Rogue Cthulhu basically got started by a bunch of *Call of Cthulhu* fans that didn't want to run their games in the "established format" that was set up by certain conventions and publishers many moons ago. We firmly believe in begging for forgiveness rather than asking for permission, so far it's worked and our fans love us for it.

BYRON: Boy, this is a killer question. I will give you the abbreviated version since the long version would likely take up a ton a space. In 1996, a group of friends, the founding fathers of Rogue Cthulhu, attended Origins for the very first time. *Call of Cthulhu* was a game all loved to play but rarely had the chance. When they saw the games on the schedule, they signed up for all of them. Unfortunately, the games were either poorly run or in many cases the Game Masters no showed. When they complained about the events the management just shooed them away. They left disheartened to say the least. In 1997 they returned, hoping to play some *Call of Cthulhu*. The events of 1996 transpired again. This infuriated them. But saving hope, tried one final time in 1998 to find satisfaction. The third time yielded the same results, they were not the only players which felt that way. There were a good many others that shared their dismay. That was the last straw. They had come prepared. When the games went south and the Game Master no showed. They had brought their own events. They commandeered the tables and ran their games for the players. They had finally gotten the results they planned, by doing it themselves. Upon returning from Origins in 1998 they decided to start Rogue Cthulhu. They partnered with Chaosium right away and brought the first Rogue Show to Origins Game Fair in 1999. It was 30 games run by 4 GMs. It was intense, and very successful. That was Rogue's start. If you want to read the long version, go to our old website RogueCthulhu.com and read the Manifesto. It explains it all.

Fast forward to 2018 and we not only continue to bring the best *Call of Cthulhu* events, but we have grown to over 40 game masters and 186 events, we have satellite groups in Kentucky, Maryland/West Virginia, Buffalo, NY, and some solo GMs that hit cons on their own.

Then who were the founding fathers of Rogue Cthulhu? Are any of them still involved today?

BYRON: The founding fathers were Jeff Rhodes, Marx Stead, Mike Haslar, and Donald Johnson. I am afraid that they went their own ways

long ago and are no longer involved. However, a little bird told me that some of them may make an appearance at the 20th anniversary show at Origins Game Fair in 2019.

How did you meet each other?

MATT: I was running a couple games independently at Origins and I'm a really intense DM with a loud voice that gets attention. I kept seeing these guys ducking their heads into the room and watching me while I ran the game. After that they asked me over and that was the beginning!

BYRON: Well, I grew up playing with the founders of Rogue Cthulhu in Junior High School. But I joined Rogue in 2011.

ANGELA: I was simply a con attendee and found myself spending a lot of time in the Rogue Cthulhu room at Origins. (This was my first time at Origins – I used to go to GenCon.) After I returned home, I got online and starting sending e-mails to tell the powers-that-be I wanted in. Long story short – here I am!

What is your position in Rogue Cthulhu, or what do you contribute? Who else is involved?

BYRON: Well, my position I would effectively call head cat wrangler, LOL. I am the President of Rogue Cthulhu. The other board members are Tom Arnott (Vice President), Matt McCloud (Promoter and Event Coordinator), Josh Langley (Planning), and a new member to the board, but that is for a later announcement. We could not run our group without the 40 plus Game Masters and eight admin staff members. It's no small cookie.

MATT: I'm the de facto face/PR/cheerleader. I'm at a lot of cons throughout the year and love to spread the word of our lord and savior Cthulhu and by proxy, our group.

ANGELA: Position? Hmm. Well, I am a secret Administrator for the Facebook page. I run all the available slots (including the LARP) every year at Origins. I run around 4 games at local shops monthly, I attend local Cons to represent the Maryland satellite group for the team, I bring bodies and supplies to help set up at Origins – I am now the Keeper of the Mr. 'C' (the inflatable Cthulhu), I write my own modules, I help run Chaosium's RC offering each year. Ummm, ask Byron, he keeps track of me more than I do. What else do I do, Byron? Oh, yes, that's right. I am known as Angela "The Beast" Souders – that title given to me by Byron, who says that I just won't stop and put the young ones to shame.

Angela, you run all available slots and the LARP at Origins? How many is that total on average each year? Gotta impress the kids!

ANGELA: It's 12 slots if you count the LARP. There are 2 on Wednesday, 3 on Thursday, 3 on Friday, 3 on Saturday, and then the LARP which technically is on Sunday at 12 AM. It's a total of 48 hours of GMing in 4



"Mr. C" waits for all who enter the Rogue Cthulhu room

days. That's why they call me "the Beast". (I do take Sunday off to shop!)

Byron, how did you get selected to become President in 2011?

BYRON: In 2010, I was recruited by then-head of Rogue Cthulhu Marx Stead to come onboard and help grow the show. While Rogue Cthulhu was doing well, there was just not much growth and we still had big plans. In 2014, I started helping with scheduling and wrangling GMs for submissions along with meeting and helping recruit new GMs. We added a few more and the seeds we planted started to grow. In those days we only had one guy doing everything logistically, but with growth comes a greater need for a team of people. I began to take a more active role and grew Rogue Cthulhu to take on a few other cons. I was really the only person with the knowledge to schedule things, email contacts and files. In 2016, when the head of Rogue stepped away, the position just kind of fell in my lap. I embraced the challenge but knew I would need a support staff. Lucky for me, I had a few ambitious GMs in the background. Tom Arnott, Matt McCloud, Josh Langley all stepped up to help run the organization and the rest is recent history. We now are bigger than ever with shows a multiple cons in a few states, with big plans for 2019. Who knows, we may even head to GenCon!!

Since 2019 is the 20th anniversary of Rogue Cthulhu, do you have anything special planned?

MATT: We are pulling out all the stops for this coming con. We have been inviting other GMs to come run with us in our room even if it's not strictly Cthulhu, like Eric Bloat's fantastic games *SURVIVE THIS!! Zombies!* and *SURVIVE THIS!! Dark Places & Demogorgons*, as well as a full LARP-style invitation that will knock your eyes out. More surprises are on the



Byron Wingate (standing) rolls someone's doom

way but it's still in the planning stages.

ANGELA: Oh, I know Byron does, but as for me – absolutely – the LARP. This one will be like no other. Twenty years deserves something that will knock it out of the park. Oh, you just wait.... (evil grin) ... you just wait.

I have only run 2 of them so far – *The Next Sacrifice* and *Cruise*. Byron has given me the go-ahead to do 2019's LARP as well. I take up to 30 players and each has a bio unique to them. It runs about 3 hours, but people linger for an hour afterward just to talk about it in a round robin, usually. And, of course, there is a grand prize we give out for the one who did the best roleplaying based on the judges' decision.

BYRON: We have many things planned. At this time many are still in planning so can't let the cat out of the bag yet. But watch our Facebook page and be on the look out for our new website.

I met you at Origins, but what cons does Rogue Cthulhu set up at?

ANGELA: Well, need to clarify that. You see, as a satellite RC member, there are LOTS of cons we do where we live – and in turn – each arm of the team has their own areas where they do this. Though our HQ is in Ohio, RC is spread all over the country. I'll let Byron bring you up to speed on all the states we are in. In the meantime, some of them you may recognize from the Rogue Cthulhu Facebook page are - Origins, Con on the Cob, GHD Gaming Con, Imaginarium, etc. - As for the ones I frequent (other than Origins) they are as follows: 1D4 Con, Euroquest, Congress of Gamers, Westminster Gamers, etc. Of course, in addition to the cons, I also run events at local stores at least several times a month for RC.

MATT: Where two or three are gathered together, there we may be also. :) Officially Origins is our main con, but we are also in Louisville at Conglomeration and Nerdlouvia, GenCon, sometimes at MACE... it depends on who's available at what con.

BYRON: Our main digs are Origins Game Fair in Columbus, Ohio, Con on the Cob in Richfield, Ohio, Groundhog Gaming Retreat in Hudson, Ohio, 1d4 Con in Martinsburg, West Virginia. We also have GMs that attend PAX East, Queen City Gamefest, GenCon, Conglomeration, Cincity con, Lexicon, Congress of Gamers, Running GAGG, and even some other cons.



Angela Souders (behind screen) prepares to unleash the horror

How did the Cthulhuthon at Origins Game Fair get started?

BYRON: Origins just decided to have one. Unfortunately, the groups in charge of it slowly dissolved and we were pretty much the Cthulhuthon. In 2019 we will be attempting to resurrect it and get it going on the proper course, assuming Origins allows us to have control of it.

Oh, I thought that was yours from the start! What was the initial response to Rogue Cthulhu from Chaosium? Did that change over time? When did they start offering prize support?

ANGELA: More Byron stuff, though some of it I know. It DID change over time for the better, actually. The prize support was these past two years mostly. Before that, we bought it, created it or had it donated.



The best roleplayer in each game gets to pick an item from the prize support table

BYRON: They loved the fact that Rogue wanted to run games. The relationship was rocky over the years, but today we have a great partnership with them. All the guys at Chaosium are great and super attentive, especially Todd Gardiner, Dustin Wright, and Rick Meints. In 2018 we took over running all Cthulhu demos for them at Origins and it went great.

How do you screen Game Masters to run games for Rogue Cthulhu? What are you looking for in a good Game Master? I heard you've had to let some Game Masters go from Rogue Cthulhu. What causes you to decide to remove a Game Master?

ANGELA: Not my territory. (shudders) Please don't sacrifice me. I'll be good, I swear...

MATT: Most often one of our fans recommends a GM that might be a good fit for the group. They know our style. Our most important trait we look for in a GM is can they control the table and are the players having fun. That's tops. Then, the player has to run an interesting game that keeps the players interest—without violating players' sensibilities (which can be difficult in some of the eras that are played). If the GM fails to meet these criteria, we will coach them. If that doesn't work, they are not invited back as part of Rogue Cthulhu.

BYRON: Well, a few questions in this one. Screening begins with either someone approaching us to be involved, or if we find someone in our journey that we feel has what it takes, we may approach them.

What are we looking for? Passion for the game above all else. If you don't want to be doing it, you will suck at it. Can they command the table? Are all the players involved or do they just show attention to the stronger players? Are the players in their games having fun, I mean that is why they are playing, right?

We have had to let a few Game Masters go, feedback is an important two-way street. You must listen to your players and take it to heart. Game Masters with passion for the game, appreciate it, those who don't, tend not to listen or understand it. We strive very hard to go the first route, when that fails, it's time to part ways.

As con veterans, what are the hardest problems about running a Cthulhu gaming room at a con?

MATT: Honestly, I always feel it's hardest for us to strike the right atmosphere in the room. If it is too noisy, the players can't hear what's going on. If we make it too dark to set the mood, the players can't read their sheets and handouts. And always, trying to strike the right relationship with the con staff is always a concern.

BYRON: Timing is the most important factor. The game must fit in the parameters of time set for it. You can't run a massive campaign, well one of our GMs (Preston Becker) would disagree. He runs it over several sessions though. Pacing is a must! Playtesting and collaboration with other GMs when writing a new scenario are two other key factors when designing a con game. I hope to write an article on this later.

ANGELA: This answer will be from MY perspective and won't necessarily speak for the powers-that-be. Organization is very important. The admins (the ones who sit at the desk and help people when they come in) fulfill an important job. They need to know where, who, what, and how at all times. They are our gofers, our saviors, our connection to the pulse of the room. We need to know which tables to go to, report any problems, the list goes on. Without enough of them, we would be in a discombobulated mess. Other than that, handling all the different personalities is always a challenge. It's like being a conductor – you have to coax some to participate, while trying to tone down the ones that want to take over. As everyone knows, I always up for that challenge! ^_^



Some important admin work: table assignments with players per available slots

What was the best moment in Rogue Cthulhu history?

MATT: The moment they asked me to come aboard! :)

BYRON: Well, for me, I would say my first year in charge (2016) and the completion of our Origins show this year. Running 186 events and 2 LARPs was crazy but we did it.

ANGELA: That I know? In the last 5 years I have been a part of it, I feel strongly the connection we made with Chaosium recently has been the shot in the arm we needed to see another 20 years come to fruition. That's my opinion.

What was the worst moment in Rogue Cthulhu history?

MATT: The moment they asked me to come aboard!



Matt McCloud (center behind screen) laughs diabolically

BYRON: We have had a few hiccups over the years, I like to look forward so don't like to relive those much.

ANGELA: You know, there have been some sad and frustrating moments. I will only share one of them I experienced with the team. We lost one of our members – she passed away. We set up a memorial for her and paid her respects. Though, it was extremely solemn, we got through it. I don't think anybody in RC will forget – no, not ever.

Time for tips! What is your best advice for writing and running a game at a con? What pitfalls should you avoid?

ANGELA: Ah, you sneak – that's TWO questions! Ok, first one – advice, eh? Easy – and yet not – PREPARE. When you write a story, there are unwritten rules you should follow. Some of them are obvious. For instance, keep it simple. It has to fit into 4 hours so don't overdo it. Another suggestion is to do research on the time period, the locale, the history – in other words – DO YOUR HOMEWORK! The list goes on but you get the idea. Question #2 – (she hears the Pitfall music play and envisions that little guy swinging out over the alligator-filled pit) Lots of pitfalls – drive carefully – here are some. When you have too many NPCs, when you have too many places to visit in the scenario, when you don't provide character sheets and expect them to integrate theirs, when you don't make certain everyone gets a chance to talk by calling out the quiet ones (yay for initiative), when you write a story that has no climax OR one that has a climax they may never reach, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

MATT: Run your game before you play it at the con. Run it several times. Make sure your timing is right, and you consistently hit the lows and climaxes at the right time. Playtesting is essential. Do not READ your scenario to the players. It's alright if there you want to read aloud a brief description or setting or make sure you get an NPC's speech right, but often, if you wing it, you'll find improvisation sparks much more excitement.

BYRON: Well, I pretty much hit the high points in the previous question. My advice is first, if you are thinking about giving it a try, DO IT!!! The feeling when that game goes off well is amazing. Second, don't try to make it huge. Invest in great characters, write at least half a page background for each them. Make the story about them, and of course the Mythos. Invest time in props (handouts, pictures, maps, physical props).

Extra question 1: What is your favorite Cthulhu adventure, and/or your favorite adventure that you wrote?

ANGELA: *Masks of Nyarlathotep*. Wrote? *Gulag 6* (1947 - Siberia - You not only face the horrors of a Gulag (a Russian concentration camp), but something more sinister) or *After the Prom* (2014 - You remember that scary house - you took a dare and someone died. Who found out? Someone knows. Now you must return.) I can't decide.

BYRON: I would say *Cold Case* (Taking an elective could be fun? Investigate a murder unsolved for years. Cement your names in history or just become another cold case!). I made some killer props. I have run it about ten times and each one is great. Favorite I played: man there are sooo many great games I have played. I guess I would have to say *Beasts of Gévaudan*. It was a scenario Bridgett Jeffries wrote that is about the events of the movie *Brotherhood of the Wolf*. I had always wanted to write one in that period, so getting to playtest this great scenario was exciting and fun.

MATT: Honestly, I get a lot of mileage out of *The Vault* (You've found the location of a vault thought to contain a hoard of gold. You gather at the door to unearth the riches within. Your pulse quickens...). It's hands down the scariest game I ever ran.

Extra question 2: What was the best/worst thing that ever happened to one of your characters in a Cthulhu game?

MATT: I don't play much, I tend to just run. I'm a horrible player. But the worst thing I think ever happened to one of my players, and it happened twice in *The Vault*, is the player's character chose to commit suicide. Two separate occasions. It's THAT grim.

ANGELA: One of MY characters, huh? Well, there was this fire my character set to burn the building down since there was a monster in it. Along with many of us in the party, we were horribly charred for our efforts. However, that very night – I swear I had nothing to do with this – the building next door to us actually burned down. FOR REAL! Freaky – and scary – to say the least.

BYRON: This is a tricky one. I guess it would have to be in a multi-table game called *Welcome to the Jungle*. The characters swap dimensions with an alternate version of themselves, if that had made different choices in life. In one life, the chemist had killed his family by getting high on his own supply. He then went to an alternate dimension where his family was still alive. He purposely sabotaged the end of the game, so he could remain in the alternate dimension to be with his family.

Extra question 3: What was the funniest thing that ever happened to one of your characters in a Cthulhu game?

ANGELA: Oh, heck, that's easy. I got to scare the bananas out of someone in the party. They had apparently been hanging on my every word while I was telling this creepy tale (in character). When suddenly, from somewhere nearby (for real), someone outside blew an air horn. The guy who was glued to my story fell backward in his chair. It startled him so badly, but I kept going in character and made it part of the roleplay. We all had a laugh.

BYRON: I was running *100akre Wood*, my Winnie the Pooh mash up game. The bad guide did the Thanos snap on Roo and half of his torso vanished. Kanga had been decapitated but they had her body. The idea that Pooh and Piglet had, was to sew the upper half of Roo to the lower half of Kanga. They were going to call it... wait for it... "Kanga/roo". Dolt!

MATT: We were playing my Jonny Quest/Cthulhu mashup, and the person playing Dr. Quest asked the Hadji's character to get their friend's suitcases. We just looked at him stunned. Then fell over laughing.

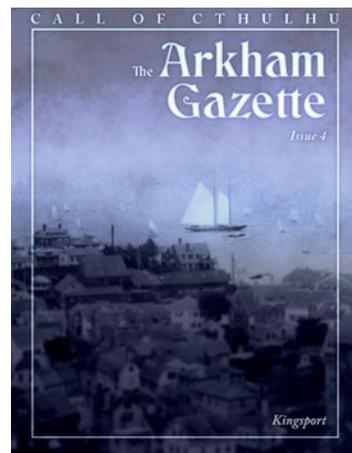
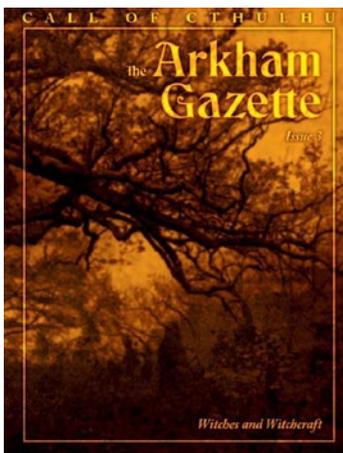
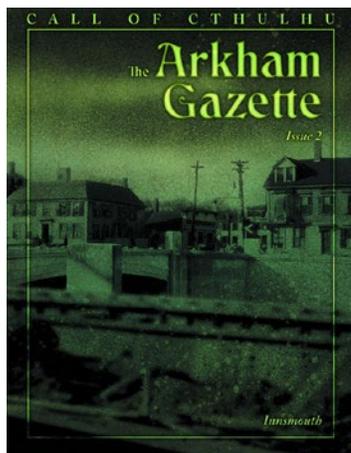
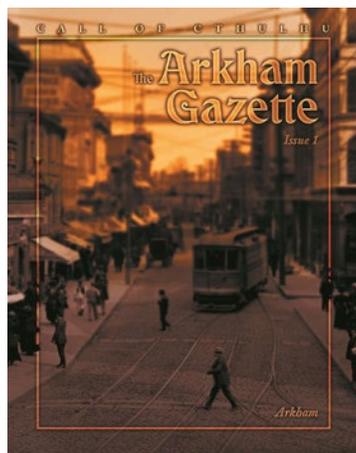
Extra question 4: What's the best/worst way you've ever killed a character or driven them insane in a Cthulhu game you ran?

ANGELA: LOL. Death by math. See, this guy thought he could read some math (involving dimensions) so he looked at the paper with the math on it. I had him roll the dice – and BAM! 100% - as critical a fail as there ever was. So, I slowly and methodically described his death. It began with the meaning of life, the universe and everything manifest before him. For a split second in time, he became omniscient. All of the mysteries of the universe were open to him. His brain tried to hold this newfound epiphany but his pathetic human fleshly brain could not handle its new contents. Kaboom! – His head exploded over everyone in the party. Brain mist, blood, headless body spurting blood (ah, the joy of it all) – Can we say Sanity check?

MATT: Well, in the way I was talking about with the characters who chose suicide, one shot himself, the other smashed a bunch of glass bearers and swallowed them. In front of everyone.

BYRON: The three worst deaths were a player was running an FBI SAC officer in *Among the Ashes* and he rolled two critical fumbles back to back and the magazine of his M16 blew his face off. The other one was I killed four players in *End of the Stair* due to them failing mountain climbing rolls. This year at Origins, I was running *Searching for the Rbeingold* and a soldier managed to stuff a primed stick grenade into his backpack strap and no one noticed. Killed the whole party at the last moment of the game, but hey, they got the bad guys that were chasing them, too! Win-win.

You can find more information about Rogue Cthulhu at facebook.com/RogueCthulhu/ RogueCthulhu.com



The Arkham Gazette

The Magazine of Lovecraft Country for the Call of Cthulhu RPG



Issue 1 - Arkham

Issue 2 - Innsmouth

Issue 3 - Witches and Witchcraft

Issue 4 - Kingsport (COMING SOON)

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jensine

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character creation



so i'm this mom, right? you know, horror movie mom, like in Hereditary. she's stuck at home with a new baby, going a bit stir crazy.



so one day her older daughter comes home from school singing this weeeeird little song like, over and over. i ask "where did you hear that song" the daughter looks at the mom like she's nuts.



"what, everybody knows this song! it's a nursery rhyme, it's everywhere."

not only can she not remember the song from childhood, it sounds alien, uncanny. she seeks out the origin of the song relentlessly, until--



i'm guessing this song is cursed? or your child's been cursed?

yeah, something like that, or maybe I'm cursed. i don't know, actually... can I go on an adventure with an infant attached to me?

we can create stats for it, for sure.

i dunno... i can see myself being the mom in some ways



i could definitely be the kid too



Harlem Renaissance

An Interview with Chris Spivey

Editor's Note: One of the most interesting finds in my excursions into Cthulhuiana was the recent release of Harlem Unbound from Darker Hue Studios. The bulk of the book is taken up by the campaign setting of Harlem, New York City, in the 1920s during the Harlem Renaissance, filled with vibrant characters and places (historical and not), and a deep background of the area and the people who formed it. Most fascinating to me was the focus on both dealing with the racism inherent in the Lovecraft's source material for Cthulhu RPGs, and the historical racism of the 1920s, including a section on how to play minority characters, and how to make racist obstacles part of gameplay. I started following Darker Hue Studios after that, and realized that this was their first release, although founder Chris Spivey had worked on many other games for other companies over the years. I approached him about this interview, but I was also lucky enough to get to play in a new scenario run by Chris himself at GenCon this year, "In the Shadow of Harlem", where our ill-suited investigators attempted to help deal with the aftermath of a boy getting killed when he was struck by a car. That proved terribly difficult when most of the racist police wouldn't help us (at best). I think saying things ended poorly is not a bad summation. Thanks, Chris!



Harlem Unbound with its three ENnie Awards

First, congratulations on winning three ENnie Awards and an Indie Groundbreaker Award at GenCon 2018, as well as Chaosium announcing they will republish Harlem Unbound in a new expanded second edition!

Harlem Unbound, your award-nominated and award-winning RPG supplement, focuses on the Harlem Renaissance in 1920s New York City, combining an impressively in-depth historical background with Cthulhu Mythos gaming. Rather than ignoring the racism inherent in a lot of Lovecraft's works, or the "white man savior complex" in a lot of 1920s Cthulhu adventures, you flip the equation on its head. You both encourage playing minority characters and People of Color, and include sections on both dealing with the racism endemic to the time and how to roleplay minorities sensitively. I thought this was one of the most interesting parts of the book, and a much needed addition to roleplaying in general.

What's been the reaction to Harlem Unbound from players and other creators?

Chris Spivey: The responses have been mostly positive and I've heard a lot of comments like, "about time someone did this." I'll focus on those comments about it. People seem to have really been wanting a book like this, something that did not shy away from the topic of racism. As an African American author who has lived with racism -- both overt and subtle -- I bring an important perspective to these stories that needed to be shared. I'm proud to have been able to shine a light on history and also on how gamers can approach what can be difficult topics.



Chris Spivey

Have you seen Harlem Unbound making any inroads into diversifying the largely white gaming audience or welcoming in minority gamers?

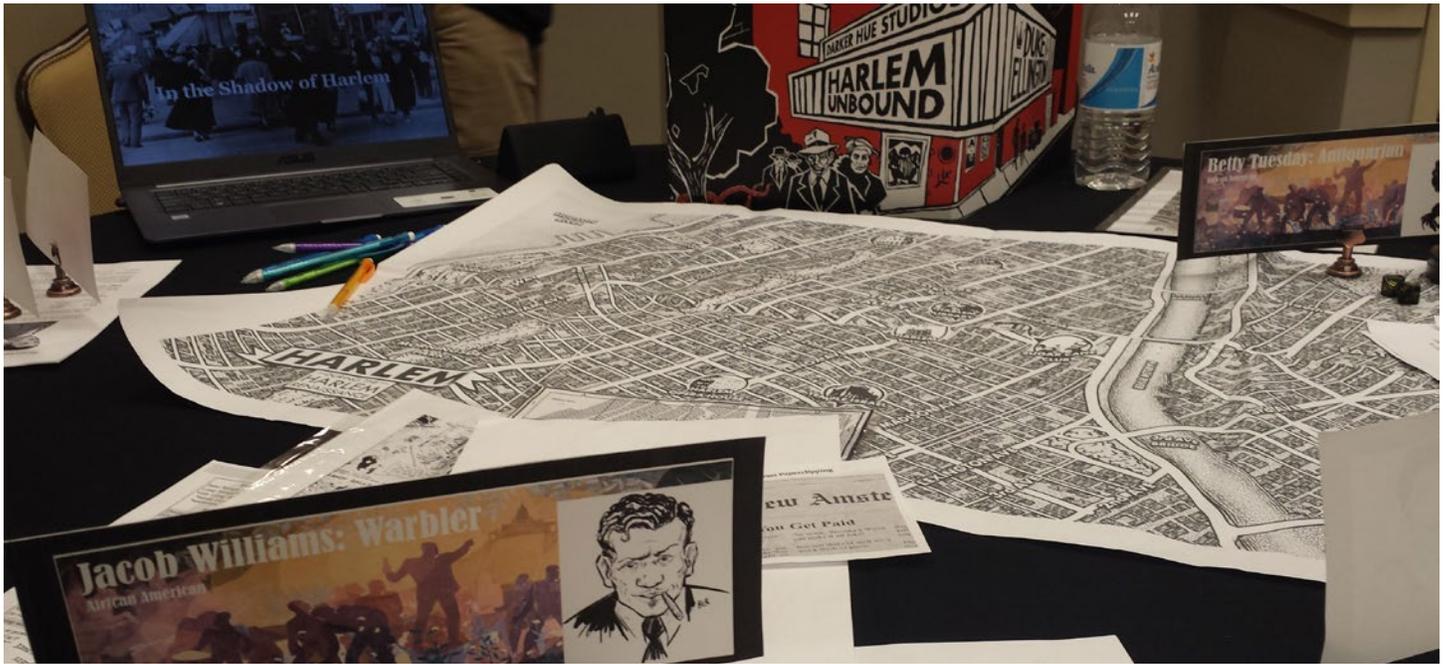
CHRIS: It's great to hear about people playing the game. For instance, Anyone Comics in New York has held multiple *Harlem Unbound* game days with scores of people from very different backgrounds coming to play. They just finished a seven-ish week campaign that I am looking forward to hearing more about.

You've also been hired by Chaosium to produce a new science fiction RPG line using their Basic Role-Playing system that form the *RuneQuest* and *Call of Cthulhu* rules. Any tidbits you can tell us about what you have planned?

CHRIS: The Call for Creatives is still open and will be until November. Other than that, all I can say is it's an idea I have had for years. I even did a small test of concept a while back and I'm excited to be able to execute it on a larger scale.

RPGs can be great tools for empathy with other players or even the idea of "the other," but the grounded characters in Cthulhu games often lack a cool hook like having a gun or psychic powers. What makes a compelling character for you, or at least a character you learn from as you play?

CHRIS: For me, it's not the hook that makes the character cool. It's the character, their story and the struggle associated with overcoming obstacles. Those obstacles are what people learn from or how they gain an insight into what other people endure. Look at *Harlem Unbound*; I have had people tell me they never even considered what it would be like for a black person to enter a police station to search for clues about a case or talk to a detective. Instead, they found themselves actively avoiding that engagement and that obstacle has now seeded itself.



The spread of photo references, map of Harlem, newspaper clippings, characters, and screen from Chris Spivey's In the Shadow of Harlem scenario

RPGs, in my opinion, are one of the best mediums to create empathy and understanding between people. For a brief window of time, a player steps into the role of someone else, thinking and acting like that person. The challenge of trying to live that life impacts people and they will tell other people about what they did. They may also convince other people to come and play the game. The Keeper will run that game for droves of people and they will talk about it. It's a "lived" moment of change and can have a lasting positive impact.

Harlem Unbound was a successful [Kickstarter](#) in January 2017. So many new gaming projects succeed through crowdfunding now, but it is also easy to miss the window in which games are announced (which is what happened to me, but I was able to order a copy of Harlem Unbound through your company website). What was the most successful part of the Harlem Unbound Kickstarter, and what unexpected problems came up from or because of it? Do you have any advice for other creators using crowdfunding for their projects?

CHRIS: The most successful part of the Kickstarter was that it happened. I know now that it sounds crazy to think it would not have been funded but look at it. Multiple companies had passed on the idea. I was a guy no one knew, I didn't have any connections, and I was directly tackling Lovecraft and racism. I am still blown away that it raised nearly 800% more than what I asked for.

My greatest bane, and I believe of most indie publishers, is shipping. The sanity shattering cost of international shipping, to be specific. For instance, shipping the book to some locations cost more than the book itself. It would have been cheaper for me to fly overseas with suitcases filled with the book and have an international signing than what shipping cost, and likely a lot more fun. I still don't have a great answer for this one other than: find a distributor. Eventually someone (thanks, Steve Segedy) introduced me to IPR and they now handle the shipping and have *Harlem Unbound* in stores overseas.

My advice for other creatives is: do it. Don't wait for someone to tell you it's okay, or offer to help you, or put it on hold. I did that for a bit and see that it was a mistake. It'll be scary to go it alone but you can do it with a plan, a few people you trust to tell you when you're going off the map and a dedication to see it to the end of the road. If you do a Kickstarter, get it super funded, and people love the idea, that is, at-best, a third of the way. It's that other 66% that's the toughest. At the end of the day, no one is going to have the passion or love for what you're doing other than you. If you want it done right, just do it.

Your relatively-new company has received a lot of attention with the success of Harlem Unbound, which is only your first project. What do you see as the near future for Darker Hue Studios, and what are your long term plans?

CHRIS: I have lot of plans. I am kind of an idea factory but it's the execution that matters.

Right now, I am focused on the modern day superhero *Pulp Cthulhu* campaign and the upcoming science fiction line for Chaosium, both of which have me psyched and pleased that I am able to add my own sensibilities to the genres. I may also have a top five Darker Hue Studios projects list sitting on my hard drive with some basic project plans outlined. But we will have to wait and see...

You can find more information about Darker Hue Studios and Chris at:

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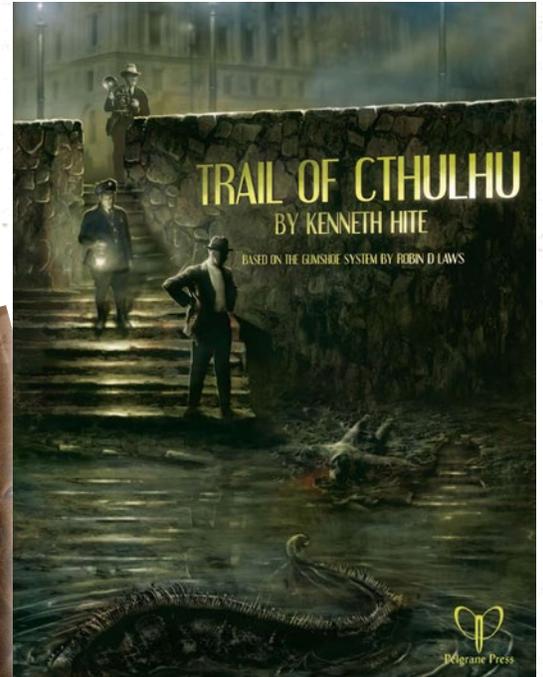
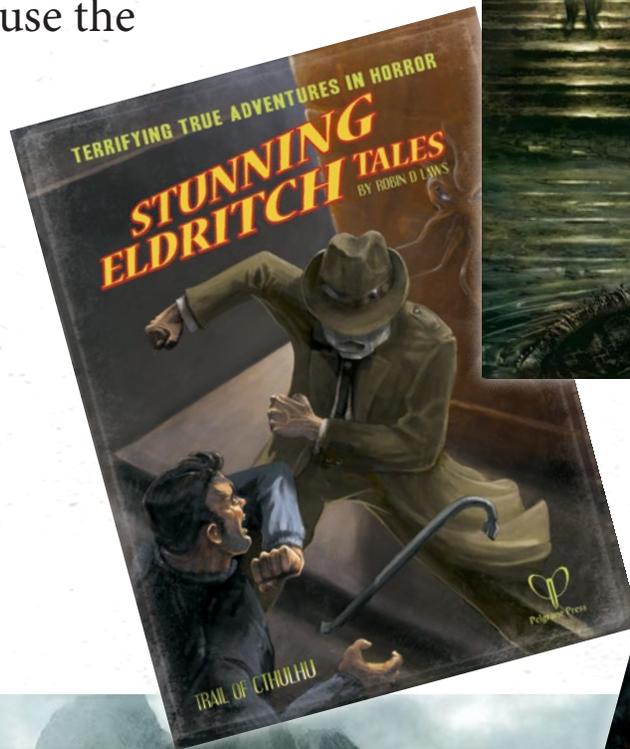
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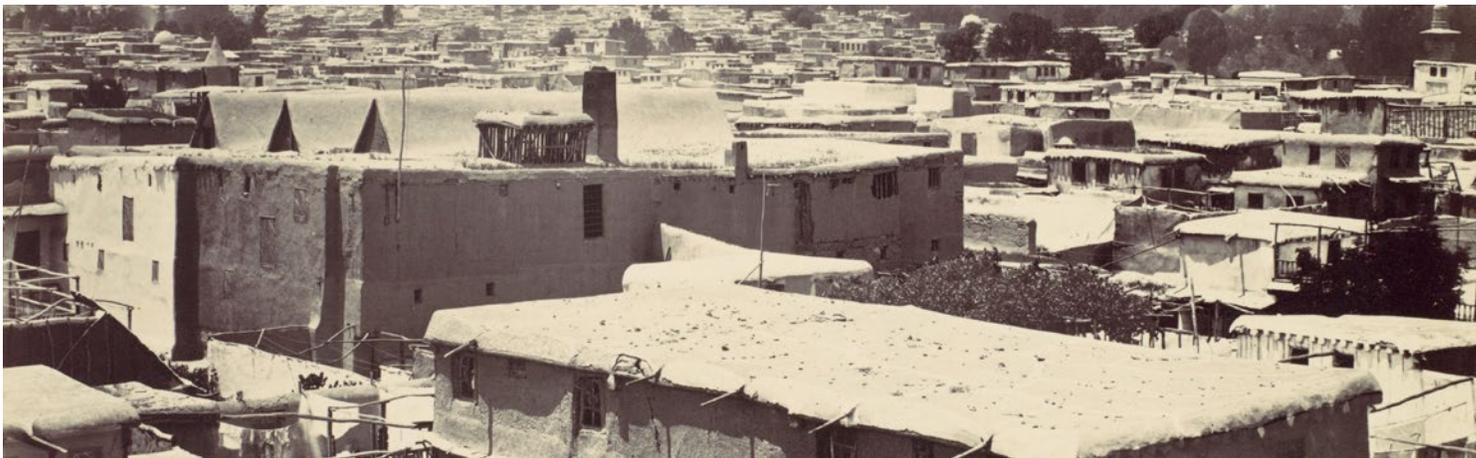
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Run for it!

Random Tables for Chases



All too often, investigators dash across towns just steps ahead of vengeful extradimensional hounds, or attempt to run down an escaping cultist. The 7th edition *Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook* added a whole chapter on chases, with a lot of good hazards for cars, but not as many for on foot. If a sudden chase develops, here are some tables to roll for random hazards and barriers, and to allow for scrambling up or down fire escapes, switching from rooftop, to street, and back. Plus a few unlucky results if you roll too high!

The rulebook suggests using a series of dots for locations, but that works best when running or driving in a straight line. You can use a map of a building or set of city blocks to do the same thing, which also gives more options to the players. Should they escape down the alley, or try to get into the house, or run across the lawn? Do you take the door, the hallway further into the house, or run up the stairs?

Running a Chase

To run a random chase, follow these steps:

1. How many exits to new locations?
2. Is the exit clear or is there an obstacle?
3. If there is an obstacle, what type: Hazard or barrier?
4. What is the obstacle?

Exits

The simplest option is to have only one exit to the next location. In a car, this is driving down the road, in a house this is the other door in the room, and so on. A **Spot Hidden** roll could notice an extra exit, such as a narrow alley or a door behind a curtain, but the biggest risk in a chase is the time spent looking for an extra exit! If you are using a location map, just use the exits marked. If you want to determine this randomly, use this table:

Number of Exits

01-60.	One
61-85.	Two
86-95.	Three
96-100.	None! The pursued spends a movement point to exit the dead end back to the previous location.

Next, the Keeper should roll randomly to see if there is an obstacle between each location in a chase. Roll on the chart below, if a 60 or lower is rolled the way to the next location is clear, otherwise there is an obstacle, with higher rolls affecting how difficult the obstacle is. Rolls only need to

be made for exits that can be seen. For example, if there are 3 doors out of a room, only roll for the one the character tries to open. But if there are 3 windows out of the room, you will have to roll for each - assuming the character spends time to look out of each, which may cost them a movement point!

Clear or Obstacle?

01-60.	Clear
61-85.	Regular obstacle
86-95.	Hard obstacle
96-100.	Extreme obstacle

Next, the player makes a **Luck** roll, with a success indicating it is only a hazard, while a failed roll is a barrier. This applies whether the player is being chased or chasing someone, sometimes the players catch a lucky break and the cultist they are chasing gets stopped by a locked door!

Hazard or Barrier?

Player Luck roll:
Success = Hazard
Failure = Barrier

Then look on the charts on the next page for the location, and roll to see what kind of hazard or barrier it is. After each entry is the skill to avoid or get around the hazard or barrier. Don't forget the level of success needed!

Here's an example. Bilal is being chased by a cultist on the streets of Washington DC and is looking for a way to get off the main street. The Keeper rolls for exits and gets a 64, two exits. She decides the building nearby also has a side alley. Bilal decides to run into the building, and the Keeper rolls on the **Clear or Obstacle?** chart above, getting a 87. Bilal's player then rolls his Luck and succeeds, so it is a only hazard, not a barrier.

The Keeper then rolls on the **Interior Hazards** chart and gets a 22, Fragile Furniture. Poor Bilal finds the front room of the house is full of chairs and tables covered in delicate china and crystal. He rolls his DEX roll, needing a Hard success, and fails! He falls over a table, breaking it and all the finery atop it, taking 1D3 damage of bruises, splinters, and cuts in the process, but he gets to exit to the next location.

Since Bilal is trying to move as quickly as he can to escape, he doesn't want to waste time looking around, so the Keeper says he only sees a door going deeper into the house. The Keeper rolls again on the **Clear or Obstacle?** chart, and gets a 42, so there is nothing stopping Bilal

from getting to the next location. He runs through the door and finds himself in a stairwell. Going up the staircase, the Keeper rolls again since Bilal is leaving the “stairwell” location and entering the “roof” location. She gets another “Clear” result and Bilal exits safely onto the roof.

Bilal decides to try to make it to the roof of a nearby building. Since there are two buildings connected to the one he entered, and Bilal can see onto the other roofs, the Keeper rolls twice. The first roll is a 99, an Extreme result! Bilal makes his **Luck** roll on that and so the Keeper rolls a hazard for the first roof, a 72 for a barking dog. She then rolls again for the second roof and gets a 62, but Bilal makes his **Luck** roll, so it is a Regular Hazard. Rolling on the **Rootop Hazards** chart, the Keeper gets a 32, the new roof is covered in someone’s laundry drying on ropes.

Bilal decides the sound of that barking dog is worrisome enough to try the second roof instead, and he only needs a regular DEX roll to weave through all the sheets and clothes, which he easily makes. If he had gone to the first roof, Bilal would have needed Extreme **Dodge** or **Fight** rolls to get past the dog.

Bilal decides to head back to the street. He enters the new building and with another “Clear” on the **Clear or Obstacle?** chart he gets down to the ground floor. He sees a door and exits back onto the street but the Keeper rolls a 97 on the **Street Hazards** chart... a second cultist has been assigned to wait in the street and watch for him! The chase continues with the new cultist in hot pursuit, but hopefully the first cultist is delayed by a ferocious dog on the roof.

Interior Hazards

- 01-20. Furniture (DEX)
- 21-40. Fragile furniture (DEX: 1D3 damage)
- 41-55. Cluttered (Climb, Jump, STR 5 hit points)
- 56-70. Holes in floor (DEX: 1D6 damage)
- 71-80. Protective dog (Dodge, Fight)
- 81-90. Angry homeowners attempting to stop intruders (Dodge, Fast Talk, Fight)
- 91-95. Floor collapses (DEX: 1D10 damage)
- 96-100. Enemy shows up (extra cultist, new monster, etc.)

Interior Barriers

- 01-20. Unlocked interior door (Locksmith, STR 5 hit points)
- 21-40. Unlocked strong door (Locksmith, STR 10 hit points)
- 41-55. Unbarred door (STR, 15 hit points)
- 56-70. Locked interior door (Locksmith, STR 5 hit points)
- 71-80. Locked strong door (Locksmith, STR 10 hit points)
- 81-90. Barred door (STR, 15 hit points)
- 91-95. No visible exit (Lose 1 movement action and reroll)
- 96-100. Trail is lost by the pursuer (Track)

Rooftop Hazards

- 01-20. Pigeon coop (DEX)
- 21-40. Carpets hung to dry on ropes (DEX: 1D3 damage)
- 41-55. Low fence (Climb, STR 5 hit points)
- 56-70. Roof under repair (DEX: 1D6 damage)
- 71-80. Protective dog (Dodge, Fight)
- 81-90. Angry homeowners attempting to stop running across roof (Dodge, Fast Talk, Fight)
- 91-95. Beam across gap between roofs (DEX or Jump: 1D10 damage)
- 96-100. Enemy shows up (extra cultist, new monster, etc.)

Rooftop Barriers

- 01-20. Privacy fence (Climb: 1D3 damage, STR 5 hit points)
- 21-40. Locked weak door (Locksmith, STR 5 hit points)
- 41-55. Wall (Climb: 1D3 damage)
- 56-70. Locked strong door (Locksmith, STR 10 hit points)
- 71-80. Higher roof (Climb: 1D6 damage)
- 81-90. Gap between roofs (Jump: 1D10 damage)
- 91-95. No visible exit (Lose 1 movement action and reroll)
- 96-100. Trail is lost by the pursuer (Track)

Street Hazards

- 01-20. Crowd (DEX)
- 21-40. Slippery refuse (DEX: 1D3 damage)
- 41-55. Low fence (Climb, STR 5 hit points)
- 56-70. Old ladder or fire escape (DEX: 1D6 damage)
- 71-80. Tight crowd (Dodge, Fast Talk)
- 81-90. Police trying to stop running (Dodge, Fast Talk, Fight)
- 91-95. Hit by vehicle (DEX: 1D10 damage)
- 96-100. Enemy shows up (extra cultist, new monster, etc.)

Street Barriers

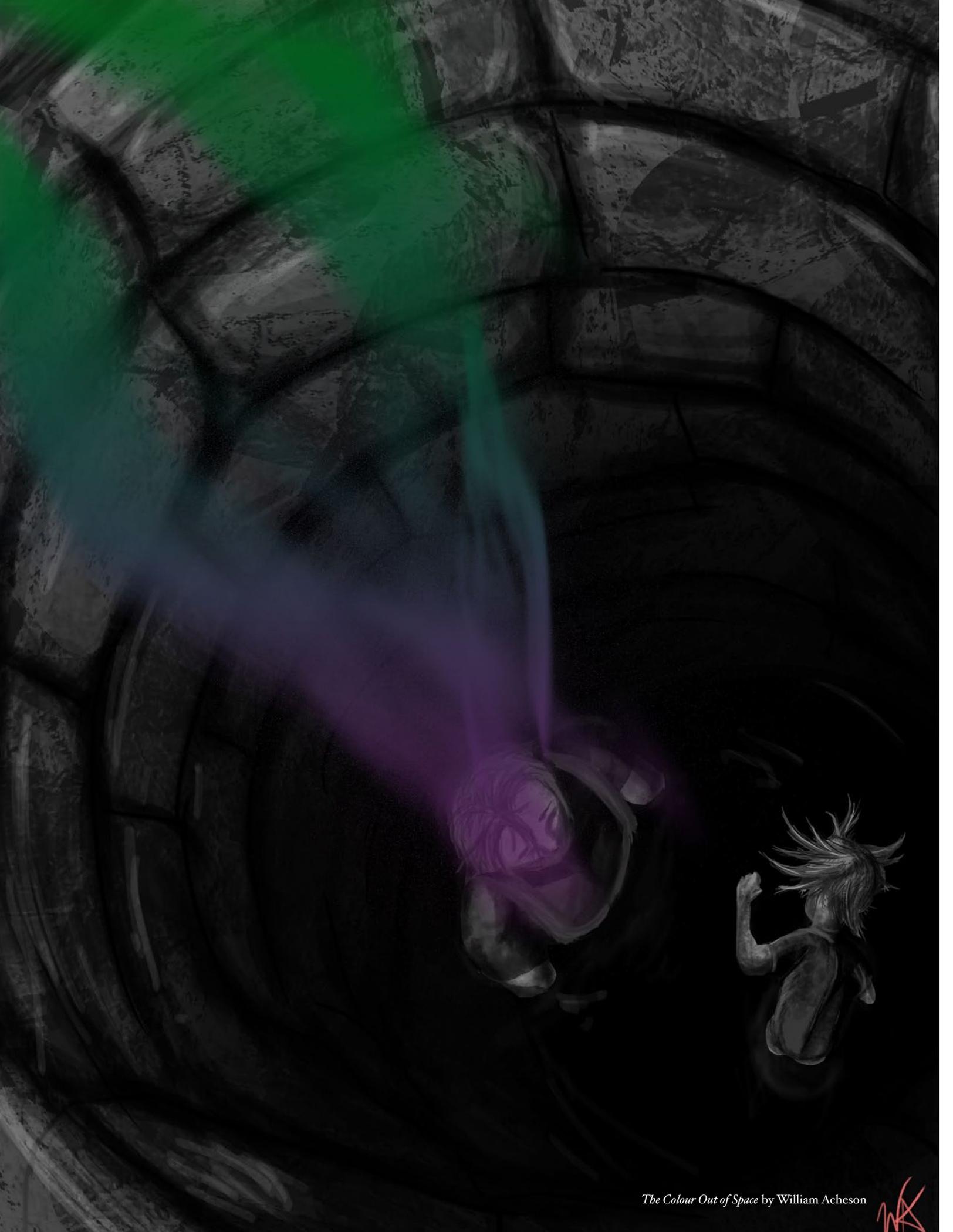
- 01-20. Locked gate (Climb: 1D3 damage, or Locksmith, STR 10 hit points)
- 21-40. Wall (Climb: 1D3 damage)
- 41-55. Barred door (STR 15 hit points)
- 56-70. Pit for road repairs (Jump: 1D6 damage)
- 71-80. Delivery vehicle (Climb: 1D6 damage, or Drive)
- 81-90. Parade, religious procession, or protest (STR, Fight)
- 91-95. No visible exit (Lose 1 movement action and reroll)
- 96-100. Trail is lost by the pursuer (Track)

Rural Hazards

- 01-20. Undergrowth (DEX)
- 21-40. Muddy area (DEX: 1D3 damage)
- 41-55. Hedge or fence (Climb, STR 5 hit points)
- 56-70. Flock of herd animals (DEX: 1D6 damage)
- 71-80. Protective dog (Dodge, Fight)
- 81-90. Angry landowners attempting to stop trespassers (Dodge, Fast Talk, Fight)
- 91-95. Branch falls (DEX: 1D10 damage)
- 96-100. Enemy shows up (farmer’s brother, new monster, etc.)

Rural Barriers

- 01-20. Fence (Climb: 1D3 damage, STR 5 hit points)
- 21-40. Thorny hedge or barbed wire (DEX or Jump: 1D3 damage)
- 41-55. Wall (Climb: 1D3 damage)
- 56-70. Shallow ditch (Jump: 1D6 damage)
- 71-80. Deep ditch (Jump: 1D10 damage)
- 81-90. Deep stream (Swim: 1D10 damage)
- 91-95. No visible exit (Lose 1 movement action and reroll)
- 96-100. Trail is lost by the pursuer (Track)



Easier to Fill the Ocean with Stones

(1968 scenario)

by Rich McKee

Vietnam. 1968.

American troop numbers rise to over half a million.

In January, North Vietnamese forces and the Viet Cong launch the Tet Offensive throughout South Vietnam, shocking the American public and the military. Casualties are high on both sides.

As the hot summer months begin, a report comes in of American soldiers shooting a group of Vietnamese civilians in a remote village near the front lines of the war. Can your team discover what has happened in the dangerous jungles?

Author's Note: I originally ran this scenario 15 years ago as the kickoff adventure for a larger Cold War Cthulhu campaign. At the time, I ran it using Palladium's Recon, so the mythos elements were even more surprising to my players. Pulling it out and reviving it was a strange, and enjoyable, experience. I want to give special thanks to my playtest group for their invaluable advice on where things were too vague. I especially appreciate their encouragement to make the plane crash scene more difficult. The title of this scenario comes from President Nguyen Van Thieu's resignation speech.

This adventure is set in 1968 in Vietnam during the US-Vietnam War. The players are a mixed group of military and civilians sent to investigate a potential massacre site in the remote hilly jungle. A U.S. Army lieutenant has been influenced by a cult and is being manipulated into helping them obtain a nuclear bomb. The players must discover the truth behind the lieutenant's actions and stop the cult before they detonate the bomb, but there is also a supernatural secret in the area that may be involved as well.

Easier to Fill the Ocean with Stones is a Vietnam War scenario. Stats are shown as **Call of Cthulhu** [GUMSHOE].

Background

Five hundred years ago, a sorcerer discovered the ley line convergence in the hills where Village Group 73 now stands. He subjugated a tribe of snake men who lived in tunnels dug into the hills and forged them into an army. He used this army to terrorize the local people, and force them to make sacrifices of gold and blood to him. As the sorcerer's power grew, so did his ambition. As he entered old age, his thoughts turned to immortality. The sorcerer grew twisted as he delved into necromancy, determined to turn himself into a lich before his death. In his final ritual, he sacrificed all 5,000 snake men of his army, and attained undeath. The power available to him allowed him to bind the army to his staff in death, so that the snake men would serve him for eternity. Due to the nature of immortality, the lich found that he must remain inactive for many years in order to exert any real effort.

Many years later, the people living in villages in the hills were faced with an invading Chinese army. Their chief was tempted through dreams by the lich to find the staff in the snake men tunnels under the hills. The lich promised the use of his army to fend off the Chinese. In return, they agreed to grow poppies on the burial mounds of the snake men army, and to use the drug distilled from the poppies in worship in the temple.

The lich was able to draw power from these rituals. The Chinese army was stopped before it reached the village. Over time this knowledge was mostly lost except as myth.

During World War II, several Japanese officers stationed in the area learned that ingesting the drug distilled from the poppies allowed them to perceive the ley lines in the area. They did not learn about the snake men or the staff. After the war, several of these Japanese officers joined a nationalist cult bent on regaining Japan's status. The cult is obsessed with unlocking and controlling an ancient power. This power can be drawn into the world by releasing large amounts of energy in places where the manifold between the realms is thin. They believe that they can release the power by detonating atomic weapons at ley line convergences. Of course, Japan has no bombs of its own, so they will have to manipulate other powers into using theirs.

Current Situation

Three weeks ago, a large force of mixed regular and irregular communist forces laid siege to an American firebase on Hill 617. The siege escalated over the next two weeks and drew international attention when a Japanese reporter, who is part of the cult, delivered a riveting, personal account of conditions on Hill 617. The hill is very difficult to resupply due to the canopy coverage in the area. The president drew a "Red Line" and states on TV that the hill will not fall.

Two weeks ago, Lt. Campbell, U.S. Army, went on leave to Japan. His unit had been hit hard during the Tet Offensive and he was having difficulties adjusting. He took leave before beginning his new assignment guarding a complex of villages, Village Group 73, in the hills. While on leave, the cult took advantage of his weakened state to magically plant a suggestion to use the poppies in the village complex to find the ley line convergence. They were unable to provide him with the exact location of the poppies.

One week ago: Lt. Campbell returns from leave (with a strange tattoo and a bad attitude) and deploys with his platoon to Village Group 73. His mission is to suppress communist forces in the area and to deny them the use of the road for resupply of their assault on Hill 617. He spends the next several days situating his forces throughout the village group. He decides to not allocate any unit to 73D due to the difficulty on reaching it and rumors that the trail between the villages is trapped. While some of his men became concerned that Lt. Campbell seemed to be obsessed with the idea that the villagers were trafficking in drugs to aid the guerillas, the HQ unit was convinced that he was correct.

Three days ago, the intensity of the assault on Hill 617 increases dramatically and the president orders that tactical nuclear weapons be deployed to the area in case it looks like the fall Hill 617 is imminent. Aircraft in the area begin carrying the weapons.

One day ago, while interrogating villagers in 73A, Campbell and his HQ unit kill 12 civilians, including the village chief Phuong. Campbell and his men had rounded up the villagers and forced them into a quonset hut to interrogate them a little after noon. Once in the hut, they began aggressively questioning them about the drug trade in the area. Eventually several of the villagers gave up the fact that 73D had previously dealt in opium. While they did not learn the exact location of the poppy field,

they did learn that it is in the vicinity of 73D. As the interrogation went on, Campbell got more and more irritated and erratic. Frustrated that he was not getting precise information, he threatened one of the villagers with his sidearm. Shortly afterwards he shot a villager when Phuong, the village chief, could not answer any more questions. Phuong made a grab for Campbell's gun to stop the shooting, and the rest of the HQ unit opened fire, killing Phuong and the other 10 villagers. They planted several captured AK-47s in the hut and started a fire with a white phosphorous grenade. While the villagers were still fighting the fire, Campbell gathered his HQ unit and 1st Squad to head to 73D. He decided to cut through the jungle because he was concerned about the revelation that the trail was trapped and about the possibility that there would be a retaliatory ambush.

KEEPER NOTE: I chose not to use period-appropriate G.I. slang both in the write-up and when I ran the game. I don't personally feel that it adds anything, and it was often based in racism and sexism. Obviously, you know your group the best and what they can handle maturely. I chose not to use actual units because those units were made up of actual, specific people. Some of the American characters do some pretty terrible things in this adventure, and I did not want to attach any of that to real life people. I avoided real places for the same reason. Those places were inhabited by real people, for whom the war was horrible. Nothing here is intended to trivialize those who fought on either side of the war, or the civilians who lived through it.

Village Group 73

Two years ago, the government of South Vietnam decided that the farms in the area that is now Village Group 73 presented too much cover for guerrillas. They ordered the farms abandoned and the people moved into three villages. The villages were to be supplied with via truck and helicopter. The farms down hill were declared a free fire zone.

The U.S. Army dubbed the villages 73A, 73B, and 73C. They added a fourth village, 73D, to the administrative group merely because it was nearby. 73D is populated by a different tribe than the other villages and relations are not good between 73D and the other villages. Many people in the lower villages believe that the people in 73D colluded with the French during the colonial years. The chief, in 73A, exerts only nominal control over 73D and has been diverting supplies for his own tribe away from those intended for 73D. The chief was selected from the displaced farmers and replaced the historical chief in 73A. There is some tension between the original inhabitants of the villages and the newcomers as well.

Village 73A: This village is the seat of the chief, the location of the helicopter landing zone, and the HQ for Campbell's platoon. It is populated with people from the same tribe as those found in 73B and 73C, as well as the people who have been relocated from the outlying farms. When the government moved the farmers into the town, they replaced Phuong with Duc, one of the farmers who had political connections. There is tension between the people of this village and 73D, as well as tension between the farmers that were relocated here and the original inhabitants. Phuong still lives here (until Campbell murders him that is) with Marie, his French wife, and Thanh, his son. There is a good deal of obvious new construction. The Army built a helicopter pad, improved the road, and erected several quonset huts for its men and the displaced farmers. There is a new palisade around this village.

Village 73B: This village subsists mostly on fish caught from the river. Very few of the farmers were relocated here. There has been no communist activity reported here, which is why Campbell decided to send the completely green 2nd Squad here. This village is open and has not been fortified.

Village 73C: This village was expanded greatly during the relocation

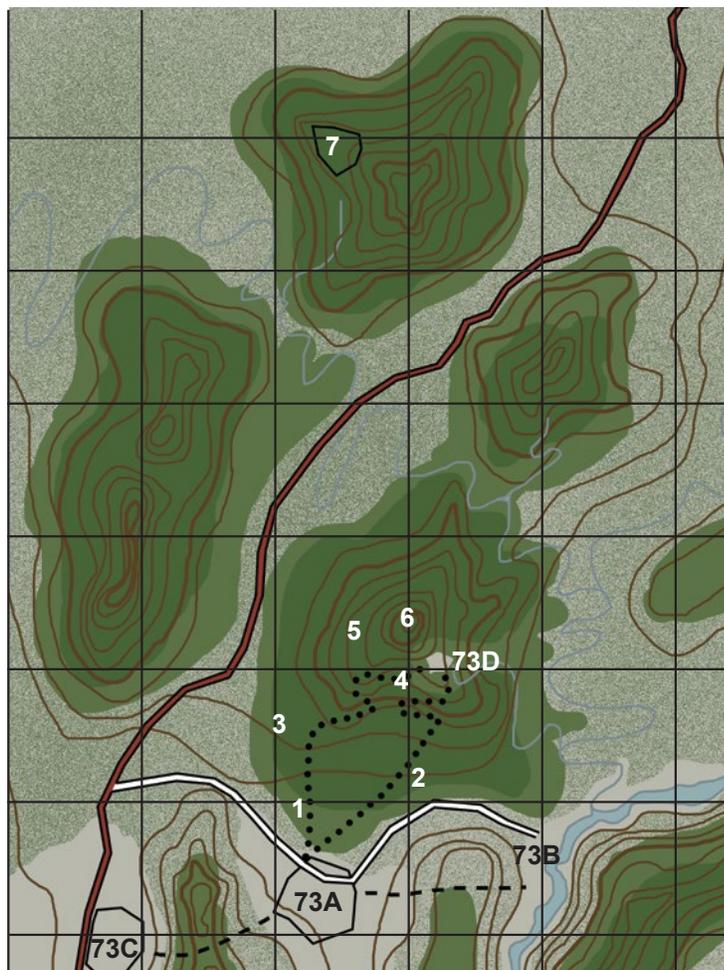
program, as it was formerly only a few families. It has been fortified with a palisade. Most of the buildings in the village are cheap, and hastily built to accommodate the new residents. The Army's main concern with this village is using it to guard the road headed north to Hill 617.

Village 73D: This village is peopled by members of a different tribe than the other villages. It is on top of a hill, and in a thick area of the jungle. The only access is through a dirt path from 73A. There is a lot of bad blood between the two tribes due to the belief that the people in 73D collaborated with French.

KEEPER NOTE: Vietnam is a diverse country, and is populated by over 50 different ethnicities. While most Americans are familiar with the Viet Kinh people, Vietnam is home to many different groups. Many of the other ethnicities live in the hills of Vietnam, and played their own parts in both the French and American wars. As in any other country subjected to colonialism, the people of Vietnam were often turned against each other along ethnic and tribal lines. The tribes in this adventure are not meant to represent any particular historical people. The terms "tribe" and "chief" are probably not the terms that these people would use to describe themselves and were adopted by the Americans due to their own history.

Area Map

(Larger map on [page 76](#))



1. Trail to Village 73D
2. Lt. Campbell's Route
3. The Crash Site
4. The Landmine
5. Poppy Field
6. Nexus
7. Hill 617 Firebase

Timeline of Events

The following series of events will unfold if the players do not interfere.

June 1, 1968

- 1530: Campbell and his men kill the villagers and burn the quonset hut. The burning building also serves as a prearranged signal to the cultists to let them know he is closing in on the poppy field.
- 1630: Campbell leads his HQ unit and 1st Squad into the jungle. Thanh heads up the trail to warn the people in 73D.
- 1700: 73C sees the smoke from the fire and dispatches a fire team to investigate.
- 1930: Fire team arrives to discover the murder, fire, and that Campbell and his men have headed to 73D. Lacking a radio of their own, they overnight in the village.
- 2000: Campbell, having made little progress, decides to stop and camp for the night.

June 2, 1968

- 0300: Thanh arrives in 73D.
- 0500: The fire team heads back to 73C.
- 0700: Campbell breaks camp.
- 0730: The fire team arrives in 73C and radios regional HQ for help. Regional HQ dispatches 2nd Squad, from 73B, to secure the villagers and aid the characters in their investigation.
- 1100: 2nd Squad arrives in 73A.
- 1130: One of Campbell's men injures his leg trying to climb a steep hill. Campbell decides to detour west to avoid the hill and orders that the injured man be carried.
- 1400: The characters arrive in 73A by helicopter.**
- 1500: Campbell, growing increasingly frustrated, finally finds a place that he can turn north again.
- 1600: Characters are likely to wrap up their investigation and head to 73D.
- 1700: After determining that they cannot make 73D by night, Campbell orders his men to make camp.
- 1900: Characters likely to make camp due to lack of light.
- 2300: VC attack and plane downed.
- 2330: Cultists on motorcycles reach plane.
- 2345: VC and cultists in tracked vehicle reach plane.
- 2355: Characters likely to reach plane if they did not rush.

June 3, 1968

- 1000: Campbell arrives in 73D.
- 1030: The chief of 73D decides to cooperate with Campbell and tells him the location of the poppy field.
- 1100: Campbell leaves 1st Squad in the village and takes his HQ group to the poppy field.
- 1200: Campbell arrives at poppy field. Characters likely arrive at 73D around this time if they have travelled a total of 10 hours.
- 1500: Campbell and his HQ group will return to 73D.
- 2100: Campbell will consume a drug made from the poppies and head off to find the ley lines with his HQ group.
- 2200: While Campbell is searching, the HQ unit will get into a fight with a group of villagers who have sided with Bian. This will turn bloody fast if the characters do not intervene. Bian will run to her hut and use the staff to summon the skeletal army.
- 2300: Skeletal army will arrive in 73D. Bian will attempt to control the army during the fight, but, after 5 rounds, will burn up in a pillar of fire due to the energy she is channeling. The undead will begin withdrawing after Bian dies, and will march west, destroying everything in their path until stopped.
- 2345: Campbell will launch the flare, at a site about an hour from the village, to alert the cultists that he has found the convergence.

June 4, 1968

- 0200: Cultists will arrive at the convergence.
- 0230: Cultists will detonate the bomb. They do not care about anyone living in the area, including themselves. Anyone witnessing the

detonation will see what appears to be a titanic starfish arm covered in milky, white eyes rising above the mushroom cloud. 73D will be completely destroyed and the other villages will have to be evacuated.

Recommended Player Characters

Pre-generated characters are available as downloads. This adventure is intended for a group of 4 to 6 PCs. The group can be made up of a mix of civilian and military characters. The civilian characters can be from a different agencies like the State Department or the CIA. Civilian characters will allow the skill set to be broadened, and keep every character from being an almost carbon copy of the others. One of the military characters should be an Army captain. This will make him the highest ranking military character in the adventure. While it may be unlikely, from a historical perspective, that there would have been any women in this group, this is a game about mythos monsters not historical accuracy. It is suggested that the characters have a wide range of skills. **Archaeology** [Archaeology], **History** [History], **Navigation**, **Occult** [Occult], **Psychology** and **Track** [Oral History, Outdoorsman, Reassurance] come in very useful in this adventure. It could be helpful if a character speaks French when they meet Marie.

Their team will be accompanied by a Vietnamese translator. *Danny Loan* is the son of a rich Saigon businessman and has a history degree from Ohio State. He speaks English perfectly. He is Catholic and a ruthless anti-communist but he is also racist against rural Vietnamese that he considers only "hill people". No character should be more than 15% proficient in Vietnamese. The characters will have to go through Danny Loan to speak to other Vietnamese.

KEEPER NOTE: I put Danny Loan in the game for two reasons. The first reason is to emphasize a real problem; Americans often had a hard time communicating with the Vietnamese people. They had to rely on translators and, as those translators were humans with their own concerns and skin in the game, they interpreted through their own lens. The second is kind of a cheat. I wanted to make sure that the Keeper did not have to use a potentially insulting accent. If the Vietnamese attempt to communicate directly with the characters without the aid of a translator, I suggest just stating that they can only make out a small number of words and tone.

Mission Briefing

Before leaving for the village group, the characters will be briefed on their mission. They are given a **Briefing Map** of the area (see *Handouts* below), a quick background on the Hill 617 situation, and the history of how the village group was set up. The briefers do not have much information on the incident at this point. They merely know that 12 civilians were killed by Lt. Campbell's platoon in 73A.

Mission Objective

The mission objective is to investigate the incident in village 73A where 12 civilians were killed by Lt. Campbell and his men. If they determine that the shooting was not justified, they are to take Lt. Campbell, and the men involved, into custody. They are also to take whatever steps they determine necessary to improve the United States' relationship with the people of the village group.

Support for the Group

Due to the ongoing operations on Hill 617, there is no guarantee that air support, other than medical evacuation by helicopter (medevac), will be available to the characters after they are inserted into the village. They will be warned that it is very difficult to land a helicopter throughout the village area, and they may have to be winched up (which is practically impossible to do under fire).

Each character will be provided with a **flak jacket** (8 points of armor) [**Armor**: 5], **M-16A2 rifle** [+3], and **hand grenades**. Officers and civilians will also be provided with a **M-1911 pistol** (use stats for .45 Automatic) [+1]. Characters can choose to take a **shotgun** [+1] instead of a M-16. One character can choose to take a **M-60** (use stats for FN Minimi) [+4] instead of a M-16. One character will be provided with a **radio**. This radio can reach the regional HQ, any helicopter support provided, the radio in 73C, and Lt. Campbell's HQ unit. Lt. Campbell will not respond to the radio. It is unclear whether this is due to a malfunction or if he is refusing to respond.

Arrival at 73A

2nd squad arrived at Village 73A at 1100, secured the shooting site, and has pulled Marie and Duc aside for the characters to begin their investigation. The characters will arrive, by helicopter, at 1400. Sgt. Matthews, of 2nd Squad, will meet the characters as they get off the helicopter and inform them of the situation on the ground. As the helicopter lifts off, the characters will notice the smell of rotting meat. It will continue to get stronger as they stand by the helipad. Sgt. Matthews can tell them the following:

- He and his men arrived at 1100 and secured the village and the scene of the shooting.
- They determined that the shooting took place in the late afternoon and that during the shooting, the hut caught fire.
- The villagers put the fire out and pulled the bodies from the hut. He mentions that the villagers had to use dirt to put the fire out because water was not working.
- He and his men made a brief search of the hut and found burned AK-47s. They left them where they found them.
- They secured the hut that Campbell and his men were living in.
- It appears that Campbell and his men have headed north through the jungle in the direction of 73D, but did not take the path.
- He learned from the villagers that Thanh, Marie and Phuong's son, headed up the trail for 73D right after the shooting. He knows that Thanh is engaged to Bian, the daughter of Nguyen, the 73D chief. He estimates that Thanh has already arrived in 73D.
- He knows that it takes about 10 hours to walk up the trail to 73D if proper care is taken. He does not know how long it will take Campbell to get there cutting through the jungle.
- He knows that Campbell was having a rough time before he went on leave in Japan. Campbell came back from leave with a new tattoo and seeming even more stressed. Campbell seems to be obsessed with drug trafficking since he came back. He is concerned that Campbell has allowed discipline to break down amongst the men.
- He can explain that the rotting meat smell is from a container next to the helipad. The U.S. Army delivered it a few days ago. 73A has no refrigeration so the meat spoiled before the villagers could eat most of it. He does not have the authority to "disposition U.S. Government property." (If the container is opened it is a **Sanity** check, o/tD4 SAN loss [1 **Stability**].)

The Scene of the Crime

An investigation of the hut will reveal that, while the outside is charred, but in fairly good shape, the interior has been gutted by the fire. This quonset hut was erected by the Army when the farmers were relocated to the village. The occupants erected bamboo divisions to separate living areas for each family. These dividers, along with the beds and occupant's possessions, have largely been destroyed by the fire. There are puddles of water and dirt on the floor from the fire-fighting efforts. There are **four burned AK-47s** on the floor. Careful examination by the characters may reveal the following clues:

- The fire appears to have been started by a white phosphorus grenade of the type used in tunnels.
- There are now 7.62 mm (AK-47 ammunition) shell casings, but dozens of 5.56 mm (M-16 ammunition) shell casings on the floor.
- Two of the AK-47s have full magazines, two have empty magazines.

Campbell's Hut

The quonset hut that Campbell's men were living in has cots lining the walls with a footlocker for each. This hut housed Campbell, his HQ group, and 1st Squad. A search of the hut can reveal:

- 3 Chinese-made **submachine guns** and 2 **AK-47s** in various footlockers.
- That seven of the men have left their **flak jackets** behind. (Current orders are all personnel wear flak jackets when on duty in the area, but many don't like them because they are hot and uncomfortable.)
- Several old, oddly shaped **daggers**. A successful **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**] or **History** check [**History**] will reveal that they are of an unknown type and about 500 years old.
- **Campbell's Diary** (see [Handouts](#) below) which records fairly standard soldier stuff up through the Tet offensive. There are no journal entries during the Tet Offensive from January 30, 1968 and May 13. Two days into his leave in Japan, he began drawing detailed pictures of black flowers. A character with the appropriate skills can identify them as poppies, by their shape, despite the black color. He has continued to draw more poppies, and his hand is clearly getting less steady. There are some sparse notes on each page. He mostly writes about his desire to find the source of the drug operation in the area, he also seemed concerned with rumors of tunnels under 73D. On May 25, he drew a map of the area. He has drawn a circle around the village group, and several mysterious lines all converging, and stopping, at the edge of the circle. There are strange symbols drawn on each of the lines. A successful **Cthulhu Mythos** [**Cthulhu Mythos**] or **Occult** check [**Occult**] will reveal that these are ley lines.

KEEPER NOTE: Any character that recognizes ley lines will know that they are supposed to be like magical power lines. They will also know that a convergence of ley lines is said to act as a power multiplier; any power expended there is magnified. Legends say that they were used to open gates to other dimensions and worlds in the past.

The Interviews

The characters are likely to want to interview two residents of the village: Marie, the wife of the old chief Phuong, and Duc, the current chief.

Marie is French and also speaks English and Vietnamese well. Marie is, understandably, very upset over the death of her husband. That said, she is a very focused person and has maintained her composure. She will be initially be hostile to the party, but can be brought around by speaking to her in French, and if roleplaying indicates the characters are more concerned with the well-being of the village as a whole. Examples of such roleplaying include being respectful of the bodies, dealing with the trailer full of spoiled meat, and other help offered to the village. She will also become helpful if the characters deal with Duc's pilfering of the supplies. Remember that the characters have a mandate to win hearts and minds and a radio. These should grant bonuses to a **Persuade** roll [**Reassurance**]. **Psychology** [**Assess Honesty**] can be used to deduce her motivations. She will not willingly reveal any useful information unless the characters bring her around through their actions and roleplaying. If her hut is searched, a successful **Spot Hidden** check [**Evidence Collection**] will allow the characters to find an **AK-47** and **dark clothing** under a mat. It is impossible to win her over if her hut is searched, even if the rifle is not found. If she is brought around, she will prevent the Viet Cong (VC) from attacking the character's camp that night (see [Viet Cong Assault](#) under **In Camp** below).

If won over, she knows:

- The vague outline of the "ghost army" story. She will reveal this if she is asked directly or overhears Duc trying to explain it and Danny dismissing it.
- Duc is diverting supplies.
- Nguyen had stopped the drug trafficking years ago.

- The location of **The Landmine** (see under **Second Day of the Journey** below).
- She has heard about the tunnels in 73D, but believes that they are far older than the current conflict.

Duc only speaks Vietnamese and will not be overtly hostile. He is more concerned about preserving his own power than anything else. He does not like Nguyen, the chief of village 73D, or the people of that village, he considers them superstitious and thinks they colluded with the French. He will not get along with Danny, who does not like the “mountain people”. Danny finds the accents of the people in this area to be heavy, making them a bit hard to understand, even for him. Duc believes the following:

- Village 73D is in the drug business. Duc will take this chance to denigrate Nguyen and the other people in 73D.
- The people in 73D are in a different tribe than him and are superstitious and likely in league with the communists. If pressed on the superstition, he will tell the “ghost army” story. Danny will not actually translate this and just dismiss it as a stupid ghost story.
- If confronted with the fact that he is diverting supplies, he will reveal that Marie is VC and the location of the **The Landmine** (see under **Second Day of the Journey** below).
- There are tunnels under 73D. He doesn’t know much about them but will try to spin it as VC tunnels.

KEEPER NOTE: Some people in the villages are able to relay an abbreviated version of the history of the lich. They can say that long ago a great sorcerer lived in the area, and he used a magic staff to destroy a large army. Legend says that if anyone finds his magic staff, they can resurrect the army for their own use.

General Scene Advice for 73A

It is important that the characters come away with this scene with a decent amount of the available information. They should at least be aware that there is a ghost story, even if they did not get the content. They should have heard at least one version of the rumor that 73D is in the drug trade. It would be best if they heard about the tunnels. The bare outline of these facts should be easy to get, as Duc will be more than happy to cast suspicions on Nguyen and 73D at every opportunity. Marie has more detailed, and accurate, information on many of these topics, but winning her over is a bonus.

The characters should come away from this scene with at least the general impression that it is more likely than not that Campbell’s actions in the shooting were not justified. It is possible that the players will not yet be in investigation mode due to the genre mixing. They may be treating this more as a military action game. Sgt. Matthews can be used to prod them here. He will want good intelligence on 73D, the path, and Campbell’s current state of mind before he puts his men in danger.

It is important to be careful portraying Danny Loan in this scene, as it will be the players’ first impression. Danny is not a monster, but he is a young man who is thoroughly indoctrinated in the mindset of the government of South Vietnam, a mindset shared by many Americans at the time. He is smart, gets along well with Americans, and really wants what he sees as the best for his country. That said, by the end of the scene, the players should be aware that Danny is interpreting through a fairly biased lens.

Ending the Scene

This scene ends when the characters leave the 73A and head up the trail for 73D. By the time they have spent time investigating and preparing, it will be late afternoon. As it will take about 10 hours to walk to 73D, Sgt. Matthews will warn them that they will have to camp overnight in the jungle. He will strongly caution against moving after it gets dark. The VC are significantly better at moving through the jungle unseen and any

ambush would come with almost no warning. They would also be denied the cover of fox holes in the event of an attack during the night, if they do not camp. Finally, booby traps are much harder to spot in the dark. If the players decide to wait until morning to leave, Campbell will have a significant lead on them. There should be a concern about what he might do when he gets to 73D.

On the Trail

On the first leg of the trip to 73D, there will be constant sounds and smoke from the bombardment of Hill 617. It will be obvious to the characters that the bombardment has intensified throughout the day. There is a chance for the Keeper to play up the environment here. It is extremely hot, and humid. The characters are under almost constant assault from small biting insects. The trail barely qualifies for the name, it switches back constantly to avoid obstacles, and there are often fallen trees and other obstructions that have to be negotiated. The jungle is very thick and presses very close on either side of the trail. It is hard to see more than a few meters into the growth. Even where the jungle thins, there is sharp grass that is as tall as a man. In many ways, these areas are worse than the jungle because it is easy to lose the trail; it is often no wider than a man. The constant need to watch their step, and frequent booby trap false alarms wears on the men and slows progress. If the game is not running too slow, the Keeper can use this as a chance to throw a few false alarm encounters at the group. Any character who wears their flak vest will suffer a 10% penalty on all physical rolls, including attacks.

- A **Spot Hidden** roll [**Outdoorsman**] will reveal stone markers. **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**], or **Art (Sculpture)** [**Art**], or **History** [**History**] will reveal that they were markers for some ancient army’s permanent camp.
- A **Spot Hidden** roll [**Outdoorsman**] will reveal a statue of a snake man. **Occult** [**Occult**] will reveal that these are commonly associated with sorcery in local legends.

In Camp

Unless the players specify otherwise, they will set up a standard camp with the men digging in to foxholes. If the characters express reservation about following the proper camp routines (most likely because they want to push further before stopping), Sgt. Matthews should approach them and explain the benefits of cover granted by digging in for the night.

As they are preparing camp, it is clear that activity on Hill 617 has increased dramatically. The artillery and airstrikes intensify as the night goes on. Around 2300, the characters will see what appears to be an air-to-air battle overhead. This is unusual because the communists should not have any air assets this far south.

- While digging foxholes, a few broken remains of weapons from the ancient army will be unearthed. **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**] or **History** [**History**] can reveal what they are.

Viet Cong Assault

The characters will experience their first combat at this point (unless they managed to establish a good relationship with Marie in the first scene, in which case the Viet Cong (VC) will not attack the camp during the night. VC will still be encountered at the crash site in either case.)

The attack will consist of **twelve VC**, including Marie. Their goal is to harass the Americans, and they will not fight to the death. If the characters are in foxholes, most of the VC will provide unaimed suppressing fire while a few try to get close enough to throw grenades into the foxholes. 5 rounds into the fight, one of the planes will come in very low overhead and crash in the jungle to the west. No explosion follows the crash. The VC will immediately break off their attack to try to get to the crash site and capture any survivors.

KEEPER NOTE: The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, or Viet Cong (VC), were the communist forces in South Vietnam. While People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam had regular units, they are largely known for their guerrilla activities.

15 minutes after the plane crash, the characters will get a radio call from regional HQ ordering them to secure the crash site and "payload".

The amount of time to reach the crash site varies and affects the chances to notice a VC booby trap (see below).

Pace	Time	Chance to Notice Booby Trap
Normal	1 hour	Spot Hidden [Difficulty 4 Sense Trouble]
Fast	45 min	Hard Spot Hidden [Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble]
Running	30 min	Extreme Spot Hidden [Difficulty 8 Sense Trouble]

Booby Trap: If the characters were not attacked by the VC there is no trap. Before starting the ambush, the VC placed stolen claymore mines about 100 meters outside the camp with the intention of withdrawing back through them if pursued. They are activated by a tripwire (25% chance for each character moving through to trip the trap. Make the rolls in marching order). Each character within 20 meters that has not made it past the trap takes 6D6 damage [+9 point-blank, +4 close]

At the Crash Scene

The plane, an A-6 Intruder with a crew of 2 (pilot and navigator/bombardier), was brought down by a **large, dark, beast with huge powerful wings** that was summoned by the **cultists** (see [Personalities and Monsters](#) below for both). The monster is now partially pinned under the aircraft, but still very much alive and angry. The jet is lying on its left side with the right wing sticking up in the air. A 3 meter long **10 kiloton B57 nuclear weapon** is attached underneath the Intruder.

The Firefight

At 2330, **five cultists** on motorcycles will arrive. They will ignore the two aircrew that are trapped in the aircraft and begin removing the bomb from the underside of the aircraft. At 2345, **twelve VC** (including Marie) will reach the crash site. Their goal will be to capture the crew alive. They will circle around to approach the plane so that it is between them and the cultists, so they can have access to the plane canopy. The cultists will engage them and they will fall back to the tree line. The VC will attempt to kill the monster and the cultists before closing again, but they will be hampered by their desire to take the crew alive.

Shortly after the VC arrive, **five more cultists** will arrive in a light tracked vehicle. These cultists will concentrate on removing the bomb while the others focus on fighting the VC. The cultists know that they do not have to defeat the VC, only hold them at bay until they can make off with the bomb. They will be content to stay behind the fuselage and the wing, holding the VC at bay from cover.

The monster can only strike at anything that gets within 10 feet of the canopy, but can emit an area of effect stun blast that affects anyone within 25 feet. The cultists' tattoos protect them from this stun attack. Make it clear that the use of full auto, or heavy weapons, on the monster will put the crew of the Intruder at risk.

The VC are severely outclassed and will retreat into the jungle about 3 rounds after the characters arrive unless the monster is killed. They want the aircrew as prisoners, but they will not fight to the death for it.

The cultists will fight to the death. It will take them 5 rounds to detach the bomb after the characters arrive. They have a tracked vehicle and, if it is not disabled, they will load the bomb onto it and leave. If the vehicle is disabled, it will take four of them to carry off the bomb, the rest will

stay to delay pursuit.

Ending the Scene

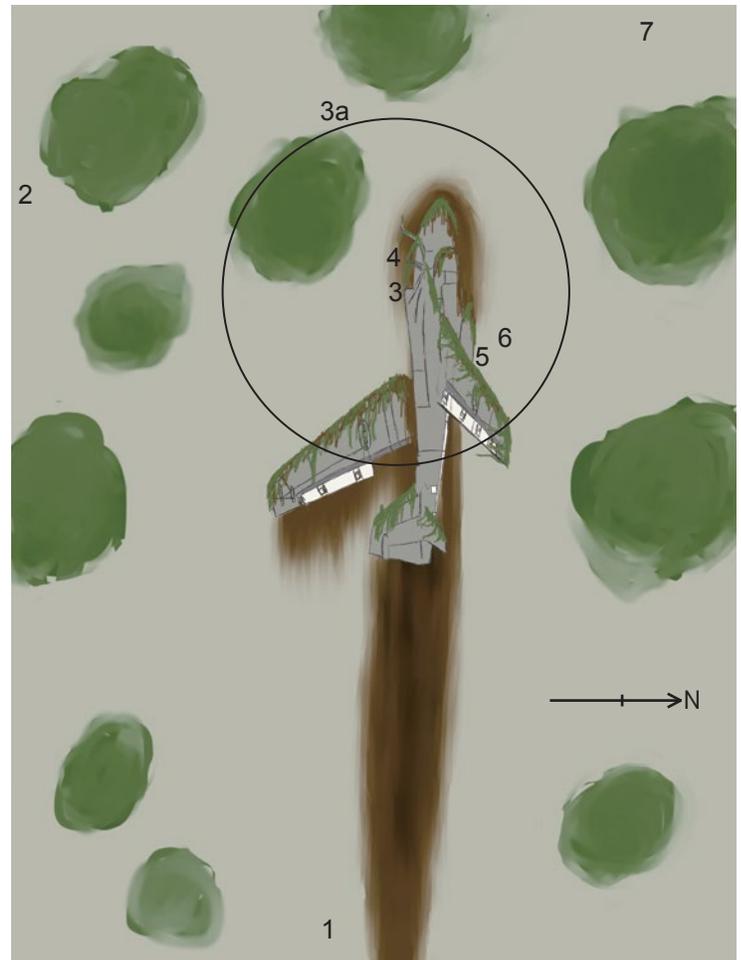
The characters will almost certainly have wounded, even if just the pilot and bombardier, that need to be evacuated. Hopefully they will also have a bomb that needs to be removed. While a helicopter cannot set down here, the wounded and the bomb can be removed with a winch. It will take about 30 minutes for the helicopter to arrive and another 10 to 30 minutes for the winching operation. If the cultists escaped with the bomb, the characters will be ordered to continue to 73D. A Special Forces unit will be inserted to recover the bomb, but that unit will eventually get lost in the dark and lose the trail of the cultists.

The following clues are available in this scene:

- A **Know**, or appropriate language roll [**Languages**], will allow a character to recognize that the cultists are speaking Japanese.
- The Dark Thing With Wings is clearly is not of this earth and should tip the characters off that something darker is going on.
- The cultists all have the same tattoo as Campbell.

KEEPER NOTE: The tattoos that Campbell and the cultists have (see [Handouts](#) below) are magical in nature. They can protect those that have them from spells like the one the monster used to stun its victims. They can also be used to channel the magical energy of the cult. The cult is using Campbell's tattoo to plant a suggestion in his mind.

The Crash Scene Map



1. Player Character's approach
2. Viet Cong approach
3. Dark Thing With Wings
3a. Radius of stun attack
4. Canopy with 2 aircrew
5. B57 nuclear weapon
6. Five cultists
7. Five cultists on a tracked vehicle arrive from this direction

Second Day of the Journey

Conditions on the second day of the journey will be similar to those on the first day. The hill will become steeper after a few hours and the vegetation will thin out a bit. There are two possible encounters on the way to 73D.

The Ancient Fort

Have each of the PCs make a **Spot Hidden** check [**Outdoorsman**] a few hours into the day's trip. Characters that succeed spot what appears to be a set of low walls about 10 meters into the jungle. If they investigate they will find what appears to be the ruins of an ancient stone fort. An **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**], **Architecture** [**Architecture**], or **History** [**History**] check will allow them to determine that the ruins are at least 500 years old and are Chinese in origin. If they spend some time sifting through the rubble and underbrush, they will discover a bizarre, misshapen skeleton (**Sanity** check, 1/1d4 SAN loss) [2 **Stability**]. An **Occult** [**Occult**] roll will reveal that it is a snake man, an evil creature in local legend.

The Landmine

About an hour south of 73D, the trail has been mined. There is a decent chance that the characters will have been warned about this as many of the villagers in 73A are aware of this trap. If the characters are not aware of the trap, they can see it with a **Spot Hidden** roll [**Difficulty 5 Sense Trouble**].

Each character will have a 25% chance of triggering the mine when moving through its area, if they are not aware of the trap. Once triggered the mine will do 4D10 damage [+8 point-blank, +3 close].

Arrival at 73D

The characters should arrive around noon. The first thing they will notice is that 73D is very old. A stone wall, that is clearly several hundred years old, surrounds the village. Stone paths wind through the small, well-kept homes to a stone temple in the center. Nguyen struck a deal with Lt. Campbell, he gave him the location of the poppy field in exchange for the Americans not entering the village in force. 1st Squad has set up outside of the gate. At this point, Campbell has already arrived, learned the location of the poppies, and left. Things are very tense between 1st Squad and the villagers. As the characters approach the village, Sgt. Pulowski will meet them.

1st Squad

Sgt. Pulowski can tell the characters that they arrived around 1000 and that Lt. Campbell struck a deal with the village chief. Neither Pulowski, nor any of his men, have entered the village. He can describe the tortured trip from 73A. He has kept his men at a high state of readiness because he does not trust the villagers coming and going from the village. He will also express concerns about rumors of tunnels under the village.

Pulowski does not agree with the breakdown in discipline that Campbell has allowed to happen with his men; roughly half of 1st Squad is not wearing their flak vests or helmets. He is concerned about Campbell's erratic behaviour, but believes that the people killed in the village were communists who tried to attack the HQ group when interrogated.

The sergeant understands his mission as suppressing communists and denying them the use of poppy fields to fund their insurgency. He expects Lt. Campbell to be back in a couple of hours. No one will try to stop the characters from entering the village, but Pulowski will express reservations about bringing 2nd Squad inside the walls based on Campbell's agreement with the chief. Sgt. Matthews will disagree, he is very concerned about the possibility of a significant guerilla force inside the tunnels that are rumored to be under the village.

Interviews

The players will most likely be interested in interviewing Nguyen, Bian, and Thanh. They will find Nguyen and Bian arguing outside of the temple. She is upset that her father caved to Campbell and is raving that "Heaven's Army" will protect them. The characters can interview both, but if they are not separated, Bian will keep interrupting with her ravings.

Nguyen is chief of the village and is very unhappy with the Americans, and will do whatever he thinks will get them to leave the area. He will be more open with the characters if they did not bring 2nd Squad inside the walls. He has no use for the communists either, they put his people in danger by mining the path between the villages. As far as Nguyen is concerned, the government of the Republic of Vietnam lied to him about how the village arrangement would be handled. He has not seen anywhere near the level of supplies he was promised. His village was once able to supply its own needs through its crops and trade with the farmers to the south, now they are struggling. If the characters did not uncover Duc's skimming of the supplies, there will be quite a bit of friction between Nguyen and Danny. If they have decided to take action to fix the supply situation, and explain this to him, he will be much more receptive to talking with Danny. His sole focus is on the well being of the people in his village and concern for the deteriorating mental state of his daughter. Nguyen can understand English, but he cannot speak it. The characters can learn the following from Nguyen:

- Some poppies do still grow on the mounds west of the town, but they have not cultivated them for drug trade in years.
- How to get to the poppy field.
- Campbell did not go far and should be back in an hour or two.
- The "ghost army" story, and about his daughter's obsession with it. To him, it is just some legend. He does not understand why his daughter is so taken with this old ghost story.
- The tunnels are very old and they are not used by the VC. He considers them to be unstable and does not allow the villagers to enter them. (He does not know that his daughter has been spending time in the tunnels.)
- How to enter the tunnels through the old temple.

Bian, Nguyen's daughter, is practically incoherent, rambling about Lt. Campbell and the ghost army. A **Psychology** or **Psychoanalyst** roll [**Psychoanalysis**] will reveal that she is not just angry, she has suffered some kind of mental break. Alternatively, a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** [**Cthulhu Mythos**] or **Occult** [**Occult**] check will reveal that she has seen something unnatural. Either way, armed with this knowledge of her mental state, the characters will be able to get her to describe the tunnels by asking questions about the ghost army. She will explain that there is a temple where she learned "spells" that will allow her to summon the army to save the village. She can give them directions to the temple.

If the characters diagnose Bian's problem, it is possible to convince Nguyen to confine her for her own safety. The characters might also confiscate the staff if they figure out she has it. Nguyen will support taking it away if they explain to him where it came from. If Bian is free, and keeps the staff, she will summon the ghost army if there is an incident between the American troops and the villagers.

Thanh is the son of Marie and Phuong, the old chief of 73A. He is engaged to Bian and will be willing to talk to the characters freely unless they killed his mother Marie in a firefight and he finds out. He is concerned about Bian and knows that she has been spending time in the tunnels.

The Tunnels

The players may choose to find and explore the tunnels. If they do, they will not have time to go to the poppy field before Campbell and his men come back. The entrance to the tunnels is in the old stone temple at the center of the village. The tunnels are very old but well built. They are

reinforced and have brick walls in many places. They are about 4 feet high, and there are several large chambers throughout. It is not suggested that this be run as a dungeon delve. No detailed map of the tunnels is required.

- Successful **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**], **Geology** [**Geology**], or **Know** [**Architecture**] checks will reveal that these tunnels are far too old to have been built by the VC. While there are some signs of recent disturbance (Bian), there is no indication that there has been the level of traffic that would indicate the guerillas were using them as a base.

The tunnels are extensive, and the temple area will be hard to find. If the characters were able to get directions from Bian, it will take about half an hour to make their way to the temple. If they do not have directions, allow the lead character to make a **Luck** check every half an hour to see if they stumble across the temple. A Hard **Track** check [**Difficulty 5 Outdoorsman**] will allow them to follow Bian's trail to the temple in about 45 minutes.

The temple area is a large chamber, about 20 feet by 20 feet with a 6 foot ceiling. There is a statue of a giant cobra with arms and murals and writings on the walls. One wall has a map carved in it. The map is covered with strange lines and symbols. The characters can learn the following here:

- **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**] and **History** [**History**] checks can reveal that this section is ancient; at least 500 years old.
- **Cthulhu Mythos** [**Cthulhu Mythos**] and **Occult** [**Occult**] checks can determine that the writings are necromantic spells (**Sanity** check for the realization, 0/1d4 SAN loss) [**1 Stability**], but there will not be enough time to study the spells.
- **Cthulhu Mythos** [**Cthulhu Mythos**], **History** [**History**], and **Occult** [**Occult**] checks will allow the players to determine that the murals tell a story that seems to track closely with the ghost army story, if they have heard it.
- A **Spot Hidden** check [**Evidence Collection**] will reveal that the cobra statue was holding something in its left hand, but it is now gone. Whatever it was holding was roughly rod shaped and about an inch and a half in diameter. This was the staff, Bian took it and will use it to summon the ghost army. It is currently in the hut she shares with her father.
- A successful **Navigate** [**Outdoorsman**] check will allow the characters to recognize that the map is of the area and that the strange lines converge at a site to the north of the village.
- A successful **Cthulhu Mythos** [**Cthulhu Mythos**] or **Occult** [**Occult**] check will reveal that the lines are ley lines.

Ending the Scene

The scene is likely to end one of several ways. The characters may:

1. Check the tunnels, in which case Lt. Campbell will likely return around the time they get out
2. Look for Lt. Campbell, but they are unlikely to succeed (1/5 **Luck** Check) because he will not take the same route back from the poppy field that he takes there
3. Investigate the poppy field themselves

The Poppy Field

The characters may decide to investigate the poppies themselves. If they have directions from Nguyen, it will take them about an hour to find the mounds where the poppies grow to the west of the town. If they did not get directions, they can follow Campbell's trail with a **Track** check [**Outdoorsman**] in about an hour. If they have neither directions or the ability to track, they can head towards a cloud of smoke rising out of the fire set by Campbell. This will take about an hour and a half due to the obstacles in the way.

Most of the clearing has been scorched by the flamethrower Campbell's

men used to burn the poppies. The poppies that remain are completely black in color and are growing on a group of low mounds in a clearing. There are about 20 mounds in the clearing, each is about 5 feet high. In places, the fire has revealed old, cut, stones beneath the soil.

Digging in the mounds will reveal weirdly misshapen skeletons, clad in armor with spears. If this is the first time the characters have encountered these kinds of skeletons, they will make **Sanity** check, 1/1d4 SAN loss [**2 Stability**]. An **Occult** roll [**Occult**] will reveal that they are snake men, an evil creature from local legend. Characters can estimate there are about 250 skeletons in a mound. As there are 20 mounds, the characters can surmise there are about 5,000 skeletons. They do not have time to destroy even a significant fraction of them.

- **Archaeology** [**Archaeology**] and **History** [**Forensics**] will determine that the skeletons are around 500 years old.

Lt. Campbell's Return

Lt. Campbell and his HQ unit will return around 1500. It will be immediately apparent that there has been a major disciplinary lapse on his part. None of his men are completely in uniform and most are unshaven. Campbell himself has cut the sleeves off his uniform and is wearing a bandana torn from one. His tattoo (see *Handouts* below) is clearly visible on his shoulder.

If the characters are in town when Campbell returns, he will report to the Captain that he burned the poppy field and denied the enemy its use. Any discussion with Campbell will be hard to follow. His eyes dart from side to side and he is sweating profusely. He seems very nervous and confused. He will complain of a headache. He will unconsciously scratch at his tattoo as though it itches him.

If questioned, he will deny murdering the civilians, claiming that they attacked him with weapons hidden in the hut when questioned. The HQ contingent will back him up. If searched, he has a small amount of the drug hidden on his person that can be found with a Hard **Spot Hidden** roll [**Evidence Collection**].

He will state that he is willing to return in the morning to defend his actions. He, and the other members of the HQ unit, will even surrender their weapons if pushed. The players are likely to take one of two courses of action here.

1. Arrest Campbell

They may arrest Campbell. While he will not resist, it will raise tensions significantly between their group, the HQ group, and 1st Squad. If the HQ group is not also detained, they will attempt to free Campbell in the night. They will do so by entering the village and picking a fight with the villagers. The first sergeant will not join this group and will free Campbell in the confusion. Campbell will then slip away, take the drug, and search for the ley line convergence. If the characters detain both Campbell and the HQ unit, there is only a 15% chance that he will be able to escape alone during the night. If he is kept under constant guard, this chance drops to nothing and the characters have neutralized this threat.

2. Accept that Campbell will willingly return with them

If he is not arrested, he will stay with his men in the tents they set up outside of town. He will order the HQ unit to pick a fight with some of the villagers and slip away during the confusion. He will then take the drug, and search for the ley line convergence.

Possible Conclusions

The ending of this adventure can take one of several forms. There are several variables at play in the climax of the adventure:

- Whether the cultists were able to gain control of the bomb
- Whether Campbell is able to escape the village to find the ley line nexus and launch the flare
- Whether Campbell's men are able to pick a fight for a distraction
- Whether Bian remains free, in possession of the staff, and summons the army when the fight breaks out

The more of these that are true, the more complications the players will face in the final scene. In the worst case scenario, the players will be dealing with the skeletal army when Campbell launches the flare. They will have a very short period of time to get to the convergence to prevent the bomb from being detonated. They may only have a vague suspicion about what is going to happen.

If Campbell never launches the flare, but the cultists have the bomb, they will assume that the operation has been blown and escape with the bomb to use another time.

Rewards

Characters regain 2 Sanity for each of the following objectives:

- Recovered the bomb
- Prevented the summoning of the ghost army
- Brought Campbell to justice
- Improved relations between the local people and the United States (Keeper's judgment)

Further Adventures

This adventure is not intended to be a standalone or one shot. It is one incident in a larger mystery, and is intended to be the entry point for a campaign. The players, and their characters, will not understand everything by the time they are finished. They will have seen only one piece of the elephant.

The Japanese cult is part of worldwide conspiracy to summon Azathoth. The international group has operations planned in a remote Arctic base powered by a nuclear reactor, and agents in Berlin and Nicaragua amongst other hot spots around the world. But their main current mission is on a Soviet submarine. The Japanese portion of the cult will keep track of the characters, and if any go on leave in Japan they may be attacked. Otherwise, the cult will bide its time and press forward on their actions involving the Soviet sub. The key is that the Japanese cult, and related groups, will attempt to arrange for nuclear weapons to be detonated, or to have power plants melt down, at ley line convergences around the globe. They need to be successful at six ley line convergences in order to complete the summoning. In my game, they had already succeeded twice: once with the 1954 Castle Bravo test, and once with the 1961 Tsar Bomba test. This can be revealed throughout the campaign as various cults are raided.

In the campaign I ran, the players did not always play the same characters in every game. If you want to use the same characters throughout a campaign involving the larger conspiracy, you could have the characters be recruited by Delta Green or a similar group. If the characters are not recruited by Delta Green, they may receive a new mission when a dead cultist with a mushroom cloud tattoo is found in the streets of Berlin. Other characters may be involved in different parts of the world, only coming together as the plot of the different cells of the cult are connected.

Adapting to Other Eras

Due to the nature of this adventure, it will not adapt well to other eras without reworking it to the point of completely rewriting the adventure. It could be moved 14 years into the past to the French War, but would still require quite a bit of work to fit. While the Battle of Dien Bien Phu could serve in place of Hill 617 (which itself is a sort of Khe Sanh analogue), many of the other elements are unique to the American War.

In lieu of being able to offer adaptation suggestions, I offer instead a suggested reading list:

- *A Bright and Shining Lie* by Neil Sheehan
- *Hell in a Very Small Place* by Bernard B. Fall
- *My War* by Robert McNamara
- *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace* by Dang Thuy Tram
- *The Village* by Bing West

Personalities and Monsters

Campbell's Platoon

- HQ (5 men): Lieutenant Campbell, First Sergeant (armed with a flamethrower), Radio Telephone Operator (RTO), Medic, Translator
- 1st Squad (10 men): Corporal, 3 rifle fire teams (3 soldiers in each)
- 2nd Squad (11 men): Staff Sergeant, Corporal, 3 rifle fire teams (3 soldiers in each)
- 3rd Squad (10 men): Corporal, 3 rifle fire teams (3 soldiers in each)
- 4th Squad (8 men): Staff Sergeant, Corporal, 2 M-60 fire teams (3 soldiers in each)

Lt. Campbell: He has been forced, by magical suggestion, to discover the poppies and use them to find the ley line nexus point. He is to launch a flare when he finds the nexus. He does not know the cultists' plan. After the interrogation of the villagers in 73A went bad, and he learned the poppies could be found in 73D, he signalled cultists that he was almost finished by setting the hut with the bodies in it on fire. The suggestion that he is under is wearing thin, making him irritable and erratic.

Japanese Cultists: The cultists have maneuvered the situation so that aircraft with nuclear weapons have been deployed to the area. They will summon a Dark Thing With Wings to take down one of the aircraft the night after the players arrive, as they know Campbell is headed towards 73D and saw his signal. Once the plane is down, they will try to seize the bomb and detonate it at the nexus point once they see the flare.

Phuong, old chief: Murdered by Campbell. Married to Marie. His son, Thanh, is engaged to Bian, the daughter of Nguyen, the 73D chief, and is also the runner sent after the murder.

Marie: A French woman who fell in love with Phuong when she became disillusioned by the French occupation. She is VC, but not an idealistic communist. She is just concerned about the well-being of the people in the village. While she will be suspicious of the players, it is possible to bring her around and win limited aid. She will not like Danny Loan. She can tell a limited version of the snake man/ghost army story.

Thanh, son of old chief: Runner to 73D. Engaged to Bian, the daughter of the 73D chief Nguyen.

Danny Loan: The party's interpreter. Speaks perfect English. Son to a rich Saigon businessman. Has a history degree from Ohio State. Catholic. Ruthless anti-communist. Racist against "hill people".

Nguyen, 73D chief: Does not like the other tribe, or the new chief Duc. Had limited respect for old chief Phuong and agreed to marriage between children to improve situation. Does not like Americans, but is more concerned with his people's well-being than making any political point. Does not believe the old ghost army story. Thinks caves under the town are dangerous.

Bian, daughter of 73D chief: True believer in the ghost army story. She has spent many hours in the snake men caves and found the chamber with the staff and carvings showing how to use it. The resulting sanity loss has left her unstable. She will be upset with her father for caving to Campbell.

Duc, new chief: He is not especially competent at running the village. He has been diverting supplies for 73D and keeping them for his own people.

SKELETAL SNAKE MAN WARRIOR

STR 70 CON n/a SIZ 70 DEX 55 INT 55 POW 5

HP: N/A Roll % under damage done x5 to destroy

Damage Bonus: none. Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 1

Spear 45% 1D8 + 1

Dodge 30%

Armor: none

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6

Undead Vitality: Any successful attack must roll damage against a difficulty number of 6, with a failure meaning no damage, and a success meaning the skeletal warrior is destroyed. Ranged weapons do half damage in this roll.

Abilities: Athletics 7, Health N/A see **Undead Vitality**, Scuffling 15, Weapons 11

Hit Threshold: 4

Weapon: +1 (spear)

Armor: none

Stability Loss: +1

DARK THING WITH WINGS

STR 170 CON 65 SIZ 280 DEX 50 INT 15 POW 50

HP: 32

Damage Bonus: +4D6 Build: 5 Move: 6/18 flying MP: 10

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting 45% (25/9) 1D6 + DB

Grab and hold (mnvr) 2d6 + 2 + crushed for 1D6 damage per round

Once every three rounds can use an attack that stuns everyone in a 8 meter radius for one round.

Dodge 25% (12/5)

Armor: 9-point hide

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6

Stun Blast: Once every 3 rounds can use an attack that stuns everyone in a 8 meter radius for one round.

Abilities: Athletics 30, Health 17, Scuffling 18

Hit Threshold: 3

Weapon: +2 (bite), +4 (smash)

Armor: -5 vs. any (hide)

Stability Loss: +1

U.S. SOLDIER/VIET CONG/CULTIST/CIVILIAN

STR 50 CON 60 SIZ 50 DEX 50 INT 50 APP 50 POW 50

EDU 30 SAN 55

HP: 12

Damage Bonus: none. Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 11

Fighting (Brawl) 25% (12/5), damage 1D3 + DB

Dodge 25% (12/5)

Armor: none or see below

Skills: Listen 20% (10/4), Spot Hidden 25% (12/5)

U.S. Soldier: M-16A2: 45% 2D8, **Armor:** Body 8 Head 4

Viet Cong: AK-47: 33% 2D6 + 1, Stealth: 50%

Cultist: M-16A2: 45% 2D8, **Armor:** Body 8 Head 4

Abilities: Athletics 5, Firearms 4, Health 7, Scuffling 4, Weapons 4

Weapon: -2 (fist) or -1 (knife)

Armor: none or see below

U.S. Soldier: +3 (M-16A2), **Armor:** 5 (flak jacket)

Viet Cong: +3 (AK-47), Stealth 3

Cultist: +3 (M-16A2), **Armor:** 5 (flak jacket)

Sanity Checks

0/1D4 [1 **Stability**] - Exposed to the rotten meat in the shipping container

0/1D4 [1 **Stability**] - Understand there are necromantic spells in the temple

1/1D4 [2 **Stability**] - Discover a misshapen snake man skeleton

1/1D6 [4 **Stability**] - Encounter an animated skeletal warrior

1/1D6 [5 **Stability**] - Encounter the Dark Thing with Wings

Handouts



Cult Tattoo by Jeff Shelton-Davis

KEEPER NOTE: Explanation of Campbell's Diary

The journal is filled with fairly standard soldier stuff up through the first entry shown on January 28, 1968.

The gap in entries is due to the Tet Offensive starting on January 30, when Campbell was often in combat.

Riku is a member of the Japanese cult. He was able to make contact with Campbell because he is in the Self Defense Force, Japan's military.

After Campbell gets the cult tattoo, they implant the mental suggestion in him that they use to control him. The mental damage manifests in the strange dreams he begins having.

The flowers are all poppies, the black poppy that Campbell is searching for.

The map of the local area drawn on May 25 shows Campbell's estimate of the ley line nexus. He is not sure of the precise location, but the lines and triangles are recognizable with a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** [**Cthulhu Mythos**] or **Occult** check [**Occult**] as ley lines coming to a nexus, but the nexus should be a precise point. (The nexus is actually the peak of Hill 587 that Village 73D is on.)

Campbell's Diary

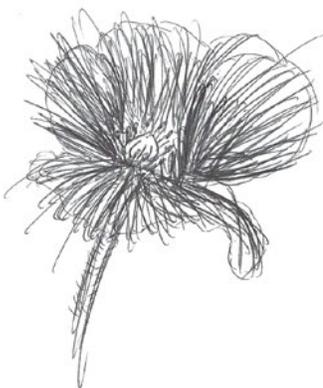
JAN 29, '68
 WE HAVE BEEN TOLD TO EXPECT THINGS TO CONTINUE TO BE PRETTY CALM FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS. TOMORROW STARTS THE NEW YEAR HERE, WHICH IS KIND OF LIKE THEIR CHRISTMAS. I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WOULD JUST HAVE CHRISTMAS BUT A MONTH LATER, BUT I AM HAPPY TO NOT GET HIT FOR A WHILE. DANNY TOLD US IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH NOT SWEEPING YO UR HOUSE.

MAY 13, '68
 I LET THESE JOURNAL ENTRIES GET BY ME FOR A WHILE, BUT THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN AWFUL. FINALLY MADE IT TO JAPAN FOR SOME LEAVE. I'M GOING TO NEED IT BECAUSE WE ARE HEADING UP INTO THE HILLS AGAIN WHEN I GET BACK. MET A GUY FROM THE SELF DEFENSE FORCE NAMED RIKU WHO HAS BEEN SHOWING ME AROUND. HE ACTUALLY KNOWS ABOUT THE VILLAGE WE ARE HEADING TO. SAYS THE WHOLE AREA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS DRUG TRADE.

MAY 21, '68
 THEY COULD BE GROWING ANYWHERE UP IN THOSE HILLS. TOO MUCH COVER TO SPOT FROM THE AIR.



MAY 23, '68
 LEAVE'S ALMOST UP. MAYBE I'LL HAVE LESS DREAMS WHEN I'M BACK IN IT.

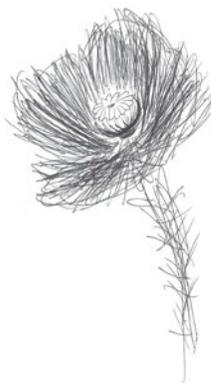


MAY 15, '68
 GOT A TATTOO LAST NIGHT. NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD DO THAT. I REALLY NEEDED THIS BREAK. SO MANY CRAZY DREAMS.

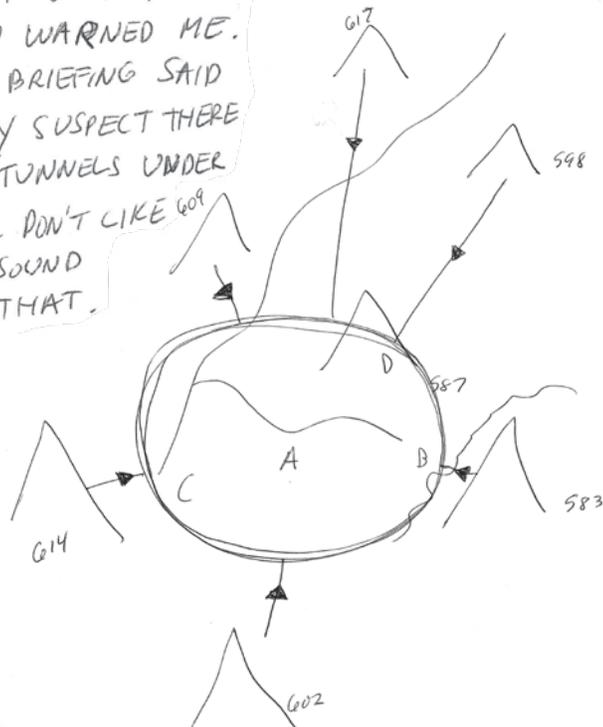
MAY 17, '68
 MORE DREAMS, NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO GOING BACK.



MAY 19, '68
 BETTER FIGURE OUT WHERE THE DRUGS ARE COMING FROM WHEN I GET BACK. WE NEED TO CLEAN IT OUT.



MAY 25, '68
 LOCALS CLAIM TO KNOW NOTHING ABOUT DRUGS. GOOD THING RIKU WARNED ME. OUR BRIEFING SAID THEY SUSPECT THERE ARE TUNNELS UNDER 73D. DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.



RED HOOK, 1933.

Grave Spirits



FROM THE CASE FILES OF
DOCTOR NILES HARRIFORD

E
V

I DON'T SEE MUCH OF RED HOOK
IN MY REGULAR PRACTICE.

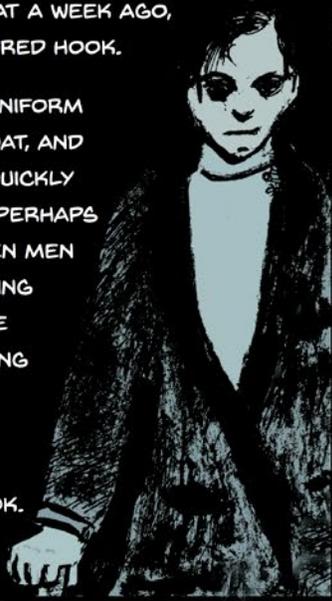


I CAN'T SAY IT'S NICE
TO BE ACQUAINTED.

MY PATIENT TOLD ME THAT A WEEK AGO,
A STRANGER ARRIVED IN RED HOOK.

HE WORE A SURGEON'S UNIFORM
UNDERNEATH AN OVERCOAT, AND
HIS QUIET NATURE WAS QUICKLY
MISTAKEN FOR KINDNESS, PERHAPS
BECAUSE THE FORGOTTEN MEN
OF RED HOOK WERE HOPING
FOR PHILANTHROPY, LIKE
STARVING DOGS SEARCHING
FOR A SCRAP OF MEAT.

THESE HAVE BEEN
DARK DAYS FOR RED HOOK.



THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY HAS COLLAPSED (ALONG
WITH EVERYTHING ELSE). NOW THE FORMER
PORT IS HOME ONLY TO STRANDED SAILORS.

IMPOVERISHED, THESE MEN TRIED TO TURN TO
DRINK, ONLY TO FIND THAT THERE WAS NO DRINK
TO BE HAD.

... UNTIL THE SURGEON ARRIVED.



HE OFFERED THEM A CONCOCTION OF WOOD GRAIN ALCOHOL AND GOD-KNOWS-WHAT-ELSE
IN EXCHANGE FOR HARD LABOR--UNLOADING CARGO TO A TENEMENT NEARBY.

THOSE THAT DRANK THE STUFF SOON DIED AFTER GOING BLIND. MY PATIENT ONLY
SURVIVED AFTER HOURS OF AGONIZING FEVER DREAMS.



THEN HE WAS KILLED BY SOME UNIDENTIFIED MEN, I'M TOLD.
I SPOKE WITH THE POLICE, WHO WERE KIND ENOUGH TO INFORM ME
THAT "THESE THINGS HAPPEN."

THERE'S ONLY ONE BUILDING ON THE BLOCK
WITH ELECTRICITY. . . AND ALL AROUND ME
THERE'S THIS STRANGE . . . HUM.



COTTON IN MY EARS SEEMS
TO PUT THE NOISE AT BAY,
BUT THE TRADE-OFF
IS THAT I CAN'T--

YOU!

-- DAMN IT.



TO BE CONTINUED

Contributors

Catherine Ramen is a native New Yorker, an author and game designer, and a principal organizer of the New York Story Games group. Catherine has been playing role-playing games since her parents gave her the red box D&D set for her eleventh birthday and is a frequent GM who specializes in wildly alternative and queered takes of well-known campaigns. She is the designer of *Rovers*, *Midnight at the Oasis*, and is currently designing *Red Carnations on a Black Grave*, a storygame about the Paris Commune. She is the author of several non-fiction books for young adults and has written for *The Guardian* online. She has been at various times an editorial assistant, computer programmer, feminist blogger, and Jeopardy! champion.

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Chris Holmes is the son of John Eric Holmes and the co-creator of Boinger and Zereth, the characters in *Tales of Peril*. Like his father, he has been a lifelong Lovecraft fan. A few of his drawings can be found in the *BLUEHOLME Journeymen Rules* by Michael Thomas and more in the Zenopus Archives.

Dean Engelhardt is a freelance designer, editor, writer, cartographer, and sometimes indie game publisher. He also blogs from time-to-time about the squamous state of the Tabletop Lovecraftian RPG world. Those mad ramblings can be read at *CthulhuReborn.com* where can also be found a wealth of free support materials, character sheets, and scenarios to enhance Lovecraftian games. In real life he lives in Australia, a place seemingly close enough to sunken R'lyeh to inspire all manner of strange nightmares.

CthulhuReborn.com

Eileen Tjan is a designer, art director, and illustrator based out of Chicago, IL. She's currently running a small studio and co-running a Detroit based publication *Grand Circus Magazine*. Between speaking engagements and teaching, Eileen is trying her hand at editorial illustration and custom type commissions. Design projects: other-studio.com
Art and illustration: eileentjan.com
Follow along on instagram [@otherstudio](https://www.instagram.com/otherstudio) for more!



Evan Johnston is a book designer and illustrator in NYC. His design portfolio can be found at evanjohndesign.com, his illustrations and comics are at evanjohnston.net. He insists that you and your fellow investigators PUT BACK THE SLAB.

Greg Steele is the creator of *Stoner Knight*. He lives in Norfolk, VA with Alaine and Bippycat.
[@harringtoncomics](https://twitter.com/harringtoncomics)

Henry Harris Jessup was an American missionary and author (1832-1910) who spent most of his time working in Lebanon. He was fluent in Arabic and published many books about Syrian history.

Jared Smith is the co-owner of the Big Planet Comics stores, the publisher of Retrofit Comics, and lives in Washington DC. He's been playing RPGs since he was 6 and has always wanted to make a magazine. He can't remember

when he first heard the call, but certainly remembers the many times his characters have died investigating it... Just follow the magazine online, you'll find him.

bigplanetcomics.com
retrofitcomics.com

Jeff Shelton-Davis is an artist and tattooer living in Richmond, VA. You can find him on Instagram at [@jeffsheltondavis](https://www.instagram.com/jeffsheltondavis) or he can be reached at jeffsheltondavis@gmail.com for commission inquiries.

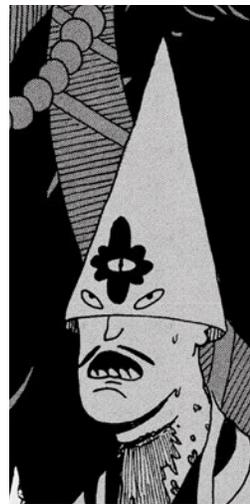


Jensine (JEN-sen) Eckwall is an illustrator living in Brooklyn NY and working in Ridgewood, NY. She illustrates books for both young people and adults (clients include Tundra, HarperCollins Children's, and Orbit). She also designs patterns and makes comics and simple animation.
jensineeckwall.com
[@whoisjensine](https://twitter.com/whoisjensine)

John Rutter was an English topographer, bookseller, printer and lawyer (1796-1851) who illustrated and published *Delineations of Fonthill Abbey and Desmesne, Wiltshire* in 1822.

Maria Nguyen is a Mississauga-based illustrator whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg*, *The Walrus*, *The National Post* and *Canada Playwright Press*. When she is not hanging out with her cat, she is likely browsing the net for horror movies/manga.

Portfolio: dtnart.com
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twitter.com/DTNart
dtnart.tumblr.com



Rich McKee is a long time gamer and an engineer turned lawyer. He has an impressive collection of student loans. You can find his blog at: darjanix.blogspot.com

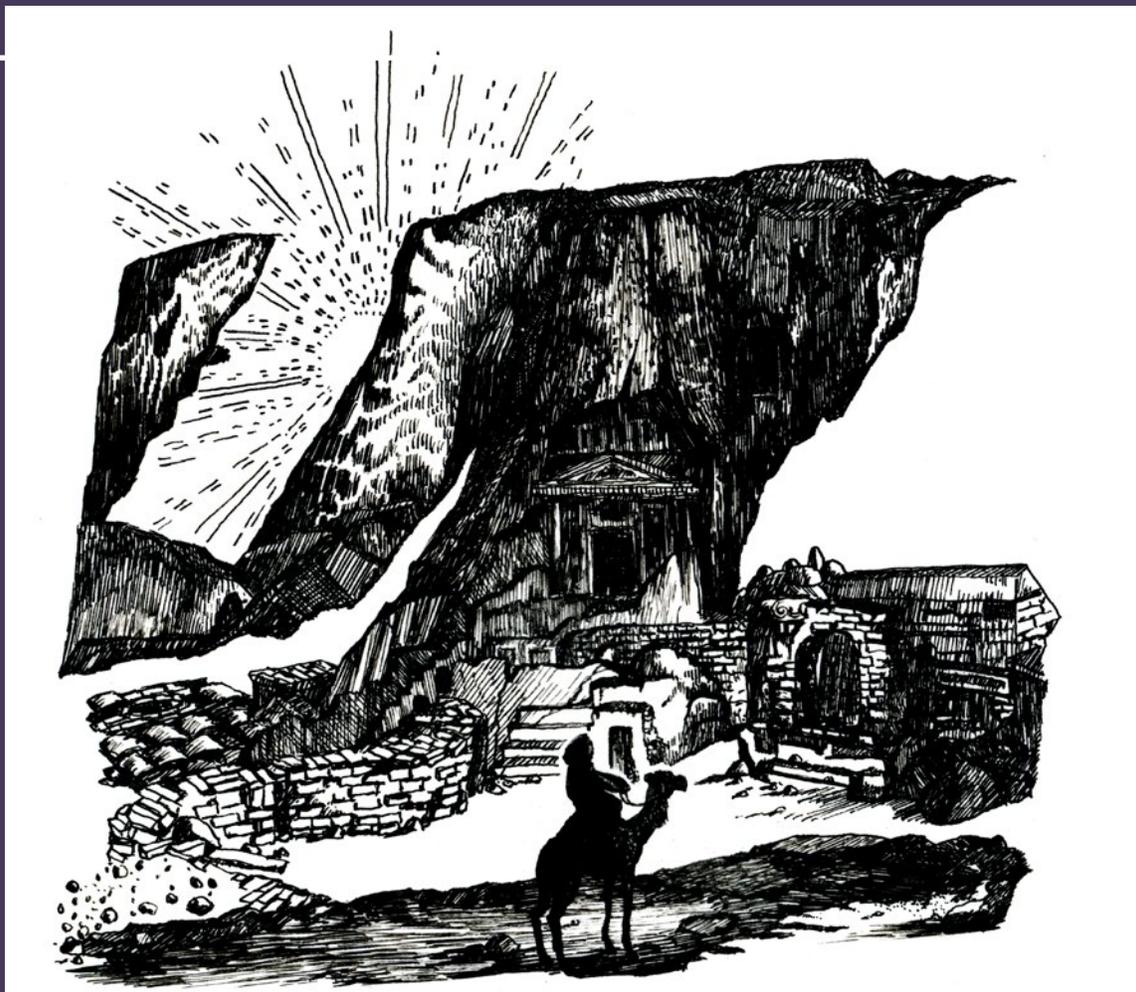
Stu Horvath is the editor in chief of *Unwinnable* and the curator of *Vintage RPG* on Instagram. He reads a lot, drinks whiskey and spends his free time calling up demons. You can follow him on Twitter [@StuHorvath](https://twitter.com/StuHorvath)
[instagram.com/vintageprg](https://www.instagram.com/vintageprg)
unwinnable.com

William Acheson is aspiring to become a professional concept artist and is currently in college as both a visual arts and computer science major at UMBC. He is certified as an expert in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. Contact him at wacheson004@gmail.com

William Henry Bartlett was an English artist (1809-1854) who travelled extensively in the Balkans and the Middle East in the 1840s, rendering the sights in sepia wash drawings that were then turned into steel engravings. He also documented Canada and the United States. He died from fever off the coast of Malta while returning from a trip to the Middle East.



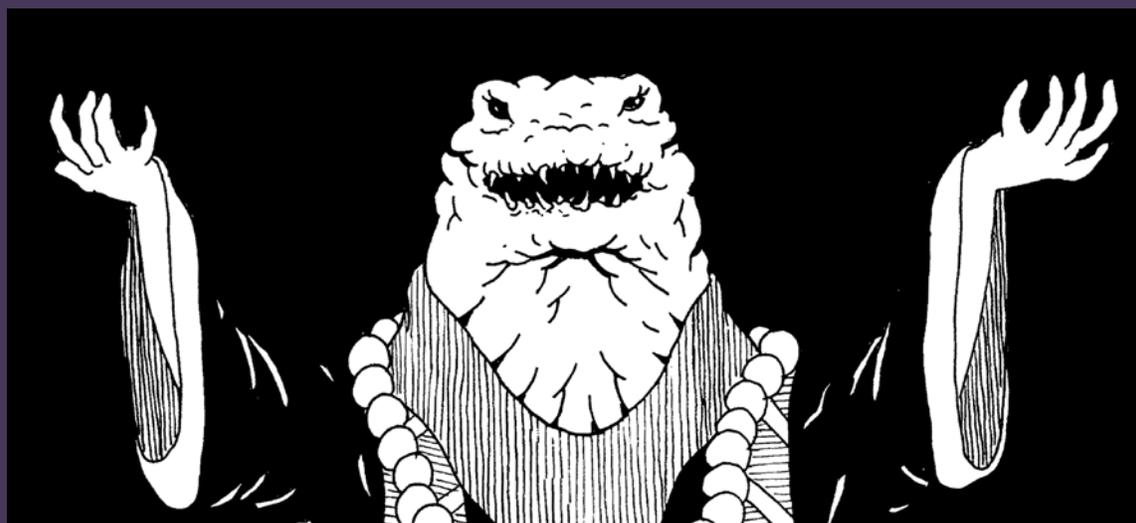
Zach Howard writes the blog Zenopus Archives dedicated to the original *Dungeon & Dragons Basic Set* and the other writings of John Eric Holmes. The blog can be found at zenopusarchives.blogspot.com



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